

## CHAPTER 5

*Van der Ven . . . gives full attention to the hermeneutical and critical perspectives [of research], and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods . . .*

(Heitink 1999: 232)

### INTRODUCTION

This final chapter addresses the last three of the four questions that have guided this study, namely question 2, “How do (the individual and collective characteristics determined in response to question 1) differ from those of members of non-holistic congregations?;” question 3, “What general conclusions may be drawn relating to the ethos of ‘holistic’ churches;” and question 4, “To what extent are the various characteristics reproducible?”

The chapter is in four parts. The nature of the data elicited from the preliminary survey is the subject of part one. Part two discusses the results of the primary survey. Part three summarizes the interviews with congregants and leaders of the participating churches and the inferences drawn from those interviews. Finally part four, the conclusion of the study, discusses the possibilities and limitations on the reproducibility of holistic church characteristics.

The following facts should be noted:

1. The preliminary survey instrument was developed entirely by the author.
2. While the primary survey instrument was developed in consultation with staff of the UGA department of statistics, its final form is again the responsibility of the author.
3. All the data generated by both survey instruments was compiled and analyzed by a graduate student in statistics at UGA under the strict guidance and

supervision of the department. The conduct of analysis of the data generated by the primary survey, including selection of the best type of analytical tools and the methodology employed in generating the report, were determined by UGA., which also approved the final report.

4. The results reported below are based on the subsequent Statistical Analysis of the Church and Ministry Involvement Study developed by the University of Georgia, Department of Statistics (contained in Appendix 4).
5. All the inferences drawn from these results are entirely those of the author of this thesis.

Before turning to the results, one final observation is necessary. While two of the churches studied – St. Mark UMC and St. Andrews Presbyterian – were identified as non-holistic, both the objective and subjective evidence suggest it would be truer to say that they exercised “incomplete” holism: that is, that the underlying structures and congregational ethos evident in all the holistic churches were equally evident in these two churches, but were not being fully utilized. St. Mark UMC for example has been very active in the field of community ministry in the past and still has all, or almost all, the structures necessary to the practice and even has a vision of community ministry for the future. Indeed, the congregation may well argue that it is in fact engaging the community by being pro-active in its ministry to the Gay, Lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered population of its neighborhood, a focus which brings with it a conscious withdrawal from broader community engagement. St. Andrews similarly appears to have the infrastructure necessary to outreach ministry, but the church’s leadership has not effectively communicated the presence of that infrastructure to its congregation, nor is it

the consistent practice of the church leadership to convey outreach ministry to the congregation as a matter of the necessary praxis of the church's theology. The inference is that St. Andrews could be a completely holistic church by paying attention to these two issues.

The quasi-holistic nature of St. Mark and St. Andrews churches as just described, if known earlier, might have resulted in their survey data being excluded from analysis, since their near-holism will undoubtedly have skewed the overall results of the study. However, the true nature of these churches did not become clear until the survey data was compiled and analyzed and interviews held with the respective congregations – events that occurred some weeks after the surveys were completed. In the event, the information elicited through interviews in both these churches is, in fact, quite instructive regarding the “fine line” that is possible between holism and non-holism.

### 5.1 PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Although not the major focus of the research, the preliminary survey provided categorical data permitting respondent churches to be ranked on a scale of holistic community engagement. It was noted above that the primary purpose of the preliminary survey was to find out the nature and extent of the practice of “holism” in a number of churches in the Greater Atlanta area and to identify churches for further research. A set of questions was developed (Appendix 1) intended to provide information about respondent church size, attendance, number of outreach ministry practices engaged, percentage participation by congregants in the church's ministries, the predominant source of ideas for secular ministries, and the locus of responsibility for the maintenance of such ministries.

The information elicited from the preliminary survey provided results for holistic churches that may be considered somewhat intuitive:

- The number of outreach ministries increases with congregational size.
- The percentage of congregational involvement in outreach ministry increases with congregational size.
- Lay leadership involvement in the identification and management of outreach ministry increases in line with the number of ministries engaged.

Beyond these three rather elementary conclusions little can be said. For more in depth information regarding the churches actually involved in the study, attention must turn to the results of the surveys and interviews conducted with the participating congregations, beginning with the Primary Survey.

## 5.2 PRIMARY SURVEY

### 5.2.1 Background information

Since entry of the basic data gleaned from returned surveys was to be performed by non-professionals (i.e., persons unfamiliar with the various analytical programs available) the raw data was first keyed-in to a prepared spreadsheet in Microsoft® Excel™ format.

The first task toward analyzing the data was therefore to convert it from the Excel™ files into a variety of more flexible analytical tools appropriate to the particular investigative and diagnostic tasks undertaken. These included Statistical Analysis Software (SAS),<sup>1</sup> Minitab,<sup>2</sup> and S-plus.<sup>3</sup> The next step was to “purify” the returned data by removing surveys with un-interpretable responses to a single question. For example, if

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<sup>1</sup> SAS Institute Inc. Website: [www.sas.com](http://www.sas.com)

<sup>2</sup> Minitab Software, Inc .Website: [www.minitab.com](http://www.minitab.com)

<sup>3</sup> Insightful Corporation. Website: [www.splus.com](http://www.splus.com)

a respondent reported being both male and female, or being in multiple age categories, that survey was not included in the study. This was done to protect the integrity of the data from either a possible incorrect recording of the survey or meaningless data. It then remained to reduce the plethora of analytic possibilities to those avenues of research considered most likely to produce characteristics of congregational ethos. The preliminary intent was to determine if there were any significant differences between the survey responses among the five high ministry churches, because survey questions whose responses are not significantly different between churches may be useful indicators of what makes a church holistic.

To this end it was thought best to summarize the responses to survey items separately by church and then also within the two blocks of five churches representing the upper and lower end of community ministry, as previously explained. The intention was to analyze the survey responses in such a way that the “ethos” of a holistic church might be encapsulated and then see if there was some consistency across the top five churches in this “ethos.” To be sure, this was a somewhat vague and imprecise goal, requiring some work to determine first, which survey items would most likely be relevant in characterizing “ethos,” next which relationships among survey items are interesting and relevant to this idea and finally the statistical method(s) that would be helpful in this task. With regard to this last point, the method suggested by the University of Georgia Department of Statistics was Factor Analysis because, as Hall (2005) writes:

[F]actor analysis is a method [. . .] appropriate for a situation in which a relatively large number of variables are measured [and] where there is substantial redundancy or overlap among those variables. The idea underlying factor analysis is that there are a small number of independent underlying constructs, or “factors”, which are each being measured in several different ways by the observed variables. A classical example

would be scores in Olympic decathlon events. We might think that the scores in the high jump, long jump, 100 meters, javelin, etc. are measuring (in some sense) a few underlying factors: sprinting speed, jumping ability, endurance, throwing ability, and perhaps strength. In this example, the hypothesis is that there are 5 underlying factors, but the 10 variables (the scores in the 10 events) are measuring these 5 factors in overlapping, partially redundant ways. Factor analysis tries to boil down the variance and correlation structures in a data set to a small number of such independent factors.

