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ABSTRACT

A Study of How Certain Characteristics Within Small Groups

Contribute to Lay Involvement in Ministry in Four

Selected United Methodist Churches

Thomas Mark Osgood

Many people within the church do not see themselves as ministers gifted by God to do the work of ministry. Instead, many of the laity see themselves as lower class Christians when compared to the clergy. Both the clergy and the laity in many churches have come to expect the clergy to do the ministry of the church while the laity receive the benefits of that ministry.

Both lay people and clergy must be empowered to do ministry if the church is to fulfill the calling of God to touch the world in the name of Christ. One of the tools which is being used in great ways to prepare God's people for ministry is the small group.

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze ways in which certain characteristics within small groups contribute to lay involvement in ministry in four selected United Methodist Churches. The study also compared the ministry involvement of those who did not participate in small groups with the ministry involvement of those who did participate in small groups.

This study used a researcher-designed questionnaire to measure the level of accountability, application of teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people within small groups and the level of the group members' involvement in lay ministry. The scores for the small group characteristics and for lay involvement in ministry were then compared to discover significant relationships.

When the respondents experienced higher levels of these characteristics in small groups, they scored significantly higher in lay involvement in ministry than those who experienced lower levels of the same characteristics and those who were not in small groups at all.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
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Catherine Stenehouse

Mentor

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Date

Harold W. Burgess

Internal Reader

April 28, 1997

Date

Leslie A. Andrews

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

April 28, 1997

Date

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by

T. Mark Osgood

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c 1997

Thomas Mark Osgood

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CHAPTER 1

Understanding the Problem

During the past ten years I have served in three different appointments in the Alabama/West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church. My first appointment was to a three-church circuit in rural Alabama, and my second was as an Associate Pastor in a county seat town in the panhandle of Florida. My third appointment is to a church in an area where the population has tripled in the last fifteen years. This historically rural community is changing into a bedroom community for nearby cities.

These churches, like other churches, live out their beliefs concerning the ministry of the laity. Some Christians hold a high view of the laity, seeing all Christians, whether clergy or laity, as ministers of Jesus Christ. Many other church goers, however, hold a view which promotes an unhealthy separation between the clergy and the laity. A large number of Christians expect the clergy, not the laity, to do much of the work of ministry. These people in the church act as if God first created clergy and then the laity (Lindgren 16).

Ogden recognizes that many in the church perceive the clergy to be ministers while the lay people are recipients of that ministry (86). A friend of mine who is a pastor confirmed Ogden's belief. He said that his congregation wanted him to spend much of his time as a "chaplain" of the established congregation. As chaplain, the congregation expected him to visit the people, minister to their needs, preach sermons, and administer the affairs of the Church. He felt the lay people in his church expected him to do the ministry while they benefitted from his efforts.

Ogden argues that the priesthood of all believers emphasized by the Protestant Reformation was never fully realized. The Protestant Church continued to have one group representing another (52). Instead of seeing the church as an organism where the people of God are ministers, the Protestant Church saw the role of the laity as secondary, tacked on to the ministry fulfilled by the ordained clergy (54, 57). This secondary status of the laity continues in many churches today. Pastors and leaders often give the laity odd jobs or ask them to serve on committees without challenging them to receive God's power to do life-changing ministry.

The lack of involvement of the laity in ministry as well as the laity's lack of perception of themselves as ministers produces a major void in the church. Both scriptural theology and history clearly point to the importance of the ministry of the laity.

Scripture supports lay involvement in ministry in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Repeatedly, God used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. A few examples are Joseph, Ruth, and Amos.

Joseph was born into a big family. His brothers did not like him, and they sold him into slavery. Later, Joseph's master falsely accused him and threw him into prison. Even through all these circumstances, God put Joseph, a lay person, in the position to save the entire nation of Israel from a great famine.

Ruth was not a member of the nation of Israel. She was a poor widow from another nation who decided to serve the one true God, the God of Israel. Ruth left her own people, her people's gods, and her own land to comfort and minister to the needs of her mother-in-law who was also a widow. Through hard work in the fields she supported

her mother-in-law. Furthermore, God allowed Ruth to become the great-grandmother of the great king David, and to have a significant impact upon the history of the nation of Israel.

Amos was a lay person as well. God called him from herding sheep to give a prophetic message to God's people. He obeyed God and gave a very hard message to the people of Israel. In God's power he called Israel to repentance, told of the coming destruction, and proclaimed the mercy of God who would provide a remnant in Israel.

The New Testament continues the theme of the importance of lay people in ministry. Jesus expected the people of God to influence the world to come to God. He urged them to let their light shine before men so others might see their good works and give glory to God (Matthew 5:16).

The New Testament church followed this teaching of Jesus. Acts 8:2 says that a great persecution scattered the lay people of the church throughout Judea and Samaria. When they were scattered they went with power to live holy lives and to share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. The influence of the church spread and the church grew because of the ministry of these lay people.

In more recent history, the Protestant Reformation has had a tremendous impact on revealing the importance of lay people for the ministry of the church. Martin Luther proclaimed the priesthood of all believers. God called all believers to be involved in ministry. Luther also believed the "common people," and not just the priests, should read and understand the Bible. He knew that this kind of exposure to the Bible would empower the lay people to minister for Christ.

The Wesleys, who God used in the eighteenth century revival in England, also had a very high regard for the ministry of lay people. The people in the societies and classes of early Methodism were encouraged to minister to the needs of people in the community. Helping the sick and those in prison, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked was very important to the Methodists. The class leaders, themselves, who had great influence in the Methodist movement were lay people.

The church of today is again seeing a revival of lay ministry. "Every Member in Ministry" is the motto for Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Frazer is the fastest growing church in American Methodism. Many other churches are seeing a revival of the involvement of lay people in the ministry of the church. The Vineyard Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Church on the Way in Los Angeles, First United Methodist Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio are only a few of the great number of churches who are rediscovering the power of lay ministry.

Since lay ministry has biblical foundations, historical support, and successful use in the latter part of the twentieth century, its importance is clear. The church needs to discover the best ways for putting people and pastors "on stage together" to do the work of the Church (Ogden 19). What techniques best train the laity for ministry? Many authors, including Ogden, Vaughan, Neighbor and Bird, say that small groups are crucial for empowering the laity for ministry. Are they correct? Do small group ministries empower the laity for ministry? Of those churches who have implemented successful small group ministries and successful lay ministry programs, was participation in small

groups related to preparing lay people for and deploying them in ministry? The effectiveness of the church in the next century may depend on discovering the answers to these questions.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze ways in which certain characteristics within small groups contribute to lay involvement in ministry in four selected United Methodist Churches. This study also compared the ministry involvement of those who did not participate in small groups with the ministry involvement of those who did participate in small groups.

Context of the Study

The four United Methodist churches in this study offered an exciting context in which to learn about small groups and lay ministry. The following sections introduce the reader to the churches.

St. Mark United Methodist Church

St. Mark is in Columbus, Georgia and is part of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. The church was part of the downtown area of Columbus until the late 1970's. The decline of the downtown area and a drop in membership to well below one hundred led the church to relocate. St. Mark is now part of one of the fastest growing areas of Columbus. At the time of this study, St. Mark had almost 1900 members, an average worship attendance of about 790, and three principle worship services. The church's facilities include a sanctuary, offices and conference rooms, educational rooms, a gymnasium, and an activity center which includes a kitchen.

A previous associate pastor started home fellowship groups about four years ago. He designed these groups to have a lay pastor, a lay pastor in training, and a host as well as the other group members. The home fellowship groups include time for biblical instruction, sharing, prayer, and accountability. The staff and group leaders encourage the groups to grow to about fifteen to twenty people and then to birth a new group. The lay pastor in training becomes the lay pastor for the new group, and some people from the original group go with the leader to form the new group. The church staff provides ongoing training and accountability for group leaders.

At the time of this study St. Mark had nine Sunday school classes which had twenty-five or fewer members and nine home fellowship groups. The church also had several activity and exercise groups of which the researcher was not aware when the groups were chosen for study. Many short-term classes and training opportunities were also important to the educational program of the church.

First United Methodist Church of Tuscaloosa

First United Methodist is located in downtown Tuscaloosa, Alabama which is home for a major university. About 700 people attend the two principle worship services, and the church membership recently surpassed the two thousand mark. In the past five years, First United Methodist has experienced new life. They have seen increases in ministry, in Sunday morning attendance, in staff, and in membership. The church is involved in several ministries within the church, out in the community, and around the world.

The researcher studied mostly Disciple Bible Study groups, Sunday school classes, and United Methodist Women groups although one care team was studied as a small group. First United Methodist had about twenty groups which fit the definition of a small group set forward in this study. Many groups created in the past two years were spontaneous responses to certain needs in the church and community.

The interviews revealed a growing enthusiasm within the church toward lay people using their gifts for ministry. The staff members were the primary instigators of this lay involvement as they saw ministry opportunities and attempted to match people's gifts and interest with the ministry jobs.

Frazer United Methodist Church

Frazer is one of the most studied churches in our country. "Every member in ministry" is the well-known slogan used by Frazer. The church's successful emphasis on lay involvement in ministry has produced thousands of people who are using their gifts to touch the lives of others. Many of these ministries are done in connection with a team of people who become a small group as the members encourage one another, care for one another, and learn together.

Frazer U.M.C. is in the eastern part of Montgomery, Alabama. About 400 people relocated to the current location in 1970. The church now has a large complex in the middle of one of the busiest areas of Montgomery. Since 1970, the church has grown to an average worship attendance of about 4,500. The membership is near seven thousand.

The church has many different kinds of small groups. In fact, the interviews showed that the staff found it difficult to know how many groups Frazer had. These

groups had a powerful impact on people's lives. Even with the great success of small groups, however, the interviews showed the church's overriding passion for lay ministry.

Christ United Methodist Church

Christ United Methodist is in a growing area of Mobile, Alabama. The church started in 1979 with just a few families and grew rapidly. About fifteen hundred people now attend the principle worship services, and the membership of the church has grown to about 3,400.

Several different kinds of small groups are part of the ministry of Christ Church. They include Disciple Bible Study groups, accountability groups, Bible study groups, Sunday school classes, supper clubs, and recovery groups. Christ U.M.C. has also experienced great success in ministry through short-term classes. Many of these short term classes as well as ongoing groups encourage and train lay people to be in ministry in their daily lives. Stephen's ministries provide another channel for people to minister in the name of Christ.

The church has recently purchased twenty-three more acres which adjoin their property. They plan to develop them for ministry during the next ten years.

Research Questions

To foster a clearer understanding of the purpose of this study, I developed research questions. These research questions divided the purpose into manageable pieces of information.

Research Question 1.

What is the relationship between accountability experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Research Question 2.

What is the relationship between application of teaching experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Research Question 3.

What is the relationship between intimacy experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Research Question 4.

What is the relationship between outward focus experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Research Question 5.

What is the relationship between openness to new people experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Research Question 6.

How do people who participate in small groups and people who do not participate in small groups compare in lay ministry involvement?

Research question 7.

Do personal characteristics such as gender, marital status, the number of children living at home, age, number of years a Christian, and work hours have any relationships to one's level of involvement in lay ministry?

Definition of Terms

Below are some definitions of important terms used throughout this study. Unless otherwise noted, the reader should assume that whenever these terms appear in the study, the author's meaning is the same as below.

Small Group

For the purpose of this study, the researcher divided small groups into two size categories. Originally, this study was limited to include only small groups of three to fifteen people. Fifteen people would be the absolute maximum number of people which could be considered a small group. Neal McBride says, "The consensus opinion among small group experts places group size somewhere between two and fifteen people" (McBride 71). McBride goes on to say that groups of fifteen require extra attention to facilitating communication and relationships. McBride affirms that groups of thirteen to fifteen can be successful even though he believes the ideal size for a small group is twelve. As the size of the group increases, the complexity increases exponentially. "A group of twelve members has the potential for sixty-six different relationship

combinations. Increasing the group size by just three persons, to fifteen, results in 105 possible relationships” (McBride 72).

According to Galloway, a good working number for a small group is eight to twelve people. The Southern Baptists put a lot of emphasis on ten people in a small group. They grew many Sunday schools having an average maximum size of ten people in each class. Furthermore, researchers tell us that ten people are about as many for which one person can care (Small 44,45). Jesus was a master in handling a small group, and He chose to have only twelve in His group.

Roberta Hstenes, past President of Eastern Baptist College, limits the definition of small groups to include three to twelve people (Small Group Training Manual 7). A group can easily move away from the advantages of being small when it exceeds twelve people.

A group of more than fifteen people is not technically a small group. However, upon interviewing the staff and key lay leaders of the churches in this study, some of those interviewed suggested that many people were being greatly influenced by involvement in groups with more than fifteen participants. Many people in these groups consider themselves to be a part of a small group.

Therefore, the researcher divided the groups into two categories. Groups with three to fifteen people make up one category, and groups with sixteen to twenty-five people make up a second category.

The researcher defined small groups as groups who met together with a Christian purpose or ministered together for at least three consecutive months in the past three years. Small groups have met for at least forty-five minutes at least once each month.

Lay Involvement in Ministry

Lay involvement in ministry is used in a broad sense in this study. All Christians are a part of the Body of Christ and are called to be in ministry. Ministry is using one's gifts to reach out to and touch the lives of people in the name of Jesus.

This study divided lay ministry into two general categories. One type of lay ministry is done for those who are part of the church family. Johnson lists five types of ministry within the church. These five are: 1) jobs that involve the physical appearance of the church grounds, 2) jobs in the church office, 3) jobs that involve personal contact with other people such as teaching, visiting, or "delivering tapes as part of a tape ministry", 4) high visibility worship tasks such as ushering, singing in the choir, reading scripture, or acolyting, and 5) committee jobs (95-97).

The second type of lay ministry is done for those outside the church family. This type of ministry includes volunteer jobs which reach out to the community or to others, even those across the world, who are not a part of Christ's Church. West reported a "significantly smaller number of members" of the church he studied involved in ministries outside the church compared to the members involved in ministries inside the church (107). Many churches have many ministry jobs within the walls of the church building while focusing less on ministry outside the church.

Lay ministry outside the walls of the church building also includes ministry within one's family as well as ministry to one's co-workers or schoolmates. Christians are called to be ministers for Christ wherever they go.

Intimacy

Intimacy within a small group is a sense of closeness experienced by members of the group in relationship with others in the group. Intimacy is characterized by group members who offer support both in the struggles and successes of other group members. According to Hemphill in his "Group Dimensions Descriptions Questionnaire," those who share intimacy in a small group know the personal lives of other group members and do small favors for others in the group (Hemphill 53). Those who share intimacy also give advice to other group members who are making difficult decisions.

Inward or Outward Focus

An inward focus in a small group is a group culture which focuses only or mainly on the needs of the people who are a part of the group. A therapy group, for example, might have an inward focus as its original purpose. The group intends to focus on the needs of those within the group.

Groups with an outward focus tend to direct the groups energies toward those who are outside the group. An intercessory prayer group, for example, might spend most of its time praying for those who are not part of the group. Ministry groups and task groups also spend large amounts of time focusing their energy outside the group.

Although some groups intentionally have an inward focus, other small groups start with intentions to reach out beyond the group, but gradually adopt an attitude of inward focus.

Accountability

In some small groups the members of the group give support and reinforcement to encourage other group members to live out their faith according to certain standards set by the group. Some groups expect the group members to give attention to certain spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, giving, or regular worship attendance. Other small groups decide that each member will be held accountable for using her or his gifts to minister outside the group.

Some groups even have combinations of standards which each member is expected to follow. For example, a small group may expect each member to get regular exercise for physical health, to consistently spend time alone with God, and to be involved in some kind of ministry through the church. In the meetings of some small groups each member is asked about the attention she or he gives to the prescribed standards. Some groups talk to each other between meetings to encourage the members to follow the guidelines decided upon by the group. Accountability leads group members to make sure that each person in the group is living for God in his or her daily life.

Accountability is based on the truth that God created us to need each other. Dunnam says that our Christianity is personal, but it is not private (84). God created us to be in community with others as we seek to know and serve God. We need the encouragement and reinforcement of others to live a Christian life. That encouragement

may involve a pat on the back or a good push in the right direction. Accountability which is given in love gives strength to group members for holy living which they would never have if left to live the Christian life alone.

Open Groups

Open groups are small groups that desire to bring new people into the group. These groups have group members who regularly invite friends and relatives to visit the group and have a steady flow of new people. Small groups that are open to new people may be characterized by group discussion which emphasizes the importance of bringing others to the group. These groups make newcomers feel welcome, and can benefit from a prospect list and a good system for contacting visitors to the group. They can be great tools for evangelism, and may even draw in those who are not members of their church.

Closed Groups

Closed groups are small groups which either did not intend to draw in new people from the beginning or have grown into a pattern which is not conducive to bringing new people into the group. A group that has not had new people coming into the group during the past six months is a closed group.

Application of Teaching

Application of teaching in a small group is characterized by an intentional effort by the members of a small group to put into practice the Biblical truths learned in the group. In groups known for application of teaching, the teaching tends to be much more practical and related to the events of a normal day.

Groups which are strong in application of teaching take group time to talk about how Biblical principles can be applied to a person's life. Members of these groups may also write down the steps necessary to put what they have learned from the group into practice. Furthermore, these group members may show principles taught in the group have been put into practice since the last meeting.

Application of teaching is crucial to Christians if the Church is to do God's Word as well as hear God's Word (Matthew 7:24-27). Dan Reiland, from Skyline Wesleyan Church in California, says that most Christians have learned much more from the Bible than they have applied to their lives. They need to apply what they already know.

Personal Characteristics.

This descriptor herein refers to age, gender, marital status, how long the person has been a part of her/his church, how long the person has been a Christian, how many children the person has living at home with her or him, and how many hours the person works each week in a paying job.

Methodology

Since this research focuses on small groups and lay ministry, the researcher selected the churches in this study on the basis of the perceived strength in both small group ministry and lay involvement in ministry. This study has been limited to four United Methodist Churches from three United Methodist annual conferences in the Southeastern United States. The Council on Ministries Directors from each of the three annual conferences submitted a list of churches which they believed were strong in small

group ministry and in lay involvement in ministry. The churches were listed in rank order based on their combined strengths in these two areas.

After each Council on Ministries team submitted the list of churches, the highest rated church from each conference and the second highest rated church from one conference were contacted to secure permission to study the small group ministry and lay ministry of each church.

