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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION: A STUDY OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Alexandra Arjannikova

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**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A NON-
PRORIT ORGANIZATION: A STUDY OF LOCAL
CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH**

BY

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B.A., International Relations and Global Studies; Hendrix College, 2005

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in

Communication

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2013

DEDICATION

With gratitude dedicated to God, who constantly leads, upholds, and blesses me and my work.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (The Message).

«11 To you, O God, belong the greatness and the might, the glory, the victory, the majesty, the splendor; Yes! Everything in heaven, everything on earth; the kingdom all yours! You've raised yourself high over all.»

С благодарностью этот интеллектуальный труд посвящается Господу Богу, постоянно ведущему, поддерживающему и благословляющему меня во всех делах.

1 Паралипоменон 29:11 (Russian Synodal Version)

«11 Твоё, Господи, величие, и могущество, и слава, и победа и великолепие, и всё, на небе и на земле, Твоё: Твоё, Господи, царство, и Ты превыше всего, как Владычествующий. »

Dedicated to my father, Dr. Vitaly A. Arjannikov, who taught me my first words of English and motivated my academic pursuits by his intellectual achievements:

Посвящается памяти Виталия Александровича Аржанникова, отца моего, который научил меня говорить по-английски, подвигнул учиться в С.Ш.А и вдохновил, своими интеллектуальными достижениями, стать доктором наук. Спасибо, Папа! Да будет царство тебе небесное.

Dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Natalia G. Arjannikova, an extraordinary woman, an outstanding mother, an inspiring role model, the most kind and forgiving confidant—my best friend:

Посвящается, так-же, Наталье Георгиевне Аржанниковой, самой невероятной женщине на свете, чудеснейшей матери и другу моему сердечному.

Моей матери я обязана за то чего я достигла и за то кем я стала. Она научила меня мечтать о невозможном, быть бесстрашной, сильной и выносливой, мыслить экстраординарно, не ограничивать себя в уникальности, и самое главное—любить Господа Бога.

Отпустив единственного ребёнка в другую страну в 15 лет, она совершила великий и самоотверженный подвиг, за который я ей безмерно благодарна. За годы разлуки, она поддерживала меня духовно, душевно, морально и финансово с невероятной щедростью и бескорыстностью. Своим упорством, стремлением к совершенству, независимостью, достижениями в работе, профессиональной и личной успешностью, лёгкостью характера, силой духа, щедростью, заботой и внимательностью к другим она постоянно вдохновляла меня и служила примером подражания. Её вклад в моё образование, становление, и счастье настолько велик, что мой титул: «Доктор Аржанникова» по праву принадлежит и ей.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION: A STUDY OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation applies organizational culture, identification, commitment, and leadership theories to explain how United Methodist Church (UMC) congregations (members and pastors) view the work of the local church and how it differs from the recommendations of the denomination's top leadership. I develop case studies of congregations using a triangulated-methodological framework of observations, interviews, and textual analysis, which captures the experience of leaders and members of three UMC congregations located in different geographical areas. I analyze the data from these research sites using thematic analysis that produced detailed and comprehensive narratives about each congregation.

These case studies identify the values that define the culture of the local churches in light of the characteristics of each regional area; describe how local congregations conceptualize the role of pastors; and explain how the church mission is expressed and enacted at the local church level in ways that differ from the mission established by the national church leadership. My analysis shows how organizational values, norms, assumptions, and contextual characteristics influence the fulfillment of the national church mission by the congregations through examining the organizational processes, practices, and pastoral leadership in local churches and identifying how these factors influence congregational identity.

This dissertation makes a theoretical contribution to the organizational values research by expanding Wiener's (1988) classification of Organizational Value Systems. It also adds a new concept of implicit commitment and contributes to organizational identification research by expanding the conceptualization of Cheney's (1983b) unifying symbols technique. Based on the application of Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model of leadership to the church context, it introduces an amended classification of elements influencing leadership effectiveness in religious organizations and proposes a new style of leadership appropriate for this unique context.

This dissertation contributes to organizational research methods by utilizing triangulation, an approach based on thick descriptions of organizational members' conceptualizations of their organizational identities and of each congregation's organizational processes. The study demonstrates how the UMC's principle of "Connectionalism" links numerous local churches across different geographical areas into one denomination, while allowing them to retain unique identities and develop close connections with their local communities.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the dissertation that applies communication theories to explain how United Methodist Church (UMC) congregations (members and pastors) view the work of the local church and their experiences with the church. Then I explain if and how this view differs from the recommendations provided by the top leadership of the church. To accomplish these goals, this chapter (1) introduces the theoretical rationale for the study; (2) provides reasoning for focusing on local UMCs; (3) describes organizational communication issues in the UMC; (4) establishes goals of the study; (5) presents research questions; (6) identifies my research perspective; and (7) provides key definitions for the study.

Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical necessity for this study is grounded in the lack of organizational communication research conducted in religious organizations in general and churches in particular. A small body of organizational communication research focuses on religious contexts (Adler, 1995; Avery, & Gobbel, 1980; Bailey, 1980; Bond III, 2001; Coopman & Meidlinger, 1998; de la Torre, 2002; Driskill & Camp, 2006; Ecklund, 2006; Guthrie, 2007; Harper & Schulte-Murray, 1998; and Schroeder & Scribner, 2006). With the exception of the studies cited above, the majority of theorizing in communication is based on the corporate, non-profit, and governmental organizations. Thus, some of the prominent, foundational theories in organizational communication have not been applied and tested in religious organizations.

In this study I apply the theories of organizational culture, organizational commitment, organizational identification, and leadership to examine communication in the United Methodist Church (UMC). My findings demonstrate how these theories can be expanded to explain organizational processes of religious organizations. My choices of theories are grounded in the communication issues pertinent to this organization; these choices are discussed in detail in a subsection below.

Choice of the Organization

My choice to focus on the UMC is based on the complexity of communication in this large religious organization. As one of the largest denominations in the U.S (Rainer, 2013), numerous local churches are situated in different areas and characterized by great diversity among congregations. Thus, this organization provides a rich turf for the study of communication.