Hall notes further that there are two basic types of Factor Analysis (FA), exploratory and confirmatory, and explains that in exploratory FA an *a priori* model, or theory, as to how many underlying factors there are is not posited. Instead, the data itself is used to generate the FA model, through the selection of enough factors to adequately explain the data and the subsequent attachment of interpretations to those factors. In confirmatory FA, on the other hand, the starting point is an *a priori* assumption that there are  $k$  factors and subsequent analysis then tries to see if the data support that theory. That is, one tries to see if the  $k$ -factor model is consistent with the data and whether the  $k$ -factors obtained from the data have the sorts of interpretations expected. For example, it might be thought that decathlon scores are based on the  $k=5$  factors defined above (sprinting speed, jumping ability, etc.), so the 5-factor model is fitted to the data to see if it fits well and that the factors really do look like they correspond to sprinting speed, jumping ability, etc.

The caveat however is that while it might be tempting to use the exploratory method of FA and let the data generate the FA model, in fact exploratory FA tends to work quite poorly. That is, while it will often lead to a FA model involving fewer factors than the original number of variables and while those factors may be interpretable, the evidence from studies of exploratory FA is that it very often fails to identify the true

model that generated the data. Instead, it may lead to another model that is also consistent with the data, but which has no real validity. Confirmatory FA, however, tends to work much better; that is, if a model can be posited, FA is fairly good at saying whether or not the data are consistent with that model.

In terms of the current study, one way to try to characterize the “ethos” of any one of the churches would be to identify a set of survey items (the variables) which may be measures of some underlying factors such as “engagement of the congregation in church programs,” “conservatism,” “evangelism,” and so on, and then try to run a FA on these variables (Hall 2005).

Hall alludes to the importance of identifying variables, that is, hypothesizing a set of factors that might correspond to a certain set of survey items and then running a confirmatory FA on them. In fact, in the present study, hypothesizing was not entirely necessary. Sider et al. (2002: 16) write:

Holistic congregations can take many forms, but they share certain attributes in common: a *holistic understanding of the church’s mission*; *dynamic spirituality*; *healthy congregational dynamics*; and *holistic ministry practice* (emphasis added).

A review of the survey instrument demonstrated, as will be shown, that the four attributes identified by Sider et al. lent themselves well as broad headings to blocks of information contained therein. Since it is posited, however, that the common beliefs held by a congregation may contribute significantly to that congregation’s ethos, a fifth attribute, *Shared Beliefs*, was proposed for the purposes of this study. These five attributes, or variables – i.e. holistic understanding of the church’s mission, dynamic spirituality, healthy congregational dynamics, holistic ministry practice, and shared beliefs – will be referred to as the “Core Variables.” Table 5.1 shows the core variables and the question groups they are associated with.

TABLE 5.1

QUESTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH “CORE VARIABLES”

Core Variable / # factors		Broadly identified by respondents to
Holistic understanding of the church’s mission/ 16		Survey question n 20
Dynamic spirituality/ 13		Survey question n 14
Healthy congregational		Survey question n 19



	dynamic s/ 8	
	Holistic ministry practice/ 13	Survey questio n 18*
	Shared Beliefs/ 13	Survey questio n 21
* But note that questions 18a and 18b, which relate to worship style, were removed as factors as not being significant to holistic ministry practice.		

### 5.2.2 Procedure

While some questions, such as question 16 (the perception of training in a number of areas) required individual approaches, the balance of question responses in the Church & Ministry Involvement Questionnaire largely fell into one of three categories:

1. Questions such as gender, employment status, church vs. Sunday school attendance, and yes/no questions. These invited categorical responses. In some cases, the responses were combined into categories reflecting specific underlying construct. These responses were analyzed first and chi-square tests were typically used to determine if the five churches in each block held consistent responses.
2. Questions involving ranked data including age and time-related questions. These were the second set of responses addressed and a Kruskal-Wallis test was employed in these situations to determine differences between median age groups.
3. Questions with a series of sub-questions, (i.e. questions 14, 18, 19, 20, 21 – the “core variable” questions). These required a more in-depth approach. First, a measurement of internal consistency (coefficient alpha) was employed to determine the degree to which items within each question correlated with one another. If necessary, a sub-question or two was removed if it was deemed to be inconsistent with the others. Second, an analysis of variance was performed on the mean response to determine consistency between churches. Next, each of the holistic churches was scored for each core variable to give a mean and the scores were then compared across the five holistic churches to see if there was some consistency.

Subsequent to the analyses described, the additional variables of responses to questions 1 (age), 2 (gender), 3 (marital status), and 10 (single main reason the respondent remains involved with the church) were each separately added to the core variables mix to see if, and to what extent, they impacted the previously developed scores/means. The additional variable related to being informed about local, national and international events, (identified as the attribute “Social Awareness,” comprising responses to questions 5 and 6 on the survey), was similarly analyzed, the objective being to discover if there was any relationship between community ministry and knowledge of current events. Question 16, relating to training opportunities, was likewise reviewed for any relationship between such specialized training and outreach ministry. The same procedure was then followed for the non-holistic churches.

Before going directly to the results, it must be pointed out that one of the shortcomings of the survey developed and used in this study emerged as analysis began. This shortcoming was the difference in information a question was intended to provide and the way the question was understood and the response it elicited. A prime example is question 13, “Do you routinely engage in outreach ministries?” The high level of “Yes” responses (77% in holistic churches) is as much a result of the unqualified nature of the word “routine” – which can be interpreted as any one of daily, weekly, monthly, annually, or indeed any regular and repetitive cycle – as it is of a natural human desire to over-report those actions perceived to be “good.” This fact was highlighted during interviews with holistic congregations in which it was discovered that far from the high levels of congregational involvement in community ministry suggested, in essence the so-called 80/20 rule applied – that is, that 20% of the people did 80% of the work. Indeed,

even this number overstates the case since during the interviews only one holistic church reported engagement in outreach ministry to the immediate community at levels greater than 15% of the active membership. This point is raised because very often, with regard to the questions discussed below, the differences between holistic and non-holistic churches, while “statistically significant,” appear very small. In light of the fact that even very low numbers of congregational participation in community ministry made a church “holistic,” it would thus be a mistake to read “very small” as “not a contributing factor.”