In order to determine the relationship between the characteristics of a small group and a group member's involvement in lay ministry in the four churches mentioned above, I chose two tools. One tool was a questionnaire and the other was an open-ended interview process. Both of these tools fall under the general category of survey methodology. Survey uses questions to investigate people's "feelings, motivations, plans, beliefs,..." (Fink 13). Survey questions can also collect information about a person's behavior. The questionnaires and, to a small degree, the interviews gave information which provided valuable insights for this study.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this study was researcher-designed (see Appendix B). The questionnaire included multiple answer questions, modified Likert scale questions, yes or no questions, and fill in the blank questions. The questionnaires were distributed in each of the four churches to people in small groups and to people who were not in small groups. Questions 25 and 42 were adapted from the "Group Dimensions Description Questionnaire" by John K. Hemphill in Group Dimensions: A Manual For Their Measurement. Questions 19, 29, 33, 34, and the list of groups in question 8 were adapted

from questions Robert Wuthnow used in his research on small groups in America.

Question 21 was adapted from Hebrews 10:24.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were arranged and conducted with paid and volunteer staff and key lay people from the four churches. The interviews were conducted on the campuses of the four churches.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain a general understanding of the leaders' vision and their church's vision as it relates to lay involvement in ministry and small groups. The interviews also were done to gain general impressions of the church's success in the areas of lay involvement in ministry and small groups. The questions were researcher designed (see Appendix C). The on site visits also allowed the researcher to observe some of the small group ministries and lay ministries of the church.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included the active participants in small groups and the active participants in worship in each of the four churches which were studied. The sample was a representative part of all those who were active in small groups or worship in each church. The sample was randomly chosen from a list of small groups and from active participants in worship. Small groups were chosen as a whole and the members of each chosen group were encouraged to individually complete a questionnaire.

Variables

According to Davies, independent variables are the things that the researcher can control. Dependent variables "are the things that we observe as a result of our control of

the independent variables” (97). Small groups are the independent variables in this study. The small group characteristics (accountability, application of teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people) are independent sub-variables. The primary dependent variable for this study is a person's involvement in lay ministry. The intervening variables are personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, length of time a Christian, number of children at home, and hours worked at a paying job each week.

Data Collection

The procedures for data collection first involved selection of the four United Methodist Churches to be studied. After the churches were selected, key leaders in each church were contacted to secure permission to study the churches. The methodology and intentions of the study were explained to the key leaders so that they would understand the nature of the study.

After the churches gave permission for the study, the researcher enlisted a contact person and arranged interviews with the appropriate staff and key lay persons. These interviews were done on site.

The questionnaires were distributed to a representative sample of small groups within each church through the contact person and the small group leaders. The researcher asked the contact persons to encourage the group members to complete the questionnaires during the meeting time and to give them back to the group leader. The group leader gave the packet of questionnaires back to the contact person who mailed them to the researcher.

The researcher also distributed questionnaires to a random sample of active participants in worship. These questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter from the church, a cover letter from the researcher, instructions, and a pre-addressed, stamped, return envelope. The respondents completed the questionnaires and returned them to the contact person.

Delimitations

This project has been limited to the study of five characteristics within small groups. Although there are other characteristics within small groups which might affect a group member's involvement in lay ministry, the body of literature which covers these topics continually expresses the importance of these five characteristics.

The researcher has also limited this study by the questions asked in the questionnaire. Questions were asked to measure a person's involvement in lay ministry at home, at work, through the church, and in the community apart from the church. Although there are other questions which could be used to measure ministry in each of these categories, these questions cover a broad picture of one's level of involvement in ministry.

The questions asked in order to measure a person's involvement in lay ministry at home were limited to the areas of serving one's family through household chores, family knowledge of the high priority one places on serving God, ministry together as a family, family devotions, random acts of kindness for family members, the use of the normal things of life to teach one's family about God, and an intentional following of Christ's example within the home.

The measurement of ministry at work or school has been limited to the areas of one's expectation that God will use him or her to minister to co-workers or fellow students each day, one's belief that one's secular employment is a ministry, one's consistency in inviting co-workers or fellow students to attend one's church, one's care and concern for co-workers or fellow students as an expression of one's love for God, one's consistency in talking about God in a natural way to co-workers and fellow students, one's level of honesty in the workplace because of one's commitment to God, and one's habit of leading Bible studies or other specific ministries with persons contacted through work or school.

The questions used to measure ministry through the church for the church focused on the areas of the importance one places on ministry within the church building, the degree to which one has a need to minister to people who have been in the church a long time, the desire one has to help Christians grow in their faith. The measure of one's ministry to community was limited to certain questions which focused on enjoyment in ministering to strangers, sharing what one has with those outside one's family and church, one's effort to make one's community a better place, and one's consistent use of one's gifts to touch the lives of one's neighbors. This research does not intend to study the spiritual maturity of a person and its effects on involvement in lay ministry nor does it intend to study the effectiveness of one's involvement in lay ministry.

Generalizability

The question could be raised regarding the generalizability of the findings from a questionnaire and from interviews in four United Methodist Churches in the southeastern United States. Although the results of this study could not be automatically generalized to apply to all churches, if more than one church shows a positive connection between certain small group characteristics and the level of involvement in ministry for small group participants, the results may give us clues as to the best way to structure small groups to involve lay people in ministry. Certain characteristics of small groups may correlate significantly with a person's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, or in the church. If so, other churches may be able to profit by creating a small group environment which focuses on the characteristics.

Theological Reflection

Jesus' use of the small group offers the strongest support in the Bible for a direct relationship between small groups and ministry. The concept of the small group was basic for Jesus' ministry, and Jesus established a precedent for the use of small groups to prepare people for ministry. Small groups were so important to Jesus that he was willing to entrust the leadership of his continuing ministry to the small group he had trained for three years.

Chapter six of Luke's Gospel indicates that Jesus spent all night in prayer before the very important task of selecting his small group. Then, for the next three years Jesus poured his life into the twelve disciples in a small group environment. John 17:6-8 tells

us that Jesus revealed the Father to the disciples in this setting. They learned how to know God.

The small group of twelve, though, was not the end result of Jesus' plan. The small group was a means to the end that the disciples might know Jesus and be empowered for ministry in his name. Ministry, not a small group was the end result that Jesus wanted. Jesus called his disciples to make disciples, baptize, teach, cast out demons, and heal the sick, and he prepared them for this ministry through a small group. When the power of the Holy Spirit filled the disciples at Pentecost, they were able to remember and use what they learned in the small group in order to share the gospel.

According to McBride, Jesus was a master of the small group and is the model for Christians (15). If Jesus was the master then we need to learn about the way he did small group ministry. Why did Jesus choose to create a small group of disciples? What characteristics did Jesus include in his small group?

In Master Plan of Evangelism, Coleman describes the four levels of learning through which the disciples grew in their faith. First, the disciples learned by watching (73). Next, they learned by sharing in leadership tasks (83). Thirdly, they learned by being sent out (84), and fourthly, they learned by reporting back (94). In these learning methods one sees what Jesus did through his small group to equip the disciples.

The small group was Jesus' method for leadership training. He trained the disciples to continue the work of the kingdom of God. The ministry of the disciples proves Jesus method was successful (McBride 17).

Jesus used the small group because of its intimacy. For Jesus, the small group was a tool that allowed the disciples to come to know Christ and his plans for their lives in the setting of intimate relationships (McBride 15). He knew that transformation was more likely to take place in a group small enough to work with in an intimate way (Coleman 24). Jesus could not have imparted himself and the truths of His kingdom so effectively to a less intimate group.

Jesus' small group was also effective because of its potential for modeling behavior and providing "hands on" experience. The informal group allowed the disciples not only to hear the teachings of Jesus but to see and experience them being lived by Jesus (McBride 15). The disciples had many opportunities to apply the teaching that they heard from Jesus. "The small group was their living-learning laboratory" (McBride 17).

Perhaps Jesus used the small group because of its manageability. Moving the disciples around and finding places to meet would have been more difficult with a large group. Since Jesus' equipping methods required the disciples to be with him almost all the time, a large group simply would not have been practical.

When the disciples were with Jesus, they experienced accountability. In Luke chapter 9 we read about Jesus sending out the twelve disciples. "He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1). He also sent them to preach with power. When the disciples went out they did what Jesus had empowered them to do. They healed people everywhere, they preached with power and they cast out demons. When the disciples returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done (Luke 9:11). The disciples learned through being accountable to one another and to Jesus.

Since Jesus considered the small group to be the best way to prepare his disciples for ministry, then perhaps small groups are still effective tools for preparing lay people for and leading lay people into ministry. All small groups, though, may not prepare people for ministry and lead them into ministry. This study seeks to determine if a person's involvement in lay ministry is significantly affected by the presence of certain characteristics in that person's small group(s).

Overview

Chapter 2 of this dissertation reviews the more salient sources of literature covering the areas of small groups in the church and lay involvement in ministry. Chapter 3 describes in detail the design and methodology of this study, and Chapter 4 reports the study's most significant findings. Chapter 5 summarizes the major findings, gives conclusions, and offers practical applications.

CHAPTER 2

Precedents in the Literature

This study is designed to identify and analyze ways in which certain characteristics within small groups contribute to lay involvement in ministry in four selected United Methodist Churches.

As a beginning place for this study, this chapter reviews some of the literature which addresses lay ministry, small groups, or the relationship between the two. The review focuses on the characteristics of small groups as well as on the various components of lay ministry. Before looking at the literature mentioned above, however, the researcher will discuss some of the literature pertinent to the survey methodologies of questionnaire and interview, and reasons for using these particular tools for this dissertation.

Survey Methodology

Since this study is concerned with the relationships between the characteristics of one's small group(s) and one's involvement in lay ministry, the researcher needed to gain very specific information about a person's small group(s) and about one's involvement in lay ministry. Fink and Kosecoff say "surveys are most appropriate when information should come directly from people" (Fink 13). The characteristics of a person's small group(s) and certainly the information about his or her involvement in lay ministry is so specific that it needs to be gained directly from the person.

The staff and other key leaders who were interviewed as a part of this project also supplied data that they could best provide. They gave information about their vision for and opinions about small groups and lay involvement in ministry.

This project seeks to adequately include the essential ingredients for a helpful questionnaire. These ingredients are “sampling and design,....data processing and analysis,....pilot testing,....response rate,....[and] reporting results” (Fink 16). Each of these ingredients is discussed in more detail in other chapters of this dissertation.

The interviews conducted with staff persons and key lay persons yielded a general understanding of the importance church leaders placed on small groups and lay involvement in ministry. These interviews also gave insights into how small groups and lay involvement in ministry fits into the larger vision of each church.

Fowler and Mangione promote the importance of standardized interviews. To standardize the interviews the interviewer must ask the same questions to each respondent, must “probe inadequate answers nondirectively,” must not bias answers by the way she or he relates to the respondent, and must record the answers correctly (33-35). All of the interviews used the same list of questions, and the interviews were tape-recorded to insure accuracy in logging answers.

Another part of the project was the observations made while visiting the campuses of each of the four United Methodist Churches involved in this study. These observations gave the researcher further insights about the churches and their views on the importance of lay involvement in ministry and small groups.

Denzin and Lincoln cite Lofland who lists four modes of observation. The four modes are the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant, and the complete observer (Denzin 379). The researcher was observer-as-participant in two churches, taking part in staff meetings and in the mid-week programs. The researcher previously had been a complete participant and a participant-as-observer in another of the four churches, and was more of a complete observer in the fourth church.

The Importance of Lay Ministry

In the church, the word “laity” currently refers to those who are not ordained clergy. By definition this word divides the church into two distinct groups. Bucy believes the line between the clergy and the laity is too bold. He points out that the word “laity” comes from the Greek word “laos” which does not denote regular Christians in distinction to those who have received training to be clergy. “Laos” means the people of God (Bucy 15). The laity are the people of God called to do the purposes of God. God never intended lay people to be seen as second class Christians, but intended them to have the “status of full privilege and responsibility” (15). The great distinction in today’s church between clergy and laity fails to recognize the laity as the people of God (15,16).

Gillispie says the passage in Exodus 19:4-7 shows the covenant is made with all the people, and all the people of God are called to be a “kingdom of priests” and a nation set apart for God’s use (15). “Even the later development of an official priesthood within Israel does not nullify this fundamental task of the people of God” (Bucy 16).

Some of the main tasks of the people of God are living holy lives, sacrificing and sharing, and showing and telling the work of God in their lives (Bucy 29-31). Their ministry is crucial in God's plan to draw all people to Himself. Even though God established the roles of the priests and Levites, He never intended His work to be accomplished only through a particular group from the people of God. Even in the Old Testament, when only the priests and Levites could perform the sacrifices of worship and when only the High Priest could enter the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, God called all the people to be priests who would be a bridge from God to the world.

In the New Testament Jesus became our High Priest, and all of God's people can now enter into the holy presence of God. With this privilege the people of God continue to be representatives of Christ to the whole world. God does His work through all the people of God. The laity, therefore, should never be considered the lower class in the Church. They are the people of God who are anointed by God, gifted by God, and used by God to be ministers in the name of God.

The Present State of Lay Ministry

The New Testament church was empowered to do ministry. The whole people of God used their gifts to minister in the name of Christ. The church of today, however, has taken a different route. Rarely are the laity of the Church challenged to use their gifts and to be in ministry, and they are deprived of the freedom to fulfill God's call on their lives. Neighbor says in his book Where Do We Go From Here?, "Traditional church life robs the believer of being responsible" (220). The believer is not expected to use his or her

spiritual gifts and, therefore, loses the joy, the fulfillment, and the power of God that goes with using those gifts.

Smart says, "The ordinary Christian no longer considers himself called to a ministry" (49). Christianity has become, in some instances, something like a spectator sport (Lay Institute to Equip A-11). Often the laity are more like the fans in the stands than the team on the field. Lay people have come to be seen and to see themselves as second-class Christians. The word "laity" has the negative meaning of "less than the clergy" (Ogden 67-8).

Lay people have moved from doing "the work of the church" to doing "church work" (Bucy 13). Sitting on a committee and talking about the decisions of the church is viewed as the work church people should be doing. Sitting in the pews and listening to a good sermon somehow is equated with doing God's work. Attending worship is considered one's ministry for God. Many lay people do not experience the abundant power which is available to all Christians in order that they might touch the lives of the people around them in the name of Christ. Perhaps many lay people have not been informed of this abundant power.

The church often views pastors as multi-gifted, super-Christians who are supposed to visit the sick and shut-ins, win the lost to Christ, run the business of the church with wisdom, lead the congregation in worship, organize and participate in ministries to the community, go on mission trips, preach wonderful sermons, teach confirmation classes, and do many other ministries for the kingdom of God. Instead of

equipping the people of God for ministry, the pastors often are expected to do the ministry while the laity receive that ministry and “help out” where they can.

This low view of the laity which many churches have adopted is neither Biblical nor is it effective in doing God’s work in the world. The church has many more lay people than clergy, and the church could be much greater if the laity were effectively ministering with their God-given gifts. When churches have pastors who equip the laity for ministry and laity who use their gifts to reach out in ministry, the kingdom of God will be multiplied many times.

As mentioned in chapter one, this study defines lay ministry in very broad terms. Lay ministry can really be defined in no other way. Lay ministry is broad because the scope of the lives of Christians is broad. Since God calls Christians to be ministers wherever they are and wherever they go, their ministry becomes as broad as their lives. God calls Christians to be representatives of God when they go to work, when they live at home with their families, when they move about in their communities, and when they join with other Christians for fellowship, teaching, and worship.

Causes of the Decline of Lay

Involvement in Ministry

Both clergy and laity are responsible for the great separation between them. A clergyperson often has a need to be in control and, with enough hard work, she or he can keep the local church under her/his fingertips (Banks 6). The church is a safe place for the clergy to exercise their authority (Banks 6), and they often do not want to give lay people authority and freedom for ministry. According to Ralph Neighbor, many pastors

want to reign over their church kingdoms. They are unwilling to equip the laity and set them free to do ministry (91). The clergy are often afraid they will lose their authority if they give authority to the laity, but if pastors buy into the idea that they can do anything and everything in the church, they have bought into their own failure (Small Group Book 36).

The laity, on the other hand, often are content to let the clergypersons keep the ministry. Many lay people want to hire the professional "holy man," put their money in the offering plate, and be free of other responsibilities (Neighbor 91). Even small churches "will seek for a Pastor-Specialist who can come and preach, teach, counsel, raise the budget, administer its spending, win the lost, and effectively manage the church schedule" (Arnold 48). Many lay people balk "at the idea of becoming a responsible, ministering person," and they "have no intention of entering into true servanthood" (Neighbor 91).

Sometimes the laity are not involved in ministry because they refuse to give up control of the day to day operations and decisions to the pastor, office administrators, or other leaders (Small Group Book 25). They spend so much time being involved in operations that they don't have any time left to use their gifts and be in ministry. People spend countless hours making decisions that do not matter much for the kingdom of God, and they waste valuable time and gifts in the process. Decisions about pencil sharpeners in the office, the weight of paper, or the location of the sanctuary furniture often take too much time and involve far too many people. These people could be using their gifts to touch lives for the kingdom of God.

Banks indicates that “society doesn’t want ministry in daily life one bit. Ministry in daily life confronts the false values of careerism and consumerism on their own turf” (10). Although society would be changed drastically if the laity took ministry into daily life, it is easier for lay people and clergy to avoid the tension and persecution that holy living and ministry in the world would cause.

The laity's lack of perception of themselves as ministers and their lack of involvement in ministry produces a major void in the church. If the Church continues the pattern of clergy-centered ministry it cannot fulfill its mission. How can the Church acquire a healthy pattern of lay ministry? Where can it look to find an example of healthy lay involvement in ministry? Both scriptural theology and history clearly point to the importance of the ministry of the laity and give answers to some of these questions.

The Literature Cites Biblical Support for Lay Ministry

Biblical literature supports the importance of lay ministry in the life of God's people, and many contemporary authors use the Bible to support their views on shared ministry. Carl George uses the story of Moses and Jethro as a basis for his structure for small groups. Moses was taking on the superstar image in Exodus 18. He had too many responsibilities as a leader, and his life suffered because of the tremendous load. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, encouraged him to hand many of the responsibilities for ministry over to leaders within the community. After Moses gave other leaders these important tasks of ministry, the judging of the nation seemed to go much more smoothly. The burden of doing all the ministry was lifted from Moses giving other leaders opportunities

to participate in legitimate ministry. Carl George calls this principle of lay leadership the Jethro Principle.

