Called to Serve:

The Effect of Neighborhood Churches on the Community of Midtown North

Matthew Horton

"Taking care of a community is like taking care of flowers, it takes love"

(Interview 7/3/07)

Introduction

Historically, American civic life is inextricably intertwined with religious life. Of this there is no more powerful evidence than the first sentence of the Constitutional Bill of Rights, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." (Amendment 1, Bill of Rights) The need for such religious clarification, commonly referred to as the separation of Church and State, is apparent given its primacy before all other civil liberties. This profound opening statement encompasses arguably the most powerful and controversial civic relationship in American society: the role of the Church in the public sphere.

All legal implications aside, defining the role of the Church in communal life has serious sociological consequences. Sociology, or the study of societal interactions, becomes interwoven with theology, or the formulation of religious beliefs. The collection of private, personal beliefs has far-reaching public ramifications for a community, including effects on unintended social realms such as economy and politics. The Church, by definition, is not a private institution but a public organization whose collective actions, or lack thereof, profoundly affect the community at large. It is precisely this public influence that compelled the founders of Democracy to elucidate and accentuate the freedom of religious organizations from the coercion of personal interest, be it

political or otherwise. The separation of Church and State, however, should not be interpreted as the separation of Church and Society, for this is an impossibility.

The city of Memphis offers an abundant field ripe with an array of religious traditions. Historically a prominent city in the South and situated in the heart of a region that has come to be known as the Bible Belt, Memphis has deep roots in the Protestant Christian Church. The region has given birth to several mainline denominations, three of which are currently headquartered in Memphis including the Church of God in Christ, one of the largest African American denominations in the world. The African American Protestant Church has played an important role in the historical landscape of Memphis, most notably in its propulsion of the movement for civil rights during the 1960s. Reports indicate that, in many respects, Memphis may be known as one of the most religious cities in the American South.

Several obstacles challenge an accurate understanding of the Church's effect on community. The first, as previously mentioned, is lack of reliable data, stemming primarily from the Church's most basic right of freedom from regulation as expressed in Amendment 1. The second, clearly tied to the first, is defining a feasible scale of study in a large metropolis, or in some cases, the lack of data to define such a scale. Both obstacles can be reduced by narrowing the field of study and honing the method of inquiry.

An urban neighborhood illustrates macro, or citywide, social processes at work on a micro, or community-based, level. The neighborhood of Midtown North, also known as the Hollywood Springdale neighborhood, is an ideal community to observe local churches and their social impact. By focusing on such a small urban neighborhood information can be gathered locally through direct inquiry, personal experience, and field observation. In addition, public demographic, economic, and census data can be obtained more accurately by narrowing the focal

point to a single zip code or Census Tract. By comparing quantitative statistics with qualitative experience, discrepancies can be identified and, with hope, explained in a way that accurately reflects the reality of those living in the neighborhood.

However, theological reflection should not be forgotten amidst social examination. In addition to the values of sociological study, Midtown North is a model test case for the pragmatics of theology. Situated in the poorest zip code in Shelby County, Midtown North has been described as a "distressed community" (Interview 6/26/07) with numerous socio-economic hurdles to overcome. Surprisingly, the neighborhood is also saturated with churches, averaging nearly one church for every 150 people. Many Christians believe the foundation of Christian theology to be an emphasis on helping those in need. Surely Midtown North presents countless opportunities for local churches to act on such a theology.

Using this context, the central research question is thus refined to observable phenomena, not merely theoretical speculation. The researcher's interests lie in the observation of social relationships, namely the relationship between churches and the surrounding community. The central question may be asked both sociologically and theologically. From a social standpoint, are the churches in Midtown North meeting the needs and expectations of the citizens of the distressed community? Or from a theological point of view, are churches in Midtown North serving their neighbors?

With hope, the insight gleaned from statistical, observational, theoretical, and theological investigation into the effects of churches in the Midtown North neighborhood will shed light on similar communities throughout the city. While it is never possible to fully escape social and cultural bias, it should be noted that the aim of any worthwhile research is objectivity and observation, rather than subjectivity and judgment. It is therefore the intent of this research to

accurately and impartially describe social and religious relationships and behavior in a way that illuminates situations and enlightens individuals thereby encouraging improvement, rather than exposing fault. Of all philosophies, certainly Christian theology espouses this endeavor.

Theory

Every question begins with a perspective since social perspective frames all social experience. Perspective determines not only which questions are asked – and conversely which questions are not asked – but also how such questions are answered. The result is unique experience.

For the purposes of comparison in this study, several different perspectives are necessary. For instance, three basic perspectives may be identified as significant: the community resident, the community leader, and the church leader. The first two will provide a depiction of the Church from without, the last from within. Both perspectives are necessary if an impartial picture is desired.

Redefining perspective redefines relevance. From the perspective of a citizen in a distressed community, civic organizations, be it religious or otherwise, find their origin in response to need. Meeting vital needs holds primary relevance to distressed citizens. Before questioning the effect of churches, these needs must be identified and understood.

Two primary questions surround a proper understanding of community needs. Logically, the first involves identifying said needs, again in terms of relevance. The second pertains to identifying who should meet these needs and how. In sum, what are the needs of the community, and which of these needs should be met by churches? Here, perspective is crucial. Social perspective will significantly influence which needs are deemed relevant and how they should be met. For example, a community leader and a church leader, assuming that the individuals do not

fall into both categories, might disagree significantly on who should meet a certain need in the community, while a community resident might argue that both misunderstand their need in the first place. For this reason, when perspectives disagree the experience of the community resident should be given primacy.

Once perspective and relevance are determined the basic inquiry is within sight. From the perspective of the distressed citizen, what are the relevant needs of a community and which of these needs do community members expect a church to address? In other words, what should be the role of the Church in a distressed community? These are not questions for the researcher, but questions for community members and church and community leaders. This internal background experience gives critical context to any and all external research observation.

Before such an endeavor can commence, certain theoretical principles require definition. In the fields of Sociology and Religion there is no more authoritative source for theory than the research, writings, and thoughts of Emile Durkheim. Considered by many the Father of Sociology, the nineteenth century French researcher pioneered the scientific study of culture, society, and religion. Although many modern theologians and sociologists alike disagree with Durkheim's controversial personal beliefs, his methodology and theory is widely practiced, even by those with no knowledge of his influence.

Durkheim's unprecedented work launched an entirely new field of social science called Sociology. Sociology studied human behavior by observing social relationships in their natural environment rather than direct experimentation in a controlled laboratory environment. In sum, the whole of human society, including cultural institutions, constitutes the field of sociological research.

In this way sociology is often considered a first-order discipline, that is, like philosophy, it seeks to understand the root processes or origins of the second-order disciplines, such as biology. Essentially, sociology attempts to challenge the assumptions and fact structure upon which other fields of study are firmly grounded. (Durkheim)

Durkheim believed that Society and Religion were inseparable. He claimed that religion is the backbone of every society, the invisible fiber that binds individuals together as a community. Conversely, Durkheim believed that society is the substance of religion, that social connection is the driving force of religious worship and the preservation of society its fundamental purpose. Wrote Durkheim, "In short, then, we can say that nearly all the great social institutions were born in religion" (Durkheim 421). Durkheim believed that religion was a fundamental and necessary element of society.