### **5.2.3 Results**

A glance at the reports (Appendix 4) will show that survey responses were consistently inconsistent among the five churches in each group, meaning that no particular characteristic, or set of characteristics, emerged to suggest that any single holistic church would work as a paradigm of holism, nor that any characteristic or set of characteristics of any single non-holistic church could be supported as a paradigm for non-holism. Thus the next step was to determine the characteristics that holistic churches contained as a group, and that appeared to be absent in the non-holistic churches, as a group.

To make this determination the individual mean responses to each survey question, as obtained from holistic churches, were assembled into a mean for all holistic churches. The result was then compared to a similarly-derived mean for the non-holistic churches. Table 5.2 summarizes the responses by both groups of churches to all the survey questions and highlights those where there are statistically significant differences.

TABLE 5.2

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM HOLISTIC CHURCHES

Question	Topic	Summary Holistic Churches	Significant Difference to non- holistic churches
1	Age	The preponderance of church members are aged 46 or older	No
2	Gender	60% of Respondents are female	No
3	Marital Status	Low "Domestic partner" numbers vs. non-holistic churches	<b>Yes</b>
4	Employment	45% in f/t employment; 35% retired	No
5	News Access (print)	Low subscription rate vs. non-holistic churches	<b>Yes</b>
6	News Access (T.V.)	66% watch daily	No
7	Residency	57% of respondents reported living in the "general area" for 20+ years	No
8	Duration of church membership	With the exception of Druid Hills Baptist, the majority of folk (nearly 90%) have been members of their church for 10+ years	<b>Yes</b>
9	Commute time to church	44% drive 15-30 minutes to church	No
10	Reasons for remaining involved with church	"Individual fulfillment" is the dominant reason for remaining involved with the church	No
11	Church Attendance	66% attend both SS and worship services	No
12	Participation in ministry outreach last 12 months	78% of respondents claim participation in outreach during the last 12 month period.	<b>Yes</b>
13	Routine engagement in outreach	82% claim to be "routinely engaged"	No
14	Reasons for doing outreach	High mean responses	<b>Yes</b>
15	Reasons for not doing outreach	About 60% are not involved in outreach ministry	No
16	Specialized training opportunities	Relatively high number of respondents claim training available in 6 of the 8 areas	No
17	Pastoral Leadership style	Pastoral leadership is more likely to be "hands off," delegating responsibilities to lay leaders.	<b>Yes</b>
18	Phrases describing the church	The median responses indicate a general agreement that the phrases describe the church	No
19	Church organization	Median response is on the "excellent" side of "good"	<b>Yes</b>
20	Congregational Priorities	Median responses fall on the "high" side of "medium priority."	<b>Yes</b>
21	Beliefs	Question 21b, g, h, j highlighted	<b>Yes</b>

These highlighted questions were then further examined to see what information they provided toward an assertion of holistic character. Questions 9, 10, and 16, while not identified in the comparison as statistically significant, have been added to the following discussion because, as will be shown, they provide information germane to the analysis.

**Question 3: Marital Status.**

A far higher percentage (71.3 vs. 53.8) of folk in holistic churches report being married and a higher percentage of folk (15.9 vs. 1.7) in non-holistic churches report being in a “domestic partnership.” When “domestic partnership” is collapsed into “married,” however, the difference ceases to exist.

**Question 5: News Access.**

This question (and the one following in the survey, having to do with Television news access, in which there was no statistically significant difference) was included in the survey to see if a general awareness of local, state, national and world affairs impacted community ministry. A result showing a high correlation between news access and ministry may have indicated that increased awareness of need increased the impetus for action. The actual result – 36% of respondents from non-holistic churches report subscriptions to both newspapers and national news magazines, versus 25% from holistic churches – is ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations.

**Question 8: Length of time attending current church.**

More than half (56%) of the respondents from holistic churches report being members of their churches for more than ten years, as opposed to 40% in the non-holistic churches. Exactly what the correlation is between length of membership and outreach

ministry is not clear, but may be grounds for believing that the stable financial and human resource platform a long-term congregation provides is a key underlying element of such activity.

**Question 9: Commute time to church.**

Although it appears that a higher percentage (44% vs. 28%) of holistic church members drive 15 to 30 minutes one-way to church it should be noted that one of the five holistic churches – Central Presbyterian – is located in the heart of downtown Atlanta and three others – Druid Hills Baptist, Christian Fellowship Baptist and East Cobb UMC – are located in urban areas, whereas of the non-holistic churches only St. Mark UMC is urban, while all the others are suburban. That there is, however, reason to believe certain members of holistic churches will drive further to go to church was borne out in subsequent interviews, wherein such people asserted that their membership of the church was primarily predicated on the church's outreach ministry activities rather than the proximity of the church to their home.

**Question 10: Single main reason to remain involved with church.**

1. Although the three most common responses from holistic and non-holistic churches are the same, there is a considerable statistical difference between the percentages of responses for each question, as table 5.3 shows. This question permitted only one response out of eleven. While the majority of non-holistic responses (70%) clustered around responses c, (I grow spiritually at this church), d, (I feel the presence of the Spirit in this church) and f, (I feel this church is under the leadership of Jesus), those same responses from holistic churches garnered only 54%, with the largest part of the balance going to responses a, (Church social

TABLE 5.3

## Q. 10: SINGLE MAIN REASON TO REMAIN INVOLVED WITH CHURCH

Response #	Response Description	Number of Respondents: Holistic Churches	Number of Respondents: Non-Holistic Churches
C	“I grow spiritually at this church”	75 (22%)	49 (25%)
D	“I feel the presence of the Spirit in this church”	57 (16%)	48 (25%)
F	“I feel this church is under the leadership of Jesus”	55 (16%)	40 (21%)
Total		187 (54%)	137 (71%)



ministry/ community outreach, 10%) and j, (The Church's Theological or Religious orientation, 8%), in holistic, as opposed to 6% and 5% respectively in non-holistic churches. With particular regard to "Church social ministry/ community outreach," these responses, sufficiently different to be statistically significant, suggest the presence in the holistic church congregation of a slightly larger number of folk for whom outreach ministry is their major reason for remaining involved with the church. Taken by itself this result may not be particularly meaningful, but it may have some bearing when combined with other characteristics of holistic churches.