I chose to focus on the local church context because a study that investigates communication patterns and organizational culture at the local church level is a missing piece in research dealing with the UMC. Two recent studies conducted in the UMC tended to treat the church as a business. They traced how the UMC uses people, money, and processes at the district, Annual Conference and general church levels (Apex, 2010) and identified quantifiable factors contributing to congregational effectiveness (Towers Watson, 2010). The research by Apex (2010) reported valuable information regarding the structures and processes of the church, but focused primarily on three of the four hierarchical levels: the Annual Conference, district and national. The data about the local church was limited to the evaluation of clergy and lay leadership's perceived attitudes toward change and effectiveness of local churches. Moreover,

the interview and the survey were primarily based on responses of district superintendents, bishops, general agency employees, and conference staff (Apex, 2010); local church leadership was scarcely represented. Thus, although the report included some information about the local churches, the data was based on opinions of leadership from other levels.

Towers Watson's study (2010) focused on local churches, surveying leaders of 2,208 churches and reviewing financial and administration data from 32,000 congregations. The research produced a list of indicators of vitality-factors that directly cause that desired congregational state. Towers Watson's (2010) research attempted to be representative of the UMC congregations in the U.S. However, it dealt with observable and quantitatively measurable factors of effectiveness or vitality and hence did not address issues of context, local church culture or communication processes and practices in the local churches.

An important limitation of Tower Watson's (2010) study was its lack of attention to the fluid, unquantifiable interactional elements that shape organizational processes. My research addresses the need to include qualitative description of UMC congregational experiences and organizational processes and demonstrate how contextual and cultural constraints influence the conceptualizations and enactments of church members and leaders as they jointly construct a unique identity for their local congregation.

Communication Issues in the UMC

This study investigates three areas related to communication: the denominational mission and goals, pastoral leadership, and organizational processes. These choices are explained below.

Denominational Mission and Goals

The UMC is uniquely focused on communication. One of the core principles of this denomination is Connectionalism, the principle of uniting multiple, diverse local congregations into a unified denomination, the *United Methodist Church*. Connectionalism is manifested in numerous structures and practices (described in detail in the last subsection of this chapter). Two of the practices, the denominational mission and goals (the Four Areas of Focus), are addressed in this study because of the apparent vagueness within the UMC's idea of Connectionalism.

The top leaders of the UMC (the bishops and the General Conference) establish a common mission for the denomination for local churches to carry out in their respective communities. *The Book of Discipline* (2008) states that, “[t]he mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (p. 87). In other words, local churches are to encourage their members to follow Christ in ways that transform the world. This expectation is communicated in *The Book of Discipline's* (2008) assertion that the local church context is “the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs” (p. 87).

Closely tied to the mission is another one of the UMC's efforts to facilitate Connectionalism, the Four Areas of Focus. Created in 1998 through collaborative efforts of the leaders of the denomination (Council of Bishops, the general secretaries, general agency leadership, etc.), the Four Areas of Focus are the vision of how the church is to fulfill the quadrennial mission of the denomination (UMC, 2011a). The four areas of ministry focus include: developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world; creating new places for new people and revitalizing existing congregations; engaging in ministry with the poor; and combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally (UMC, 2011 b).

Similar to the mission, the top leadership urges congregations to “bring these areas of focus to life in a wide range of ministries” in their congregations (UMC, 2011b).

However, apparent problems exist with the enactment of the nationally established mission and the quadrennial Four Areas of Focus at the local level. Local churches do not follow one unified mission established by the national level leadership and many have their own priorities. A recent study of the UMC structures and congregations in the United States suggests that rather than being led by a common-global mission, leaders in many local churches create their own interpretations of the mission (Apex, 2010). According to the Operational Assessment Project, one of the central themes in the interviews with UMC leaders (national, regional, and local) was “a sense of loss of [unified] identity” (Apex, 2010, p. 8). Apex study’s participants reported apparent variations in local church mission interpretations and stipulated that lack of clarity in expression of the global church mission likely was the reason.

To understand this problem better, I analyze members’ and pastors’ conceptualizations and enactments of mission and goals (Four Areas of Focus or their alternatives) at the local church level through the lens of communication theory. The theory of organizational culture enables me to understand the contextual influences associated with the regional areas where local churches are located and the unique identity of each organization. Attention to the differences in the mission statements and missional priorities expressed at the local church sites is necessary to inform the UMC’s practices of communicating the mission and the Four Areas of Focus to the local churches. This information is likely to benefit the denomination’s leaders as well as the leaders at the local church level since it shows how local congregations differ in the way they construct and enact UMC’s idea of mission.

Leadership

Another area that is closely linked to communication is leadership. This area needs attention in this organization because the UMC's conceptualization of leadership in church context differs from its implementation from congregation to congregation. First, this organization lacks consensus in its conceptualization of effective or most appropriate leadership style. The UMC uses two leadership models: participatory (bottom-up) and authoritarian (top-down). However, the organization neither explains when each of the models is appropriate nor provides reasoning for switching between them or integrating their components. Thus, the UMC sends conflicting messages regarding styles of church leadership. Second, both of these leadership models are drawn from the corporate environment and are not always appropriate to local congregations and the needs of the community where those churches are located.

To illustrate, the UMC's practices of creating the denominational mission and the Four Areas of Focus can be seen as an example of the corporate top-down or authoritarian model. Embedded in the practice of having the top leadership dictate the mission and the goals for its multiple dispersed local organizations is the corporate view that the organization has to have one unified mission and specific goals that need to be accomplished through the subordinates.

