

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY MINISTRY ON CHURCH HEALTH IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCHES OF SOUTH LONDON

by

Stephen Hance

The church in the United Kingdom has experienced a long period of decline and malaise in terms of cultural influence, numerical strength, and mobilization of its members. This period coincided with a time of retrenchment in the evangelical wing of the church particularly, in which mission came to be narrowly identified with proclamation evangelism at the expense of a broader and more holistic perspective. More recently a movement has emerged within the British church to live out a broader definition of the mission of God in the world, expressing mission in community ministry and service as well as other forms of evangelism. This research studied churches that are part of this movement in order to understand what the impact of this holistic mission practice is upon the health of a local church. First, it surveyed a cross-section of churches by means of a questionnaire. Second, it analyzed in more depth a smaller sample of churches that have embraced community ministry as part of a holistic approach to mission. It concluded that this approach has significant success in combating the symptoms of church malaise.

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Asbury Theological Seminary

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by

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

The church in the United Kingdom (UK) is in decline. To take the example of my own church, the Church of England experienced a century of unbroken year-on-year numerical decline from 1905 onward, which continues to this day. Statistician, cleric, and author Bob Jackson states, “The average Church of England diocese in 1994 had a usual Sunday attendance of about 20,000 adults and 4,500 children.... However, by 2004 the average diocese had a Sunday attendance of only 17,000 adults ... plus 3,200 children.” Surveying the impact of this decline on the number of clergy employed by the Church of England, Jackson concludes, “If these long-term trends continue, then, by sometime in the middle of the century each diocese will end up with its own Elijah, probably the cathedral dean, lamenting “I am the only one left!” (6). The situation is serious indeed.

While these figures refer specifically to the Church of England, the situation is not much different in the UK church as a whole. According to the English Church Census of 2005 undertaken by the Christian Research organization, and reported in their publication *Pulling Out of the Nosedive* by Peter Brierley, 6.3 percent of British people now attend church on a typical week, 50 percent of all churches are in decline, and 70 percent of churches have congregations of less than one hundred people. Mainstream churches—the historic denominations, especially the Roman Catholic church—continue to decline fastest, while the smaller, independent Pentecostal congregations are generally declining more slowly or even growing. Overall, according to the English Church Census, 34 percent of churches are growing, with 50 percent declining and 16 percent remaining stable. The decline in church involvement among young people has been particularly

catastrophic with around 85,000 under fifteen and a similar number of people aged fifteen to twenty-nine leaving the church since 1979.

Other reports come up with slightly different numbers without challenging the overall message. For example, the Shaftesbury Society's report begins as follows:

Church membership is steadily declining. It has dropped from 6.6 million members in 1990 to 6 million in 2000, to a projected 5.6 million in 2005. ... According to the 2001 census, 72% of the UK population call themselves Christian. But this is far from the reality seen in our churches on Sunday mornings. A report published in June 2004 put church attendance at 3.6 million, meaning that only one in ten who call themselves Christians are actually part of a local church congregation. (4)

The best one can say about English church attendance is that the rate of decline has slowed down. This shift is revealed in a comparison of the titles of the reports into the 1998 English Church Census, entitled *The Tide Is Running Out*, and the 2005 equivalent, entitled *Pulling Out of the Nosedive!* (Brierley). Even this qualified optimism is probably overstated, in that the largest factor in the stabilization of church attendance in the UK appears to be the significant rate of immigration from other countries with higher rates of churchgoing, Roman Catholics from Eastern Europe and Anglicans and Pentecostals from Africa and the Caribbean. To summarize English church attendance, one would have to say that the situation remains bleak, that it continues to become more bleak, but at least it is not becoming more bleak as quickly as it was before.

Other signs of decline in addition to the numerical ones are in evidence. The church is increasingly marginalized from the public arena, even the Church of England, which remains the established church in the UK. The processes by which this marginalization has happened are multileveled and pertain to UK society as a whole, as well as having some specific manifestations impacting the role and position of the

church. With the rise of postmodernism, a new suspicion emerged of institutions in general, as seen in declining membership of political parties and trades unions as well as the churches. A corporate sense of identity, defined by class, faith, geography, and job, came to be replaced by a much more individualistic sense of identity, in which people downplayed or consciously rejected membership of these larger demographic groups and institutions. Increasingly all claims to knowledge, power, and status came to be distrusted. Despite its origins as a community of the poor and the peripheral, the church had become so comfortable with the trappings of establishment power and prestige that it looked to be in danger of being swept away by these trends. At the same time the rise of multiculturalism as both fact and ideology, as a way of making British society work in a time of mass migration, introduced many new options into the religious marketplace, rendering Christian claims to absolute truth and unique social status more difficult to sustain. Sociologists summarized these trends as they impacted the religious sphere as secularization, a term used both descriptively and ideologically to talk about not only what was happening, but what must and should happen. As David Martin notes, “Often enough this story of the triumph of the secular combines description of the process with overt or covert prescription of the outcome. Secularization is both noted and promoted” (8). Any signs of religious life that did not fit into the secularization thesis were explained away or ignored by academics who in some cases not only believed that religion was being eradicated from British culture but who also devoutly hoped this to be the case.

Contemporary sociology recognizes that the process of secularization is more complex than this argument suggests. As Martin says in his most recent book on the subject, “Some kind of process has certainly occurred, but it may not be quite the one we

have retrospectively constructed” (8). He contrasts an earlier model of an unequivocal tide of religious faith rushing out as modernism rushes in with a more complex, dialectic approach featuring multiple Christianizations followed by multiple secularizations:

Once the dialectic between transforming vision and a neutral and social reality characterized as good has been introduced into history, it does not and perhaps cannot lapse. Rather it mutates in different variants, sometimes under misleading names so that we will miss its secret presence. (11)

The thought that secularization is not a one-way street is one that has great significance for the subject of this study.

I have no doubt that however complex these arguments are, the processes of secularization and multiculturalism have pushed Christianity into the private sphere and left humanism and relativism as the working framework for public life, so that government ministers are now able to refer without correction to the UK as a secular democracy. Joel Edwards, who leads the Evangelical Alliance in the UK, summarizes the church’s present situation:

Christianity in Britain is losing ground. Church attendance since the 1960s has plummeted, and the church itself is widely perceived to represent ideas and practises which have become irrelevant. Government and civic institutions as such are becoming more ‘neutral’ with respect to religion, while at the same time seeking to accommodate a greater diversity of religious traditions and faith communities in an even-handed way. In the process, the UK church is having to come to terms with a relative loss of prestige and public influence. (xiii)

The situation is bleak indeed.

Many churches faced with this situation are in denial or maintenance mode. Some choose the security of doing what they have always done over the risky business of finding new ways to engage with a post-Christian society. Others turn inward and become increasingly engaged with matters of significant interest only to church insiders.

Debates over the finer points of liturgical revision, internal matters of church government, and other questions of little interest to nonchurchgoers conspire to make the church look increasingly irrelevant in a changing world. Even current and important discussions in the Church of England about women bishops and homosexual clergy only underline how removed the church is from a genuine missionary agenda toward the culture, at least at its establishment center.

Hopeful signs also exist, however. Some churches remain passionate about and active in evangelism, “a word with a good heart, in spite of its dirty reputation” (McLaren 12), even if differences remain about what evangelism means or looks like in practice, as well as baggage about past poor evangelistic practice. Walter Brueggeman says, “The urgency of evangelism thus is a multilayered and complex reality in the church. For that reason it does not surprise us that there is no ready agreement among us on the meaning of evangelism, let alone strategies and procedures” (7). Perhaps the best known definition of evangelism is that of the Lausanne Covenant:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. (Stott, *Lausanne Covenant* 20)

Michael Green prefers William Temple’s similar definition:

To evangelize is to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that man shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour, and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church. (9)

In recent history churches have embraced definitions of evangelism such as this, and then developed programs, which communicate the gospel about Jesus Christ as clearly as possible, and people have come to faith as a result.

However, the situation is now less certain and more complex. Even those churches that are passionate about evangelism are finding that these methods they have used successfully in the past no longer produce substantial fruit. For example, according to the web site for Alpha, two million people in the UK have now undertaken the course, easily the most successful evangelistic initiative of recent years, but anecdotally, many church leaders say Alpha is not drawing the crowds it formerly did, and the number of churches running it is no longer on the increase. Mike Booker and Mark Ireland say, “After phenomenal growth in the number of churches running Alpha in Britain during the 1990s, HTB expected the trend to continue in the new millennium, but in fact over the last three years the numbers has plateaued at around 7000” (13). To take the example of my own church, even five years ago courses with thirty attendees were common; now around ten is typical. As another example, London City Mission recently abandoned their program of door-to-door evangelism because they have found it no longer effective. While some sections of the UK church are passionately committed to sharing their faith, the programmatic approach seems to be less fruitful than before, and while each person who does come to faith is a cause for celebration, those who are concerned about these things long for more of them and wonder what approaches might prove more effective in the twenty-first century. John T. Finney noted in 1992 that an average of only 3.7 new professions of faith per church in England each year was being reported (6).

The principles from Alpha and other similar endeavors are now well enshrined in the UK church’s approach to evangelism and include the beliefs that evangelism is more a process than a single event, that people belong before they believe, that faith is best discovered in community, that communication of the faith should be more interactive

than didactic, and that an experience of worship and the presence of the Holy Spirit is as important as an apologetic appeal to the rational mind. Meanwhile, church leaders are increasingly wrestling with how those principles are to be expressed in contemporary evangelism given that even the successful programs of the past no longer seem to work as well as they did.

Evangelistic effectiveness is being hampered by two different and in some ways contradictory mindsets in the contemporary culture. Bruggeman writes of “the growing awareness among us of the resistance of our culture to the primary claims of the Gospel” (7). The rise of postmodernism has given birth to an *anything goes* spirituality, particularly among those under the age of forty. Eddie Gibbs states, “Now we are faced with a generation of people under thirty-five who are turning away from institutional expressions of Christianity and opting to define their own spiritual journey” (11). Contrary to the arguments of older secularization theorists, these people have not rejected spiritual things. *Spirituality* is a contemporary buzz word, and every expression of faith is equally acceptable, however bizarre, provided it makes no claims to authority or uniqueness. At the same time the church’s claim to a special revelation puts it at odds with the prevailing ethos. The appeal to reason characterizing most evangelism of the twentieth century no longer connects with these people, about whom Alister McGrath writes, “Christianity must commend itself in terms of its relevance of life, not just its inherent rationality” (11). Most tragically, the church is so linked in these people’s minds with its establishment role that many no longer see it as a spiritual entity at all.

In contrast, people over the age of forty are more likely to have a mind-set shaped by the scientific rationalistic values of modernism, in which only those things that could

be explained and grasped by the rational mind had value and truth. These people may be more sympathetic to the church's role as an institution within the community, without having much interest in any kind of spiritual message the church might want to convey. Over time, by definition, this second group is likely to grow smaller and the first group to grow larger. In the present climate, both mind-sets are formidable obstacles to be overcome in the cause of Christian evangelism. In that struggle the beliefs of Christians are less powerful than their actions. Many people think they know the content of the Christian faith, and they have to some extent discounted it. Nevertheless they are impressed when they see Christians who are living out their faith in a practical and sacrificial way.

Some church members may be quietly thinking the same way, especially younger, postmodern people, who are less concerned with the fine print of doctrinal purity and more passionate about living the life that Jesus points his followers toward. Sadly many of these people sit bored and disengaged in churches where nothing is asked of them except to turn up to meetings, listen to talks, and perhaps participate in volunteer teams to keep church programs running. The desire to change the world for the better seems to have no place for expression within many churches. An emerging group of Christians is longing for a fresh vision of their faith that is passionate about social transformation.

In the last century, the church has been afflicted by a kind of malaise now threatening the future life and credibility of the church in the United Kingdom, demonstrated in declining numbers, frustrated members, and marginalization from public life, signs of an organization that has lost its way.

Faced with these symptoms, Rick Warren says the Church needs a new Reformation. According to Warren, whereas the first Reformation was about *creeds*, this one will be about *deeds* (qtd. in Henderson). Evidence exists of such a Reformation beginning. One such sign is the increasing willingness of biblically orthodox churches, that have traditionally focused on evangelism and neglected community ministry, to engage with their communities in acts of service. Steve Sjogren's ministry and writings are a good example of this trend in the North American context. In the most powerful summary of his thinking *Conspiracy of Kindness*, he argues from his own church experience that community ministry is more effective than other models of evangelism in communicating the gospel effectively:

Servant evangelism works. People on the receiving end of these simple acts of kindness come away with a more positive impression of Christianity than they previously had. With regular frequency, these deeds also open a door to deeper communication about the gospel. And those who engage in this approach to sharing God's love with strangers don't come away feeling like they have been put through a meat grinder. (21)

Ann Morisy, writing from a UK context, argues that community ministry is a strategy for mission that enables people to act like Christians, feeds people's imagination so that the significance of the gospel can be sensed, and can be a force for positive change in society (ix). Notable from both these authors is the sense that community ministry as a model for mission brings change not only to those who receive it but also to the church offering it.

In the UK church, community ministry as a model for mission is taking off. In soup runs, after-school clubs, community centers, refugee work, elderly care, and myriad other ways, local churches are seeking strategies to be good news, not just to speak about good news. The *Challenging Church* report draws attention to the vast array of these acts of service with which churches are involved. "The church is the largest voluntary

organization in the UK” (Shaftesbury Society, 5), it says, and presents evidence for the church’s influence and potential. The UK church’s turnover was 2.2. billion pounds in 2003 and is rising year after year. Much of that money pays for staff. For example, the Christians of Bradford employ 150 people in community ministry initiatives alone, work that has been valued at over 1.3 billion pounds per year in a single city. At the same time, also in Bradford, over 2,100 Christians volunteer to serve their city in church-based community ministry projects. In Brighton, churches run over three projects, involving 134 staff, 1,072 volunteers, and 5,690 clients. Additionally, Christians offer many hours as volunteers in other areas of social activity as school governors, trade union representatives, or local councilors.

This research addressed the following questions: What is the impact of a local church engaging in community ministry? What impact does all this activity have on the signs of malaise and stagnation in the UK church? Does community ministry enable local churches to prevail against the trends and become healthy? Does it mobilize volunteers? Does it restore the church’s place in the public sphere? Does it give purpose and focus to the congregation? Also, what is the impact of community ministry on the communities being served? Do local people experience change in their communities? Do those areas become happier and healthier places to live? Are new people drawn to faith in Christ? What does the evidence suggest? Empirically, does community ministry on the part of the church look to be an effective way of reversing the decline of the church in England and bringing real change in local communities, and if so, what best practice will help the church to do community ministry brilliantly?

Purpose

The purpose of this research project was to identify the different types of community ministry in which local churches are involved and to assess their impact on the health or malaise of a church.

Research Questions

For the purposes of this research, three questions guided the study.

Research Question #1

How many churches are presently involved in community ministry, and with what specific types of community ministry are they involved?

Research Question #2

Do churches that are actively involved in community ministry display greater signs of church health and fewer signs of church malaise than churches that are not?

Research Question #3

Are particular types of community ministry associated with greater than typical signs of church health?

Definition of Terms

Some terms frequently used in this project are defined below.

Community Ministry

By the phrase *community ministry*, I mean any ministry, project, or intervention undertaken by a local church or local churches specifically designed primarily to meet a perceived need among a section of the general population of a community rather than to serve the needs of the church members. Such projects may overlap these two groups in that needs identified in the community at large may well also be experienced among the

church members, therefore, some of those who are served by such ministries may include some church members. However, the focus of such ministries will be those who do not yet come to church rather than those who do. I am specifically excluding from this definition those ministries designed only to meet the spiritual needs of nonchurchgoers by drawing them to Christ through communication of the gospel.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a division emerged in the church between those in the evangelical wing who tended to prioritize personal salvation through evangelism and those in the liberal wing who tended to prioritize expression of the gospel through care for people's practical needs. Tony Campolo said recently in an interview, "In an over-reaction to the liberal-modernist wing of the church, which had made social justice their only concern, evangelicalism went to the other extreme—saying evangelism is important and that social justice does not matter" (Flannagan). In recent years this unhelpful and false dichotomy has been eroded as Christians of orthodox theology invest significant resources of time, money, and energy to serve the people of their community in practical ways, regardless of those people's present faith commitment. I am defining community ministry as any such needs-orientated activity freely offered by the local church to the whole community in the name of Jesus.

Church Health and Malaise

I am using the phrase *church health* to cover a cluster of signs of life, energy, and growth in the life of a local church. Conversely the term *church malaise* covers a cluster of symptoms of stagnation and decline. I talk on occasion about church malaise rather than church health because it is more descriptive of the state of much of the UK church. One way of defining church malaise is to take the signs of church health identified by

other studies and to see church malaise as their opposites. For my purposes, I used the Natural Church Development definitions of Christian A. Schwarz as one of the best-known descriptions of church health.

Jackson underlines the organic nature of the imagery in Schwarz's work;

Schwarz picks up the biological pictures of the Church found in the New Testament, such as in Jesus' words: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." Living organisms grow naturally, their growth potential built into their genes. A church is a living organism. If it is healthy, it will be growing. (Jackson 72)

As a living body the Church should normally experience growth.

Schwarz studied one thousand churches in thirty-two countries in order to identify eight characteristics present in healthy churches. Other authors have criticized his work for positioning church health as an alternative to church growth and perhaps most seriously for quasi-scientific claims, which are difficult to verify from the methodology of Schwarz's research. Nevertheless, leaving aside the claims to a scientific basis for Schwarz's case, the fact remains that the eight characteristics Schwarz identifies agree to a large extent with other such lists of signs of a healthy church, compiled in different ways. George G. Hunter III says that Schwarz's characteristics "merely confirm what many church leaders have intuitively believed all along" (11), and on that basis they provide a reasonable and widely acceptable picture of what a healthy church looks like.

Schwarz's signs of church health are as follows:

- Gift-orientated ministry,
- Inspiring worship services,
- Need-orientated evangelism,
- Loving relationships,

- Holistic small groups,
- Passionate spirituality,
- Empowering leadership, and
- Functional structures (22-38).

To summarize, the healthy church will evidence signs of life in worship and spirituality, in ministry and mission, and in leadership and community relationships.

If Schwarz presents a picture of the characteristics of a healthy church, then logically an unhealthy church might be expected to demonstrate the polar opposites of these qualities. One might therefore expect that the characteristics of unhealthy, malaise-stricken churches would be as follows:

- People uninvolved in ministry or serving in areas for which they are not gifted,
- Uninspiring worship services,
- Little or no evangelism or evangelism that does not meet people at the point of need, leading to numerical decline,
- Lack of relationships in the church or relationships marked by superficiality or unhealthy conflict,
- No small groups or small groups that have become inward looking and cliquy,
- Lack of spiritual passion,
- Controlling or ineffective leadership, and
- Ineffective structures.

In summary, the church afflicted by church malaise will have members who are pew fillers not ministers, will have worship services and small groups that are stale and dutiful not dynamic and challenging, and will be failing to draw new people to Christ. Malaise-stricken churches will exhibit little sense of life, of momentum, or of mission. Sadly this picture describes accurately the state of many churches in England.

Ministry Intervention

This project aimed to assess the impact of community ministry on the health of Anglican churches in south London by means of a questionnaire to the leaders of all the churches of the Diocese of Southwark and follow-up visits to a small number of those churches for the purposes of interviewing leaders, volunteer ministers, and community ministry participants.

Context

This study takes place in the context of the church in England. The church in England breaks down into three groups of roughly equal strength: the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the other denominations and networks of whom the strongest are the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, and the Pentecostal Church. Strong ecumenical networks exist across the denominations. Although my own church setting and the context for this research is the Church of England, the application of this research is not limited to the Anglican Church.

As has been said already, the recent history of the church in England is a discouraging one. Throughout the twentieth century, church attendance declined every year. According to the English Church Census of 2005, the average size of congregation in England is now only eighty-four. Despite the Church of England being an established

church, with the Queen both head of state and head of the church and senior bishops sitting in the House of Lords, the church has lost most meaningful opportunities to contribute to public life. The UK is now firmly a post-Christian, multi-faith country, particularly in its urban areas.

In the last thirty years, various initiatives have been undertaken to reverse the tide, such as the Alpha course and the Decade of Evangelism. Despite some limited evangelistic success, the most that one can say overall is that according to some estimates the decline may now have stopped. While some churches are growing significantly—generally those that are conservative in theology and contemporary in style—little evidence exists of substantial overall church growth. Gains in one church are offset by losses in another. In particular, increasing church attendance among black people is camouflaging the rate of decline among the white population. In London, more churchgoers are now black than white. Overall church attendance remains at around 6 percent of the population. For most British citizens, the church is irrelevant. This study takes place in the context of a national church that has experienced enormous decline and has not yet begun a major recovery.

Nevertheless, Christians should not become depressed about the present situation. The UK church has a long history and this history includes periods of missional effectiveness as well as stagnation and decline. Sometimes renewal movements have emerged at times when the church has appeared to be in the direst of situations. John Wesley and the early Methodists constitute one example, the charismatic movement another. Even now signs exist of an emerging renewal movement. Faced with the seriousness of the situation, some churches are strategizing for change and growth in

creative ways. They exhibit increasing willingness to experiment with worship styles, with new approaches to community, with dynamic strategies for evangelism, with workplace-based cell groups, and with fresh initiatives to serve and bless the local community. This last group of churches is the focus of this research. My hope is that this research will help more congregations to be part of a community-focused renewal movement within the English church.

Methodology

My research sought to analyze the impact of community ministry on church malaise through the following approach.

Participants

I chose as my sample to survey the churches of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark. Southwark Diocese covers a large area of south London, from the inner city through the prosperous outer suburbs and into some rural communities just outside the city. The advantages of Southwark Diocese as my survey sample were availability, in that as an Anglican clergyman of this Diocese myself I had relatively straightforward access to the other church leaders, and mix, in that the Diocese includes a wide variety of demographics, church sizes and models, and theological traditions.

Instrumentation

I surveyed this group by means of a questionnaire (see Appendix A) directed to the church leaders to discover the kinds of community action in which churches were involved, and to what extent those churches manifested symptoms of health or malaise. From the group of questionnaire respondees, I followed up a smaller number of churches particularly active in community ministry by means of interviews with the church leader

and others, including participants in and recipients of the church's community ministries, and people who had recently joined the church. I used a semi-structured approach, which allowed the interview to be partially shaped by the concerns and experiences of the interviewee. The aim of this part of the research was to see in more detail some of what is actually happening on the ground and to hear the stories of how churches had embarked on this kind of ministry.

Variables

I was aware of needing to work with two main variables. I faced varying levels of familiarity with and access to the Internet and electronic communication, which I approached by trying to make the process of requesting a hard copy questionnaire as straightforward as possible. I also faced varying levels of motivation, given that this subject would interest some potential participants more than others and that those clergy who were involved in community ministry were more likely to respond than those who were not. I approached this variable by communicating with all clergy several times in order to ask for their involvement and by trying to make participation as easy as possible.

Data Collection

I distributed the questionnaire by means of an e-mail to all those church leaders for whom the Diocese had e-mail addresses and by post to others. Every vicar (senior pastor) received a questionnaire and an invitation to participate. Both groups were offered either an online form to complete or a hard copy questionnaire. I transferred the data that came via either hard copy or e-mail into the online form in order to keep all the data together. I took notes during the interviews, which I then read and, where necessary, expanded immediately afterwards while my memory was still clear.

Data Analysis

I separated questions the questionnaire into three main sections: those questions pertaining to symptoms of church health and malaise, those that asked about community ministry projects, and those that were contextual or demographic questions. I then reviewed responses in order to define categories for each in light of the responses received. I assigned numerical points to questions that required answers on an agreement scale in order to tabulate them in a database. I combined answers to questions in the first two sections to create an overall score for church health/malaise and another overall score for community ministry involvement, which could be correlated with other factors. I generated a database showing whether those churches that scored themselves strongly on community action also scored more strongly on other signs of church growth and health.

Generalizability

Southwark Diocese has a mix of churches that reflects many of the types of churches to be found in the UK. Southwark churches have a spread of theological traditions that includes evangelical, catholic, central, charismatic, liberal, and all points in between. They range in size from the very small to the very large. They cover inner city, urban, suburban, and rural areas. Therefore, while this research is limited to the churches of one denomination in one area of the country, I would expect these results to be broadly reflective of the UK church more generally.

Theological Foundation

Chapter 2 bases this study on the theological concept of the *missio Dei*, the notion that mission is primarily God's action of reaching out to his creation in grace and love. Chapter 2 argues that rather than the Church initiating mission that it then asks God to bless, mission flows from God himself, who creates and equips the Church to engage in God's missionary activity along the way. The Church is, therefore, more a product of mission than mission is an activity of the Church.

This theological foundation, as chapter 2 demonstrates, is based upon six core building blocks from the Bible:

1. the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2, revealing God's concern and involvement with the whole created order;
2. the Pentateuch, and especially the call of Abraham, who was blessed by God in order to be a blessing to the whole world;
3. the Old Testament prophets, which demonstrate that God is as concerned with how his people live in the community as he is with the rightness of their worship lives;
4. the life and ministry of Jesus, expressed in Luke 4, which is not restricted to a renewal of right religious practice in Israel but which is seen in healing, deliverance, and reaching across social boundaries;
5. the gift of the Holy Spirit, who creates his church as the bearer of God's presence and mission in the world and empowers the church to accomplish things that could never be accomplished in human power alone; and,
6. New Testament eschatology, which is about God's restoration of the whole cosmos in the New Creation, not simply the rescuing of human souls for heaven.

From this review of biblical theology, Chapter 2 draws three key principles about the mission of God:

1. Mission is God's initiative.
2. Mission is for the whole world.
3. Mission is for the whole of life.

Overview

The chapters that follow develop the research in the following way. Chapter 2 sets a biblical and theological framework for the study before providing a brief historical overview of the UK church's engagement with social action. Chapter 3 sets out in more detail the methodology described earlier. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings from this research and answers the three research questions accordingly. Chapter 5 discusses what the data reveals, makes some recommendations for local churches, and some suggestions for further research.

Conclusion

Any organization facing stagnation or decline may be tempted to attempt any new thing possible to arrest that decline, and the church is not immune from that temptation. Nevertheless, a desire for survival is not a good enough motivation for churches to reorientate themselves to become centers of transformation within their communities. As Jackson states, "The main motive for community initiatives has to be love, care and compassion for the human predicament, not bolstering the attendance register figures" (85). Jackson also sees some evidence now that these initiatives are beginning to have an influence on attendance figures, and this evidence is the subject of this research. At the moment, many churches are tentatively stepping out into this holistic model of mission,

without knowing what the impact of this strategy will be on the number of those attending or any of the other signs of health. This research provides data to allow churches to know in advance what the results of these activities are likely to be.

Christians may think perfectly good reasons exist why churches might want to engage in these activities even if no evidence exists that they will lead to significant changes in the health of their own congregation, but they should at least know what the likely results will be and therefore be better placed to decide whether to embrace this approach. My hope is that this research will inspire many churches to do so.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

The local church—given its power by all the elements of Eucharistic celebration (word, sacrament, fellowship, openness, and leadership)—only has a point when it knowingly commits itself to share in God’s mission. This is not an isolated exercise in making more Christians to fill the pews and the collection plate. This is not a challenge to the apathy of decline in which church attendance by diminishing numbers is little more than an extended wake. Rather, it is about sharing in God’s passionate hope for all creation in the minutiae of local living and daily occupation.

—Robin Greenwood, *Practising Community: The Task of Community*

Introduction—A Tale of Three Churches

On any Sunday in suburban London, or almost any other English city, a visitor could attend churches very much like the fictitious three described here.

First one could visit St. Mary’s for their 8 a.m. Eucharist. St. Mary’s is a somewhat traditional Anglican church. They would not call themselves evangelical, catholic, liberal, charismatic, or anything except Anglican. The vicar is a kind and gentle man of no fixed theology, and his congregation is similar. They are middle-aged and older, long-term members for whom church is an important but not necessarily defining part of life. Recently the vicar set up a “mission committee” to give away some funds and to encourage people to be involved with mission. The new committee has taken on its responsibilities with relish. They have found fourteen mission societies to support out of their initial budget of one thousand pounds for the year. Most are Anglican societies. Most emphasize development and relief work over gospel proclamation. After all, the vicar has taught that everyone will be saved in the end anyway, so they see no need to waste valuable resources on evangelism. All this work is overseas, mainly in parts of Africa that have had good coverage in the press. A map of the world is proudly displayed at the back of the church, showing where funds have been distributed.

At the end of the service a visitor could move on to Central Baptist Church for their 10:30 a.m. Family Service. Central Baptist is a lively, fast-moving church. The new pastor, in post for nearly a year now, is changing the church radically, and the congregation is growing. Today's sermon is entitled "Reaching the Lost," the fourth of a twelve-week preaching series on evangelism. The pastor believes the greatest weakness of the church he inherited was its lack of emphasis on evangelism, and he is doing all he can to change it. Sermons constantly emphasize the importance of faith-sharing. "If we don't tell others about Jesus, they face hell because of our lack of concern," the pastor teaches. *Becoming a Contagious Christian* courses help church members to evangelize, and Alpha courses provide a safe place to bring interested seekers. All of these initiatives are well attended, and people are increasingly finding faith at Central Baptist. A few weeks ago, a few of the younger people came to see the pastor. They had an idea that the church should be doing something to serve the residents of a poor estate in the area, but the pastor explained that, although kindly intentioned, this plan would be a distraction from the important business of evangelism.

Later on a visitor could attend Old Street Methodist Church for their 6:30 p.m. service. The congregation is small, forty people or so, and youthful, mainly under thirty years old. They are more casually dressed than either of the other congregations, in jeans and T-shirts. The pastor is a woman in her forties, dressed much like her congregation. She is preaching from Matthew 25, the story of the sheep and the goats. She explains that Jesus is teaching here that what Christians do to serve the practical needs of the hurting and vulnerable, they do for him. "That's what mission is about," she says. "Not forcing our beliefs on others. Not thrusting religious dogma down their throats. Why does it

matter if they believe what we believe? No, the real mission of Jesus is to show our love for others, regardless of who they are or what they believe.” The notice boards at the back reveal that this congregation has taken this teaching seriously. The church organizes soup runs, homeless shelters, after-school clubs for children, all local initiatives, all being run by this small band of Christians and their friends. Recently a member of the church suggested organizing some evangelistic meetings to share the gospel with all the nonchurchgoers who benefit from these initiatives, but nobody else liked the idea. Nobody can remember the last time someone became a Christian and joined the church.

These three churches, whilst fictional, are not hard to find in reality, and while they appear different they have something in common. All have a faulty, incomplete notion of mission. All are trying to do something. All are doing better than the many churches who never give mission or outreach a second thought. All are doing some good things, but none of them have properly understood mission biblically and theologically. St. Mary’s have made the mistake of thinking that mission is something that happens far away, in countries overseas populated by people who neither look nor live like them. Central Baptist has fallen into the trap of believing that mission is only about saving souls, and that any community transformation that occurs will be, as Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz state, an inevitable by-product of evangelism (341). Old Street Methodist Church has accepted the liberal social gospel agenda that equates mission with social action alone and is embarrassed and half-hearted about gospel proclamation. None of them practice the breadth of mission described by Conn and Ortiz:

The task of the church is to preach the kingdom of Christ in a way that effectively redresses the Fall and brings wholeness and peace to individuals and community. A world-centred spirituality—bodies without souls—will not do. A soul-centred approach—the soul without the body—

will not make much of an impact. A God-centred spirituality touches all of life. (347)

Every narrower conception of mission is at best partial and falls short of the gospel of God.

In this chapter I look at mission primarily as God's activity in the world into which he invites his Church, rather than a human activity for which the Church seeks God's blessing. This concept of the mission of God, the *missio Dei*, provides the foundation of this dissertation. First I unpack the *missio Dei* in the biblical narrative, identifying six core biblical building blocks for the notion. I then go on to look at the nature and breadth of God's mission, and here I argue that true mission has three key principles at its heart: it is God's initiative; it is for the whole world; and, it is for the whole of life. Then I give a brief historical overview of how the church has practiced her mission in the UK. Here I focus on the ebbs and flows of holistic mission as part of the church's mission, seeing that in periods of its history the church has grasped the whole-life dimensions of its calling, and other periods when it has retreated into a narrower focus on proclamation evangelism. I follow this section with a summary of the contemporary situation, reviewing recent literature on mission and community ministry and identifying the main developments in the current UK church in this area. By the end of this chapter the theological roots of community ministry will be clear, together with the development of mission understanding and practice in the UK church over time, providing a foundation for the research into how an integrated understanding of mission positively contributes to church health in a local congregation today.

The *Missio Dei*: God's Mission

The theological foundation for this dissertation is *missio Dei*, the notion that God is a missionary God already at work in his world who calls his Church to join him in his mission. Mission is not primarily something people do, a human task to be accomplished. It is rather something God does, that flows from his nature and identity.

Although the phrase *missio Dei* has a long pedigree stretching back to Augustine, its use in missiological discourse is generally first attributed to German theologian Karl Hartenstein who summarizes the thought of Karl Barth:

Mission is not just the conversion of the individual, nor just obedience to the word of the Lord, nor just the obligation to gather the church. It is the taking part in the sending of the Son, the *missio Dei*, with the holistic aim of establishing Christ's rule over all redeemed creation. (qtd. in Engelsviken)

Mission then becomes something that flows from God and his nature primarily into which his people are subsequently invited. God is a missionary God.

The *missio Dei* has become a popular notion in missiological discourse since the Willengen world mission conferences of 1952. Tormod Engelsviken characterizes this development as involving a change from “a more anthropocentric understanding of mission to a more theocentric, and from a more ecclesiocentric understanding to a more cosmocentric. In the latter perspective, the world, both in its socio-political and religious dimensions, is at the centre of attention.” *Missio Dei* is therefore about God's initiative toward the world.

This concept of God is profoundly rooted in an understanding of the Trinity, in which the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and the Father,

Son, and Spirit together send the Church into the world. Jurgen Moltmann comments on this understanding.

“It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way.” (64)

The church is the product of God’s mission to the world.

Stephen Seamands reflects on Moltmann’s thinking as follows:

To be sure, the church is an instrument of God’s mission, but God’s mission precedes, initiates, defines and sustains the church in mission. Consequently, there is not mission because there is church; there is church because there is mission already—the mission of the triune God.... The church is not so much a sending agency as it is a sent agency. We are sent because the triune God is Sender (Father), Sent (Son) and Sending (Holy Spirit). (161)

God’s mission is, therefore, primary and the church secondary, constituted as the servant of God’s mission, not the other way round.