2. More folk in non-holistic churches (70% vs. 54%) report "fulfillment" (a combination of Q.10 responses c, d, and f) as their reason to remain involved with their church. Holistic congregants have slightly higher responses to reasons related to "denomination" (combined b, g, and j, 16% vs. 10%) and to "outreach" (combined a, e, i, and h, 16% vs. 12.4%).

3. In an attempt to see if different combinations of responses might yield additional information, responses were first grouped under motivations linked to "denomination" (b, g, j), "outreach ministry" (a, e, i, h), "fulfillment" (c, d, f) and "other" (f); and then as "church-oriented motivations" (a, b, e, g, i, j), "personal" (c, d, f, h) and "other" (k). Such combinations, however, did not highlight any significant differences.

### **Question 12: Community Outreach participation in last 12 months.**

The statistical differences between holistic and non-holistic churches in the responses to this question are unsurprising since they were the basis on which these

churches were selected for study. What is surprising is that while the Holistic congregations responded 78% “yes,” an anticipated response, respondents from the non-holistic churches also claimed, at 67%, a relatively high degree of outreach. A reason such a high level of engagement could be asserted by these churches was clarified in subsequent interviews, as follows: All of the non-holistic churches surveyed hold seasonal festivals that are open to the secular community. Although these events, held on the church grounds, are intended to draw folk in, they are claimed as “outreach” activities and it is the significant demands these events make on the human resource of the congregation that lead to the elevated response to this survey question.

**Question 14: Reasons for doing outreach ministry.**

Analysis of responses to the varied reasons for doing ministry posed here is necessarily more subtle. The nature of this question is such that all respondents are likely to respond more toward “very important” than to “not at all important.” That they do not indicate that they are *all* “very important,” and the extents to which they fall away from that category are possible clues to an underlying ethos. In this regard, holistic and non-holistic churches have similar low responses to “very important #1,” but then holistic churches tend to cluster more around “very important #2”, whereas the non-holistic churches shift, albeit only slightly, toward “somewhat important #3.” The reduced stress non-holistic churches place on importance of individual reasons probably has much to do with the vicarious method by which outreach ministry in such churches is executed, with the concomitant thinking that the third party, as “expert” in ministry, has the best idea of the degree of importance that should be ascribed to each discrete reason. In addition, analysis of other survey responses and information about church ministry motivation

gleaned from interviews suggest that outreach ministry, especially to the local community, is not a high priority in non-holistic churches.

**Question 16: Specialized Training.**

This question was asked against the background of certain knowledge that none of the churches offered any formal training in any of the areas detailed on the survey. The intent was to discover the perceived level and extent of informal training available in the church intended to prepare congregants for various activities associated with outreach ministry. More than 50% of respondents in holistic and non holistic churches indicate that training in most of the areas listed (and others that are not) is available. The exceptions are Lay Leadership for non-holistic churches (a marginal response, in that the “yes” and “no” responses are about equally divided) and Lay Leadership and Ministry to the Homeless for holistic churches (which show a definite leaning in favor of “no” responses). In light of subsequent congregational interviews which seem to show that non-holistic churches intentionally de-emphasize community ministry, a question that emerges is, “Why do congregations not focused on community ministry nevertheless claim to have available to them training directed toward such ministry?” Again, subsequent interviews with these congregations clarified the issue: First, any formal Sunday school teaching or pulpit preaching that has as its core an emphasis on the topics listed is considered “training” in that topic; second, the Bible itself is understood to be in some respects a document that provides training on every aspect of engagement of the community of the “saved” with the secular world. Thus reading and studying the Bible, individually and in groups, is considered in a way to be receiving training in all fields of human endeavor, including outreach ministry.

**Question 17: “Hands on” or “Hands off” pastoral leadership.**

Although the variance between them is statistically significant, both holistic and non-holistic church respondents claim high degrees of “hands off” ministry (73% and 82% respectively). Even though this is of course a subjective response, reflective of a perception rather than a reality, there is some evidence that the pastors of holistic churches are slightly more engaged with the various activities of their congregations than pastors of non-holistic churches. Exactly how this engagement is exercised is not clear, but subsequent interviews with the pastoral leadership of the various churches indicated that although among the holistic congregations outreach ministry programs enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy, the pastor was generally very conscious of, and even directly involved in, some ministries and strongly promoted congregational involvement in all the ministries of the church. Such promotional activities may be what give rise to the perception of a higher degree of pastoral management in these churches.

**Question 19: Rating organizational issues.**

This question suffers from the same inherent problem as question 14 in that respondents might consider themselves being unfaithful or disloyal if, even considering the anonymous nature of the survey, they make any claims about the church that may be seen as negative. Nevertheless, differences in responses from holistic and non-holistic churches are evident and may suggest some slight variation in underlying character or ethos. Mean responses for the holistic churches cluster around “good,” with responses evenly balanced on either side; for the non-holistic churches, mean responses edge slightly more toward “fair,” with a slight preponderance of responses on the “fair” side of the mean. When combined with responses to question 17, the implication is that holistic

churches are slightly more organized and under slightly higher pastoral oversight than non-holistic churches.

**Question 20: Congregational Priorities.**

As with Questions 14 and 19, in which the desire to put one's church in the "best light" might influence responses, the nature of the sub-questions here invite human nature to intervene. The fact that once again, however, there are consistent differences between holistic and non-holistic churches in terms of responses suggests that there is some underlying character difference between the two types of congregations, although the exact nature of that difference is not clear. What can be said is that the mean response for holistic churches and the responses in general, cluster in an area slightly higher than those for the non-holistic churches. That is, the holistic churches tend to apply a "statistically significant" tendency toward higher priority of the listed ministries overall than do the non-holistic churches. This finding is supported by responses to question 21b (see below), which suggests that non-holistic churches rely more heavily on a ministry of words than a ministry of action and is further supported by evidence gleaned from interviews, which suggests that while non-holistic churches have an interest in community ministry, such ministry is not considered as high a priority as is such ministry to members of the church's Christian community.

**Question 21: Questions about beliefs.**

This question posed some analytical difficulties. Although it was identified as a "core variable" question (Table 5.1), the internal consistency of the sub-questions was extremely weak. This meant that rather than summarizing responses into a mean, each response to each sub-question had to be studied individually. Thus, rather than a "trend"

developed from responses, only responses to discrete questions could be analyzed. Such analysis determined that there were four questions with statistically significant differences between holistic and non-holistic churches: sub-questions b, g, h, and j.