Easterly (2008) defines the top-down, corporate view as one where institutions are seen as "determined by the laws written by...leaders" (p. 95). The corporate top-down model emphasizes vertical communication, strategizing and decision making transmitted from top leadership to various levels below. Chiou and Chang (2009) explain that top leadership accomplishes its goals by having subordinates comply with the vision of leaders. According to the corporate model, top leadership is competent in providing guidance regarding "the strategies

and tactics to meet the ever-changing interests of its constituents” (Chiou & Chang, 2009, p 98). Consequently, top leadership is seen as responsible for understanding the needs of the constituents and market trends and directing the subordinates that otherwise do not have access to that relevant information and hence do not know how to fulfill their tasks in ways that lead to organizational success. This view is incompatible with the church context because unlike businesses, churches are not regulated by market principles. The financial relations in church context are also different. The top leaders in the church (bishops and General Conference) do not provide pastors and members of local churches with monetary incentives. Members of churches support both the local and the national organizations instead. Thus, the underlying principles of the top-down corporate approach are incongruent with the church context and its nonprofit statutes.

Having said that, the UMC leadership’s efforts to set the denominational mission and goals and expectations that the local churches would fulfill this mission are grounded in the desire to foster denominational identification (the UMC principle of Connectionalism). However, unless the top leadership makes this reasoning clear to the local churches, they are likely to see the mission and goals established for them at the top level as enactments of the corporate version of the top-down leadership. Thus, local churches are not likely to embrace the mission and goals communicated from the top if they see them as enactments of the corporate view or the national/international organization that assumes that they are subordinates and thus should follow rather than create their own mission and goals. This shows how UMC’s enactment of the top-down leadership needs modification if it is to reflect the reality of the relationship between the national church and the individual congregation.

The second leadership model that UMC uses is the participatory model of leadership, a model that is more in line with what congregations do. The UMC exercises this approach by giving local church leaders freedom to structure their work according to what they perceive are the needs of the community. This practice is grounded in the UMC's top leadership recognition that the "one-size fits all" approach does not satisfy all locations due to the diversity of local churches in terms of size and members. Thus, in describing the organization and administration of the local churches, *the Book of Discipline (2004)* states that, "[e]ach local church shall develop a plan for organizing its administrative and pragmatic responsibilities" (§244). In describing most of the local church structures and responsibilities, *the Book of Discipline (2004)* uses such terms as "strongly encouraged" rather than "must" or "mandated," thus confirming the flexibility that the local leaders have in their work. In my study, I hope to find out how this model works for congregations.

Similarly, the local churches are not expected to adopt the denomination's mission of the UMC and the Four Areas of Focus word for word. Local leaders are encouraged to modify the phrasing of the mission statement and the foci to fit their local context. Unlike subordinates in the corporate top-down model, they are given freedom to interpret and communicate the top leadership's mission in ways most appropriate for the local community. This shows that the UMC sends conflicting messages regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of leadership styles. It uses two models of leadership without communicating to the pastors and congregations the reasons for favoring one model over another.

The UMC's practice of combining components of the two conflicting models without adequate communication about these choices is also confusing. For example, it seems that the organization values the participatory model of leadership because it encourages creativity and

initiative. At the same time, it appreciates the top-down model's ability to institute consistency and accountability between multiple levels of the organization. Seeking to promote both values: initiative and consistency, the UMC combines the elements of these two leadership models. For example, pastors and congregations exercise creativity in their local churches but remain constrained by the mandates and expectations imposed by the national leadership. Because the participatory and top-down corporate models are in tension, applying them interchangeably sends a conflicting message and results in organizational problems such as discrepancies between what the national leadership expects and recommends and how local churches understand and enact their role in the local community.

To address these inconsistencies, I study the conceptualizations and enactments of leadership in local churches through the actions, texts, and voices of leaders and congregational members. Through the lenses of organizational culture, leadership, organizational commitment, and organizational identification, I analyze influences on pastoral leadership and identify manifestations of leadership that are unique to the UMC context. Application of these theories to the church context reveals how these theories need to be expanded to explain organizational communication processes in a religious organization and to understand how church congregations are constituted through the interactions of leaders and members.

Organizational Processes

In addition to the communication associated with leadership and nationally established mission and goals, this study analyzes local churches' expressions of organizational practices and processes and members' and pastors' conceptualizations of their roles. I apply a framework of three organizational communication theories: organizational culture, organizational

commitment, and organizational identification to interpret the contextual differences associated with those expressions. Rather than targeting specific organizational processes, I allow the data to suggest which processes, practices, identifications, and commitments are at the forefront of organizational experience. The application of this theoretical framework to study this organization allows me to identify components of these theories that need to be expanded in order for these theories to explain organizational processes in the religious context.

The Goals of the Study

The overarching goal of this study is to expand organizational communication theory so that it can be used in religious organizations. To accomplish this goal I focus on three core elements of the UMC organizational communication that seem problematic or inconsistent. I seek to understand how leadership, church mission, and organizational processes are enacted at the local church level and what influences these enactments have on the way congregations construct a unique identity. I also seek to understand how these enactments vary contextually (based on the regional and organizational differences).

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What values define the culture of the local church in light of the characteristics of its regional area?
2. How does the local church (congregation and pastors) understand the role of senior or lead pastors?
3. How is the mission expressed at the local church level different from the mission established by the national level leadership?

4. How do organizational values, norms, assumptions and contextual (regional community) characteristics affect the fulfillment of the church mission, organizational processes, practices, pastoral leadership in local churches, and congregational identity?

Research Perspective

The philosophical assumptions underlying this research merit attention. Presented below is a brief description of my key positionalities.

Philosophical Assumptions

The goal of this work is not to generalize but to present some of the unique perspectives and voices existing at the local church level. My approach is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which seeks to interpret or understand the experiences of the people in their specific context. I choose this approach because the goal of this study is to understand how local church leaders and congregations define and enact their church's mission, vision, and leadership. I also seek to understand what makes the local church experience unique. I investigate how local church culture and context guide the mission and the vision, and affect the leadership decisions and the style of the pastor. The interpretive approach allows me to observe and interact with the UMC members and staff in their familiar surroundings (their local church). This is especially useful given my interest in the entirety of the congregation's experience (including the surroundings, the contextual influences, etc.).

Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm envisions reality as socially constructed. It posits that humans do not experience *reality* objectively but construct subjective realities based on their interactions with the world and with each other. There is "always an infinite number of constructions that might be made...[and therefore,] there are multiple realities" (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985, p 84). Further, social constructivism suggests that no absolute knowledge exists within the human realm and that all “knowledge claims are inevitably positioned and partial” (Cheney, 2000). Knowledge is derived through “intersubjective or communal agreement” of individuals that belong to a particular community (Anderson & Baum, 2004, p. 604). Each community determines what is true or what knowledge is valid through “the social process of justification” (p. 604). From this perspective, research cannot be truly objective.

This view appeals to me as I seek to provide an interpretation of how the mission, vision, and church leadership are perceived by some of the local church leaders and congregations rather than claim to provide the interpretation that speaks for the entire denomination. The goal of my research is to capture one perspective out of many possible perspectives. I do not seek to represent all the local United Methodist churches in the U.S. or to portray the most prevalent view. The intention of this research is to provide information that may be relevant to understanding some of the communication problems currently experienced by the different UMC congregations located in different regions of the U.S.

Axiologically, social constructivism portrays research as value-laden. Cheney (2000) writes that the researcher does not simply use methodological instruments; the researcher is the instrument of research. From this perspective, it is impossible to separate the researcher from the participant. The researcher-participant relationship is one of productive tension and reciprocity (the researcher influences the response of the participant and the participant influences the researcher). This perspective is appealing to me as I seek to acknowledge my background, assumptions, and beliefs as influencing my research rather than try to isolate them from the research process. Making my readers aware of the contingencies associated with my identity will

allow them to draw informed conclusions as they construct their knowledge based on the products of the research.

Positionality toward the Study

In the study of the United Methodist Church in general and the local church setting in particular, I am more of an insider than an outsider. I am an insider in a sense that I have been a UMC member since I was nine. I first joined the Return to Christ UMC in Ekaterinburg, Russia. At age fifteen I moved to the US and began to attend a small rural church in the South Central Jurisdiction followed by a large urban church in the same conference. After spending eight years there, my membership was transferred to another urban church in the South Central Jurisdiction. In three years living in that area I was part of three different United Methodist congregations (all three large urban churches). Currently I am a part of a congregation in the Western Jurisdiction.

Prior to beginning my research of the church communication practices, my primary experience of the UMC has been on the local church level. As an active member I have been involved as a participant and lay leader in various church activities including youth, mission, Sunday school formation, and Bible studies. It is my passion for God, my dedication to the United Methodist teaching, and my commitment for the work of the local church that served as reasoning behind my research goals.

The characteristics that make me an insider are beneficial in gaining access to a variety of local congregations in various Annual Conferences. They also allow me to contextualize and make sense of the local church culture that I observe in light of the history and tradition of the denomination.

However, the same characteristics also act as biases as I approach the research. As a devoted member and lay leader in the United Methodist Church, I am biased by my familiarity with the traditions and rituals of the church, my beliefs in the United Methodist theology, and continuous exposure to the positive impact of the work of the church. Being aware of these biases is helpful to me and to the reader in making sense of the research findings and interpretations.

In addition to being an insider in a local church context, I am also an outsider from the perspective of clergy and staff. Being a member of a local church I have not been ordained or appointed as a local pastor and hence have not been exposed to much of the administrative dynamics of the church, especially those at the district and the national level. I learned about the work of the organization's Annual Conferences, districts, General Agencies, and the General Conference primarily through studying and conversations with representatives of those groups. My interpretations about their work are not based on the inside knowledge but on observation, conversations with top leadership, and information from official communication sources.

The lack of the insider background may lead me to interpret what I learn from the church leaders differently than the insiders who know unwritten rules and interpretations. However, it might be helpful for the top leadership to be exposed to outsider interpretations of their statements and actions. After all, the majority of the denomination consists of local church members and lay leaders who are likely to possess little insider knowledge about the work of the top leadership.

Definitions of Terms

The United Methodist Denomination

Presently, the United Methodist Church is the second largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. with over 7.8 million members in this country (Rainer, 2013). The UMC is grounded in Wesleyan theology and retains much of the structure established by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. For example, United Methodist preachers continue to follow the tradition started by Wesley of meeting in conferences. However, in light of the democratic principles that are at the core in the United States, the conferences are significantly more participatory in nature. The structure of the UMC and the leadership arrangements between organizational levels are discussed in detail in Appendix A.

National Church Leadership

The Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church represents the top leadership. Bishops oversee the entire church but have specific leadership assignments in their respective episcopal areas. The U.S. is divided into 50 episcopal areas while the number of Episcopal areas in other countries is 18. Although the UMC is an international religious organization, the majority of its membership and leadership infrastructures are in the United States. This study focuses on the organizations and congregations in the U.S. and thus refers to the leaders of the denomination as national leadership.

In addition to the bishops, the top leadership role is shared by the collective body called the General Conference. The General Conference is constituted by nearly 1,000 delegates from the U.S. and other countries with United Methodist representation. Fifty percent of the delegates are clergy and fifty percent are non-clergy. Bishops serve as presiding officers during the

conference but they do not have a right to vote. The General Conference proposes and votes on petitions and resolutions, makes policy changes, and develops and or modifies official church statements and rules. The General Conference is the only entity authorized to speak for the entire denomination, to issue mandates for churches, and make major policy and doctrine changes (see Appendix A for detailed description of the role of the General Conference and the UMC's bishops).

Local Church

The term “local church” refers to each individual United Methodist congregation. In the UMC structure it is the smallest unit and is considered “the primary unit of outreach to the communities of the world” (UMC, 2011c). Each local church has one or more pastors, several committees, Sunday school classes, Bible studies, social and outreach programs, etc. Local churches range from large (mega-churches) to small, rural to urban, bilingual to highly homogeneous, liberal to conservative, traditional to contemporary (sometimes featuring both types of services and congregations in one church), strict and methodical to casual and informal, etc. Local churches are linked to other local churches as well as various hierarchical structures of the United Methodist church, such as Annual Conferences, districts, jurisdictions, etc. (See Appendix A).