God's call on Abraham and the people of Israel was a call which gave them great responsibility for ministry. According to Exodus 19:6 God intended Israel to be a nation of priests who would be an important link between God and the world. Even though God gave the Priests and Levites particular roles to lead the people, the call of God for Israel was not limited to a few privileged leaders. The whole nation was to be a ministering agent to the people around them.

The New Testament also claims that the people of God are ministers on behalf of God. I Peter 2:9 points out that Christians are called apart by God to be a nation of priests. The whole church, which includes the laity, is called to be the holy people of God ministering to the world. "Any view of call that debilitates and devalues the ministry of the whole body of Christ is contrary to the New Testament conception of the church" (Ogden 211).

Ephesians 4:11-12 talks about equipping the church for ministry. This "equipping ministry helps to awaken the laity to the call God has placed on their lives" (Partners In Ministry 1). Ephesians 4 tells us about the gifts given to the Church when Jesus ascended in power to the right hand of the Father. Jesus "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..." (Ephesians 4:11-12a). The Holy Spirit did not give these gifts so a few people could do all the ministry while the rest of the church received the

ministry. God intended to equip all of God's people to use their own gifts to minister in the name of Christ.

God not only calls Christians to be the carriers of God's light to the world, but God empowers Christians to do it. The New Testament book of Galatians says fruit of the Spirit is being produced in every believer. That fruit includes "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). This fruit produced in the lives of Christians is intended not only to impact the lives of the Christians themselves, but everyone with whom the Christians have contact. So whether a Christian is going to the store, or relating to people through a community organization, or living with her or his family, the fruit of the Spirit can be working in the Christian to minister to others.

More Biblical support for lay ministry is found in the passages which focus on the gifts of the Spirit. Romans 12:1-8, I Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:1-16, and I Peter 4:8-11 mention many of the spiritual gifts that are distributed among all Christians.

The first three passages listed above refer to the analogy of the church as a body. Paul consistently uses this analogy to describe the church. He compares the many members of the church to the many members of a body. Each member has a certain job or jobs, and the members of the body work together to form the whole. Each part of the physical body must serve its own function in order for the body to perform properly.

Likewise, each part of the body of Christ, every Christian, must use her or his God-given gifts to make the church perform properly. If some Christians do not use their gifts in ministry, a void is created in the church. These passages discount the image of

ministry where clergy are the superstars and the laity are spectators. Garlow says, "If the pastor is a superstar, then the church is an audience, not a body" (Partners In Ministry 28).

The Biblical picture of the church includes all the people, lay and clergy, ministering with power to one another and to the world. The Bible passages about the gifts of the Spirit clearly point out that "every member is significant and has a necessary and vital ministry to accomplish" (Heidebrecht 45).

As mentioned in chapter one, Jesus trained the disciples to be ready to be sent out to minister. Although the twelve apostles might be considered forerunners of the clergy, the seventy-two who were sent out in Luke 10 may be more like the laity. They were commanded to heal the sick and tell the people the kingdom of God was near them. When they returned to give a report of their experiences, they rejoiced that the evil spirits submitted to them in Jesus' name.

The early church in the book of Acts considered ministry of the laity to be very important. In Acts 6 the church selected Stephen and others to serve widows. As the church was scattered because of persecution after the martyrdom of Stephen, the people proclaimed the Word of God wherever they went (Acts 8:4). In fact, Eastwood says that John Wesley makes the point that the Apostles were not even part of the scattered group. Wesley believed the "regular" Christians and not the Apostles were the ones who proclaimed the Gospel in the dispersion (222).

The phrase "I'm just a lay person" should be wiped away from the memory of the laity (Lay Institute to Equip A12). In the New Testament, there was no such thing as a

Christian without a ministry (Guelzo 35). God intended for God's ministry to be done by all Christians--both laity and clergy.

History of Lay Involvement in Ministry

The ministry of the laity has been a continuing theme all through history.

Through the years, the church has shifted back and forth in its emphasis on the ministry of the laity. When the ministry of laity is emphasized, great things happen in the church.

The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation has had a tremendous impact on revealing the importance of lay people for the ministry of the church. Martin Luther and other leaders in the Protestant Reformation acknowledged value in the ministry of the laity by proclaiming the priesthood of all believers. The call for the priesthood of all believers led the Protestants to believe that all Christians had access to God through the work of Jesus (Ogden 11). However, Ogden says that even though the laity and clergy were brought closer together through the Reformation, much was left undone. The Church was still "empowered by its top-down leadership" (52). Lay ministry was still a supplement to and secondary to ordained ministry (Ogden 57).

The Wesleys and the Time of Early Methodism

The Wesleys and the revival in eighteenth century England encouraged many lay people to be in ministry. The ministry of the laity was an important part of John Wesley's theology and preaching. Wesley preached holiness and stated, "The Gospel of Christ knows...no holiness but social holiness." Wesley expected the lay people to live holy lives which included ministering to the world around them. He believed God called

Christians to minister in a social world and to avoid a "solitary religion" (qtd. in Ogden 206).

The classes of early Methodism lived out Wesley's theological beliefs. "The class meeting afforded lay persons a valuable school of training for future usefulness in the Church." These small groups tested the qualifications and developed the gifts of its people (Alley 36). In the class meetings lay people learned to use their gifts in ministry to each other and to the world.

The class leaders give us great examples of the ministry of the laity as they ministered and led others to reach out in ministry as well. Wesley urged class leaders to lead their people to service in the community, especially to the poor (Class Leaders 53). Lay leadership and social outreach were two very important aspects of the Methodist societies and class meetings (Accountable Discipleship 26).

Class leaders were also "the persons responsible for grounding church members in the basics of Christian discipleship" (Class Leaders 79). This pastoral and leadership role for the class leader was essential because of the nature of the circuit riders, the clergy of early Methodism. During the first half of the nineteenth century the circuit riders were traveling around the countryside and saw a particular group of Christians infrequently. Class leaders and stewards pastored the churches while the traveling preachers were gone.

At this point Methodism had "a golden opportunity to forge a shared pastoral leadership between clergy and laity..." Instead, the church moved toward a "clergy-dominated leadership" (Class Leaders 47). The church fell short again. The gap between clergy and laity was widened instead of narrowed. "As the nineteenth century

progressed” and pastors became more settled in a particular community, “questions of leadership became more divisive,” and the Methodists excluded the laity from Annual Conference sessions and even from General Conferences (Class Leaders 48). Norwood, in his book Story of American Methodism, says when the preacher was stationed in a particular community, the class leader became “an unnecessary wheel.” Methodism lost the strength of “the active ‘ministerial’ participation of lay people” (qtd. in Class Leaders 49).

Here at the threshold of the twenty-first century, many writers and church specialists agree that the involvement of the laity in ministry is crucial for the future of the Church. James Garlow believes that the laity must be considered “equal laborers--partners in ministry” (Partners 2). Mead says, “In the Church of Christendom, the clergy were assumed to play the primary role in mission and ministry. In the emerging Church, the laity are the primary ones to cross the missionary frontier and undertake the missionary task” (53). Lay ministry is a crucial aspect of the church.

The Bible emphasizes lay ministry, and many significant leaders in church history have claimed that lay ministry was crucial to the life of the church. Many leaders in the church today have also heralded the significance of lay ministry. If the ministry of the laity is so important for the church, a large part of the church has made a terrible mistake. The ministry of the laity has been devalued creating a significant problem in the life of the church. Without the ministry of the laity, the church is much less effective than it can be, and perhaps is no longer the church at all. Something must be done to revive the ministry of the laity, but perhaps neither clergy nor laity know what to do. What are the

best ways to overcome the low view of the laity? What are the best ways to prepare the laity for and involve them the ministries to which they are called?

Small Groups: One Key to Involving

Lay People in Ministry

Many church leaders see small groups as an effective means for equipping people and encouraging involvement in ministry. In his book The New Reformation Greg Ogden says that small group ministry is the "best and broadest" way to move into the equipping model. He also says that "small groups are a visible microcosm of the church" (124). Small groups allow people to connect with each other and to learn about being the church. Ogden believes that small groups, "more than any other structure," move the laity from audience to participant (19-20). People who feel like isolated spectators in a large or medium-size church can experience community and can begin to understand and use their gifts in ministry through small groups. John Vaughan says "The small group is the most likely place for assimilation and equipping for ministry to occur" (qtd. in Bird 28).

The atmosphere in a small group can be much less threatening than the atmosphere in a crowd. People are given individual attention in small groups and are often given opportunities to use gifts like leadership, teaching, intercession, encouragement, and hospitality. In fact, all of the spiritual gifts could be used within the context of a small group. These people might never step forward to experiment with these gifts and roles in the larger church setting. Small groups also allow otherwise quiet members of the church to be "discovered" and encouraged in their gifts.

Through small groups people grow in their discipleship, and when people grow in their discipleship they better understand God's call to be ministers. Dale Galloway, when he was pastor of New Hope Community Church, said, "At New Hope, we believe that the best and most effective place to train or disciple a future leader is in a small group" (Small Group Book 14).

Knight says the use of small groups for revitalization demands that the church shift "from a clergy-dominated church to a laity-involved church..." (4). Knight saw that the small groups were "motivational centers in the development of lay leadership and lay participation" (208). Small groups are effective structures in leading people to discover themselves and their ministry (Knight 236).

Knight also mentions four objectives for small groups. Two of the four objectives concerned lay ministry. One was "outreach," and another was "laity involvement" (148-9). Knight claims that the attitude of caring and loving found in some small groups automatically begins to evolve into outreach (231).

The Meta-Church model developed by Carl George is based on nurturing cells and is designed to produce church growth through multiplying cells, empowering the laity, training leadership, and a festive worship celebration. The "E" in "Meta" (Multiplying cells, Empowering lay people, Training leaders and apprentices, Adoring God) stands for empowering lay people for ministry through equipping and enabling (George 205). Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio, and New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, have both seen incredible successes in empowering laity for ministry through the Meta-Church model.

Small groups and lay involvement in ministry are intimately connected. Churches all over the world herald the benefits of small groups for preparing lay people for ministry. Are small groups a passing fad? Are they a new phenomenon or do they have a solid foundation in Biblical and post-Biblical history?

The Literature Cites Biblical Support for Small Groups

Contemporary proponents of small groups use biblical models to provide a basis for their own models. As mentioned earlier, Carl George cites the story of Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro in Exodus 18 (121). George uses this story not only to promote the idea of shared leadership, but also as an example of a workable structure for small groups in the church. In the Old Testament story, Jethro suggested a system whereby Moses would appoint local leaders who would judge over ten households each. Five of the local leaders would come under the authority and leadership of another leader. These leaders would be under another's authority, and the trend would continue until everyone had access to judges and every judge was accountable to someone who was under Moses' authority.

Carl George puts forth the same kind of structure used by Moses as a way to lead and pastor people within the church. In this meta-church model George believes a leader's "span-of-control" should never be more than ten people (125). In these small groups of ten, people are nurtured, trained, and moved to be involved in ministry.

As mentioned in the Theological Reflection of Chapter 1, Jesus was a master of small groups, and the use of small groups continued to be very important for the early church. George Hunter, in Church for the Unchurched, says the early church experienced

small groups as “necessary and normative” (82). Hunter says that the early church met together in a large celebration, except for times when persecution prevented it, and in small cells in people’s homes. These small cells provided much more than protection from persecutors. The house groups provided opportunities to share in intimate ways with other people with whom one shared the grace of God. These house groups were places where the members could minister to one another through love and concern (Nicholas 29-31).

We find evidence for this in many places in the New Testament. Hunter cites Acts 16:40 which tells us that Paul and Silas “visited the church that met in Lydia’s home” (Hunter 83). Hunter goes on to cite Dale Galloway’s 20/20 Vision, based on Acts 20:20, when he says Paul taught in large gatherings as well as “from house to house” (83). The Christian movement seemed to plant “small house churches wherever it spread” and to “intentionally multiply house churches in each city it reached” (Hunter 83).

Historical Support for Small Groups

One of the most powerful uses of small groups in history occurred during the Wesleyan movement of the eighteenth century. Wesley built this great movement “substantially on the small groups he called classes” (Hunter 84). In these classes people learned together, prayed together, encouraged one another, and held one another accountable. These small groups provided opportunities for intimacy and spiritual growth that simply could not take place in a larger church setting.

George Whitfield, a contemporary of Wesley, complimented Wesley on his use of small groups. He pointed out that wherever Wesley had “awakened souls,” he made sure

he put those new Christians in small groups called classes (Skinner 104). Because of the small groups the people matured in their faith and learned how to be ambassadors for God in their country and even throughout the world.

John Wesley learned about small groups from his study of the New Testament church and from his life experiences. When Wesley was young he had experienced meetings his mother held in her home. These meetings were similar to the religious societies of her day and were places where people shared deeply about their faith in community with each other (Accountable Discipleship 26). George Hunter points out that Wesley also learned from “the Lutheran Pietist leader Philip Jacob Spener,” from the Moravians, “from Anabaptist groups and from the occasional ‘societies’ within the Church of England” (Hunter 84). Wesley’s learning about and experience of small groups greatly impacted his life and ministry.

A review of the salient literature on small groups indicates the importance of accountability, application of biblical teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people. The small group of Jesus and the disciples, the small groups of the early church, the Wesleyan small groups, and the small groups used in many growing churches today continually emphasize the importance of these five small group characteristics. Furthermore, numerous experts claim that these characteristics within small groups are important for preparing the laity for ministry and supporting them in that ministry.

Small Group Characteristics and
Their Relationship to Lay Involvement in Ministry

Small groups, have many characteristics which render them effective in the history of God's people. Just as small groups were an effective tool for preparing Jesus' disciples for ministry, for empowering the early church, and for increasing the ministry of the laity during the early Wesleyan movement, small groups are also effective in preparing today's Christians for ministry. The following sections describe five characteristics found in small groups and the relationship between those characteristics and lay involvement in ministry.

Intimacy

Today's American culture is craving intimate relationships. Robert Wuthnow, in Sharing the Journey, presents an intense study of the small group movement in America. He says that four out of every ten Americans are involved in a small group (4). He goes on to say that people join small groups to gain a sense of community. The small group structure provides an intimate atmosphere for learning about and applying important truths.

As mentioned earlier, some small groups offer friendly settings, support and care. Leslie states his belief that small groups can provide an opportunity for the personal sharing that so many people want and need (14). The world is filled with large, impersonal cities and large, sometimes impersonal churches. Many people find themselves alone, "lost in the crowd." They need the intimacy that small groups have to

offer. This intimacy provides a friendly atmosphere where members can be encouraged and trained as lay ministers.

Arnold admits there is no passage in the Bible that says small groups are the best way to produce growth in one's faith. Arnold goes on to claim, though, that "what is in the Bible is an understanding, from beginning to end, that people need a close community in order to grow" (73-74). "Some things just naturally go together," and discipleship and community are two of those things (Arnold 76). A healthy community will produce healthy disciples" (Arnold 11).

A study of 174 top executives from the Lutheran denomination revealed that one of the marks of faithfulness was "a commitment to participation in Christian community" (Banks 14). People need the relationships found in a close community. According to Neighbor and McBride, God exists as community within the Trinity. Since people are created in God's image they are unfulfilled outside of community. The intimacy of a small group provides an atmosphere for the community that we so desperately need. "Community is not one aspect of group life, it is the very structure within which the group operates" (Arnold 11).

Small groups emphasize intimacy in community. "The essence of community is a sense of belonging. There is a powerful Christian camaraderie established when people belong to each other in a cell group" (Neighbor 20). Needs that may go unnoticed in a larger group can be discovered and met in the setting of a small group (Arnold 34). Not only, though, do small group members look after one another, but they further this group togetherness by ministering together to others (Neighbor 20).

Small groups can offer an environment that encourages people to talk about the options each person has for ministry. Group members can also offer support, care, and direction to individuals as they share their successes and failures in ministry.

Certain types of groups would be more likely to involve intimacy than other types. Groups that have a long life have more potential for intimacy, but long life does not, of course, insure true community. Groups that encourage people to move from "non-personal general" sharing to "personal intimate" sharing (McBride 94-95) are more likely to experience community. Support groups, for example, by definition, call for intimate sharing because co-dependent persons are encouraged to share. Teaching, prayer, and spiritual formation groups can also draw the group members toward intimacy. In groups that pray together and share concerns, intimacy is readily encouraged. In groups that hold members accountable for Christian discipleship, intimacy would be very important because of the vulnerability of the members when they share the details of their lives with one another.

Bible study groups and other study groups also can provide intimacy, but do not do so by definition. A study group can be built around a framework where one person does most of the sharing and talking while the other members remain mainly uninvolved. Intimacy and community in such a group is severely limited.

Ministry groups can also provide intimacy since people who work and minister together often come to know each other well. As in all small groups, though, intimacy is more than simply getting to know other people on a friendly or work basis. Intimacy involves disclosing oneself to the other group members (Neighbor 60) and caring for the

needs of other group members. When this intimacy exists, people who minister together will have many opportunities to help one another be better ministers.

Inward or Outward Focus

A group that shares intimacy must be aware of a tremendous danger. Intimacy can become so strong that the group begins to focus only on itself. When a small group has an inward focus, the members will be less likely to extend their ministry beyond the group.

A small group needs to reach out beyond itself in ministry. Some of those in the group have gifts that can best be used outside the group, and those gifts should not be neglected. Cosby says the call of God has four components. The first is a call to a relationship with God. The second is a call to be in community with others who are called. The third is a call to grow up in Christ, and the fourth is a call to “move out—to discover where we were to lay down our lives...” (Cosby 27,28). All four of these components work closely together. Being in relationship with God in the midst of a community of believers where God’s Word is taught leads one to a depth of relationship with God. Christian discipleship, however, must not stop with this “inward journey” (Cosby 55). God calls Christians to move outward to minister to the needs of others and serve them in the name of Christ. Some small groups miss the part of God’s call that involves outreach. Instead of moving forward in God’s call to reach out to others, they move toward an inward focus.

Wuthnow points out that many small groups have fallen into the trap of focusing on the personal and social needs of small group members. This ingrown focus has

neglected the pursuit of "a higher level of...spiritual quality." Some groups do not encourage their members "to make more serious commitments to others who are in need" or "to serve the wider community" (24).