**Sub-question b: “The way to share God’s love is by telling them about Jesus,” vs. “the way to share God’s love with people is to demonstrate it with caring actions.”**

When responses 4 and 5 are combined, fully 79% of holistic-church respondents agreed with the second statement as opposed to 62% of non-holistic church respondents. Conversely, 14% of holistic-church respondents agreed with the first statement (1 and 2 combined) as opposed to 25% of non-holistic churches. The responses here indicate a very strong divide between holistic (actions) and non-holistic (words) churches in terms of attitudes toward and strategies to engage ministry. Clearly both types of churches use both strategies, but the stress each type of church puts on each strategy is significantly different.

**Sub-question g: “Poverty is largely due to a person’s immoral lifestyle, laziness, or drugs,” vs. “Poverty is largely due to social, economic, and political factors, racism, and lack of good jobs.”**

Of holistic churches, 45% agreed wholly with the second statement as opposed to 32% of non-holistic churches. If responses 4 & 5 are combined the percentages are 77% vs. 63% respectively. That there is a significant difference in attitude between the two church types when it comes to considering reasons surrounding indigence is very evident.

**Sub-question h: “Christian ministry should be directed mainly to other members of the Christian faith,” vs. “Christian ministry should be directed to all members of society.”**

Again, 68% of holistic churches agreed with the second statement as opposed to 61% of non-holistic churches and if responses 4 and 5 are combined, the percentages are

92% vs. 84% respectively. Although the difference is small, non-holistic churches have a statistically significant reduced interest in ministry outside the Christian community, in favor of ministry to those who are “in the family.”

**Sub-question j: “Any church’s social action should be directed to all who are in need in the world,” vs. “Any church’s social action should be directed primarily toward its local community.”**

Some 38% of holistic churches agreed with the first statement, as opposed to 30% of non-holistic churches. If responses 1 and 2 are combined, the numbers change to 62% and 48% respectively.

This is an interesting result in light of the fact that holistic churches predominantly focus on community ministry, whereas non-holistic churches tend to shun hands-on, community ministries in favor of those they can support at a distance or through a third party. One reason the response may appear the way it does is the way the question might have been interpreted; a holistically-minded respondent, not wanting to imply that ministry to the local community excludes global ministry, will choose the response “all who are in need in the world” because “all” necessarily includes the local community.

#### **5.2.4 Characteristics identified from Surveys: Preliminary Conclusions.**

Nine congregational characteristics were deduced from the questions discussed in section 5.2.3, as follows:

##### **5.2.4.1 Church Membership**

Although the actual meaning is obscure, long-term (10+ years) membership seems to play some role in the development of holism, at least as it applies to outreach. At least two possibilities may be considered: first, that long-term membership provides a

stable “platform” from which to conduct community ministry; second, that it can, in some cases, take several years for a congregation to reach a level of comfort within its own community before it feels in some way prepared to reach outside of itself.

#### 5.2.4.2 Ministry Emphasis and Opportunity

The holistic churches stress the importance of outreach and offer extensive opportunities for persons to engage in such ministries. People attracted to or desirous of engaging community outreach ministry were drawn to join a church that offers such ministry opportunities even though doing so meant, in some cases, driving considerable distances, or for lengthy periods.

#### 5.2.4.3 Pastoral Oversight

Although pastors of holistic churches are largely perceived to be “hands off,” they are only slightly less so than their non-holistic peers. Another way to say this is that pastors in holistic churches tend to a slightly higher managerial oversight than those in a non-holistic setting, although such management tends to present itself less as formal management and more as what may be termed “concerned interest.”

#### 5.2.4.4 Ministry Structures

The holistic churches are rather better organized, especially in terms of structures for identifying, authenticating, and administering outreach programs.

#### 5.2.4.5 Ministry Training

The holistic churches offer somewhat more in terms of specialized – albeit informal – training in a broad range of areas than do the non-holistic churches. Considering the lack of holistic ministry in non-holistic churches, this result is not surprising.



#### 5.2.4.6 Local Outreach and Personal Involvement

The holistic churches place a high priority on the importance of outreach ministries to the local community and on the need for individuals to become personally involved in such ministries.

#### 5.2.4.7 Congregational Support

Members of the holistic church families believe that “actions speak louder than words” and where they cannot themselves be actively involved in community ministry, they enthusiastically support others in the congregation in their efforts to do so.

#### 5.2.4.8 Focus on Poverty

The holistic congregations believe strongly that poverty is usually not a voluntary condition and will engage in, support and encourage a variety of programs intended to help the poor.

#### 5.2.4.9 Ministry to All

The holistic congregations believe that ministry is a global need, but that emphasis should be placed on the immediate community and should be applied regardless of the religious affiliation or lack thereof on the part of recipients.

To provide a complete picture of the characteristics of holism in terms of the churches studied, the results of the objectively determined characteristics of holism just described must be reviewed in the light of the subjective analysis detailed in chapter four and summarized in the next section.

### 5.3. SUBJECTIVE RESULTS

*Jesus [...] formed a community. This community has as its heart the remembering and rehearsing of his words and deeds, and the sacraments given by him through which it is enabled both to engraft new members into its life and renew this life again and again through sharing in his life through the body broken and the lifeblood poured out. It exists in him and for him. He is the center of its life. Its character is given to it, when it is true to its nature, not by the characters of its members but by his character.*

*[I]n the Synoptic gospels, the mighty works of Jesus are the work of God's kingly power, of his Spirit. So also with the disciples. It is the Spirit who will give them power and the Spirit who will bear witness. It is not that they must speak and act, asking the help of the Spirit to do so. It is rather in their faithfulness to Jesus they become the place where the Spirit speaks and acts.*

*(Newbigin 1989: 118, 119 cf. above p. 8)*

Chapter one of this study describes the findings of Bayer (2001) regarding “Christendom” and “post-Christendom” churches. A primary observation developed through the interview process was that churches discovered to be “non-holistic” exactly fit Bayer’s “Christendom” model and holistic churches similarly fit his “post-Christendom” description. The focus of this study being community outreach, the question of course is what are the characteristics that lie behind these descriptions? Some basic information relating to this question has been provided by objective data derived from surveys conducted in a range of churches, as noted above. The purpose of this section is to add to those data the subjective material provided through interviews conducted in those same churches. These interviews identified the following core characteristics.

#### **5.3.1 Characteristics identified through Interviews: Preliminary conclusions and commentary.**

##### 5.3.1.1 Centrality of Jesus.

All the churches studied consistently underscored the centrality of Jesus, but the way such centrality was understood differed significantly between the holistic and non-

holistic congregations. The holistic congregations largely comprise folk whose lives are lived with constant reference to the life words, actions and instructions of Jesus. While fully acknowledging his redemptive death, holistic folk take Jesus' life – understood as a life of preaching, teaching, and healing and largely lived on the margins of society – not only as exemplary of how their own lives are to be lived, but as conduct to be urgently engaged through ministries in and to the wider community. For such folk “salvation” results in a drive to action. The non-holistic congregations, on the other hand, while acknowledging the words and actions of Jesus' life as important and instructive, nevertheless put much greater emphasis on his atoning death (“the blood”) and resurrection and the redemption they enjoy through faith in him, a perspective that materializes, in terms of church praxis, as a significantly reduced emphasis on local outreach ministry.