Durkheim provides a foundation for understanding religion at work in society in two primary ways. First, the Church is essentially a social institution, that is, it is made up of numerous social individuals. As such it cannot be placed into a laboratory and prodded with needles until the experiment yields results. It must be observed, as any other social group, at work in its natural environment, the community.

Secondly, Religion is a second-order discipline, that is, it is based on a set of proscribed beliefs or truth structure that forms the basis of theological inquiry, also known as faith. While faith is certainly a viable and justifiable foundation for religious organizations and their members, it is not the method of social research. Sociology is closer to a first-order discipline in that it questions the founding principles upon which other disciplines are built (Durkeim). This critique is not practiced with the intent to destroy the foundations of belief but with the hopes that relatively unbiased, objective insight might encourage and strengthen true convictions.

In other words, one cannot study the Church with theology; truly impartial research can only come from sociology. That is not to say that theology is not a useful discipline when critiquing religion, for indeed theologians the world over find inspiration in scripture for improving the Church. It is simply the case that sociology offers the most objective point of view from which to observe the Church's role in society without attaching moral or spiritual judgment.

Terminology

Theory aside, the first and most general sociological observation may be made concerning the role of the Church in American society: it is complex. The importance of such an extreme understatement cannot be stressed enough.

There are several reasons for the complexity of the religious sector in the United States, the first of which being Amendment 1 under the Constitutional Bill of Rights. The government's inability to regulate religious organizations makes any form of research into this independent sector extremely difficult and almost always inaccurate. In fact, there is little to no uniform system of procedure, regulation, verification, or documentation on virtually any level of the religious sector from the smallest zip code to the largest region of the United States. Nearly all the available data on churches, from which a basic understanding may be achieved, is made possible by mainline Christian denominations that keep their own records and voluntarily submit information periodically to independent research groups.

To begin, the name 'church' is problematic because, in a predominantly Christian culture such as the United States, the term is typically reserved for Christian organizations and tends to exclude other less-prevalent religions. For the purposes of this study, which focuses on a

neighborhood devoid of non-Christian houses of worship, the term 'church' will be used to refer only to a Christian congregation that performs regular services of religious worship. Likewise, references to 'the Church' will be used when making broad statements regarding the entire body of American Christian congregations of worship.

The term 'church' is also problematic due to its categorization under the Independent Sector of the nation's economy. To be distinguished from the government and business sectors, the independent sector is the overarching name attributed to the realm of charitable, philanthropic, religious, and typically not-for-profit organizations that generally provide various public services independent of governmental or corporate direction. (IndependentSector.org) It is estimated that nearly 240 billion dollars changes hands among more than 900,000 federally recognized charitable organizations every year nationwide in this important economic sector. (AAFRC 2004)

Churches are not the only religious organizations in the independent sector. Nonprofit organizations cover a wide range of public services, from hospitals and schools to community centers and churches, many of which espouse elements of religious beliefs. Most recently with the creation of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001 and the subsequent passing of legislation making government funding available to organizations with religious affiliation, the number of religious nonprofits has skyrocketed. Commonly known as 'faith-based nonprofits,' these organizations can apply for federal dollars to provide public services on a not-for-profit basis while maintaining a loose religious affiliation completely separate from that of churches.

The distinguishing characteristic of churches is the element of religious worship. For this reason churches maintain an elite, distinctively untouchable position from all other faith-based

nonprofit organizations. In order to be eligible for federal faith-based funds and to be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a tax-exempt organization, all nonprofits must register with the IRS and meet eligibility requirements for *Section 501, Exemption from Tax on Corporations, Certain Trusts, etc.* of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). Organizations are required to file extensive forms regarding their operations and must be subject to periodic auditing.

Churches represent the only exception from this rule and may claim tax-exempt status without registering with any government agency. "Churches that meet the requirements of IRC section 501(c)(3) are automatically considered tax-exempt and are not required to apply for and obtain recognition of tax-exempt status from the IRS" (Tax Guide 3).

It is wholly unclear how a church may identify itself as such and subsequently meet the requirements of section 501(c)(3) without registering with any level of federal, state, or local government. This gray area is purposefully maintained by Amendment 1 of the Bill of Rights such that government will not have the authority to determine what does or does not constitute a 'church' and therefore, by association, determine what does or does not constitute Religion. However, without a unified system of accountability this confusion of terms leaves a wide loophole in the independent sector for exploitation and misuse.

In addition, the lack of cohesive registration on the part of churches means an overall absence of accurate and reliable information regarding the actions of these organizations. Information such as church membership, number of churches, and number of church denominations all provide important statistics for community leaders and community citizens alike. Until 1946 this information was collected and made available via the United States Census

Bureau, but objections on the grounds of invasion of privacy from several religious groups during the 1930s, led by the Church of Christian Scientists, ended this government practice.

Since then, data regarding religious membership and congregations has been collected and analyzed by a number of independent organizations including the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), the Nation Council of Churches (NCC), and the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA). Although cooperation between these organizations is frequent, the lack of cohesion amounts to discrepancies in research procedure and analysis resulting in less than accurate data.

In short, the realm of churches is decidedly complex for legitimate reasons. Despite the lack of reliable information that comes with government regulation, churches maintain order and regulatory structure internally either on the denominational or congregational level. Many substantial churches voluntarily register with the IRS as tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and most mainline denominations regularly submit accurate data to various research agencies. However, this collected information is not exhaustive, and small, undocumented, nondenominational churches, of which there are many, often go unnoticed. These congregations fly well under the radar of most agencies and may constitute more church members as a whole than one might expect.

Memphis

The expression 'a church on every corner' almost literally describes the Bluff City. More churches call Memphis home than nearly any other industry or business and they have played an important role in shaping the local civic landscape.

Several significant research studies confirm that religion is heavily embedded into the rich culture of Memphis. Of these, two are especially worth noting. The first is a national

publication with significance for the city of Memphis; the second is an unprecedented local study yielding some of the most important findings for the region.

As previously mentioned, following the objections of religious groups during the 1930s over a question on the US Census pertaining to religious affiliation, several independent organizations took on the task of collecting data that could be used to describe the religious landscape of America. The most comprehensive of these studies was initiated by the National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCC) in the early 1950s and by 1957 the Bureau of Research and Survey of the NCC published the first edition of *Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration and Analysis by Counties, States, and Regions*. This would be replicated every ten years for the next half century, though the name and sponsoring organization would change, and would become the definitive source for religious data in the United States.

The most recent edition of this publication, now titled *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States* published in 2000 by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), contains interesting information on religion throughout the state of Tennessee as well as Memphis proper.[1] According to this nationwide survey of mainline denominations, more than 2,900,000 individuals in Tennessee were members of a church congregation (Jones 2002). When compared with US Census population data for Tennessee, nearly 5,700,000 people called the state home in 2000, indicating that more than 51 percent of the population of Tennessee claimed membership in a church during that year (US Census Bureau 2000). Nearly 370,000 Memphians were churchgoers in 2000 throughout Shelby County (Jones 2002), representing more than 41 percent of the county's 900,000 population (US Census Bureau 2000). Memphians made up almost 13 percent of all Tennessee church members.

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[1] Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed graphs and data concerning Memphis area churches and church membership.

