The Impact of Volunteering on Christian Faith and Congregational Life: The *Service and Faith* Project [1]

Review of the Literature

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This document provides an extensive review of the literature that served as a foundation to this project. It was last updated in spring 2005. Topics covered include congregations as subject of social scientific study, community ministries, volunteering, faith development, and issues in social work with congregations. Other documents on this website will provide the reader with more detail about the actual project and its findings. These documents include an explanations of the project's methodology, findings from the surveys and from interviews with volunteers and their service leaders, appendices of all the research instruments developed in the study, and a full listing of publications and professional papers with sources that the project has produced. ***Do not quote or copy any of these documents without permission of the primary investigator.***

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This document reviews the literature that relates to our research. We also will give a very brief introduction, with a slant toward Protestant Christianity, to some of the theological discussions that have inspired our understanding of what faith is and how it is/could be related to service through community ministry. We have attempted to conduct a comprehensive review of the social science research literature, but 2000 years of Christian biblical exegesis and theological thought on faith and service outstrips any pretense of being able to provide any comparable review of the theological literature.

Religious Congregations as Social Service Providers

Religious congregations and the organizations they spawned were virtually the only social service providers before the development of government social programs during the last century, and they have

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continued to play a significant, though often unrecognized, role in social service provision. The social work profession itself grew out of the work of congregational volunteers who served as "friendly visitors," founders of settlement houses, and developers of foster care and other services for neglected and abused children. Religious volunteers founded and even staffed orphanages and other community programs for the neediest members of society. Many of those programs retained their religious identity and now are known as "faith-based organizations" (FBOs). But with the nascent social work profession basing its work on the scientific method in the early 1900s, and with the shift from private to public responsibility in social welfare, the role of congregations and their volunteers in social welfare became increasingly marginalized and virtually ignored (Garland, 1994, 1992; Hugen, 1994).

The Rediscovery of Congregations and Their Volunteers

A major shift began in the 1980s from social welfare policy and services centralized in the federal government to policies that encouraged decision making and service provision at local levels. Government leaders began calling on congregations to step up their involvement in social service provision, and there is evidence that many congregations and other FBOs did mobilize to increase the scale and efficacy of their social programs. In a 1992-1995 study of public and private agencies in Greensboro, North Carolina, research by Wineburg, Ahmed, and Sills (1997) found a substantial increase in the use of congregational resources during the Reagan and elder Bush presidencies. Forty-two percent of the local public and private agencies that used congregational volunteers and another 42 percent that used congregational facilities started doing so between 1982 to 1992, a time frame that reflects the beginning of the Reagan budget cuts taking effect and the end of the elder Bush presidency. Wineburg (2001) also found that 69% of the agencies that reported receiving money from religious sources started doing so during that same period (see also Cnaan, Wineburg, & Boddie, 1999; Wineburg, 2001). Cnann, Wineburg, and Boddie suggest that two independent forces have been at work. One is that since the 1980s, congregations and other religious organizations have been stepping in locally to meet social and community needs, often without much fanfare. As a consequence, they have become an integral and necessary part of the resource base for local social services. At the same time, the growing rhetoric, public influence, and political gains of the religious right created an atmosphere in which politicians increasingly have become free to make the religious community a focal point in a new social welfare policy (Cnaan et al., 1999).

Other evidence suggests that President George W. Bush's "charitable choice" policies accelerated the partnership between congregational services and public programs and funding. Sherman conducted a two-year project on the implementation and impact of the Charitable Choice provision in nine states and found 125 new relationships involving several hundred congregations and FBOs. In those states studied, thousands of welfare recipients now are receiving services through FBOs and congregations working in tandem with local and state welfare agencies. Second, and probably the most striking observation from the nine-state study, is that more than one-half of the collaborations described represented partnerships between government agencies and FBOs or congregations that previously were not engaged in formal church-state relationships. Third, stimulated by federal welfare reform, many of these new players were doing new things. That is, many congregations started providing social services they had not provided previously. Specifically, many have moved from "commodity-based benevolence" (operating food pantries and used-clothing centers) to "relational" ministry (mentoring families going from welfare to work or providing intensive job and life skills classes). Many of these programs involved congregational volunteers in direct service to clients (Sherman, 2000).

The National Congregations Study, a 1998 survey of a representative sample of 1,236 religious congregations, found that 57% of congregations, taken as units without regard to their size, participated in or supported social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects within the 12 months prior to the survey. Seventy-five percent of religious service attenders were in a congregation that had at least one project of this sort (Chaves, Konieczny, Beyerlein, & Barman, 1999). Further, more than one-third of congregations potentially are open to pursuing government funds to support social service activities. Liberal and moderate congregations are much more likely than conservative congregations to pursue charitable-choice opportunities, and predominantly African-American congregations particularly are likely to move in this direction (Chaves et al., 1999).

What Is a Congregation?

Boddie, Cnaan, and DiIulio (2001) defined a congregation for research purposes as any religious gathering that meets the following seven criteria:

1. A cohesive group of people with a shared identity;
2. A group that meets regularly on an ongoing basis;
3. A group that comes together primarily for worship and has accepted teachings, rituals, and practices;
4. A group that meets and worships at a designated place;
5. A group that gathers for worship outside the regular purposes and location of a living or work space;
6. A group with an identified religious leader;
7. A group with an official name and some formal structure that conveys its purposes and identity. (p. 15)

Stout and Cormode have pointed out that in the eyes of the government, congregations have become only a special case in the larger field of non-profit organizations. "Thus, one of the very few characteristics common to almost all religious organizations—regardless of belief—is that they follow the structures set down by the IRS for all 501(c)(3) organizations" (1998, p. 69). Nevertheless, congregations are significantly different organizations from other non-profit organizations, even religious ones such as denominational agencies. Wind and Lewis define "congregation" as the body of people that gathers regularly for worship at a particular place, noting that congregations in America preceded denominations and, for that matter, most other permanent institutions (Wind & Lewis, 1994).

Warner points to a convergence across diverse religious traditions in the United States toward "*de facto* congregationalism" and an organizational uniformity that transcends differences of theology and polity. He distinguishes congregations from denominations: "Congregations are typically groups of amateurs spending disproportionate time on activities that are hard to define, whereas denominations will have professionals devoted to articulated goals" (Warner, 1994). In fact, congregations not only are *voluntary* in the United States, they also are *communities* as much or more so than they are organizations. People gather not only for worship, religious education, and service, but also for "fellowship," or simply to be together. Congregational studies have become a separate sub-specialty in the sociological study of religion (e.g., Ammerman, 1997; Becker, 1999; Carroll, Dudley, & McKinney, 1986; Chaves et al., 1999; Mock, 1992). Among the most useful insights thus far in congregational studies is the discovery that the congregation's "story" is central to the way it functions (Hyer, 1991). Carroll and Roof describe a congregation as a "thick gathering:"

> Each [congregation] represents a thick mix of world views, values, symbols, meanings, and practices that participants bring to them. Gender, ethnic, lifestyle, regional, and social class distinctions are among the most important that are reflected in a single congregation's gatherings… . This diverse combination of perspectives is often cross-cutting and cross-pressuring, creating a complex set of popular undercurrents beneath the congregation's surface… . This variety of religious forms is shaped as well by the particular congregation's culture… . Because of the overlapping cultures that characterize a thick gathering, a congregation becomes a staging ground for generational conflict and efforts to mobilize influence (2002, p. 10).

Most congregations are small; 71% of congregations have fewer than 100 regularly participating adults, and only 10% of American congregations have more than 350 regular participants. Most attenders go to large congregations, however (Chaves et al., 1999). Nineteen percent of congregations, containing about 11% of attenders, are not affiliated with a denomination; they constitute the third-largest grouping of congregations, following Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists (Chaves et al., 1999). Attenders in Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist congregations are one-third fewer today than three decades ago, with less pronounced losses for Lutheran congregations, and Baptists (all variations combined) remaining at about the same level as in the late 1960s (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999).

The most mammoth congregational research project to date, the International Congregational Life Survey, took place in 2001, involving 1.2 million worshipers and 12,000 congregations in four nations (Woolever & Bruce, 2002). In the United States, the average adult in congregations is age 50, six years older than the average American (p. 13). One in four worshipers (25%) are retired, which is much higher than the average of 14% for all Americans (p. 13). Worshipers tend to be better educated than Americans in general. The U.S. Census reports the median household income is $41,343. Among worshipers, the average is $37,500 (p. 15). Most worshipers in America are married (66%), and most of these are in their first marriage (55%); this percentage is much higher than the 52% of Americans who are married. Only 8% are separated or divorced, compared to a national figure of 11%. Almost one-half (47%) of adult worshipers have children, compared to only 33% of American adults (p. 17).

In the study of congregations, various useful metaphors have been used for describing congregations, and with those metaphors come relevant theories.

Congregation as Economy

Economic theory has been used extensively in describing the dynamics of congregations with terms such as "social capital" (Greeley, 1997a, 1997b). For example, Gronbjerg & Never (2002) describe volunteering as a way of "constructing social capital … in which benefits accrue to the larger community because it strengthens nonprofits engaged in public-benefit activities (the basic for their tax-exempt status)" (p. 3). Park and Smith (2000) write that "proactive participation in this organization may beget other forms of social participation much in the way that human capital can produce social capital" and go on to ask the question, "Given that church attendance promotes community voluntarism, are there additional ways in which religion acts in the form of religious or cultural capital to promote volunteering behavior?" (p. 272).

Biddle critiques the use of economic theory as applied to congregations and their volunteers, cautioning that attaching a monetary value to voluntarism is risky. The congregation neither pays for the volunteer labor nor relies on it for the ongoing well-being of the congregation itself, so there is no incentive to put volunteers in tasks where they might be most productive. "Thus we have engineers delivering meals to shut-ins, two volunteers minding the thrift shop and enjoying each other's company when one would suffice to get the job done, and so on" (1992, p. 107). Number of service hours may therefore be an inappropriate measure of the worth to the community—or the congregation—of volunteer involvement in community ministry. It may be that more sophisticated methods of evaluation are needed, such as the impact on community social problems and impact, also, on the lives of volunteers.

Congregation as Organization

Kanagy (1992) applies organizational theory to his study of congregations. He defines the congregation's social involvement in the community as bargaining: "By offering its resources to the community, a church negotiates an informal agreement to legitimize its existence in the community" (p. 36). He defines evangelism as an effective cooptation strategy for extending the life of the congregation by increasing the church's resource base. Ecumenism is defined as "coalition-building." In the congregations he studied, he found that: (1) social involvement did not relate significantly to evangelism but was strongly and significantly correlated with ecumenism; (2) no significant relationship existed between ecumenism and evangelism; and (3) the local community has significant impact upon social involvement (Kanagy, 1992). At best, this organizational theory is imperfect at explaining the social involvement of congregations.

Congregation as Community

Johnson (2003) argues that the economic and organizational models of religion, part of the sociology of religion's "new paradigm," need to be balanced by an equally strong model of the congregation as community. In contrast to the individualistic utilitarian assumptions of the market model, in which individuals' religious beliefs and behavior reflect their rational-choice efforts to obtain the most personal benefits at the lowest cost, the concept of community emphasizes that individuals' interests may be expanded through emotional bonds with fellow-members and identification with the community's welfare and values. Although members benefit personally from belonging, their motivations are seen as different from those involved in market transactions, and the nature of emotional exchanges within communities makes the cost/reward distinction difficult to establish on an objective basis. Variation in the relative priority different people give to personal interests versus community obligations may be related to gender as well as to generational cohort and other historical, cultural, and sub-cultural variations in different social settings. Johnson goes on to say that the concept of community is certainly closer to the self-understanding of those in the pew than the concepts of corporate group or bureaucratic organization or competitive market supplier. He proposes that it is not either/or but rather "all social relations may include varying mixtures of the motivations and dynamics of both markets and communities" (Johnson, 2003, p. 332).