There is a caveat to this observation, however, in that not all members of all non-holistic congregations believe that community ministry should receive reduced emphasis. Some of them want their churches to engage the community and feel in some ways that their churches and their individual lives are incomplete in their function when they fail to do so. The problem for them is that their non-holistic church homes do not provide the necessary structures for such ministry (see 5.3.1.10) and the balance of their churches' theology and practice is sufficiently meaningful for them to remain where they are rather than move to a church where their desire to participate in outreach ministry might be fulfilled. Some folk in these churches, still desiring to do something for their community, seek relief of their ministry yearnings by joining secular organizations such as community associations, neighborhood watch or beautification committees and the like;

activities that feed their inner desire to engage their community without the necessity of finding a different church home.

#### 5.3.1.2 The Holy Spirit

While the initial desire by an individual to engage outreach ministry has many sources (see 5.3.1.3), there is consensus that the kinds of ministries identified and engaged, the resources necessary to support it and the strength to remain engaged with it were aspects directly attributable the Holy Spirit. For example, the first aspect, identification, would commonly be experienced through a time, or moment, of “insight,” when an individual or group, such as a Sunday school group, would become aware of a particular need in the secular community. Resources, strategies and funding then become available in ways that are easily explained in purely rational terms, perhaps, but are nevertheless ascribed in some way to the intervention of the Spirit. Finally persons who engage in outreach ministry describe a sense that ministry in some emotional way “completes” them, that they are made “whole” through their actions. These feelings are often so sufficiently rewarding that they overcome tiredness or negativity, supplying ministry providers the strength to remain engaged long beyond the period that might be expected if the motivation were purely humanitarian.

#### 5.3.1.3 Motivations for Ministry

In most cases, people report being driven to outreach ministry by one or more of the following:

- **Doing what Jesus did:** a belief that Jesus’ life of ministry is a model to follow.
- **Biblical mandate:** following the various examples of and commands to ministry contained in the gospels.

- **Following the leadership of the Spirit:** The leadership of the Spirit manifests in two ways. First, in a sense that in some way the individual has been “led” to a life of ministry; second, that such ministry may be identified as being under the leadership of the Spirit when it transcends a brief, occasional and easily fulfilled sense of human responsibility (the so-called “humanitarian” motivation) to become a long-term ministry engagement which is demanding on a number of levels (for example, taking time away from family and/or social life) and whose specific purpose is to be a hermeneutic of the gospel.
- **Altruism/ a desire to serve:** a natural or intrinsic desire to be of service to others. Some people who fell into this category added that “service” to others was a characteristic instilled in their formative years.
- **Repaying the church:** This motivation was largely articulated by folk who were reformed, or reforming, from substance abuse as a result of help and counseling provided by the church, or by folk accepted into the church despite their different sexual orientation. It should be noted though that although the sense of repayment may have been the initial motivator, it is the leadership of the Spirit that is credited with maintaining the desire and individual ability to remain engaged long-term with the outreach ministries of the church.
- **Experiencing the Holy.** Some folk engaged ministry because they felt that by doing so they were standing on sacred ground and experiencing the holy; and while they felt the experience was in some ways frightening, they also felt sanctified, or set apart, by their work.

It is particularly interesting to note that these characteristics, central to outreach ministry in holistic congregations, are shared by some respondents in non-holistic church families. Why this does not result in non-holistic churches becoming holistic was addressed in 5.3.1.1

#### 5.3.1.4 Purpose

For holistic congregations, community ministry is not done to bring people into the church. Rather, the purpose is to be the “good news” of the gospel as a theology of action rather than of words, exercised by giving shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and a voice to the indigent and the intention is to bring relief to souls rather than bring souls into the church. That some people come into the church as a result of this work is a pleasing consequence, but the essential purpose of community ministry is, for holistic congregations, to “be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole life of society” (Newbigin 1989: 233). The holistic perspective on community ministry is to address the essential physical and emotional needs of individuals and trust that by grace the Spirit will in some way manifest through these actions and bring to salvation those whom it will. Thus saved and unsaved are equally housed, fed, and given voice in, by and through holistic congregations. The contrary view, generally held by non-holistic churches, is to focus only on the winning of souls, with the corollary understanding that saved souls will be equipped by the Spirit to help themselves out of homelessness and hunger, rejoin mainstream society and thereby once again have voice in the community.

#### 5.3.1.5 Unrestricted Outreach

Individuals in Holistic congregations believe that acknowledging Jesus as Lord is also acknowledgement of a call to the service of all people in need, in all places of the world, without restriction. The intrinsic rewards of local ministry, however, (see section 5.3.2) result in a high local manifestation of such ministry.

#### 5.3.1.6 Active Outreach

Active Outreach is a key feature of holistic congregations. It is the realization of intentionality in ministry and manifests as the active seeking out of those in need. Passive Outreach, in contrast, avoids looking for those in need, but is willing to help those who, as it were, come to the church door looking for aid. It is the difference between merely helping the needy that are encountered haphazardly and actively and intentionally seeking out those in need.

#### 5.3.1.7 Holism and Congregational Support

It is quite clear that the adjective “holistic,” with particular reference to a church and its community ministry, is somewhat complex. As has been noted elsewhere in this study, a commonplace of reference to any division of labor in social organizations is that often, 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Churches are not exempt from this rule: in fact, in only one of the congregations interviewed did it appear that more than 15% of the congregation were actually directly caught up in outreach ministry at any given time (East Cobb UMC is the exception, with interviewees reporting as many as 50% thus involved, although the church’s pastors agree on a much lower, but still significantly high, 30%). This does not mean that the balance of the congregation is disinterested, however. Rather, the 15% are doing what many of the 85% are unable to do because of

age, family or time commitments, or other activities or obligations that preclude their direct involvement. Indeed, some are already involved in other ministries of the church. What most of the 85% do contribute is a shared belief in the importance of community ministry and an environment of approval, praise and enthusiastic prayerful and financial support for it. Thus, although community ministry manifests as a function of the few, it is in fact an expression of the holistic nature of the larger congregation.