Stevens refers to an overly inward focus in a small group as autism. Instead of having healthy relationships with the outside world, like an autistic child, the overly inward focused small group has a "morbid absorption in fantasy" which prevents "a proper response to the environment....The maturing process of a group requires an active acknowledgment that life exists beyond its borders." Mission is vital for a small group to remain healthy (49).

To really grow through a small group experience, the members "must be in touch with [their] environment, penetrating it like salt and yeast within dough" (Neighbor 60). "When we gather around the scripture, it should always be done expecting Christ to use it to cleanse and equip us for His work" (Neighbor 67-68). Ralph Neighbor quotes Bruno Bettelheim in Home for the Heart as saying, "I am convinced community can flourish only if it exists for an aim outside itself" (Neighbor 101). The small group that has an outward focus has a built-in structure which encourages its members to be in ministry.

Jesus did not allow his small group of twelve disciples to drift into an inward focus. He constantly took them into the places where the publicans and the sinners were (Neighbor 117-118). He was constantly reaching out to minister to people outside his group.

The Holy Club of Charles and John Wesley also was more than "a self-contained fellowship group. It looked out as well as in" (Wood 38). Members of the Holy Club

gave charitable service to the underprivileged and ministered to the sick, the poor, the prisoners, and the oppressed (Wood 38). This Holy Club was a sign of things to come as it turned out to be a forerunner of the class meetings that would appear later in the Wesleys' ministry (Wood 38).

Fellowship groups, prayer and share groups, support groups, and accountability groups can easily fall into the trap of an ingrown focus. The ministry/outreach side of the Christian life can easily be ignored as the group focuses on each member's growth in an atmosphere of love and community (Arnold 194). An inward focus can be prevented as evangelism and mission are "intentionally built into the group over time" (Arnold 194). Without opportunities for outreach "the group can stagnate in self contentment, and eventually fossilize into nothing more than a mutual admiration society" (Coleman 120).

An inward focus of a small group could also be indicative of the inward focus of individual group members. If this is so, then the small group members have gathered not to minister to one another, but primarily to receive from one another. This type of group is defined more by self-centeredness than community.

An outward focus can bring many benefits into the life of a small group. An outward focus can lead the group to "get more intimately involved in mission" by "adopting" a missionary and agreeing to support her or him through prayer and financial giving. A small group with an outward focus also can go into the community. There are many projects which can be done out of love and concern for others. Gifts and talents of group members can be utilized in wonderful ways as the small group reaches out to the community. The group may offer tutoring, financial planning, teaching on parenting, or

carpentry skills all in the name of Christ (Arnold 181). Small groups who have an outward focus might be easily motivated to go on a short-term mission trip. The outward focus could even lead to sending out group members as full-time, professional missionaries.

Application of Teaching

Another important group characteristic which affects lay ministry is the group's proficiency at applying what is learned in the group to every-day life situations. Reading and applying "God's Word with integrity" is an important part of small groups (Arnold 43).

A weakness in study groups which hinders lay ministry is the absence of application of the teaching. Many people in groups that study the Bible and other books do not apply the truth to their daily lives. The study can become no more than a mental exercise which has no impact on their actions. A study on lay ministry or spiritual gifts can be an exercise which is, for all practical purposes, forgotten when the study group members leave the study.

Many things in life are learned by watching, hearing, and imitating. This method is used when learning to ride a bike, drive a car, or when lifting weights. Jesus certainly used this method with his disciples. They not only heard the gospel, but they imitated the actions of Jesus. After all, the disciples were not merely hearers who obtained information from Jesus, but they were apprentices who were called to become like Jesus (Arnold 15).

Just as in Jesus' time, people are more likely to be changed when they combine seeing and experiencing with hearing. The educational field tells us that learning is enhanced when people hear, see, and experience what is being taught. The small group, where members see and experience the Gospel through the lives of other group members and through their own actions, is an excellent tool for providing this holistic learning experience. Such small groups continue to provide an effective atmosphere for leadership training. The smallness of the group allows the members the benefit of personalized, hands-on training along with the support and encouragement of intimate relationships.

Teaching in a small group needs to be more than "an exercise of the mind" (McBride 89). God encourages His disciples to apply what they hear through imitating Jesus. As a small group seeks to know how the Scripture should be applied to individual members and the group as a whole, the group becomes more of a catalyst which propels its members into ministry.

Open or Closed Framework

Small groups may be built around either an open or closed framework. Open groups are defined as those who are open to new people coming into the group. Closed groups, on the other hand, are those groups that do not desire or pursue new members.

Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho's church in Seoul, South Korea, is a phenomenal example of the power and ministry of open groups. The church, which has almost three quarters of a million members, uses small groups as a tool of evangelism. The groups pray for non-Christian friends hoping to bring them into their small group as well as into the church

(Arnold 170). This type of open group encourages lay people to be in the ministry of bringing non-Christian friends to faith in Christ.

The level of openness in a small group often has a correlation with the degree of outward focus. An open group, since it is looking outside itself for new members, may be more likely to notice various kinds of needs in its community and the world. Having seen the needs, it may be more willing to reach out and meet those needs. A closed group can "become alienated from all but themselves" (Neighbor 60).

Arnold gives a scenario of a small group that has been meeting for two years in the leader's home. They love meeting together and find great strength as they study, pray, and share together. One of the members, though, begins to realize the group is closed to reaching out to others. The group had "decided that it was better to stick with a proven group than to risk a new person ruining things for everyone." They had become "ingrown, allowing themselves to enjoy God's blessing while withholding it from others" (162-163). Arnold goes on to cite one of the group members who asked the question, "What would have happened if the early church had hoarded God's blessing, keeping it from others?....The answer is simple. The growth of the church would have been slowed or even stifled." (163)

A closed group fails to see needs outside itself or the importance of meeting those needs. A closed group may miss the joy of finding those who are not Christians, praying for them, and bringing them into relationship with Christ.

Closed groups, however, are not necessarily devoid of members who are active in lay ministry. The members of a closed group can be in ministry to one another. They can

serve one another and may be extremely caring and supportive toward other members.

Closed small groups are sometimes the refueling stations for persons deeply involved in ministry.

A small group, though, does not have to be closed in order to experience intimacy. Neighbor says people are mistaken if they think that transparent openness can only be found in a closed group. Neighbor believes a newcomer to a group can bring new life without destroying the openness the group enjoys (60). So, according to Neighbor, the argument for a closed group on the grounds of the intimacy it produces, may be weaker than some people think.

Although closed groups too often have an inward focus, some closed groups have succeeded in keeping its members alive in ministry to the world around them. Those who participate in a closed group may choose to hold one another accountable for Christian living. Through this accountability, group members can encourage one another to use their gifts to minister to those inside and outside the group.

Jesus and his disciples certainly comprised what would be described as a closed group. Jesus did not allow the group, however, to be lost in an inward focus. In this closed group the disciples were being trained to reach outside the group in ministry.

Support groups such as twelve-step groups often are open groups. They invite newcomers into the group quite readily and proceed to minister to one another. Many Bible study groups, prayer groups, Sunday School classes, accountability groups, and sharing groups, are closed groups. Many of these groups did not intentionally plan to be closed, but drifted in that direction over time.

Accountability

Accountability is another aspect of many small groups. Almost everyone, perhaps everyone, needs accountability in order to grow in faith. Through accountability, group members take responsibility for one another. They share with each other, ask questions of one another, encourage one another, and support one another to insure that each member is living according to the standards agreed upon by the individual or the group. Depending on the group's wishes, group members may be held accountable in the areas of spiritual disciplines, consistent exercise of the body, or holy living at home, work, and play.

As revival spread through eighteenth century England, the Methodist class meetings successfully utilized accountability. According to John Wesley, the Class leader was "to see each person in his class, once a week at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper[ed]." The leader also had the responsibility "to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort" the members (qtd in Wood 191). The level of accountability in these Methodist Class Meetings was high as were the expectations for a holy life. Wesley said that "evil men" who continued in sin after they were reprovved were to be removed from the society (qtd in Wood 191).

The Methodist Bands were groups that were smaller than the Classes. The members of the Bands held each other accountable for Christian living through confession (Wood 191). This confession "was designed to bring the same sense of relief and catharsis" as confession to a priest (192).

Accountability is also important and effective for our culture. People need support and encouragement from others. Sometimes people need gentle pushes and sometimes they need shoves from friends in order to live out the Christian life. If people know that their lives will be inspected by other people, the accountability will encourage them to behave in ways which are pleasing to God.

Accountability in groups can be effective in leading people to use their gifts in ministry to the church, the community, and the world. In an atmosphere of loving accountability, the group can identify members' gifts and encourage the use of those gifts in ministry. This type of encouragement and support in the area of spiritual gifts prepares the group and the individuals to have more effective ministry (Nicholas 59).

Conclusion

The ministry of the laity is very important for the fulfillment of the Church's mission. One effective way to prepare the laity for ministry and to encourage them in ministry is through the small group. Many authors believe small group characteristics such as intimacy, a healthy focus on those outside the group, the application of Biblical teaching, an openness to new members, and accountability create an atmosphere conducive to lay ministry involvement. This study measures whether or not the involvement of small group members of four United Methodist Churches in lay ministry is likely to increase when these characteristics are part of their small group experience.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

This study investigated four churches to discover relationships between small group characteristics and lay involvement in ministry. The questionnaire, which was designed to measure the small group characteristics and the different areas of lay ministry, was the primary source of data for the study.

Problem and Purpose

An unbiblical gap exists between clergy and laity in many churches today. The clergy often are considered to be above the laity while laity often are not trained to or expected to use their gifts in ministry for the kingdom of God. Small groups are considered by many leaders in the church to be one of the best ways to involve lay people in the ministry of the church to the world. The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze ways in which certain characteristics within small groups contribute to lay involvement in ministry in four selected United Methodist Churches.

Research Questions

In order to answer the first five research questions, the researcher developed a questionnaire to measure the amount of accountability, application of teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people present in the small groups of those responding to the questionnaire. It also measured the amount and kind of lay ministry in which respondents participated. The sixth research question simply compared those in small groups to those not in small groups. Answering the seventh research question

involved selecting the personal characteristics which were most likely to affect involvement in lay ministry.

Each of the research questions seeks to discover the relationship between a particular variable and lay involvement in ministry. The questions from the questionnaire which were used to measure lay involvement in ministry are discussed later in Chapter 3.

Research Question 1.

What is the relationship between accountability experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

One question from the questionnaire which measured accountability addressed the issue of sharing openly about one's life so others in the group could make sure each member was living for God. Another accountability question measured the likelihood of group members encouraging each other to do the right thing even when the encouragement involved saying hard things. The questionnaire asked questions about sharing the successes and failures of one's life and receiving helpful pressure from the group to encourage one's growth as a Christian. The respondents also were asked if the group's existence reminded them to live for God on a daily basis. Being regularly and personally asked about the attention one gives to spiritual disciplines was the focus of another accountability question.

Research Question 2.

What is the relationship between application of teaching experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Two of the questions on the questionnaire for application measured the extent to which the teaching in the group related to everyday life for the group member. Another question asked the respondents to rate their group's consistency in intentionally taking time to talk about applying the teaching of the group. Application was measured further by asking the respondents to rate their group leader's consistency in directing the group's attention to written questions that helped the group put the teaching into practice.

Writing down the steps one would take to put the teaching into action and sharing how the teaching of the previous meeting made a difference in one's life were the subject matter of two other questions on application.

Research Question 3.

What is the relationship between intimacy experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Some of the questions which measured intimacy addressed issues such as the group members doing small favors for one another, giving advice to help each other make difficult decisions, celebrating the successes in another group member's life, and providing care and support during hospital stays. The respondents were also asked to rate their group on making them feel like they were not alone in their struggles. Another

question measured the extent to which the personal lives of each of the members was known to the other members.

Research Question 4.

What is the relationship between outward focus experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

In order to measure outward focus, one question asked the respondents to indicate whether or not they spent a lot of time talking about the needs of people who were not part of the group. Another question asked about the degree to which the purpose of one's small group was to reach out beyond the group. The extent to which a group expects its members to be in ministry within the church or outside the church was the subject of a third question. In another question the respondents were asked to rate how well their group encouraged them to notice and meet the needs of people outside the group. Other questions on outward focus addressed the issues of regularly doing service projects as a group and sharing one's faith with others.

Research Question 5.

What is the relationship between openness to new people experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Some of the questions on openness focused on themes such as the number of people a group member had invited to the group, regular discussion within the group about bringing new people to the group, and the extent to which a small group had a

steady flow of new people. The respondents were also asked to tell if their groups had about the same number of people as six months ago. Whether or not one's group(s) attracted people who were not members of their church was the subject matter of another question. A final question on openness addressed the issue of a good system by which the group contacts and welcomes newcomers.

Research Question 6.

How do people who participate in small groups and people who do not participate in small groups compare in lay ministry involvement? Question 8 on the questionnaire gave this study's definition of a small group and asked the respondents to indicate if they were a part of at least one small group. Those who were a part of a small group were then compared to those who were not part of a small group concerning their involvement in lay ministry.

Research question 7.

Do personal characteristics such as gender, marital status, the number of children living at home, age, number of years a Christian, and work hours have any relationships to one's level of involvement in lay ministry? The demographic information on the questionnaire allowed the researcher to look for lay ministry involvement differences between persons in the various demographic categories.

Outline of Methodology

The methodology for this study started with the selection of the four churches to be studied. Since the researcher is United Methodist pastor, he decided to limit my study to United Methodist churches. To begin the selection process, the researcher asked the

Council on Ministries Directors of four United Methodist Annual Conferences to suggest churches who had strengths in lay involvement in ministry and in small groups. The Council on Ministries Directors were first contacted by telephone. After agreeing to participate in the study, they received a letter explaining the nature of the study and their job of making a list of churches (see Appendix A).

The letter asked each Council on Ministries Director to list in rank order the five United Methodist churches from his conference who were strongest in the areas of lay ministry involvement and small groups. Each director also gave the address, telephone number, and a contact person for each church listed.

The three Council on Ministries Directors who responded were from the Alabama/West Florida Conference, the North Alabama Conference, and the South Georgia Conference. The directors responded with a list of churches numbering from five to nine churches in rank order. The researcher contacted the first church on each list by telephone and asked them to participate in the study. Since only three Council on Ministries Directors responded with a list of churches, the second church on the list from the researcher's home conference, the Alabama/West Florida Conference, was also asked to participate in the study. The first four churches which were contacted agreed to participate in the study.

The churches which participated in the study are Christ United Methodist Church in Mobile, Alabama, First United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Frazer United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and St. Mark United Methodist Church in Columbus, Georgia. The researcher enlisted a staff person from each church to

oversee the project in her or his church. These staff persons played a crucial role in the data collection for this project. The overseers worked to set up dates for site visits and helped to arrange interviews with staff members and other key lay people. The overseers also distributed and collected the questionnaires.

Population and Sample

The population for this study includes the active participants in small groups and the active participants in worship in each of the four churches. The group leaders distributed the questionnaires to small groups at a group meeting. This method insured that only active small group members would be part of the sample. The researcher chose small groups as a whole and encouraged the members of each chosen group to individually complete a questionnaire.

The sample of small groups was systematically chosen from lists of small groups within the church. The contact persons provided lists of small groups and included the number of people in each group. The groups were divided into two categories. One category had groups with three to fifteen members. The other category had sixteen to twenty-five members.

The researcher systematically selected groups with three to fifteen members by arranging them in alphabetical order by the last name of the group leader. Every second, third, fourth, or fifth group, depending on the total number of groups that had three to fifteen members, was chosen from the alphabetical list until the total membership of the selected groups equaled about sixty to seventy people.

Then the researcher systematically selected the groups with sixteen to twenty-five members in the same way. The combined total membership from all selected groups from each church ranged from 131 to 150.

The researcher took another sample from active worship attenders, some of whom were involved in small groups and some of whom were not. This sample from active worship attenders brought into the study those who were not involved in small groups. Each church generated a list of active worship attenders based on its own possibilities for doing so. Each list was received and used to represent the population of active, resident members and attenders.

One church gave the researcher a list which included couples on one label instead of separating the list into individuals. A second church generated a list of active, resident members. The researcher could not control this church's definition of "active." The third church allowed the researcher the opportunity to define active members and participants by a percentage of the previous year's attendance. The researcher defined an active member as someone who had been present for at least twenty weeks in the year. The fourth church also allowed the researcher to define active members (they could not generate active participants) based on an attendance percentage of the previous six weeks. Active members were defined as those who had been present for three of the last six weeks.

After the churches generated lists of active participants in worship, the researcher randomly selected those active worshipers who would receive questionnaires. From the list of active worshipers in three of the churches, the researcher chose 125 people to

receive questionnaires. Because of the high number of small group members who would receive questionnaires at Frazer, 225 questionnaires, instead of 125, were mailed to their active worshipers. The total of all active worshipers on the list from each church was divided by the number of questionnaires that would be sent. If, for example, the church had about 1200 active worshipers, 1200 would be divided by 125 to get an answer of about ten. Every tenth name would be selected until the total of selected names reached 125.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to gather data in this study, the questionnaire introduced above, and an interview protocol. The researcher designed both of the instruments used in this study.

Researcher-Designed Interview Protocol

The researcher interviewed key leaders in each of the churches to gain a general idea of their vision concerning small groups and lay involvement in ministry. The interviews also yielded a better understanding of the context of the study. The researcher set up the interviews (see Appendix C) in three sections. The first section asked questions about small groups. The interviewees were asked about the value of small groups and the importance of small groups to them, to the senior pastor and for the mission of the church. The interview also addressed the issues of group function such as how groups get started, who leads them, how the leaders are trained and held accountable, what kinds of groups are a part of the church, how groups are promoted, and how many groups are presently active in the church.

The second section dealt with lay ministry. The interviewees were asked about the importance of lay ministry in their view, in the view of the senior pastor, and in the view of the church as a whole. The interviewer asked about their definition of lay ministry and the church's procedure for equipping lay people for ministry. A final question in this section asked the interviewees to talk about the relationship they saw between small groups and lay ministry in their church.

The final section of the interview asked questions that were more demographic in nature. These questions asked about the respondents' role in the church, their preparation for that role, and the length of time they had been with the church.