As communities, congregations are widely believed first to care for their own and for those they know, sometimes in extraordinary ways. For example, in 1997, the first birth of living sextuplets in recorded history took place. The physical reality of caring for seven infants—400 weekly feedings and untold diaper changes—mobilized members of the family's Missionary Baptist Church. Seventy volunteers organized by the church helped care for the babies in shifts around the clock. "'This is just the normal, everyday way this body of believers works,' Craig Milligan, an area cattle farmer, told ABC" (Walsh, 1998). This snippet of a story gathered from the media uses the New Testament metaphor of the church

as an organic body—feet, eyes, hands—and illustrates the extraordinary ways congregations can be mobilized to care for those in the community.

Thomas Jeavons has reviewed the historic involvement of American congregations in community service. In his sermon to the new settlers of Massachusetts, John Winthrop said they needed to "'be knit together in this work [of building a new community] as one man … [to] entertain each other in brotherly affections … [and] to abridge themselves of their superfluities for the supply of each other's necessities'" (1994, p. 6). In other words, they need to give of themselves voluntarily for the public good. According to Jeavons, the social philanthropic ideals expressed in Winthrop's sermon held sway, virtually unchallenged, through the middle of the 1800s (Jeavons, 1994). Indeed, the expectation to care for neighbor still is a fundamental teaching in Christian churches.

In their two-volume edited work, Wind and Lewis report on the most comprehensive social scientific examination of American congregations to date, undertaken by The Congregational History Project, begun in 1987 at the University of Chicago (1994). In a historical study of 12 congregations, the project team found that congregations reach directly into civic life, contributing government leaders, serving as places of public formation and mediation, and often playing pivotal and complex mediating roles between individual worlds and the public sphere. Ministry and service to persons with needs within their own flock and in the wider community is woven into the heart and history of the stories of the 12 congregations studied (Wind & Lewis, 1994). For example, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church has a traditional sunrise Easter service that includes not only worship but the expectation that members bring either information about a job, a new pair of shoes, or some canned goods as their offering. In one such service, unemployed persons were matched with the "offerings" of information concerning more than 100 jobs. Bethel has 50 ministries headed by volunteer laypersons that deal with the needs of women, pregnant teenagers, drug addicts, the homeless and the hungry, former convicts, prisoners, students, senior citizens, and the deaf. Another congregation in the study, St. Boniface, has taken the lead in promoting low-cost housing for its neighborhood and in the development and support of a community organization that responds to issues of urban renewal, real estate practices, and community stability. St. Peter's parish has created several self-help industries, providing jobs and income for persons in their church and community. Fourth Presbyterian has supported "street ministers" who seek out youngsters in slum neighborhoods, inviting them to sports activities and other weekday programs. Currently, wide-ranging community ministries include tutoring and scholarship programs, a team of church members that repairs and cleans nearby housing project apartments, and financing for the building of low-income housing (Wind & Lewis, 1994).

Variables of Congregational Community Ministry

A number of variables are associated with the ministries provided by any given congregation. They include: what kinds of services are provided, who is served, who provides the service, the theology of service, the location of the congregation, how needs are assessed, whether the congregation serves alone or in partnership with other organizations, the racial and ethnic identity of the congregation, the congregation's size, the extent to which a congregation responds to requests for service provision from the larger community, the congregation's resources for service, and the leadership the congregation can provide the service. We will examine each of these in turn.

Services Provided

Congregations vary dramatically in the kinds of services they provide and the extent to which those services are formal or informal. For example, Cnaan and his colleagues found that 78% of congregations

provide informal family counseling, whereas only 17.1% provide formal family counseling programs (Cnann, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002). Chaves (1999a) found that congregations are more likely to provide short-term, small-scale relief of various sorts than to operate ongoing or large-scale programs.

For example, those who began a program in African-American congregations that provided mentoring for teens at risk for juvenile crime found that although the program initially was received enthusiastically, it was difficult to recruit the needed volunteers for the intensive, long-term commitment such mentoring requires. They could, however, mobilize ample volunteers for one-time events and more informal assignments. Fear of the population group contributed to the challenge. In response, the leaders adapted the programs by using group mentoring (Branch, 2002).

As a result of his findings, Chaves concluded that expecting congregations to operate social service programs in large numbers is unrealistic. Even so, there are approximately 300,000 congregations in the United States. If one-half of 1% of those congregations become engaged deeply in social service activity, this represents roughly 1,500 congregations. The most likely congregations for such engagement are large, located in relatively poor neighborhoods, but that draw members who are not wholly low income (Chaves, 1999a).

Cnaan and his colleagues found that 29.8% of the congregations they studied reported formal cash-assistance programs, and almost 75% have various other ways to assist the poor. More than one-fourth of congregations (27.9%) reported formal health screening programs. A similar number reported health education programs; 25% reported programs for persons with HIV/AIDS (p. 67). Congregations offer Scouting programs, 12-step programs, day care centers (30.3%), and nursery schools (17.5%) (Cnann et al., 2002).

Who is Served

Researchers have found that congregational programs are aimed more for the community than for their congregation's own members. In a comprehensive study of Philadelphia congregations, Boddie, Cnaan, and DiIulio found that, on average, each congregation-sponsored program serves 43 members of the congregation as well as 62 people residing in the community who are not members of the congregation (Boddie et al., 2001). In a study of diocesan social services in Long Island, Cosgrove discovered that membership in any parish was never a condition for receiving services. "Some group members could estimate the approximate proportion of applicants who were members of the parish or who were Catholic, some could not, and one, after a puzzled pause, said, 'You know, I never really thought about that'" (2001, p. 339).

In Cnaan's survey of congregations located in properties considered historically significant (i.e., older, established city congregations) in six American communities, he found that, on average, the congregations provided 147 volunteer hours to the community per program per month (Cnaan, 1997). Cnaan concluded:

> Overall, these findings indicate that local religious congregations should be viewed, not as member-serving organizations, but rather as charitable organizations concerned with the welfare of others. The focus of most congregations in our sample was the betterment of community life. They not only provide services to others directly and in partnership with other

> organizations but also make their facilities available to a wide range of community activities (1997, p.18).

More than a decade ago, The Religion and Civic Order Project was launched as an attempt to place the Los Angeles religious community's responses to the 1992 riots over the verdicts delivered in the Rodney King trial in the larger context of the work religious leaders had been conducting to avoid any repeat of the 1965 Watts riots. As a result of the Project, the character and style of the city's religious-political leadership became more neighborhood-specific and more coalitional. At the same time, social service programs became more congregationally based, often located in evangelical Protestant churches and non-denominational Christian fellowships. These programs: (1) address the needs of particular neighborhoods; (2) emphasize mentor relationships that put former addicts, prisoners, and gang members together with on-the-street addicts and gang members; (3) encourage upwardly mobile African-Americans and Latinos to be role models for others; and (4) merge spiritual and political concerns (Orr, Miller, Roof, & Melton, 1994).

Theology of Service

Congregations vary dramatically in their culture and theology. Often it has been assumed that congregations that are more conservative theologically will be more focused on life after death and, therefore, more concerned about evangelism and less about issues of social injustice and the consequent needs of others. Likewise, it has been assumed that more theologically liberal congregations will be more politically liberal and more concerned about responding with activism and social programs to the consequences of societal injustices. The congregational studies literature indicates that this assumption is false. The Church and Community Project, which involved 62 congregations, found no evidence of a linear relationship between a congregation's religious identity and its orientation to community ministry and activism. Moreover, evangelical congregational theology does not necessarily translate into conservative social beliefs among members, nor does liberal congregational theology imply liberal social beliefs among members (Mock, 1992). Mock concludes that virtually any theological orientation can supply justification and motivation for launching active, even radical, social ministry.

In a qualitative analysis of three congregations in Australia, Bedford found that the theology underpinning a congregational culture's relationship to community services was fairly general, rather than well articulated. Apparently theological understanding does not overtly inform a congregation's involvement in community services. Rather, it seems the congregation develops an implicit understanding that caring and compassion are appropriate reflections of congregational faith (Bedford, 2004). Bedford concludes that, "the 'street theology' of people within a congregation, their unarticulated beliefs born of life's experiences and their sense of faith within those experiences, more than formal theological statements, is a better representation of congregational culture" (p. 128). There is no reason to assume that this is unique to Australian congregations, but it is a hypothesis to be tested.

Congregational Location

Church location is a more significant variable in determining the services a congregation will provide than theology. Mock found that more than 75% of the churches with an "activist" identity (emphasizes serving world over serving members) were located in the inner city or inner-city fringe neighborhoods, as compared to 25% each for "civic" (balances serving members and serving world) and "sanctuary" (inwardly focuses on serving members) churches. It is not clear whether activist churches locate in areas of greater social need due to their self image of being a church involved in social issues or, rather,

congregations that are located in these areas develop an activist identity due to the constant confrontation with community needs just outside their doors (Mock, 1992). In a study of Catholic parishes, Cavendish found that inner-city churches are more likely even than their better-resourced suburban counterparts to engage in social service and social action programs (Cavendish, Welch, & Leege, 1998). Neighborhood residents trust congregations and their representatives as concerned neighbors, giving them opportunity to provide services to even the hardest-to-reach families in need.

Bulten (2002) has called congregations "communities of interest" (p. 359) and posited that congregants may be able to experience a fairly strong sense of community in spite of geographical dispersion of members' homes. Such dispersion, which can diminish a sense of place, limits the visibility and voice of the congregation in the public sphere. He theorizes that rather than modeling community, dispersed congregations actually may fragment further already distressed neighborhoods by dividing allegiances and resources. If Bulten is correct, it raises questions about the impact of the growth of mega congregations; large churches often draw from widely dispersed geographic regions and are defined by their expressway interchange and large parking lots. Even among Catholic congregations, which historically have defined membership by geographic parishes, the Second Vatican Council established a process that has led to the decoupling of residency and church membership, so that the territory is no longer the congregation (Gamm, 2001). Half of Americans attending worship are able to get there in 10 minutes or less (Woolever & Bruce, 2002, p. 17)—and one-half live more than 10 minutes away.