Connectionalism

An important principle underlying the structure and the organization of the church is “Connectionalism.” It embodies the historically Methodist arrangement of communication linking the dispersed believers into one body. Central to Connectionalism is the emphasis, established by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, of the importance of communication in

religious organizations. The roots of Connectionalism are in what John Wesley called the “connexion,” an interlocking system of classes, societies, and Annual Conferences that provided an organized system of communication and accountability (Koehler, 1997, p 24). In the early years of the church (1700s), the “connexion” was manifested in societies or small groups that linked parishioners with each other and a circuit-riding pastor (one who literally rode in a circuit visiting several churches that were under the pastor’s care). It was also manifested in the conferences where Methodist pastors met with Wesley to discuss “how [they] should proceed to save [their] own souls and those who heard [them]” (Outler, 1964, p. 134).

Currently, the United Methodist “Connectionalism” is seen as a “vital web of interactive relationships [among persons and groups]” weaving a global church into unity (Frank, 2006, p. 169). The *Book of Discipline* (1992) defines it as “a style of relationships rather than simply an organizational or structural framework” (§ 112.1-2). Among the numerous manifestations of “Connectionalism” are the following: (1) the common doctrine, rules, and missional foundation; (2) local churches’ identification with the UMC; (3) the practice of regular conferencing (meeting in General and Annual conferences); and (4) the connected system of giving.

First, United Methodists share the UMC constitution and doctrinal standards. Churches outside the U.S. are permitted to adapt the remainder of the *Discipline* to fit local cultures. For the U.S. churches, however, the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions* in their entirety serve as official rules, regulations, and guidelines. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the top leadership of the UMC (the bishops and the General Conference) establishes a common mission for the denomination for local churches to carry out in their communities.

Second, Connectionalism is at the forefront of local church identity. The *Book of Discipline* (2004) defines the local church as “the connectional society of persons who have been baptized, have professed their faith in Christ”, etc (§ 203). When a person joins a United Methodist church, he or she does not only join that specific congregation but the whole connection (§215.4).

Third, Connectionalism is also exemplified by regular conferences that enable a system of interrelatedness between local churches through the larger church. The most prominent types of conferences in the UMC are general and annual. Annual Conference meetings gather all clergy of the respective Annual Conference (regional body) along with an equal number of lay representatives. These conferences occur every year to discuss questions pertaining to the whole Annual Conference (as a regional body) as well as the local church concerns (*Book of Discipline*, 2004, § 602.8).

Every four years, representatives from each Annual Conference (clergy and lay) are summoned at the General Conference where they discuss issues of the denomination, Annual Conferences (regional bodies), and individual districts. The denomination’s ministry goals upon which the General Conference delegates agree are communicated and fulfilled by the smaller structural units of the church: jurisdictions, Annual Conferences, district offices, and local churches. Conferences facilitate Connectionalism by building relationships between dispersed individuals and providing a shared doctrine, rules, and vision (mission and areas of focus) for the churches to follow and by which to be united.

Fourth, the system of funding also exemplifies Connectionalism. A portion of the general budget of each local church is given to the general church. Through these contributions, called

“shared ministries” or “apportioned funds,” the UMC “proportionally allocates the church wide budget to conferences and local churches” as well as to selected programs on national and international levels. Some of these agreed upon programs include World Service, Africa University, Black College, Episcopal, General Administration, Interdenominational Cooperation and Ministerial Education (UMC, 2011d).

Organizational Culture

The theory of organizational culture posits that each organization has a unique culture produced by individuals within this organization as they communicate with each other.

According to Keyton (2005) the culture of the organization is created by “the strategic and spontaneous, intentional and unintentional, formal and informal, and verbal and nonverbal interactions of organizational members” (p. 44).

Culture consists of a variety of elements. Keyton (2005) lists three main elements of organizational culture: **artifacts, values, and assumptions**. Keyton (2005) defines artifacts as “anything that one can see, hear, or feel in organizational experience” (p. 23). Keyton (2005) lists such examples of artifacts as “norms, standards, and customs” (p. 23). Values according to Keyton (2005) are “strategies, goals, principles, or qualities, that are considered ideal, worthwhile or desirable, and, as a result create guidelines for organizational behavior” (p. 24). Keyton defines assumptions as “beliefs that are taken for granted, so deeply entrenched that organizational members no longer discuss them” (p. 25). Assumptions can be divided into several groups: assumptions about self; “about relationships to other organizational members, clients, customers, vendors, and other external stakeholders; about the organization itself; or about the work” (p. 26). Given these three elements, Keyton (2005) defines culture as “the set(s)

of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of organizational members” (p. 28).

In order to identify artifacts, values, and assumptions that make up the culture of an organization, researchers typically examine organizational traditions, rituals, routine practices, celebrations, etc. Focusing on the physical surroundings, the arrangement of the space, the mundane daily interactions, the climactic events, and atypical occurrences demonstrates a multi-layered view of the elements of the organizational culture. Attention to the nuances and the differences in expressions of the elements of culture lead to a multi-faceted, holistic representation of the culture of the organization.

Religious Organizations

The term religious organization can be used to refer to a wide range of institutions including churches, religious communities, councils or alliances of churches, church commissions, religious advocacy groups, etc. In this study the term refers to Christian churches.

Religious organizations differ from secular (corporate, governmental, and non-profit) organizations in several significant ways. The first difference is the role the organizational belief system plays in the life and culture of the organization. Unlike secular organizations Christian churches are concerned not only with the human realm but also with the Higher Power.

In Christianity the Higher Power is represented by one deity, God (in contrast with polytheistic religions that believe in many gods). This one God is manifested as God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. The triune conceptualization of the Higher Power in Christianity is referred to as the Trinity. It emphasizes the relational nature of God. In Christianity the relationship between God and the people is central; thus in churches,

communication is not only among humans but also involving the Higher Power or God (Meyer, 2009). Each Christian denomination has its own system of beliefs that provides a conceptualization of God, describes the human relationship with God, advises certain human behavior, moral and social principles, etc. This belief system (also referred to as doctrine, creed, theology, order, principles, teachings, etc.) is vital to the existence and functionality of churches.