Data concerning church congregations in Tennessee also yield important information. According to the ASARB, in 2000 there were over 9,600 churches throughout the state of Tennessee, 541 of these, or roughly 5.6 percent were located in Shelby County (Jones 2002). Since 1957 the total number of congregations statewide has increased by one half from 6,400 in 1957 (NCC 1957) to 9,600 in 2000 (Jones 2002). Shelby County, however, has experienced that increase substantially, nearly doubling the number of congregations in Memphis from 298 in 1957 (NCC 1957) to 541 in 2000 (Jones 2002). Interestingly, Memphis did not experience a proportional increase in church members. Statewide the total number of churchgoers more than doubled during the half century increasing nearly 120 percent from 1,300,000 in 1957 (NCC 1957) to almost 3,000,000 in 2000 (Jones 2002). Shelby County, however, only increased total church membership 113 percent during that same time frame. Although the difference in percentage of increase is not very significant, it is important to note that Memphis experienced a disproportionate increase in church congregations when compared to the overall increase in church members.

These studies, despite their key statistical findings, have one fatal flaw: they only record information from mainline denominations that voluntarily submit survey data. Not only is the term 'mainline denomination' unclear, though it is apparent that the sponsoring organization (be it the NCC or the ASARB) has determined which denominations qualify for this status most likely based on nationwide membership, but the fact that these denominations voluntarily submit their information leaves ample room for miscalculation and misrepresentation. The idea is that most nondenominational churches are small in church membership and relatively uncommon, enough so to justify their exclusion from the data set. Without a denominational governing body

or the resources and record-keeping of a large denominational church, it is nearly impossible to collect information from nondenominational churches on any scale, let alone nationwide.

The reality, however, in many urban regions of the South is an extremely large number of nondenominational churches ranging in size from very small (15-30 members) to relatively large (300 members or more) congregations. The result is a mistakenly low count of total church congregations and membership in many urban areas, since it is extremely difficult to determine the number of organizations and individuals that do not fit mainline religious categories.

A particularly useful alternative method for determining a city's religiosity with relative accuracy is a study of philanthropic giving. Characteristically, those congregants that attend a church regularly will give to the organization according to their means via a tithe or other donation. As with any other sector of the economy, financial contribution or investment is typically a good indicator of interest or involvement. The independent sector is no different.

The nation's leading research institution for the independent sector is The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Since 1958 and the creation of the American Association of Fundraising Counsel (AAFRC) Trust for Philanthropy, these two organizations have jointly published an annual report on nationwide financial philanthropy entitled, *Giving USA*. This publication has become the definitive source for national philanthropic data.

In 2003 The AAFRC Trust and The Center on Philanthropy took a bold step in expanding the reach of this influential report. With the intent of localizing the national study, researchers approached the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis with a proposal to use the city of Memphis as the site of its first regional analysis of philanthropy. The resulting publication, entitled *Giving Memphis 2003: The Report on Philanthropy in the Memphis Region for the Year 2002*, was an unprecedented enterprise that yielded important conclusions for the city of

Memphis. "It is the first report of its kind in the United States to measure the total amount of giving in a region and to simultaneously analyze all of the sources and uses of philanthropy in any region of the USA" (AAFRC 2004).

While the publication has countless practical applications and provides vital information for nearly every organization of the independent sector in Memphis, several key findings are particular significant to a comprehensive understanding of religion in the Memphis region. The data concerning religious philanthropy in Memphis are among the most remarkable conclusions of the study.[2]

Of the staggering 1.39 billion dollars donated to charity in 2002 by Memphis area individuals, corporations, and foundations, 506.1 million dollars, or nearly 46 percent, was given to religious organizations. This is particularly significant for several principle reasons. First, this percentage of giving to religion is extraordinarily higher than the national average of 35 percent. This indicates that Memphis citizens and organizations are more heavily influenced by religion when it comes to charity than the average American. Second, the vast majority of donations given that year came from individuals rather than corporations, 79.5 percent versus 76.3 percent nationally. This proves that the data concerning religious belief are indeed originating from individual citizens who are giving of their own accord. Third, of the 1.39 billion dollars donated to charitable organizations that year, 1.1 billion dollars, or more than 79 percent, was given to Memphis area organizations. In sum, it is evident that the large percentage of philanthropic dollars that was donated by Memphians in 2002 to religious organizations was, indeed, given primarily by individual citizens to local Memphis organizations, such as neighborhood churches. It is also evident that this tendency far exceeds the national trend. (AAFRC 2004)

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[2] Refer to Appendix 2 for detailed chart and data concerning Memphis philanthropy.

Additional data support the influence of religion on the philanthropy of Memphis citizens. Of all individual households surveyed in Memphis during 2002, nearly 79 percent gave some form of charitable donation. The average total donation among these individual households was $2,899. Religious convictions play an important role in these findings, evidenced by data showing that more than 60 percent of Memphis households donated in some fashion specifically to a religious organization, compared to less than 46 percent nationally. Correspondingly, the average charitable contribution to religious organizations was $2,222 for Memphis citizens, versus $1,638 for the average American. Not only are a greater percentage of Memphians giving to religion than nationwide percentages indicate, but Memphis residents are giving statistically more per household to local religious organizations than the national average. (AAFRC 2004)

While it is true that the term 'religious organization' includes such entities as faith based nonprofits and is therefore not limited to churches, characteristically religious motivation towards philanthropy begins in a religious community such as a church, rather than a social service organization such as a nonprofit. Studies have shown that churches tend to influence social behavior and motivation more so than their public service counterparts. In the words of Diana Garland of Baylor University, "As much as congregations look like and function in some ways as organizations, they really are better understood as communities" (Garland 2004). Data from *Giving Memphis* reveal the importance of religious motivation in Memphis philanthropic giving.

According to surveys, nearly 64 percent of Memphians are significantly motivated by religious beliefs to give financially. Of those individuals that were religiously inspired, the average total donation was $3,672, considerably higher than the overall average donation of $2,899 and indisputably the highest average donation when compared with other motivational

factors, such as tax benefits. In addition, when the average total donation is used to determine individual motivation by religious affiliation and religious attendance, the data supports important trends. For instance, those individuals that identified themselves as Protestant Christians reported the highest average donation of $3,428 among all surveyed households, compared with $2,802 among those that claimed another Christian tradition, and the lowest average donation of $1,593 reported by individuals that did not identify with any religion whatsoever. Also, of religiously motivated individuals, those that reported attending religious worship once or twice a month were found to donate, on average, $3,456, the highest of all attendance categories, including 'more than once a week' at $3,388 and 'a few times a year' with $1,765. In short, most Memphians are motivated by religious beliefs to give to charity and those that attend a Protestant Christian church at least once a month statistically donate, on average, significantly more than both the city and nationwide average. (AAFRC 2004)

Income also has an important effect on the ability and motivation of an individual to make charitable donations, and therefore some noteworthy results are relevant to a proper understanding of Memphis churchgoers. Despite the economic hardships of families living near or below the poverty level, which can range based on family members from less than $12,000 to less than $37,000 in annual income (US Census Bureau 2002), surveys showed that in 2002 over 63 percent of households making less than $50,000 per year reported donating financially to charity. Although this percentage and subsequent average donation is lower than other higher income brackets, the average donation of these households represents 5.6 percent of their annual income. This represents the highest donation percentage of any income bracket, including that of households making more than $100,000 annually that give, on average, only 3.3 percent of their

income. In many respects Memphis citizens that are under considerable economic constraint tend to give more of their resources than wealthier families. (AAFRC 2004)

If philanthropic data is any indication of the influence churches have in the city of Memphis then the conclusions of the unparalleled study *Giving Memphis* thoroughly expands and completes the otherwise limited statistics on churches and church membership as conducted by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies.