It is not only mega-congregations that draw widely dispersed congregations. McRoberts (2003) conducted an ethnographic study of 29 congregations of the 0.6 square mile of Boston known as Four Corners. He found that congregations build networks—among congregants with each other and with vertically situated agencies. Yet, particularly in neighborhoods with high concentrations of churches, congregations tend to be particularistic and mobile. These factors lead churches to either disregard neighborhoods as sources of membership and objects of mission or to identify, instead, with distinct populations that happen to co-reside in the neighborhood. The infrastructure in these congregations thus may not be brought to bear on neighborhood-level issues. Congregations also may move into abandoned storefronts when a once-vital commercial crossroads wanes to the point of stagnation, explaining why certain poor neighborhoods contain so many churches and why so many non-residents of various socioeconomic classes descend on such neighborhoods every Sunday morning. As in the case of Four Corners, a neighborhood literally can host dozens of congregations yet contain little neighborhood-focused civic engagement (McRoberts, 2003). Unlike the political rhetoric that defines storefront congregations as grass-roots organizations, McRoberts designates them a transgressive form of religious presence:

> They are ubiquitous yet out of place. They break tacit societal norms about where and how people should worship. They emerge from the depression of the neighborhood and bluntly remind people of that depression by occupying otherwise vacant commercial spaces. The churchly norms that permit a congregation to exist comfortably near many others in a religious district can thus be radically out of step with what neighborhood residents understand as a 'normal' degree and quality of religious presence. For this reason, residents I met at community development meetings tended to be cynical about the numerous storefront churches in Four Corners … . Churches took up valuable commercial space, did not draw members from the neighborhood, and

> did not appear to be concerned with neighborhood affairs (McRoberts, 2003, p. 57).

It is important to be cautious, then, when noting that congregations are embedded in virtually every community in the nation, even the most resource-deprived, where the only other institution left may be the liquor store (Scheie, 1994). They may, or may not, have the potential and see their mission as analyzing the community's problems and developing community-based solutions (Marter, 1998).

Assessment of Need/Decision About What to Do

In his study of parish-based community services in Long Island, Cosgrove found that formal needs assessments generally were not conducted. Instead, parishes developed services in response to needs as they had experienced them in their community or because they had particular resources within the parish that were relevant to community needs. Even so, once services were established, they generally became oversubscribed (Cosgrove, 2001)

In an initiative developed by community organizations in direct response to a need for services to youths at risk for violence that placed programs in congregations, referrals did not come as expected; congregations were not always trusted by the juvenile justice system to have the capacity to provide services. In short, the program was less than successful. In this program, the needs assessment was done outside the congregations and the congregations were then enlisted as sites (Hartmann, 2003). No examples were found in the research literature of congregations conducting formal needs assessments as the foundation for their community ministries.

Serving Alone or in Partnership

One of the reasons for the lack of needs assessment on the part of congregations is that, in many cases, the programs are not theirs to administer. Cnaan found that nearly one-third of the congregations in his study collaborated with secular organizations for the purpose of delivering a service or running a program (Cnaan, 2000). Similarly, Chaves examined three of the most common sorts of programs in which congregations engage—food, housing, and homelessness services—and found that only a very small minority (12%) of congregations administer their own projects in these areas. Most typically, congregations support programs and activities operated by other organizations (Chaves, 1999a).

In an evaluation of the mentoring programming for teens at risk for violence that partnered congregations with one another and with the various agencies of the justice system, Hartmann (2003) concluded that congregations were not eager to partner with an FBO outside of their neighborhood, even when the organization was well established and recognized. Instead, congregational leaders were quicker to respond to leadership from within their community. Intra-denominational partnerships worked best and interfaith partnerships worked least well (Hartmann, 2003; Pepper, Herrera, & Leviton, 2003).

Despite this penchant for local collaboration and issues of separation of church and state, congregations also have been collaborating with government entities for a long time. In addition to providing direct services, a study of black congregations determined that 20% provide some form of community-wide economic or institutional development (Billingsley, 1999). Long before Charitable Choice legislation, many of these congregations had discovered how to partner with local communities and federal programs to develop and sustain innovative housing, business, job preparation, and educational and cultural

enterprises. For example, when the Pentecostal congregation Greater Christ Temple Church in Meridian, Mississippi, was founded in 1974, 96% of its 35 members were welfare recipients. By 1999, under its non-profit corporation, the church owned three restaurants, a bakery, an auto-repair shop, a 4,000-acre farm with 700 head of cattle, and two meat-processing plants. What began as a small, poor congregation grew into a major contributor to the economic and social well-being of its community, in part through partnerships with available government resources (Billingsley, 1999).

Racial and Ethnic Identity

Some research indicates that black churches are significantly more likely than white churches to engage in social service and social action activities independent of a variety of demographic, organizational, and structural factors known—or suspected—to influence activism (Boddie, 2003; Cavendish, 2000). When it comes to involvement in organized social issues and community organizing, historically black denominations rate both issues more highly than all other faith groups (Chapman, 2002). On the other hand, an extensive random sampling of congregations found no such difference between white and black congregations in the number of services offered (Tsitsos, 2003). Black congregations did offer more tutoring/mentoring, substance abuse, and non-religious education programs (Tsitsos, 2003), which require far more intensive involvement of volunteers than food pantries or clothes closets—programs that often characterize congregational community ministries. In his national surveys of black congregations, Andrew Billingsley (1999) discovered that these congregations offer a long list of community services: counseling (family counseling, aid to incarcerated individuals and their families, women's services that include help for abused spouses, child-welfare services, parenting workshops, and workshops on human sexuality); social recreation; basic-needs assistance; couples mentoring; and services to the elderly. Their children and youth programs include adult-youth mentoring, Afrocentric education, rites of passage, drug-abuse prevention, health education, and tutoring. A major focus of these programs is the prevention of teen pregnancy. In addition to providing direct services, 20% of churches provide some form of community-wide economic or institutional development (Billingsley, 1999).

Brashears & Roberts (1996) describe the ministry of African American Second Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, using the informal structure of church-member relations as the mechanism of response to social needs. The church hired a social worker in 1987 who developed a generalist practice of providing direct services to church members and their families. These services included case management for elderly and disabled, support services for the homebound and institutionalized, support for members experiencing a crisis, and general family support. It is suggested that this program is successful because it meets clients in their community.

There is a shift away from decrying that "Sunday morning is the most segregated time in American society," a negative critique of American congregations that has been bandied about for years. Instead, there is a recognition that the black religious culture of a congregation can contribute to the construction of racial identity and solidarity across socioeconomic lines (Daniel, 2000). For immigrating Hispanic and other groups, congregations where their first language is spoken and their cultural traditions recognized can be a safe haven and important source of community, replacing lost fictive kin and family/community networks (Hurting, 2000). Church is the only place where immigrants may feel warm welcome, be recognized and greeted by their names and in their language, have someone inquire about their lives and loved ones, and, in essence, experience confirmation that their existence is real, a worthwhile and sacred reality with purpose (Maduro, 2004; McRoberts, 2003). Livezey notes that "the cultural activities of religious congregations tend more toward preserving and reclaiming traditional collective goods (neighborhoods, families) than toward promoting either new collective goods (economic equality) or

individual rights and freedoms" (Livezey, 2000). As a result, new immigrant congregations are redefining what it means to be Christian in America (Smith, 2002; Warner, 2004).

Size

Size is a key predictor of the number of outreach services provided by congregations (Chaves, 1999b; Cnann et al., 2002). In a study of northern black churches providing community health outreach programs, size and educational level of the pastor (also often a factor of congregational size) were the strongest predictors of service provision (Thomas, Quinn, Billingsley, & Caldwell, 1994). The National Congregations Study reached the same conclusion (Tsitsos, 2003). See also (De Vita & Palmer, 2003).

Requests from Outside the Congregations

Cnaan and his colleagues (2002) found that congregations seldom initiated social service programs in response to outside requests; programs were initiated in response to requests from other congregations (3.3%); diocese/judicatory (2.6%); neighborhood coalitions (1.9%); human service organizations (1.9%); and government agencies (1.4%). Government funding cuts led 10% of the congregations to respond with social programming (Cnann et al., 2002). Perhaps this broader issue of programs being generated from within the congregation rather than from pressures outside the congregation contributed to Hartmann's (2003) finding that congregations were not eager to partner with an FBO outside of their neighborhood.

Resources Internal to the Congregation

Chaves also found that middle-class congregations do more social service activity than poorer congregations, and this is true even of institutions located in poorer neighborhoods. This pattern suggests that the resources internal to a congregation are crucially important in generating social service activity (Chaves, 1999a).

Leadership

It is common for community ministries to be led by lay volunteers rather than paid clergy, and, in fact, this pattern is true of many of the activities of a congregation. A study of 168 Protestant and Catholic churches in northern California found surprisingly high levels of shared control over church work. Lay leaders today commonly are involved even in work traditionally associated with the clergy role (e.g., administering sacraments, planning worship, counseling) (Monahan, 1999, p. 370).

The clergy leadership does have a significant impact on the community ministries of a congregation, however. Tsitsos found that congregations led by clergy with graduate degrees and congregations that offer more leadership opportunities to the laity are more likely to support at least one social service program (Tsitsos, 2003).

Bedford found that a lack of support from congregational leadership discouraged more intensive involvement in community ministries (Bedford, 2004). Such lack of support is common. Dudley's research discovered that pastors consistently and significantly underestimated congregational support for community ministry, opting for pastoral care ministries as their focus more frequently than developing programs addressing community needs (Dudley, 1996).

Even so, the volunteers in Dudley's research indicated how important clergy support can be. They reported that pastors furthered the involvement and growth of social ministry programs by personally encouraging individual members to become involved by preaching a linkage between faith and social ministry from the pulpit. In other words, the clergy leadership does not necessarily have to be involved directly in order to encourage the involvement of volunteers. Overall, church members who had experienced either or both of those kinds of support from their pastors also reported greater positive impact in their own lives from their volunteer work. In giving voice to the theological foundations for faith expressed through social ministry, pastors facilitate the connections between service and faith (Dudley, 1996).

Congregations as Sources of Volunteers

Volunteering takes places throughout the American landscape. A Gallup survey (1994) found that *family* volunteering is part of life for 36% of American families. Most commonly, that involves a husband/wife partnership (60%), although in 22% of households, the adults are volunteering together with one or more of their own children who are younger than age 12, and 17% with one or more of their children who are teens. The most broadly supported activities are helping older people (60%), children or youth programs (58%), and church or religious programs (57%). Nearly one-half of the families assist sports or school programs (49%), and significant numbers are involved in environmental programs (31%) or assistance to the homeless (25%). Eighty percent of the volunteers had been serving with another family member for three years or more (George H. Gallup International Institute, 1994).

Sheie points out that it is very difficult to distinguish between "religious" and "community-based" programs where volunteers serve, because many community-based organizations originated in church basements and are staffed by church members. Many organizations that may consider themselves "community-based" have extensive involvement by community congregations and their volunteers (Scheie, 1994).

Despite the common assumption that congregations are bottomless buckets of volunteers, Cosgrove described the difficulty Long Island parishes encountered in attempting to recruit reliable volunteers for parish social ministries; the only reliable source seemed to be senior citizens (Cosgrove, 2001). The congregation-based mentoring program for youth at risk for violence experienced similar difficulties (Branch, 2002). The explanation for this difficulty is not that these were particularly challenging or difficult volunteer roles. An interfaith coalition to provide voluntary caregiving to community residents faced similar difficulties in volunteer recruitment, which led to closure of more than one-half of the programs started by the initiative and difficulties for one-third of the programs that remained open (Pepper et al., 2003). In a comparison of FBOs (including congregations) and secular organizations in New York City, Seley & Wolpert (2003) actually found that the secular organizations had an easier time recruiting volunteers than the FBOs—including congregations. Are congregations at capacity for providing volunteers in their communities given other life demands and barriers that make volunteering impossible for many members? Or, are there missing connections between volunteer service and life in the community of faith? These are some of the questions that warrant further research.