A new notion, or a new expression of an ancient concept, is always open to the danger of misunderstanding. *Missio Dei* is a term broad enough to mean everything and nothing, according to the agenda of the person using the term. Wilhelm Richebacher describes it as a “container definition” from which a person can read “anything that he or she needs at this time.” Similarly, J. Andrew Kirk writes, “The wideness of its scope means that it has become a tag on which an enormous range of meaning can be hung.” (25). Writers have used *missio Dei* to advance all kinds of agendas, not all of which clarify the church’s understanding of mission.

In the case of *missio Dei*, a particular danger arises that the Church concludes that if God is the initiator of mission, less responsibility rests upon the church to focus on mission itself. The grace and sovereignty of God become excuses for human inaction and

sin, not an uncommon feature of church history. However, this view misses the whole point. The point about *missio Dei* is not that God says, “Leave the mission to me, everyone.” It is rather that in his reaching out to the world he chooses to invite his people to join him. God is not the sole protagonist of mission; he is its initiator. The role of the Church is to step into something God has already purposed and begun, rather than to plan and initiate it all and then seek God’s blessing on it. The church remains central. For example, Richebacher summarizes Barth’s thought as follows:

For him it was a matter of certainty that the church itself has a clear place as a subject of missionary activity, within the fundamental process in which a person encounters the Word, an experience that only God can give.

As Christopher J. H. Wright explains, “Mission ... means the committed participation of God’s people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God’s. The marvel is that God invites us to join in” (67). God initiates mission but calls his people to partner with him in it.

The *Missio Dei* in Scripture

The *missio Dei* is not a twentieth-century theological innovation but a thoroughly biblical concept; indeed, it is the only truly biblical foundation for the Church’s reflection and practice in mission. More than that, the Bible is itself a collection of missional documents that cannot be understood apart from an understanding of God’s mission to the world. I agree with C. Wright when he says that right understanding of Scripture requires “an approach to biblical hermeneutics that sees the mission of God ... as a framework within which we can read the whole Bible” (18). Richard Bauckham makes a similar argument when he talks about the need “to read the Bible in a way that takes seriously its missionary direction” (11).

C. Wright argues that the whole basis and story of Scripture is missional. He argues that in Luke 24:45-47, Jesus claims that the whole of Scripture finds its focus and fulfilment both in the life and death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah and in the mission to all nations, which flows out from that event. Luke says this thought opened the minds of disciples, so they could understand Scripture. "The proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read their Scriptures is messianically and missionally" (C. Wright 30). Therefore, the Bible is not so much a book to raid for proof texts that justify mission but is itself the product of God's mission. Bauckham argues that Scripture encapsulates a movement from the particular to the universal in time, space, and in people. As C. Wright says, "The whole canon of Scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God toward his creation and us" (48).

The Bible gives six key building blocks for this belief. The first is the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2. This story reveals that the universe did not simply happen to exist. Whatever mechanics may have produced it, it came to be out of the specific will of God simply by his word. As Derek Kidner says, "The absence of any intermediary implies an extremely rich content for the word 'said'" (46). The physical universe and all that is in it comes to be because God has willed it and spoken it himself, and his own Spirit broods, or hovers, over the waters in Genesis 1:2.

This text also reveals that God's concern and involvement is with the whole created order, not just one nation or people group, not even just humanity, but the whole world. It rightfully belongs to him because he has made it. Therefore, he is the one true Lord and King of the whole creation. David Atkinson makes this point:

Genesis 1 reminds us that the rest of God's creation—and we human beings also—are there *for him* [original emphasis]. There is a community of creation, and each part is brought to its potential and fulfillment only in correspondence with other parts, as each stays in line with God's creative purposes for it. (35)

God also celebrates creation and delights in it. God has no half-heartedness in his attitude to created matter. He gives no sense that somehow the material world is less than a higher spiritual plane, no hint that animals and inanimate objects are provided merely as resources to humans, even while humanity represents the peak of the creation story. Rather, the text reveals a God who exults over what he has made, repeatedly affirming it as good. This world is God's world. He made it; he celebrated over it; and he alone is the initiator of its restoration.

Scripture affirms this point in the many places where God's sovereignty and ownership of the whole created order is specified. For example, Deuteronomy 10:14 says, "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." Job 41:11 states, "Everything under heaven belongs to me." Even while the Bible focuses on the uniqueness of God's covenant relationships with his people—the Hebrews of the Old Testament, and then the ingrafted children of Abraham in the New—it never forgets the reach of God's kingship and concern. The narrative of the Fall teaches that human sin has affected not just people but the whole created order (Gen. 3:17). As Conn and Ortiz say, "The natural world is on a downslide, decaying without resolution until Jesus returns" (345). If the Fall encompasses the whole of creation in its impact, however, so does redemption. In Romans 8:19-22, Paul pictures the groaning not only of God's people as they wait for the completion of their adoption as his children, but of the whole of creation. Tom Wright comments on this text:

The creation isn't waiting to *share* [original emphasis] the freedom of God's children, as some translations imply. It is waiting to benefit wonderfully when God's children are glorified. It is waiting—on tiptoe with expectation, in fact—for the particular freedom it will enjoy when God gives to his children that glory, that wise rule and stewardship, which was always intended for those who bear God's glorious image. (*Paul* 152)

As C. Wright argues, the Bible teaches that the created order has purpose and value not only because of where it has come from but also because of where it is going.

Two implications follow from this point. Firstly, Christians have a specific mandate for care of the creation. The church has been slow to understand this mandate, although this process may now be happening, albeit with resistance from some sections of the evangelical church. Secondly, and more broadly, Christians need to see that if God's concern is global and cosmic in breadth, then the Church dare not narrow its definition of mission to a simple proclamation of a personal salvation message, important though that is. Christians must seek to operate out of a conception of mission that is as broad as God's.

The second building block is to be found in the Pentateuch, most especially in the call of Abraham:

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen. 12:1-3)

Abraham receives a unique calling. As Bauckham says, Abraham is *singled out* by God. (28). God promises particular blessing to Abraham and his descendents, but makes clear that this blessing, the blessing of greatness, of reputation, and of a new land, is not ultimately for Abraham and his descendents but is for the sake of the whole world. "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). Even at this moment of unique

covenant with Abraham, and through him the whole Jewish people, God's ultimate focus is not on a particular group but on the whole human race:

We learn at once that this singling out of Abraham from all the nations is not at all to be understood as God's giving up on the nations.... In Abraham's case he is singled out precisely so that blessing can come to the nations. (28)

This point is important, for without this recognition it would be possible to read the biblical narrative as starting with a broad canvas for God's concern and sovereignty—the whole created order—and then post-Fall focusing down onto one narrower area of concern—the chosen people; but a careful reading of Abraham's calling shows the truth to be somewhat different. The particularity of Israel is not because God has decided to care only about them but because God's strategy for the changing of the whole created order is to bless a people who will then be a blessing and a sign of God's rule to all the nations. This promise is repeated four more times in Genesis (18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). As Bauckham says, "For the canonical reader Genesis creates a strong expectation that the blessing of the nations through Abraham's descendants is to be the goal of the rest of the biblical story" (30).

In this context blessing surely means more than contemporary usage, indicating either a warm wish from one person to another ("Bless you for that!") or a vague sense of spiritual well-being from God ("Dear Lord, please bless our church"). Bauckham states, "Blessing in the Bible refers to God's characteristically generous and abundant giving of all good to his creatures and his continual renewal of the abundance of created life" (34). Blessing is also "to know God himself in his generous giving" (34). Blessing is about experiencing the fullness of God's good creation and the fullness of relationship with the Creator. As such, it is a broad and inclusive term, encompassing all that may be said to be

good about human experience: spiritual, material, relational, political, and economic.

Blessing is “in the most comprehensive sense God’s purpose for his creation.... God’s blessing is universal” (34).

Another way of understanding the breadth of God’s blessing is to understand its opposite, God’s curse. As Bauckham says, “With sin God’s curse enters creation alongside God’s blessing.” Genesis 3 and 4 make this point clearly. Even in the story of God’s promise of blessing to Abraham, a reminder of God’s curse runs beneath the surface. (“I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse” [Gen. 12:3].) God’s curse has a profound impact. In Genesis 3 and 4, it is seen in the alienation of the man and the woman, the introduction of death and pain into human experience, the hardening of creation so that producing food becomes hard labor, and the separation of humanity from God. The blessing of God, promised to all nations through Abraham and his descendents, must, therefore, entail the reconciliation of the man and the woman, the elimination of the forces of pain and death, the renewed richness of creation, and a new relationship between God and humankind.

The third building block is found in the Old Testament prophets. In the prophets God makes clear in frequent denunciations of injustice and oppression that he is concerned with the whole of life and how the community lives together. Although the prophets focus strongly on themes of spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness in worship, they do not do so to the exclusion of concerns about the social, political and economic life of the community.

Those times in the books of the prophets where the text reveals the breadth of God’s engagement with the whole of his world are particularly telling, because the focus

of the prophets is primarily the people of the two kingdoms. Nevertheless, God's wider vision and purpose often shine through for example, in Isaiah 19:24-25, which speaks about Israel being a blessing to the earth, together with Egypt and Assyria. Bauckham sees in this passage a prophetic expectation of a future federation of international powers in which the blessing of God is promised. Verse 25 makes this blessing specific: "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Bauckham makes this point about the text:

Here Israel, from her central position 'in the midst of the earth ... proves a blessing to her former oppressors, her international neighbors, and perhaps we are to understand that the blessing extends to all the nations since all could be envisaged as members of these three great empires. (32)

Verse 23 picks up the biblical theme that God will be glorified when the nations, Egypt and Assyria in this instance but elsewhere left unspecific, come to worship. At that time Israel's vocation as a sign and blessing to the world will have been completed. Isaiah 25:6-8 envisages a day when the "shroud that enfolds all peoples," presumably a picture of misunderstanding and unbelief resulting from the other nations not having received direct revelation from God, will be swallowed up, and all nations will be represented at the banquet of God.

Jeremiah 4:1-2 again makes the point that Israel's fulfillment of its obligations under the covenant is essential if its vocation to be the bearer of God's blessing to the nations is to be fulfilled. As Bauckham says, "In order for the nations to be blessed Israel need only be faithful to YHWH" (31). Israel's calling to bless the nations, while not constantly reiterated in the prophets, creates the purpose and context against which its present faithlessness will be judged.

The prophets also make clear the breadth of God's concern with how his people live. Of course, the balance of Old Testament prophetic material is weighted toward the cultic obligations of Israel under the covenant, but in many places God's passion for the whole of human life is revealed, and his anger when his people fall into patterns of oppression and injustice. Amos is perhaps the most obvious extended treatment of this theme, but Isaiah 58:5-7 clearly indicates that even meticulous obedience to the religious obligations of the law is insufficient unless it is accompanied by an active commitment to its social and political strictures. Micah 4:3-4 envisages the future fulfillment of God's kingdom in these powerful words:

He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.
Every man will sit under his own vine
and under his own fig tree,
and no-one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

This picture is indeed, as Bruce Waltke, Desmond Alexander, and David W. Baker say in their commentary, a "glorious future," a picture of blessing, peace, and prosperity encompassing every part of human life.

In the exilic prophecies, one catches an intriguing glimpse into God's engagement with those who are not part of his covenant people. They can be used to accomplish his will, as was Cyrus in Isaiah 45. According to Jeremiah the exiles are to pray for the blessing and prosperity, the "shalom," of the land where they are held captive—evidence that God has a concern for those nations, too. Even in times of suffering and oppression, God's people remain a missional people. "The exiles had a task—a mission no less—

even in the midst of the city of their enemies. And that task was to seek the welfare of that city and to pray for the blessing of YHWH upon it” (C. Wright 99-100).

Finally in the Old Testament, the prophecies about the coming Messiah establish that he will be a light for the nations, not just the nation. God’s vision is creation-wide, and his long-term plan is global restoration. For that purpose, not just the restoration of one people group let alone the rescuing of a smattering of penitent individuals from a world in meltdown, the people of the Old Testament were awaiting a Savior.

In the New Testament, the reader sees *missio Dei* in the fourth building block, the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus’ mission is all God’s initiative. God acts to demonstrate his sovereignty in Jesus, and in Jesus God is encountered and known. Because of the breadth and inclusivity of the mission of Jesus, those who are guardians of the national religious life simply cannot understand what they see and hear. Jesus’ mission crosses all manner of religious and national boundaries and refuses to be restricted to a renewal of the worship life of Israel. It embraces the whole of life and is expressed succinctly in Jesus’ reading and claim of the prophecy of Isaiah 61, as recorded in Luke 4:18-19:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Tom Wright explains the Old Testament roots of Jesus’ teaching:

Jesus seems to have drawn on the larger picture in Isaiah and elsewhere which speaks of Israel being called to be the light of the nations, a theme which Luke has already highlighted in chapter 2. The servant-Messiah has not come to inflict punishment on the nations, but to bring God’s love and mercy to them. And that will be the fulfillment of a central theme in Israel’s own Scriptures. (*Luke 48*)

The mission of God in Jesus only makes sense in the light of the Old Testament.

God's singling out of Abraham as the one man through whose descendants all the nations of the world would be blessed is now replicated in the singling out of Jesus, whose descendants are also called to be the bearers of God's blessing to the whole world. Equally clearly, the demonstration of the gospel in the signs of healing and deliverance that accompany Jesus wherever he goes reveals the breadth of Jesus' mission. The reader sees that breadth in the way he reaches out to those who are outside the covenant, such as the Roman centurion, or marginalized within it, such as the Samaritan woman. Most of all, one sees that breadth in his death and resurrection. This Messiah is for the whole world, for the whole person, and for the whole of life.

C. Wright summarizes the convictions of Jesus and his earliest followers in a punchy seven point statement:

1. if the God of Israel is the God of the whole earth
2. if all the nations (including Israel) stood under his wrath and judgement
3. if it is nevertheless God's will that all nations on earth should come and worship him
4. if he had chosen Israel to be the means of bringing such blessings to all nations
5. if the Messiah is to be the one who would embody and fulfil that mission of Israel
6. if Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen, is that Messiah
7. then it is time for the nations to hear the good news. (500)

Jesus' fundamental sense of vocation as the Messiah of Israel in itself means that the time has come for the nations to receive the gospel. C. Wright shows how Jesus' ministry to Israel as Messiah relates to his ministry that impacts the nations:

Jesus' earthly ministry was launched by a movement that aimed at the restoration of *Israel* [original emphasis]. But he himself launched a movement that aimed at the ingathering of the *nations* [original emphasis] to the new messianic people of God. The *initial impetus* [original emphasis] for his ministry was to call Israel back to their God. The

subsequent impact [original emphasis] of his ministry was a new community that called the nations to faith in the God of Israel. (506)

Jesus ministry as Messiah leads inevitably to the ingathering of the nations to God's covenant people.

In Paul's thinking about Jesus' death, Abraham's promise and Israel's vocation are central, too. For example, in Galatians 3:8-9, Paul sees the declaration of God to Abraham that all nations would be blessed by him as nothing less than the articulation of the gospel. The message of the gospel is that all Gentiles will be blessed in Abraham. In Galatians 3:13-14 Paul argues that in the death of Jesus, the descendent of Abraham, he becomes cursed himself, absorbing God's curse from the Fall, so that the blessing promised through Abraham to the nations might now be experienced. Bauckham makes this point:

It is in this light that Paul can make the promise to Abraham that the nations will be blessed through the gospel.... The secret of the promise is the bearing of the curse so that the blessing may prevail. The gospel is that in Jesus Christ the curse has been set aside and God's creative purpose for the blessing of his creation is established beyond any possibility of reversal. (35-36)

Through Jesus, and most especially through his cross, blessing replaces the ancient curse, not only for the physical descendents of Abraham but for all who will receive the invitation to be included in God's covenant people.

The fifth building block is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who flows from the events of cross, resurrection, and ascension. He takes the gathered frightened disciples and turns them into the Church. Again, the initiative is all God's. The gift of the Spirit means that now these first Christ followers are bearers of God's presence in a hitherto-unknown way.

Seamands explains the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost:

Pentecost is was not so much about the apostles' getting Holy Spirit power—like Popeye, the cartoon character, getting his can of spinach—so they could carry out the mission of Christ; rather, Pentecost was about the Holy Spirit, who is on a mission, sent by the Father and the Son, getting the apostles so he could fulfill God's mission through them. (168)

Therefore, mission in the book of Acts is primarily the mission of the Spirit into which the disciples are caught up rather than the mission of the disciples in response to the Great Commission for which Holy Spirit power is sought. Pentecost is the day the apostles are captured by God's mission, not the day they receive spiritual power for their own.

Three things follow from Pentecost that have great significance for the Church's understanding of God's mission. First, Pentecost represents a kind of reversal of the story of Babel. In that puzzling story, human attempts to create a kind of new world order that expresses human power in a united race are overcome by confusion. God overturns the single language of the time for a multiplicity of languages, and destroys the communication the project requires. The sovereign God whose power will not be threatened by the efforts of humankind overturns human pride and arrogance. At Pentecost, the Spirit again gives a vast number of languages, but this time that multiplicity facilitates communication, rather than destroys it. Pentecost expresses a God-given unity, not a human-made one, a unity from the Spirit, not in rebellion to him. This time the project is God-ordained not God-restrained, and God's sovereignty is upheld not challenged.

Second, from Pentecost flows genuine mission to the nations. Since Pentecost people hear the gospel in every tongue. Peter explicitly states that his message is for

“every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). People of whatever nation can respond and turn to the Jewish Messiah. From Pentecost flows Peter’s communication of the gospel to Cornelius, Phillip’s preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch, and Paul’s mission to the nations. From Pentecost the Gentiles, too, will receive God’s Spirit—a point Paul connects with the call of Abraham to be a blessing in Galatians 3:14. Gordon Fee puts it like this:

The blessing of Abraham ... is not simply ‘justification by faith’. Rather, it refers to the life of the future now available to Jew and Gentile alike, achieved through the death of Christ but applied through the dynamic ministry of the Spirit (60).

The gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles fulfils the promise to Abraham.

Third, from Pentecost, Spirit-filled believers have God’s nature inside them. Knowing God is no longer a matter of learning the Torah and seeking to implement it but of being led by the Spirit. From Pentecost the character of God increasingly becomes the character of the Christian. The Church expresses the character of God in its actions. The first action of the post-Pentecost Church is mission. The disciples are driven out into the world, not primarily by a command but by the missionary nature of the God now dwelling within them.

The sixth and final building block is New Testament eschatology. Revelation is a complicated book to read and apply, and space forbids a detailed study. Whatever else might be going on, the reader sees that in this final book of the Bible, God’s mission is finally complete and its various strands resolved.

Revelation 21 and 22 reveals some of these strands most clearly. N. T. Wright describes the picture these chapters paint:

They speak in highly colored language of a renewed world order, with heaven and earth united in a single embrace; of a city without a need for a

Temple, a world without need of sun or moon, because of the presence of the living creator God, and of Jesus. (*New Testament* 461)

In this text the creation is restored—the breadth of God’s purpose for the created order revealed not in the destruction but in the restoration of all that is beautiful and God honoring of this present world. At the center of this restored creation is the New Jerusalem. The new creation does not lead the reader back to the Garden, the place commonly associated with unspoiled nature, but forward to the perfected City, the place commonly associated with culture and commerce and social life. The text speaks of God dwelling with people, wiping away their tears. It speaks of the end of death and mourning. It reveals all nations and all tongues represented there in the great crowd that gathers before the throne. At the center, sovereign over it all, is the Lamb on the throne who shed his blood for the freedom and renewal of the whole created order. Now the river of God and the tree of life provide the healing of the nations and the curse is no more. The whole earth has at last been filled with the glory of God. All of this glory is the longed-for result of God’s mission that brings transformation and newness to every part of life. This narrative is not the final chapter of a story of human evangelistic effort but the *telios* of a divinely initiated plan for the transformation of the whole earth in which the disciples of Jesus have a God-prompted part to play but whose author and perfecter is nobody less than God himself, and it is global and universal in its scope. N. T. Wright writes as follows:

New bodily human beings will require a new world in which to live. In this transformed world order, the veil will be lifted for all time. The realities of the heavenly world will be visibly united with the realities of the earthly (*New Testament* 461).

The picture is not of an ethereal spiritualized heaven, but a restoration of the entire cosmos to the original design of its Creator. As C. Wright states, “Such is the triumph of the mission of God” (530).

The Nature of God’s Mission

From this biblical overview, three things should be clear: Mission is all God’s initiative. Mission is for the whole world. Mission is for the whole of life.

Mission as God’s Initiative

The whole argument so far makes this point; therefore, this section is brief. To summarize for the sake of clarity, the case is as follows. Rather than mission being a human activity, a set of particular human responses to the prompting of Scripture or the command of Jesus, mission is preeminently the activity of God. It begins right back at the beginning, when God expresses his love and delight in the creation of a universe that will bring him glory and joy. It flows all through Scripture, through his forming of a nation for his own name and the charging of that nation to be a blessing to others, through the giving of law that teaches that nation how to live and the sending of prophets who will recall Israel to its original vocation, and then through the coming of the long-promised Messiah. This Messiah challenges the nationally held expectations of Messiah-ship to such a degree that he goes unrecognized by most of those who are supposed to be looking for him. After his death for the sins of the world and his resurrection that demonstrates his conquest of all evil, he breathes the Holy Spirit onto his disciples and tells them to wait for the indwelling of the Spirit’s power. When the Spirit comes on Pentecost Day, he immediately drives them out into the streets of Jerusalem, packed with people from many nations, to bear witness to Christ in fulfillment of Jesus’ command. From Pentecost

comes the mission of the people of the new covenant to the whole world, culminating in the future with the restoration of all things and the universal acknowledgement of Christ as Lord of all. As Bauckham says, “The church in its missionary vocation is not so much the agent of the process as the product of the process on the way to its God-given goal” (17).

Mission belongs to God. His people have an essential part to play. He delegates activities to them and challenges them when they do not play their part, but the mission is his, his initiative, his vision and purpose. The Church’s role is to understand its calling within that mission and seek to live it out, but even that cannot be done by people alone, for the power from on high, without which no true mission happens, is God himself, poured out into every open heart, so that even the Church’s mission activity is God working through it. Mission is all about him.

Mission for the Whole World

The temptation for special people is to think they are special. In other words, those who know that God has chosen them in some particular way can fall into the trap of thinking that their specialness is for their own sake, that it confers rights more than responsibilities, that it demonstrates that God somehow loves them more or thinks better of them than he does of others.

Churches fall into this trap in a small way when they become inward focused, prioritizing the needs of the congregation over the needs of the wider community, or even rejecting people from the wider community who do not fit in for social, economic, or ethnic reasons. Every pastor knows the struggle of getting the local congregation to support expenditure on projects from which they will not themselves see benefits.

Nevertheless, Scripture makes clear that when God designates a people as chosen he does so not for their own sake but for the sake of the world. God does not fail to find a way to bring hope and transformation to the whole creation, and so settle for bringing it to one people group instead, whether the Jews of the Old Testament or the Christians of the New. The covenant people are not a retreat from God's grand purpose; they are the means to it.

The Church needs to confess that at times in its history it has misunderstood this calling very badly indeed. Whether considering the Church's attitude to Native Americans, its support of slavery, its acquiescence in apartheid, where the Church has retreated from God's global perspective that all people are valuable and created in his image, it has allowed horrible things to happen.

Pamela J. Walker writes about the response of contemporary British Christians to the early work of the Salvation Army: "Many regarded the Army as a serious threat to wider Christian efforts to evangelize and civilize the working class. Sermons condemned Salvationists' belief and practice, while newspaper and journal articles debated how Christian could begin to contain the movement" (2). Similar attitudes play out every time a church gets upset that the youth group is attracting *undesirables* from the local social housing blocks or every time a church member looks down on a newcomer who has arrived at church chewing gum and smelling of tobacco.

Haskell M. Miller writes, "In Jesus, God expressed his limitless concern for the whole human race, and an uninhibited willingness to inject himself into human affairs" (47). God's mission is to everyone. His image is placed in everyone. He loves everyone

and his desire is to restore and bless everyone. His people have been chosen to work with him in that mission, not for their own sake.

Mission for the Whole of Life

In my introduction, a perhaps parodic description of approaches to mission subscribed to by three fictitious local churches, I sketched a picture of Central Baptist Church, a church where if mission does not solely equal evangelistic proclamation of the gospel, proclamation is such a strong priority that little time remains for anything else. The grand global sweep of God's mission is reduced to telling others about Jesus, important though that is. I can picture Central Baptist quite well, because I grew up in a similar context. I remember as a teenage Christian getting passionate about culture and art, politics and justice, and being solemnly warned by older church members that these interests were a distraction from the real purpose of the gospel, which was to save as many souls as possible. "This is a slippery slope towards theological liberalism!" I was told.

Many well-known Christian authors have written about their childhood church experiences in similar ways. Although the shocking expressions of this attitude from fifty years ago, normally including an implicit if not explicit support for racism on the grounds that the civil rights movement was a distraction from the real message of the gospel, may be uncommon now, the underlying framework is not. It says people are beings made up of a physical part, body and mind, operating in the world of matter and the senses, and a spiritual part, soul or spirit, operating in the spiritual realm. While the physical part may have some value, it is less than the value of the spiritual part because that part alone is capable of being saved for immortal life with God. Therefore, meeting the needs of

people's physical selves is less important than meeting the needs of the spiritual self and is a distraction from the most important challenge of gospel proclamation. In this way the worlds of work, politics, economics, and the arts, which make life meaningful or intolerable for billions of people every day, are marginalized to a footnote in God's plan.

The Bible has no foundation for this belief. God has created whole people. He is concerned with the whole person. He has created a world in which he delights. His kingdom will come with benefits that are economic and social as well as spiritual. He is the Lord of all of life, and his mission is addressed to the whole of life.

Therefore, when Christians speak about Jesus to those who do not know him, of course they are engaged in mission. When they challenge injustice, they are engaged in mission. When they build houses for people who do not have them, they are engaged in mission. When they provide decent schools for children who would otherwise not have them, they are engaged in mission. When they campaign for political change to meet the needs of the poor, they are engaged in mission. Because Scripture says God is concerned with all these things and more, all of them are expressions of his missionary purpose to his creation.

The biblical teaching about Jubilee makes this point most clearly. Here, as C. Wright makes clear, the three central dimensions of life—economic, social, and theological—are interwoven, giving a holistic picture of God's restoration, a picture amplified in Isaiah 61 and explicitly applied to Jesus in Luke 4. Proclamation is important, but it is not in itself as broad as God's mission to his creation.

Conn and Ortiz make the point about this broad, holistic nature of the gospel:

The missionary arm of the church of Jesus Christ has not made the mistake of ignoring its social responsibilities. It was commanded to obey

Jesus in all things (Mt 28:20). The assumption was that redemptive power and obedience would change life on both community and personal levels. Both the spiritual life and physical life would be transformed by the gospel. (342)

The Church engages with the whole of life because God does.

Community Ministry and the UK Church—A Historical Overview

From what has been said so far, one might assume that the history of the church would be a story of engagement in the kind of Holy Spirit-led, whole-world orientated mission that naturally flows from a right understanding of God as the initiator and prime mover in mission, and the breadth of his concern for his creation. Unfortunately, the reality is somewhat different. As Robert Lewis says, “Many churches have long since abandoned any idea of reaching or influencing the city in which they are located” (157). One might add that they have abandoned the idea of reaching the culture or addressing the social needs of their people with the gospel as well. The church has proved able to miss the full force of its missional calling. Its definitions of mission are too narrow. Its understanding of God is too limited. Its spirit is too timid, and its vision is too small.

This point may be a generalization, but a brief glance at church history suggests it is not far from the truth. I want to illustrate this point with a brief look at the history of mission within the UK evangelical church. This discussion is confined to evangelical churches within the UK. One reason is that the evangelical church provides my own background and is also the wing of the church where one can find many of the most creative examples of holistic mission or community ministry today. Historically, debates have continued, some of them heated, about what defines an evangelical. To take a contemporary example, today some self-described evangelicals within my own church, the Church of England, are not regarded as such by more conservative colleagues because

they take a less strident approach to the divisive issue of homosexuality within the church. To take a historical example, a particular eschatological view is now regarded as essential in some evangelical circles, whereas in the early days of the evangelical movement many leaders and members had no fixed view or interest in this subject at all.

Perhaps the most influential exponent of evangelical thought in the UK over the last half-century has been John Stott. Stott has consistently sought to make clear what evangelicalism is and what it is not. Evangelicalism is not a subculture or a set of behaviors, however important ideas such as abstinence from alcohol have been to previous generations of evangelicals, nor is it a single denomination, despite the presence of the word in the titles of some denominations and the hostility of some evangelicals to the idea of remaining in non-evangelical churches, as Stott has done all his life. It is, rather, a set of core beliefs that energize and direct one's life and mission.

In a dialogue with liberal theologian David L. Edwards, Stott explains the essence of evangelicalism:

Evangelicals regard it as essential to believe not just "the gospel revealed in the Bible," but the full revelation of the Bible; not just that "Christ died for us" but that he died "for our sins," in some sense "bearing" them objectively in our place, so that in holy love God can forgive penitent believers; not just that we receive the Spirit, but that he does a supernatural work in us, variously portrayed in the New Testament as "regeneration," "resurrection" and "recreation." (Edwards and Stott 39)

Whatever debates may rage about what defines an evangelical, most who claim the title would be able to subscribe to Stott's definition.

Another simple definition of evangelicalism in terms of core beliefs comes from Kenneth D. Brown who identifies four key aspects:

- The need for individual salvation,

- A particular regard for the Bible,
- A stress on the centrality of Christ's atoning work on the cross, and
- A belief that the gospel needs to be actively expressed (140).

In talking about evangelical churches, my working definition is this; those churches who adhere to the core beliefs as summarized above, regardless of denomination, and who are then inspired by that faith to seek the transformation of individuals and, perhaps, communities by that same gospel.

The history of the evangelical church's engagement with holistic mission is a variable one. John Wolffe describes the contemporary situation:

More recent images of evangelicalism have tended to see it as an escapist religious movement, offering a sense of eternal security but little constructive engagement with contemporary society. (*Evangelical Faith* 1)

He contrasts that situation with the one in the mid-nineteenth century, when a critic of evangelicalism such as George Eliot was able to comment as follows:

Evangelical brought into palpable existence and operation ... [the] idea of duty, the recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self (qtd. in Wolffe, *Evangelical Faith* 1).

The contrast between the confident outgoing evangelicalism of its heyday and the retrenched ghettoized phenomenon of recent history is sobering.

Most commentators agree that the history of the evangelical church in the UK begins in the eighteenth century. For example, David W. Bebbington begins his seminal book on evangelical history in 1730 ("Evangelicalism"). By the late eighteenth century, evangelicalism was emerging as a potent cultural force. It is often said that the evangelical movement of this period saved Britain from revolution, and it was hugely influential in the lives of those great social reformers who devoted their lives to the

elimination of such evils as the slave trade and child labor. Most evangelical social action of this period happened at more of a local level. David Hempton says that evangelical priorities at this time were “the conversion of the irreligious at home and abroad, the diffusion of religious knowledge and the improvement of morals. Most typically, their chosen instrument was the creation of voluntary religious societies” (29). Ford K. Brown says this about eighteenth century evangelical activism:

There were societies to improve, to enforce, to reform, to benefit, to prevent, to relieve, to educate, to reclaim, to encourage, to propagate, to maintain, to promote, to provide for, to support, to effect, to better, to instruct, to protect, to supersede, to employ, to civilise, to visit, to preserve, to mitigate, to abolish, to investigate, to publish, to aid, to extinguish. Above all there were societies to suppress. (328)

Evangelical social action at this time was generally action *against* things.

Bebbington, a more sympathetic observer than F. Brown, concurs.

The target of evangelical campaigns ... was consistently sin.... If ever evangelicals became convinced that they were responsible for a state of affairs that necessarily entailed sin, and if they possessed the ability to do something to change the state of affairs, they felt bound to act. (“Evangelicals” 4).

Evangelicalism was therefore a kind of protest movement against spiritual and social evil.

According to Bebbington, targets of evangelical campaigns of this period generally fell into one of three categories. They were either obstacles to the gospel, such as drunkenness, or substitutes for the gospel, such as Catholicism, or breaches of biblical ethics, such as pornography. Bebbington argues, “It becomes apparent ... that such crusades cannot properly be called ‘humanitarian,’ the label that historians have traditionally applied to evangelical socio-political attitudes.... The effect of many campaigns was to reduce suffering but that was not their aim.” (“Evangelicals” 7).

Evangelicals tended to be known for what they were against. Nevertheless, something

important was expressed in all this activism about the relevance of the gospel to the physical and material needs of people, so that “the large number of voluntary associations that were predominantly evangelical in inspiration provided the chief means by which the needs of the age were met” (15).

The impact of all this activism on British society at the end of the eighteenth century is hard to overstate. Hempton makes the point well:

The conversionist zeal, moral discipline and social concern of countless thousands of evangelicals of all social ranks made early industrial British society more stable, more humane, and more religious than it otherwise would have been.... The price that might have been paid without the manifold fruits of evangelical enthusiasm in early industrial England ... may only be conjectured (33).

Undoubtedly evangelicalism of this era played an enormous role in holding British society together and improving the lives of the poor.

The nineteenth century was the peak time for evangelical influence and effectiveness, reaching its zenith around the middle of the century. Bebbington portrays the growth of evangelical practice in anecdotes and statistics. “In 1850 the Lord Lieutenant of a Midland shire remembered a time when only two landed gentlemen in the county had family prayers, but by that year only two did not” (*Evangelicalism* 104). Many people carefully observed fast days during the Crimean War. The British Museum and Crystal Palace were closed on Sundays due to Sabbatarian influence. Additionally, Bebbington argues, “Evangelical attitudes were characteristic of the times as never before or since.” (104). Within the Church of England, the numbers tell the tale. In 1803 there were approximately five hundred evangelical Anglican clergy. By 1823 the number had passed 1,600. By 1853 it had passed 6,500, more than one-third of the total. The first evangelical Anglican bishop was appointed in 1815. The next was appointed in 1826, and

then another in 1828, and several more in the 1830s and 1840s, and six more between 1856 and 1860. Even an evangelical Archbishop of Canterbury was appointed during this period. The 1851 census of religion, which coincided with the pinnacle of evangelical influence, found that 54 percent of people were in church on census Sunday. Even though that figure has been subsequently reestimated to 35 percent, it remains the high-water mark of UK church attendance. In some areas the figures were even higher, 71.4 percent in the countryside and small towns for example. In other areas the figures were much smaller, only 25 percent in a northern urban area such as Preston, for example. As Bebbington says, the seeds of future failure in industrialized, working class, urban Britain were already being sown.