Researcher-Designed Questionnaire

Since no instrument existed to look at the issues raised in the research questions of this study, it was necessary for the researcher to design the questionnaire. It included three sets of questions. The first set provided demographic information, the second set related to the five small group characteristics, and the third set pertained to lay involvement in ministry. Table 3.1 lists each of the questions for each section of the questionnaire. The questions for each small group characteristic and each area of lay ministry are listed separately. Except for demographic questions, all questions in the table were scored on a scale from 0 to 6. Some questions were drawn from other sources and the source is indicated after those questions.

Table 3.1

A list of Questions by Category

Demographic Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender 2. Marital Status 3. If you have children, how many live in your home? 4. What is your age? 5. How long have you been a Christian? 7. How many hours do you work in a paying job each week?
Questions for Small Group Characteristics - Accountability
<p>15. In at least one of my groups I am <u>personally</u> and <u>regularly</u> asked about the attention I give to the following spiritual disciplines. (Check all that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a. Bible reading <input type="checkbox"/> b. Bible study <input type="checkbox"/> c. fasting <input type="checkbox"/> d. financial giving <input type="checkbox"/> e. prayer <input type="checkbox"/> f. regular attendance in worship <input type="checkbox"/> g. serving others <input type="checkbox"/> h. none of the above <p>21. In one or more of my small groups the group members encourage one another to do the right thing even when the encouragement involves saying hard things (Hebrews 10:24).</p> <p>24. At least one of my groups has a specific time where each member is asked to share about the successes and failures in her or his life since the group last met.</p> <p>33. At least one of my small groups, simply by its existence, reminds me to live for God on a daily basis (<u>Sharing the Journey</u> 275).</p> <p>37. In at least one of my groups the group members provide helpful pressure that leads me to grow as a Christian.</p> <p>41. In at least one of my small groups the members of the group speak openly about their lives to one another in order that the group can make sure each member is living for God.</p>

Table 3.1, continued

Question for Small Group Characteristics - Application
<p>20. In at least one of my small groups it is easy to see how the teaching relates to my life away from the group.</p> <p>26. In one or more of my small groups we intentionally take time to talk about how we will apply the things we study to our lives.</p> <p>30. Most of what we study in any of my small group(s) seems unrelated to the events of a normal day.</p> <p>35. In at least one of my small groups I am regularly encouraged to write down the steps I will take to put into action the Biblical principles I have learned.</p> <p>39. In one or more of my small groups the group members share about how the teaching of the previous meeting has made a difference in their lives.</p> <p>44. In at least one of my small groups the leader often directs our attention to written questions that help us put the teaching into action.</p>
Questions for Small Group Characteristics - Intimacy
<p>19. In one or more of my small groups the group helps me celebrate successes in my life (<u>Sharing the Journey</u> 412).</p> <p>22. If I were admitted to the hospital, the members of at least one of my small groups would provide care and support for me and my family.</p> <p>25. In one or more of my small groups each member's personal life is known to the other members of the group (Hemphill 53).</p> <p>29. At least one of my small groups has given me specific advice that helped me make a difficult decision (<u>Sharing the Journey</u> 412).</p> <p>34. At least one of my small groups makes me feel like I'm not alone in my struggles (<u>Sharing the Journey</u> 412).</p> <p>42. Members of at least one of my small groups do favors for one another (Hemphill 53).</p>

Table 3.1, continued

Questions for Small Group Characteristics - Outward Focus
<p>18. In one or more of my small groups, we spend a lot of time talking about the needs of people who are not part of our group.</p> <p>27. The purpose of one or more of my small groups is to reach out to people beyond the group.</p> <p>31. At least one of my small groups <u>expects</u> its members to be involved in ministry either within the church or outside the church.</p> <p>36. At least one of my groups makes a point of regularly doing service projects as a group.</p> <p>38. At least one of my groups encourages me to notice and meet the needs of people outside the group.</p> <p>43. Sharing one's faith with others is a very important expectation of at least one of my groups for its members.</p>
Questions for Small Group Characteristics - Openness
<p>12. Each of my small groups has had about the same people in it for the last six months. ___ a. no ___ b. yes</p> <p>16. In the last six months, how many people have you invited to visit your group (select the group to which you have invited the most people)? ____</p> <p>23. In at least one of my small groups, the importance of bringing new people to the group is discussed regularly.</p> <p>28. At least one of my small groups attracts people who are not members of our church.</p> <p>32. At least one of my small groups has a steady flow of new people.</p> <p>40. At least one of my small groups has a good system by which we contact newcomers after they visit to let them know they are welcome.</p>

Table 3.1, continued

Questions for Lay Involvement in Ministry - Work
<p>45. When I go to work (or school) I <u>expect</u> God to use me that day to make a difference in the lives of my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).</p> <p>51. I consider my secular employment (or my work in the home or at school) as a ministry.</p> <p>54. I often invite my co-workers (or associates or fellow students) to attend my church.</p> <p>57. As an expression of my love for God, I show care and concern for my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).</p> <p>59. I often talk about God in a natural way with my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).</p> <p>63. I am honest in my work because of my commitment to Christ.</p> <p>65. I lead a Bible study or other specific ministry with persons contacted through my work or school.</p> <p>_____ a. no _____ b. yes</p>
Questions for Lay Involvement in Ministry - Home
<p>47. When I do normal household chores I view them as part of my ministry for God.</p> <p>49. My family knows that God takes high priority in my life.</p> <p>53. My family does ministry together so we can touch people's lives together.</p> <p>55. Family devotions are a normal part of my family's life.</p> <p>58. I do random acts of kindness for those in my family as part of my ministry in the name of Christ.</p> <p>60. I teach my family about God through the normal things in daily life.</p>

Table 3.1, continued

Questions for Lay Involvement in Ministry - Church
<p>48. I want to help Christians grow in their faith through programs in the church.</p> <p>52. Even though much is done in our church to attract new people, I feel a need to direct my ministry to those who have been here a long time.</p> <p>56. Most of my meaningful ministry for God is done at our church building.</p>
Questions for Lay Involvement in Ministry - Community
<p>46. I share what I have with those who are outside my family and outside my church and who are in need.</p> <p>50. I enjoy ministering to the needs of strangers.</p> <p>62. God leads me to spend a lot of energy trying to make my community a better place.</p> <p>64. I consistently use my gifts and talents to touch the lives of my neighbors.</p>

The questionnaire was designed (see Appendix B) to be taken by people who were involved in small groups and by people who were not involved in small groups. The researcher included a question at the end of the demographic section asking the respondent whether or not she or he was part of a small group as defined in the instructions. Those who were not involved in small groups were asked to skip the questions which related to small groups and answer only the questions on lay ministry involvement. Those involved in small groups answered all questions.

The small group section included questions to find out how long the respondents had participated in small groups, the frequency of the meetings of their small group(s), and the average number of people who attended their group(s). This section of the questionnaire then asked six questions to measure each of the five characteristics of small groups being studied in this dissertation. Limiting the questions to six for each characteristic made the questionnaire manageable. The subject matter in the six questions came from the literature, from other studies, and from the researcher's experience. Each question covered a significant piece of what was meant by the characteristic.

The next section of the questionnaire addressed the issue of lay involvement in ministry. The researcher designed the questions to cover the areas of lay ministry to the church, to the community, at work, and in the home. These questions were also gleaned from the literature and from the experience of the researcher.

The questionnaire instructed the respondents to answer questions eighteen through sixty-four on a scale of zero to six with zero meaning "does not apply" and six being highest. The participants answered the other questions by filling in blanks and checking options. The scores from the completed questionnaires allowed the researcher to measure the relationship between the characteristics in a person's small group(s) and that person's involvement in lay ministry to the church, to the community, in the home, and at work.

Questionnaire Reliability and Validity

To help insure a valid questionnaire, the researcher pre-tested the instrument in two Sunday school classes, a men's group, and with a few individuals. The completed pre-test questionnaires, along with comments from the participants, gave insights into the

lack of clarity in some of the instructions and questions. The pre-test also yielded suggestions for making the questionnaire more attractive and easier to complete.

The Pearson statistic, two-tailed test was applied in the analysis of the data from the Likert scale questions. The test checked for questions which were so similar that they were almost always answered in the same way by all of the participants. This statistical analysis revealed some questions which were too similar. The researcher either removed or rewrote these questions to strengthen the questionnaire.

After the pre-test the researcher randomly scattered the small group questions and the lay ministry questions to avoid several questions in succession which addressed the same small group characteristic or lay ministry area. The rearranging of the questions helped make the results more accurate and, therefore, the questionnaire more reliable.

Data Collection

The data were collected by means of interviews with staff and key lay people, through the seventy-two question questionnaire, and from general observations while visiting the campuses of the four churches in this study. The “Outline of Methodology” section in this dissertation covers the details of setting up the interviews.

The questionnaires were mailed directly to active worship attenders. Each church provided a cover letter from the senior pastor or a key staff person which introduced the researcher, explained the project, gave deadlines, and asked the person to offer help to complete the project. Each questionnaire also had a short cover letter from the researcher (see Appendix B) telling the respondent the significance of this project and asking for her/his participation. Three of the four churches allowed the researcher to use their

stationery to mail the questionnaires, while the fourth church felt the response would be better if my church's stationery were used. Each envelope had a stamped, pre-addressed envelope for the convenience of the respondent. The return envelope was addressed to the church whose participants were completing the questionnaire, and was marked to the attention of the senior pastor or the key staff person overseeing the project. All of the envelopes had first-class postage.

The questionnaires to the small groups were not mailed to the groups but were delivered to the group leader in a packet from the contact person who was overseeing the project. The researcher included enough questionnaires for every member of the group, and asked the contact person to have the group members complete the questionnaires during the group's meeting time. Some groups did complete the questionnaires during the meeting time while other group leaders gave the questionnaires to the members to complete at a later time.

Each contact person made either a personal contact with the group leader or included a cover letter with each packet of questionnaires. The researcher also included a cover letter with each of the questionnaires distributed in the small groups (see Appendix B). The questionnaires were to be returned to the group leader who would deliver the packet of questionnaires back to the contact person.

Two of the churches had a lower response rate than the other two, so the contact person was called and asked to announce that any questionnaires returned in the next couple of days could still be used. After the announcements, the contact persons received only one extra questionnaire.

Independent Variables

As stated in chapter 1, the primary independent variables for this study were small groups. The researcher selected small groups for study based on group size, the frequency of the group's meetings, length of meeting time, and the group's purpose. The small groups in this study had three to twenty-five people, met for a Christian purpose, and met at least forty-five minutes at least once each month. The independent sub-variables were the five small group characteristics studied in this project (accountability, application of biblical teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people).

Dependent Variables

The primary dependent variable in this study is involvement in lay ministry. The researcher divided lay ministry involvement into four sub-variables. The sub-variables are ministry at work, ministry at home, ministry within the church, and ministry in the community.

Intervening Variables

Some variables in the lives of small group members and non-small group members may also affect their involvement in lay ministry. The intervening variables studied in this project are personal characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, length of time a Christian, number of children at home, and hours worked at a paying job each week. Another intervening, or control variable is whether or not a person was in a small group.

Data Analysis

The researcher did not analyze statistically the data collected from the interviews. These data provided only general impressions, descriptive information, and supporting information. The researcher used several different statistical tests to analyze the data collected from the questionnaires. The primary sources of information used to answer the first five research questions were t tests and F tests which compared scores for small group characteristics with scores for the areas of lay ministry.

The scores for each small group characteristic were divided into four groups called quartiles. Then the average score in lay ministry involvement for each quartile was compared by t tests and F tests to the average score in lay ministry involvement for each of the other three quartiles within the same small group characteristic. For example, the accountability scores were divided into four groups. The first quartile included those who scored lowest in accountability. The second quartile consisted of those who scored a little below average, and the third quartile included those who scored a little above average in accountability. The fourth quartile was comprised of those who scored highest on accountability. The scores for lay ministry involvement of all those in the fourth quartile were averaged. The researcher did the same averaging for the third, second, and first quartiles. The researcher made a comparison at this point. Did the t tests reveal significant differences between the average lay ministry score of those who scored higher on accountability and the average lay ministry score of those who scored lower on accountability? Did those who had high accountability in their groups score significantly higher in lay ministry involvement than those who had low accountability in their groups?

To answer the first five research questions, the researcher made comparisons like this between each small group characteristic and each area of lay ministry.

The researcher included all the data from those who did not participate in small groups in the quartile comparisons. Since those not in small groups did not complete the small group section of the questionnaire, they scored zero in each characteristic. The lowest quartile, then, was comprised mostly of those who were not in small groups. Including those not in small groups offered the opportunity to compare those in small groups with those not in small groups.

Although the t tests and F tests were the primary source of helpful statistics for this study, the researcher used other statistical tests. A Pearson Correlation Analysis revealed significant correlations which existed between any of the variables in the study. Other tests performed on the data included the Spearman Correlation and a descriptive analysis on all columns.

Conclusion

After all the data was collected and all the statistical tests were complete, the researcher studied the significant relationships which existed between small group characteristics and lay ministry involvement, between participation in a small group and lay ministry involvement, and between personal characteristics and lay ministry involvement. The results are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Findings of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings of the study based on the questionnaires and the interviews. These findings are presented in order to answer the research questions listed in Chapters 1 and 3.

Profile of Study Churches

Before the quantitative findings from the questionnaires are discussed, the researcher will briefly describe the four churches in this study and give overall impressions of their views of small groups and lay ministry. Interviews with the staff and other key leaders in the churches provided most of these impressions.

All of the churches in this study are larger churches. Three of the churches have 650 to 1500 people in the principal worship services and one church has about 5000. Each church has a staff person who oversees the small groups or multiple staff who oversee small groups in particular areas under their responsibility. One of the churches has a staff person who oversees lay involvement in ministry.

Everyone interviewed in the four churches spoke of the importance of small groups. The most mentioned positive aspect of small groups was their necessity in a large church to give people a place to connect with others. Almost every person interviewed mentioned this point even though they phrased it differently. Two interviewees said small groups gave people opportunities for building bonds, oneness and community while another mentioned the importance of small groups for fellowship.

Every interviewee in one church described the importance of small groups using words like identity, attachment, connectedness, close relationships, intimacy and assimilation.

Another interviewee said small groups give “a personal touch to a large congregation.” Others mentioned words like “a chance to talk,” and closeness when describing the importance of small groups. One interviewee said, “The Christian life does not come alive without a small circle of relationships.

Some of the interviewees indicated that the intimacy in a small group was part of the progression toward the small group members becoming more involved in service. One said that the caring and supportive atmosphere in a small group leads outward to serving.

The churches also had a high view of laity in ministry although they were at different stages of implementing this philosophy of lay ministry. Some had implemented this philosophy in very significant ways, while other churches were just beginning to put their philosophy into practice.

A General Description of the Data from the Questionnaires

The researcher sent the questionnaires to four churches. In each of the four churches 131 to 150 questionnaires went to participants in small groups in each of the four churches while 125 were randomly sent to the active participants in the primary worship services in three of the churches. Because of the large number of active participants of Frazer United Methodist Church who participated in small groups, the researcher increased to 225 the number of questionnaires sent to active participants in

Frazer to 225. This increase allowed the researcher a better chance to receive an adequate number of questionnaires from those who did not participate in small groups.

Table 4.1

Questionnaire Response Rate by Church

Church	n	Returned	Valid	%
Christ UMC	256	92	81	36.1
First UMC	264	51	38	19.3
Frazer UMC	375	206	193	54.9
St. Mark UMC	257	66	58	25.9
Total	1152	415	370	36.0

As shown in table 4.1, Frazer has the highest response rate. Their response rate is more than twice the response rate of two churches and more than 50% higher than the third church. The work done by the contact person at Frazer played a crucial role in this response rate. The contact person was very organized and had authority to make sure that those overseeing small groups distributed and collected the questionnaires. The contact person for Frazer even set a deadline for other staff persons to return the questionnaires from the small groups under their supervision.

Another reason for the high response rate could have been the involvement of the Senior Pastor, Dr. John Ed Mathison. Dr. Mathison signed the letter of recommendation which was sent with all the questionnaires. Since so many members of Frazer respect and

greatly appreciate Dr. Mathison, his involvement may have been influential in the high response rate. All the other churches used the name of the contact person, not the Senior Pastor, on the letter of recommendation.

The contact person for Christ U.M.C. seemed to have a close working relationship with most of the small group leaders. This relationship may have influenced the high return rate for Christ Church.

Perhaps First United Methodist Church's method for producing the mailing labels affected the response rate for their church. For married couples, the labels included the name of both husband and wife, but in all the other churches, the labels were addressed to individuals. The presence of one questionnaire with two names may have been confusing.

The contact person for St. Mark U.M.C. was building a good working relationship with group leaders, but had only been involved in the church for about eight months. Limitations in relationships because of this short period of time may have influenced a low return rate.

Profile of Subjects

Of the people who completed valid questionnaires, 210 were females and 160 were males. Two hundred, seventy four were married, ninety-four were single, and two of the questionnaires were left blank on this question.

More than half of the people who completed the questionnaires (53%) had no children living at home. 21% of the people who completed questionnaires had only one child at home. A total of almost 75% of the people had either no children at home or one

child living at home. This percentage can be explained in part by the inclusion of ninety-four single people, most of whom had no children at home, and by the fact that people with less children living at home might have more time to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed by people ranging from eleven to eighty in age and the median age was forty-five. The distribution of age ranges was very balanced. One hundred, twenty people worked in a paying job less than thirty hours per week. Seventy-six of the 120 worked zero hours per week at a paying job. Two hundred, twenty people indicated they worked in a paying job thirty or more hours each week. Of the 220, 116 worked forty hours, seventeen worked forty-five hours, forty-four worked fifty hours, and fourteen worked fifty-five hours.

Of the people who returned a valid questionnaire, 295, or 80% were a part of a small group. Seventy-one, or 19%, were not part of a small group. Of those who said they were a part of at least one small group, 48 were only involved in groups with sixteen to twenty-five people. Two hundred, forty seven were involved in at least one group with three to fifteen people. Two hundred, sixty nine of the respondents participated in at least one group which met weekly while only thirty three respondents met no more frequently than twice each month. Sixty-seven met only monthly.

Question eight of the questionnaire asked the respondents to describe their small groups. Table 4.0 shows the most frequently used descriptors and the percentage of people who used each descriptor to depict their group(s). The researcher allowed the participants to use more than one descriptor for each small group.