Volunteer Variables

Volunteers choose to serve for complex and multilayered reasons. Clary and colleagues (1996) found that current volunteers with a great deal of experience were different motivationally from current volunteers with less experience. People engage in volunteering to satisfy important personal and social needs and

goals, and apparently many individuals are pursuing more than one set of goals through their volunteer activities (Clary et al., 1996). The Search Institute found a number of themes, all of which contribute, in its research into what leads to compassion, generosity, and involvement in volunteering activity and adolescents, including:

> Experiencing the generosity of others and receiving care from parents and other significant adults;
>
> Spending time in settings (home, congregation, school) where caring and generosity are invited and expected;
>
> Being guided by religious beliefs (or other 'frameworks of consciousness') that encourage (even mandate) care, compassion, and generosity;
>
> Being in contact with mentors and role models (at home and elsewhere) who both practice and teach generosity;
>
> Having concrete opportunities to serve and give—and being personally invited to participate; and
>
> Experiencing a faith that is alive, deep, dynamic—in short, life-shaping;
>
> Finding enjoyment or fulfillment through acts of giving and serving;
>
> Being connected to people from diverse backgrounds who have unique awareness of issues in the world; and
>
> Possessing self-confidence and a belief in one's capacity to make a difference (Roehlkepartain, Naftali, & Musegades, 2000, p. 89).

Other researchers have identified the following variables that are related to whether or not persons become and remain volunteers: church attendance, family life and faith, early volunteering experiences, socioeconomic status, work status, theology, values, and capacity to forgive.

Church Attendance

Church attendance has been shown to have a consistent positive influence on volunteering; it is the best general predictor of involvement in volunteer service (Gerard, 1985; Greeley, 1997b; Park & Smith, 2000; Smith, 2004; Wuthnow, 1995). Based on the American Congregational Giving Study of 625 congregations in five denominations using a cluster random sample, Hoge and colleagues (1996) found that members of Assemblies of God and Southern Baptist churches volunteer significantly more (3.2 hours per month and 3.4 hours per month) than Catholics (1.6), Lutherans (2.7) and Presbyterians (2.7). They found the only significant predictor of volunteer involvement to be attendance at worship services. Those who attend more than once per week spend far more hours each month (5-9 hours) volunteering than those who attend only once a week or less (0-5 hours) (Hoge et al., 1996).

In their study of adult males in a city hit by a tornado, Nelson and Dynes (1976) found that both ordinary and emergency helping behaviors vary directly and positively with religiosity, which they defined as regular personal and family prayer life and church attendance. Church attendance was more significant than the personal and family prayer life in involvement in emergency helping behavior. They defined devotionalism based on responses to three questions: "How often are table prayers said at mealtimes in your home?"; "How often do you pray privately or with only your wife (excluding mealtimes at home)?";

and "How important is prayer in your life?" The authors defined ordinary helping as donation of funds or goods to social service agencies, the informal performance of such services as provision of aid to motorists with car trouble, picking up hitchhikers, taking food to bereaved families, and regular participation in formal voluntary social service work. They defined emergency helping behavior as donating funds or relief goods to temporary relief organizations and the performance of disaster relief services for victims (Nelson & Dynes, 1976).

A grounded-theory study of 21 Hispanic women active in their communities found that a number of experiences positively influenced their involvement, including seeing injustice, being on welfare, being encouraged to attend college, having confidence expressed by an employer, and joining in social action activities of the church (Lazzari, Ford, & Haughey, 1996). Family members appear to be among the most influential persons in these women's lives encouraging their service; mothers particularly were important role models by actualizing community involvement, helping others, and instilling a sense of self-confidence and self-value. Finally, among the interpersonal qualities that encouraged them to community leadership, the women included "having a God-given responsibility." The factors that supported and sustained the women in their extensive community involvement included seeing the need, feeling personal satisfaction, receiving support from others, and having personal beliefs and characteristics. The authors defined the last factor as follows: "Personal beliefs and characteristics that helped the women maintain their endeavors included having a strong sense of obligation and responsibility; being part of living in a community; and being a part of religion, faith, and spirituality" (Lazzari et al., 1996, p. 202).

Among teenagers, Smith & Faris (2002) found that three-quarters of all 12th graders had done some volunteer work in the past year, although more than one-half of them had only done so a few times. Every level of religious service attendance is related positively to voluntarism, even rare attendance. Seventeen percent of all weekly religious service attenders volunteered at least weekly, and more than 40% do so at least monthly. Seniors at every level of religiosity—even those for whom religion is only a little important—are more likely to volunteer than those who say religion is not important. A study by Search Institute (2000) found that the most common place for teenagers to start serving others as volunteers is through the congregation. Among young people who volunteer, 53% first learned about volunteer activities through their congregation (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000, p. 64). Moreover, the more active young people are in their congregations, the more likely they are to serve others.

Early Volunteering

Volunteering during the teenage and younger years has significance not only at the time but in later life as well. Early volunteering experiences with religious institutions act as a significant force in promoting volunteering behavior when people reach adulthood (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Wilson & Hanoski, 1995).

Family Life and Faith

The 1996 Religious Identity and Influence Survey, a cross-sectional, nationally representative telephone survey probing the religious beliefs, identities, and behaviors of Americans over the age of 17, found the only significant predictor for church-related volunteering among churchgoing Protestants to be the transmission of parents' religious identity, specifically the "mainline" identity (Park & Smith, 2000). Beyond this general transmission of religious identity, families are involved directly in volunteering activities. Married people are more likely to volunteer than singles (Uslaner, 2002). Moreover, families often volunteer together. In a survey of 32 congregations, Garland and Yankeelov (2001) found that Bible study, prayer, and devotions with the family ranked lower in importance as faith practices than the items "caring for nature with the family," "daily chores and routines of family life," and, "with the family,

caring for persons in need." In a qualitative study of family faith, Garland (2003) found that families often convert individual volunteer assignments, both in congregational life and in the community, into family volunteering opportunities that, in turn, have an influence on their faith-life as a family.

A Search Institute study of Protestant congregations found that involvement in family service projects during childhood and adolescence has a powerful impact on young people's growth in faith (Roehlkepartain, 2003). About one-third of Protestant teens reported involvement in family service projects (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000). Points of Light Foundation has provided a guidebook for agencies who work with family volunteers (Points of Light Foundation, 1999); another resource is designed for families themselves (Thoele, 2001).

Socioeconomic Status

Based on the Americans Volunteering 1974 survey, Chambre found that educational achievement had a significant positive influence on whether an individual volunteered (Chambre, 1984). Education and income consistently increase the likelihood of church-related volunteering for churchgoing Protestants (Park & Smith, 2000). Another study found that more educated individuals are significantly more likely to perform volunteer work of almost any type than those with lower levels of completed education; college graduates are 14 times more likely to volunteer than those without a high school diploma (Gronbjerg & Never, 2002, p. 8).

Work Status

In one study, full-time work status significantly decreased the odds of non-church-related volunteering (Park & Smith, 2000). Among those involved in providing direct services, the highest rate of participation (23%) is found among those not in the labor force for reasons other than retirement (e.g., homemakers), compared to 12% overall and only 7% of retirees (Gronbjerg & Never, 2002, p. 8).

People who have not volunteered before retirement do not, on their own, tend to begin volunteering once they retire (Caro & Bass, 1997). In a study of retired attenders of leisure activities at a Jewish community center, volunteers differed significantly from non-volunteers in (a) past history of membership in service-oriented organizations, (b) past history of greater number of organizational memberships, (c) higher frequency of attendance in organization meetings, (d) a greater enjoyment derived from organizational memberships, and finally (e) a lesser availability of free time and fewer difficulties in finding activities to fill this time. In other words, the volunteering was a continuation of life patterns, not something that was begun upon retirement (Dye, Goodman, Roth, Bley, & Jensen, 1973).

Even so, in the first and second years following retirement, non-volunteers indicate more willingness to take on volunteer assignments and an ability to do so than do older adults who are employed or those who have been retired for longer periods. Those willing to volunteer also were not likely to experience health or transportation barriers (Caro & Bass, 1997). Based on the Americans Volunteering 1974 survey, Chambre found that a significant number of elderly volunteers may be volunteers who became elderly; that is, their involvement is a continuation of behavior patterns established earlier in life (1984; Chambre, 1987). In another study, workers who stated that they are less than five years away from their retirement transition actually are significantly less likely to report volunteering as part of the ideal retirement lifestyle than are those workers who were more than five years away or had no plans regarding retirement (Smith, 2004).

Theology

Uslaner (2002) found that Americans with the most conservative religious values are 74% less likely than people with the most liberal views to engage in exclusively secular volunteer settings. He also found they are much more likely than anyone else to restrict their volunteering to church-based causes.

Values

In a study of blood donors from a congregation, Ortberg and colleagues (2001) found that attitudes and moral obligations both can motivate donating behavior, but that they are distinct from one another:

> "Attitudes" can be described as the classic social psychological evaluation that ranges from positive to negative, encompassing effects such as like and dislike. "Moral obligations" are the degree to which the outcomes are perceived by the respondent to be fulfilling their "religious values" (if so, one has a "moral obligation" to produce such outcomes). Hence, religious values underlie moral obligations and are distinct from attitudes (Ortberg et al., 2001, p. 489).

In a national survey, the research of Clary, Snyder, and Stukas (1996) found that "values" was the most significant motivation for volunteers; "motivation" is defined as the desire to express and act on values related to humanitarian, altruistic concerns, and service to the less fortunate members of society. Promotion of their own career interests and psychological reasons (guilt, feelings of inferiority) were the least important motivations (Clary et al., 1996).

With a sample of 466 volunteers and 405 non-volunteers (friends nominated by the volunteers to participate in the study), the research of Cnaan, Kasternakis, & Wineburg (1993) found that volunteers reported slightly higher rates of intrinsic religious motivation, but the difference between the two groups was insignificant. They concluded that today's religious congregations are failing to educate and inspire their members to help those in need.

In a study in Great Britain comparing volunteers and non-volunteers, Gerard (1985) found that voluntary workers in all fields—charitable and non-charitable—appear to be more reflective in disposition and less concerned with material aspects of life than others not so involved. Volunteers expressed a greater need for moments of contemplation, meditation or prayer in their lives, and thought more often about the meaning and purpose of life. They also reported better health and a greater preference for active pursuits, and they were less likely to spend long periods watching television than other respondents (Gerard, 1985).

Forgiveness

A national study of participants in prayer groups, Bible studies, and other religiously oriented small groups found that forgiveness is correlated positively with involvement in volunteer work. A majority (61%) of respondents said their group had helped them to forgive someone, 71% said they had experienced healings of relationships as a result of their group, and 43 % said they had worked on improving a broken relationship in recent months (Wuthnow, 2000). Groups that emphasize prayer, sharing, and learning about forgiveness are especially effective in promoting forgiving behavior—and volunteer service. Wuthnow theorizes that forgiveness frees people from focusing so much on their own concerns and thus enables them to help others (Wuthnow, 2000).

Social Connections

Cnaan and his colleagues (2002) found that religious beliefs and teachings do not lead directly to volunteering. Rather, congregational activity and social connections channel religious beliefs and teaching into action. Moreover, congregational social programs attract non-member volunteers, many of whom are friends and relatives of member volunteers. These individuals may not even share the religious beliefs of the congregants, but they are motivated to volunteer because of personal contact with members. For every 100 congregational volunteers, there are an additional 45 volunteers from the community (Cnann et al., 2002; Nelson, 1999). Ashcraft & Kedrowicz (2002) found that volunteers who receive multiple forms of social support are more likely to stay committed to the program, whereas others are more likely to leave.