While not all these people attended evangelical churches, the evangelical churches were growing fastest, and their influence was lifting the figures overall. The church was the center of the community by the middle of the 1800s so that future Labour government minister George Lansbury was able to say of his youth, “There was no social life outside of religious organisations” (qtd. in Wolffe, “Historical Models” 22) The church was the heart of the neighborhood, and remained so for the rest of the century, particularly for those in need. The belief that the churches had a duty to care for the needy and that the local parish could become a supportive community that cared for its own was a powerful notion in early Victorian Britain.

All of this growth and power and commitment to the poor poured out in a great wave of evangelical philanthropy, which remains UK evangelicalism’s finest hour. While one may be tempted to look back on this era and think evangelicals were simply doing what everyone was doing, or at least believed to be good, such is not the case. Already

the critique was heard that charity only made things worse, and to some extent evangelicals worried about this. Nevertheless, on balance they tended to believe that Jesus was concerned with the whole person, physical as well as spiritual, and the whole community, nonchurchgoing as well as churchgoing. An editorial in *The Christian* made the following declaration in 1880:

Neither Jesus nor his apostles ever separated the physical from the spiritual well being of men. He and they fed and healed the bodies of the people, and the sympathy thus manifested won their attention, and enabled them to impart food and healing to their souls. (qtd. in “Evangelicalism” Bebbington 120)

English evangelicalism was never so holistic again.

A typical parish of this time might have a voucher program that provided food, funds for the poor, local insurance schemes for sickness or death, soup kitchens, and even a lending library. In addition phenomena such as the city missions movement had emerged, attempting to address the church’s already apparent weakness in the new urban centers through visiting, evangelism, and social provision, such as voluntary societies that “raised money to support people from their very own neighbourhood in reaching out to the surrounding community and bringing its members to faith” (Eastman 46) As Michael Eastman says, “An important outcome of the City Missions movement was the expectation that every Christian would be involved in social issues” (48). Other experiments existed, such as the work of Scottish clergyman Thomas Chalmers, who created a parish-based system of social relief, and influential churchmen such as John Bird Sumner, Bishop of Chester and later Archbishop of Canterbury, who gave strong emphasis both to communicating the gospel and serving the poor. In this era evangelism and church growth went together with social action, with no contradiction between the

two. Bebbington concludes that “the gospel and humanitarianism ... were not seen as rivals but as complementary” (*Evangelicalism* 120).

This situation did not last. The decline in the evangelical movement began before the end of the nineteenth century and was well established by the time of the First World War. Ian M. Randall describes the change:

Social gospel remained an important, if divisive, feature of evangelicalism in Britain up to World War I. From then on, social concerns were increasingly marginalised in the evangelical community (155).

In the interwar years, declining numbers attending church, decreasing confidence in the possibility of making a just society in the face of global evil, and the increasing role of the state in providing social services that had previously been the remit of the church pushed the church back on to the defensive, particularly in the area of social action.

While philanthropy always remained an admirable quality for evangelicals, an increasing anxiety also grew about mixing faith with politics, and in a culture where social provision was becoming the raw material of political debate, the church could only offer short-term solutions to individual problems rather than tackle the roots of social issues. The evangelical wing of the church also reacted with alarm to the rise of the social gospel movement, particularly in the USA, where personal conversion to Christ now seemed marginalized by the mission to provide welfare to those in need. As Oliver R. Barclay says in his history of the British evangelical movement, “With few exceptions ... social action was regarded as a dangerous distraction from ‘gospel work’” (33). Faced with a choice between caring for the poor and saving souls, the evangelical church would choose saving souls, and few raised their voices to question whether this choice was well

made or necessary. An increasing sense of apocalyptic doom in the era of two world wars made the imperative to save souls feel all the more compelling.

Much good work was still going on, of course. Some of the most deprived urban areas of the country, such as London's East End, were well served by medical outreach practices and the Salvation Army. Overall, though, as Barclay says, the tide was turning against evangelicals being involved in social action:

The idea that evangelicals should work to alter the structures of society and make them more just was, however, held by many conservative evangelicals to be inappropriate. Certainly it was held to be inappropriate for the churches to act politically as churches, and there was some doubt about whether individuals should be deeply involved. In some Brethren circles, particularly in Ireland, there was even doubt about whether Christians should vote. The Schofield Bible and a premillennial view of the second coming of Christ, which were specially influential in Brethren circles, gave reasons for thinking that society would inevitably get worse and that it was futile to try to improve it. (33)

This shift took most of the century to redress.

Stott, one of the key figures in what was to happen next, summarizes the reasons why the evangelical church pulled back from social engagement:

1. the evangelical reaction against theological liberalism,
2. the division of the gospel into "social" and "spiritual" categories,
3. evangelical's disillusionment with earthly life after WWI,
4. the spread of premillennialism, and
5. the spread of evangelical Christianity amongst the upper and middle classes

who equated it more and more with their own personal well-being (*Human Rights* 21-25).

For all these reasons, the evangelical church was engaged in a great retreat to the privatized, spiritual corners of people's lives, leaving great swathes of culture and experience ready to be dominated by the forces of modernism.

The situation began to change around the middle of the twentieth century. Stott was one of the key figures in this shift. Paralleling the journey of a number of influential and thoughtful evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic, Billy Graham being the best American example, Stott began to speak more clearly and cogently about the Christian's social responsibility, pursuing a train of thought that came to fruition in his seminal book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, in 1984. The book begins with this paragraph:

It is exceedingly strange that any followers of Jesus Christ should ever need to ask whether social involvement was their concern, and that controversy should have blown up over the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. For it is evident that in his public ministry Jesus both “went about ... teaching ... and preaching” (Matt. 4:2, 9:35) and “went about doing good and healing” (Acts 10:38). In consequence Evangelism and social concern have been intimately related to one another throughout the history of the church.... Christian people have often engaged in both activities quite unselfconsciously, without feeling the need to define what they were doing and why. (2)

Perhaps Stott was a little disingenuous to say that evangelism and social concern had been related to one another “throughout the history of the church” (2). As previously argued, when Stott was writing, the UK evangelical church was emerging from more than a half-century in which this connection had been far from self-evident to most of its members. Stott's influence had the greatest influence on that change, particularly through his role at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967 where he led delegates to agree that “evangelism and compassionate service belong together in the Kingdom of God” (qtd. in Bebbington, “Decline” 185). Stott played a similar role at the Lausanne World Congress on Evangelism in 1974, which affirmed that ““evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty’ and deemed both alike to be ‘necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ’” (qtd. in Kapolyo 133). Joe Kapolyo states that at

Lausanne great caution was expressed by some delegates about embracing a similar agenda to the World Council of Churches, which they believed to have abandoned evangelism for social action. The Congress concluded that “such action should never be equated with evangelism or mistaken for the total mission of the church. But it is a legitimate Christian ministry in its own right” (135).

Three other factors need to be identified in the church’s reengagement with social issues in the second half of the twentieth century. First were theological influences. The influence of premillennialism and the Schofield Reference Bible declined. American authors from the loosely termed evangelical left, such as Jim Wallis, Ronald Sider, and J. H. Yoder, began to acquire an audience in the UK through, for example, the Greenbelt Christian Arts festival. As evangelicals began to feel less embattled with the promotion of several evangelicals to positions of influence in the Church of England and the increasing significance of the Evangelical Alliance, they found an increasing willingness to address difficult questions and wrestle with theology rather than simply trying to defend previously entrenched positions. Better ecumenical relationships allowed the spread of tides of theological thought and new models of church. A new wave of interest in Calvinism led to new study of Dutch Reformed theology with its social implications. Second, new local and national initiatives caught the imagination of evangelicals and other Christians, such as David Sheppard’s Mayflower Centre in East London and Tear Fund, offering disaster relief and development work from an evangelical perspective. Third, with Britain’s economic problems under both Conservative and Labour governments in the 1970s, and then the welfare cuts of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government in the 1980s, suddenly every social need was no longer capable of being met

by the state. New opportunities opened up for the church to serve, and some denominations began to recover a prophetic voice within the culture. Bebbington summarizes the new situation: “There was a commitment to give serious attention to the problems of society. No longer would evangelicals be able to regard their task as withdrawal from the world in the company, if possible, of other souls to be snatched from it” (*Evangelicalism* 247-48). Evangelicals were rediscovering their social activism.

Community Ministry and the UK Church—The Contemporary Situation

In November 2007, a conference entitled Faithworks drew a thousand people to central London to look at the present situation in the UK church with regard to community ministry, to share inspiring stories and best practice, to encourage one another, and to build a sense of being part of a movement. Among the speakers were two government ministers, including a member of Gordon Brown’s Cabinet, as well as bishops, authors, community development workers, pastors, and activists. Conversations and testimonies underlined the vast array of faith-based initiatives in which local churches are now involved. The delegates heard about projects working with the young and the old, the learning disabled, addicts and prostitutes, refugees and people with HIV/AIDS. Most of these projects were small and local in scope. Few of them had received much public awareness outside their immediate area, but all were making a difference to needy people in the name of Jesus Christ.

A visit to the conference bookstall revealed how much ink has been spilled on this subject in recent years. From academic tomes on the theology of mission to popular paperbacks telling stories of Christian love in action, the Christian publishing world had evidently identified a phenomenon and an audience wanting to read about it.

Among the most influential popular literature on contemporary holistic mission have been the books of Steve Chalke, one of the founders of the Faithworks movement. In his book *Faithworks Unpacked*, Chalke sets out the rationale of the whole movement as he sees it:

Our motivation is simply our God-given responsibility to care—our faith must work! If through our work the people we serve encounter God and something of the love and compassion of Jesus then that will speak for itself. We don't hide our faith, but we will never impose it. We are here to serve all, unconditionally. That's what Christ asks us to do. It's what our faith compels us to do. (15)

Another book entitled *Stories of Hope* simply tells inspiring tales of local groups of Christians who have worked often quietly and without much recognition to address real local needs in the name of Christ. The book records great diversity in the ministries being offered (e.g., debt advice, youth work, sports clubs) in the locations and social contexts explored (e.g., from the inner city to the leafy suburbs) and in the churches involved (e.g., Anglican, nonconformist, independent and Catholic). However, all the stories have in common the rediscovery of the sense that if Christian faith is meaningful it must also be tangible to the communities churches serve. Chris Stoddard and Nick Cuthbert cover similar terrain, making a case as to why the local church should be concerned with community development and social action as part of their mission and going on to tell stories of twenty-two such congregations at work trying to live this out in their local contexts.

Having noted hopeful evidence, the situation should not be overstated. Signs of encouragement exist, but the majority of churches in the UK are doing little or nothing to impact social needs in their local communities. Research carried out by the organization Christian Research suggests that only 9 percent of churches in the UK are engaged in

social action locally (confirmed in private e-mail to the author). Additionally, as Harvard strategist Michael Porter argued in a lecture at the Leadership Summit at Willow Creek Community Church in August 2007, much of what the church actually does seems designed to make Christians feel like compassionate, giving people, rather than to address the needs of the people who are being served. So much of the recent literature has a polemical purpose, to stir the church to action and then to enable it to ensure that its action is as effective as possible in addressing real need. A recent example of this genre is the book by Malcolm Duncan, another Faithworks leader, entitled *Kingdom Come*:

Kingdom Come has one central purpose, namely to inspire followers of Christ to cooperate with God to establish His kingdom on earth in terms of felt change in our communities and our world. This book is about recognizing that good theology always leads to good practice. (21)

The assumption here, and in much of the literature, is that will rather than theory is lacking in the church today.

Another thread worth noting from Duncan's book is the inspiration that leaders and authors in the UK take from some key figures in the United States in this field. Jim Wallis is especially influential here, most recently through his magnum opus *God's Politics*. The fact that his wife is an English Anglican priest and that Wallis spends a great deal of time speaking in England no doubt helps. Another key American influence is author and speaker Tony Campolo, through books such as *Letters to a Young Evangelical* and *Revolution and Renewal*. A more recent inspiration is Shane Claiborne, also a speaker at the recent Faithworks conference, and the story of his own journey *The Irresistible Revolution*. Many UK leaders feel that while these authors may not be doing in-depth theology, they are embracing and articulating a passion for radical, whole-life,

mission-orientated discipleship addressing real human need and positioning the church at the center of community transformation.

Because the UK church is weaker than the North American church in numbers, wealth, and access to the centers of power, and because it is excessively hindered by the burden of large historic buildings to maintain, the British literature puts a greater emphasis on partnership. Nick Spencer, in his book on the renewal of the Anglican parish structure, argues for partnerships between the local church, businesses, community groups, and the state to maximize the community use of church buildings (156-57). Many of the projects mentioned in Chalke's *Stories of Hope* and Stoddard and Cuthbert's *Church on the Edge* involve partnerships in which local churches act as catalysts to bring together local authorities, businesses, charities, and other groups, Christian and not, to meet some local community need. This opportunity requires that the church learn some skills it has not previously needed and be ready to work with non-Christians from a position of goodwill and humility. The stark fact is that most churches in the UK simply do not have the resources or power to meet social need without such partnerships.

The local church also needs to address community need in partnership with other congregations. Denominational loyalties run deep. Some churches would prefer to partner with the secular local authority than a church of another denomination in the same area, or even to do nothing at all. As a result, huge amounts of duplication of effort occur, and suspicions arise from statutory agencies who fail to understand why Christians cannot work together to meet social need. From an American perspective, Jack Dennison argues clearly that only the unity of local churches, submitting their own agendas for growth and success to the bigger picture of kingdom growth and social change, will be sufficient to

bring the transformation the church desires, and the challenge is appropriate in the UK, too. The Shaftesbury Society argues that lack of partnership between local churches is the most significant factor impinging the effectiveness of the local church's mission in the UK:

Local congregations can find themselves often unintentionally competing with each other for grants, volunteers and sometimes even clients. And in small geographical areas, it is not uncommon to find several groups working independently to meet similar needs, while other pressing needs are neglected. In many places, Christian projects seem more willing to build links and partnerships with regeneration bodies and other agencies than with other Christians. (5)

Truly the unity of the church is essential if its mission is to be fulfilled.

Thankfully encouraging signs of increasing cross-denominational unity are now emerging in the UK. For example, Hope08 is a nationwide initiative drawing together churches from all denominations in partnership with statutory authorities to serve local communities in social action projects throughout 2008. Organizer Matt Bird, in an interview with Christian Socialist Movement journal *The Common Good*, makes clear that the foundation of Hope08 is unity—between churches, between the church and other agencies, and between evangelism and social action (Bradstock). Hope08 seeks to fulfill the broader vision of urban mission expressed by Roger S. Greenway:

The comprehensiveness of the missionary task in the city requires the proclamation of the gospel, the planting and nurture of churches, and the application of the principles of Christ's lordship to all areas of community life. It means concern for all that is city, even for the cosmos above and beneath the city, from the quality of the air people breathe to the purity of the water in the rivers and canals. (45)

Hope 08 is perhaps the first serious nationwide attempt to demonstrate such a comprehensive approach to mission for many years.

Some of the literature recognizes a strength the UK church has that other agencies do not have. Simply stated, the church has been here a long time, and in some of the inner city areas particularly, that history makes the church almost unique. The Church of England's report *Staying in the City* bases its vision for church action in the poorest urban parts of the nation on this very point (Bishops' Advisory Group). While other agencies have come and gone, at the center of most communities, even the poorest, the church has maintained a witness for literally hundreds of years. This fact gives authenticity and credibility in some areas where no other body has it. John J. Vincent's book, for example, tells some of the stories of the Anglican Church's work in inner city Sheffield, much of which is small scale, almost hidden, and very long-term.

Staying in the City and other similar reports produced by the Church of England are unusual in that they seek to offer a political analysis of certain aspects of UK society with the hope of being heard at the national government level. People such as Wallis have done similar things in the United States. Even so, this analysis is not yet a strong strand in the UK church's engagement with wider society. The UK church is far more likely to operate out of the model of someone such as Sjogren, who talks about "the power of God's kindness to open doors into the hearts of community" (*Servant Warfare* 12). This approach is about helping those with needs, rather than addressing the more political question of why those needs exist. The UK church still needs to hear the challenge of Robert C. Linthicum who, in surveying how Third World urban Christians address these issues says, "The work of the church must move beyond ministries of mercy and compassion to deal with the systemic and substantive issues that create and maintain poverty in [the] cities" (78). This step appears to be problematic for the UK church.

This situation is in part because of the relative weakness of the church, or at least its sense of being weak. Political change seems such a hard thing to accomplish that the church is reluctant to try. Additionally, the church tends to be comprised of pragmatists and activists, concerned with meeting immediate needs rather than engaging in a discussion that seems theoretical without any certainty of success. To some extent the present situation is also due to political changes in the UK. The election of Tony Blair's government was greeted with enthusiasm by many Christians, especially after what was perceived as the social harshness of the last Conservative government. Blair was known to be a Christian and talked the language of faith communities, as does his successor. The climate does now seem to be one of opportunity for churches and other faith groups to partner with government in the pursuit of social benefit, as exemplified by the presence of government ministers at the Faithworks annual conference in 2007. The danger is that the church might compromise its prophetic voice in challenging the government where necessary. Surveying the contemporary UK scene, Martyn Eden of the Evangelical Alliance observes that many churches are now playing significant roles in their local communities:

The Government has acknowledged the value of faith-based schools, but they could equally well recognise the contributions made by faith-based organisations which care for people with disabilities or those with drug and alcohol problems, for the homeless and for many other client groups who are ignored and neglected in our self-centred society. Our survey has found that 29% of Christians and 40% of churches are involved in some form of voluntary, caring activity. It is clear from this research that it is their Christian faith that motivates those who provide this compassionate service. (176-77)

Increasingly the UK government acknowledges this fact, but the church should be aware that this recognition presents dangers as well as opportunities.

A Question of Motivation—Why Churches Engage in Community Ministry

Three main sets of motivating factors inspire churches into community ministry. For some, the answer will be simply because community ministry is the right thing to do for theological reasons such as the ones already mentioned. For others, the answer will be because of the impact this ministry can have on the community, and for others, the answer may be because of the impact this ministry may have on the church in terms of increased numbers attending and increased mobilization of the congregation. For most churches, the answer to the motivation question will be a combination of these reasons.

However, not much is known about the impact of this approach to mission. Many of the sources mentioned use anecdotes or statistics to demonstrate the positive impact that community ministry has on the wider community; however, little substantial analysis of the impact that engaging in community ministry has on a local church and its surrounding community has been undertaken. Simply, no one in the UK has studied it. I have tested out this statement by contacting all the main agencies dealing with this area of work—Tear Fund, Shaftesbury Society, Faithworks, and Oasis Trust—and no one knows of any research on this topic. This omission is surprising. Possibly churches see no need to measure the impact of this type of ministry because their primary motivations are altruistic, not results-orientated. Even so at the very least a church considering developing this kind of strategy may want to know what the impact is likely to be, and at the moment the data does not exist to tell them. This omission is the research gap this dissertation seeks to bridge. This piece of research looks at those churches which are living out their identities as missional congregations in the UK in a broader understanding of holistic

mission, specifically seeing community ministry as a manifestation of God's missionary heart and giving such activity high priority along with other aspects of mission, and seeks to address the following questions: What difference does it make when a church embraces this broader understanding of mission and begins to live out of it? What impact does it have upon the all-too-common symptoms of church malaise? How does such an approach foster a healthy church environment? What hope is there for the Christian mission—even in postmodern England—as churches begin to pursue the glorious mission of God?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Precisely because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, God's new world has already broken in to the present and Christian work for justice in the present, for instance, in the ongoing campaigns for debt remission and ecological responsibility, take the shape they do. If Jesus left his body behind in the tomb and if we are going to do the same as many theologians of the last generation thought, then we are robbed both of the ground and the energy for our work to bring real, bodily, concrete signs of hope to the present world.
—N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*

Problem

Chapter 1 established that the UK church has experienced a long period of stagnation. The number of people attending church has been in decline for a century. The influence of the church on wider society has similarly diminished. The UK church as a whole appears to have lost any sense of vision for a future better than the recent past. Although around 6 percent of the population are in church on any given Sunday, only a small minority of those are active in ministry. I have used the term *church malaise* to describe this situation.

Against this backdrop, though, signs of life and health exist. An increasing number of churches are experimenting with what I have termed *holistic mission*, a model of mission that reflects more fully the breadth of God's action in his creation than a simple emphasis on evangelism through words. This approach combines a passionate belief in proclaiming the gospel with an equivalent emphasis on community ministry. It comes closer than other models to the picture of the early Church in Acts in which the Christian community met spiritual, physical, social, and economic needs.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project was to identify the different types of community ministry in which local churches are involved and to assess their impact on the health or malaise of a church.

Research Questions

For the purposes of this research, three questions guided the study.

Research Question #1

How many churches are presently involved in community ministry, and with what specific types of community ministry are they involved?

This question provided the starting point for the research by identifying the huge range of community ministries to which churches are committed as a practical implementation of their understanding of God's mission. The question also allowed the identification of those churches which are involved in community ministry at all, and those which are not. This question was answered quantitatively by means of a questionnaire.

Research Question #2

Do churches that are actively involved in community ministry display greater signs of church health and fewer signs of church malaise than churches that are not?

This question is at the heart of this research. It aimed to establish the relationship between a holistic understanding of mission expressed in community ministry and the previously identified symptoms of church health and malaise. It revealed whether those churches involved in community ministry as well as proclamation evangelism exhibit more signs of church health than those that are not. This question was answered

quantitatively by way of a questionnaire and qualitatively by follow-up interviews with a smaller number of church leaders and members.

Research Question #3

Are particular types of community ministry associated with greater than typical signs of church health?

This question goes deeper into the data than the previous one by asking whether particular types of community ministry make more of a difference to the health of a church than other types. The question was addressed by means of a questionnaire and subsequent follow-up interviews with a small number of church leaders and members.

Population and Participants

As this research project discusses community action in the UK church, one could define the population as every church in the UK. However, for a number of reasons I deemed such a large population unmanageable. First, no central list exists of all local churches in the UK. Churches open, close, combine, and relocate all the time, particularly outside the historic mainline denominations. Second, I would anticipate a very poor response rate in sampling across the UK church. From personal experience I know that when I am invited to contribute to a survey on a subject that does not interest me by someone I do not know I tend to ignore the request.

I therefore decided to limit the survey to the Anglican diocese of Southwark. This diocese covers all the Anglican parishes of south London, from the inner city areas of Brixton and Camberwell to the leafy suburban areas of Kingston and Surbiton. In that sense Southwark diocese provides a cross section of many different demographics to be found in the UK. It also provides a wide range of theological approaches, from

conservative evangelical to extremely liberal, and a wide variety of church sizes, from congregations of fifty led by part-time or bi-vocational clergy through to churches of several hundred served by large staff teams. Additionally it provides a spread of approaches to community ministry, with some churches running well-established projects, some churches at the planning stage, and other churches doing nothing at all. In addition to the reasons previously discussed, one of the main advantages of limiting the study to Southwark diocese was the fact that it is my own denomination and diocese. Therefore I believed I had a good chance of getting support from the diocesan authorities for distribution of the questionnaire and a reasonable response rate. Additionally follow-up interviews would be manageable because of geographical proximity.

The main disadvantage of surveying only churches of the Anglican diocese of Southwark is that it limits the study to one denomination and one area and therefore leaves open the question of whether the findings are applicable to other denominations in other locations. Because of the demographic and theological range to be found within the diocese, I would argue that the findings are likely to be applicable to the wider UK church. Future research will be necessary to establish categorically the accuracy of this argument.

Design of the Study

The study was designed and implemented according to the following process.

Instrumentation

The research used two instruments, a questionnaire and semi-structured interview protocol. I designed the questionnaire with the following aims in mind. My first aim was to assess the extent of malaise within a given congregation. Therefore it asked

quantitative questions about membership, attendance, annual budget, participation in small groups and ministry teams, and recent trends in these areas in order to assess whether the responding church was doing better, worse, or much the same as other churches in the survey in these areas. Additionally, the questionnaire asked more subjective questions of the church leader about less measurable but equally important factors in church life, such as morale and relationships within the congregation.

The second aim was to assess the level of involvement in community ministry projects. I asked questions about what community ministry projects a church was involved with, how high a priority these projects had within the church, and what importance the congregation attached to them by comparison with other aspects of the church's mission. I mixed up the topics of the questions in order to reduce the risk of repetitive responses to similar questions.

In addition, I asked questions designed to give a clearer picture of the church concerned—size, demographics, length of pastor's tenure, and theology—to discover whether any of these factors had an effect on the signs of health or malaise within the study churches. These questions were of three types: questions requiring brief, single word or phrase, write-in responses; questions requiring a level of agreement, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*; a small number of open-ended questions, giving responders the opportunity to write more fully.

Pilot Test

I tested the questionnaire with a small number of church leaders who minister outside the diocese and who would therefore be unable to participate in the study. Their

feedback was used to improve the instrument for clarity and to give responders an accurate expectation of time required for completion.

I used responses to the questionnaire to decide topics for discussion in follow-up interviews with a smaller number of church leaders and members. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a clearer understanding of the types of community action taking place in local churches; to discover more about the theology or vision that gives rise to this action; to discover whether some types or approaches were more effective than others; and, to understand more fully the situation of churches not involved in community action, asking specifically whether these churches follow strategies that are proving as or more effective than community action in dispelling the symptoms of church malaise.

Variables

I was careful to eliminate the variable of access to the Internet and differing levels of ease with online surveying. Although I worked with an online questionnaire, I offered every potential participant the opportunity to participate via a Word version of the questionnaire that could be e-mailed to me, or a printed copy to be returned by post. In this way I allowed clergy with less computer skill to contribute as easily as those who were very comfortable with electronic communication. However, this left the problem of the motivational variable whereby those clergy who were actively engaged in community ministry might be more likely to participate than those who were involved to a small extent or not at all.

Data Collection

I sent a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to the leaders of all 302 churches in the Anglican diocese of Southwark. In churches with more than one clergy, the questionnaire

was sent only to the team leader to ensure that each church was represented in the research only once. The questionnaire was sent by means of an e-mail from the Diocesan Director of Training to all church leaders for whom the diocese had e-mail addresses. This e-mail linked to an online form where the survey could be completed. The Diocese had no e-mail addresses for a small number of church leaders, and these received a hard copy of the questionnaire by post together with a prepaid envelope for return. All recipients received a cover letter from me explaining the purpose and ethics of the research and offering the choice of electronic or paper response. I set a deadline of one month after distribution for response. Toward the end of that month, when I had received few responses, I sent a reminder e-mail. In total 111 responses were received.

After analysis of the data from the questionnaires, I chose ten parishes for follow-up interview. I chose these because the community action projects they had written about seemed to be particularly interesting or because the correlation between these projects and the growth and health of the church appeared to be especially strong. I invited these parishes into the interview stage of the process. Interviewees in these parishes included church leaders, key volunteers, and some church members, especially those who had joined the church recently. These interviews provided helpful qualitative information to expand the data received via the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed as follows. First, I separated questions on the questionnaire into three main sections; those questions pertaining to symptoms of church health and malaise, those that asked about community ministry projects, and those that were contextual or demographic questions. Second, I reviewed answers given to the write-in

and open-ended questions in order to define categories for each in the light of the responses received. Third, I assigned those questions requiring an answer on an agreement scale numerical points for each possible answer, allowing answers to be tabulated on a database. Fourth, I combined answers to questions in the first two sections in order to give an overall score for church health/malaise and another overall score for community ministry involvement, which could be correlated with other factors. I created a database showing whether those churches that scored themselves strongly on community action also scored more strongly on other signs of church growth and health. I analyzed data by means of a statistics software package from the company SPSS. In addition, I discerned other themes through the cross-tabulation of different questions on the questionnaire, which I then added to the interview guide used in the follow-up interviews.

Ethical Procedures

This study required that participants identify themselves and the church for which they were speaking; however, I assured them that they and their churches would not be named in the study, nor would attributable data be seen by anyone other than myself and anyone working with me on data entry. I informed all participants that all data collected would remain in my personal possession until and unless I deemed it redundant, when it would be destroyed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

The problem this research project focused on was the malaise affecting much of the church in the United Kingdom. This malaise is manifested in declining numbers, marginalization within the national life and institutions, moribund and apathetic congregations, low morale, and evangelistic ineffectiveness, among other symptoms. An increasing number of churches in the UK are seeking to reverse this trend through community ministries. The purpose of this research project was to identify the different types of community ministry in which local churches are involved and to assess their impact on the symptoms of church malaise. The project consisted of a survey of all the Anglican churches of Southwark Diocese and follow-up interviews with church leaders and others in ten of those churches. Southwark Diocese covers an area of south London and north Surrey commuter belt, and includes a great diversity of church tradition and demographics.

Participants

One hundred and eleven parishes responded to the request to complete a questionnaire out of a total of 302 parishes in Southwark Diocese. As Figure 4.1 demonstrates, just over 40 percent of responding churches identified themselves as suburban, with around 25 percent describing themselves as either urban or inner city, and tiny numbers in the other two groups, small town or village, and rural. Based on my knowledge of the area, this profile appears to accord approximately with the shape of Southwark Diocese as a whole.

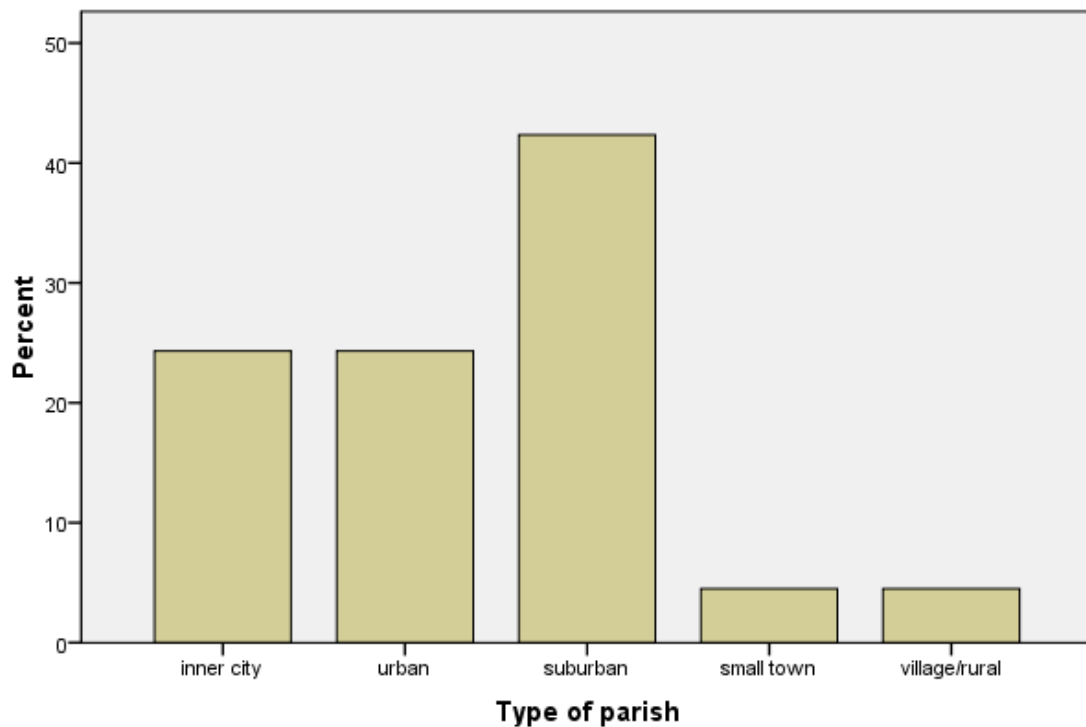


Figure 4.1. Types of parish.

The survey reveals a wide variety of Sunday attendance figures at these churches. The smallest have less than forty attendees, the largest seven hundred or more, with a mean of 152. Variation occurs of congregation size in types of parish, with inner city and suburban churches averaging attendance in the 160s, urban and other churches somewhat less (see Appendix B.i for table). Figure 4.2 shows the distribution for the size of Sunday congregation across the survey as a whole.

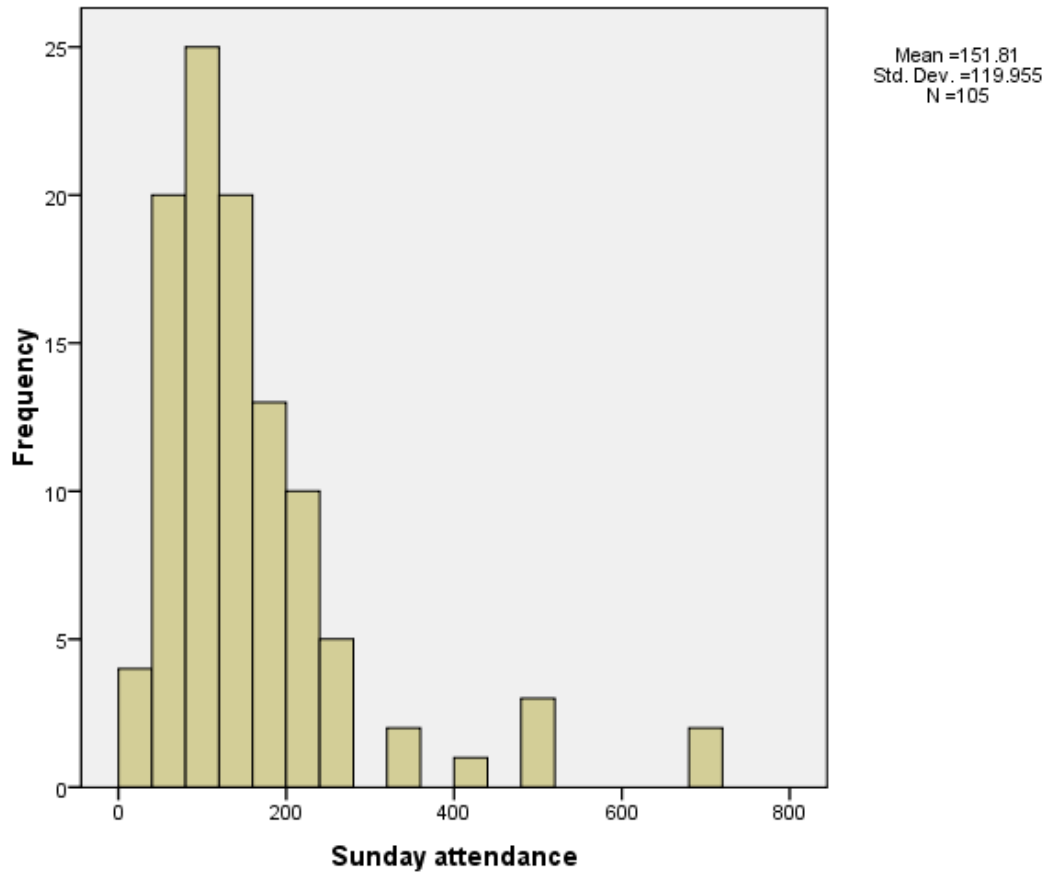


Figure 4.2. Size of Sunday congregation.