As shown in table 4.2 small Sunday school classes and Bible study groups are cited much more frequently than any other groups. Of all the people in this study who participated in at least one small group, two-thirds participated in Sunday school. Sunday school was an important part of the lives of those who participated in small groups. Since almost half of the people who participated in small groups described at least one of their groups as a Bible study group, the findings concerning application of biblical teaching may be even more important than the findings for the other small group characteristics.

Table 4.2

Descriptors Used Most Often by Subjects
to Describe Small Groups (N=295)

Descriptor	n	%
Accountability group	47	15.9
Bible study group	143	48.4
Care group	37	12.5
Discipleship group	53	18.0
Men's group	32	10.8
Prayer group	48	16.3
Sunday school class (small)	195	66.1
Supper club	39	13.2
Support group	42	14.2
Women's group	48	16.2

Most of the remainder of this chapter looks at the data collected from the questionnaires and applies that data toward answering the research questions. The various statistical tests performed on the data provide help in answering the questions. The most informative statistical tests for this study were the t test and F test. To prepare for these tests, the scores for each of the small group characteristics (accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people) were divided into quartiles by percentiles of scores. Quartile four consisted of the highest scores for a particular small group characteristic while Quartile one consisted of the lowest scores. Then the researcher used t tests and F tests to compare the lay ministry mean scores and variances of the quartiles of each small group characteristic. These tests showed significant differences between the lay ministry involvement of those who scored high in certain small group characteristics and the lay ministry involvement of those who scored low on the same characteristics.

Accountability

What is the relationship between accountability experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Table 4.3

**Differences Among Subjects' Lay Ministry Involvement
by Accountability Quartiles**

Quartile	Work	Home	Church	Community	Total
100% (4 th)	31.60	32.09	18.99	27.09	109.78
75% (3 rd)	28.93	29.51	13.81	23.95	96.20
50% (2 nd)	25.91	28.21	12.55	20.59	87.26
25% (1 st)	26.28	27.63	11.38	21.64	86.94

Accountability and Involvement in Ministry at Work

When the level of the participants' scores on accountability are compared with regard to ministry involvement at work, the data presents several significant findings. Table 4.3 shows the mean scores in lay ministry at work rose as the accountability scores moved from a lower quartile to a higher quartile. Subsequent t tests showed that those in the fourth quartile had a significantly higher mean score than the third quartile ($t = 2.85, p < .01$) and every other quartile in ministry at work. The third quartile scores were significantly higher than the second quartile ($t = 3.05, p < .01$) and the first quartile. These findings indicate that scores for ministry at work increased significantly when scores for accountability increased.

Subsequent F tests revealed that the third quartile had a significantly lower variance than the second quartile in ministry at work ($F = 1.51, p = .04$). A lower variance indicates more consistency among the third quartile in their answers concerning

lay ministry at work. The third quartile, therefore, not only had a higher average score on ministry at work, but also was more consistent in its answers. These data, combined with the significant mean score differences shown in table 4.3, indicate a strong increase in lay ministry at work as the accountability score increases.

The first and second quartiles in accountability had no significant differences in the lay ministry mean scores. This lack of differences occurred even though the first quartile was made up mostly of those who are not in small groups. Therefore, the t Test results indicated that those who had low accountability in a small group had about the same level of involvement in ministry as those who were not in small groups at all. All of the t tests indicate a pattern of little or no significance between the first and second quartiles in their involvement in ministry.

Accountability and Involvement in Ministry at Home

Table 4.3 also shows the mean scores in lay ministry at home rose as the accountability scores moved from a lower quartile to a higher quartile. Subsequent t tests show that those in the fourth quartile had a significantly higher mean score than the third quartile ($t = 3.37, p < .01$) and quartiles one and two. These findings indicate that scores for ministry at work increased significantly when scores for accountability increased, particularly when the accountability scores were very high (4th quartile).

Accountability and Involvement in Ministry within the Church

As shown in table 4.3 mean scores for ministry within the church increased as the accountability scores increased. T tests indicate the fourth quartile was significantly higher than the third quartile ($t = 3.37, p < .01$) and all other quartiles in ministry within

the church. Even though the mean scores showed a connection between high accountability and more involvement in lay ministry within the church, subsequent F tests showed differences in consistency which weaken the argument. The fourth quartile was significantly less consistent in its answers than the third quartile ($F = 2.83, p < .01$) and all other quartiles.

Accountability and Involvement in Ministry in the Community

The differences in mean scores on involvement in ministry in the community were significant, but not as significant as the differences in the other lay ministry areas in table 4.3. Subsequent t tests showed a significantly higher mean score for the fourth quartile when compared to the second ($t = 2.85, p < .01$) and the first quartile.

Accountability and Total Involvement in Ministry

When all the lay ministry areas were viewed as a whole, the connection between high accountability and increased scores on lay ministry involvement were startling and significant. Table 4.3 shows that every quartile scored higher than all the quartiles below it in lay ministry involvement. The fourth quartile was significantly higher than the third ($t = 3.31, p < .01$) and all other quartiles. The third quartile was significantly higher than the second ($t = 2.57, p = .01$) and the first. In the area of total lay ministry involvement, the variances were not very significant. This indicates that no quartile is significantly more consistent in its answers than any other quartile.

The data pertaining to the first research question clearly were significant. They indicate that more involvement in lay ministry was connected with higher accountability within a small group.

Application of Biblical Teaching

What is the relationship between application of teaching experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Table 4.4

Differences Among Subjects' Lay Ministry Involvement
by Application Quartiles

Quartile	Work	Home	Church	Community	Total
100% (4 th)	32.16	32.48	15.95	25.01	105.96
75% (3 rd)	28.25	29.09	16.55	23.92	97.81
50% (2 nd)	26.52	28.54	12.32	22.67	90.06
25% (1 st)	26.16	27.54	11.78	21.65	87.14

Application and Involvement in Ministry at Work

Table 4.4 shows that the third and fourth quartile mean scores were higher than the mean scores of each of the quartiles below them. T tests revealed that the fourth quartile scored significantly higher in ministry at work than the third quartile ($t = 3.86, p < .01$) and all other quartiles. The third quartile was significantly higher than the first quartile ($t = 1.94, p = .05$) but was not significantly higher than the second quartile ($t = 1.73, p = .08$). These data point to a strong relationship between high scores

in application of teaching and lay involvement in ministry at work, particularly when the scores in application were very high.

Furthermore, because of the low probabilities the connection between high application and more involvement in ministry at work is more likely to be repeated in other groups. Subsequent F tests revealed that the variances between the quartile mean scores on ministry at work were generally insignificant which indicates that no application quartile was significantly more consistent in its ministry at work scores than any other application quartile.

Application and Involvement in Ministry at Home

A look at table 4.4 reveals that higher scores on lay ministry at home were related to high scores on application. Subsequent t tests showed that the fourth quartile mean scores were significantly higher than the mean scores of the third quartile ($t = 3.58, p < .01$) and every other quartile. The low probability scores make a case for a solid connection between higher scores on application of teaching and more involvement in lay ministry at home. The third quartile scores were not significantly higher than the first and second quartile scores even though they were a little higher. These data indicated that only when application scores were highest was the level of ministry at home significantly higher.

Application and Involvement in Ministry within the Church

Although the third quartile scored a little higher than the fourth quartile in ministry within the church, the upper two quartiles were set apart from the lower two (see table 4.4). T tests revealed that the fourth quartile was significantly higher than the

second quartile ($t = 3.53, p < .01$). Since the third quartile was higher than the fourth, the third quartile was also significantly higher than the second. The relationship between the upper and lower quartiles is shown to be even more solid by the low probabilities. As application of teaching increases, the mean score for involvement in ministry within the church also increases.

Subsequent F tests indicated some significant variances in lay ministry within the church. The third quartile is shown to have the highest variance in its scores on lay ministry within the church. This means that the third quartile was least consistent in its answers. The third quartile was less consistent in its answers than the second quartile ($F = 5.18, p < .01$) and quartile one ($F = 2.05, p < .01$). The fourth quartile was also less consistent than quartile two ($F = 1.65, p = .02$) and quartile one ($F = 1.52, p = .05$). These significantly higher variances in the upper two quartiles weaken, but do not destroy, the argument that higher application is significantly connected to stronger involvement in lay ministry within the church.

Application and Involvement in Ministry in the Community

Mean scores for involvement in ministry to the community were not significantly higher as scores in application increased. Involvement in the community is less connected with high scores in application than any other lay ministry area.

Application and Total Involvement in Ministry

The total involvement in lay ministry had a very significant relationship with higher scores in application of teaching. Table 4.4 shows that each of the upper two quartiles was higher in its lay ministry involvement than each of the quartiles below them.

Quartile four scored significantly higher than quartile three ($t = 1.80$, $p = .07$) and quartile two ($t = 4.40$, $p < .01$). Quartile three also scored significantly higher than quartile two ($t = 2.02$, $p = .04$). Overall, these data strongly point to the conclusion that lay ministry involvement significantly increased as the scores on application of teaching increased.

Intimacy

What is the relationship between intimacy experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Table 4.5

Differences Among Subjects' Lay Ministry Involvement
by Intimacy Quartiles

Quartile	Work	Home	Church	Community	Total
100% (4 th)	30.93	31.11	16.56	25.30	103.90
75% (3 rd)	28.18	29.98	15.84	22.80	96.80
50% (2 nd)	26.88	28.46	12.72	23.29	91.34
25% (1 st)	26.63	27.76	11.30	21.67	87.37

Intimacy and Involvement in Ministry at Work

When the quartiles of the small group characteristic of intimacy were compared with regard to their scores on ministry at work, significant findings resulted. The difference in table 4.5 between the fourth quartile and the third quartile was significant

($t = 2.54$, $p = .01$). The mean score for the fourth quartile was also significantly higher than the mean score for the second and first quartiles. The low probability strengthens the argument of significant differences between quartiles four and three. Subsequent F tests revealed that the fourth quartile was significantly more consistent in its answers than the third quartile ($F = 1.55$, $p = .04$).

The first, second, and third quartiles showed no significant difference in their mean scores for involvement in ministry at work. A strong relationship between ministry at work and intimacy in a small group does exist, but it does not become evident until one scores very high on intimacy.

Intimacy and Involvement in Ministry at Home

This study also showed significant increases in mean scores on ministry at home as scores on intimacy increase. The top two quartiles in intimacy scores, as shown in table 4.5, had a higher mean score in ministry at home than the lower two quartiles. Succeeding t tests showed that these mean score differences were significant. Although the fourth quartile was not significantly different than the third, the third quartile was significantly higher than the second ($t = 1.76$, $p = .08$) and the first. The fourth quartile's score was also significantly higher than the second ($t = 2.81$, $p < .01$) and the first. The low probability which exists when comparing quartile four with the two lowest quartiles indicates that the data might be generalizable to other groups.

Overall, there is a strong connection between high scores in intimacy and more involvement in ministry at home. This connection is not surprising since a small group and the home are places where intimacy is often expressed and experienced.

Intimacy and Involvement in Ministry within the Church

Table 4.5 shows that the scores for ministry in the church moved higher as the intimacy scores increased. T tests revealed that the third quartile's mean score in ministry within the church was significantly higher than the mean score of the second quartile ($t = 2.12, p = .04$) and the first quartile. The fourth quartile was also significantly higher than the second quartile ($t = 2.83, p < .01$) and the first quartile. These data indicated that those scoring in the top half intimacy scores also scored higher on ministry within the church.

Ensuing F tests indicated that the third quartile, when compared to the second quartile, was significantly more inconsistent in its answers ($F = 1.64, p = .02$). This inconsistency slightly weakened the argument that high intimacy led to increased lay involvement within the church.

Intimacy and Involvement in Ministry in the Community

The next lay ministry area that is compared to intimacy scores is lay involvement in ministry in the community. For the first time in all of the data discussed to this point, there is no significant increase in mean scores as the scores move from lower quartiles to higher quartiles. The mean score of quartile two is even a little higher than that of quartile three.

To be fair to the previous comparisons in this chapter, the mean scores of ministry in the community have not changed as significantly as other ministry areas when the score of the small group characteristic increased. Even so, the findings here are clear. The

scores for ministry in the community did not increase significantly as the intimacy scores went up.

Intimacy and Total Involvement in Ministry

When seen as a whole, table 4.5 showed involvement in ministry increased when the level of intimacy scores increased. The fourth quartile was significantly higher than the third ($t = 1.84$, $p = .07$) and the other quartiles. The high probability weakened the argument that the fourth and third quartile were significantly different. Those who scored highest in intimacy, when compared with those who scored lower in intimacy, scored higher in lay involvement in ministry, but the relationship was not as strong as it was between the first two small group characteristics (accountability and application) and total ministry involvement.

Outward Focus

What is the relationship between outward focus experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Table 4.6

**Differences Among Subjects' Lay Ministry Involvement
by Outward Focus Quartiles**

Quartile	Work	Home	Church	Community	Total
100% (4 th)	30.90	32.09	15.79	28.91	107.68
75% (3 rd)	28.24	29.22	14.60	21.76	86.36
50% (2 nd)	27.17	28.95	14.46	21.24	91.82
25% (1 st)	26.34	27.11	11.52	21.40	86.37

When the quartiles of the outward focus scores were compared in regard to lay ministry involvement, the comparison revealed significant relationships. They were, however, less significant than the relationships among the quartiles of accountability, application of teaching, or intimacy.

T tests revealed that in no area of lay ministry did quartile three have a significantly higher mean score than quartile two even though the scores for quartile three were a little higher in most categories (see table 4.6). The variances between quartiles two and three were also very similar. These data reveal that little difference existed between quartiles two and three.

Outward Focus and Involvement in Ministry at Work

In the area of lay ministry at work, quartiles one, two, and three were very similar in their mean scores and variances. The fourth quartile had a significantly higher mean score in ministry at work than the third ($t = 2.71$, $p < .01$) and every other quartile. When

a person scored very high on outward focus, he or she also tended to score higher on ministry at work than those who scored lower on outward focus. The low probability when comparing quartiles four and three supported this conclusion.

Outward Focus and Involvement in Ministry at Home

Concerning lay ministry at home, the fourth quartile of the outward focus scores had a higher mean score than all the other quartiles. Quartiles three and two were similar in their mean scores for ministry at home, and quartile one of outward focus scores had the lowest mean score. Subsequent t tests revealed that only the highest scores in outward focus tended to be related to significantly higher mean scores in ministry at home. Quartile four was significantly higher in ministry at home than quartile three ($t = 3.14, p < .01$) and every other quartile. The scores for ministry at home only increased significantly when scores in outward focus were in the highest quartile.

Outward Focus and Involvement in Ministry within the Church

Table 4.6 shows that differences between quartiles four and three or quartiles three and two were very slight. Only quartile one was significantly different in mean scores for ministry within the church. Since quartile one is mostly comprised of those who are not in small groups, the data indicates that a higher score on outward focus within a small group made little or no difference in mean scores on ministry within the church.

Outward Focus and Involvement in Ministry in the Community

Only the fourth quartile of outward focus scores stood out as significantly different from other quartiles regarding lay ministry in the community. T tests showed

that the fourth quartile was significantly higher in ministry in the community than quartile three ($t = 2.54, p = .01$). No significant difference in mean scores existed between the first three quartiles. These data indicate that those who scored highest in outward focus tended to score higher in ministry in the community than any lower quartiles of the outward focus scores.

In fact, of all the characteristics of small groups, outward focus had the greatest effect on lay ministry in the community. Those in the fourth quartile of the outward focus scores had the highest score of any quartile of any small group characteristic in ministry to the community.

Outward Focus and Total Involvement in Ministry

When lay involvement in ministry was considered as a whole, the first three quartiles are similar in their mean scores (see table 4.6). Subsequent t tests revealed that only those who scored in the fourth quartile had significantly higher scores in lay ministry involvement than the third quartile ($t = 3.34, p < .01$) and all other quartiles. Those who scored highest in outward focus were likely to score higher in total ministry involvement.

Openness to New People

What is the relationship between openness to new people experienced in a small group and a small group participant's involvement in ministry at home, at work, in the community, and in the church?

Table 4.7

**Differences Among Subjects' Lay Ministry Involvement
by Openness Quartiles**

Quartile	Work	Home	Church	Community	Total
100% (4 th)	30.08	30.45	16.45	28.46	105.45
75% (3 rd)	28.56	29.69	14.89	23.75	96.88
50% (2 nd)	27.33	29.11	14.06	21.23	91.73
25% (1 st)	26.79	28.04	11.27	20.38	86.48

The quartiles of openness to new people had less differences in lay ministry involvement than the quartiles of any other small group characteristics. The mean scores, like in all the other small group characteristics, did increase when openness scores moved from a lower quartile to the next higher quartile (see table 4.7), but the increases were only slightly significant.

Openness to New People and Involvement

in Ministry at Work

T tests indicated that quartile four in openness to new people had a significantly higher mean score for ministry at work than quartile two ($t = 2.52$, $p = .01$) and quartile one. Quartile three had a significantly higher mean than quartile one ($t = 1.69$, $p = .09$). The low probability weakened the significance of the difference between quartile three

and quartile one. A weak connection existed between higher openness and higher ministry at work.

Openness to New People and Involvement
in Ministry at Home

The third quartile was significantly higher in ministry at home than the first quartile ($t = 1.75$, $p = .09$). The fourth quartile was not significantly higher in ministry at home than the third or second quartile, but was significantly higher than the first ($t = 2.92$, $p < .01$). Since the first quartile was mostly comprised of those who were not in small groups, the data indicates that no significant difference in ministry at home existed between the openness quartiles.

Openness to New People and Involvement
in Ministry within the Church

The fourth quartile was significantly higher in ministry within the church than both the second quartile ($t = 1.79$, $p = .08$) and the first quartile ($t = 3.63$, $p < .01$). These data indicated that those who scored highest in openness, when compared to those who scored low in openness, were significantly more involved in ministry within the church. The high probability of .08 mentioned above weakened the significance of the higher mean score.

Openness to New People and Involvement

in Ministry in the Community

T tests revealed that quartile four was significantly higher in ministry in the community than quartiles two ($t = 2.51, p = .01$) and one. This was the only significant relationship of any of the openness quartiles in ministry in the community. Subsequent F tests indicated that the fourth quartile was significantly less stable in its answers for ministry in the community than quartile two ($F = 4.32, p < .01$) and quartile one. These data showed that those who scored highest in openness were more likely than those with low openness scores to have a high score in ministry to the community.