Although the lack of reliable information regarding unregistered nondenominational churches makes specific calculations imprecise, several generalizations can be made with the aid of financial information regarding religiously motivated philanthropy. First, individual Memphis citizens are significantly more motivated by and thus more involved in churches than average Americans. Second, Memphis citizens are significantly more generous with their resources, particularly towards churches, due to their religious convictions. Third, those Memphians that attend a Protestant Christian church somewhat regularly are significantly more generous with their resources than other Memphis citizens. Finally, while household income does affect the size and frequency of generosity, Memphis citizens that struggle with poverty are actually highly motivated to give more of their resources based on religious convictions. (AAFRC 2004)

Midtown North

It is evident from statistical analysis that the city of Memphis is saturated with churches and that Memphis citizens are subsequently heavily influenced by religion. In order to understand how this civic relationship manifests itself locally a case study is in order. The neighborhood of Midtown North offers an ideal micro community from which to observe macro social interactions between the Church and society.

In many respects Midtown North is characteristic of numerous working class urban neighborhoods in Memphis. Furthermore, it may also be considered one of the poorest regions of the city. Comprising over 500 acres, or less than one square mile (0.78 mi^2), the primary neighborhood area is bordered by Jackson Ave to the south, Chelsea Ave to the north, North Hollywood Street to the east, and a small area west of Springdale Street to the west (Google Planimeter). Midtown North is located almost entirely within the 38108 zip code and the US Census Tract 9 (CT9) with small areas of CT 6,7, and 8. For the most part the neighborhood closely resembles the demographics of CT9 and the 38108 zip code.[3] (Rhodes 2004)

It is estimated that roughly 4,000 citizens reside within the neighborhood zone, despite recent estimates that nearly 16 percent of land parcels are vacant and over 20 percent of houses are in violation of code enforcement (Rhodes 2004). The population is principally African American with percentages as high as 98 percent black in CT9, as compared with 71 percent throughout the zip code. With only 50 percent of residents in the work force and only 52 percent with a high school degree, Midtown North is among the poorest and least educated neighborhoods in Memphis. More than one third of both families and individuals in Midtown North are classified as living below the poverty level. In 2000 the median family income was less than $20,000 per year. (US Census Bureau 2000)

Several factors account for the severe poverty that has recently gripped Midtown North. Predominantly a working class neighborhood, the area suffered substantial employment loss following the closing of several major local industries, including the devastating loss of over 2,000 jobs when the nearby Firestone tire plant closed in 1983. Considerable health risks have encouraged exit-migration following public exposure during the 1980s of the environmental contamination of Cyprus Creek on the part of Velsicol Chemical Company. As a result, the

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[3] Refer to Appendix 3 for GIS maps of Midtown North neighborhood boundaries and Census Tracts.

remaining residents struggle with relentless unemployment and serious health concerns, the most

dangerous of which being extreme infant mortality rates. Perhaps the highest in the nation, the

infant mortality rate reached as high as 30 deaths per 1000 persons in 2000, as compared with the

statewide average of only nine. (Rhodes 2004)

Neighborhood members are well aware of the troubles facing their community. Many are

overwhelmed with the enormity of the problems and lost as to how to improve conditions.

Despite the relocation of younger generations due to the hardships now afflicting what once was

a beautiful community, many current residents that have remained behind make it clear that the

people and relationships of Midtown North are what make a neighborhood a home, and a true

home is worth the struggle.

Expectations

The Church plays an important and often disputed role in American society, and

Midtown North is no exception. While the neighborhood has suffered greatly from an overall

shortage of social services and resources on the part of nearly every level of the government,

corporate, and independent sector, it is unclear where the Church falls in terms of a responsibility

to provide for the community. This is precisely the controversy of Amendment 1, that the Church

cannot be *required* to fill any specific role in civic life outside the intent of its members, yet

regardless it is apparent that the Church, by its very nature, drastically affects civic life with its

collective actions, or lack thereof. What, then, does a community *expect* from the Church?

Perspective frames such expectations and provides a lens through which an individual perceives

the role of religion in society.

The debate over the role of the Church in civic life is certainly not a new one, however,

only recently in American history has the government financially endorsed religious

organizations with the intent to encourage civic engagement. The message is clear, many Americans believe that the Church has a responsibility to serve the community in a capacity beyond that of mere spiritual worship. Yet to what extent should this be the function of the Church? Academics as well as ordinary citizens disagree on the fundamental objective of the Church.

Diana Garland of Baylor University argues that the Church's most basic mission is to serve a higher power, or God. The congregation is first and foremost a group of people with that common intent, and Emile Durkheim would most likely agree. "Community," Garland maintains, "is probably the most significant resource that congregations offer to the needs in our country. One of the great errors in policymaking is the false assumption that social service programs can produce care. Care resides in the domain of communities" (Garland 2004). However, she admits that conflicting theologies often dictate vastly different understandings of how the religious community should interact with the community at large. Civil service is not necessarily a vital aspect of fulfilling the Church's mission.

One resident of Midtown North expressed similar sentiments. He traced the theological history of the Christian Church to its inception in the New Testament for insight into the purpose of the modern institution. The idea of the Church began with a need, he stated, and that need originated with the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) when humans, in their arrogant attempt to become like God, suffered the wrath of God's judgment and subsequently were divided from their natural unified state. Following the death and resurrection of Christ, the modern Church was born with the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit reunited all of God's people in forgiveness for the sins of Babel, finally fulfilling the unity of humankind. Therefore, he claimed, the Church finds its calling in community, uniting people with a common

belief. As such, the purpose of the Church is to "bring souls to Christ" and the role of the Church in society is to evangelize. However, he acknowledged that this primary mission cannot be achieved without a deeply rooted connection to the people of a community. Society is in a constant state of Babel. The Church is charged to be Pentecostal. (Interview 6/28/07)

Others view the Church's commitment to God as necessarily a commitment to improving the lives of people, not just spiritually but socially. In another study by Diana Garland and colleagues of Baylor University several church members asserted, "Before we are a social service agency, we are a church. And because we're the church we have to honor the oath of the spiritual realm, which is service. The calling to service cannot be ignored even when resources do not match the need – empty-handedness is not an option" (Garland, Netting, Katherine, and Yancey 2004). Theology, from this perspective, is grounded in practical application. There can be no spiritual commitment without a physical presence. "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead" (James 2:26, NRSV).

A church member in the Midtown North neighborhood challenges her congregation to live out faith through community action. The Church, she argues, by definition should be actively engaged in civic life. "The Church should be on one accord with the community. Of course, the church should witness the love of Christ, but it should also be of physical assistance to those in need. It should be a source of not just spiritual but physical support to the community. It should be a well-rounded organization" (Interview 6/29/07). It is precisely this service to the community that makes a church more than a social club. Just as theology gives social services purpose, it is fundamentally service that gives theology meaning.

The expectation of churches to provide social services, however, is not without its consequences. When a public institution fulfills a social need responsibility is inevitably diverted

from another source. For instance, the recent surge in faith-based nonprofit organizations is partly the result of unrealized expectations of the Church. The Executive Director of South Memphis-based non-profit Advance Memphis, explained that the need for faith-based non-profits, like his organization, originated, "because the Church wasn't being the Church" (Interview 1/23/07). Community leaders in Midtown North worry that as churches and nonprofits take on social services the burden of responsibility will be lifted from the government and corporate sectors.