Approximately half these churches say they are growing numerically (see Figure 4.3). Over 50 percent of inner city and urban churches say they are growing; over 50 percent of suburban churches say they are stagnant. Few churches confess to declining, although given the situation in the UK church nationally one might expect that this figure would be somewhat higher. A small number of churches who received follow-up visits claim to be growing rapidly.

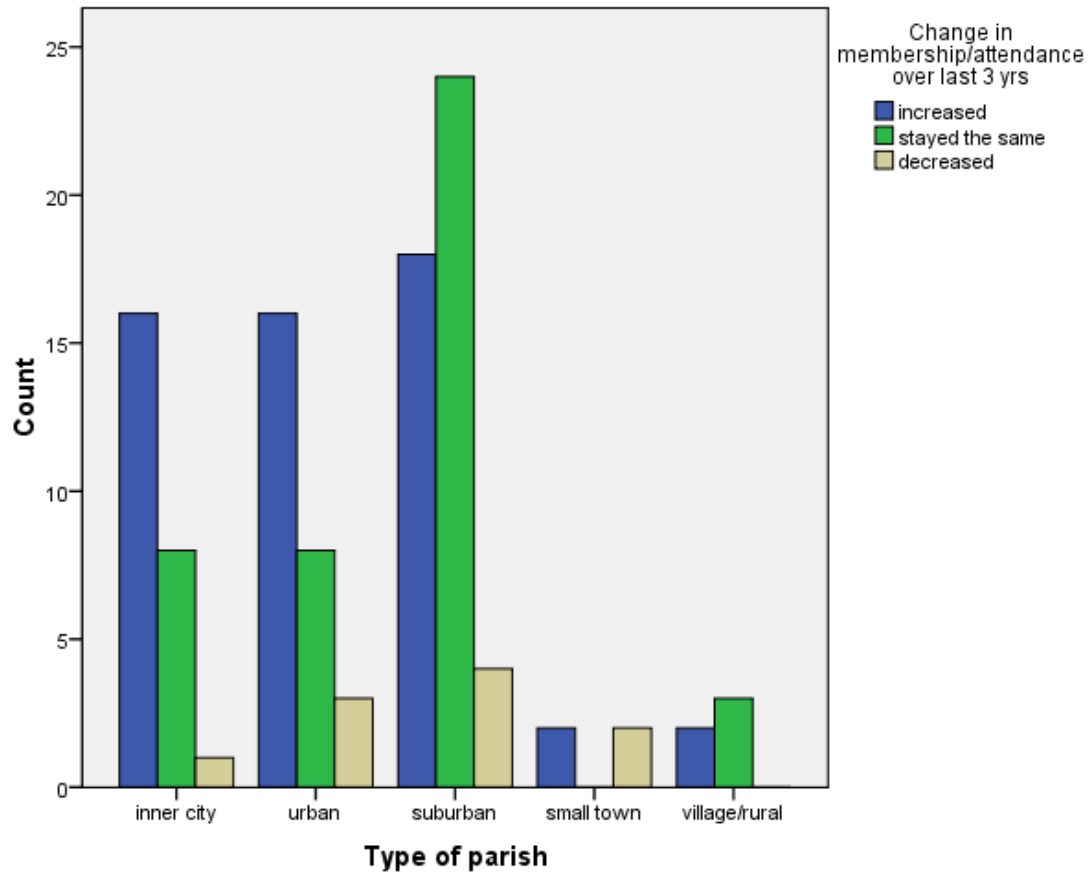


Figure 4.3. Change in membership/attendance over last three years.

Anglican churches have a responsibility to care for the people of a specific geographic parish. In practice some churches draw congregations mainly from this local area, while others draw people from further afield. Among these participants, the mean was 64 percent living in the parish, probably within easy walking distance from the church building. In follow-up visits to churches, I observed that many of those who were most active in community ministry had a very local parish focus (see Figure 4.4).

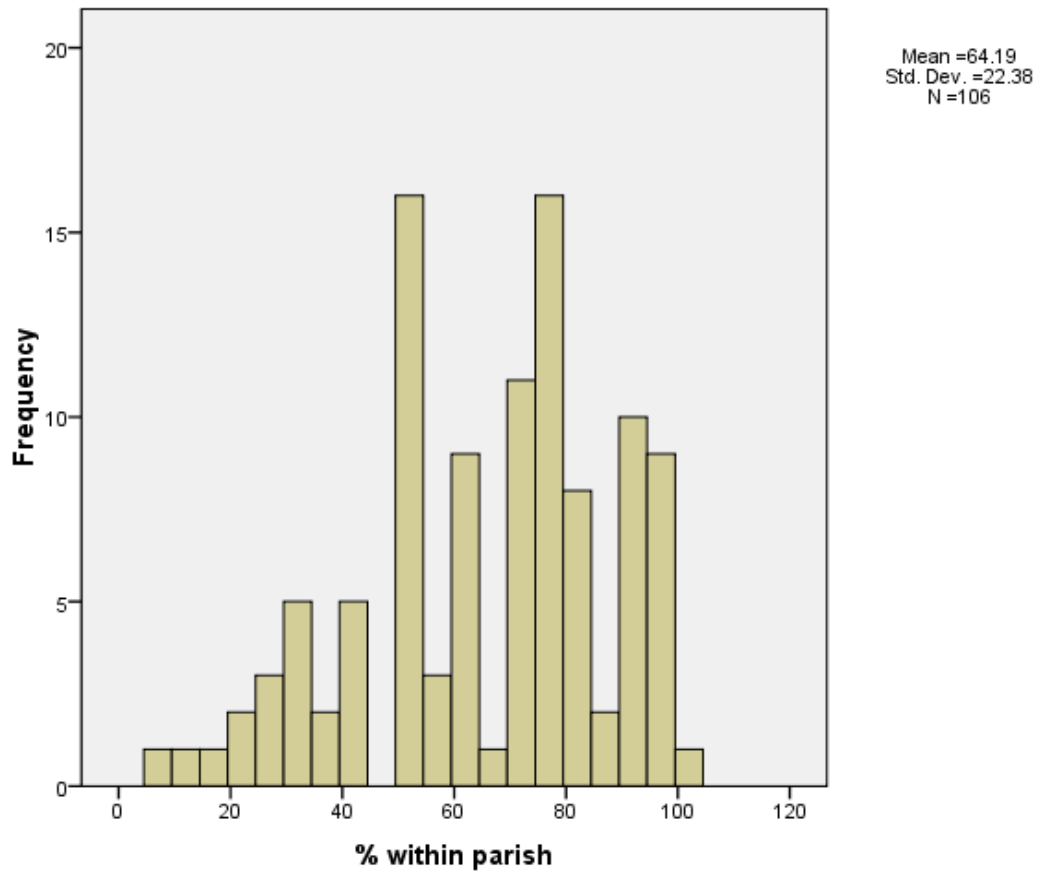


Figure 4.4. Proportion of congregation living in parish.

The proportion of those who attended churches within their parish varied for different types of parish type. Inner city churches were slightly less local (42 percent within the parish) than suburban (53 percent) and urban (54 percent) parishes (see Figure 4.5.) This fact may be explained by the fact that parishes in higher-density population areas tend to be smaller geographically, meaning that most people live within walking distance of several churches. Additionally good public transport links in the inner city increase the mobility of the churchgoing population.

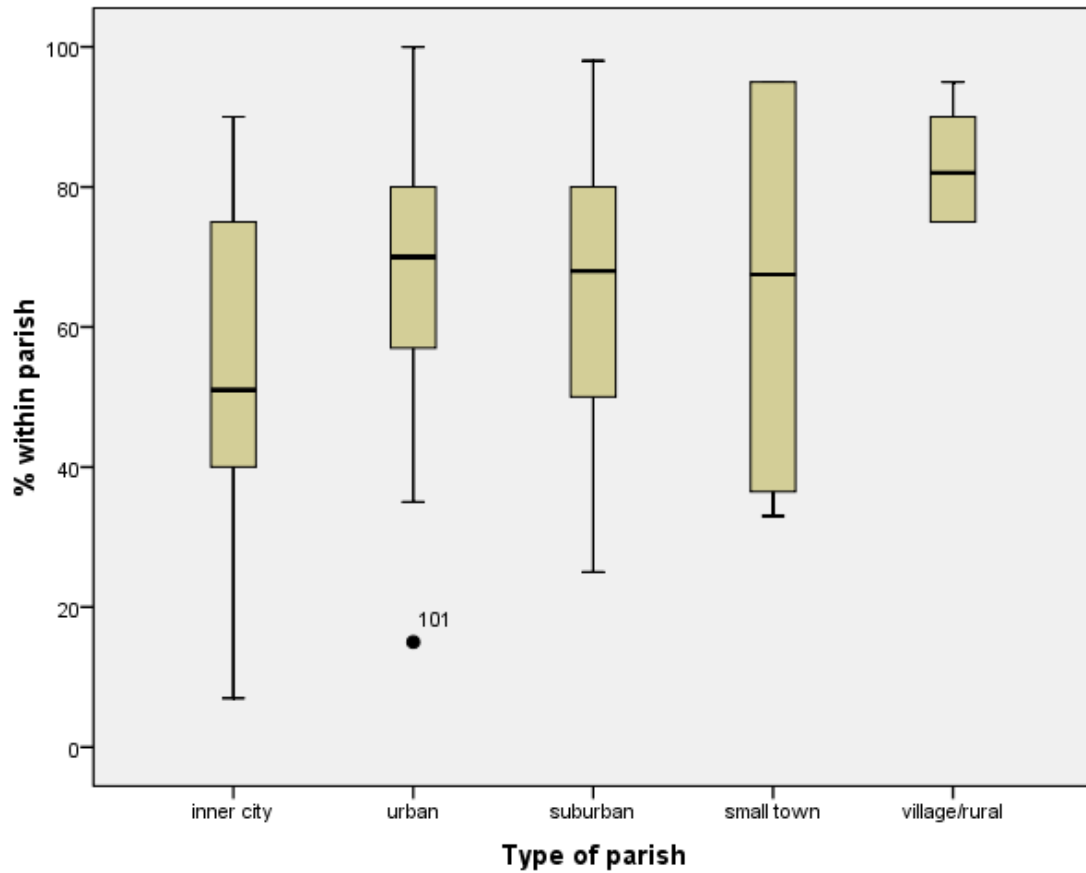


Figure 4.5. Percentage of congregation living in different types of parish.

Figure 4.6 shows that churches with smaller electoral rolls (i.e. membership lists) have a significantly higher proportion of people living within the parish. As the electoral roll increases in size, so the proportion of members living within the parish decreases. Similarly churches with smaller Sunday congregations have a significantly higher proportion of people living within the parish (see Appendix B.ii).

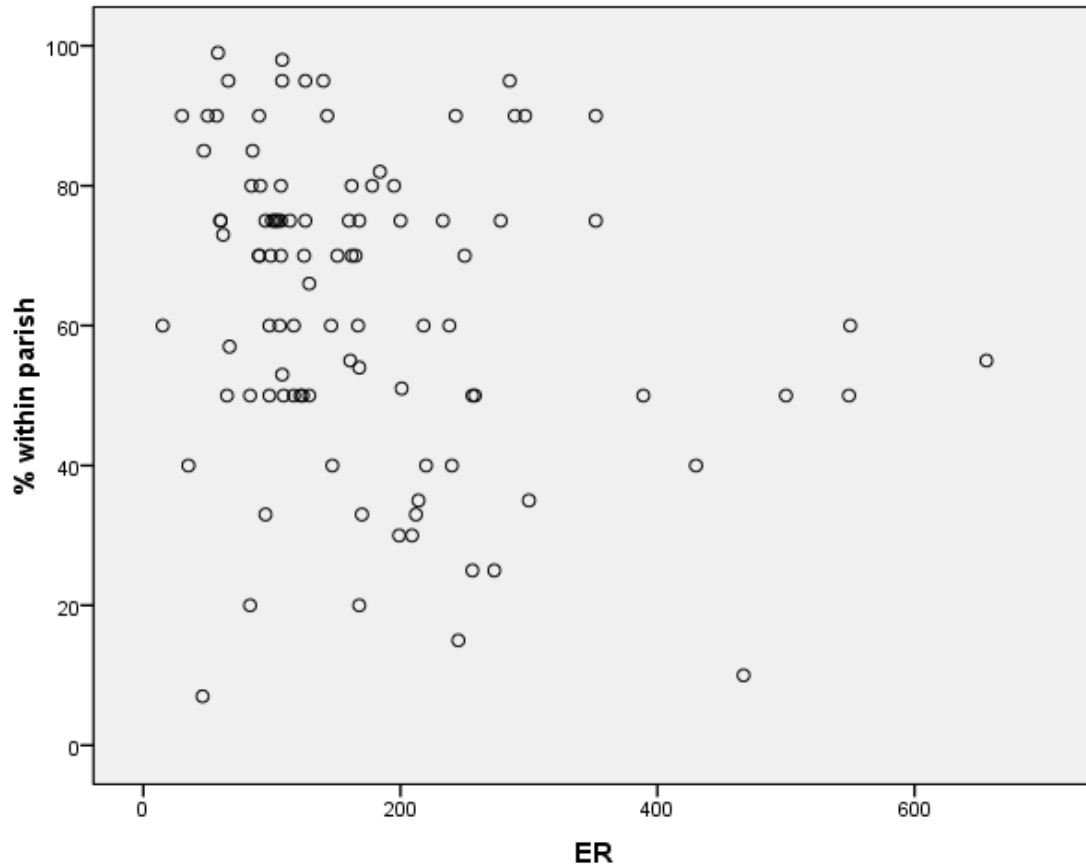


Figure 4.6. Electoral roll and percentage living within parish.

Research Question 1

How many churches are presently involved in community ministry, and with what specific types of community ministry are they involved?

The research demonstrated that the vast majority of churches are involved in some kind of community ministry. and that most of these community ministries focus on three groups: parents and toddlers, children and youth, and the elderly.

Of the churches surveyed, 95.5 percent are running at least one community ministry project. This figure is higher than one might have anticipated and, while

encouraging, creates a problem from a research point of view as it leaves no meaningful control group who are not running any community ministries. The focus in the data analysis that follows is, therefore, on the impact of differing levels of involvement in community ministry.

As Figure 4.7 demonstrates, a single church alone runs the largest group of these ministries (45 percent). More are run in collaboration with statutory agencies (branches of national and local government) than with other local churches. A leader of one church that carries out a great deal of community ministry in collaboration with others noted that such partnerships can be a weakness as well as a strength. On the positive side, he noted that the community hears the church speaking with a united voice, and greater resources may be available for the project. Nevertheless, decision making can be slow, and the creation of another body not in the purview of any one church can have a distancing effect between the ministry and the congregations who support it. Another church, desiring to serve families, had recently opened a large and highly professional center, which local people had developed, nonchurch as well as churchgoers, and funded principally by the central government. The church leader explained that the vision for the project had always been that it should be an open, ostensibly secular project and that government funding required that it should be so. Rather than plan for the center, the church had worked to revive a local residents' association, and then that association had worked on the project. The result of this process was that the new center had no overt Christian focus at all. In fact Muslims ran the nursery school, which served only halal food. The church leader stated that he did not want local people to think that this project was church-run, but their own family center. He said, "I'm trying to create an open,

secular space, and then to invite church people to come in and inhabit it.” His hope was that church people would get involved as volunteers and serve and connect with nonchurch people, as well as get to know more of their non-Christian neighbors that way.

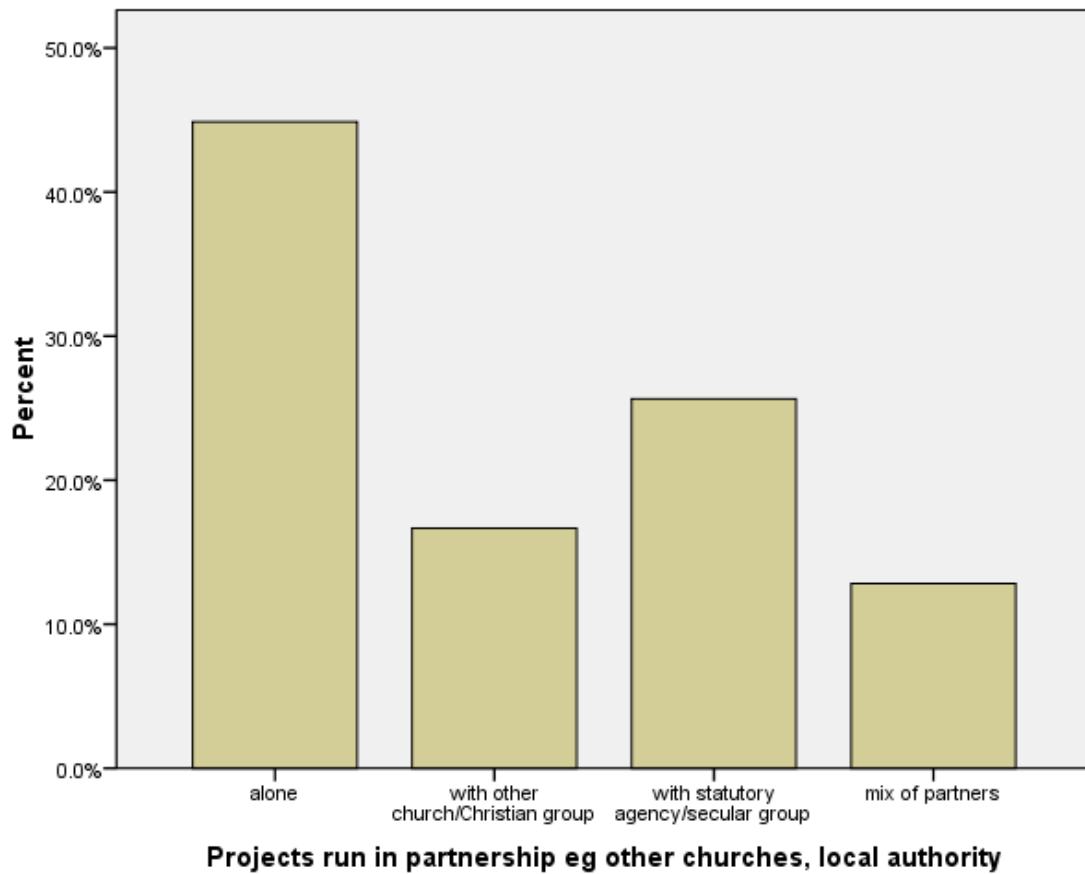


Figure 4.7. Projects run in partnership or by single church.

The survey asked churches which groups they seek to serve with their community ministry projects. Figure 4.8 shows the responses. Answers divided into seven groups plus an *other* category for ministries only mentioned by one church. These groups included parents and toddlers, children and youth, homeless, elderly, special needs,

socially disadvantaged, and refugees and immigrants. The majority of community ministries serve only three groups, with around 25 percent of churches running ministries for each of those three. No other group is served by more than 5 percent of churches (See Appendix B.iii). Points 34 and following analyze this subject further.

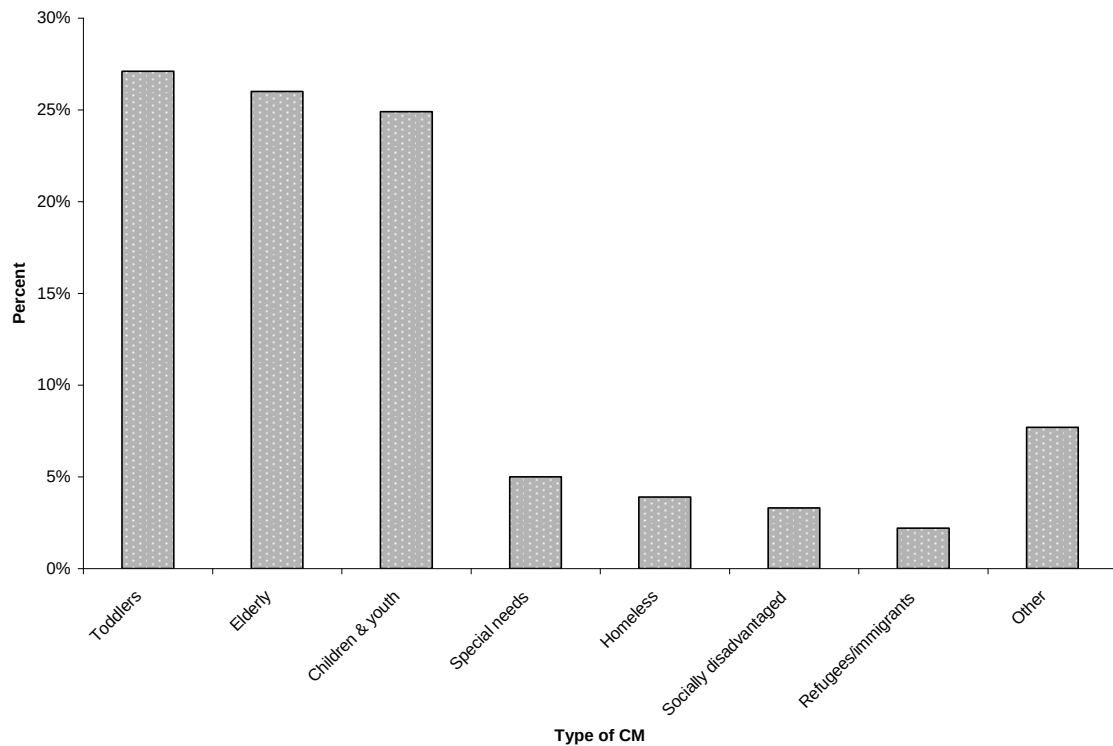


Figure 4.8. The groups served by community ministry.

Table 4.1 suggests that different types of churches reach out to serve different groups in society. Suburban churches appear to serve the elderly most, youth and children least. Urban and inner city churches appear to serve youth most, elderly least.

Table 4.1. Different Groups Served by Different Types of Parish

		Type of Parish				
		Inner City	Urban	Suburban	Other	Total
Parents & Toddlers	Count	9	12	24	4	49
	%	50%	60%	67%	57%	
Elderly	Count	8	6	28	5	47
	%	44%	30%	78%	71%	
Children & Youth	Count	13	13	17	2	45
	%	72%	65%	47%	29%	
Learning Difficulties/Special Needs	Count	1	1	6	1	9
	%	6%	5%	17%	14%	
Homeless	Count	3	0	3	1	7
	%	17%	0%	8%	14%	
Socially Disadvantaged	Count	4	1	1	0	6
	%	22%	5%	3%	0%	
Refugees/Immigrants	Count	1	1	2	0	4
	%	6%	5%	6%	0%	
Other	Count	2	6	5	1	14
	%	11%	30%	14%	14%	
Total	Count	18	20	36	7	81

Figure 4.9 reveals the proportion of respondees agreeing with the statement that evangelism and community ministry are of equal importance. One church leader said, “We used to believe that evangelism was the main thing, and community ministry was a

distraction from that. Now we understand that the gospel has to be lived as well as taught.” Over 80 percent of churches surveyed agreed with the statement (see Figure 4.9).

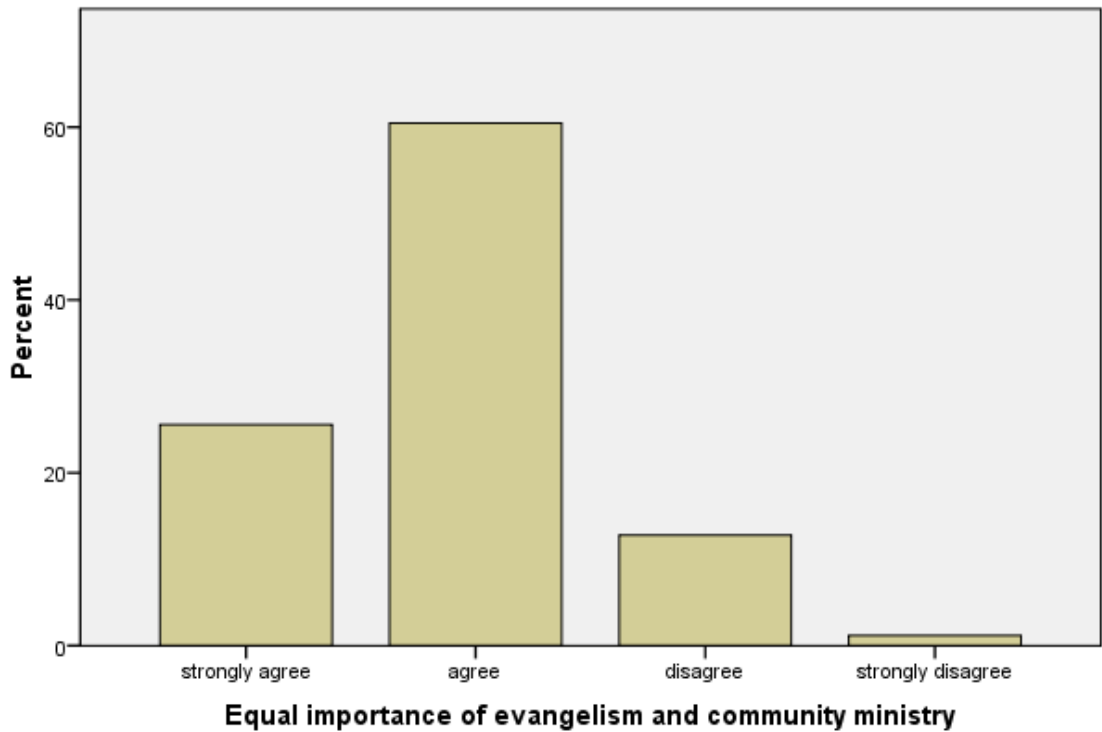


Figure 4.9. Evangelism and community ministry of equal importance.

Conversely, as Figure 4.10 demonstrates, a small proportion agreed that community ministry is only valid if it leads people to faith. Most churches surveyed now appear to believe community ministry is a worthwhile endeavor in its own right. One church leader said during an interview, “The ministries are valid in their own right. Whatever people’s responses to being served and blessed, we are still called to do it, although we do also want to provide opportunities for people to move on.” Two of the churches who received follow-up visits who were experiencing rapid growth saw their

community ministry as part of their evangelistic activity and had put great effort into trying to ensure that participation in a community ministry would be a first step to Christian faith for many people.

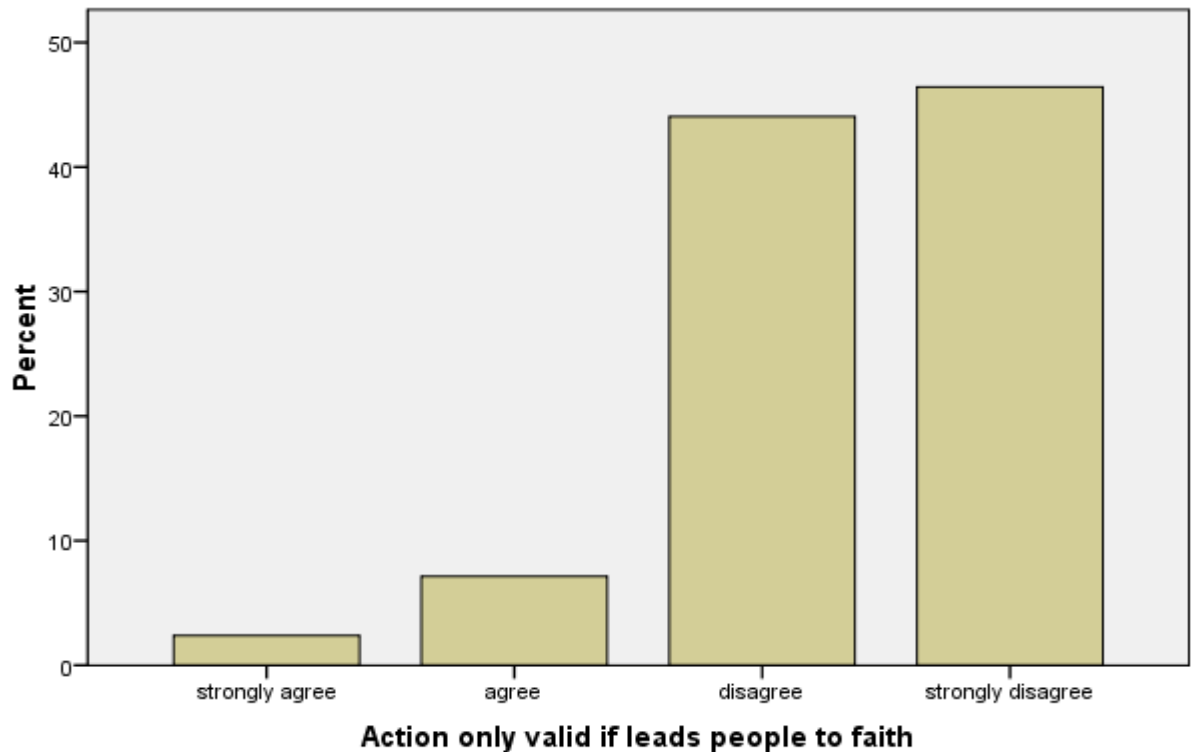


Figure 4.10. Community ministry only valid if it leads others to faith.

A majority of churches surveyed (53 percent) say their commitment to community ministry has increased over last five years. Just over half plan to increase their commitment further by starting new projects. Several of the churches which were visited for follow-up interviews had grown their community ministries very substantially over recent years (See appendix B.iv).

Figure 4.11 shows that most churches surveyed devote only a small proportion of their budget toward community ministry (mean 5 percent). This finding may be in part because Anglican congregations have substantial financial obligations toward central funds (from which clergy are paid) and the maintenance of large, historic, and expensive buildings. One church leader spoke of his aspiration to see 50 percent of his church's budget devoted to mission and outreach.

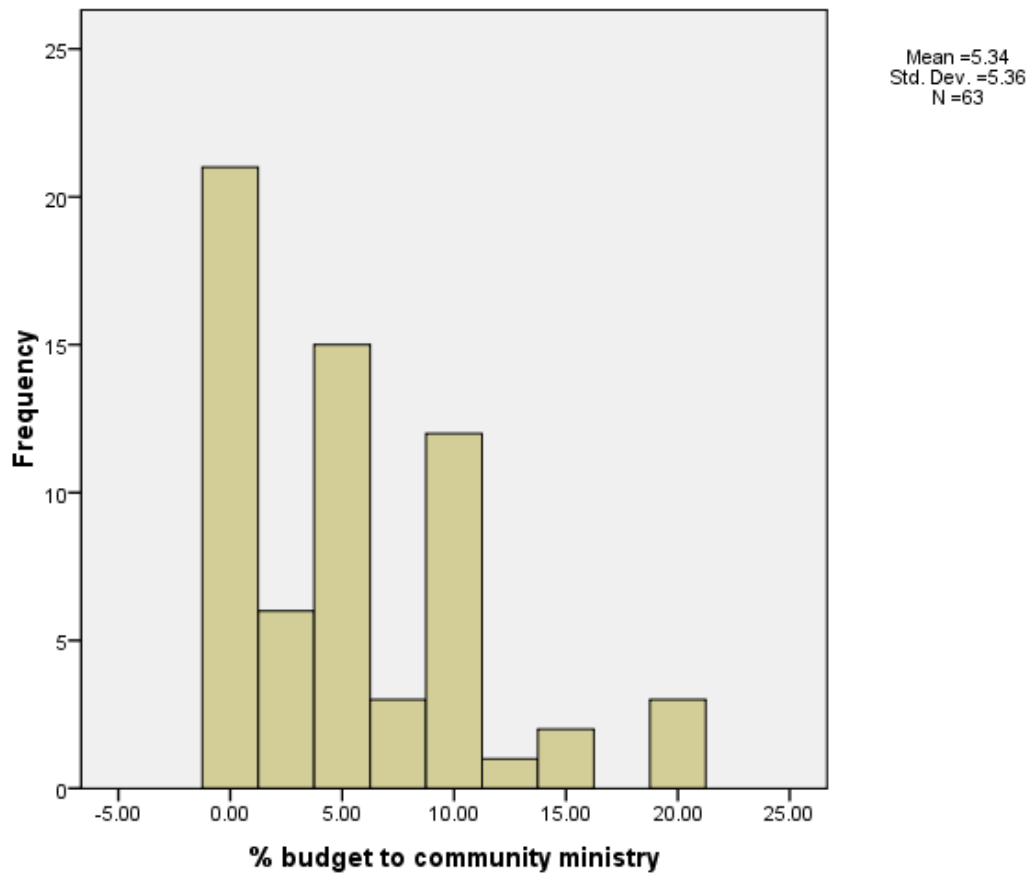


Figure 4.11. Percentage of budget devoted to community ministry.

Figure 4.12 shows that the commitment to community ministry in staff time is considerably higher (mean 17 percent). While some churches devote little or no staff time to community ministry, one church leader said in the interview that his aim is to put all his staff energies into mission and community ministry. He said he refuses to staff the pastoral care of the church, encouraging people to look after each other instead. In his view, churches should employ staff to do what the congregation can not, for example mission and community ministries that take place when most church members are out at work. A noteworthy point is that most Anglican churches have no paid staff other than the vicar (senior pastor), so in answering this question many churches are stating the proportion of the vicar's time that goes to community ministry. One church leader who oversees extensive community ministries said, "When the congregation say 'We're so glad we're doing this' what they really mean is 'We're so glad *you're* doing this'!" Congregations may have an expectation that the vicar is the person to carry out church ministries, whether community or congregation focused.