Openness to New People and Total

Involvement in Ministry

Overall, the highest scores in openness, when compared to the lower scores in openness, are likely to be more involved in ministry to the community. The fourth quartile was significantly higher in total ministry involvement than the second ($t = 3.28, p < .01$). The fourth quartile was also much less consistent in its answers ($F = 2.07, p < .01$).

Comparing Small Group Participation

and Non-Participation

How do people who participate in small groups compare with people who do not participate in small groups in lay ministry involvement?

The people involved in this study who were in small groups, when compared to those who were not in small groups, did not have significantly higher scores in ministry at work or home. The variances in these comparisons were also insignificant.

In the area of involvement in ministry within the church, those who were in small groups had a mean score of 14.59 while those not in small groups had a mean score of 11.97. The difference is significant ($t = 1.98$, $p = .05$). However, those in small groups also had significantly higher variances in ministry within the church ($F = 2.35$, $p < .01$). The higher variance indicates less consistency even though the average score was higher.

When considering total involvement in all the ministry areas, those in small groups did score significantly higher ($t = 1.93$, $p = .05$) and had scores that were significantly more scattered than the scores of those not in small groups ($F = 1.83$, $p < .01$). The mean score for total involvement for group members was 95.77 compared to 88.90 for those not in small groups.

Although the direct comparison of those in small groups with those not in small groups revealed less differences in scores for lay involvement than the researcher expected, other data can be considered at this point. The quartile comparisons in research questions one and two indicated a stronger connection between small group participation and lay ministry involvement than indicated by research question number six. In these research questions, the higher quartiles of accountability and application of teaching, when compared to quartile one in the same small group characteristic, scored significantly higher in lay involvement at work and home. As stated earlier, quartile one is mostly comprised of those not in small groups. These data, therefore, indicate that

those who are in small groups with high accountability and application, when compared to those who are not in small groups, score higher on lay ministry at work and home. This trend continues in the small group characteristics of intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people although the differences are not as stark. Small group participation in groups with high levels of accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, or openness to new people are more involved in ministry than those not in small groups.

Personal Characteristics

Do personal characteristics such as gender, marital status, the number of children living at home, age, number of years a Christian, and work hours have any relationships to one's level of involvement in lay ministry?

Ministry Involvement and Gender

No significant differences existed between men and women in the areas of lay ministry at work, lay ministry at home, or total involvement in lay ministry. Men did score significantly higher (15.08 compared to 13.31) in the area of lay ministry within the church ($t = 1.69$, $p .09$). The high probability of .09 suggests that the differences between men and women in ministry within the church may not have been as significant as the t test indicated.

In the area of ministry to the community, women had a significantly higher variance than men. A low probability of less than .05 indicates that this pattern might be generalizable to other sets of men and women.

Table 4.8

Ministry Involvement by Marital Status

	Married	Single	t	p
Home	28.16	29.66	1.88	.06
Church	17.32	12.96	3.67	.0003*

* $p \leq .05$.

Ministry Involvement and Marital Status

No significant differences in ministry involvement at work occurred between married and single people. Table 4.8 shows that singles scored higher than married people in the area of ministry at home. The researcher was surprised by these data. Another look at the questions on ministry at home, however, revealed that most of the questions concerning family could be answered with one's extended family in mind. This flexibility in the questions may account for singles scoring higher than the researcher expected in ministry at home. Although the t score was significantly higher, the probability is above .05. The high probability slightly weakens the argument that singles were significantly higher than married people in ministry at home.

Married people scored significantly higher in the area of ministry within the church, but subsequent F tests showed a significantly higher variance for married people ($F = 5.20, p < .01$). The singles had a significantly higher variance in the area of ministry to the community ($F = 3.19, p < .01$) indicating high and low answers among the group.

Ministry Involvement and Age

For the purpose of comparing the lay ministry involvement of different age groups, those who completed a questionnaire were divided into six groups. See table 4.9 for a list of these ages. Only one person from the youngest group completed a questionnaire, so the youngest group was left out of the comparisons.

Table 4.9

A List of Age Groups

Up to 12
13 - 19
20 - 25
26 - 35
36 - 55
56 and up

No significant differences occurred between any age groups in the area of ministry at work or school. In the area of ministry at home, the college age group had a significantly lower mean score than each of the older categories. All other comparisons yielded insignificant results in ministry involvement at home.

The age group of 13-19 had a significantly higher mean score in ministry involvement within the church than the college age, the 26-35 group, and the retirement age group. However, the teenage group also had significantly higher variances. The 36-

55 group had a significantly higher mean and variance than the 26-35 group and the retirement age group.

The youth scored higher in ministry to the community than did the college age group, the retirement age group, or the boomers (age 36-55). The boomers had a significantly higher mean score in ministry to the community than the 56 and up group. The boomers also had a higher variance.

In the area of total involvement in ministry, the teenagers and the boomers scored the highest. Of those two, the teenagers had a significantly lower variance indicating more consistency in their answers. Most of the teenagers who took this questionnaire came out of a church that stressed lay ministry involvement and were part of small discipleship groups. This may partially explain the high scores for teenagers in lay ministry involvement.

The boomers scored significantly higher than the college age group, the 26-35 group and the 56 and up group in total ministry involvement. In each of these cases the boomers had a higher variance.

Ministry Involvement and Children Living at Home

Those who completed the questionnaire were divided into groups based on the number of children living at home. Only three people had four children living at home, and, due to its smallness, the group is not compared to the other groups. Significant differences occurred between the different groups in lay involvement in ministry.

Those with two children scored significantly higher in ministry at work than those with no children. These data might first appear surprising, but a closer examination

reveals that the sample included several retirement age people who did not have children living at home and who did not work away from the home. The low scores of the retirement age group on ministry at work may have lowered the mean score of the entire group.

The group with two children had a significantly higher score in ministry at work than the group with three children. The group with two children also had a variance that was significantly lower. These data indicate that those with two children were more involved in ministry at work than those with three children.

More surprising is the absence of significance in the mean scores in ministry within the church. The group with two children had a significantly higher mean score in ministry in the community than those who had no children. These data may again point to retirement age people and to college age people who have less involvement in the community than those with children. The data may also suggest that people with children have more points of access to the community. The group with no children also had a higher variance indicating less consistency in their answers.

In total ministry involvement, those who had two children scored significantly higher in total ministry involvement than those who had no children and those who had three children at home.

Ministry Involvement and Work Hours

The number of work hours made very little difference in the mean scores for involvement in ministry. Those who completed the questionnaire were divided into quartiles, and the mean scores of the quartiles was compared in the areas of lay ministry.

Those who worked the most scored higher than those who worked the second largest number of hours in ministry to the home and to the church. Those who worked the second most hours scored better in lay ministry at work than those who worked the most.

Ministry Involvement and Number of Years a Christian

The people who took this questionnaire also were divided into quartiles based on the number of years they had been Christians. The mean scores of quartiles for lay ministry involvement were compared. The t tests and F tests revealed almost no significant differences in the lay ministry involvement scores. The people who had been Christians the longest and those who had been Christians second longest both scored significantly higher than the most recent Christians in ministry involvement in the church. The top two quartiles also had higher variances.

Overall, the t tests and F tests reveal very few significant relationships between personal characteristics and involvement in ministry. The most significant relationships in this study are between small group characteristics and lay involvement in ministry.

A Comparison of Group Size in Lay Ministry Involvement and Small Group Characteristics

As indicated previously, this study divided those in small groups into two categories of group size. One category included groups with three to fifteen people while the other category included groups with sixteen to twenty-five people. A comparison of the lay ministry involvement scores of the two different categories revealed no significant differences. The three to fifteen category did have a higher mean score in every area of lay ministry, but the mean scores were not significantly higher.

Table 4.10

Small Group Characteristics by Group Size

	3 to 15	16 to 25	t	p
Accountability	39.97	34.20	2.33	.02*
Application	19.48	16.33	3.34	.0009*
Intimacy	20.22	18.55	2.43	.02*

* $p \leq .05$.

A comparison of the small group characteristic scores of the two different categories of small groups did reveal significant differences. Table 4.10 shows that the three to fifteen category scored significantly higher in accountability, application of teaching, and intimacy than the sixteen to twenty-five category.

The Most Salient Findings of the Study

In almost every comparison between the quartiles of each of the small group characteristics, lay ministry scores went up as the group characteristics went up. The higher quartiles were almost always significantly higher than lower quartiles in lay ministry involvement. High scores in accountability, application and intimacy had very strong relationships with increased involvement in ministry. Scores in all five small group characteristics were much more related to ministry involvement than personal characteristics such as gender, marital status, the number of children living at home, age, number of years a Christian, and work hours.

The people in groups who scored highest on outward focus had the highest score of everyone in ministry to the community. This group also had one of the lowest scores on ministry within the church.

Those who were in small groups and who had high scores on any of the small group characteristics (accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, or openness to new people) were more involved in ministry than those who were not in small groups. When those in small groups were compared to those who were not in small groups without considering the scores on the group characteristics, less significant differences in lay ministry involvement occurred.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter briefly summarizes the major findings of this study, evaluates and interprets the data, and reflects theologically on the findings. The findings of this study are compared to the existing body of knowledge, and then the limitations, unexpected findings, and practical applications of the findings are discussed.

Summary of Major Findings

The most significant findings in this study came from the comparisons between those who scored low and those who scored high in each of the five small group characteristics (accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people). In virtually every comparison, those who scored higher in one of the small group characteristics had higher mean scores for every area of ministry than those who scored lower on the same small group characteristic.

In many cases, these differences were significant. This study revealed that increases in scores of the small group characteristics were related to higher involvement in ministry.

Another important finding of this study was the few significant relationships between personal characteristics (such as gender, marital status, the number of children living at home, age, number of years a Christian, and work hours) and involvement in ministry. The researcher believed that involvement in ministry might be more closely related to differences in marital status, work hours, and the number of years the person had been a Christian.

The data from research question six indicated that scores for ministry at work and at home were not significantly different between those in small groups and those not in small groups. Before drawing conclusions about the relationship between small group involvement and lay ministry involvement, however, other data was considered.

The people who were willing to take the time to complete this questionnaire were possibly living at a higher commitment level regarding the church and ministry than most people. Further study might reveal that those not in small groups who invested time to complete the questionnaire were more involved in ministry than most people who were in the church but not in small groups.

As stated in Chapter 4, the comparisons of the different small group characteristic quartiles regarding lay involvement added further insight for the comparison of those in small groups with those not in small groups. Even though a direct comparison between those in small groups and those not in small groups did not reveal differences in involvement in ministry which were as significant as the researcher had expected, the quartile comparisons do. The quartile comparisons showed the higher quartiles to be consistently and significantly higher than the lower quartiles. Because those who were not in small groups were included in the quartile comparisons, the first quartile was primarily made up of those who were not in small groups. So, in the first five research questions, when the top three quartiles were compared to the lowest quartile, the comparisons were essentially between those in small groups and those not in small groups. These data indicated that those who scored high on the small group

characteristics were significantly more involved in ministry than those who were not in small groups.

If the comparison in research question six is accurate, the results of this study are even more significant. If participation in small groups in general did not increase the level of lay involvement in ministry, it was not enough simply to be in a small group. In order to make small groups effective for mission and ministry, churches must intentionally build accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people into small groups.

Evaluation and Interpretation of the Data

The purpose of this project involved not only discovering relationships between small groups and lay ministry, but also involved understanding the causes and meanings of the data. This section seeks to understand the data in relationship with the Bible, more recent history, and the Church of today.

Accountability

The relationship between higher scores in accountability and higher scores in lay ministry involvement was very significant. In the area of ministry at work, those who scored higher in accountability, when compared to those who scored low in accountability, had higher means and lower variances. These data pointed to a strong relationship between accountability in a small group and the group member's level of ministry at work.

Strong connections also existed between higher scores in accountability and ministry at home, ministry within the church, and total involvement in ministry. Higher scores in accountability were also related to higher scores in ministry to the community, although this relationship was weaker than the connection with ministry at work, home, church and total involvement in ministry.

How could one explain this relationship between increased accountability and increased lay involvement in ministry? Being accountable to a group of people who want to help each other love and serve God can bring many positive influences into a person's life. When a small group member knows she will be lovingly asked about her relationship with God, she often will work hard to build that relationship. If a group member knows he will share with his small group his successes and failures in living the Christian life, he will often be more focused on holy living.

The early Methodists understood the power of accountability. The fact that a class member's life was known to others in the class and even to those who were enemies of righteousness, led the class member to live her or his life with "a wholesome and continuous check" (Alley 29).

David Lowes Watson says, "The key to understanding the dynamic of the early class meeting is the word accountability" (Accountable 44). Watson goes on to say that the members had "an openness to one another, and an intimacy which permitted them to share their spiritual pilgrimage unreservedly" (44). The task of the Class Leader was to "encourage, nudge, and guide" the members of the group "to participate in acts of

worship, devotion, compassion, and justice under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (Tyler-Wayman 7).

It is easy to see how this kind of accountability could strengthen people to be better ministers at work, home, within the church and in the community. Although many groups do not have the accountability intensity of the early Methodist class meetings, those groups with more accountability tend to be more involved in ministry.

Application

The data from research question two indicated that application of teaching within a small group was also significantly related to lay involvement in ministry. One would expect a person’s ministry involvement to increase if that person was learning Biblical principles about living the Christian life and personally applying what was being learned. So often in churches people simply hear teaching without putting that teaching into practice.

People do not hear a sermon or a lesson, understand it, and go right out and use it. “It takes a long time for people to understand and appropriate something into their lives” (Small Group Book 153). Large settings are often ineffective in helping people to put teaching into practice. In order to appropriate truth, most people need other people to relate to, talk to and learn with. These things do not happen well in large groups. Small groups, on the other hand, are great tools to help people appropriate the truth of the Bible into their lives. Small groups help people to become more intentional about serving God in daily life.

Intimacy

The data from the questionnaire revealed a significant connection between intimacy experienced in a small group and the group members' involvement in ministry. These data are not surprising for those who are familiar with God's emphasis on intimate relationships.

Relationships are crucial for Christianity. Jesus indicated that the whole of the law and the commandments are summed up in two commandments. These two commandments are concerned with loving God and loving people. Our relationships with God and others are of supreme importance in the Christian life.

The entire Bible is a book about relationships. Over and over, God's dealings with God's people are described with an emphasis on relationships. In the fifteenth chapter of John, Jesus described himself as the vine and his disciples as the branches. Jesus encourages his disciples to abide in him. This illustration of the branches abiding in the vine gives a picture of the intimacy God intends to have with God's people.

The Bible also has much to say about relationships with others. God calls the people of God to love one another, forgive one another, care for one another, confess to one another, and encourage one another. Through the intimate relationships indicated by these acts of love and care, God prepares the church for ministry to the world. When the people of God love one another, they are better equipped to love and care for those who are not part of the church. When Christians find love, acceptance, encouragement, and direction in the church, they are freed up to take risks to minister to people in the daily places of life. The early church in the book of Acts experienced intimate love and

concern for one another, and they also made a major difference for the kingdom of God through mission and ministry to the world around them.

Since Christianity is built primarily on relationships, it was not surprising that the experience of intimate Christian relationships in this study led to more involvement in ministry and mission for the cause of Christ. Large groups are not conducive to intimate Christian relationships. Christians need small groups, but the individualistic tendencies of American culture battle against the group relationships needed to support effective living. Americans are craving intimate relationships, but often find themselves empty and lonely. These individualistic tendencies in the church must be overcome.

In fact, many in America are rebelling against this individualistic society. Small groups have become so prevalent for Christians and non-Christians alike that, according to Robert Wuthnow, four out of every ten Americans is involved in one. "The desire for intimacy, support [and] sharing" have played an important role in the success of the small-group movement (Wuthnow 52). Christians must intimately connect ourselves to smaller groups of Christians. The intimacy experienced in these groups will meet their needs and help them be better prepared to minister in the world.

Outward Focus

Higher scores in outward focus tended to raise the involvement level of the group members in ministry. When a group is making sure that it reaches out to others it will encourage its members to be in ministry.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, those in the fourth quartile of the outward focus scores had the highest score of any group of any small group characteristic in ministry to

the community. This fourth quartile also had the lowest score of any other fourth quartile on ministry within the church. These data indicated that high scores in outward focus led people to score higher in ministry in the community and lower in ministry within the church.

God has sent us to all people groups to reach them in the name of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus calls us to be his witnesses close by and around the world. Reaching out to others and ministering to them in the name of Christ is the essence of Christianity.

If ministry to those outside our groups and churches is so important, we must be very intentional to make sure that small groups prepare and release people to do ministry at work, at home, within the church, and in the community. A small group can become self-centered and lose the mission to reach out beyond itself, but a small group also can make outreach a part of its purpose. Small groups that intentionally reach beyond themselves will build ministers reaching to those in their communities, at their jobs, and in their homes.

Openness to New People

When those who scored highest in openness were compared to those who scored lowest, the scores for involvement in ministry were significantly higher for those who scored highest in openness. When a small group is open to new people, it is training the people of the group to be sensitive to those outside the group. This awareness of others and their need to know Christ and experience him more fully is an important step in becoming involved in ministry.

If the group adopts the policy of being open to new people from the very beginning, it is making a good step toward helping the members of the group be in mission. The open chair philosophy of Carl George creates a continual awareness that the group is not complete. The open chair reminds each member that he or she has a responsibility to bring others into relationship with people and with God. When the group members become aware that God wants to use them to bring others to God, the lives of the group members are changed. Now they begin to see themselves as inviting agents for God when they go to work, to school, to home or into the community. They are prepared to begin to see themselves as people gifted by God to minister to the needs of people.

Group Size

This study indicated that those in groups of three to fifteen people, when compared with those in groups of sixteen to twenty-five people, scored significantly higher in accountability, application of teaching, and intimacy. These results were not unexpected. The smaller group context offers much more flexibility for accountability and application of teaching. The connection between smaller groups and intimacy shows agreement with the small group experts who say that intimacy decreases as group size climbs above fifteen. Small groups with less than fifteen people provide a good setting for intimacy, and intimacy is a necessary ingredient for accountability.

The interviews in the four churches indicated that intimacy was viewed as one of the primary benefits of small groups. If the churches in this study wish to strengthen

intimacy among the people in their small groups, they will benefit by building groups with fifteen or less people.

Even though the small groups in the three to fifteen category scored significantly higher in accountability, application of teaching, and intimacy, they did not score significantly higher in lay ministry involvement. Frazer United Methodist Church's high level of lay involvement in ministry, may have impacted these results.