One influential community leader expressed the need not only for churches to serve their neighbors independently but, perhaps more importantly, to cooperate with and encourage other likeminded organizations to work together for systemic improvement. She argued that churches should use their resources, both affluent and influent, to support community agencies and to hold the government accountable for protecting its citizens. Most importantly churches should empower citizens to demand more from the government and corporate sectors. "The Church should be a partner with community citizens; it should work *through* the people of a community, not merely *for* the people…. The Church should be the backbone of a community and not in the forefront" (Interview 6/26/07). In this sense the Church is called not only to serve directly but also to encourage responsibility among other civic institutions.

On the other hand, one resident disagreed directly with this depiction of the Church. Instead of churches focusing on reforming government they should direct their attention to the ultimate underlying problem: the moral corruption of society. From his perspective, "The government wouldn't have to provide services if the Church would do its job" (Interview 6/28/07). That is, the government most often protects its citizens against the effects of immoral behavior, for instance hate leads to crime leads to police. In his mind, if the Church was

successful at curbing the morality of individuals then the government could spend less time protecting its citizens and more resources on providing opportunities for people to help themselves.

The freedom to determine the practical application of religious beliefs is a fundamental right in American democracy. Theology does not necessitate social action, however the inevitable connection between religion and society is undeniable. One point is clear: in the distressed community of Midtown North citizens have high expectations for churches.

Religious Scene

Residents of the Midtown North neighborhood have good reason for the high expectations they place on local churches. First and foremost, there are more churches in the neighborhood than perhaps any other public institution, an exception being businesses along Chelsea Avenue. Secondly, the once vibrant community has strong cultural historical ties to the Protestant Christian Church, evident in the current prevalence of neighborhood churches. Finally, the severe poverty and hardship that has recently gripped the community of Midtown North has occurred despite these first two conditions. From the perspective of many residents, the state of affairs is unacceptable and is indicative of the failure of local churches.

At least 27 churches are located within the 500-acre demarcated neighborhood of Midtown North.[4] This accounts for virtually one church for every 150 residents. If this average were extended for the entire population of Memphis it would amount to more than 4,300 churches within the city limits alone (US Census Bureau 2005). This is to be compared with estimates from the ASARB of only 541 registered churches throughout Shelby County in 2000 (Jones 2002). It is apparent that either citywide statistical analyses are grossly inaccurate or Midtown North is substantially over saturated with churches.

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[4] Refer to Appendix 4 for table of all known churches in Midtown North including affiliation, address, and contacts.

Despite presuming the latter of the two possibilities, it should be noted that of the 27 churches located in Midtown North, nine congregations are not affiliated with any mainline denomination and would therefore not be included in any statistical research. Again, if this rate of church reporting, amounting to only two thirds of all the churches in the neighborhood, were extended throughout Shelby County, the initial estimate of 541 churches would rise to nearly 812 churches (Jones 2002). It can likewise be assumed that either research is significantly underreporting church congregations or the neighborhood of Midtown North has an abnormally high percentage of nondenominational churches.

To a certain extent, all of the above inferences contain truth. Even without accurate quantitative analyses it is experientially evident that Midtown North contains an unusually high number churches in general, and consequently a high percentage of undocumented nondenominational congregations in particular. It is therefore of no surprise that only five of the 27 churches are federally classified with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (Pub. 78, IRS 2006) and only ten are even registered with the State of Tennessee (Sec. of State 2007).

Several mainline Protestant denominations have a strong presence in Midtown North, all of which are predominantly African American. Apart from the nine nondenominational churches, there are seven Baptist churches and five Missionary Baptist churches located in the neighborhood, as well as one of each of the following denominations: African Methodist Episcopal (AME), AME Zion, Church of Christ (COC), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the Pentecostal Church, and the Apostolic Church. Denominations differ on the degree of affiliation and subsequent requirements for the association of a local congregation.

Statistics aside, the experience of a walk through the neighborhood reveals much about the religious landscape of Midtown North. More than one half of the churches are located on a

residential side street – that is, not one of the four major roads that enclose the neighborhood – sometimes as numerous as five churches on the same street within two blocks. Most churches are small, encompassing less than three parcels of land including the building and vacant land for parking, and many operate out of a converted house or business storefront. The Shelby County Assessors Office records that many churches also own one or more residential properties, on which they pay taxes, for various undisclosed reasons (Clark 2007).

Aside from the two largest churches, Springdale Baptist Church on Springdale Street and Cathedral of Faith on Jackson Avenue, most of the churches are too small to hire full-time staff members and therefore keep regular office hours during the week. Despite many churches listing their phone number publicly, most have no staff to answer a call during the week and some have no answering machine with which to leave a message. For the most part church buildings are empty and locked during the week, except for the occasional evening group or meeting.

On Sundays church members typically park on the street, sometimes avoiding designated parking areas in overgrown vacant lots, and the buildings are relatively active from 9am into the evening. Most church members commute into the neighborhood from other areas the city via cars. As one resident pointed out, many of these church members grew up in the neighborhood attending the local church but have recently moved to more affluent accommodations. Few local residents walk to attend a nearby church. In some cases residents actually walk or obtain a ride outside of the immediate neighborhood to attend church elsewhere. This is typically the case when a resident attends a church that was once located within the neighborhood but has since moved to a more prosperous community. One community leader estimated that more than one half of residents do not attend any church on a regular basis.

Statistics and observation agree that the neighborhood of Midtown North is inundated with small, local, primarily independent churches. The conditions are such that these congregations are poised to be significant community resources for residents. However, it is not yet clear if the reality matches the opportunity.

Experiences

There is no substitute for descriptive experience when it comes to sociological inquiry. While quantitative data can serve many useful purposes, qualitative personal accounts are the most direct route to a proper understanding of social experience. As before, perspective drastically alters perception and thus accounts often differ significantly, especially concerning specific elements. More often than not, though, general trends appear across multiple descriptions until an overarching conclusion can be made.

Ideally a truly conclusive study would have a substantial participant sample size of perhaps fifty or more, however, research time constraints as well as a desire to remain unobtrusive in the lives of community citizens forced a smaller, more thorough study of primarily ten participants. Participants were divided into three separate categories based upon the particular perspective their experience offered. Four community residents, five church leaders, and one community leader took part in the study. Church leaders were not confined to clergy members, though most identified themselves as such, and one church leader was also a resident of the community. The community leader was the chair of a community association and was also a resident of the neighborhood. All participants will remain anonymous apart from first names cited in the bibliography.

Each participant was asked to engage in a brief thirty-minute conversation about his or her perception of churches in Midtown North. Interview questions were tailored according to the

participant's particular perspective; for instance, church leaders were also asked specific questions pertaining to their congregation. General questions for all participants included topics such as expectations of churches in the neighborhood, opinions on the role of the Church in society, description of needs that should be met by churches, the reality of local church involvement in the community, and ways that they believe churches could improve such that they would meet their expectations. Responses were candid, direct, and exceedingly insightful.