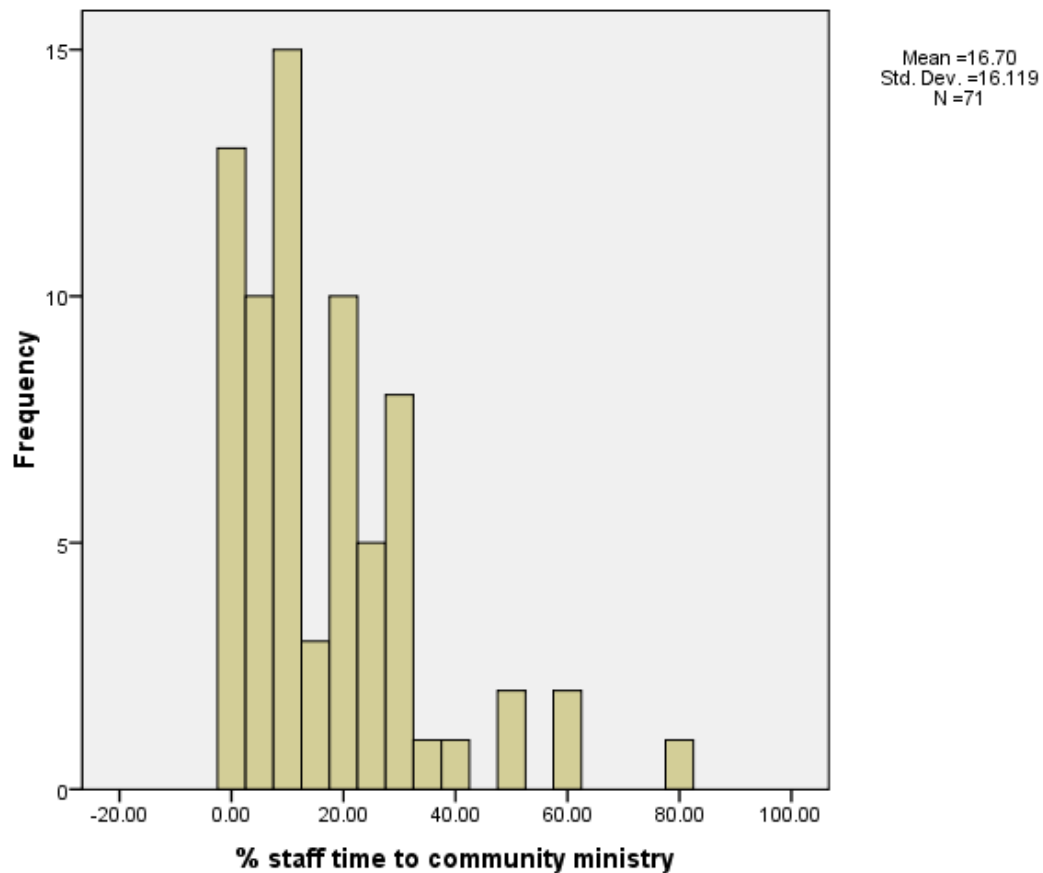


Figure 4.12. Percentage of staff time devoted to community ministry.

Figure 4.13 shows that the commitment to community ministry in volunteer time is higher still (mean 25 percent). A few church leaders who participated in follow-up interviews put great emphasis on inspiring congregation members to volunteer for community ministry. In both cases these were leaders who had a contagious passion for community ministry, which could easily excite others for the task. The leader of a large church stated that nearly 50 percent of his congregation was involved in some kind of community ministry, with over one hundred people, about 20 percent of the congregation, volunteering regularly. The key to mobilizing volunteers, in this leader's view, was to identify the activists and involve them within a few weeks of them starting

to come to church. Church leaders who reported high levels of volunteerism also tended to report significant fruit from community ministry, particularly in new people joining the church, and to score more highly on church health generally.

Churches make different decisions about the balance between staff and volunteer effort devoted to community ministry according to their context. One church with a great deal of community ministry going on noted that these are mainly staff led because potential volunteers work during the day when these ministries run. Another church, only a few miles away, had found plenty of volunteers available in the daytime to serve, such as young mothers and recently retired people. The leader of this church believed this significant volunteer commitment, with around 30 percent of the congregation involved, had built a high level of ownership and awareness of community ministry within the wider church, something that may be more difficult when ministries staff run ministries on a congregation's behalf.

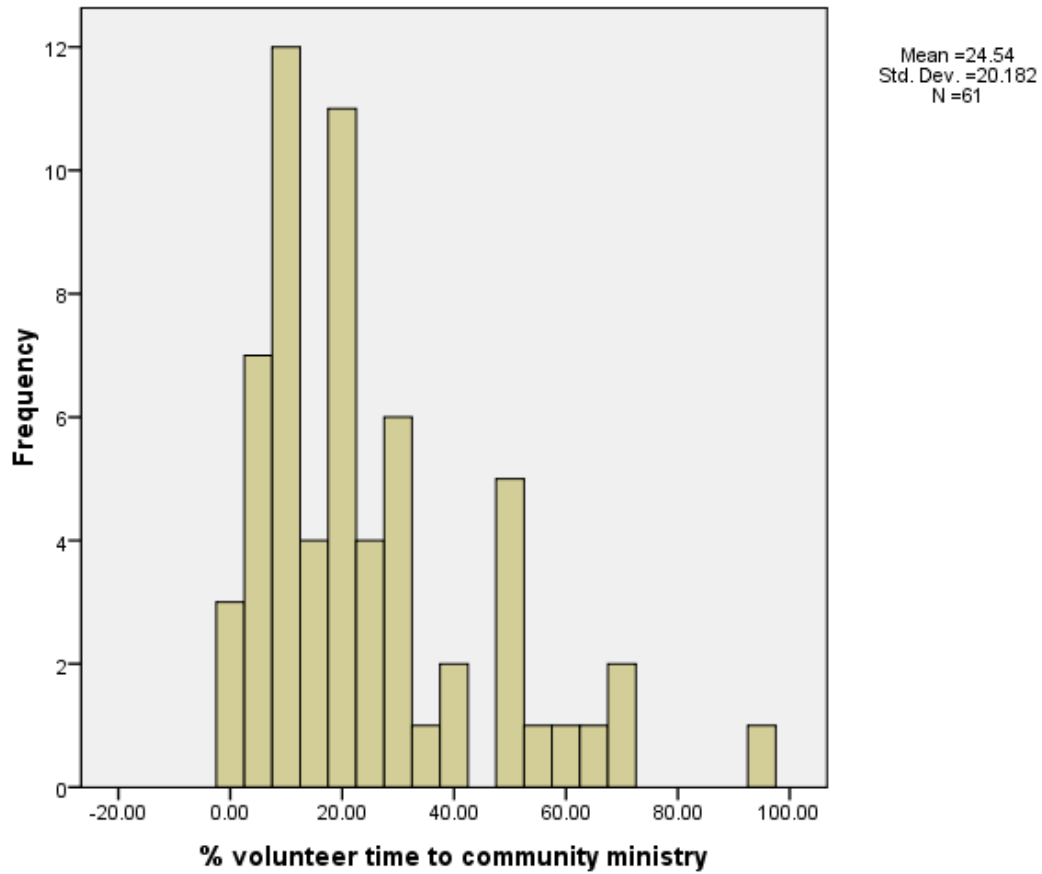


Figure 4.13. Percentage of volunteer time devoted to community ministry.

The proportion of income spent on community ministry is similar across theological traditions, or churchmanships, with evangelicals/charismatics spending slightly less as a proportion of budget (see Figure 4.14). As the largest churches in the survey were evangelical/charismatic churches, they may still have been spending more money in real terms.

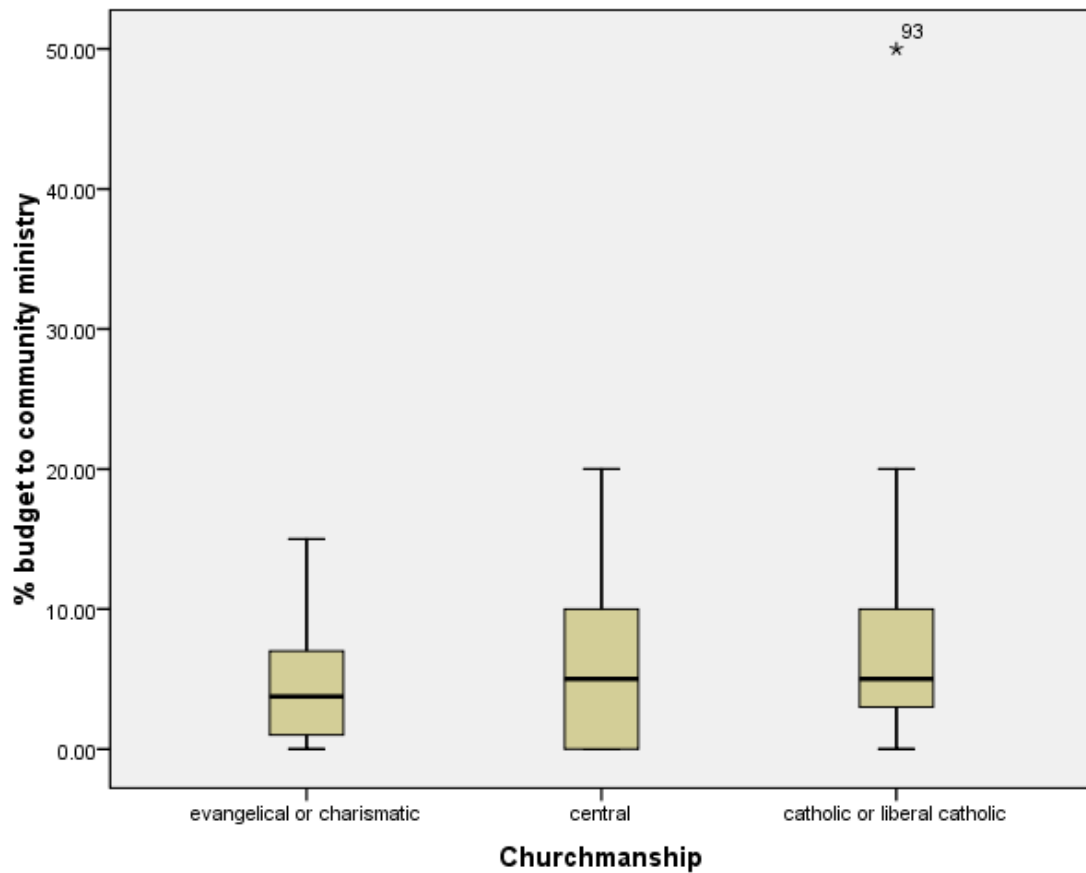


Figure 4.14. Percentage of income spent on community ministries by churchmanship.

The survey asked churches how many people on average benefit each week from their community ministries. Figure 4.15 shows that the range of responses was very wide, from virtually nobody to over five hundred per week, with a mean of ninety-nine weekly beneficiaries per church.

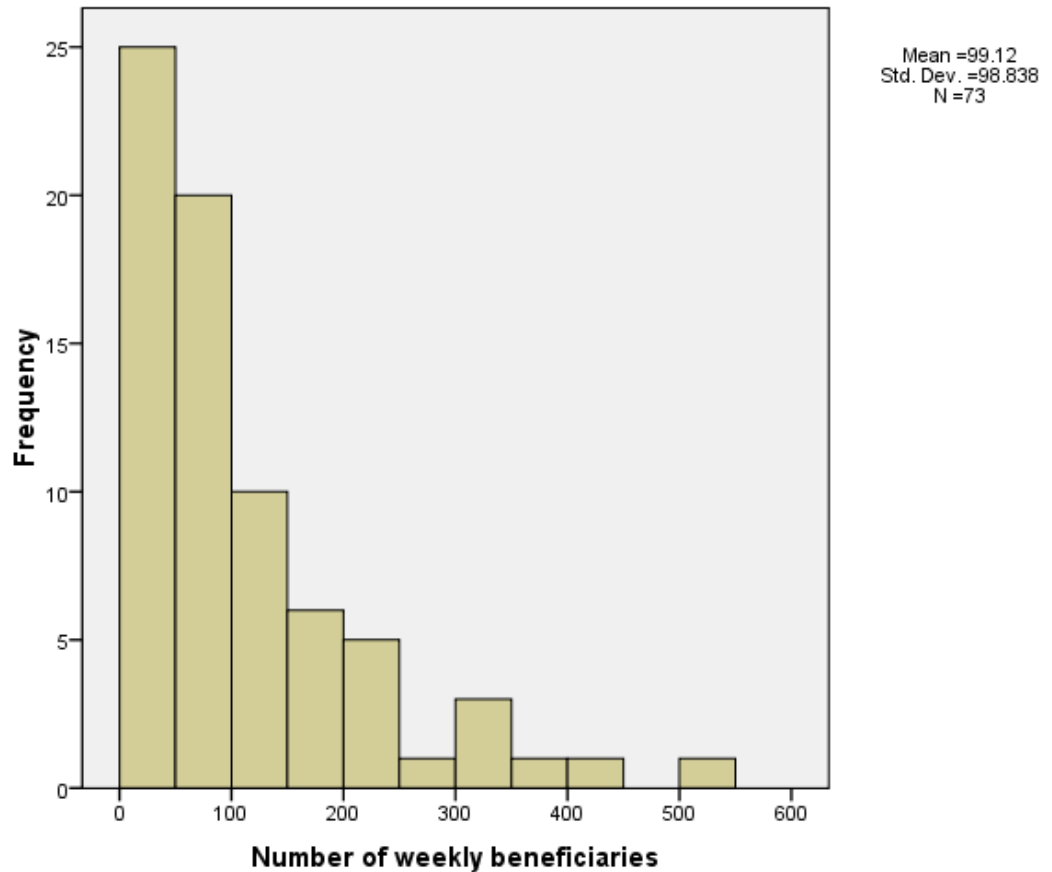


Figure 4.15. Number of beneficiaries from community ministry.

Research Question 2

Do churches that are actively involved in community ministry display greater signs of church health and fewer signs of church malaise than churches that are not?

The evidence suggests that churches that are actively involved in community ministry display fewer signs of church malaise than churches that are not, although the picture overall is complex, with some very active churches exhibiting signs of malaise, and some inactive churches, in community ministry terms, apparently very healthy.

Overwhelming evidence exists of a relationship between community ministry (a total score for all community ministry-related answers) and church health (a total score

for all health/malaise-relate answers;) see Appendix B.v. Figure 4.16 demonstrates that as the community ministry rating goes up, so the health rating tends to increase as well. This evidence agreed with the impression received in visits to specific churches for follow-up interviews. Those churches doing a great deal of community ministry often exuded a palpable sense of energy, momentum, and dynamism, with people devoting large amounts of money and energy to the fulfilment of the church's mission.

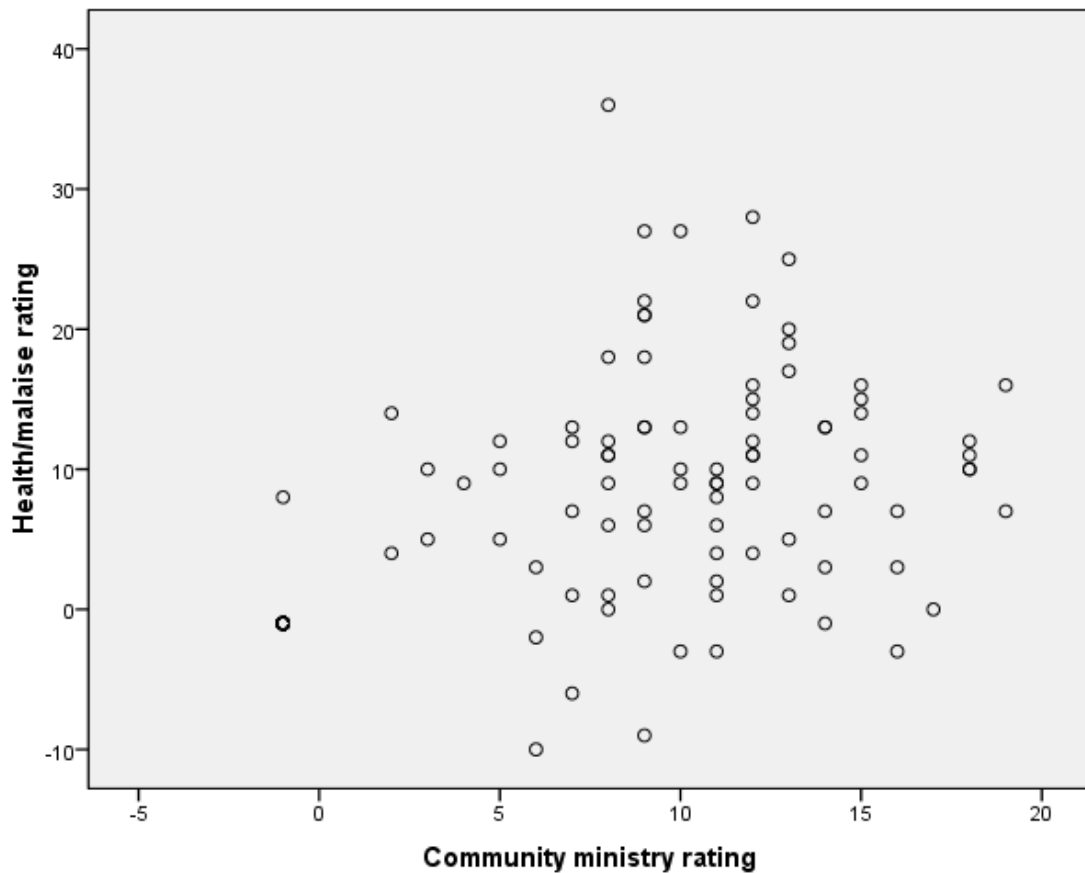


Figure 4.16. Relationship between community ministry and church health.

The survey reveals overwhelming evidence of a relationship between positive attitudes to community ministry (defined as the total of *agree* and *strongly agree* answers to community attitude questions) and positive attitudes to church life and health generally (defined as the total of *agree* and *strongly agree* answers to church health questions); (See Appendix B.vi for Pearson's correlation. (I also used Spearman's test here and elsewhere but did not quote it when it simply substantiates Pearson's.) Figure 4.17 demonstrates that those churches who give positive answers in questions about their attitude to community ministry were more likely to report positive signs of church health. The follow-up visits underlined this point, where churches that had great desire to serve the wider community often seemed to exhibit a joy and energy that was missing elsewhere.

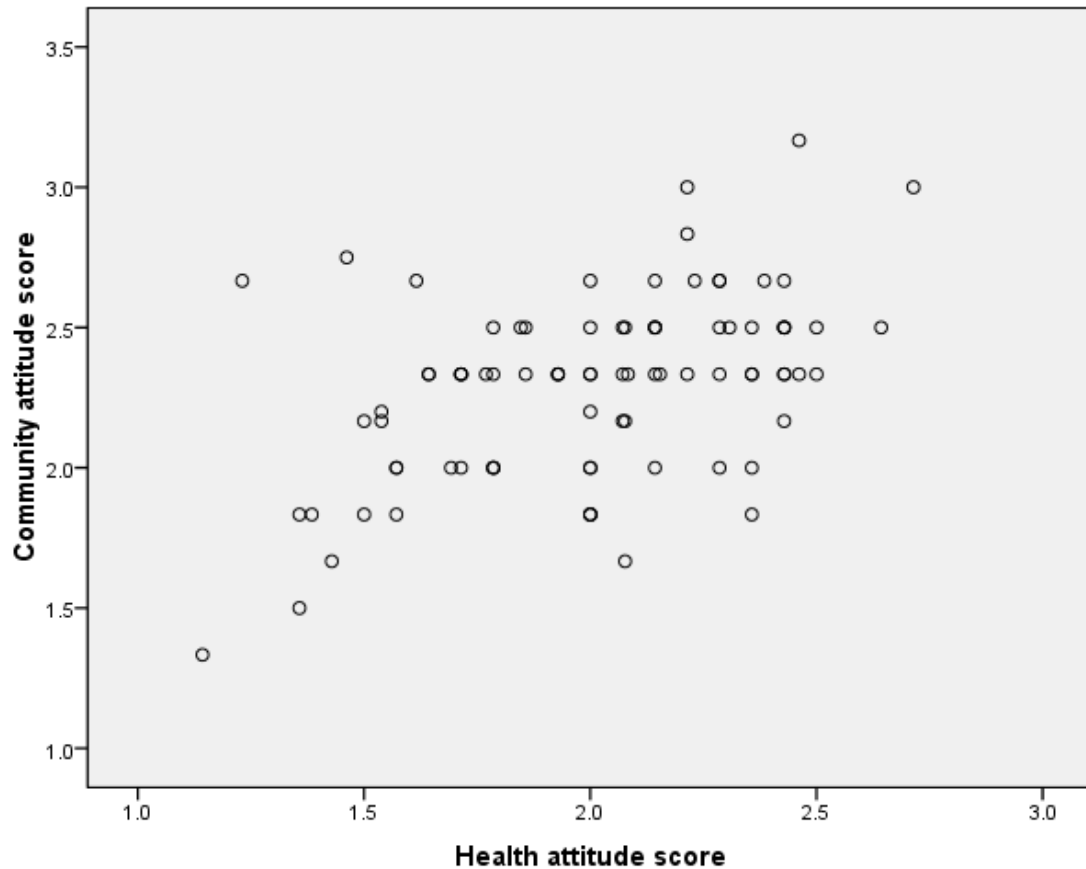


Figure 4.17. Relationship between positive attitudes towards community ministry and experience of church health.

The survey reveals evidence that the benefits of community ministry to church health increase as the number of people benefiting from those ministries increases. Figure 4.18 demonstrates that the more individuals a church serves weekly through their community ministries, the higher their responses to church health-related questions are likely to be.

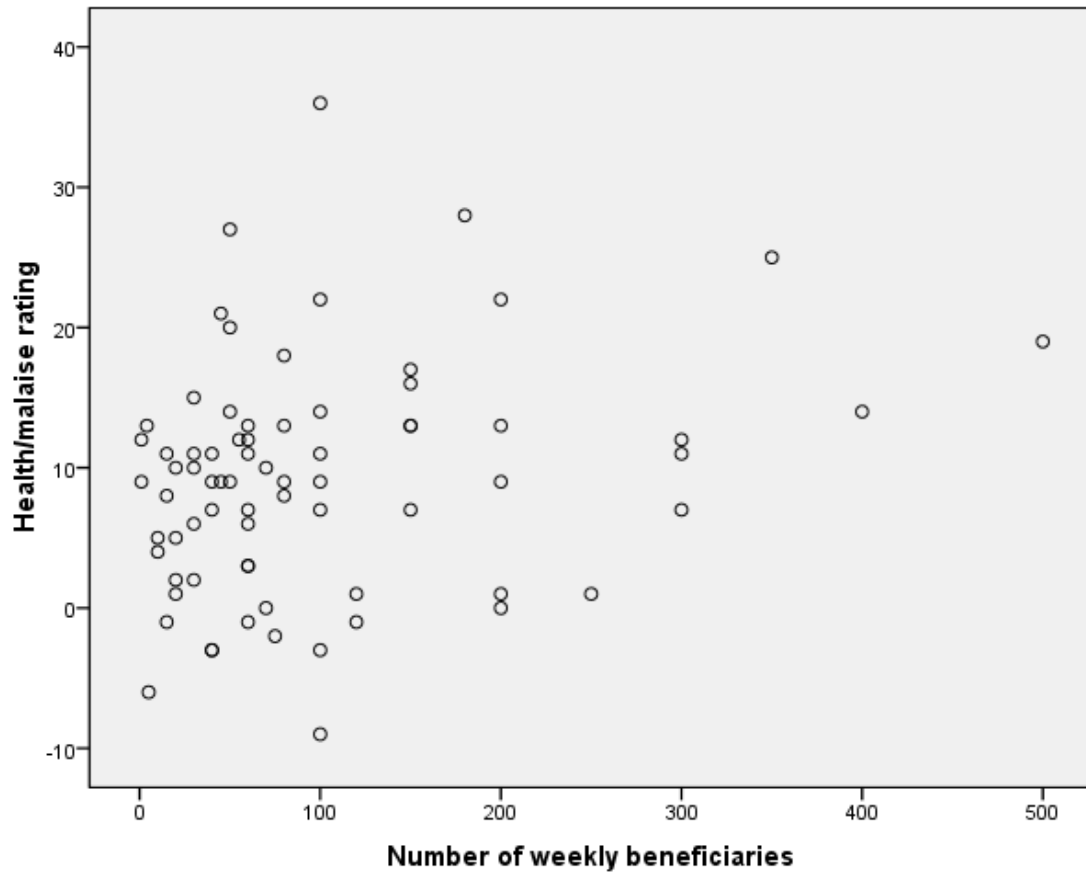


Figure 4.18. Relationship between number of people served and church health.

Churches that gave more positive answers to church health-related questions were also more likely to state their belief that Christians have a special responsibility for the needy, as Figure 4.19 shows.

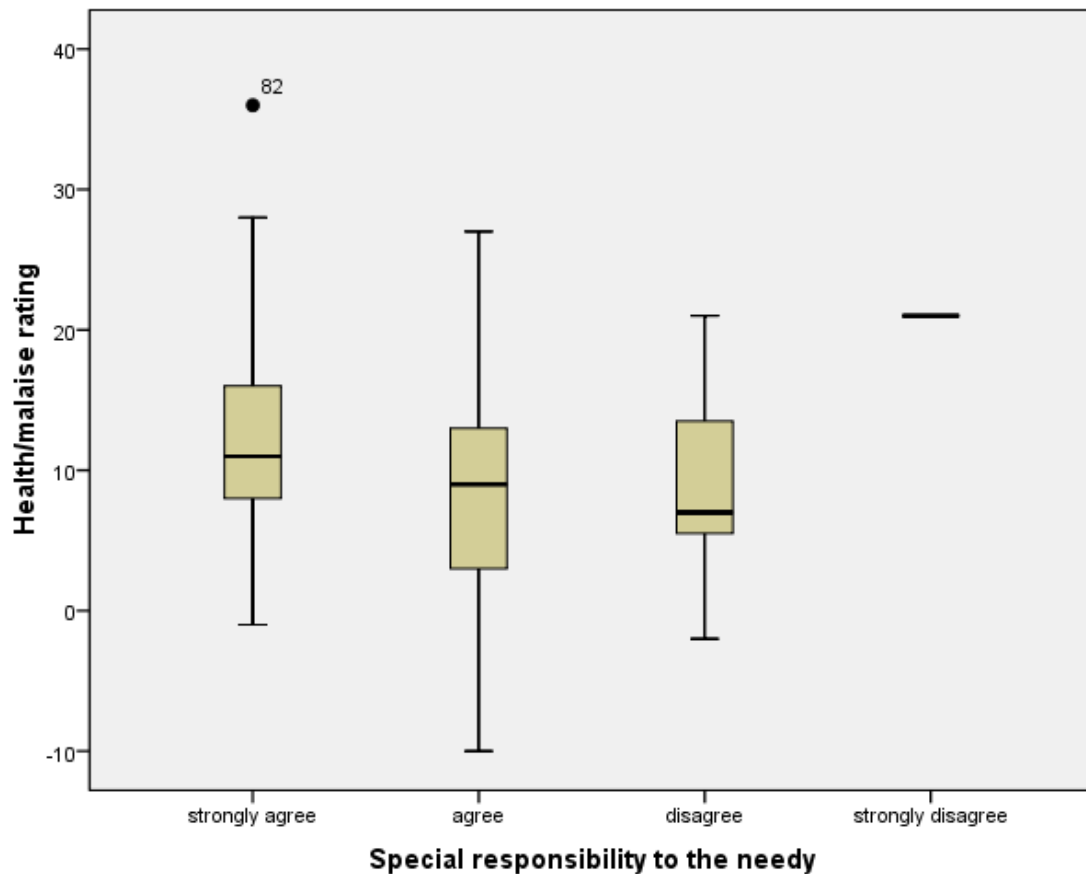


Figure 4.19. Relationship between church health and belief that church has special responsibility to the needy.

I have not found it possible to demonstrate a strong relationship between church growth and community ministry; however, of those churches whose membership is increasing, few receive a low score on community ministry. Additionally several of the church leaders who participated in one-on-one interviews believed their numerical growth derived from community ministry. For example, one church that has recently developed a new service aimed at nonchurchgoers, with around three hundred people attending, of which approximately 85 percent have come through a community ministry aimed at parents and toddlers. The same church reported that two people had recently

joined the congregation through a lunch for homeless people. Another church that was active in community ministry reported that 160 people had become Christians in a four-month period recently.

As Figure 4.20 shows, the survey demonstrates evidence of an almost-significant relationship between the number of weekly beneficiaries and the number taking a step of initiation, also suggesting that community ministries may be drawing new people into church (see Appendix B.vii).

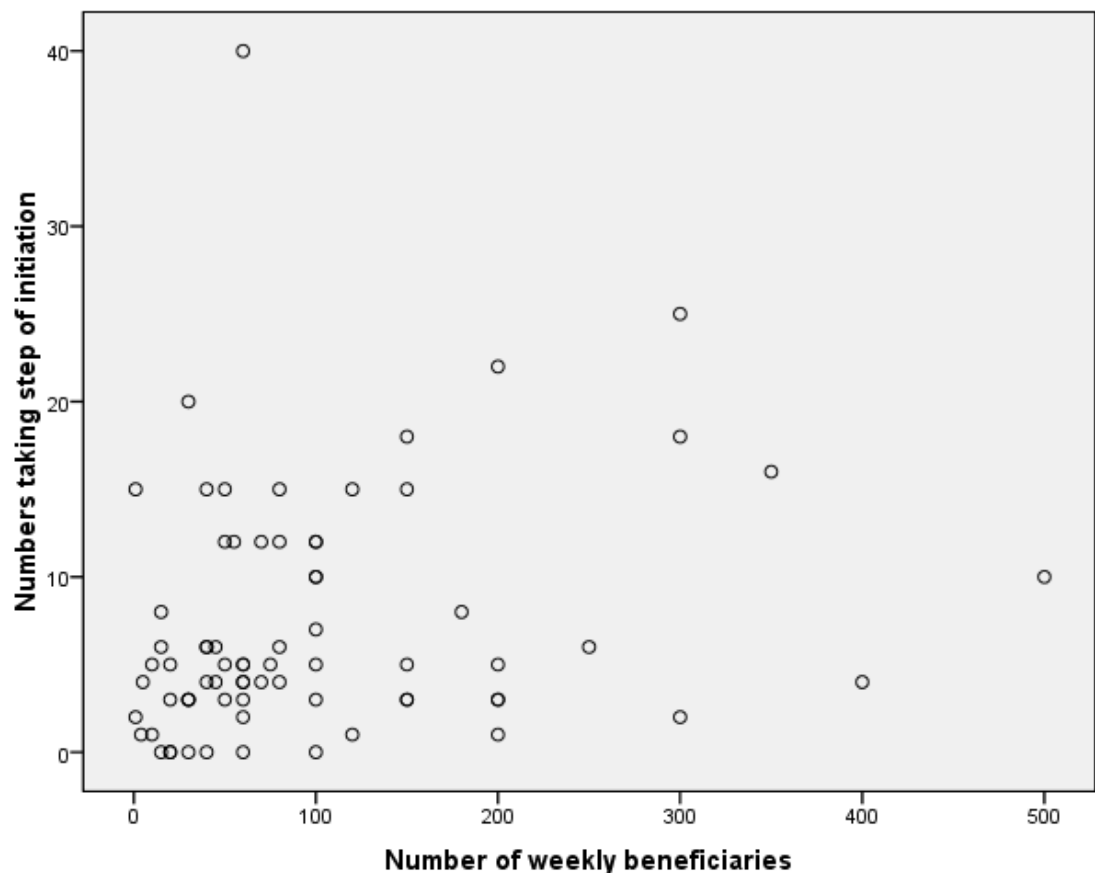


Figure 4.20. Relationship between number of beneficiaries and numbers taking steps of initiation.

Not surprisingly, as Figure 4.21 shows, overwhelming evidence exists of a relationship between the size of a church and the number of people served through community ministry (see Appendix B.viii). Larger churches tend to have the resources of money and people to serve greater numbers.

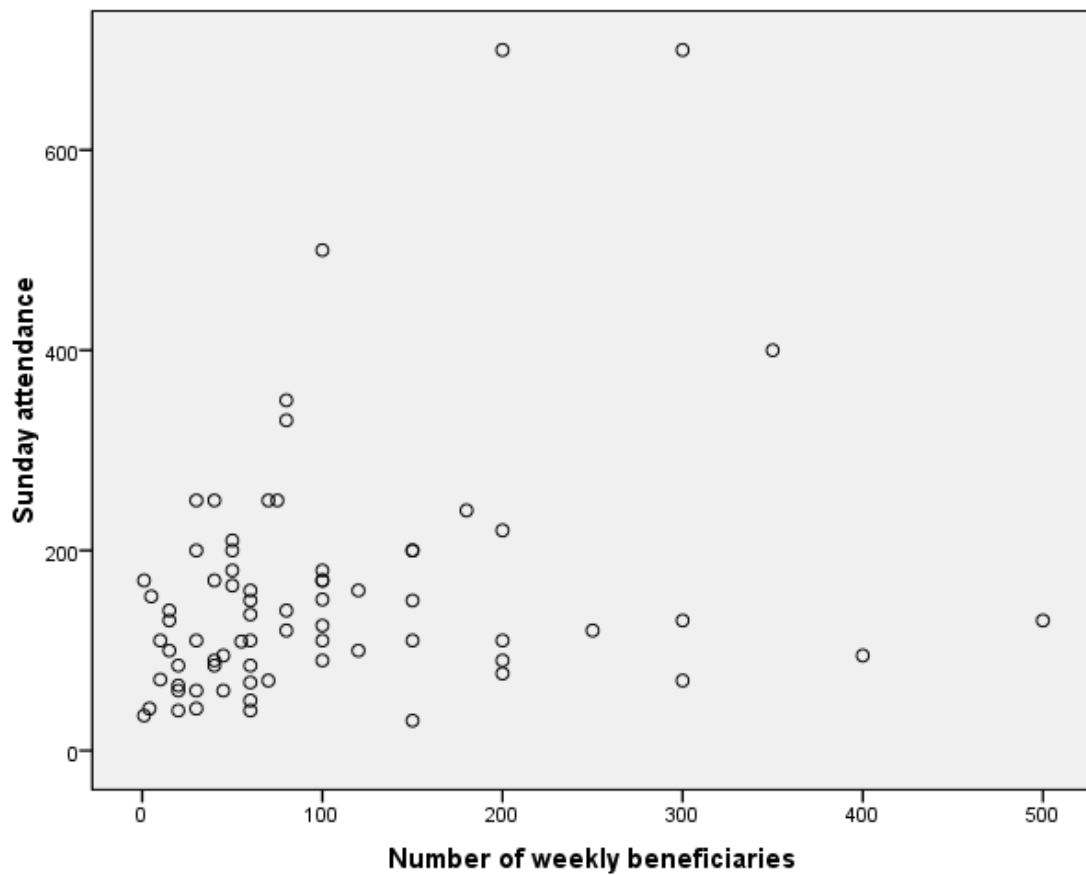


Figure 4.21. Relationship between Sunday attendance and number of people served by community ministry.

Figure 4.22 demonstrates that churches with a higher community rating also tend to have a larger fringe of occasional churchgoers. One church reported in an interview

that at some services up to 70 percent of the congregation were still finding their way to faith.