The belief system defines what a religious organization is. A corporation may be defined by the product or service it provides. The identity of a religious organization is necessarily grounded in how it addresses God; how it perceives the relationship between the members; between the members and the organization; between the members, the organization, and God; etc. Since the belief system stipulates these important relationships, it defines the organization by giving it purpose, meaning, and even structure. Thus, the belief system of the church is at the core of its culture as it informs the rituals and the practices, as well as guides the formation of values and assumptions about the organization, about God, and about self. Bailey (1980) writes that most churches have a highly developed belief system or religious worldview that encompasses their “views of the world, of God, of the church, of pastoral leadership, and how the life of the [church] in all of its aspects should be conducted” (p. 15). Thus, in studying the organizational culture of a church, attention to the belief system embedded in that church is especially important.

In addition to the focus on the belief system, another difference between secular and religious organizations is the implication of voluntary membership. Attendance, participation, and membership in most Christian churches in contemporary U.S. society are voluntary. People choose whether to attend a church, which church to attend, how often to attend, and whether to become members or attend as “visitors.” They can choose how much or how little to participate

in the life and activities of the church. Membership in most churches is not dependent on frequency of attendance or active participation. Studies of organizational culture in religious contexts need to consider the implications of voluntary membership.

The third element that distinguishes religious organizations from secular ones is the organization's financial dependence on members. Unlike corporate organizations that are funded by production of goods or services, churches rely on members for funding. The amounts of funding churches receive often depend on how much members choose to contribute. In Christian churches there is an expectation that members contribute according to their income; a tithe (one tenth of the value of a person's possessions or income) is the prescribed amount to be contributed to the church. However, members who do not contribute according to the expected level do not lose member privileges and are not expelled from the organization; they are merely encouraged to contribute more. Thus, it is the members who determine whether to contribute to the organization and how much they believe is reasonable and possible according to their financial situation. The financial arrangements are important in studies of organizational culture because they affect organizational practices, values, assumptions, and other elements of culture.

The fourth difference between secular and religious organizations is that members in a religious organization are not only stakeholders but also stockholders. The financial dependency patterns are substantially different in churches where members do not usually receive compensation for their work. In churches people can volunteer services as well as contribute money. Since members are not financially dependent on the church, but rather the church is dependent on their support, church members and prospective members are stockholders. Meyer (2009) writes that churches have to "attract and retain each person's attendance and loyalty" if they are to survive and prosper (p. 62). The decisions that a particular church makes often

depend on members' acceptance or approval of new practices, policies, programs, initiatives, and changes. Research shows that when making such important decisions as which style of worship to adopt (Meyer, 2009) or what topics to address in the sermons (Guthrie, 2007), churches tend to adapt to the perceived expectations of their members more than to the leaders of their denomination. As a result, church members typically have more influence than employees of a corporation concerning the style and content of the services, the issues addressed in sermons, the missions that the church sponsors and participates in, the type of music played, and topics studied in small groups. While church members exercise a significant influence on organizational practices, awareness of their stockholder role is important for understanding the culture of the organization.

The fifth element that merits attention when studying culture in religious organizations is the role of volunteers. While most churches do have staff managing the operation of the organization, the majority of the work and ministry is accomplished through volunteers. Church leaders have to be convincing and inspiring when urging their members to take action or follow church teaching. Unlike corporate leaders who can mandate that their employees take a specific action or attend a "mandatory" lecture or gathering, pastors and lay leaders have to persuade their followers.

In coordinating the actions of volunteer followers, church leaders often draw on organizational identification rather than financial incentives, which are common in corporate settings. The term organizational identification refers to how much value an organizational member attributes to the goals and interests of the organization. High identification means willingness to support the goals of the organization while low identification means lack of

concern for these goals (Cheney, 1983). Organizational identification is described in detail in chapter 3.

In addition to organizational identification, churches often rely on leaders' charisma, inspiration, persuasiveness, and their appeal to the values, identities, and religious aspirations of the followers in order to solicit and direct volunteer action. Yancey (2007) writes that the "sterile academic approach" does not inspire people to take action, but scriptural evidence and theological support is needed if members are to respond. He also highlights the importance of the religious leader having authority on what he or she speaks about or calls to. The leader's authority, credibility, and popularity are of high value in religious organizations. For example, research shows a strong correlation between reported sermons' effectiveness and how much the hearers liked the preacher (Avery & Gobbel, 1980). The relationship between church leaders and their volunteer workforce adds to the complexity and uniqueness of the leader-follower dynamics in church context. It is, thus, important in making sense of the culture of the religious organization. Attention to the elements that make religious organizations unique is vital for proper understanding and contextualizing of the organizational culture of the UMC congregation.

Organizational Context

According to organizational communication theory, context is "where communication occurs (i.e., the physical setting) and the interpretive frameworks used to make sense of the communication exchange" (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004, p. 35). Context shapes the interpretations people make about what they experience (physical phenomena and communication). Thus, context determines the meaning of all that is seen, said, and done.

Eisenberg and Goodall (2004) point out that “the role of context is always complex” (p. 35). First, multiple contexts in organizations are always available as the history, the lines of authority, organizational and personal relationships, politics, and other factors influence the meaning-making process. Second, contexts are not stable meaning that the interpretations and meanings made by an individual at one point in time can be drastically different at another point in time. Contexts are changed over time as the definitions of contextual elements and relationships between these elements change. Third, contexts are both constructed and constructing. Contexts are constructed through communication in that the components of any context (the history, the relationships, the hierarchy, etc.) are defined and agreed upon through communication. At the same time, once constructed, contexts guide the process of meaning making and thus serve as means of constructing interpretations and understandings.

Attention to organizational contexts and to the complexities associated with these contexts is imperative for understanding communication, organizational culture, and the experience of organizational members.