Neighborhood residents unanimously agreed that churches have a responsibility to be involved in the community. Whether the goal is primarily to evangelize, as one resident maintained, or to specifically provide social services, neighborhood members concurred that the Church cannot fulfill its mission without being actively engaged with the residents who live in the immediate vicinity. One resident expressed the civic responsibility of churches as a commitment to a longstanding tradition in the black Church. Nearly a lifelong resident of the neighborhood, she recalled a time when, "Community churches were the focal point; they gave you direction" (Interview 6/28/07). She described a neighborhood where churches were actively involved in local Civic Leagues, community organizations led by residents, that worked together to fight racism during the 1960s; to support and challenge political candidates with rallies and gatherings; and to register and inform citizens of their rights as voting members of an active community. Recent restrictions from government regulations, she believed, are partly to blame for a substantial decrease in community involvement on the part of churches. (Interview 6/28/07)

Most residents expressed an overall disapproval with the current state of neighborhood churches. One resident voiced frustration with the lack of presence on the part of church members during the week. "Every now and then churches have community programs – health tests, food donations, etc. – things people generally can't afford… but the doors of the Church

are never open [during the week]" (Interview 7/3/07). He argued that this absence during the week negates the good that is done on Sunday; for the temptation to sin, to get caught up in illegal activities such as drugs or crime, is extremely powerful when surrounded by severe poverty. "If you can get in to see the Devil, why can't you get in to see God?" (Interview 7/3/07) Instead, he remarked, citizens like himself have to do the work of the Church themselves, opening their homes to those in need during the week.

Several community members mentioned the importance of protecting and teaching the children of the neighborhood. One resident remarked that some churches offer youth programs, but they do not seem to be effective. Concerning the tendency for younger generations to disregard the advice of their elders, he sighed, "They [the youth] hear you, but they don't hear you" (Interview 6/28/07). Another resident was disappointed with the churches' involvement in the lives of local families, saying, "Churches are not involved with parents and their children. They are not teaching children to be good community citizens. Bible study is not being involved in the community. It is a personal thing. Churches have resources; they are just not using them in that direction. They are more interested in 'pastorly' activities than being a part of a neighborhood" (Interview 7/3/07). On woman called for a cultural return to family values where families would read the Bible together and parents never needed a babysitter. Today she observes, "Children are running in the street on Sunday" (Interview 6/28/07). Residents regretted a cultural shift in the neighborhood away from strong families ties, but most believed that the Church should be positively influencing the moral foundations of the family, if for no other reason than the children.

Perhaps the most profound sentiments on the part of neighborhood residents concerned the overall disconnection between local churches and the community at large. Residents

acknowledged the fact that most of the members of local churches do not live in the neighborhood. One resident remarked that many churchgoers are former neighborhood residents that have since become successful and moved to wealthier accommodations; they return only on Sundays, their congregation the last remaining tie to a life they would rather forget. "The Prosperity Gospel preaches the spiritual justification for the poor – they are not saved. Only those who are financially successful become truly saved…. This theology places guilt and blame on individuals who ask for help" (Interview 6/26/07). Another mentioned the unavoidable gap between people of differing socio-economic status. "It's hard to give tithes if you don't have money, or a job for that matter. That's why people don't go to church" (Interview 7/3/07). Still another remarked that churches are not doing enough to bring drug dealers and criminals – those that need salvation most – to Sunday worship (Interview 6/28/07). And another recognized the limitations of the modern congregation. "The Church is too full of the 'saved.' There's no room for the sinners, the needy" (Interview 7/3/07).

Church leaders generally echoed the comments of residents in terms of the ultimate goal of the Church, though they sometimes disagreed on their specific role in the community. Argued one church leader, "While the church's main priority is salvation, you cannot preach to someone who is hungry or homeless, you must first provide them with their physical needs…. Though the role of the church is primarily spiritual, social services often must come first" (Interview 6/29/07). She realized that the greatest obstacle to providing such services is a lack of connection between church members and residents. This disconnection, she believed, is perpetuated by the perception on the part of residents that church members are judgmental. While she maintained that this is a misguided assumption, she recognized that many residents have the right to feel this way. She called for a humbleness of service among all Christians instead of harsh judgment that

turns people away. One the other hand, she contended, residents need rejuvenation. They need

the initiative and self-motivation to want to help themselves. Until then, the church can only

affect minimal change. (Interview 6/29/07)

The community leader substantiated this claim with her perspective. "Churches should

meet people where they are instead of telling them where they should be…. They should offer a

hand up not just a hand out…. But most importantly they should empower the people who live in

the community" (Interview 6/26/07). Without resident participation, she argued, the church

cannot solve social ills.

If true understanding originates from a synthesis of differing social perspectives, then the

experience of one man, both a lifelong resident of the neighborhood and an active pastor of a

local church, offered wisdom that was at once refreshing and enlightening. Despite his blindness

the elderly pastor of Greater Sakazia Baptist Church was able to see the religious community of

Midtown North from a unique perspective.

The great grandson of a slave from Madagascar, from which the name *Sakazia* or

friendship originated, the reverend grew up in the neighborhood a gang member with a mission.

He described a day when gangs protected a neighborhood, a day when family and history and

community were important. It was obvious that times had changed, he recalled, when during the

late 1970s he felt the inspiration to start a church in the neighborhood that meant so much to him.

Instead of offering their support, local neighbors, including several local pastors, signed a

petition against him and refused to sell him any land. In 1981 in spite of opposition he founded

Greater Sakazia Baptist Church without a building. It was not until 2000, and more than a decade

of dedicated labor building a church from the foundation up on land once owned by his father-in-

law, that the church had a substantial structure. Today the church has a membership surpassing 40 residents and regular Sunday attendance of at least two dozen. (Interview 7/3/07)

The churches of Midtown North are in a dire position, warns this pastor. The Church has lost its authority in the community; there is no trust left. He describes an afternoon walking through the neighborhood dressed in his suit and collar only to be chased down the block by several men and nearly beaten and robbed. "[In their minds] religious men are not be trusted," he remarks (Interview 7/3/07). In another incident he recalls confronting a man who was smoking marijuana on the back steps of his church. When the reverend asked the man to leave he rudely told him to wait until he was done, offering him some of the drug. Furious, the reverend demanded that the man conduct his illegal activities off of church premises. "There is a serious difference between respect for the Church and respect for the preacher," he affirmed (Interview 7/3/07). When the former is at risk due to lack of the latter Religion itself is at risk of becoming irrelevant in the community. Here the words of Durkheim find modern application, for authority is upheld only by social opinion.

Only through cooperation and communication, claims the pastor, can churches hope to regain the trust and respect of their community. "Right now there is a 'crab mentality' among local churches: when one crab tries to crawl out of the bucket, another one pulls it down" (Interview 7/3/07). Often a congregation has a plan to serve the community, but the pastor is so disconnected that he cannot possibly be of any help. Other times a pastor tries to initiate a community project and he is thwarted by other churches, pulled down by fellow pastors. If pastors can put aside differences of theology and personality and learn to work together for the sake of the community, he argues, wonderful things can happen. (Interview 7/3/07)

Several churches in Midtown North are acting on convictions that the Church should invest in the neighborhood. Through the newly developed Progress Ministry of Springdale Baptist Church, church leaders are building programs in Civic Engagement, including voter registration campaigns; Health Services, involving community-wide HIV testing; Youth Programming, with an emphasis on the Department of Child Services and parenting resources; and Corporate Support, working with businesses to stimulate the local economy and create jobs. (Interview 6/29/07) Similarly, Cathedral of Faith has created a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit operation called A New Beginning Community Organization through which church members are renovating a nearby apartment complex in order to provide a decent, affordable living community for residents. (Interview 7/14/07)

Even small churches with nowhere near the resources of such large congregations are actively supporting nearby residents in a variety of ways. Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church has paperwork underway to purchase two vacant homes nearby with plans to convert them into 'tidy houses,' or halfway houses offering around-the-clock assistance to those in need, including temporary housing, healthcare, food, clothing, and counseling (Interview 7/25/07). To that end, Patmos Island Community Church, still operating out of a converted residential home, continues to serve its small congregation, comprised almost entirely of nearby residents, by referring and supporting qualified counseling. In the words of its pastor, "If churches can be considered spiritual hospitals, then Patmos Island is the Emergency Room" (Interview 7/20/07).