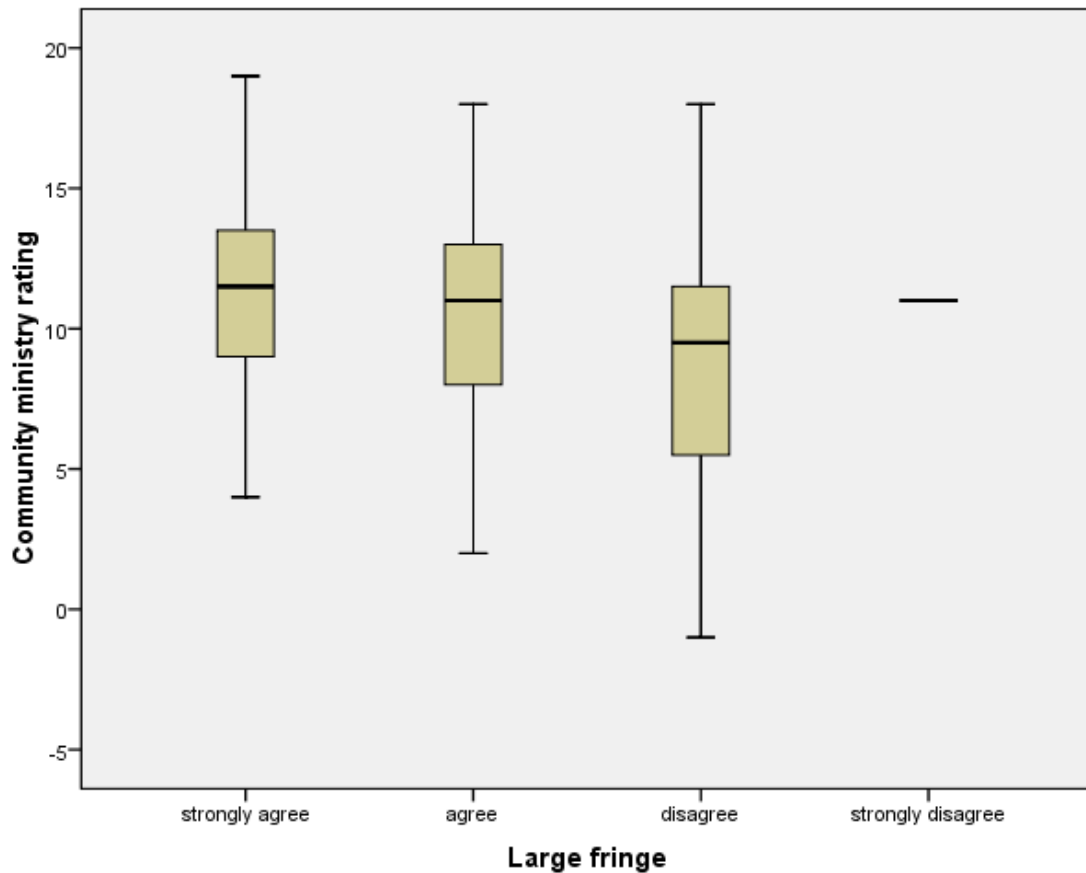


Figure 4.22. Relationship between community ministry and large fringe.

The survey found evidence (see Figure 4.23) that churches with a higher community rating are more likely to see people regularly coming to faith. One might expect this given the point made above about community ministry generating a large fringe of unchurched people who might be drawn into the congregation. The follow-up interviews suggested that the churches who experience conversions as a result of their community ministry are highly intentional and structured about enabling people to take

steps of faith. Programs such as Alpha are well integrated into community ministries, not just the worshipping life of a church. For example, one church leader said “We meet people where they are, but we don’t leave them there.” Another church was deliberately tracking those who had come to faith through their community ministries.

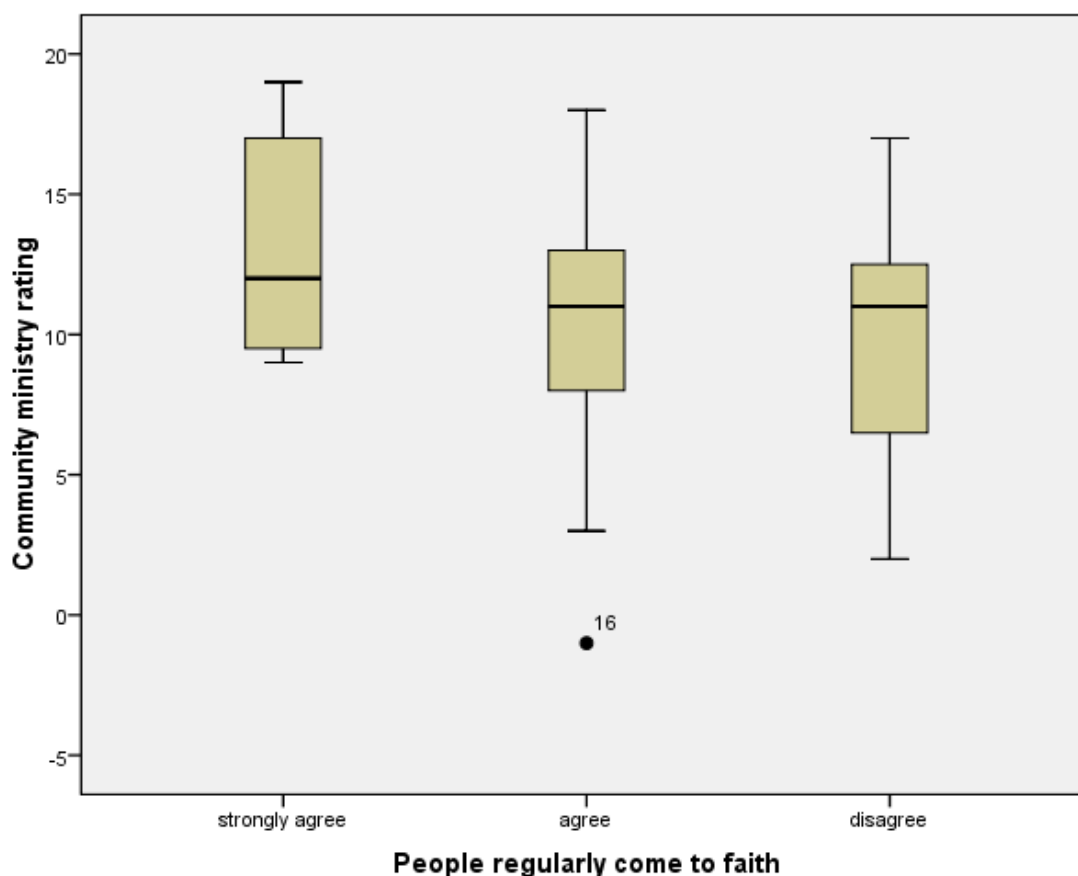


Figure 4.23. Relationship between community ministry and people coming to faith.

Figure 4.24 suggests that churches scoring highly on community ministry are more likely to report close supportive relationships (see Appendix B.ix for Mann Whitney). This impression was underlined by the impression received through visiting churches for follow-up interviews. It often seemed to me as if groups of volunteers and

staff who had served together in community ministry had a sense of mutual care and camaraderie over and above the norm. One church leader said “When we serve people together we get drawn closer to one another at the same time.” Several churches reported similar experiences.



Figure 4.24. Relationship between community ministry and supportive congregational relationships.

Several other characteristics that one might expect to be present in a healthy church are also reported more frequently amongst churches with a high community

ministry rating, as summarized below. For example, as Figure 4.25 shows, churches with a high community rating are more likely to report that conflict is handled positively in the church.

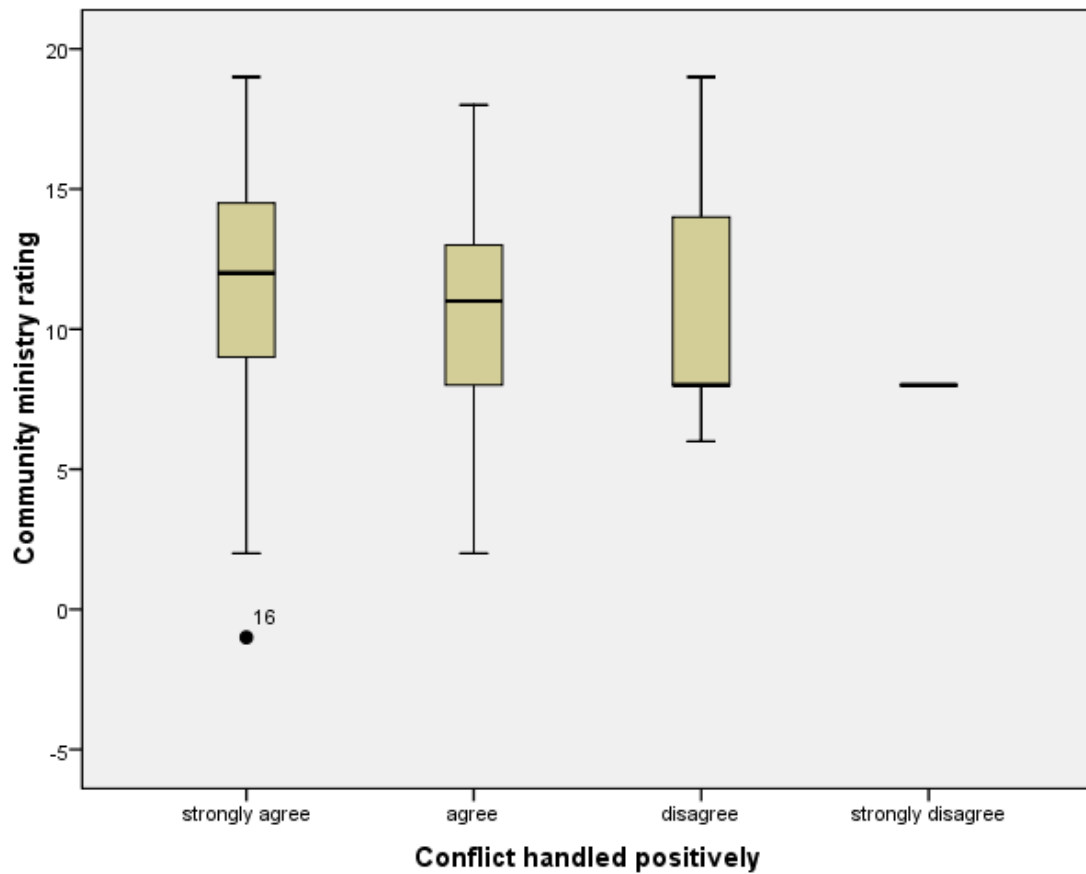


Figure 4.25. Relationship between community ministry and conflict handled positively.

Similarly, as Figure 4.26 shows, churches with a high community rating are more likely to report healthy outward-looking home groups. Sometimes church home groups can become introspective, cliquey, and ultimately selfish. Churches with a strong focus on community ministry are less likely to experience this introspection.

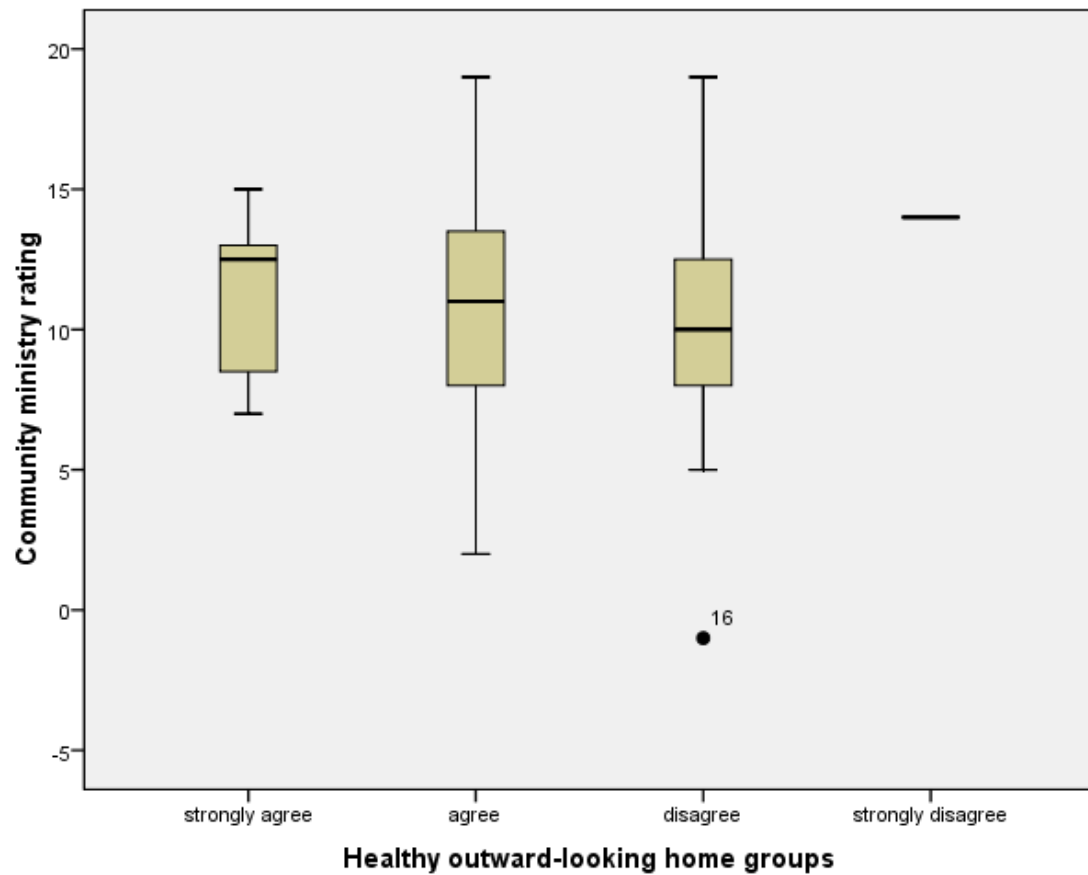


Figure 4.26. Relationship between community ministry and healthy home groups.

As Figure 4.27 shows, in the same way, churches with high community ministry rating are more likely to report that they have effective decision-making processes. Perhaps a strong focus on an external mission forces churches to streamline their processes rather than getting preoccupied with internal bureaucracy.

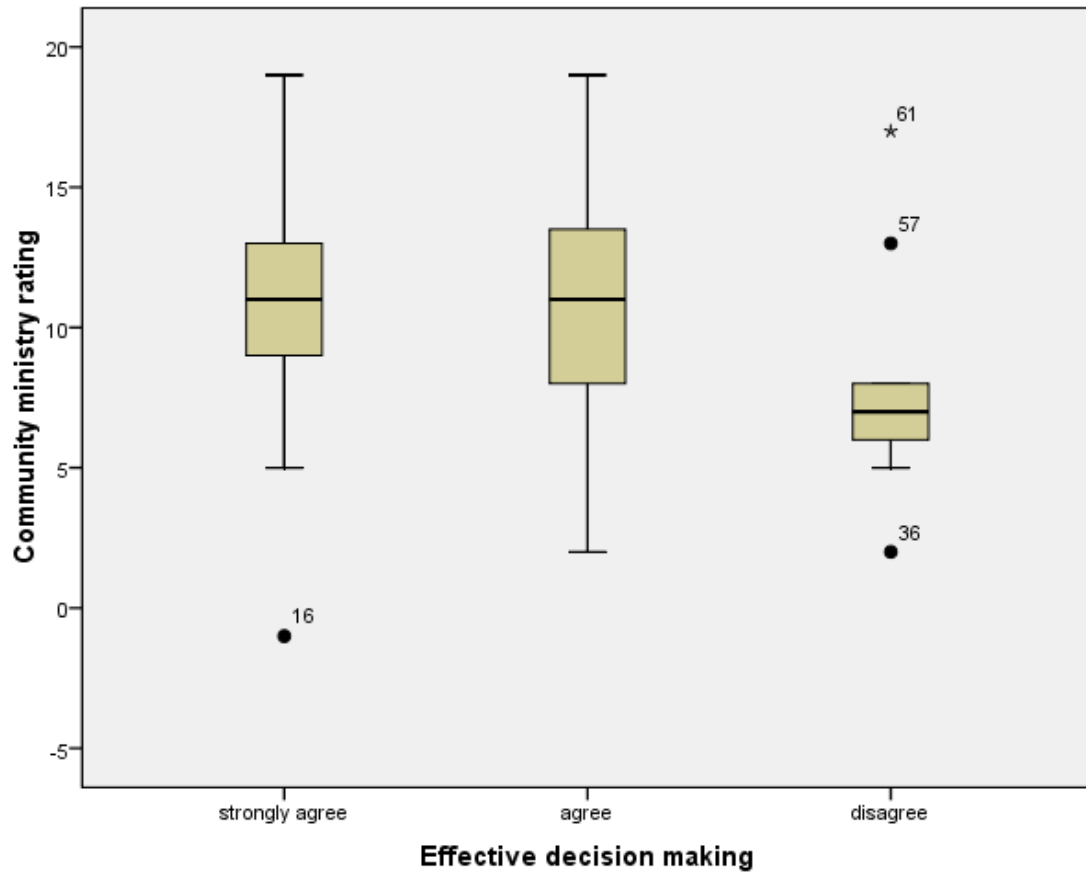


Figure 4.27. Relationship between community ministry and effective decision-making processes.

Churches report a variety of types of fruit in the local community as a result of their community ministry, summarized in Figure 4.28 below. The largest one by far is a greater awareness of the church in the local community, or some variation on that theme. For example, one church that had embarked on a program of community ministry since the appointment of a new minister three years ago reported that the reputation of the church locally had improved dramatically as a result. The church leader said she knew the church had to change its local perception when someone had said to her “I can’t come into this church—it’s too posh.” Another major area of fruitfulness in the local

community was a sense of cohesion, that somehow the ministry of the church was creating a sense of belonging and interconnectedness in the area. One leader said in an interview, “What is happening in church is building a sense of community locally.” She told the story of a child at the local school who had died during the previous week. Local people were contacting the vicar to ask how they could help the family, whereas before they would not have known how to offer support (See Appendix B.x).

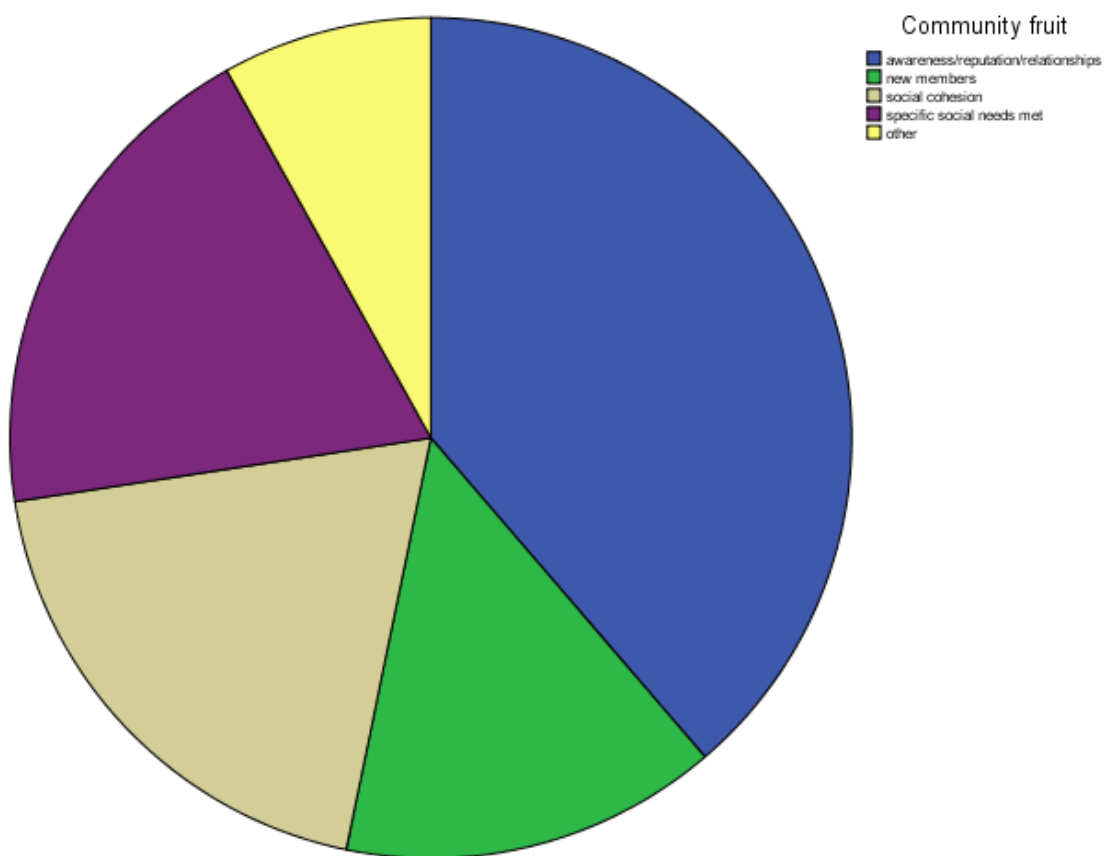


Figure 4.28. The fruit of community ministry in the local community.

Churches report a variety of types of fruit in their congregation as a result of their community ministry, summarized in Figure 4.29. No one type of fruit stands out as being

referenced by a significant numbers of churches, although interestingly 7 percent of churches say they have seen little or no fruit of any type. Of the churches surveyed, 21 percent report increased mobilization of the congregation. One church leader stated during the interview that this factor was central to her approach to discipleship and spiritual growth. “The more you get people doing something in the local community, the more involved they feel in their faith.” Another church leader, quoting Willow Creek Community Church’s REVEAL research, said, “The way you help Christians grow is by serving the poor.” A staff member from one middle-class church with many community ministries serving the poor said that some members of that congregation had been changed and radicalized by serving in those ministries, and that this change had affected the church as a whole. Several leaders spoke of new volunteers coming from their congregation to serve in specific community ministries. One church leader said community ministry had created a more inclusive, exciting church and had liberated generosity and sharing in the congregation; however, he also worried that focusing on mission more broadly might dull the church’s evangelistic cutting edge. Overall 16 percent of churches report numerical growth, and if one combines this with the 15 percent of churches who report new members as a fruit in the local community, it suggests that churches do attract new members through community ministries. Interviews with church leaders confirm this fact. For example, the church that runs community theatre projects made the point that a small number of people had become worshipping members as a result (see Appendix B.xi).

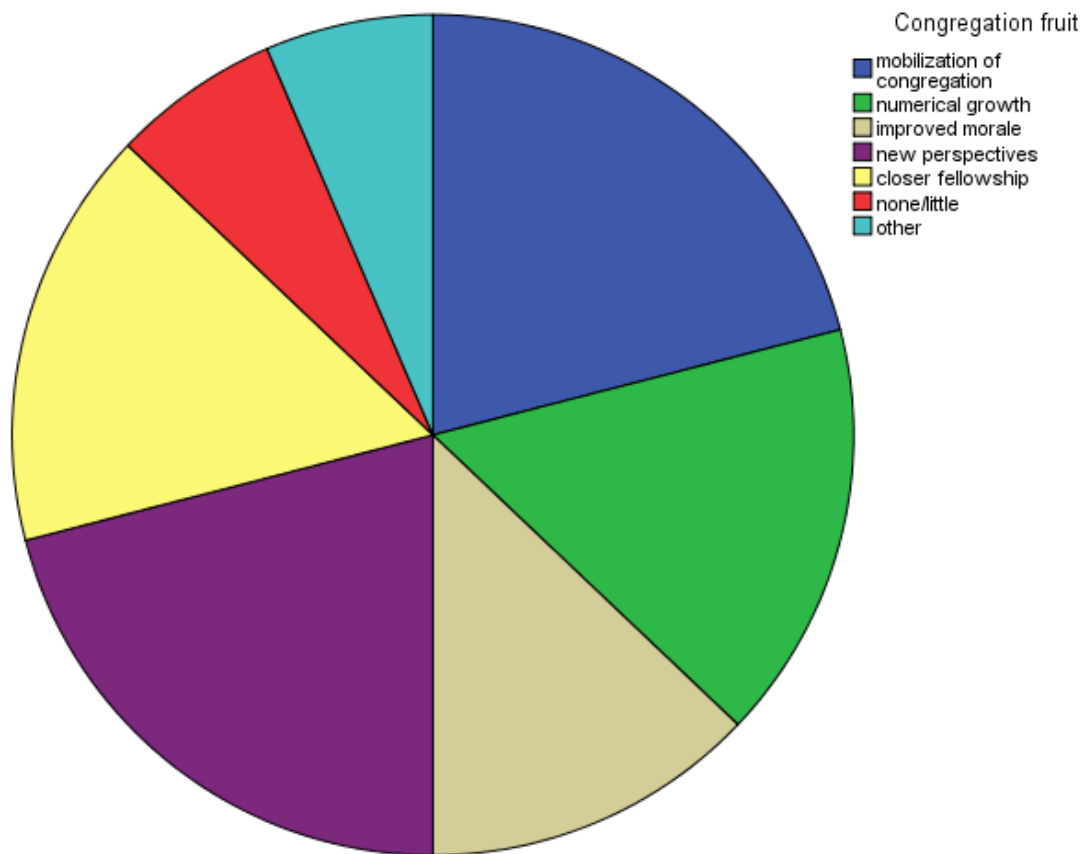


Figure 4.29. The fruit of community ministry in the local congregation.

Churches differ significantly in the number of groups they seek to serve through community ministry, with some churches serving only one group and others spreading their resources more widely. Some of the churches I visited for a follow-up interview offered a dizzying array of activities. For example, one church was running a ministry to prisoners, a rehabilitation ministry, a ministry decorating and gardening, a mediation ministry, parenting and family life classes, toddlers groups, a youth outreach ministry, and was planning to start a Street Pastors team. Frequency table Table 4.2 summarizes the number of groups served by each church (0/N.A. includes respondees who left this

question blank as well as the 5 percent of churches who say they run no community ministries).

Table 4.2. The Number of Groups Served by Each Church

		Frequency	%
	0/N.A.	30	27
	1	22	20
Valid	2	29	26
	3+	30	27
	Total	111	100.0

This research found evidence of a relationship between the number of groups served by community ministries and increasing attendance/membership. Of churches who served no groups, 46 percent grew. With one group, 41 percent grew. With two groups, 62 percent grew. With three or more groups, 50 percent grew. While this relationship is not significant, it does at least suggest that more groups served may lead to greater likelihood of numerical growth.

The research also found an almost-significant relationship between the number of groups served and congregation size (see Table 4.3 and Appendix B.xii for Anova). These figures raise a question, too, about why those churches who serve no groups seem to be doing better than those serving one group.

Table 4.3. Relationship between Number of Groups Served and Congregation Size

Sunday attendance	Descriptives				95% Confidence Interval for	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0	26	130.85	118.126	23.166	83.13	178.56
1	20	104.55	49.213	11.004	81.52	127.58
2	29	174.59	104.725	19.447	134.75	214.42
3+	30	179.47	155.412	28.374	121.43	237.50
Total	105	151.81	119.955	11.706	128.60	175.02

The total number of groups served ministries is nearly significant against size of budget; significant against numbers of weekly beneficiaries, very significant against health/malaise rating, and not significant in numbers volunteering (see Appendix B.xiii for Anova).

This study found no correlation between churchmanship and the number of groups served. However I note that evangelical/charismatic churches seem to do a lot (35 percent serve three groups or more) or a little (24 percent do nothing); (see Appendix B.xiv for table).

Research Question 3

Are particular types of community ministry associated with greater than typical signs of church health?

This research concludes that community ministry which serves parents and toddlers, and children and youth, is associated with fewer than typical signs of church malaise. Furthermore, the research concludes that community ministry which is

strategically integrated with the wider life of the local church has considerably more impact on church malaise than community ministry which is not.

As previously noted, I classified responses into eight types including *other*. Of these eight, only three had significant numbers of churches offering that ministry—parents and toddlers, elderly, and children and youth. I noted that some of the community ministries offered by only one church, and therefore not analyzed here, are imaginative and contextualized; however, due to the fact that they are offered by only one church I cannot say how these ministries contribute to church health. For example, one church with a big open park next door offered a ministry of hospitality to dog walkers. Another church with a large number of creative people in the congregation had an outreach specifically to artists and musicians. Another church ran a community theater production once every two years or so in which church members and nonchurch members alike participate as equals; yet another church has a music society putting on highly regarded classical music concerts nine times per year, which fill the church. Each of these ministries is a crucial part of the unique mission of that church to the surrounding community. Also worth noting is the rapid emergence of the Street Pastors ministry, in which ecumenical groups of local Christians go out into their town centers at night to minister to anyone who might be in need of help or support there. Street Pastors has taken off dramatically in south London over the past year, with support and recognition from the press, the police, and politicians from the Prime Minister down. However, it is too new a development to feature in this study. Another emerging area of work is ministry to people struggling with debt or financial management issues. Two churches who received follow-up visits mentioned debt advice as a major area of activity, and both said two

churches who received follow-up visits people had joined the congregation through this ministry. However, numbers reporting were too few for this ministry to show up in the statistical data. This situation may change as churches respond to tough times for the British economy. Of the top three popular community ministries, the majority of those churches offering parents and toddlers, and children and youth ministry say they have grown in the last three years (see Appendix B.xv for table). Additionally, 25 percent of churches running children/youth ministry and 27 percent of those running parents and toddlers have seen increases in Alpha/initiation—as against 12 percent for those running community ministries to serve the elderly. No children/toddler project churches have seen decline in numbers undertaking steps of initiation. The following paragraphs focus on these main three areas of community ministry.

Parents and Toddlers

Churches running parents and toddlers ministries are on average larger than churches that do not (see Figure 4.30 and Appendix B.xvi for Mann Whitney). This data does not answer the question about causality, whether bigger churches run toddlers groups or whether those churches who run toddlers groups tend to grow. One-to-one interviews with church leaders also suggested that toddlers groups are an effective way of drawing new people into the church. One church leader made the point that many parents start considering the big questions of life when they have children and are therefore more open to being drawn into church. A volunteer leader at another church spoke of how she had returned to faith initially through coming to the toddlers group at that church three years previously. She had heard of this group's good reputation locally and then been impressed by the warmth of the people she had met when she had visited with her son. I

visited two churches who were working hard to introduce a worship dimension into toddlers groups. For example, one had started a simple service called Praise and Play, based around simple songs, stories, and crafts, which had become church for a group of eight or ten small children and their caregivers. Another had changed a traditional midweek service into a lively toddler's service, which had grown from six or so to sixty or seventy in attendance. This same church had also begun a new all-age service on a Sunday morning to complement their more traditional service and to connect with families from the toddler's group, and now had fifty or sixty people at that service each week. This strategic approach, of connecting up one church activity to another so that logical next steps were provided for people to take, was a regular feature of the most effective churches.

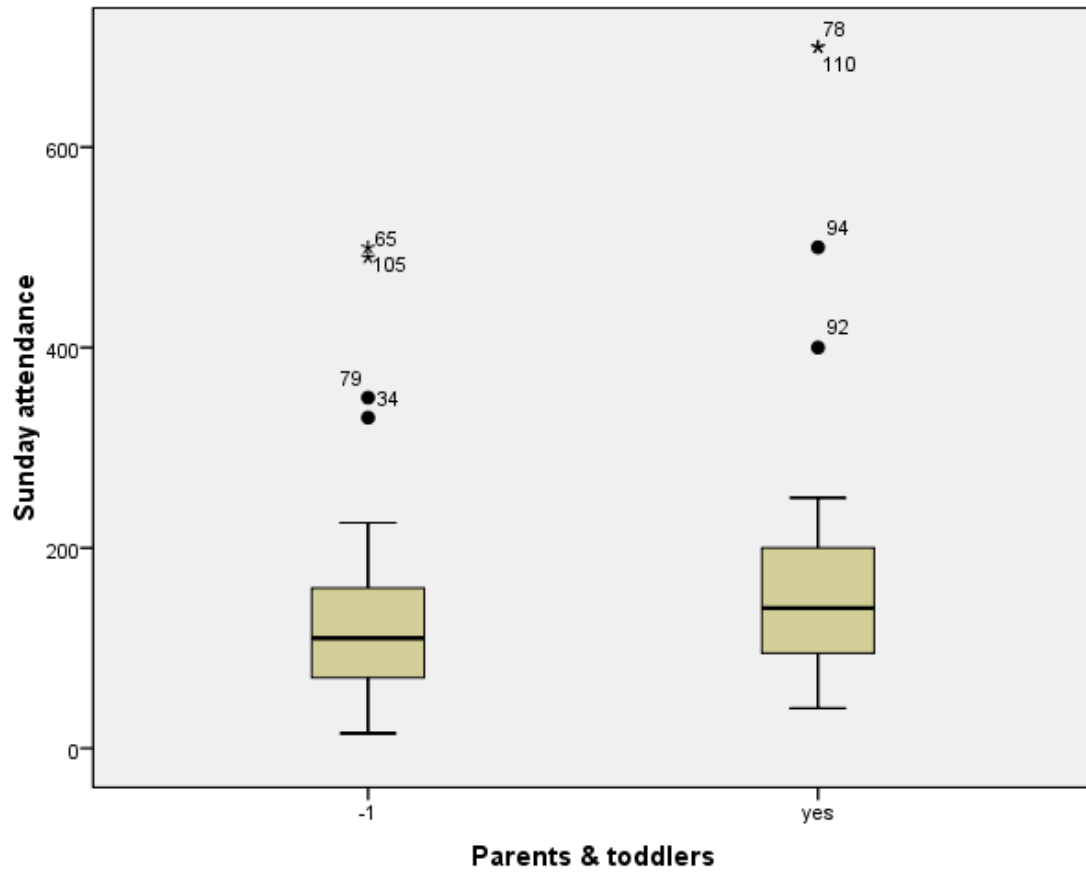


Figure 4.30. Parents and toddlers group and Sunday attendance.

Churches that run parents and toddlers ministries tend to score more highly on health rating (see Figure 4.31 and Appendix B.xvii for Mann Whitney).