#### 5.3.1.8 Overburdening

One negative aspect of the 80/20 rule is “burnout.” Regardless of congregational prayer and financial support, there can come a time when folk engaged in ministry (and this observation is not limited to outreach) feel stretched to the limit. This usually occurs when the same ministry is consistently engaged by the same small percentage of the congregation, or when the same people are asked to fill multiple roles. A way holistic churches have found to ease the burden is to involve more people through personal invitation (see 5.3.1.12). Also, holistic churches have found a way to balance the ministry *of* an individual with ministry *to* the individual, for example by providing variety in the ministry experience by rotating individuals through various aspects of a particular ministry, by rotating people through a variety of ministries, by requiring that they take a sabbatical from ministry, or some combination.

#### 5.3.1.9 Pastoral Leadership

The role of the pastor in terms of ministry to the local community by each of the ten churches is, overall, quite varied. In terms of holistic churches, for example, in one instance outreach ministry has been the direct result of the pastor’s initial efforts. In another, the pastor has re-awakened a dormant desire or nurtured an incipient inclination



by the congregation of interest in the welfare of the secular community. In a third case, rather than leading the congregation, the pastor's actions in community ministry give further expression to the already existing will and action of the congregation. One commonality pastors of holistic churches share is a constant promotion and reinforcement of the importance of community ministry as both a biblical mandate and a social responsibility. Within the context of holistic churches it should be noted that, in most cases, when the motivation for community ministry has been, as it were, "let out of the box," it tends to stay out. That is, once a congregation engages the idea, a change in pastors, while it may bring a change in emphasis, or focus, tends not to inhibit existing outreach ministries.

On the other hand, the mindset of folk attracted to non-holistic churches is, by and large, to defer to the leadership of the pastor and it has already been noted that in non-holistic churches a reduced emphasis on ministry in the immediate community has largely been derived from a theological position related to a particular understanding of the centrality of Jesus in the life of the church. Pastoral and/or church leadership adherence to this view tends to passively impede ideas and actions related to ministry within the secular community that may emerge from members of the congregation, a situation compounded by the lack of specific structures within the church that would facilitate such ministries.

#### 5.3.1.10 Organizational Structure

Holistic churches recognize that unrestrained engagement in community ministry can take a church in multiple directions and rapidly drain financial and human resources. While the organizational processes for ministry engagement varied among them in detail,

holistic churches generally have some kind of oversight board/committee for the “authentication” of identified ministries, as well for limiting outreach to those forms of community ministry adopted by the congregation. Authority for funding and oversight of such congregationally endorsed ministries generally falls under the purview of the same group, which will have a congregationally-approved annual budget. So-called “Maverick” ministries – outreach programs outside of those routinely adopted and funded by the congregation as a whole, are funded and resourced through the groups that identify such ministries: Sunday school classes, “brotherhoods,” and the like.

#### 5.3.1.11 Qualifications

The combined knowledge of the holistic churches studied suggests the importance of only electing a person or a group to jobs they are qualified to do. While it may seem obvious that people put in positions of responsibility must have the necessary financial, organizational, management, physical, or other skills to be effective in their various roles and equally obvious that if unqualified or inexperienced persons are put in positions of responsibility, the ministries may languish and perhaps altogether fail, it is important on the other hand to give people the opportunity to exercise what they think may be their spiritual gifts (see 5.3.1.13). What these apparently contradictory positions have caused the holistic churches studied to put in place is a method of holding both ministry practitioners and ministry leaders accountable for their actions and intervening if those actions appear to be contrary to the mandate specific to the ministry engaged.

#### 5.3.1.12 Inviting Participation

It is the clear experience of holistic churches that open invitations to a congregation to engage in ministry rarely work. More often what is needed is a personal

request to be involved, accompanied by the reason(s) the person approached is thought to be ideal for a particular role. Volunteers, on the other hand, are almost invariably utilized and allowed to find their own place within the ministry, the general assumption being that the Spirit has motivated them and thus that the Spirit will help them to find their position within a particular ministry. Both instances remain subject to the rules of accountability (5.3.1.11).

#### 5.3.1.13 Spiritual Gifts

Holistic churches have recognized that spiritual gifts are not always the same as professional career training. Being an accountant by training, for example, is not necessarily a spiritual gift to be dedicated to the service of the church any more than is being a skilled plumber or a competent painter. These are things people do for a living, but are not necessarily gifts of the spirit. Instead, a trained accountant may be a gifted carpenter; a journeyman plumber might be gifted with an extraordinary singing voice; and a skilled painter might be gifted with excellent organizational skills. In holistic churches, people are encouraged to open themselves up to self-exploration of undeveloped interests in the expectation that somewhere among those interests is one, or perhaps more than one, that can be nurtured by the Spirit for the use of the church.

#### 5.3.1.14 Ecumenism

Holistic congregations are sufficiently comfortable and self-assured with who they are and what they are as a church and as a community that they are not afraid to cross denominational or religious boundaries if doing so amplifies their community efforts. In such instances, issues of theology, doctrine, religious practice and other often divisive matters are set aside in favor of a common focus on the welfare of folk in the

immediate secular community. Non-holistic congregations, on the other hand, tend to stick fairly closely to groups and associations sharing a common theological perspective and practice.

#### 5.3.1.15 Young People

While all ten churches acknowledge the presence of youth within their congregations by having ministries oriented toward them, holistic congregations tend to be proactive in involving their youth in the church's wider ministries, both in a capacity that allows the young people to be made aware, through their representative presence on various boards and committees, of what is going on in the church and similarly, in some cases at least, in an advisory capacity to let the various boards and committees know what is going on with the youth of the church. Further, specific outreach ministries oriented to the postmodern characteristic of contemporary youth are developed both by the young people themselves and by youth ministers, to keep the young people involved in their own way with the church's various activities in the community.

### 5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this study was to identify and define the underlying characteristics of five congregations that engage in holistic ministry anticipating, as the research hypothesis in chapter one states, that "If there is an ethos common to congregations that engage in holistic ministry, and if it can be discerned, generalization of that ethos will help other churches make a difference in their communities." This study has demonstrated that there are indeed a number of factors, the application of which may contribute to an ethos of holism in a given church. It remains here to make a few concluding remarks.