Yet despite the optimism of church leaders, and the successes of several active congregations, the reality of residents' experiences remains palpable. To what extent can differing perspectives inform one another to offer constructive responses to community needs? In

what ways can residents, community leaders, and church leaders work together to reconcile experience with expectation?

Interpretations

It is apparent that social perspective affects one's theological worldview, which, in turn, affects the opinion one has regarding the role of the Church in society. For instance, religious leaders and residents generally agree that churches should serve the surrounding community, however, they tend to disagree on the role that service plays in theology. Some view community service as a means to an end, that is, a route to spiritual salvation. Others see it as an end in and of itself, a necessary element of faith. One thing is clear, conflicting theologies often result in lack of communication, subsequent misunderstanding, refusal to cooperate, and ultimately disconnection and isolation.

The social landscape of the Midtown North community specifically, and the city of Memphis generally, is rich with religious culture, history, and means. There is no shortage of churches or the resources necessary to maintain them individually. It is true that many small independent churches in Midtown North lack the funds necessary to enact large-scale community operations, yet the flaw is not in the lack of resources but the unwillingness to cooperate with other churches.

In many ways church statistics reflect this tendency toward independence most often resulting in isolation. The abnormally high percentage of independent nondenominational churches in Midtown North indicates a propensity for pastors to leave mainline denominations, for various understandable reasons, and start churches with virtually no ties to other organizations. One likeminded pastor started an independent congregation after he was racially discriminated at a mainline denominational church (Interview 7/20/07). This freedom of

assembly is a fundamental right of any American specifically maintained by the first sentence of the Bill of Rights.

Unlike the Church and State, however, the Church and Society are inseparable. Even the most harmless decisions made by religious organizations cannot escape the effect imposed on the community. As a result, a community saturated with separate, isolated theologies will naturally develop a culture with a similar worldview. In other words, if church leaders refuse to work together there is no surprise that community residents have similar difficulty in this regard.

Sociologist and theologians debate whether religion affects culture or culture affects religion, and consequently which situation is ideal, but observation affirms that the two are related to some degree. This is certainly the case in the neighborhood of Midtown North.

Conclusions

Despite its limitations available data seems to support the inference that the situation, and likewise this research, in Midtown North is applicable to the city of Memphis as a whole. In this case several important conclusions can be made. First, there is little to no consensus concerning even the definition of a church, let alone the role a church should fill in a community. Second, this inconsistency and overall uncertainty surrounding churches is partly a deliberate effort to preserve the most basic right in American democracy and partly its unintended byproduct.

Third, due to the above conditions, statistics and other quantitative data offer limited information about and generally vague depictions of the Church at work in society. Fourth, consequently social experience and similar qualitative measures are most effective at constructing a relatively accurate picture of the Church. Fifth, social perspective drastically affects such subjective observational techniques and must therefore be taken into consideration when seeking impartial understanding.

Finally, it is precisely this discrepancy of social perspective that accounts for differences in theology in the first place, resulting in the lack of consensus when defining the role the Church in the community from which this study began. This is not a pointless circular argument meant to encourage frustrated exclamations of, "Everyone has an opinion," but a profound wakeup call for everyone trapped in this endless cycle. Such a study is not an exercise in futility but a step toward rejuvenation and participation.

This is not to suggest that the solution to religious independence and freedom is consistency and uniformity, quite the opposite. Diversity is perhaps the greatest byproduct of democracy. However, independence does not require isolation and separation. If the churches of the Midtown North neighborhood could combine their efforts and pool their resources in a way that respects their theological diversity and organizational independence the community as a whole would flourish.

Every citizen, regardless of religious belief, has a stake in this important discussion. It is clear that churches in Midtown North, and religion in general throughout Memphis, are not diminishing by any means, nor should they. They are a fundamental part of American society. Let it be known, however, that the actions of the Church affect everyone. In this sense, all are a part of the community, like it or not. In the words of one church member, "Whether you live in the neighborhood or not, all church members are community members by default" (Interview 6/29/07).

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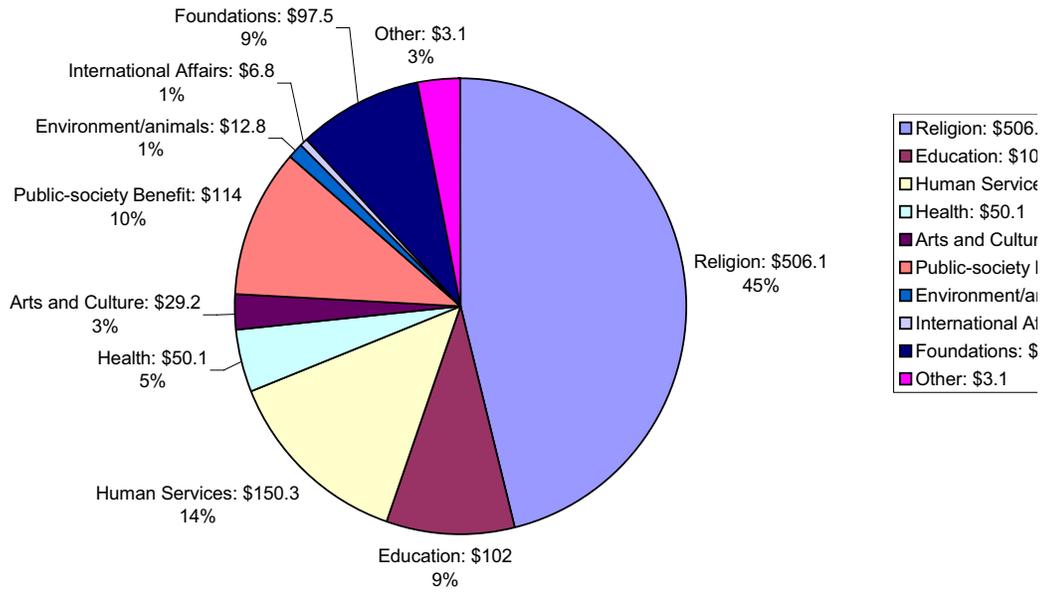< http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/uscode26/usc_sec_26_00000501----000-.html >