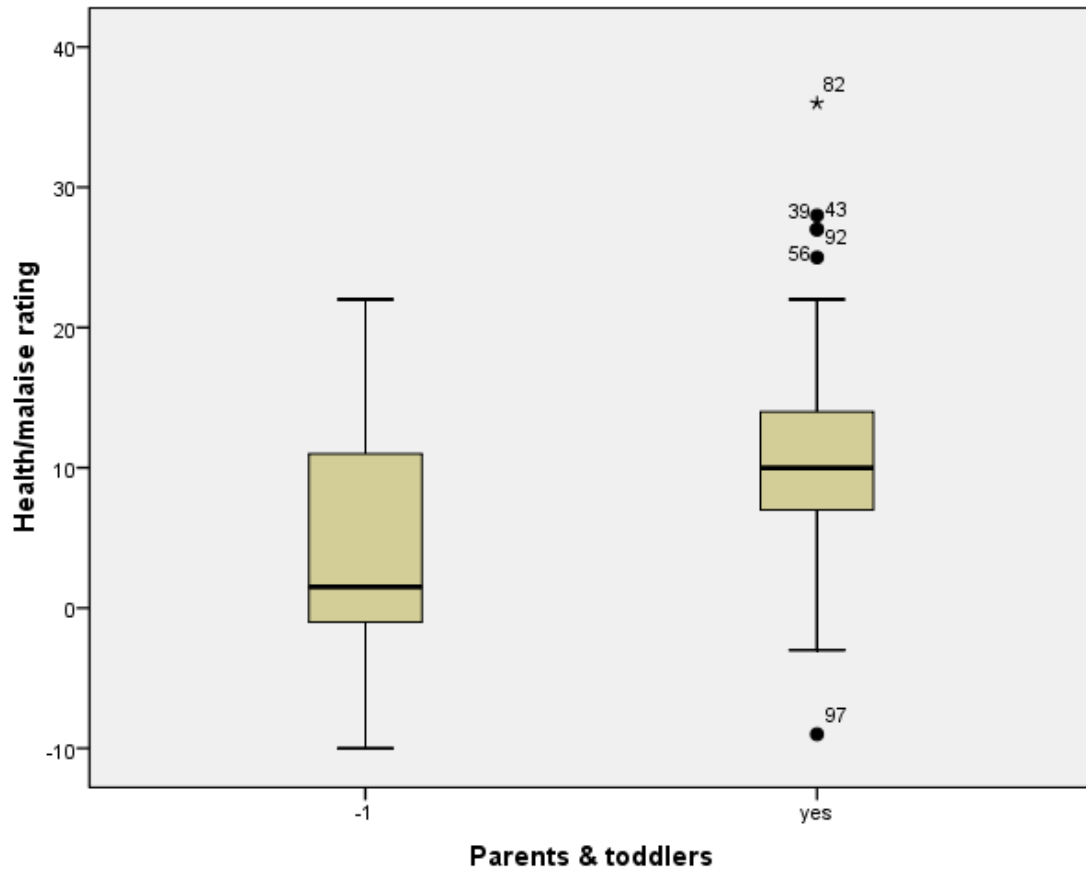


Figure 4.31. Parents and toddlers group and church health rating.

Elderly

Churches that run elderly ministries are on average larger than churches that do not, as Figure 4.32 demonstrates. As before, this fact may be at least as much because larger churches have the resources to do this as because elderly-focused community ministries bring growth. The range of elderly-focused community ministries is quite wide. Some churches run lunch clubs for older people. Many visit older people in their homes. One church had just started a book club for older people.

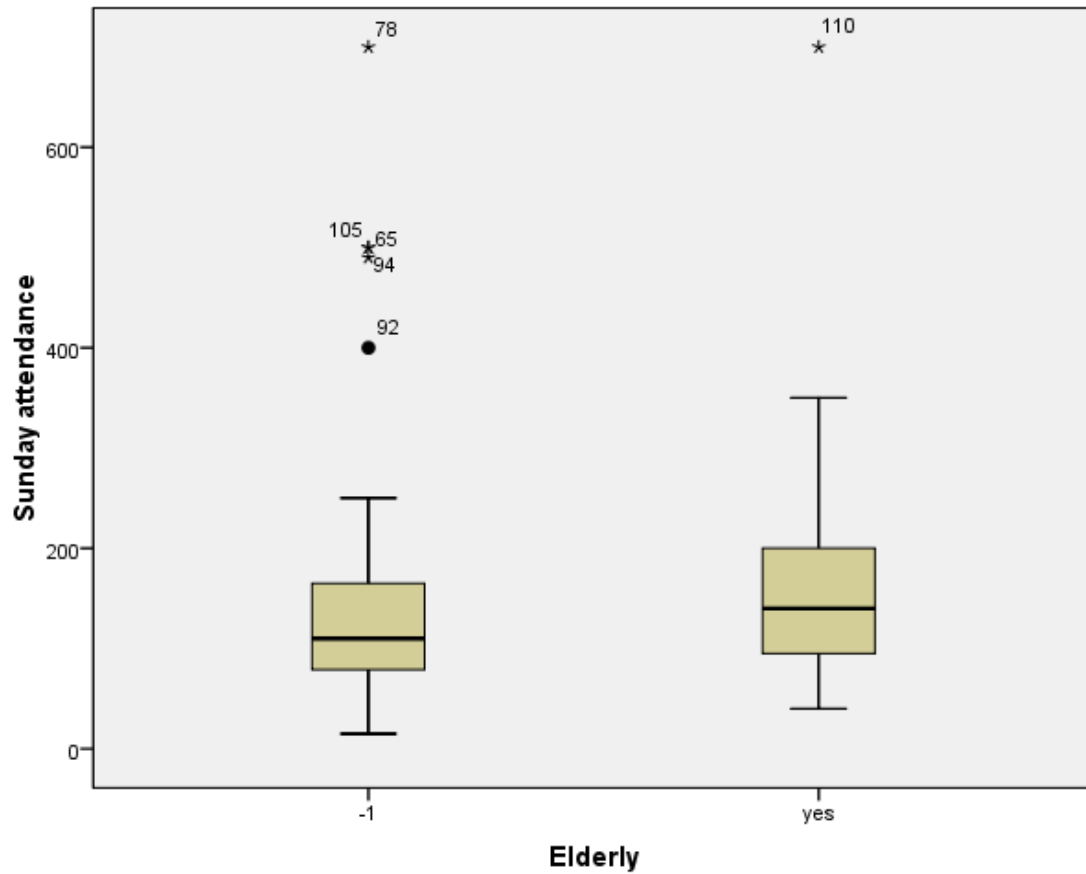


Figure 4.32. Ministry to the elderly and Sunday attendance.

Churches that run elderly community ministries do not, however, score more highly on church health rating than those who do not, as Figure 4.33 shows.

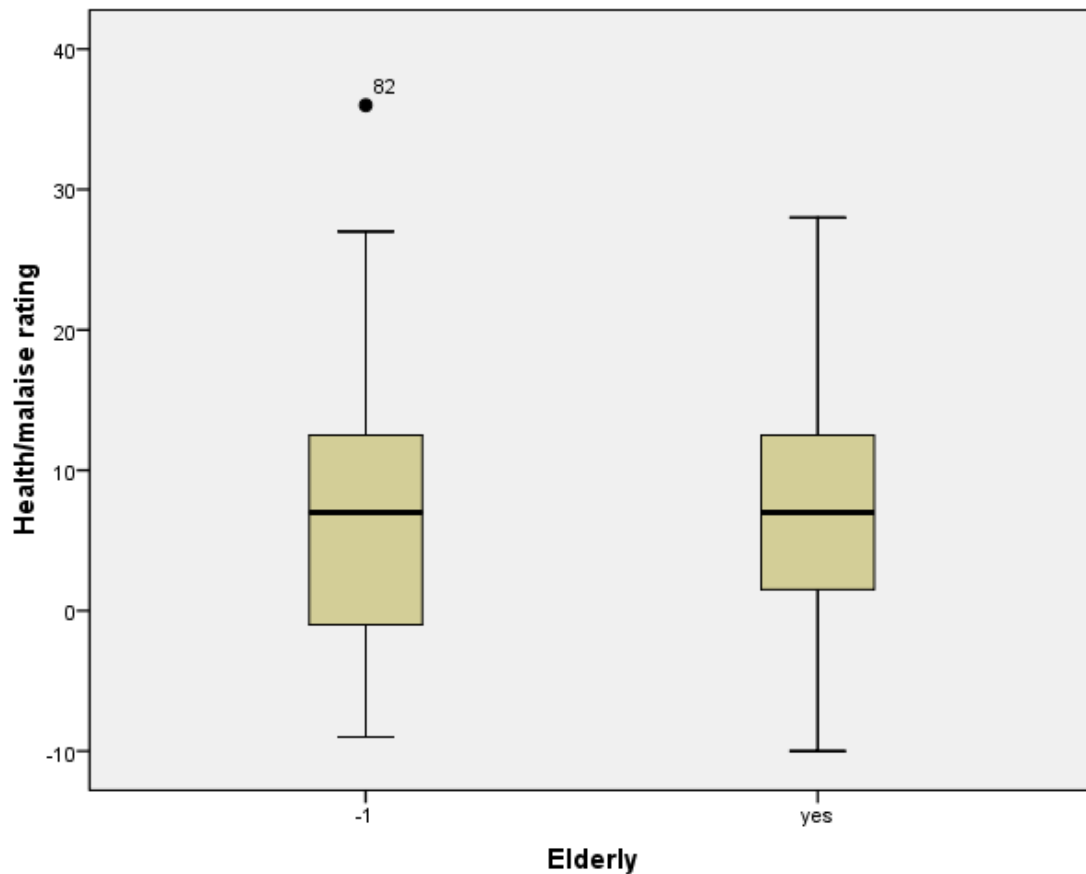


Figure 4.33. Ministry to the elderly and church health rating.

Children and Youth

Churches that run children and youth ministries are on average larger than churches that do not (see Figure 4.34). This phenomenon is not necessarily because the ministry draws more young people into the church. One church visited as part of this research had facilitated an enormous youth project in the local community, in collaboration with other local churches and statutory agencies. This project was not resulting in significant numbers of young people being drawn into the worshipping congregation. As with ministry to the elderly, ministry to children and youth can describe a large variety of activities. One church leader highlighted in an interview the tension in

hiring a youth worker between the needs of the wider community and the desire of the congregation to employ someone to look after their own children. Another point to note is that in the UK many Anglican parishes have their own church school, funded by the government but with a Christian ethos and often priority given to children from the parish church. In some parishes this school link generates a great deal of work and also many opportunities for the church, for example leading assemblies, teaching religious education, serving as a school governor. Where church schools have a good local reputation, neighboring churches become familiar with the pattern whereby parents start attending church when their children are small but then drop out when the children have been admitted to the school. Some churches in this research were making good use of this opportunity. One minister said, “Now people come for the church school, but they don’t leave.” Other churches have similarly found that families who join initially to access the church school subsequently get involved and stay.

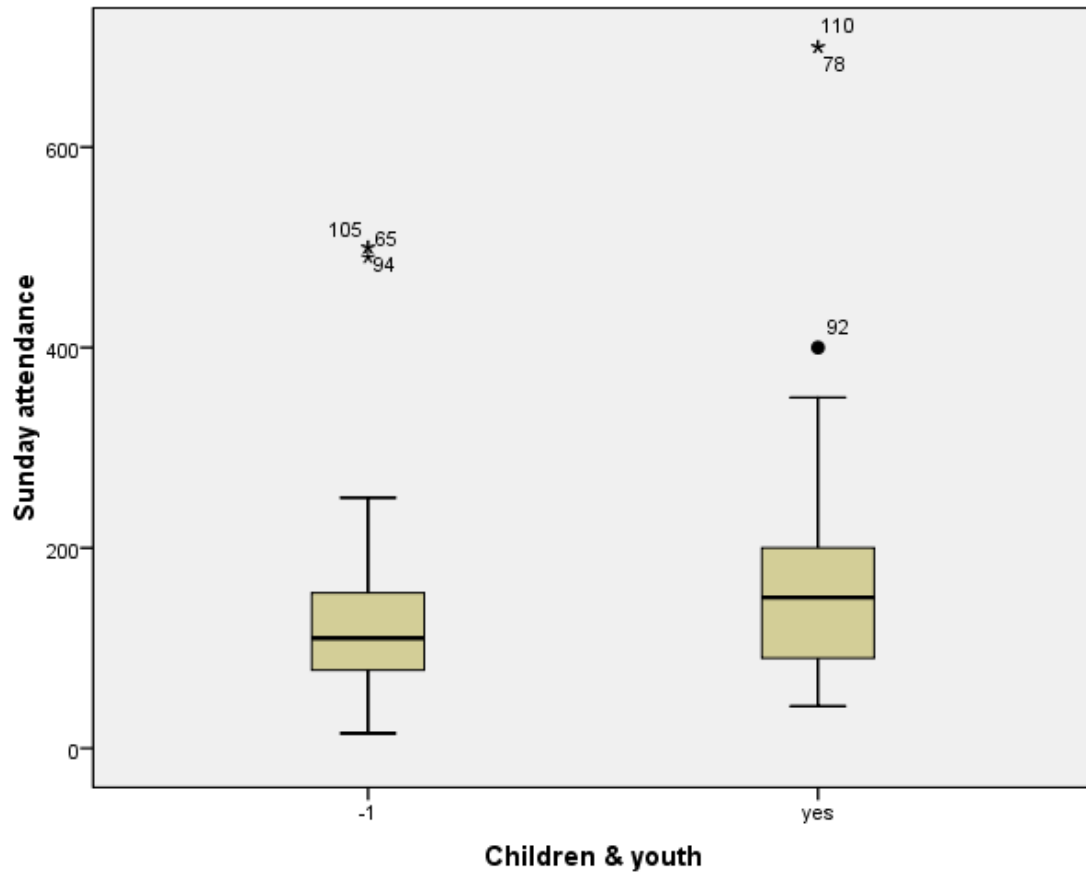


Figure 4.34. Ministry to children and youth, and Sunday attendance.

As Figure 4.35 shows, churches that run children and youth ministries score more highly on their health rating than those who do not. This statistic is quite striking by comparison with the results of ministry to the elderly, as seen above and suggests that this ministry area is the one with the closest relationship with a the health of a church (see Appendix B.xviii for Mann Whitney).

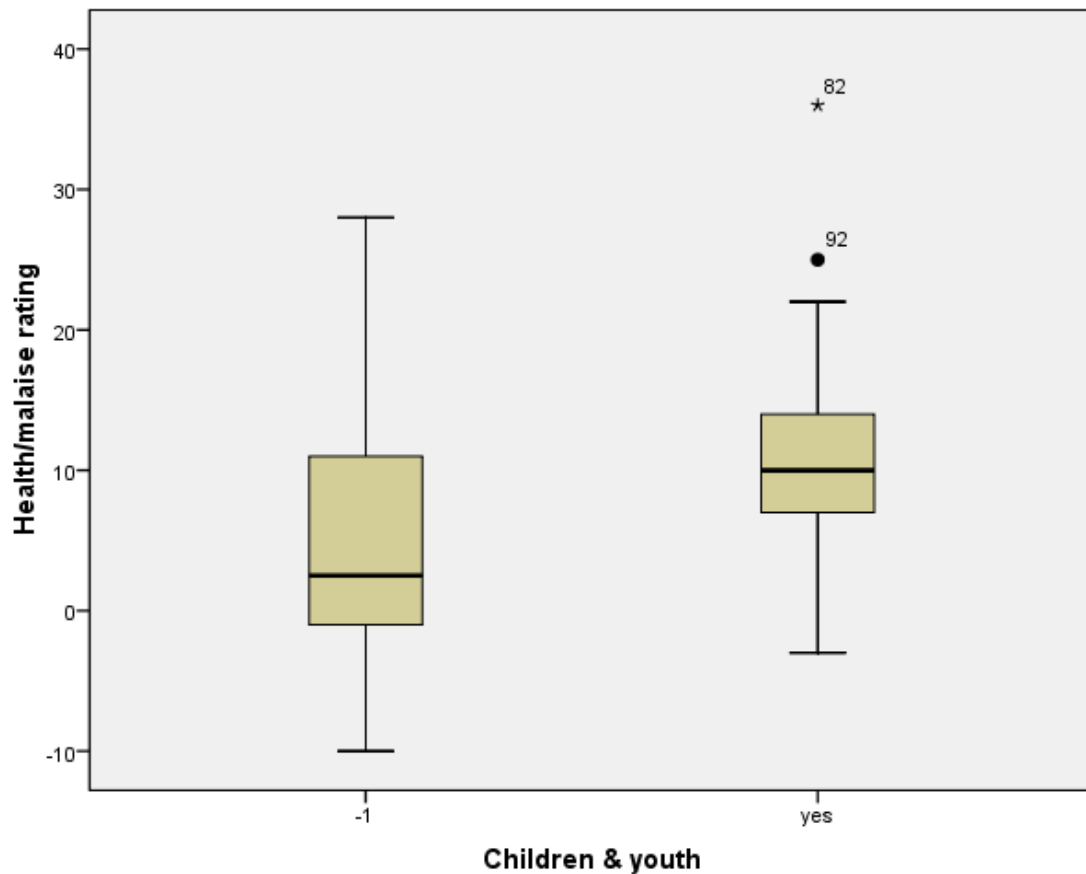


Figure 4.35. Ministry to children and youth, and church health rating.

Parents and Toddlers Plus Children and Youth

Given that parents and toddlers' ministries and children and youth ministries seem to be the community action projects most strongly associated with church health, I decided to look at the relationship between them. Figure 4.36 suggests a significant difference in health between those churches who do one or the other or both of those ministries, and those who do nothing. Interestingly the research does not suggest an equal difference to church health between churches who do one or the other or both, as long as they do at least one (Kruskal-Wallis $H = 18.959$; $df = 3$; $sig = 0.000$; see Appendix B.xix).

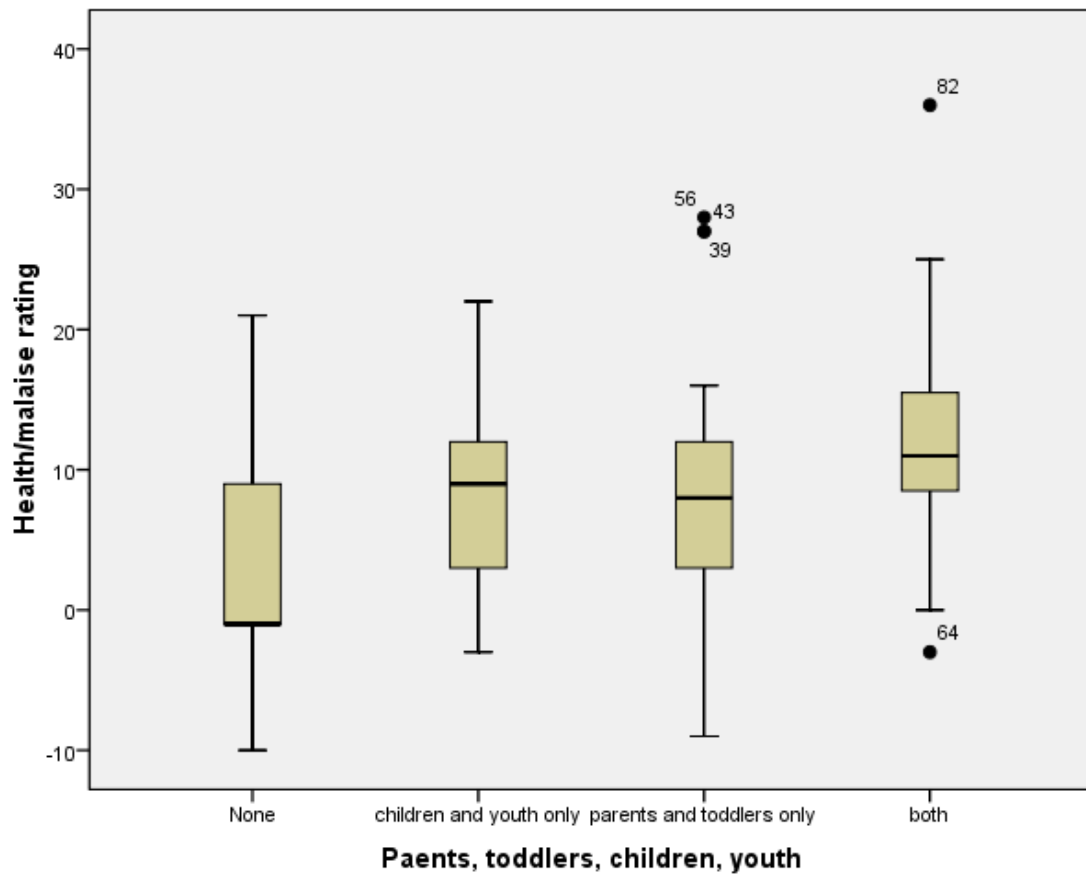


Figure 4.36. Parents and toddlers plus children and youth: relationship to health rating.

Evidence of a significant relationship exists between Sunday attendance and parents and toddlers, children and youth ministries, with a big difference between those who do one or the other or both, and those who do neither (Kruskal-Wallis $H = 12.058$; $df = 3$; $sig = 0.007$; see Appendix B.xix).

I am interested to note also the relationship between churches running parents and toddlers' ministries, children and youth ministries, and the age of minister. On might

make the assumption that the younger clergy do most with these groups, whereas in my sample the younger ministers do least. This finding may be due to the fact that younger clergy tend to lead smaller churches, considered appropriate for first posts, which the data suggests do less community ministry generally (see Appendix B.xix).

Nearly significant relationships exists between churchmanship and parents and toddlers, and churchmanship and children and youth. In my sample evangelicals/charismatics tend to do both (47 percent); catholic and central churches one or the other. Only 22 percent of catholic parishes and 14 percent of central parishes do both. Possibly this observation has been skewed by the fact that several large churches in this sample are evangelical, and large churches have the resources to do more (see Appendix B.xx).

Summary of Major Findings

- This research indicates that the vast majority of churches are involved in community ministry, but to very different extents, both in terms of inputs (volunteers, money, and staff) and outputs (number of groups and individuals served).
- The research provides overwhelming evidence of a relationship between community ministry and church health, with churches who have a greater commitment to community ministry apparently enjoying greater health in other areas, such as close supportive relationships, positive conflict resolution, healthy home groups, and effective decision-making processes. Although this relationship is significant, the data suggests that community ministry explains only a relatively minor proportion of a church's health.
- My research provides anecdotal but no clear statistical evidence for a relationship between community ministry and church growth; however, it does provide

some evidence of a relationship between community ministry and people coming to faith, which should result in an increase in church membership and attendance.

- This research indicates that a church's community ministry can bring real fruit in the local community and in particular can help to develop a sense of social cohesion in the area.

- According to the research, a large majority of community ministry projects seek to serve one of three groups: parents and toddlers, children and youth, and the elderly. Of these, parents and toddlers, and children and youth, both appear to be positively related to church health.

- The research provides evidence for a positive relationship between church health and the number of groups a church serves. The more groups a church serves, the greater the impact is likely to be on health and growth. The impact appears to be particularly strong when a church takes a strategic approach to connecting its community ministries with each other and with the evangelistic activities of the church.

- Finally, the research striking reveals that most of the community ministries offered by local churches are to some extent remedial in nature and aimed at the relatively vulnerable or marginalized in society. That is to say, they have the laudable aim of meeting the needs of those who lack power or status. They do not seek to shape culture or to influence those who themselves hold influence. They are more likely to reach out to those who have been broken by society than to try to change society so that others may not be so broken through the exercise of cultural influence and political power.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

I have argued that, while mission is God's initiative, the Church still has responsibility within it. The Church's responsibility is to allow its vision of mission to be broadened to encompass community ministry and social transformation as well as bringing individuals into relationship with Christ through Spirit-empowered evangelism, and then to put that understanding of mission into action in every possible context and situation. This research, in essence, is about how effectively churches are fulfilling this responsibility. This effectiveness was studied by discovering how many churches are presently involved in community ministry, and with which types; whether churches actively involved in community ministry displayed fewer signs of malaise than churches which that are not; and, whether particular community ministries were associated with low church malaise.

The Local Church and Community Ministry

One of the most surprising and encouraging findings of this research was that 95 percent of all churches claim to be involved in community ministry. Previously I have argued that the church has too often abandoned the idea of reaching the culture, influencing the city, or meeting the needs of their community, preferring to concentrate instead on the more obviously "spiritual" activities of preaching the gospel and evangelism. Research quoted in Chapter 2 suggests that only a minority of churches engage in community ministry, while this research suggests that the vast majority of churches do. In fact, this high number caused a problem with the analysis of the data, due

to the absence of a clear comparison group of churches who were *not* involved in community ministry. Within this overwhelming majority of churches who were engaged with community ministry, substantial differences emerged as to the extent of this engagement. At one end of the spectrum was the church serving prisoners, people in debt, people with addiction problems, parents and toddlers, youth, and myriad other groups, involving large numbers of volunteers and, in some instances, professional leadership for those ministries. At the other end were the churches whose engagement consisted of a small toddlers' group or a coffee morning for the elderly, which might be run by one or two committed volunteers with little awareness from the rest of the congregation. Most churches may not be doing much, but they are at least doing something. The research suggests, however, that the impact of community ministry on the health and growth of a church which has effectively created a vision for this ministry, contextualised it well, connected it to the rest of church life, and mobilized resources of finance, staff, and volunteer-power towards it will be far greater than the impact on a church where community ministry is essentially a marginal affair.

Even accounting for the great array of commitments and activities that might fall under the heading of community ministry, this figure of 95 percent still seems surprisingly high. One possible explanation for this high response could be that only around one-third of those invited to complete the survey did so, and those churches who were not running community ministry might have felt they had nothing to contribute and so be less likely to respond. Another possible explanation for the high rate of community ministry is that Anglican parish churches, with their responsibility for a geographical area

and all its residents, might feel a stronger obligation to meet the needs of local people than other church traditions.

Nevertheless, even taking all of this into account, the likelihood remains that churches are doing more community ministry than had been anticipated, and that the level of engagement of local churches is increasing. As Chapter 2 argues, community ministry has had a higher profile in the UK church in recent years, through new organizations such as FaithWorks, new strategies for older organizations such as Shaftesbury Society, Evangelical Alliance, and Tear Fund, and the blessing of government ministers. The search for new and effective approaches to mission in a secular context may also be a driving force here. Assuming that those churches who responded are not totally different in their community ministry to those who did not, one possibility is that at least part of what is happening is that more and more churches are becoming increasingly involved in community ministry. I argued in Chapter 2 that in periods of its history the church has grasped the whole-life dimensions of its calling, and in other periods it has retreated into a narrower focus on proclamation evangelism. As C. Wright argues, “Mission ... means the committed participation of God’s people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God’s. The marvel is that God invites us to join in” (67). I am hopeful the church is coming into a period when community ministry is becoming more central to its conception of mission again. Mission is God’s purpose for the redemption of the *whole* created order, not just individual souls, into which he invites his people. If the UK church is waking up to this invitation, then this news is encouraging for those who are concerned about the health of the church in the UK.

Community Ministry and Church Health

The research suggests overwhelming evidence of a relationship between community ministry and church health, with churches who have a greater commitment to community ministry apparently enjoying greater health in other areas. To recap from Chapter 1, my starting definition of church health, following Schwarz, is a church exhibiting the following characteristics: gift-orientated ministry; inspiring worship services; need-orientated evangelism; loving relationships; holistic small groups; passionate spirituality; empowering leadership, and functional structures.

Anyone who reflects on theology or experience should not be surprised that churches who commit themselves to community ministry also benefit from higher levels of health. Theologically, as Chapter 2 demonstrates, the whole movement of the gospel is toward self-giving love, modelled perfectly in the life and death of Jesus and urged upon those who would call themselves his followers. As people give themselves way they find themselves, and as they prioritize the interests of others they find peace and joy. At its most fundamental level, community ministry is simply a local church giving corporate expression to that theological truth. Chapter 2, citing Greenwood, argues that the Church only has a point when it engages in this type of mission, in which God's passionate longing for all creation is expressed (33). One would expect churches who have taken this mission imperative to heart to be healthy in other ways, and the evidence supports this expectation.

Reflection on personal experience may suggest similar conclusions. For example, the research indicates that churches with a community ministry focus answer a question about whether congregation members enjoy supportive relationships with each other

more positively than do other churches. Theologically one might expect this finding. Chapter 2 argues that the *missio Dei* is profoundly rooted in an understanding of the Trinity, in which the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and the Father, Son, and Spirit together send the church into the world. The Church is sent out into mission by a Trinitarian God. The Church's experience of profound relationships within the body of Christ is also rooted in the Trinity. The intimate relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the Church's model for community living, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit makes community possible. One might expect therefore that the more fully people surrender themselves to the missionary dynamic of the Trinity, the more profoundly they will enter into the community dynamic of the Trinity as well. On a personal note, having been in churches all my life, I reflect that almost all my closest relationships in church have been forged in the cause of some great work for the kingdom, not formed intentionally in some kind of fellowship group or similar. In other words, as Christians focus on serving God and people in God's world, they find they get strong relationships thrown in as well. If they focus on finding fellowship to meet their own needs, they may find they do not get the fellowship *and* they do not achieve the mission. The learning point for local church leadership should be clear. If they organize people in teams with a great purpose to fulfil, then stronger relationships will grow than are ever likely to arise from a focus on relationship building itself.

Returning to the definitions of church health and malaise from Chapter 1, the evidence seems clear that a relationship exists between community ministry and church health. The research also demonstrates some ways that the definitions Schwarz and others offer are incomplete. In Chapter 4 I state that churches I visited that were doing a great

deal of community ministry often exuded a palpable sense of energy, momentum, and dynamism with people devoting large amounts of money and energy to the fulfilment of the church's mission. These qualities are, I believe, signs of church health in themselves that are not identified by the quasi-scientific approach taken by Schwarz.

Having said this, the research also shows that community ministry is by no means the only factor affecting church health, and it may not even be the most significant one. Some churches score highly on community ministry and poorly on church health, and vice versa. The rest of this chapter includes some reflections on why this is so, but further research needs to be done on a more systematic and robust tool for measuring church health and the factors that contribute to it. From my research I would argue that the definitions of church health need to be broadened so that a church which is not engaged with its context or community cannot be defined as a healthy church. Such a church may be a very helpful support group for its members, but it is not yet the kind of world-changing community to which Jesus entrusted his mission.

Community Ministry and Church Growth

One of the most measurable signs of church health/malaise is whether or not that church is growing, and while it may not be the only evidence of the general life and health of a church, this project's definitions of church health include church growth as one of the evidences. I argued in Chapter 2 that conversion to Christ should be one of the results of a holistic approach to mission, agreeing with Bauckham who shows how God's blessing entails experiencing both the fullness of God's good creation and the fullness of relationship with the Creator. This quote from *The Christian* from 1880 makes a similar point:

Neither Jesus nor his apostles ever separated the physical from the spiritual well being of men. He and they fed and healed the bodies of the people, and the sympathy thus manifested won their attention, and enabled them to impart food and healing to their souls. (qtd. in Bebbington 120)

At its best, the Church has understood God's mission to encompass all spheres of human experience; spiritual, material, relational, political and economic. Whilst a biblical model of mission will not focus on evangelism and conversions to the exclusion of all else, refusing to accept the separation of physical and spiritual which has characterized some types of Christianity, it will not accept either any approach to mission that gives little or no emphasis to new people coming to faith. It insists on both/and, not either/or. Therefore, one might expect that those churches most active in community ministry would also experience numbers of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

This research was not able to demonstrate statistically a clear link between community ministry and church growth, although anecdotally almost all the church leaders who were interviewed mentioned new members as one of the results of community ministry, and leaders from churches who were active in community ministry tended to say that people regularly came to faith in their church more than less community-focused churches did. The question arises, therefore, as to why the research does not demonstrate a clearer statistical link between community ministry and church growth.

One reason may be that some churches have decoupled the evangelistic dimension of mission from the community ministry dimension. Over recent years a move has taken place, particularly among some evangelical churches, away from seeing community ministry as a subset of evangelism but as a worthwhile activity in its own

right. In the light of the theology of Chapter 2 of this project, this move is thoroughly welcome, but it has a negative side, too. Some churches may emphasize community ministry as a good in itself to such an extent that they no longer have any real intention that people should move from having a need met to hearing the gospel, as demonstrated by the lack of any evangelistic programs in many churches who responded to the survey. For those who come from an extreme liberal or universalist position, who believe everyone will be saved anyway, the incentive to engage in evangelism is missing, and community ministry may be used as an appropriately missional alternative.

Some of the churches that are most engaged and creative in community ministry are evangelical in theology, as Chapter 2 argues, and these churches tend to emphasize evangelism alongside community ministry, enabling people to come to faith in Christ as well as receive service in his name. Even among evangelicals, however, renewed emphasis on community ministry may also be paralleled with a reduced emphasis on evangelism, as seen for example in Chalke's comments, cited in chapter 2, in which he states, "We don't hide our faith, but we will never impose it" (15). The question arises as to whether "we don't hide our faith" is really strong enough. Perhaps evangelicals, in particular, need to ensure they guard a robust commitment to evangelism as well as community ministry and be aware of the dangers of replacing one unbalanced concept of mission with another.

In fact, the churches who are experiencing most growth from community ministry do not generally hold this view, nor are they over dependent on a programmatic approach to evangelism, hoping that if they offer Alpha courses or similar programs as well as community ministry that people will naturally drift from one to the other. Rather, they are

intentional in creating an invitational culture, so that people who come into contact with the church through community ministry build relationships with Christians there, and in due course those Christians will talk to them about faith or invite them to some suitable church event. This work of gentle invitational evangelism is not left to the clergy or any other small group but is genuinely seen and practiced as the work of the whole people of God. These churches understand that meeting people's practical needs in the name of Christ is important, if they fail to share their faith and give an opportunity to meet Christ personally, they have left people's most important need unmet.

Within non-evangelical circles, many churches that were active in community ministry initiatives reported offering no evangelistic or discipleship programs, such as Alpha, to help people come to know Christ for themselves and grow as his disciples. One may wonder how churches might grow through new converts if they do not offer opportunities for them to find faith for themselves. At the most extreme end, some churches may actively not want any new people to join. While that assertion sounds shocking, more than one church leader said in interview that their people were unwelcoming and unfriendly to new people who attended, especially those who did not fit in or whose children made noise in the service.

Many other churches would perhaps like to grow, but have not yet connected up their community ministries to the rest of church life in a strategic way. One leader whose church was experiencing significant growth through community ministry said the key was to create a process for people with clear entry points that link naturally to the next step. The churches who were welcoming new members through community ministry understood this process. The evidence suggests that an integrated program, of which

community ministry is a part, is essential. Like a connect-the-dots puzzle, the little pieces of church life need to be linked, so that the next step is always clear for people. For example, to draw a crowd to Alpha, the course should be rooted in one of the community ministries, not in the worshipping congregation of the church. Some churches seem to do very well at drawing a crowd through community ministry but then have no process for moving people on. One church leader said, “People are pouring in, but how do we connect and keep them?” A number of church leaders experience frustration over this phenomenon.