A Language for Describing Volunteering

Wuthnow (1991) interviewed dozens of adults involved in voluntary service and concluded that they have complex motives and languages for describing their motivations for serving. It is just as important to have a language to interpret one's motives as it is to have the time and resources to actually volunteer. We have to be able to tell ourselves and others why we are doing what we do. Wuthnow found that many people used biblical language to explain their motives for becoming involved in caring activities. The perception that one is receiving love from God does, in fact, seem to be associated with a greater willingness to care for others. On the other hand, those he interviewed were at a loss for words when asked to describe specific religious teachings that might be relevant to their caring. They knew compassion was part of what their religion taught, but they could not say why or how. This was particularly true of those who were uninvolved or only nominally affiliated with some religious tradition.

The very complexity of reasons for volunteering creates dilemmas for the volunteer. Wuthnow explains:

> We live in an era when all accounts of motives have become subject to doubt. They have taught us that our motives are not always what they seem. … One person, when asked if he had any further comments, remarked that he could have answered some of the questions about motives in ten different ways. Another man expressed his cynicism about motives this way: 'Somebody can stand up and say they're doing nice things to pay back their dear old Aunt Edna who's now departed. Who cares? They can say anything they want to. As long as they're doing nice things, it doesn't matter.' A young woman expressed a similar view: 'I've never been too concerned about motivation as long as some good was done.' In the survey there were also signs of widespread cynicism about the motives driving voluntarism. My point here, though, is not so much that voluntarism generates cynicism, but that cynicism is one of the ways in which we respond to motives themselves. If, as I say, you can give me a dozen reasons for doing something, then why should I take any of those reasons very seriously? (1991, pp. 62-63).

Because there is more than one vocabulary for talking about motivation for volunteering, volunteers have to find a way to organize their thinking and explanation to others about the reasons for their altruism. Wuthnow argues that this is especially important in a society such as ours, which is characterized by a basic selfishness rather than concern for the needy, so that caring appears to be deviant and thus requires explanation.

Search Institute research with youth volunteers identified the significance of using religious language to describe their service. As one congregational leader stated, "Young people [need to] have opportunities to reflect on giving and serving within the context of their faith" (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000, p. 121).

Bender spent 15 months of ethnographic field observation in the kitchen of God's Love We Deliver (GLWD), a large, non-profit AIDS service organization in New York City. In analyzing in-depth interviews with 20 volunteers, she concluded that what is important is not if something is defined as "religious" outside of a particular context, but rather when it becomes so for those who are working within it. "The question … is therefore not whether GLWD's kitchen is sacred space, but rather *when it becomes so*—for one volunteer or many volunteers—either through intentional work or through unexpected happenstance" (1997, p. 36).

> Religion is constituted in interactions. Communities and texts may be the location of some religious production or reproduction, but they are not the only places. Religious practices may or may not be shared even if people refer to the same traditions. The issue is not whether or not individuals share meaning, but the ways that they communicate in contexts where meaning is not always assumed to be shared between individuals. Religion is not a whole system in practice, but always partially enacted, often in dialogue with other practices (Bender, 1997, p. 52).

Spiritual/Religious Motivations

The volunteers Wuthnow interviewed indicated that perceiving that God loves them is associated with a greater willingness to care for others. Of those who felt during the past year that God loved them all the time, 83% said that helping the needy was very important to them; that figure declined to 73% among those who said they had experienced God's love many times during the past year, 57% among those who said they had felt God's love only a few times, and 55% among those who had not felt God's love. Moreover, believing that God exists and is aware of what you do and say seems to be as conducive to caring as picturing God as a loving and caring being (Wuthnow, 1991).

Wuthnow found, however, that conservatives and liberals had different configurations of motivations. Conservatives are more likely to be driven by the desire to give, even to sacrifice, themselves, whereas liberals believed that caring for others would make them stronger, that caring was a significant aspect of their personal identities, and even that charitable activity is a way of making themselves feel good (Wuthnow, 1991). In other words, the motivations of the conservatives were less self-focused than those of the liberals.

In her work with congregations involved in social ministries, Unruh posits five spiritual states that motivate and/or result from volunteering:

> Gratitude: Service as a response to what God has already done.
>
> Obedience: Service as a response to God's will.
>
> Discipleship: Service as a means or motivation for encountering God.

Encountering God without:Seeing Christ in the needy, discovering God at work in society.

Encountering God together: Nurturing Christian fellowship through communal service (Unruh, 1999).

Wuthnow (1995) conducted a national qualitative study with teenagers to determine the causes of kindness and volunteerism. The teenagers he interviewed were participating in programs helping the homeless, responding to environmental problems, providing tutoring, and caring for AIDS victims and residents of nursing homes and hospitals. Wuthnow concluded that the religious setting is the best environment for nurturing the helping impulse in teenagers. It also is the place where the bulk of volunteering for this age group occurs. Through the right kind of volunteer work, teens can find the role models and moral incentives that will instill a calling to service that they often carry into adulthood. According to Wuthnow, some of the key principles for encouraging the growth of caring in teens include:

1. The experience must expose young people to need and create identification with the person suffering; there must be direct personal contact. Raising money (selling candy, soliciting support for a cause, etc.) or providing free labor (stuffing envelopes, typing, etc.) do not create and may even detract from the growing sense of caring in young people.

2. Young people develop "scripts" that they hear from others, remember, and internalize that explain their reasons for wanting to help others. These frameworks of meaning do not need to be explicit or detailed, but they must explain why it is good to be a caring person. About one-third of American teenagers attribute their volunteering to religious or spiritual reasons. Support groups of caregivers, where volunteers can share their stories with one another, powerfully reinforce caring and kindness.

3. Organizations nurture and support even small acts of kindness. It is very difficult to be a caring person alone. Schools and churches are primary sources and contexts for teen volunteering.

4. Role models other than parents are important to teens. Parents are supposed to care; that is part of their job description. When other busy adults work with a teenager, however, it has special meaning and becomes a model for the teen's own caring. The most significant role models are those who step out of their roles as teachers, coaches, pastors, or volunteers long enough to listen to and share themselves with teens.

5. Kindness often is fundamentally symbolic. It may indeed be helpful—the tutoring, the warm soup. But it carries deeper meaning beyond the gift itself. Kindness tells us we are not alone and that others are concerned enough about us to care. Young people need experiences that lead to the realization that small actions count, even though they do not solve all the problems or make the world more perfect. Caring is not just for saints that make lifetime commitments to caring for others. "A few people, even with the dedication of Mother Teresa, will not save us. But the fact that ordinary people can demonstrate kindness in ordinary ways should also be a symbol of hope" (Wuthnow, 1995).

Self-interest

Some have suggested that volunteering can be considered a leisure activity. Stebbins (1996) suggests that many kinds of volunteering, because they foster the acquisition and expression of a combination of special skills, knowledge, and experience, can be looked on as serious leisure (see also Handy & Srinivasan, 2004).

Others who have conducted research with faith-motivated volunteers would take issue with Stebbins. They argue that although there may be self interest involved in the service (e.g., learning new skills, making social contacts with other volunteers, a teenager having "community service" to put on a college application), those rewards are never enough alone to sustain volunteering. Quite the contrary, they are merely a by-product of the service and not a cause for serving.

> Many of us say our helping behavior is an important source of fulfillment and self-worth. But set against the other things in our lives that give these feelings, helping behavior seems relatively insignificant. What this means, I suppose, is that good feelings may not be a very strong incentive for most of us to become more caring. …There are limits to the value of thinking about fulfillment as a reciprocal exchange (Wuthnow, 1991, p. 99).

Relationships with Service Recipients

Lawrence (2000) worked with five congregations developing community service projects. He concluded that, "The key to developing any successful project lies in the redemptive quality of genuine relationships between privileged and underprivileged persons" (p. 12). Programs that volunteers find rewarding interpersonally but that do not contribute to solutions to social problems are just as ineffective, however.

Someone Asks

One of the main influential factors that lead people to volunteer simply is being asked to do so (Bowman, 2004; Park & Smith, 2000). The Search Institute research exploring volunteering behavior among teens found that 93% of young people who were asked to volunteer by someone close to them did so. On the other hand, only 24% of those who volunteered were not asked personally. Unfortunately, only one-half of the young people that Search Institute surveyed ever were invited to volunteer (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000, p. 116).

Neighboring

The Points of Light Foundation, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has explored the nature of volunteering in tough communities and the role it plays in transforming these areas into family-supportive places where children and families can thrive. Their research concludes that volunteer programs and initiatives that view residents as assets and encourage "neighboring" are more effective than more formal volunteer programs. Volunteers, in this situation, usually are residents. They are abundant in tough neighborhoods and have a long history of helping, but they do not usually refer to themselves as "volunteers." They consider what they do "helping out," "giving back," or "neighboring," and the volunteering that takes place usually is not recognized or rewarded; it happens spontaneously. If formal programs are developed, they need to include residents—neighbors—in the planning and decision-making process. Building on the gifts, talents, and existing or potential leadership in the community ensures community involvement (Points of Light Foundation, 2003).

Defining Faith

Wuthow's research has pushed the social scientific study of voluntarism to consider the role that religion and faith have both in motivating and sustaining volunteer service and, in turn, the role that voluntarism may have in shaping religion and faith (Wuthnow, 1991, 1995). We begin with an exploration of what faith means both theologically and in the social sciences. We then turn to the relationship of faith with voluntarism and community ministry.

Nelson has defined Christian faith in three dimensions: knowledge, assent, and trust. "Faith knows some things; more importantly faith knows someone; God as encountered above all in Jesus the Christ (Nelson, 1990, p. 224). Augustine spoke of the eyes of faith, or a special kind of seeing, and St. Thomas described faith as a "habit" or quality of the mind (Hellwig, 1990). In Christian theology, faith is a gift, not something within human capacity or initiative (Galatians 2:15). At the same time, it is a gift providing an infused habit to do good:

> When Paul speaks of *saving* faith, he means faith as God's gift—and never our work. When he speaks of our response to that gift, then faith may be understood in terms of human possibilities (McElway, 1990, pp. 167-168).

Other theologians have defined faith with a fourth dimension, that of behavior. The concept of faith has its origin in the Hebrew Scriptures, built from a root that has to do with firmness, reliability, trustworthiness. It is the same root for the affirmation "amen" (Hellwig, 1990). The stories of faith, focusing most sharply on the figure of Abraham, are stories of human responses to God's promises. "The faith that is presented by the sacred texts as characteristic of Abraham is a very active, creative force that constantly moves him to bold and radical measures involving great risk" (Hellwig, 1990, p. 4).

According to Martin Luther, there are two *effects* of faith—justification and service. In fact, faith and works are related so closely in Luther's thought that "it is impossible, indeed, to separate (them), just as it is impossible to separate heat and light from fire" (McElway, 1990, p. 176). The expectation that faith leads to lifestyle has pervaded Christian thought, and social ministry is one of the possibilities for that lifestyle. Moreover, it gives the faithful the opportunity to engage directly those forces that stand in opposition to God and the coming of God's kingdom (Campolo, 1983; Hessel, 1988; Nelson, 1990). Not only does service have the potential for making an impact on the world, it also has an impact on the believer: "Involvement in social ministry nourishes faith as it seeks to grasp the full reality of God's activity in the world" (Nelson, 1990, pp. 240-241). God is to be found where men and women struggle with the unjust realities of life.