Implications of this Study for Revising the Existing Body of Knowledge

Much has been written about small groups in the last several years. With so much interest in small groups, there is always a small group phenomenon to investigate and analyze. Small groups have been studied from almost every angle including their relationship to personal and spiritual health, church growth, the use of spiritual gifts, evangelism, and discipleship.

Lay involvement in ministry also has been a hot topic in the last thirty years. Books, articles and studies on lay ministry have been numerous. Many have concluded that the church can only be effective when the lay people recognize and use their God-given gifts to be in ministry.

These two areas, small groups and lay involvement in ministry, are having a significant impact on the church. Many authors and researchers have studied the relationships between the two. Much has been written about small groups being ideal communities for learning about and exercising one's spiritual gifts. Ministry groups also have effectively shown how small groups and lay ministry go well together. In these

groups, the members do a particular task of ministry together. Some have developed small groups with a focus on the ministry of evangelism. The New Hope Community Church in Portland Oregon successfully uses their small groups for evangelism.

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge concerning the connection between small groups and involvement in ministry. Some people would say that small groups help people to be in ministry. This is true, but not just any group will do. This study indicates that groups which create high levels of accountability, application of biblical teaching, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people will be more likely to have members who are more involved in ministry.

Limitations of The Study

This study is limited to four large United Methodist churches in the southeastern United States. Because churches, situations, and communities differ so significantly, the results of this study cannot be wholly generalized to all other churches. However, the findings are very consistent. Every small group characteristic in the study is significantly related to involvement in lay ministry although some small group characteristics are more significantly related than others. Because of this consistency among all the small group characteristics, the study may be helpful to others who want small groups to strengthen the lay ministry involvement of the group members.

Some of the findings of this study are limited by weaknesses in the questionnaire itself. Three questions at the end of the questionnaire asked the respondents to list numbers of hours they spent in certain ministry tasks. Because these three questions were so different in nature from the scaled questions, the last three questions were not

considered in the statistical analysis. One of these questions was significant for accurately describing a person's ministry within the church. When the question was disregarded, its absence weakened the area of lay ministry within the church.

Another weakness in the questionnaire was the lack of repetition of key instructions at one key place in the questionnaire. Those who were not in small groups were asked to go directly from question eight to question forty-six. Since the instructions on scaled answers were not repeated at that point in the questionnaire, several who were not in small groups simply checked boxes instead of answering on a scale. These questionnaires were invalid.

Practical Applications

The results of this study can have practical applications for those who want to build or strengthen small groups in their churches. People who want to develop higher involvement in ministry through their small groups will do well to consider building the five small group characteristics into their groups. Those who want their groups to be involved in ministry in the community need to consider the importance of outward focus within the group.

Another practical application of this study could be the use of the questionnaire as a tool for measuring the levels of the small group characteristics within small groups and lay ministry involvement among members of small groups. Churches could use this questionnaire, with some revisions, to see how well their small groups are doing in these areas.

Further studies could gain valuable insights by comparing combinations of the small group characteristics with lay ministry involvement. A comparison of the highest quartile in each characteristic concerning each lay ministry area might also be a good follow-up study to this project. The study would show if any of the small group characteristics were more related to a particular ministry area than another small group characteristic.

Since Frazer United Methodist Church focuses on lay involvement in ministry, a comparison of small group characteristics with lay ministry involvement using only the data from the other three churches might yield interesting results. The connections between the small group characteristics and lay involvement might be even more significant if the data from Frazer were excluded. Also, a separate comparison of small group characteristics and lay ministry involvement for each church in this study, might yield interesting results.

A duplication of this study in small churches would also yield interesting results. Would the same significant relationships between the small group characteristics and lay involvement in ministry persist in small churches?

Conclusion

Involvement of the laity in ministry is crucial for the success of the church. When the work of the clergy “is identified as ‘the ministry’ of the community itself, as has been the tendency within the history of the church, the result is a theological disaster” (Gillespie 29-31). All of God’s people are called to be in ministry.

Small groups are one of the best ways to involve lay people in ministry. When those in small groups experience the characteristics of accountability, application, intimacy, outward focus, and openness to new people in their groups, they are more likely to be involved in ministry for the kingdom of God.

Appendix A

Letter of Introduction for this Study

August 13, 1996

The Reverend Jane Geiger
P. O. Box 700
Dissertation City, CA 90909

Dear Reverend Geiger:

I want to thank you for your willingness to participate with me in my dissertation for the Beeson Doctor of Ministry Program. I would like for you to select the three Churches from your conference which you feel do best at both small group ministry and lay ministry. I am looking for no particular size, setting, or style in the churches I study. After you select the three churches, please rank them from one to three with one being the highest rated church.

You have some freedom to select the churches based on your own experience and subjectivity. However, the following general characteristics might be helpful in defining a successful small group ministry:

1. A significant part of those who attend the primary worship service(s) are involved in small groups.
2. The church sees small groups as an important part of its overall ministry.
3. Training for small group leaders is an important part of the small group program.

A small group is herein defined as a group of three to fifteen people who meet at least monthly with a Christian purpose.

Furthermore, the following general characteristics might be helpful in defining successful lay ministry:

1. The Church sees the role of the laity as crucial for the ministry of the Church.
2. The Church understands its members to be ministers for Christ at home, church, work, play, and in the community.
3. Many lay people in the Church see themselves as ministers and are actively using their gifts and talents to minister for Christ at home, church, work, play, and in the community.
4. The Church guides lay people into ministry.
5. The Church trains lay people for ministry.

Please send me a list of the three churches with their addresses, pastors or contact persons, and phone numbers. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thanks again for your help and kind support.

Sincerely,

Mark Osgood

Appendix B

Dear Small Group Member:

I need your help to complete a study which I have begun concerning small groups and lay involvement in ministry. My name is Mark Osgood. I am pastor of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Smiths, Alabama, and I am working on the project phase of my Doctor of Ministry degree. I am studying four churches in Georgia and Alabama, and because of the strengths of your church, Christ United Methodist Church has been selected for study. Through this study I hope to discover some relationships between small groups and the involvement of the small group members in ministry for Christ. I hope this study will give some insight into how we can make small groups even better for the kingdom of God.

The questionnaire will probably take you 15 to 20 minutes to complete. During the middle part of the questionnaire, where you will be answering each question by using a scale of 0-6, simply write down your first impression and move on to the next question. The small group questions were written to accommodate those who are part of more than one small group.

Nowhere will you be asked to put your name on this questionnaire because your confidentiality will be protected in the use of the information you give. When you finish the questionnaire, please place it back in the envelope for your group leader. The group leader will then return the questionnaires to Kenna Sapp who will return all of the questionnaires to me.

Thank you for your help in this project,

Rev. Mark Osgood

Participant Questionnaire

If you have already completed this questionnaire, please discard.

General Information

Instructions: Place a check in the blank next to the appropriate answer or fill in the blanks for the following questions.

1. Gender

____ a. Female

____ b. Male

2. Marital Status

____ a. Married

____ b. Single

3. If you have children, how many live in your home? ____

4. What is your age? ____

5. How long have you been a Christian?

6. How long have you been a part of this church?

7. How many hours do you work in a paying job each week? _____

Survey Questions

Instructions: Place a check in the blank next to the appropriate answer or fill in the blanks for the following questions.

8. A small group, as defined in this study, is a **group of three to twenty-five people** with a Christian purpose which has met together or ministered together **for at least three consecutive months** in the past three years. A small group **meets for at least 45 minutes at least once per month**. Generally, church committees are not considered to be small groups in this study although some committees might be defined by one of the examples below. Have you participated in at least one of the following or similar types of small groups (see list below) **for at least three months in the last three years**? In order to check "yes" at least one of your groups must have three to twenty-five people. (Check either "no" or "yes")

___ No

___ Yes

Mark all those you have participated in **for at least three months in the last three years** (three to twenty-five people).

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ___ Accountability group | ___ Fellowship group | ___ Sunday school class (Small) |
| ___ Anonymous group | ___ House church | ___ Supper club |
| ___ Bible study group | ___ Men's group | ___ Support group |
| ___ Care group | ___ Ministry group | ___ Therapy group |
| ___ Couples' group | ___ Prayer group | ___ Topical study group |
| ___ Covenant group | ___ Prayer and share group | ___ Women's group |
| ___ Discipleship group | ___ Singles' group | ___ Youth group (small) |
| ___ Other _____ | | |

If you answered "Yes" to question 8, go to question 9. If you answered "No" to question 8, go to question 45.

Instructions: Continue to place a check in the blank next to the appropriate answer or fill in the blanks for the following questions.

9. How many small groups did you participate in for three months or more over the past three years?

10. How long have you participated regularly in small groups? _____ years _____ months

11. How often do (did) your small groups meet? (Answer for each of your small groups)

- a. _____
- b. _____ (if applicable)
- c. _____ (if applicable)
- d. _____ (if applicable)
- e. _____ (if applicable)

12. Each of my small groups has had about the same people in it for the last six months.

___ a. no

___ b. yes

13. How many people, on average, are present for your group's meetings? (Answer for each of your small groups)

- a. _____
- b. _____ (if applicable)
- c. _____ (if applicable)
- d. _____ (if applicable)
- e. _____ (if applicable)

14. How long have you been a part of your small group? (Make one check for each of your small groups. You may need to put more than one check in a single blank.)

- _____ a. 3-6 months
- _____ b. 7 to 11 months
- _____ c. 1 to 2 years
- _____ d. Between 2 and 5 years
- _____ e. More than 5 years

15. In at least one of my groups I am personally and regularly asked about the attention I give to the following spiritual disciplines. (Check all that apply)

- _____ a. Bible reading
- _____ b. Bible study
- _____ c. fasting
- _____ d. financial giving
- _____ e. prayer
- _____ f. regular attendance in worship
- _____ g. serving others
- _____ h. none of the above

16. In the last six months, how many people have you invited to visit your group (select the group to which you have invited the most people)? _____

17. How do you think you compare to others in this group when it comes to inviting people to your group?

- _____ a. You invite more people.
- _____ b. You invite about the same number of people.
- _____ c. You invite less people.

Instructions: Using the scale provided below, write a number in the box beside each statement which most nearly represents your answer.

- 6=Strongly agree
- 5=Agree
- 4=Somewhat agree
- 3=Somewhat disagree
- 2=Disagree
- 1=Strongly disagree
- 0=Does not apply

☐ 18. In one or more of my small groups, we spend a lot of time talking about the needs of people who are not part of our group.

☐ 19. In one or more of my small groups the group helps me celebrate successes in my life.

☐ 20. In at least one of my small groups it is easy to see how the teaching relates to my life away from the group.

☐ 21. In one or more of my small groups the group members encourage one another to do the right thing even when the encouragement involves saying hard things.

☐ 22. If I were admitted to the hospital, the members of at least one of my small groups would provide care and support for me and my family.

☐ 23. In at least one of my small groups, the importance of bringing new people to the group is discussed regularly.

☐ 24. At least one of my groups has a specific time where each member is asked to share about the successes and failures in her or his life since the group last met.

☐ 25. In one or more of my small groups each member's personal life is known to the other members of the group.

☐ 26. In one or more of my small groups we intentionally take time to talk about how we will apply the things we study to our lives.

☐ 27. The purpose of one or more of my small groups is to reach out to people beyond the group.

☐ 28. At least one of my small groups attracts people who are not members of our church.

- 6=Strongly agree
 5=Agree
 4=Somewhat agree
 3=Somewhat disagree
 2=Disagree
 1=Strongly disagree
 0=Does not apply

- ☐ 29. At least one of my small groups has given me specific advice that helped me make a difficult decision.
- ☐ 30. Most of what we study in any of my small group(s) seems unrelated to the events of a normal day.
- ☐ 31. At least one of my small groups expects its members to be involved in ministry either within the church or outside the church.
- ☐ 32. At least one of my small groups has a steady flow of new people.
- ☐ 33. At least one of my small groups, simply by its existence, reminds me to live for God on a daily basis.
- ☐ 34. At least one of my small groups makes me feel like I'm not alone in my struggles.
- ☐ 35. In at least one of my small groups I am regularly encouraged to write down the steps I will take to put into action the Biblical principles I have learned.
- ☐ 36. At least one of my groups makes a point of regularly doing service projects as a group.
- ☐ 37. In at least one of my groups the group members provide helpful pressure that leads me to grow as a Christian.
- ☐ 38. At least one of my groups encourages me to notice and meet the needs of people outside the group.
- ☐ 39. In one or more of my small groups the group members share about how the teaching of the previous meeting has made a difference in their lives.
- ☐ 40. At least one of my small groups has a good system by which we contact newcomers after they visit to let them know they are welcome.
- ☐ 41. In at least one of my small groups the members of the group speak openly about their lives to one another in order that the group can make sure each member is living for God.
- ☐ 42. Members of at least one of my small groups do favors for one another.
- ☐ 43. Sharing one's faith with others is a very important expectation of at least one of my groups for its members.
- ☐ 44. In at least one of my small groups the leader often directs our attention to written questions that help us put the teaching into action.
-
- ☐ 45. When I go to work (or school) I expect God to use me that day to make a difference in the lives of my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).
- ☐ 46. I share what I have with those who are outside my family and outside my church and who are in need.
- ☐ 47. When I do normal household chores I view them as part of my ministry for God.
- ☐ 48. I want to help Christians grow in their faith through programs in the church.
- ☐ 49. My family knows that God takes high priority in my life.
- ☐ 50. I enjoy ministering to the needs of strangers.
- ☐ 51. I consider my secular employment (or my work in the home or at school) as a ministry.
- ☐ 52. Even though much is done in our church to attract new people, I feel a need to direct my ministry to those who have been here a long time.
- ☐ 53. My family does ministry together so we can touch people's lives together.
- ☐ 54. I often invite my co-workers (or associates or fellow students) to attend my church.
- ☐ 55. Family devotions are a normal part of my family's life.
- ☐ 56. Most of my meaningful ministry for God is done at our church building.
- ☐ 57. As an expression of my love for God, I show care and concern for my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).
- ☐ 58. I do random acts of kindness for those in my family as part of my ministry in the name of Christ.

- ☐ 59. I often talk about God in a natural way with my co-workers (or associates or fellow students).
- ☐ 60. I teach my family about God through the normal things in daily life.
- ☐ 61. I intentionally follow Christ's example by serving those in my home.
- ☐ 62. God leads me to spend a lot of energy trying to make my community a better place.
- ☐ 63. I am honest in my work because of my commitment to Christ.
- ☐ 64. I consistently use my gifts and talents to touch the lives of my neighbors.

Instructions: Place a check in the blank next to the appropriate answer or fill in the blanks for the following questions.

65. I lead a Bible study or other specific ministry with persons contacted through my work or school.

- ____ a. no
____ b. yes

66. What percentage of your income do you give to the ministry of your church? ____%

67. In the last three months, how many worship services did you attend? ____

68. About how many hours each week do you spend attending classes or groups or other opportunities for growth offered by your church? ____

For Question 69

A few examples of ministry jobs done through your church for people **who are part of your church** might be:

taking meals to the sick in your church, ushering, creating in-house publicity, maintenance, office work, singing in the choir, chaperon, helping the homebound, prayer team, sharing a testimony, playing an instrument, providing food for events, preparing communion, leading worship, program director, teaching, choir director, work-area chairperson who focuses on people who are already part of the church, pastoring a group of people, event organizer, administrative leadership.

69. On the average, about how many hours do you spend each month preparing for and doing ministry jobs through your church for people **who are part of your church**?

____ hours per month

For Question 70

A few examples of ministry jobs done through your church for people who are **not** part of your church might be:

church food bank, befriending newcomers, helping the homeless, ministering to special needs in the community, tutoring, visitation of newcomers, evangelism leadership, teaching a money management class for the community, leading a project for a community ministry.

70. On the average, about how many hours do you spend each month preparing for and doing ministry jobs through your church for those who are **not** part of your church?

____ hours per month (do not include any hours that you included in question #69)

For Question 71

A few examples of ministry jobs done in your community which are **not through your church** might be:

volunteering through a non-profit organization, delivering meals on wheels, working to touch the community through community organizations, collecting funds for heart disease research, leading in a scout program, providing leadership for other community organizations which minister to needs in the community, serving as leadership for ministry agencies in the community.

71. On the average, about how many hours do you spend each month doing ministry jobs in your community which are **not through your church**?

____ hours per month (do not include any hours that you included in questions #69 or question #70)

72. Are you part of a group which you consider a small group, but which does not have three to twenty-five people?

- ____ a. no
____ b. yes

If yes, how many are in your group? ____
Describe your group. _____

Thank You Very Much!

References for the Questionnaire

Question 18 (Sharing the Journey 412)

Question 21 (Hebrews 10:24)

Question 25 (Hemphill 53)

Question 29 (Sharing the Journey 412)

Question 33 (Sharing the Journey 275)

Question 34 (Sharing the Journey 412)

Question 42 (Hemphill 53)

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. When you think of small groups, what story comes to mind that demonstrates the importance of small groups in your church?
2. What do you believe can be accomplished through small groups?
(Why do you invest your energy in small groups?)
3. On a scale of one (lowest) to ten (highest) how important are small groups to the mission of your church? Why do you say that?
- 3a. How important are small groups to the Senior Pastor? How does he communicate that?
4. How do small groups function in your church? How do they get started, who leads them, what do they teach, and who are they accountable to?
 - (a. How are groups formed?
 - b. How is leadership developed?
 - c. How is leadership trained?
 - d. How are leaders kept accountable?
 - e. What kind of groups are at St. Mark UMC?
 - f. What curriculum is used?
 - g. How are the groups promoted?
 - h. How many small groups?)
5. Tell me a story about lay ministry in your church.
- 5a. How important is lay ministry to you, to other leaders, and to your church as a whole?

(...how important is lay ministry to...
 - a. Staff
 - b. Lay people
 - c. You
 - d. Senior pastor -to what degree does Senior Pastor share your passion?)
- (5b. How do the people in your church know lay ministry is important?)
(-how does the pastor communicate importance)
6. When you speak of lay ministry, what do you mean?

7. How are people at St. Mark UMC equipped for ministry?
8. What relationship do you see between small groups and lay ministry at St. Mark UMC?

Demographic Questions

1. What is your role in the church?
2. What was your preparation for this ministry?
3. How long have you been with Mark UMC?

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