Organizational Processes

Organizational processes in this study are defined broadly and refer to actions, procedures, developments, and work that occur in an organization. Organizational processes range from core to peripheral processes. Core processes are tied to organizational goals (Hung, Chung, & Lien, 2007). Peripheral processes may serve to support core processes or govern daily interactions. The peripheral processes may not be directly related to organizational success or effectiveness, yet their underlying influence may be stronger than perceived. Thus, understanding core and peripheral processes and their interrelatedness is necessary in order to

understand how the organization functions (achieves its goals, perceives and evaluates effectiveness, relates to stakeholders, organizes its employees, etc.).

Organizational Leadership

Research in leadership identifies several elements that determine which type of leadership is most appropriate for the situation. Fiedler's (1967) theory of leadership effectiveness, called the Contingency Model, differentiates several types of groups and situations that decide the appropriateness of a certain leadership style or model. Fiedler's (1967) findings focus primarily on the situational factors that determine the degree of a leader's influence on the group. Fiedler (1967) identifies three situational factors: position power, task structure, and personal relationship between the leader and the members of the group.

He defines position power as "the degree to which the position itself enables the leader to get his group members to comply with and accept his [or her] direction and leadership" (p 22). Position power can be seen as the potential power the organization makes available for the leader to use.

According to Fiedler (1967), task structure deals with the assignment that the group performs on behalf of the organization. The structure of that assignment or task ranges from precise or specific to general, vague, or unstructured. The degree of specificity is directly related to position power. Fiedler (1967) explains that the less structured the task, the less the leader is able to use his or her position power or draw from the power of the organization because unstructured tasks are difficult to enforce.

Fiedler (1967) defines the interpersonal relationship component as the relationship between the leader and the members of the group. He argues that it affects a leader's ability to

gain acceptance and loyalty from the group and the group's compliance with his or her directions. Fiedler (1967) insists that factors affecting a leader's personal relationship with the group depend on the compatibility of the personality of the leader with group members' personalities, on the culture of the organization, and the history of the leader's behavior in critical situations.

In Fiedler's (1967) model, leadership characteristics or styles are based on the above taxonomy. Fiedler (1967) argues that the same leadership strategies or characteristics may be effective in one context and ineffective in another.

Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model separates organizational groups into those with structured tasks and powerful leader positions, unstructured tasks with powerful leader positions, structured tasks with weak leader position and unstructured tasks with weak leader positions. He also envisions each type of group with good leader-member relations and moderately poor leader-member relations. Having identified eight types of groups, Fiedler's (1967) model tests whether relationship oriented or task oriented leadership style is more effective in each context.

Fiedler (1967) explains the relationship oriented leadership in terms of ample communication, focusing on followers, and empowering them to participate in leadership. In this study I refer to this approach as communication approach to leadership with a participatory emphasis. Fiedler's (1967) definition of the task oriented leadership includes providing directives regarding how followers are to fulfill the task. This approach exemplifies the top-down leadership style.

Central to Fiedler's approach, called the Contingency Model, is the assumption that leadership effectiveness depends on choosing a leadership style appropriate for the situation and

the goals of an organization. The Contingency Model based distinctions on such parameters as task structure, position power, and relationship between the leader and followers.

These distinctions are helpful as they point to the danger of applying leadership models without regard for the organizational context. However, among the distinctions that the Contingency Model overlooks are the differences between religious and secular organizations. Thus, in applying the Contingency Model in churches, it is beneficial to examine these differences and their potential effects on the situation and leadership dynamics.

Preview of Chapters

In summary, this chapter introduces the theoretical rationale for the study; provides reasoning for focusing on local UMCs and specific communication issues in this organization; presents goals, research questions, and research perspective; and provides definitions of primary terms for the study.

Chapter 2 describes the literature that serves as the grounding for this research. The chapter reviews such theories as organizational culture, organizational leadership, and organizational identification and commitment.

Chapter 3 discusses the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study. It explains why the chosen methods are appropriate for the goals of this research, establishes criteria for evaluating this qualitative study, and alludes to the processes for implementing such criteria. The chapter also describes the process of data collection.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss the data from each church profile in terms of emerging themes that define organizational culture, describe how organizational culture fits with the values

of the regional community, and how it affects conceptualizations of mission or vision and church goals/priorities, pastoral leadership, and other processes.

Chapter 7 provides conclusions regarding each of the research questions and explains this study's theoretical, methodological, and organizational contributions and directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Three bodies of literature serve as the theoretical base for the study because they are central to understanding organizational dynamics, communication processes, and leadership frameworks in church contexts. This chapter consists of three sections each featuring one of the bodies of literature: organizational identification and commitment, organizational culture, and organizational literature. In each section, I describe the theory or theories and define major constructs and relevant related concepts as well as give examples of seminal studies (both foundational and recent ones). I also explain which contexts the theories have been applied to and whether a theory, a construct or a concept, need to be adapted in order to be applied in the UMC research. Further, I explain how each theory is relevant to my research and how each theory's methods are congruent with my study.

Organizational Identification and Commitment

The two constructs are presented together due to their connectedness and frequent joint application. These constructs deal with the association and relationship between individuals and organizations. Here, I describe organizational identification and then organizational commitment, highlighting these constructs' applicability to this study. I also explain the relationship between these constructs and closely related organizational communication constructs.

Organizational Identification

Foundational work. The construct of identification was developed by Kenneth Burke; his theory of identification is recognized as foundational or central in rhetorical and

communication studies (Cheney, 1983). Burke (1937) explained identification as a means for individuals to participate in a collective and to create a societal role. According to Burke (1969), individuals respond to the division of labor, hierarchical stratification, and other elements that emphasize distinctions and differences by seeking to identify or belong to “some special body,” a group or a collective (p. 268). Through identification with various groups, an individual accumulates a variety of identities that may be quite different and even contradictory (Burke, 1937).