Liberation theologians have taken the connection between faith and lifestyle another step; in liberation theology, faith is doing justice in such a way that persons thereby are emancipated from social, economic, and political enslavement. For Gustavo Gutierrezz, to be in [to have?] Yes—to have. faith is to encounter Jesus, and Jesus is most deeply present in this world, especially in persons who are socioeconomically oppressed (Lee, 1990a).

It is as faith takes behavioral form that the social sciences begin to enter the discussion.
Lee has pointed out that faith is not the exclusive province of theology but the province of all the sciences that study human nature and functioning. Each of these sciences can contribute in one way or another to a

holistic construct of faith (Lee, 1990a). The sciences make no attempt to answer the "validity question," i.e., whether or not there is a God and if God is rightly characterized by the holder of faith. Rather, the sciences are interested in how faith is enacted (Malony, 1990).

James Fowler has been instrumental in shaping the social scientific understanding of religious faith (Fowler, 1990, 1992; 2000). He defines faith as that for which we are spending our lives, to which we are committed, and which makes life meaningful. Malony agrees, saying that "faith is the act whereby persons go beyond daily problem solving and establish their selfhood by affirming their identity within a context of ultimate meaning" (1990, p. 89). More concretely, Craig Dykstra has suggested that faith is what we do, how we choose to act, based on our understanding of God (Dykstra, 1986). Catholic activist Dorothy Day taught that one cannot understand the caring of Christians without understanding the life of the spirit that is in dynamic interaction with that caring. "We feed the hungry, yes," she said. "We try to shelter the homeless and give them clothes, but there is strong faith at work; we pray. If an outsider who comes to visit us doesn't pay attention to our praying and what that means, then he'll miss the whole point" (Forest, 1995).

It appears that the relationship between faith and service is transactional. In concluding his study of congregations involved in social service (or "social ministry"), Carl Dudley wrote, "Not only can faith produce social ministry, but social ministry can produce—or at least enhance—faith" (Dudley, 1996). In his study of the community ministries of congregations, Dudley found that volunteers who received personal encouragement from a church leader to become involved and who heard from church leaders the connection between service and faith experienced a greater positive impact on their own lives as the result of their volunteer work. He concludes that volunteers need to hear the theological foundations for faith expressed through service, and they need to have opportunity to talk about their volunteer experiences in light of their faith (Dudley, 1996).

In her study of family faith, Garland (Garland, 2003) explored the impact that actions grounded in faith have on faith itself. If faith leads to behavior, that behavior may impact the beliefs that motivated the actions. In turn, then, the beliefs themselves are shaped. For example, if a belief is that fervent prayer will lead to healing of a terminal illness and the person dies anyway, a crisis of faith occurs. Similarly, volunteers engaged in community ministry for a variety of complex faith-based and other reasons that are, in turn, shaped by the experience itself.

Measuring Faith

During the past century, and especially during the past several decades, the most concerted effort to define and measure faith has taken place within the discipline of psychology. Attempts to distinguish between mature and immature or healthy and unhealthy forms of personal faith began with William James' effort to differentiate between "healthy-minded" and "sick soul" converts (Johnson & Malony, 1982). Allport identified two primary faith orientations, labeled intrinsic and extrinsic faith (Allport, 1950; Allport & Ross, 1967). According to Allport, intrinsic faith is considered "mature" and extrinsic faith "immature." Others have developed this perspective further, particularly Batson and Ventis' introduction of a third basic faith orientation, the "quest" orientation (Batson & Ventis, 1982). Such an approach is quite different from the theological view that faith is a gift to be received. In psychological research and theory, faith is viewed as another dimension of human development.

According to Davidson, Johnson, and Mock, there are four dimensions that sociologists and others have used to describe the content of faith: individualistic and communal, vertical and horizontal, restricting and releasing, and comforting and challenging.

> **Individualistic and communal.** This dimension relates to the character of faithfulness: Is the focus on the individual or on the community of the faithful? … Is faith personal or collective? Is it private or public? Is faith possible apart from the group or not? Is the individual or the group the primary instrument of God's will in society?
>
> **Vertical and horizontal**. This dimension suggests directionality. Where is God: up in heaven or here on earth? … "individual to God" or "person to person."
>
> **Restricting and releasing**. Does faith consist of a relatively well-defined set of truths that the faithful are expected to accept, or an idea that sets one free? Does faith emphasize the importance of "right living," or does it release the faithful to take risks? Does it stress the "thou shalt nots" or the concept of grace?
>
> **Comfort and challenge**. This dimension explores the consequences of faith. Is faith supposed to be a source of comfort, or is it supposed to challenge the faithful to improve themselves and the world around them? (Davidson, Johnson, & Mock, 1990, p. 5).

Other researchers find that faith conceptualized from the psychological perspective is an inadequate understanding of the Christian faith experience and have incorporated specific Christian content into their measurement instruments (Bassett et al., 1981; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993; Ellison, 1983; Malony, 1988; Townsend & Wichern, 1984). These researchers assume that there are general tenets and convictions expressed in daily life about which most Christian traditions and groups agree, although they differ significantly on what those tenets and convictions are. Their faith scales use different definitions of faith, with different dimensions and empirical indicators, weighting differently the dimensions of cognition, affect, and behavior. Only one (Benson et al., 1993) includes indicators of faith that relate to community ministry activities.

Practices of Faith

Richard Foster has been profoundly influential in modern thinking about faith practices, or what he calls "disciplines."

> A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is to provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He puts the seed in the ground where the natural forces take over and up comes the grain. That is the way with the spiritual disciplines—they are a way of sowing to the Spirit. The Disciplines are God's way of getting us into the ground; they put us where he can work within us and transform us (Foster, 1978, p. 6).

Faith practices are ways of developing habits—always difficult and demanding—that lead to internal changes such as the development of a compassionate spirit (Foster, 1978, p. 7). Or as Jim Wallis writes, "[A] Christian is more than someone who wants to change things; a Christian is someone who is being changed" (Wallis, 1984, p. 22).

Dykstra makes the point that a practice is different from other activities that are aimed at some desired outcome or result. Practices are of valued in and of themselves. Moreover, they have universal implication because, even when we engage in them in solitude, it is as participants of the church. "Practice is a participation in a cooperatively formed pattern of activity that emerges out of a complex tradition of interactions among many people sustained over a long period of time" (Dykstra, 1991, p. 43).

Dykstra offers the following list of *activities*—referred to as "practices of faith"—that, collectively constitute a Christian life of faith:

> Worshiping together—praising God, giving thanks for God's creative and redemptive work in the world, hearing God's word preached, and receiving the sacraments given to us in Christ;
>
> Telling the Christian story to one another—reading and hearing the scriptures and also the stories of the church's experience throughout its history;
>
> Interpreting together the scriptures and the history of the church's experience, particularly in relation to their meaning for our own lives in the world;
>
> Praying—together and by ourselves, not only in formal services of worship but in all times and places;
>
> Confessing our sin to one another, and forgiving and becoming reconciled with one another;
>
> Tolerating one another's failures and encouraging one another in the work each must do and the vocation each must live;
>
> Carrying out specific faithful acts of service and witness together;
>
> Giving generously of one's means and receiving gratefully gifts others have to give;
>
> Suffering with and for one another and all whom Jesus showed us to be our neighbors;
>
> Providing hospitality and care, not only to one another but to strangers and even enemies;
>
> Listening and talking attentively to one another about our particular experiences in life;
>
> Struggling together to become conscious of and to understand the nature of the context in which we live;
>
> Criticizing and resisting all those powers and patterns (both within the church and in the world as a whole) that destroy human beings, corrode human community, and injure God's creation; and

> Working together to maintain and create social structures and institutions that will sustain life in the world in ways that accord with God's will. (Dykstra, 1999, pp. 42-43).

These are the practices of faith, and to be faithful involves intentionally participating in them (Dykstra, 1986). Not to participate in providing hospitality and care to strangers, praying, participating in activities that promote social justice in society, or any of the practices of faith, is to deny oneself the opportunity to participate in God's redemptive activities in the world (Huebner, 1986).

For those who participate in a faith practice of community ministry, what effect does such participation have on their faith? To answer this question, it first is necessary to ask if and how faith changes. Do we grow in faith? Does faith develop? What is meant by faith maturity? Several who advocate understanding and measuring faith from within a theological perspective do not believe that faith grows or matures as conceptualized in the behavioral sciences literature (Dykstra, 1986; Huebner, 1986; Lee, 1990b; Nelson, 1990). For example, Huebner rejects altogether developmental models of faith growth and maturity. Rather, he thinks of changes in faith as "bursting into our lives … creating a clearing in the midst of our everydayness wherein God is sought, waited for, acknowledged and depended upon" (Huebner, 1986, p. 515). He states:

> The mystery of human growth happens through our bodies. It also happens through the stranger and the strangeness of the world. God's grace keeps breaking into our lives, fracturing and breaking us through the strangers that we meet. The parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of that grace. The stranger may be the foreigner, a friend, lover, or foe. It may be the person next door, whom we can't stand, the hurting folks in Africa, our neighbors in Central and South America. …The stranger is also that part of me that I would prefer not to acknowledge to myself, let alone to anyone else. God's grace pulls us out of our self-rootedness to attend to that which we are not, and thus calls our attention to the fact that we were not created to be self-sufficient individuals, but created as children of God (Huebner, 1986, pp. 512-513).

Faith involves all our human dimensions, including our intellectual and cognitive abilities, emotions and attitudes, actions, even our lifestyles. It is in the understandings, explanations, and sufferings we come upon through serving the strangers in our midst that we fully experience the *awareness and acknowledgement* of God's grace in our lives (Huebner, 1986). Growth in faith occurs when people engage in the practices of community ministry, but it is enhanced further when these practices are performed in relationship with or connection to other Christian practices of faith. Dykstra states that the practices are part of a whole life of faith and thus need to be experienced in relationship with one another (1999, pp. 45).

Learning the Practices

According to Dykstra, people best learn the practices of faith when they:

> Are active in them, actually *doing* what these practices involve, engaging in them personally in particular physical and material settings and in face-to-face interaction with other people;
>
> Participate in them *jointly* with others, especially with others who are skilled in them and are able to teach them;
>
> Are, or are becoming, personally significant to one another;
>
> Are involved in increasingly broader, more varied, and more complex dimensions of the practices, with more wide-ranging context and impact;
>
> Connect articulations of the significance and meaning of these practices and the ways the various practices are connected and related to one another and other life activities; and
>
> Take increasing personal responsibility for initiating, pursuing, and sustaining these practices and for including and guiding others in them (Dykstra, 1991, pp. 50-51).

The Relationship of Faith Practices and Community Ministry

Among the practices of faith identified by Dykstra (1999), several relate directly to volunteer service or community ministry activities. These include providing hospitality and care to strangers, suffering with and for one another and our neighbors, carrying out specific faithful acts of service, and participating in activities that promote social justice in society. These practices flow from and sustain Christian faith through service to others. Similar to the other practices, they, too, are a means of God's grace in a believer's life. By participating in community ministry activity, therefore, volunteers avail themselves to the opportunity to experience God's grace in their lives. In summary, growth or maturity in faith related to community ministry activity involves: participation in community ministry practices; ability and opportunity to acknowledge and articulate the personal benefits of community ministry participation; and relating or connecting community ministry practices with other Christian practices of faith.