One church talks about the “mission funnel” to describe this process. The funnel begins with the hundreds who are touched by community ministry and then gets smaller and narrower at every stage, each marked by another discipleship step, with a fraction of the numbers who began the process coming out the other end as committed disciples of Jesus Christ. The two most striking things about this concept are that the funnel has to exist and work in the first place and that the more people a church connects with at the beginning, the more will come through to committed discipleship at the end. Biblically this concept is not unlike the parable of the sower, of course. Because only a proportion of the seed grows, the greater the amount sown, the greater the harvest will be.

In this context, the importance of the worship service cannot be overstated. As previously mentioned, passionate and engaging worship life is one of the signs of church health. If a church, through its community ministry, gives the impression of a faith and a congregation who are joyful, loving, welcoming, and creative, but the worship services are dull, boring, predictable, and oppressive, then anyone who steps into church on a Sunday morning as a result of community ministry is unlikely to return. The fact remains

that, regardless of all the fresh thinking going on at present about the emergent church, cell church, missional communities, and so on, for most people a journey toward Christ is likely to include regular participation in a Sunday service at some point. If the connections between community ministry and Sunday worship are not well made, someone's spiritual journey may stop right there. One church leader said, "If you don't make the worship open and accessible to people, they will stay in the outreach project" and not join the worshipping congregation. One person who had recently joined a church through community ministry said, "This is church done in a way I haven't seen it before." If churches want to grow, they need to make sure the worship is appropriate to the people who are being served through the community ministry. Additionally, they need to allow the people who have been drawn into the worshipping life of the church to begin to shape it rather than being expected to change themselves to fit with the inherited culture of the church. For traditional churchgoers this change may be difficult. At least three churches had started new services to serve the newly reached people without having to incur the wrath of the established church members if *their* service changed. Appropriately enculturated worship will look different from context to context, but without some movement in that direction churches are unlikely to experience significant growth as a result of their community ministries. One church leader who had inherited a traditional pattern of worship in his church said, "If we hadn't changed what we did on a Sunday morning, I don't see how any unchurched person could have joined us." This challenge is difficult to take for churches who may not have changed their worship pattern for a generation or more.

To summarize this section, I have been convinced through this research that the key to church growth through community ministry is, first of all, to want the church to grow and reach new people, and second, to be strategic about connecting up church activity, including Sunday worship, so that a clear path is created for people to follow on their spiritual journey that has integrity with the culture and values of the community ministry project and those it serves. When high quality community ministry is in place, and is well linked into the rest of church life, growth should happen, even if it is not the main aim.

Community Fruit

The emphasis of this research was mainly on the impact of community ministry on the health or malaise of a local congregation. The survey also asked questions about the impact of community ministry on the life of the local community, and their answers were quite consistent, with a large proportion of responses focused on the impact in developing a sense of social cohesion in a local area.

By way of context, a sense exists in Britain today, and perhaps especially in London and other big cities, that community has somehow broken down. Many factors contribute to this social fragmentation. Social mobility means people move around more than they once did, leaving extended family behind and putting down fewer deep roots into a neighborhood. Many people live in one area, work in another, send their children to school in another, and socialize in yet another. Whole communities have changed character as migrant communities have come and gone, creating some areas in London, for example, which are now 90 percent Muslim. Some of the institutions that once acted

as focal points for a community, such as a youth club or community center, a traditional local pub, even a family-owned store or cafe, have now gone.

These developments are not all bad. To some extent they are a manifestation of greater wealth, greater freedom, and greater opportunity than previous generations had. The fact remains, though, many people feels like something worthwhile has got lost along the way. Life in a big city can feel anonymous, disconnected from community and neighbors.

Despite all the changes, the church has remained. I argued in Chapter 2 that one strength of the church is that it has remained at the heart of ever community in the land, even the poorest, while other agencies have come and gone. This history gives it an authenticity and credibility that no other body has.

When a church says it is helping to develop a sense of social cohesion in an area, something important is happening, not only for the churchgoers in that community but for everyone. Such cohesion means that people are seeing the church as an institution at the center of the community, that people are becoming more aware of others who live near them, particularly those who might be different from them, that people are discovering that hard-to-define sense of belonging. As previously stated, almost all Anglican churches in England are responsible for a particular geographic parish and the people who live in it, whether Anglican or not, and every geographic parish has an Anglican church in it. It is particularly fitting that churches with that kind of ethos and vision should work for a sense of social cohesion in communities that have become increasingly individualized and atomised. As a result a church positioned at the heart of the community would come to be seen as *our* church even by those who do not attend, and

that in due course more nonchurchgoers might find their way into the worshipping congregation.

Chapter 2 quotes Hartenstein on the global and cosmic reach of God's mission:

Mission is not just the conversion of the individual, nor just obedience to the word of the Lord, nor just the obligation to gather the church. It is the taking part in the sending of the Son, the *missio Dei*, with the holistic aim of establishing Christ's rule over all redeemed creation (qtd. in Engelsviken).

As Christ's rule is established over the whole creation, so communities that have been fragmented by social change begin to discover their unity again. Whether or not people recognize Jesus Christ as the source of that unity, from a Christian perspective he is, and his church is acting as a focal point for it in many communities today.

The Groups Served by Community Ministry

The research is striking in what it reveals about the groups served by community ministry. Chapter 2, in its summary of the history of evangelical community ministry, records that a typical parish the nineteenth century might have a voucher program that provided food, funds for the poor, local insurance schemes for sickness or death, soup kitchens, and even a lending library. Again in Chapter 2, the discussion of the FaithWorks conferences notes projects working with the young and the old, the learning disabled, addicts and prostitutes, refugees and people with HIV/AIDS. This present research uncovered a similarly wide array of creative approaches to community ministry, including addiction rehabilitation programs, prisoner resettlement schemes, and community theatre productions, to name just a few, but most of these ministries are offered by only one or two churches. A large majority of community ministries seek to serve one of only three groups: parents and toddlers, children and youth, and the elderly.

These groups have in common that they are large and easy to identify. Indeed, most people will pass through them, yet they reach out to people at points in their lives when they may well be vulnerable or excluded from the centers of power in society.

The research raises the question, why do churches focus their community ministries in this way? If, as I have argued along with Bauckham previously, Scripture encapsulates a movement from the particular to the universal in time, space, and in people, why is the church's community ministry so specific, so targeted, in nature? Specifically, why do community ministries tend to be remedial in nature, aimed at the relatively vulnerable or marginalised in society? One possible answer is that the needs of these groups are relatively obvious, and churches believe they have the resources to meet them. As the research demonstrated, churches actively involved in community ministry tend to believe Christians have a particular responsibility for the needy and powerless, and community ministries may be an expression of that laudable impulse. The question then arises, how is the church seeking to connect with the wealthy and the powerful? Where are the community ministries designed to equip the decision makers in society? Where is the church engaging with politicians and entrepreneurs, artists and media people? Where are the forums bringing together those who have the power to change an area, not just those who have been affected by social change?

I noted earlier that in the early days of the Salvation Army in Great Britain people criticized the movement for its focus on the working class, the poor, the alcoholics, at a time when the Anglican church was orientated toward serving the wealthy and powerful. Now perhaps the pendulum has swung the other way. The suggestion from this research is that most Anglican churches, at least, who offer community ministries, now reach out

to those who are marginalized and peripheral in some way. This impulse is laudable, particularly because the reduction in the size of the state since the 1980s has left more people vulnerable and unprotected. In that sense the church now has a window of opportunity to serve the poorer members of society that parallels the needs it faced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have previously argued that evangelicalism of this era played an enormous role in holding British society together and improving the lives of the poor. A great many people, however, do not fit into these categories, and it is much less clear how the church is seeking to serve them.

I suggest that the church has a great deal of reflection and study to do to work out what community ministry to the wealthy and influential should look like. If God is the Lord of all of life and of all the world, as previously argued, then he is concerned just as much with the powerful as he is with the powerless, with political decision making as much as with child rearing, with culture formation as much as care for the elderly. The Church has at least as much of an imperative, going back to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1, to influence society to become more just and equitable as to pick up the pieces from society's injustice and inequity. At the moment the church appears to be more comfortable with the latter than the former approach. It is practicing the model identified with Sjogren—local, reactive, needs orientated—more than that associated with Wallis—national, proactive, policy-driven.

Conversely, the research also paints a picture of community ministry which is relatively safe. The old and the young may be relatively powerless in society, but they are safe and obvious groups to serve. Most congregations have some members who fit into these groups. Little shame or social stigma attaches to belonging to them. However, much

less evidence exists of community ministry to those groups who are harder to reach, who are more socially stigmatised and less safe. The homeless, immigrants, and addicts are generally not well served by community ministry, even though their needs have in some ways increased over recent years. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable by comparison with the church in the USA, where the recovery movement has become hugely significant in many local churches. If the UK church wants to follow the model of Jesus, who broke down social barriers and scandalised his peers with the people he was willing to love and serve, it has a long way to go.

The research also strikingly reveals that the churches who seek to serve several groups tend to see greater fruit from community ministry than those who only serve one or two. This insight defies the conventional wisdom that it is better to do one thing well than to do several things less effectively. The most likely explanation for exponential increase in fruitfulness is that, almost by definition, churches serving only one group cannot offer the kind of process, or *mission funnel*, previously discussed. For example, if a church has a thriving toddler's ministry, but nothing for children who are a year or two older, then I find it hard to see what will keep families connected with that church when their children outgrow that group. Some kind of clear next step, rather like the way a child moves from elementary to senior school, seems essential, and only churches that have multiple community ministries can offer such a process. A good example of this relationship would be a church that runs a prison visiting ministry offering a successful Alpha course for prisoners, and then links to a prisoner resettlement program for those prisoners when they are released.

Limitations of the Study

Two main limitations affect this study. The first limitation is related to the sample group who participated in the research. The Anglican churches of Southwark Diocese are, by definition, limited to a particular geographical and denominational context.

Admittedly, Southwark Diocese has a great diversity of types of geographic community, from the inner city parishes of Brixton to the small villages of Surrey and all points in between. Southwark Diocese also has a great variety of theological traditions, from the most conservative evangelical to the most liberal, with catholic parishes and all other possible combinations present as well. I would argue that Southwark Diocese provides a reasonable mix of the types of church to be encountered in the UK. Churches of all those theological traditions, of all demographics, and of all sizes from a handful of members to several hundred, participated in the survey. However, some of these findings might look slightly different had the sample been differently or more widely drawn. Additionally, only one-third of the churches who were invited to participate in the study chose to do so, and possibly those churches who are more engaged with and passionate about community ministry responded to this invitation, while those who had given this subject little attention did not. To return to the fictional churches from the beginning of Chapter 2, St. Mary's may have responded, Old Street almost certainly did, and Central probably did not. The picture of activity the research presents may be skewed by the degree of self-selection in the sample group.

The second category of limitations relates to me as the researcher. I imagine many first-time researchers feel, as I do at the end of this project, that if I knew at the outset what I know at the end, I would have done some things differently. Specifically, having

been through the process of collating and analyzing data for the first time in my life, I would have tried to have a briefer and more incisive questionnaire, driven more directly by the analysis that I planned to do, and that might have given clearer evidence of some of the findings it presently suggests.

Suggestions for Further Research

Four topics suggest themselves for further study by other researchers. Firstly, the Church needs an agreed measurement tool for church health. At the moment all such definitions, such as that of Schwarz and his Natural Church Development project, are contested and controversial. A widely agreed way of gauging healthy churches would be a significant contribution to future researchers and all who are concerned to see the church grow and thrive. Secondly, more research is required into the factors that contribute to church health or its opposite, church malaise. This project has indicated that community ministry is one of the contributing factors but leaves open the question as to what the others may be and which are most significant. Thirdly, further research into the relationship between community ministry and church growth is required. This project gives anecdotal evidence of a relationship, but is unable to statistically demonstrate it fully. To what extent such a relationship exists is now a subject for some future researcher. Fourthly, research to discover how churches are seeking to serve the powerful as well as the powerless, those who shape society as well as those whose lives are shaped by it, needs to be undertaken. This research was unable to find evidence of churches moving from a remedial to a proactive model of community ministry. Possibly this evidence gap is because it simply is not happening, but further study needs to be carried out to discover if that is the case, and if good practice exists from which the wider Church

can learn. Such research would need to be qualitative rather than quantitative due to the scarcity of examples on which to draw.

Recommendations for Churches

On the basis of this research I am making four recommendations for churches.

Every church should engage in community ministry, especially with the young through ministry to parents and toddlers or children and youth. Such engagement is both a gospel imperative and a wise strategy for churches to serve those who do not presently attend worship at the point of their felt need. Christians grow in their relationships with God and with their fellow Christians by serving others as part of a team. Healthy churches have a particular concern for the young, as of course did Jesus. I would urge all churches to begin to develop these kinds of ministries and, if they exist, to consider how they might be developed.

Every church should think strategically about how to connect their community ministries with the rest of church life, so that a process or mission funnel emerges through which people might become part of the worshipping congregation. I recommend churches think in particular about four types of connection, and I suggest some questions to help them do so. Firstly, churches should consider the connection between one community ministry and another. If a ministry exists to serve people at one stage of life, what happens to people when they move beyond that stage? Secondly, they should consider the connection between community ministry and evangelistic programs. If many non-Christians attend a toddlers group, but only a few come to Sunday worship, would it be better to base an Alpha course in the toddlers group than to try to stimulate interest on a Sunday? Thirdly, churches should consider the connection between community

ministry and Sunday worship. Does the church have at least one service on a Sunday that will be appropriate and accessible to someone who comes from a community ministry, and that reflects the values being expressed in that ministry? Fourthly, churches should think about the personal and relational connections that will draw new people into the congregation and to faith. Are the congregation motivated and equipped to share their faith appropriately and to invite people to suitable church events? Does the church have an invitational culture, one that allows people genuinely to belong before they believe?

Churches should think creatively about where they are going to put their community ministry resources. Because many churches run ministries to the same few groups, leaders fall into the trap of starting more of the same, without thinking through whether that is required. They also often consider their own church's program in isolation without considering what other agencies already exist or are possible in an area. Specifically, I would recommend that churches do not begin any community ministry without first addressing contextual questions such as, Who lives in the area? What are their needs? Which of those needs can the church address and how? Which are already being addressed by someone else? With whom can the church partner? How can the church serve the influential and the powerful, and the marginalized and the vulnerable?

Finally, I recommend that churches do not neglect the spiritual dimension. This research did not really address this aspect, yet a small number of church leaders mentioned it. One spoke about the importance of looking for what he called the "God-incidences," those apparently random contacts or opportunities that God uses to guide a church. Another reflected on the significance of prayer in leading a community-focused church, saying, "If you neglect prayer, then things go awry." While planning,

strategizing, researching, and learning from others are all important, the Church is before all else a community with God at its center, and health-conscious church leaders must make sure they are seeking the promptings and power of God above everything.

Ministries that bring spiritual life to others can only flow out of churches that are themselves spiritually alive to start with. If mission is all about God, as has been argued above, then the Church dare not engage in it without first receiving his presence and power.

Conclusion

God is about a big purpose in and for the whole of creation. The church has been called into life to be both the means of this mission and a foretaste of where God is inviting all creation to go. Just as its Lord is a mission-shaped God, so the community of God's people exists, not for themselves but for the sake of the work. Mission is therefore not a program or project some people in the church do from time to time (as in "mission trip", "mission budget", and so on); the church's very nature is to be God's missionary people. —Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*

I have argued that the Church's attitude to mission will need to change. First of all, the Church will need to learn afresh that mission is not primarily something that it *does* but an expression of who it *is*. Mission is not an item on the church's agenda, along with pastoral care and building maintenance; it is the Church's identity. The Church is the community called together by a missionary God for the purpose of blessing the whole world. That is its DNA and its reason to exist. Without that understanding the Church is purposeless and lost, and when one visits a church that is withering on the vine, purposeless and lost, inevitably one finds no real understanding of the missional identity of the Church or its Lord there.

Secondly, the Church will need to learn afresh that mission is not something it initiates and leads, but something God initiates and leads. Therefore the covenantal

people of God need to get really good at hearing from God so that they can receive his instructions. Different traditions understand this concept in different ways. For some, it will include some emphasis on the charismatic gifts, especially those of prophecy and discernment, as a way of hearing the “now” word of God for his church. For others, the emphasis will be more heavily placed on study and analysis leading to understanding of the mission opportunities that the Lord has placed before each specific congregation. For all churches, an appropriate wrestling with Scripture and theology is required. In whatever way this listening task is tackled, the Church’s attitude needs to move from seeking God’s blessing on its mission toward a humble seeking after God’s direction so that it might do what he has already decided to bless.

Thirdly, the church’s definition of mission needs to broaden considerably. This issue is vexed and difficult. The split between the fundamentalists and the social gospelers in the early twentieth century caused many Christian churches to take sides over whether mission was meeting human needs for economic and social well-being or communicating the gospel of Christ. A holistically minded church will insist that the answer is yes, to both definitions. Only a definition of mission as broad as Scripture will do. This issue will be painful for some who carry the scars of those earlier battles. It will require careful thought and management of resources by each local congregation to make the best of the opportunities God has given them, which is why the listening point is so essential.

One church leader from a conservative evangelical tradition spoke of how the evangelical fear of the social gospel has led to distortions in the church’s theology. “Doctrinally community ministry fits both as a *preparation* [original emphasis] for the

gospel and as an *outworking* [original emphasis] of the gospel,” he said. Faced with declining numbers and cultural marginalization, the UK church is now beginning to recognize this fact. The church needs to minister to the community to prepare people to receive the gospel, so that hearts will be softened and people turn to Christ when he is presented to them. Also the Church needs to minister to the community because that is the logical outworking of wholehearted commitment to the missionary God who is constantly reaching out to the whole of creation in his love and grace.

Duncan, of FaithWorks, recently said, “I believe we have a window of opportunity to establish the church and our witness as an authentic expression of our Christian faith. And if we don’t build it in the next 10 years it will close” (“Christians”). The need facing the church in twenty-first-century Britain is real. The opportunity is there, and the time to do something about it is now.

Postscript

This research project grew out of a profound discontent on my part with the weakness of the church in my country, the UK, and a deep longing to see it fulfill its great purpose as the agent of God’s mission in the world. I experienced the joy and the stress of reflecting on these issues at an academic level at the same time as leading the church where I serve as vicar, Ascension Balham Hill in south London, through a similar, albeit more locally specific, process of change as we sought to live out a much fuller understanding of the *missio Dei* in our own community. My hope is that our learning together from this project will more than make up the price that Ascension has paid for its completion.

APPENDIX A**Questionnaire on Church Life and Community Ministry*****Page 1 - About your church***

Please write in brief answers to the following questions.

1. What is the name of your church?

2. What type of community does the church serve?

- ☐ Inner city
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Suburban
- ☐ Small town
- ☐ Village/Rural

3. What proportion of your congregation is:

Local (lives within the geographic parish) _____
Gathered (lives out side the parish)? _____

4. What is the average total weekly attendance at all worship service?

5. If you have a membership list, or electoral roll, how many names are on it?

6. Over the last three years has attendance/membership:

- ☐ increased
- ☐ decreased
- ☐ stayed about the same

Page 2 - About your church

7. If you have home groups or similar in your church, what proportion of the members attend?
8. If you run a regular evangelistic programme, e.g., Alpha, approximately how many people have attended in the last twelve months?
9. What approximate proportion of your church membership volunteers in some church ministry or activity?
10. How many adults have undertaken a step of initiation (e.g., baptism, confirmation) within the last year?
11. Over the last three years have these numbers generally:

☐ increased
☐ decreased
☐ stayed about the same
12. What is your approximate annual church budget?
13. How many paid members of staff, including yourself, does your church employ? (Please count part-time staff proportionately, e.g., a half-time staff member is 0.5.)
14. How would you describe the theology or tradition of your church?

Page 3 - Community work

15. Does your church run any projects which exist to serve the local community beyond the congregation?
16. If so, which specific groups do those projects serve? E.g., toddlers, youth, senior citizens, the homeless or socially disadvantaged, people with special needs, etc.
17. Are these projects run by your church alone, or in partnership with other organizations, e.g., other churches, local authority?
18. If in partnership, with whom?
19. What approximate proportion of your total annual budget is spent on community ministry/projects?
20. What approximate proportion of total staff time is spent on community ministry projects?
21. What approximate proportion of total volunteer effort is spent on community ministry projects?
22. Over the last five years have these proportions:
 - ☐ increased
 - ☐ decreased
 - ☐ remained about the same
23. Approximately how many people from the community benefit each week from these ministries?

Page 4

24. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
People in our church associate with each other outside church events and activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People have close relationships within the church that they draw on for personal support.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a lot of laughter in the church.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conflict and disagreement within the church is handled in a positive manner.	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a clear vision and effective strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our services are characterized by a sense of the presence of God.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are regular opportunities for church members to receive training for mission and ministry in our church.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our home groups or similar, if we have them, are healthy, open, and outward-looking.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our decision-making process is effective and efficient.	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have regular meetings for prayer which are well-attended.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most of the congregation gives sacrificially to the church.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Most of the congregation practice spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and contemplation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Morale is generally high in our church.	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have a large fringe of newcomers, occasional attendees, and people exploring faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐
In our meetings we regularly share news of what God is doing in our local community.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People regularly come to faith, or return to faith, in our church.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Evangelism and social action are of equal importance as expressions of God's mission.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The church has a special responsibility to care practically for the most needy members of the local.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community action is only valid as a church activity if ultimately it leads people to Christian commitment.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel enthusiastic about the future of this church.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 5 - Further detail about community work

Please answer these questions in as much detail as possible, continuing on a separate sheet if necessary.

24. Briefly describe the community action projects with which your church is involved.

25. What has the fruit of these projects been within the local community?

26. What has the fruit of these projects been within your own congregation?

27. Do you have further projects planned? If so, please give details.

Page 6 - Personal details

Finally, please give some personal details.

28. What is your name?

29. What is your age?

☐ Under 30

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60 and over

30. How long have you been Minister of this church?

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill in this survey.

APPENDIX B**TABLES****(i) Sunday attendance**

Type of parish	Mean	n	Std. Deviation
inner city	164.36	25	121.142
urban	114.56	25	61.083
suburban	167.87	46	138.073
other	138.33	9	134.490
Total	151.81	105	119.955

(ii) Electoral roll and percentage within parish

		% within parish	Sunday Attendance	ER
% within parish	Pearson Correlation	1	-.309**	-.245*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.015
	N	106	103	99
Sunday Attendance	Pearson Correlation	-.309**	1	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	103	105	100
ER	Pearson Correlation	-.245*	.869**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.000	
	N	99	100	101

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(iii) Groups served by community ministry

		Responses		
		n	%	% Cases
Types of community ministry ^a	Parents & toddlers	49	27%	61%
	Elderly	47	26%	58%
	Children & youth	45	25%	56%
	Learning difficulties/special needs	9	5%	11%
	Homeless	7	4%	9%
	Socially disadvantaged	6	3%	7%
	Refugees/immigrants	4	2%	5%
	Other	14	8%	17%
	Total	181	100.0%	224%
^a				

(iv) Commitment to community ministry over last 5 years

		n	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Increased	42	53.2	53.2
	Stayed the same	36	45.6	98.7
	Decreased	1	1.3	100.0
	Total	79	100.0	
Missing	no response	32		
	Total	111		

(v) Relationship between community ministry rating and health/malaise rating**Correlations**

		Health/malaise rating	Community ministry rating
Health/malaise rating	Pearson Correlation	1	.458**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	111	111
Community ministry rating	Pearson Correlation	.458**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	111	111

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(vi) Relationship between positive attitudes towards community ministry and experience of church health**Correlations**

		Community attitude score	Health attitude score
Community attitude score	Pearson Correlation	1	.487**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	87	87
Health attitude score	Pearson Correlation	.487**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	87	88

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(vii) Relationship between number of beneficiaries and numbers taking steps of initiation

Correlations		
	Numbers taking step of initiation	Number of weekly beneficiaries
Numbers taking step of initiation	1	.220
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)		.061
N	97	73
Number of weekly beneficiaries	.220	1
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.061	
N	73	73

(viii) Relationship between Sunday attendance and number of people served

Correlations		
	Sunday attendance	Number of weekly beneficiaries
Sunday attendance	1	.283*
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
N	105	72
Number of weekly beneficiaries	.283*	1
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
N	72	73

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(ix) Relationship between community ministry and churches reporting supportive congregational relationships

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	People have close supportive relationships within church	n
Community ministry rating	strongly agree	39
	agree	48
	Total	87

Ranks

	People have close supportive relationships within church	Mean Rank
Community ministry rating	strongly agree	49.60
	agree	39.45

Ranks

	People have close supportive relationships within church	Sum of Ranks
Community ministry rating	strongly agree	1934.50
	agree	1893.50

Test Statistics

	Community ministry rating
Mann-Whitney U	717.500
Wilcoxon W	1893.500
Z	-1.871
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.061

Ranks		
	People have close supportive relationships within church	Sum of Ranks
Community ministry rating	strongly agree	1934.50

a. Grouping Variable: People have close supportive relationships within church

(x) The fruit of community ministry in the local community

		n	%
Valid	Awareness/reputation/relationships	24	39
	new members	9	15
	social cohesion	12	19
	specific social needs met	12	19
	Other	5	8
	Total	62	100
Missing	no response	49	
	Total	111	

(xi) The fruit of community ministry in the local congregation

		n	%
Valid	mobilization of congregation	13	21
	Numerical growth	10	16
	Improved morale	8	13
	new perspectives	13	21
	closer fellowship	10	16
	none/little	4	7
	Other	4	7
	Total	62	100
Missing	no response	49	
	Total	111	

(xii) Number of groups served and congregation sizeOne-way ANOVA, $F = 2.259$ ($df=3,101$) $sig = 0.086$ **ANOVA**

Sunday attendance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	94087.355	3	31362.452	2.259	.086
Within Groups	1402382.836	101	13884.979		
Total	1496470.190	104			

(xiii) The relationship between total number of groups served and budget; weekly beneficiaries; health/malaise rating; numbers volunteering

The number of group served is nearly significant against size of budget; significant against numbers of weekly beneficiaries (ANOVA, $F = 3.747$ ($df = 3, 69$) $sig = 0.015$); very significant against health/malaise rating (ANOVA, $F = 7.996$ ($df = 3, 107$) $sig = 0.000$); and not significant in numbers volunteering.

Descriptives

		n	Mean	SD	Std. Error
Size of budget	0	14	114087.50	151752.745	40557.627
	1	17	69941.18	41924.367	10168.153
	2	27	173703.70	142771.958	27476.476
	3+	24	166916.67	148713.298	30355.975
	Total	82	140027.13	136401.572	15063.034
% volunteering	0	16	40.00	17.224	4.306
	1	20	35.90	20.308	4.541
	2	29	40.52	19.804	3.677
	3+	29	48.14	16.611	3.084
	Total	94	41.80	18.824	1.942
Number of weekly beneficiaries	0	3	53.67	49.803	28.754
	1	18	49.67	45.254	10.666
	2	27	96.52	88.589	17.049
	3+	25	143.00	122.644	24.529
	Total	73	99.12	98.838	11.568
Health/malaise rating	0	30	3.37	6.916	1.263
	1	22	3.77	7.515	1.602
	2	29	11.28	9.342	1.735
	3+	30	10.30	7.240	1.322
	Total	111	7.39	8.529	.810

Descriptives

		95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Size of budget	0	26468.07	201706.93	30000	600000
	1	48385.66	91496.70	6500	166000
	2	117225.00	230182.41	15000	560000
	3+	104120.55	229712.78	22000	563000
	Total	110056.42	169997.85	6500	600000
% volunteering	0	30.82	49.18	10	70
	1	26.40	45.40	0	88
	2	32.98	48.05	7	90
	3+	41.82	54.46	25	95
	Total	37.94	45.65	0	95
Number of weekly beneficiaries	0	-70.05	177.38	1	100
	1	27.16	72.17	4	150
	2	61.47	131.56	1	350
	3+	92.37	193.63	10	500
	Total	76.06	122.18	1	500
Health/malaise rating	0	.78	5.95	-1	21
	1	.44	7.10	-10	21
	2	7.72	14.83	-3	36
	3+	7.60	13.00	-3	27
	Total	5.78	8.99	-10	36

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square
Size of budget	Between Groups	1.409E11	3	4.697E10
	Within Groups	1.366E12	78	1.751E10
	Total	1.507E12	81	
% volunteering	Between Groups	1960.670	3	653.557
	Within Groups	30992.490	90	344.361
	Total	32953.160	93	
Number of weekly beneficiaries	Between Groups	98538.483	3	32846.161
	Within Groups	604823.407	69	8765.557
	Total	703361.890	72	
Health/malaise rating	Between Groups	1465.419	3	488.473
	Within Groups	6536.923	107	61.093
	Total	8002.342	110	

ANOVA

		F	Sig.
Size of budget	Between Groups	2.682	.053
% volunteering	Between Groups	1.898	.136
Number of weekly beneficiaries	Between Groups	3.747	.015
Health/malaise rating	Between Groups	7.996	.000

(xiv) Relationship between churchmanship and number of groups served**Churchmanship * Number of groups served Cross-tabulation**

			Number of groups served	
			0	1
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	8	5
		% within Churchmanship	23.5%	14.7%
	central	Count	2	6
		% within Churchmanship	9.1%	27.3%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	6	11
		% within Churchmanship	14.6%	26.8%
Total	Count	16	22	
	% within Churchmanship	16.5%	22.7%	

Churchmanship * Number of groups served Cross-tabulation

			Number of groups served	
			2	3+
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	9	12
		% within Churchmanship	26.5%	35.3%
	central	Count	8	6
		% within Churchmanship	36.4%	27.3%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	12	12
		% within Churchmanship	29.3%	29.3%
Total	Count	29	30	
	% within Churchmanship	29.9%	30.9%	

Churchmanship * Number of groups served Cross-tabulation

			Total
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	34
		% within Churchmanship	100.0%
	Central	Count	22
		% within Churchmanship	100.0%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	41
		% within Churchmanship	100.0%
Total	Count	97	
	% within Churchmanship	100.0%	

(xv) Groups served and church growth**Type of ministry and change in church membership**

			Change in membership/attendance over last 3 yrs
			increased
Type of community ministry ^a	Parents & toddlers	Count	25
		%	51%
	Elderly	Count	22
		%	46%
	Children & youth	Count	26
		%	58%
	Learning difficulties/special needs	Count	5
		%	56%
	Homeless	Count	3
		%	43%
	Socially disadvantaged	Count	3
		%	50%
	Refugees/immigrants	Count	3
		%	75%
	Other	Count	7
		%	50%
	Total	Count	94

^a

Percentages and totals are based on responses.

Type of ministry and change in church membership

			Change in membership/attendance over last 3 yrs
			stayed the same
Types of community ministry ^a	Parents & toddlers	Count	21
		%	43%
	Elderly	Count	19
		%	40%
	Children & youth	Count	16
		%	36%
	Learning difficulties/special needs	Count	3
		%	33%
	Homeless	Count	3
		%	43%
	Socially disadvantaged	Count	3
		%	50%
	Refugees/immigrants	Count	1
		%	25%
	Other	Count	6
		%	43%
^a	Total	Count	72

Percentages and totals are based on responses.

Type of ministry and change in church membership

			Change in membership/attendance over last 3 yrs	
			decreased	Total
Types of community ministry ^a	Parents & toddlers	Count	3	49
		%	6%	
	Elderly	Count	6	47
		%	13%	
	Children & youth	Count	3	45
		%	7%	
	Learning difficulties/special needs	Count	1	9
		%	11%	
	Homeless	Count	1	7
		%	14%	
	Socially disadvantaged	Count	0	6
		%	0%	
	Refugees/immigrants	Count	0	4
		%	0%	
	Other	Count	1	14
		%	7%	
^a	Total	Count	15	181

Percentages and totals are based on responses.

**(xvi) Parents and toddlers group and Sunday attendance
Mann-Whitney Test**

Ranks				
	Parents & toddlers	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Sunday attendance	-1	56	46.34	2595.00
	Yes	49	60.61	2970.00
	Total	105		

Test Statistics ^a	
	Sunday attendance
Mann-Whitney U	999.000
Wilcoxon W	2595.000
Z	-2.398
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.017

a. Grouping Variable: Parents & toddlers

**(xvii) Parents and toddlers group and church health rating
Mann-Whitney Test**

Ranks				
	Parents & toddlers	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Health/malaise rating	-1	62	46.54	2885.50
	yes	49	67.97	3330.50
	Total	111		

Test Statistics ^a	
	Health/malaise rating
Mann-Whitney U	932.500
Wilcoxon W	2885.500
Z	-3.505

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
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a. Grouping Variable: Parents & toddlers

**(xviii) Children and youth and church health rating
Mann-Whitney Test**

		Ranks		
	Children & youth	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Health/malaise rating	-1	66	47.20	3115.00
	yes	45	68.91	3101.00
	Total	111		

Test Statistics^a

	Health/malaise rating
Mann-Whitney U	904.000
Wilcoxon W	3115.000
Z	-3.512
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Grouping Variable: Children & youth

(xix) Parents and toddlers plus children and youth, relationship to health rating, age of minister, and Sunday attendance
Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks			
Parents, toddlers, children, youth		n	Mean Rank
Health/malaise rating	None	45	41.64
	children and youth only	17	59.50
	parents and toddlers only	21	59.10
	Both	28	74.63
	Total	111	
Age of minister	None	45	46.21
	children and youth only	17	58.62
	parents and toddlers only	21	66.86
	Both	28	62.00
	Total	111	
Sunday attendance	None	40	40.03
	children and youth only	16	62.13
	parents and toddlers only	21	63.29
	Both	28	58.61
	Total	105	

Test Statistics ^{a,b}			
	Health/malaise rating	Age of minister	Sunday attendance
Chi-Square	18.959	8.078	12.058
Df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.044	.007

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Parents, toddlers, children, youth

(xx) Parents and toddlers plus children and youth, relationship with churchmanship**Cross-tabulation**

			Parents, toddlers, children, youth	
			None	children and youth only
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	11	2
		%	32%	6%
	Central	Count	7	6
		%	32%	27%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	13	9
		%	32%	22%
Total	Count	31	17	
	%	32%	18%	

Cross-tabulation

			Parents, toddlers, children, youth	
			parents and toddlers only	both
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	5	16
		%	15%	47%
	Central	Count	6	3
		%	27%	14%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	10	9
		%	24%	22%
Total	Count	21	28	
	%	22%	29%	

Cross-tabulation

			Total
Churchmanship	evangelical or charismatic	Count	34
		%	100%
	Central	Count	22
		%	100%
	catholic or liberal catholic	Count	41
		%	100%
Total	Count	97	
	%	100%	

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