#### 5.4.1 No Observed “Postmodern” Problem

It was thought at the outset that the developing attitudes of contemporary society captured in the expression “postmodern” would be a major factor impacting the holistic nature of the church. The study suggests differently. There is a general absence of a “postmodern problem” – within the strict terms of outreach ministry – in the churches studied. To be sure, the church is increasingly having to make accommodation for postmoderns in its faith community; East Cobb UMC, for example, has adapted to the transient attention of its youth group by designing short-term outreach ministries. Accommodations in general though, rather than impacting outreach ministry, focus more on adapting the traditional structures of faith and worship to the postmodern character without alienating the more conservative members of the church family. These adaptations usually emerge in one of three ways: by having completely separate services each week that speak to the differing needs of conservative and postmodern (usually referred to as “Traditional” and “Contemporary” services), by holding Traditional and Contemporary services on a rotating schedule, or by mixing a little “Contemporary” worship in with “Traditional,” or vice versa. Accommodations in terms of faith are a little harder to quantify, but the study shows a strong case could be made that a willingness to revisit traditional approaches to the overall nature of being and doing church for the dual purpose of increasing the church’s relevance to postmoderns and constructive usefulness in and to society is fundamental to holism. For example, historically many churches have traditionally developed a standard, or set of standards, related to human behavior to determine who is “in” the fellowship of the saved and who is not. Such standards, by which and through which it is believed an individual’s “true”

adherence to the Christian faith can be determined, include tobacco and alcohol use, a history of divorce, the kind of attire worn to church, non-traditional sexual mores, whether or not an individual has a “correct” understanding of the scriptures, the kind of employment individuals engage in, regularity of attendance in church, and whether or not the individual practices true tithing. Churches that employ these standards claim biblical support, which is often found in a narrow interpretation of a single, frequently obscure text. Where the development and application of standards of this kind have been part of their history, holistic congregations – and their pastoral leadership – have revisited them and, if not abandoning them altogether, at least embrace a softer interpretation of the texts in question, being guided more by an inclusivist interpretation of the New Testament as a whole rather than by a narrow, exclusivist application of particular texts.

#### **5.4.2 Desire versus Ability to “Engage” Community**

The study was undertaken in the belief that as a general rule, churches failing to engage their communities were not failing as a matter of desire, but rather of ability; they wanted to practice community ministry but in some way lacked an element, or elements, of congregational ethos critical to that end. This study has demonstrated the naïveté of that belief by illuminating the reality that there are in fact churches for whom community ministry, while sometimes a matter of some importance to at least a portion of the congregation, is not a matter intrinsic to the overall theology or doctrine of such churches and thus their practice. For these churches community engagement, or the lack of it, is a non-issue; their focus is elsewhere. Nevertheless, that there are some churches that wish to be more involved in community ministry but lack some particular element or elements of holism is demonstrated in the cases of St. Mark UMC and St. Andrews Presbyterian,

both churches being on the brink, as it were, but in some way lacking the catalyst to bring holism into being.

### **5.4.3 Interpreting the Life of Jesus**

The words and works of Jesus are clearly what place him at the center of a holistic church's faith and life. Among holistic congregations, Jesus' atoning death on the cross is seen as the crowning moment of a life of care and compassion for humankind. During his life, he ministered to those sections of society that would have him – usually the poor and the marginalized, occasionally a few of the upper levels of society – but his ultimate act of ministry embraced all of humankind, a clear demonstration that he believed all people mattered. It is the idea that if all people mattered to Jesus, then they must matter to people who believe in Jesus that motivates outreach ministry. As a result, holistic congregations are not passively content in the knowledge that they are saved through faith. Rather, they believe that salvation is active, that salvation is a call to follow Jesus – not as a metaphorical following, indicating regular prayer, worship and Bible study – but as a call to action. Their understanding of salvation impels them to do what Jesus did – minister where they can and when they can to the best of their ability.

### **5.4.4 A Congregational “Culture of Care”**

A congregation does not become holistic through the work of a few of its members. While it is true that only a few members of the congregation are actually engaged in the church's ministries, those involved individuals and the ministries themselves are upheld by congregations characterized by a culture of genuine concern for the welfare of all people in all places. This culture of care, it should be noted, comes from the aggregation of people in whom there exists an intrinsic quality of compassion

that goes beyond casual humanitarian concern for and alleviation of the needs of the less fortunate to a deep and abiding interest and effort toward permanent improvement in their lives. Also, people who have this intrinsic quality are usually drawn to faith communities where it can be exercised.

#### **5.4.5 Spirituality as Congregational Action**

It is obedience to the felt need of “living a life like Jesus,” confirmed by sincere willingness to engage in and/or support ministry to all people in all places that creates the environment in which the Spirit materializes as the life and action of the congregation. The presence of the Spirit manifests itself in multiple ways: for example in congregational openness to new ministries; in confidence that financial and human resources will be found to meet expanding need; and in sustaining the human spirit of those who might otherwise be overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them by the ministry they practice. Thus there seems no doubt that faithfulness to the call to action – perceived by holistic church families as central to their religious convictions – creates a visible point of reference for the work of the Spirit, and that the visibility of the Spirit then further stimulates the congregation to even greater effort.

#### **5.4.6 Pastoral Leadership**

Although it has been noted that once a church begins the practice of outreach such outreach becomes self-sustaining, the level of a pastor’s interest strongly influences the nature and extent of the ministry. During every interview conducted in the churches studied, the pastor was credited with shaping the church’s theology and ministry. Indeed, every church appeared in many ways to be an extension of the character of the pastor. That this should be so is somewhat intuitive, since each pastor has to meet the specific



theological and practical requirements of the congregation. However, this study suggests that in holistic churches the pastor's character *vis-à-vis* the congregation is shaped in a situation of mutual reciprocity: Once called and installed, interaction between pastor and congregation begins an ongoing process whereby the character or ethos of the congregation forms and reforms. In due course, the pastor becomes the embodiment of the church's ethos, and through formal preaching and teaching, administrative meetings with lay leaders and informal attitude and conversation within and among the church family, leads the congregation in the direction the ethos determines.

#### **5.4.7 Applicability of Conclusions**

To affirm that the traits or qualities identified above are in some way fundamental to an ethos of holism or that they have universal application would be presumptuous; there are surely others, perhaps more intrinsic to holism than these, which the design of the study failed to reveal. When it comes to application experience tells us that what works in one socio-religious environment often will not work in another. Nevertheless, it is believed that the characteristics noted above do, to some degree, paint at least a broad description of the qualities that underlie the ethos of holistic churches and present some promising avenues that churches wishing to become – or become *more* – holistic might profitably explore. It is the sincere hope of this writer that those pastors called to lead their congregations to an enlarged ministry in the greater secular community – who seek, indeed, to embody the Holy Spirit in making the Kingdom of God a reality – and the faith communities with whom such pastors labor will find the results of this study of some small benefit, to the greater glory of God.

GRAYSON, GEORGIA, MAY 13, 2005.