Johns (2003) examines the relationship between virtues such as kindness and service and faith practices. Virtues, he posits, are habits so engrained that they do not have to be considered. The virtue of love must be a fundamental and regular practice of life to be a virtue and not a random act. For Christians, however, virtue requires more than practice; a person must be met by God's grace.

God's gracious assistance must inspire and suffuse our moral efforts. Many writers follow Thomas Aquinas in distinguishing between natural virtues and infused virtues. Natural virtues are those habits we can develop over time by exercising our natural, inborn capacities. Classically, these included practical wisdom, courage, justice, and thoughtful moderation of pleasure … Infused virtues, on the other hand, are dispositions that are given to us as gifts from God. For example, Aquinas says God gives us extra portions of courage and moderation to resist the distorting effects of sin and surplus wisdom to pursue God's calling. Chief among the infused virtues, however, are totally new dispositions of faith, hope, and love. These are called theological virtues (Johns, 2003).

Though Johns writes about parenting, by extrapolation his discussion of virtues and Christian practices apply to service. He says that when Christian parents hope, they do not hope in their children. Hope is

directed elsewhere and is inseparable from the larger story of the Christian faith, of creation, the cross, and resurrection. If that is true, then even more so do Christian volunteers place their hope for transformation not so much in those whom they serve but, rather, with the Christian story.

Prayer

Prayer is the most common faith practice. Gallup found that 90% of Americans pray, 75% daily, 29% before a meal. Prayer most often is petition or request that God do something desired by the petitioner (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999). The International Congregational Life Survey found that 45% of Americans spend time every day in prayer, meditation, reading the Bible, or other private, devotional activities. People attending Catholic parishes spend time in private devotional activities less often than worshipers in other types of congregations (Woolever & Bruce, 2002, p. 26).

The content and nature of prayer has significance. A nationwide study of senior adults found that the deleterious effects of chronic financial problems on physical health are reduced significantly for older people who pray for others often. In contrast, praying for material things fails to offset those pernicious effects. They also found that older African-Americans are more likely to pray for others than older whites (Krause, 2003).

The practice of prayer is related to volunteering in community ministries. Branch (2002) found that prayer is the most common faith practice in the mentoring programs with high risk teens he evaluated. Prayer takes place in the meetings of volunteers and ministry leaders, by those who pray for the ministry as their participation in it, and between volunteers and the program recipients.

Worship

Branch (2002) found that the mentoring programs he evaluated encouraged attendance at worship services in the congregation but did not require it.

Studying Scripture

Branch (2002) also found that studying sacred texts is a part of the service program in many congregations.

Making Music

In a number of the programs Branch studied—African-American congregations providing mentoring for teens at risk of violence—music is very much a part of the environment. Sometimes it is background Christian music while the program takes place. In some programs, however, there was hymn singing, and in one congregation, service recipients formed a gospel choir (Branch, 2002).

Evangelism

Branch found that most of the volunteers in the mentoring program expressed hope that program recipients would become members of their faith group, but the volunteers did not see their work as proselytizing. In fact, interviews with the teens in the program revealed that few experienced any change in their faith as a result of the program (Branch, 2002).

From the perspective of the ministry programs, it is not proselytizing when they expose participants to religious practices, as long as they do not require participants to take part. Nor do they consider it proselytizing if mentors invite participants to attend religious services with them, as long as they are not requiring that they do so or requiring that they join the church. In their lexicon, it is proselytizing only if

participants are coerced into taking part in religious practices to receive program benefits or if participants have no secular alternative for the same services (Branch, 2002).

Some programs that recruit volunteers from congregations have felt the need to make an explicit policy forbidding proselytizing (Jellinek, 2001).

Making Financial Contributions

The International Congregational Life Survey found that while less than one in 10 Catholic worshipers tithe, almost one-third of Protestant worshipers do (Woolever & Bruce, 2002, p. 41). Moreover, 73% gave money to a charitable organization other than the congregation in the past year (p. 56). Toppe and Kirsch (2003) found that those who give money to congregations also provide three-quarters of the financial support that secular organizations receive; those who give to both congregations and secular organizations give nearly four times as much as those who only give to secular charities. On the other hand, Eckel and Grossman (2004) found that, whereas religious givers are more generous overall than non-religious givers, their greater generosity is confined to churches and church-based institutions and does not extend to secular charities.

Forgiveness

A nationwide survey of older adults examined the relationships among forgiveness by God, forgiveness of others, and psychological well-being and found that forgiving others tends to enhance psychological well-being, and these salubrious effects are greater than those associated with forgiveness by God. Second, the findings indicate that *how* older people forgive is important: Older adults who require the other to perform acts of contrition experience less psychological well-being than those who forgive unconditionally (Krause & Ellison, 2003). Wuthnow's research also found that forgiveness was associated with volunteering (Wuthnow, 2000).

Hospitality

Hospitality precludes guest/host bond instrumentality, or what typically is associated with hospitality, i.e., "If you invite me to your house, then I'll return the favor at a later date." Christian hospitality, by contrast, insists that "the least"—those persons who seem to have little to bring to the encounter—most especially are to be welcomed. In Near Eastern cultures, hospitality customarily meant that strangers could expect welcome, food, and protection for three days. In most biblical narratives of hospitality, the hosts had adequate or abundant resources to provide hospitality and, in many of these accounts, guests brought their hosts a blessing of some kind and even special connection with God. But this connection frequently resulted in more mundane forms of blessing as well (Pohl, 1993). A powerful feature of New Testament theology is God as guest or stranger in the world Jesus' dual identity as a stranger/guest and host is a core image of the Christian faith. Jesus experienced marginality, vulnerability, and rejection as a stranger. As host, Jesus welcomed all who came to him desiring to enter the Kingdom (Pohl, 1993).

Pohl (1993) describes being a member of a small church in New York that welcomed and resettled hundreds of refugees in a four-year period, compelled by the biblical stories and injunctions. She notes the following outcomes:

> *Fulfillment.* We gained the slightly self-righteous satisfaction that we were practicing a more genuine form of hospitality than were neighboring churches whose 'hospitality' committees served coffee and doughnuts on Sunday, or at best turkeys on holidays (pp. 2-3).

> *Fatigue.* The needs, however, were great, and the responsibilities seemed nearly endless. … After several years, when the novelty had worn off and massive fatigue had set in, church members began asking themselves if perhaps God might want them to cease from their labors and change course. Whatever God's intentions were, the costs had piled up and the members began abandoning their responsibilities. … Strangers whose needs are not met within a few days of kindly attention and care, and strangers with substantial needs who do not move on but stay within the community, are problematic in the modern world. Their presence raises questions about scarce resources, the nature of family and congregational life, the role of the state, the meaning of boundaries, and the process of assimilation (p. 3).

> *Sensitization.* Experience with the needs of refugees also sensitized us to other kinds of strangers—those on the margins of our own society, excluded from its bounty and benefits (p. 4).

Pineda points out that hospitality needs to take place in a community, because a community can do together what no one can do alone (Pineda, 1997). Attempts to protect against misuse of hospitality by guests can be more structural. Letters of reference, emphases on conversation and tests, bureaucratic regulation, and record keeping are all efforts to control the advantage seeking of guests "Today when hospitality is freely offered, it is often quickly overwhelmed by need. . . . Although hospitality cannot adequately address the just distribution of resources, it is very difficult to practice if the larger distribution is seriously unequal" (Pohl, 1993, p. 403). Even so, Pohl concludes that:

> While hospitality does not anticipate reward, the rich interaction partakes of divine qualities which infuse the experience with grace and gift. This negates the artificial definitions of altruism that separate it from a reward. In practice, we experience fulfillment as we give of ourselves, but we do not anticipate it (Pohl, 1993, p. 416).

Service

Virtually all contemporary denominations in the United States express some sense of the integration of religious faith (or beliefs) and social service (Davidson et al., 1990; Watkins, 1994). Congregations integrate religious faith and service in four different ways. Some assume that faith is more essential than service, i.e., that service is a by-product rather than the focus of faith. Groups who adopt this framework usually are theologically and socially conservative in their orientation, positing that the more faithful members are to the religious belief system, the more concerned they will be about using service as a platform for converting the poor and needy. A second group of congregations assumes that social service is more important than one's belief system, and that effective service will enhance the believer's faith. These tend to be more "liberal" congregations. A third view is that faith and service are of equal importance. Finally, some congregations assume that faith and service are not only equally important but are inseparable, reinforcing and supportive of each other. In this view, faith is not viable if it is not expressed in concern for persons in need, and social concern is not sustainable if it is not accompanied by faith (Davidson et al., 1990; Watkins, 1994). Congregations and denominations with the most

hierarchical structures invest more resources in national social ministry programs than do those with more democratic structures (Davidson et al., 1990, p. 235).

The Search Institute applied the educational concept and process of "service-learning" to the church, combining the methods of Christian education with service to the needs of the neighborhood or larger community (Roehlkepartain 1993). He reports that service-learning occurs best when service and learning are interactive, with service being accompanied by religious reflection and study about the meaning of service.

Eyler and Giles list five essential elements for effective service-learning: values ("I ought to do"), knowledge ("I know what I ought to do and why"), skills ("I know how to do"), efficacy ("I can do, and it makes a difference"), and commitment ("I must and will do") (p. 157).

Evans, Evans, and Kennedy (1987) present eight case studies of programs that involve middle-class congregational volunteers engaged in ministry and "transformative education" that combines combine action and reflection. First, they suggest that volunteers need to make a significant *commitment of time and energy*. Second, they need to be *immersed in another culture* or in a poverty neighborhood where they can be intensively involved with persons different from themselves. Third, *risk* seems to be a necessary aspect of the experience. The admonition from Jesus for Christians to be "born again" suggests the depth of the experience necessary for significant holistic change in people. Fourth, they need to be part of a *community of support*; otherwise, individuals cannot sustain their commitment in the face of risks. Finally, participants realized that they needed more *scheduled time for reflection* in order to assimilate and enhance their learning [service experience?]. Many of the models in the case studies included Bible study as a specific component in their programs and tried to integrate it into the action/reflection rhythm of their volunteers' work.

Faith as Independent Variable—Faith Shapes Service

Much of the current emphasis on faith-based services sees faith as an independent variable. That is, volunteers and faith communities bring "faith" as an element of their service that has some impact on the effectiveness of the services they render. For example, Trulear (2000), in field research on reaching high-risk teens through programs in FBOs (i.e., congregations) described his research as follows:

> Our research on the work of these sites focuses on the following key issues: (1) congregational capacity for program implementation; (2) the role of faith in service delivery; (3) the extent of faith-based organizations' reach into the community; and (4) the impact of the initiative on youth and their communities (Trulear, 2000, p. 6).

"Congregational capacity" refers to the FBO's ability to form strategic partnerships, leverage and manage resources, build community support, actively involve congregants in a range of supportive roles for youth, and develop and implement sound programmatic strategies and services that engage the most seriously at-risk youth. Trulear sought to understand how the issue of faith influences the shape of the program and its approach to youth as well as the extent to which faith is a factor in attracting and engaging youth (Trulear, 2000).

The Search Institute found that, among other variables, religious beliefs encourage—and even mandate—care, compassion, and generosity (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000). The religious experience produces in the

individual a re-evaluation of the meaning of life, which leads to greater degrees of community voluntarism (Park & Smith, 2000).