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Appendix 1

Church Membership by County
(NCC & ASARB)
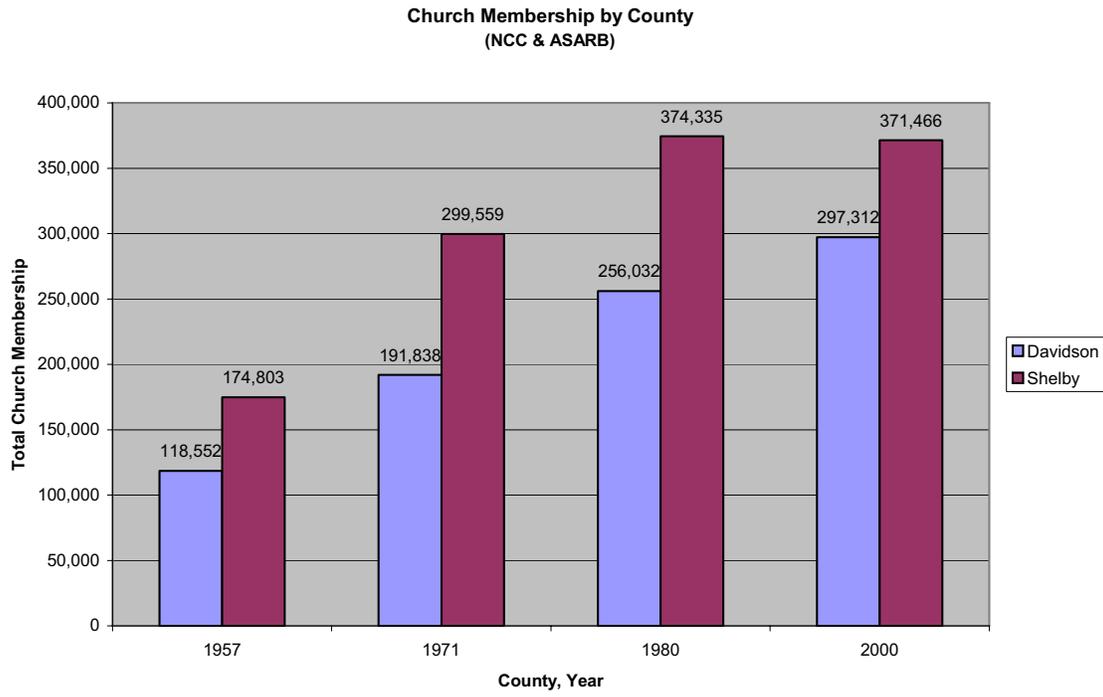
Appendix 2

Giving by Memphis-area Donors to Memphis-area Organizations, by Type of Recipien
Total Estimated Donations: $1.10 Billion (Dollar ammounts in millions)
(AAFRC Giving Memphis 2003)

Foundations: $97.5
9%

Other: $3.1
3%

International Affairs: $6.8
1%

Environment/animals: $12.8
1%

Public-society Benefit: $114
10%

Arts and Culture: $29.2
3%

Health: $50.1
5%

Human Services: $150.3
14%

Education: $102
9%

Religion: $506.1
45%

Religion: $506.
Education: $10
Human Service
Health: $50.1
Arts and Cultu
Public-society
Environment/a
International A
Foundations: $
Other: $3.1

Appendix 3

Midtown North Neighborhood Boundaries
(Google Maps)

United States Census Tract 9
(US Census)
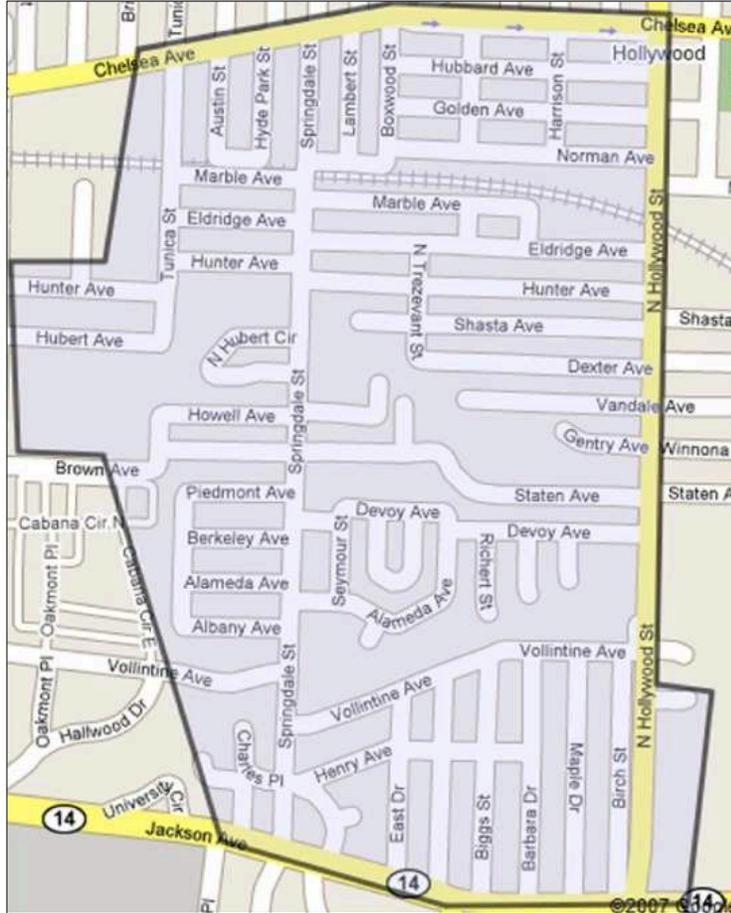
Appendix 4

Table of All Known Churches in Midtown North Neighborhood

Church Name	Affiliation	Pastor Name	Pastor Contact	Church Contact	Street Number	Street Name
Body of Christ Apostolic Assembly	Apostolic					
Cathedral of Faith	NA	Rev. Booker	281-2868	327-1616	2212	Jackson
Chelsea Avenue Church of Christ	COC			324-4336	2334	Chelsea
Corinthian Missionary Baptist	Missionary Baptist	Rev. Wiggison	274-4794	274-3181	2291	Chelsea
Faith in Action Deliverance Church	NA	Rev. Grant-Young			2236	Clarksdale
Greater Galatian Baptist	Baptist			323-7225	2418	Jackson
Greater Mount Zion Baptist	Baptist	Rev. Conrad		274-8013	2070	Chelsea
Greater Sakazia Baptist	Baptist	Rev. Persons	274-4336			Marble
Hunter Avenue Baptist	Baptist	Rev. Partee	274-5388	278-2710	2245	Hunter
Living Christ Church	NA			725-5977	952	Springdale
Love Temple Ministries	NA			324-2507	1106	N Hollywood
Messiah Baptist	Baptist			452-3515	2390	Chelsea
Mount Victory	NA			458-3521	2327	Vandale
New Antioch Missionary Baptist	Missionary Baptist	Rev. Braddock	644-9582			
New First Baptist	Baptist	Rev. Askew		726-4438	2311	Norman
New Heights Third Day	NA			276-0774	2160	Chelsea
Open Door Holiness Church	NA	Rev. Tyms			2216	Eldridge
Patmos Island Community Church	NA	Rev. Perkins	299-5685		2113	Hunter
Pinnacle Pentecostal Holiness	Pentecostal			458-6069	2383	Jackson
Pleasant View Missionary Baptist	Missionary Baptist	Rev. Barrett	406-0141	452-2887	2332	Hunter
Power of the Word COGIC	COGIC	Rev. Harris	315-1663		1066	Springdale
Princeton Chapel AME Zion	AME	Rev. Jones	229-0840	276-2523	2262	Eldridge
Springdale Baptist	Baptist	Dr. Hughes		690-8746	1193	Springdale
St. John AME	AME	Rev. Courtez		323-9850	2321	Hunter
Summerfield Missionary Baptist	Missionary Baptist	Rev. Wilson		276-5950	1383	Boxwood
Trinity All Nations Missionary Baptist	Missionary Baptist	Rev. Cockeran		276-5211	2383	Norman
Trinity Prayer and Faith Ministries	NA			365-6601	2131	Hunter

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