Faith as Dependent Variable—Service Shapes Faith

Most discussions of the relationship between service and faith assume faith leads to social ministry or voluntarism, but much less attention is given to the other direction of the relationship, or how social ministry may influence faith. Moreover, the theological view that faith is God's gift and not something achieved makes it challenging to describe the way in which faith and social ministry interact at the level of human action (Nelson, 1990).

A biblical/theological discussion by Sawicki (1988) provides insight about how to consider faith as influenced by service. Sawicki explores Luke's story of the empty tomb (24:1-11), a story about where Jesus is *not* to be found, a story that fails to bring people to the Risen Lord. Jesus obviously is not in the tomb, where the women expected him to be. But neither is the Lord in the text, the narrative. The question of 24:5 applies equally well to those who seek Jesus in a tomb and those who seek him in the written word: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Tombs are for dead people, just as texts are for words spoken in the past. The empty tomb story in 24:22-24 ends with the words, "Him they did not see." Matthew's gospel ends with the one way to be able to see the Lord is to follow Jesus' instructions, that is, by obedience. Those who wish to see Jesus must go to a mountain in Galilee; Jesus comes to them there. The teacher's role is to lead people "to the mountain," that is, to the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and to the authority of Jesus. And those teachings focus on serving the hungry, thirsty, strange, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Sawicki, 1988, p. 446). Those who want to find Jesus will find him in the needy. In Acts 7:55-56, "it is the soup-line worker Stephen (see 6:1-5) who, 'full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.' No one in the New Testament understands resurrection better, or speaks of it more eloquently, than this man whose daily job was to distribute food to widows" (Sawicki, 1988, p. 448). In short, service can lead to a transforming faith experience.

Service-Learning

The Search Institute has applied the educational concept and process of "service-learning" to the church, combining the methods of experiential Christian education with service to the needs of the neighborhood or larger community. Service-learning occurs when service and learning are interactive, with service accompanied by religious reflection and study of the meaning of the service (Roehlkepartain, 1993). Their research indicates that young people who are involved in service are much more likely to be firmly bonded to their churches and much less likely to drop out of school. They are less likely to engage in behaviors that put them at risk, such as using drugs and alcohol. Moreover, people involved in service as children and teens are much more likely to be involved in service as adults.

Swezey (1990) explored how community service within campus religious life can support and challenge students' spiritual development, and, in particular, their faith development. Students said they have experienced transformation of their attitudes and values. Some expressed feelings of being uncomfortable or of being inspired. Some posed questions about larger issues of social injustice that they have encountered. All are attempting to create meaning from their experiences, and all have been shaped or transformed by those meanings (Swezey, 1990).

Perry & Katula (2001) searched nine databases and identified 37 studies for empirical research on the relationship between volunteerism and citizenship. In examining those findings, they concluded that

volunteering leads to later giving and volunteering and that the type of service that produces the most consistent results is service-learning.

The Degree of Discomfort/Risk/Fear

Working with people who are radically different, who live in poverty or are homeless, can feel uncomfortable and shake one's understandings of the world. Cosgrove commented that none of the volunteers—all white Roman Catholics—involved in Long Island Catholic parish ministries he studied had experienced the continuous exposure to the depth and extent of human suffering that they encountered in their volunteer service. "For some, their work was a radicalizing experience, leading them to identify with people very different from themselves" (Cosgrove, 2001).

Importance of Relationship

In his study of Catholic volunteers, Cosgrove found that they placed great importance on relationship as the context for helping, i.e., they looked for ways to relate more effectively with program recipients:

> Core workers spoke several times of trying to place themselves in the position of those who had to ask for help ... Another way of facilitating the workers' ability to relate, which was mentioned in both groups, was to "see Christ" in the face of those they helped. This was one of the ways in which faith entered into the work of Outreach staff. It was their faith that led them to and sustained them in the work (Cosgrove, 2001).

In short, there is certainly theological support and some limited research evidence to indicate that involvement in service through community ministries has the potential for shaping the faith of volunteers to some extent. It appears that several variables heighten that potential: opportunities to accompany that service with reflection on its meaning (i.e., service-learning); the ability to develop relationships with service recipients, especially those who are in some way different from the volunteer; and a way to experience some discomfort or risk in the process of serving.

Issues Facing Social Work with Congregations and Their Volunteers

Connecting with the Congregation's Mission

Social service professionals who engage congregations discover diverse cultural and religious communities that offer a service-minded cadre of volunteers. These volunteers are both rich resources and unique challenges. Too often, social service providers in the community approach the church from the perspective of the social service agency's mission, which is addressing the needs of clients and advocating for social justice. From this perspective, the congregation is seen as a resource to be mined in accomplishing the mission of serving community clients. After all, the congregation has money, volunteers, and some political clout. In the best of situations, the goals of the social service provider are congruent with those of the congregation. If the social service provider does not help the congregation make connections between the social service and the mission of the church, however, future partnerships suffer. Congregational volunteers become involved in community programs in order to bring their gifts and their personal attributes as individuals, and as believers, to address the needs of others (Jeavons, 1994). Congregations tend to focus on their mission to serve, to "be faithful," more than the outcomes and effectiveness of that service. They are focused on what God is calling them to do. Even the question

concerning the most pressing need or urgent problem in the community must be secondary to that focus (Garland, 1995, 1992; Garland & Bailey, 1990; Jeavons, 1994).

Community service programs, even Christian programs, tend to adopt secular, for-profit management practices, largely because of the influence of business principles in our culture and the presence of large numbers of business people on non-profit boards. "These people bring needed skills to the organizations but often fail to see the significant differences between the character and the mission of non-profit, especially religious, organizations and those of business organizations" (Jeavons, 1994). For example, in his work with congregations to develop community projects, Lawrence determined that,

> Rather than feeling compelled to develop a project that met the greatest need, we would concentrate on potential projects that generated the most excitement, seemed most likely to succeed, and met other criteria. … Four of the five congregations succeeded in launching viable projects: a tutoring and business-training program for women on welfare; a community education center for children in public housing; a tutoring program for children at risk; and an ecumenical community organization working to meet the needs of local teens (Lawrence, 2000, p. 13).

Targeting Services

One outgrowth of working from the congregation's mission rather than the community's need is the ability of the congregation to stay focused. Trulear writes of the "tyranny of need" when congregations become fragmented in their approach to service, stretched to the limits of resources, and unsystematic in the development of their delivery systems (Trulear, 2000). To be effective, congregations have to say no to some problems in order to address adequately those to which they feel called to serve. Pepper and colleagues (2003) describe some congregations as being overtaxed by multiple community initiatives and thus not open to a new initiative that involved providing voluntary caregiving to community residents.

A review of partnerships between a university and African-American churches to increase community awareness and participation in health screenings suggests the following guidelines:

> 1. Know what the communities' past experiences are with similar programs;
>
> 2. Know the credibility of sponsoring agencies and organizations;
>
> 3. Know other competing priorities of the community at the time the activities are initiated, i.e., poverty, crime, and racism;
>
> 4. Know the experiences of and have familiarity with the target community; and
>
> 5. Understand the social and political influences within the community (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).

Focus on Needs Rather than Systemic Causes

In an early study (1987) working with 32 congregations to develop advocacy ministries, Bobo and Tom (1996) concluded that congregations develop their ministries in terms of people they want to serve rather

than issues or social problems. The congregations focus on relationships with people. They also may not believe they can make a difference in the larger social problems that have a negative impact on those people's lives. Bobo and Tom suggested five steps in moving congregations to broaden their involvement from social service to social advocacy:

> 1. Seek to involve people directly affected by problems in the design and implementation of community services;
>
> 2. Design an extensive listening and discernment process to ensure that community problems are truly heard and understood;
>
> 3. Build in opportunities to help congregations reflect on their ministries;
>
> 4. Challenge Christians to understand and use their power; and
>
> 5. Develop a long-term vision on a spiritual foundation (Bobo & Tom, 1996).

Cnaan and his colleagues (2002) found that congregations respond with social service programs to needs evident among their own members or in their community. They are much less likely to attempt to discover and address the underlying causes of these needs. "While this macrostructural analysis was usually missing, what was found was genuine compassion and a desire to make a better society" (Cnann et al., 2002, p. 253).

In fact, Wuthnow found evidence to support the belief that many volunteers believe that those suffering have brought it on themselves and so may not be motivated to explore underlying institutional causes. Nevertheless, even when individualism provides an explanation for suffering that blames the victim, it does not seem to dampen the importance people place on caring (Wuthnow, 1991).

Is it Worth It? Evaluation of Volunteer Services

There is very little research to determine the extent to which, from a social service perspective, volunteer involvement is worth what it costs or has any discernable positive impact on the problems it addresses.

Cost Efficiency

In a study of volunteer services in hospitals in Toronto, Handy and Srinivasan (2004) concluded that an average of $6.84 in value from volunteers was returned for every dollar spent on volunteer recruitment, administration, liability, supervision, and recognition—a return on investment of 684%. In addition, they found that 80% of active volunteers donate money, and 46% donate money to the hospital in which they work. They caution that as valuable as volunteer services are, they are not interchangeable with, and thus cannot be substituted for, professional services. We have located no other studies of the cost efficiency of volunteers.

Impact on Social Problems

Price (2000) studied 75 congregations in diverse neighborhoods in Chicago. Despite the impressive scope of multiple churches' outreach programs to residents of the poorest communities in the city, he found a striking absence of social transformation, or even a tangible process of improvement, relative to the major outlay of resources. He concludes:

> On the one hand, our findings suggest that any notion that the churches can "pick up the slack" left by the curtailment of the welfare state is completely delusional; even with a limited mission and relatively substantial resources, the churches have been unable to change Cabrini Green fundamentally. On the other hand, in an era marked by increasingly hardening attitudes toward the poor, it is more important than ever that the churches formulate projects that both work and involve their members, and that there be an honest and realistic dialogue within churches about their programs' effectiveness and underlying philosophies (Price, 2000, p. 74).

Research Questions

Based on this literature review, and with the purpose of helping social workers and church leaders lead and guide congregational volunteers more effectively, we designed a research project to study the relationship of faith and service in the lives of congregational volunteers. The project limited its focus to one subset of service activity, that of "organized community caring." Organized community caring connotes service that takes place through the programs of congregations and other community organizations. It does not include acts of kindness, charity, or social action that take place in informal human interaction.

As we began, there appeared to be two sets of variables at work in the relationship between service and faith. First, there are "servant variables," which are characteristics of the serving congregation and its volunteers. These may include theological belief systems, predispositions to serve, systemic strengths and resources, and previous experiences. Second, there are "service variables," or characteristics of the service activity—what volunteers do and how and in what context. Service variables may include whether or not the volunteer works alone or with others in the volunteer's family and/or congregation, the length and extent of the commitment required by the activity, the psychological or social distance between the volunteer and the recipient of service, and the intensity of the relationship. For example, do those experiences of service in which the volunteer has the opportunity to form a relationship with the recipient (through tutoring, mentoring, or leading a children's activity group) have a more profound effect on faith than other, less interactional forms of service (preparing meals to be delivered by others, gathering goods or funds for missions in other places by other persons)?

Finally, we were interested in the ways these two sets of variables interact with one another. What motivates congregations and their volunteers to serve through particular programs and activities of organized community caring? What characteristics of the service sustain or deplete their motivation? How does the volunteer's understanding of theology and mission interact with social environment, community characteristics, and congregational resources to shape service? What impact does service have on the life and faith of a congregation corporately and on its individual members and families?

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