In addition to defining identification, Burke explained how identification is facilitated and managed through rhetorical (communication) strategies. He linked identification to rhetoric and persuasion asserting that one “can persuade a man only insofar as [he or she] can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* [ones] ways with his” (1969, p. 55). Burke suggested that persuasion by flattery, for example, is guided by principles of identification. He explained that through rhetoric one can persuade a person to change his or her opinion about something but in order to do that, one needs to yield to that person’s “opinions in other respects” (p. 56). Thus, it is through identification that one is able to persuade others. In other words, A can be persuaded by B when A believes that his or her interests are joined with B and thus A identifies with B.

In his (1972) book, *Dramatism and Development*, Burke described three kinds of identification as rhetoric. The first kind refers to allusions to similarity between one person and others that are members of a group (Burke, 1972). The second kind is called antithesis, which occurs “when allies who would otherwise dispute among themselves join forces against a common enemy” (Burke, 1972, p. 28). Third, and the most powerful kind of rhetorical identification, refers to instances when identification is implicit or unnoticed. The primary

example of this kind of identification is the communicator's use of the term "we" to tacitly imply the commonality of individuals who have drastically different identities (Burke, 1972).

The contributions of the seminal work of Burke that are particularly important for my study are the establishment of the connection between identification and persuasion via rhetoric (communication) and the different types of rhetorical (communication) strategies that are relevant for persuasion using identification within organizations. Further, the work of Burke serves as a basis for developing the theory of organizational identification. For example, Cheney (1983a, 1983b, 1991) expanded on Burke's research by broadening the application of the theory. Cheney (1983a) defined organizational identification "as an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene" (p. 342). He pointed out that "corporate identities are vital because they grant [individuals] personal meaning" (1983b, p. 145), and they help individuals "in making sense of [their] experience, in organizing [their] thoughts, in achieving decisions, and in anchoring the self" (1983a, p. 342). Drawing on Burke's description of persuasion through identification, Cheney highlighted the rhetorical (communication) advantages of identification in organizational settings. He explained that "identifying allows people to persuade and to be persuaded" (p. 342), thus affecting decision-making, organizational control, and communication strategies.

It is useful to explore how identification is manifested in communication of the UMC. Studies that link these phenomena help generate a framework for exploring identification and leadership in the context of the UMC. Specific sources include Cheney (1983a, 1991), Mael and Ashforth (1992), Adler (1995), and Driskill and Camp (2006).

For example, Cheney's (1983b) study presented a typology of identification strategies and tactics developed and applied to a specific type of organizational communication—corporate house organs (magazine-type publications). Using Burke's description of identification as rhetoric, Cheney extended Burke's work by identifying specific strategic categories. For example, Burke's common ground technique in Cheney's study (1983b) was exemplified by: 1) the expression of concern for the individual, 2) the recognition of individual contributions, 3) espousal of shared values, 4) advocacy of benefits and activities, 5) praise by outsiders, and 6) "testimonials" by employees. Cheney (1983b) explained that all six categories represented forms of the common ground strategy, each "involv[ing] associational process whereby the concerns of the employee [organizational member] are directly or indirectly identified with those of the organization" (p. 153).

Further, Cheney expanded the research on identification by discovering an additional identification tactic that did not fit the three-fold Burkean theory but clearly exhibited attributes of identification as rhetoric. Cheney's (1983b) "unifying symbols" tactic focuses on the significance of the group's name, logo, and trademark. This tactic or strategy exemplifies an important contribution to understanding identification in organizations. Cheney's (1983b) definitions of various types of identification tactics serve as a framework for analyzing communication in the UMC because leaders of this organization use a variety of identification strategies to unify or connect United Methodists across numerous diverse local churches. For example, the organizational logo (the Methodist cross with a flame) is consistently adopted in local churches in all UMC Conferences (both in and outside the U.S.). The UMC's statement: "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" is another example of a unifying symbol. Congregations often use this symbol to convey adherence to a deeply rooted United Methodist

principle of openness. It also fosters identification with the denomination and connection to other UMCs that uphold the principle of openness.

Understanding these and other identification practices in the context of the UMC is important because they are linked to other organizational phenomena that are pertinent to my research. Cheney's (1983 b) work not only featured the taxonomy of identification strategies, but it also provided a description of the benefits that organizations derive through identification. Cheney explained that "[t]ypically, individuals sacrifice a degree of autonomy when they participate in organizational life" (1983b, p. 157). When an individual "join[s] an organization, whether for employment or for other purposes...[he or she] makes the decision to 'behave organizationally'"(p. 157). As an employee comes to identify with the organization, the distinction between "the 'outer-voice' of the organization and the 'inner-voice' of the individual" dissipates so that the two speak in unison (p. 157). In his (1983a) study of a large industrial and high technology corporation, Cheney found that most employees who strongly identified with the organization "saw organizational interests as relevant to on-the-job decisions" (p. 361).

They developed an "internal motivation" to behave in accord with the organization's interests" (p. 157). From the perspective of the organization, this state of employee identification is desirable since it upholds organizational goals and aids in their fulfillment. Cheney (1983b) pointed out that top-level leaders often expect employee identification because they see it as "not only desirable but often [is] necessary for 'predictable' organizational functioning" (p. 157). Thus, he argued that organizations exert significant effort and invest resources into developing or boosting employee identification. Cheney also (1983a) suggested that organizational policies have a major impact on employee identification. Although churches differ from the organizations described in Cheney's (1983a) study, most church leaders also strive to promote member

identification. Thus, Cheney's (1983a) findings from the study in the corporate setting are relevant to my UMC research. Exploring the relationship between identification tactics used in the UMC and their influence on local church members and staff contribute to understanding the goals and purposes of the leadership.

Related studies. While the findings from Cheney's research in corporate settings provide relevant information for understanding identification from an organizational point of view, Cheney's research in religious contexts is even more relevant to for the study of the UMC. In his (1991) book, *Rhetoric in an organizational society: Managing multiple identities*, Cheney focused on the identification strategies used by the Roman Catholic Church in communicating with its various publics and constituents. Cheney's (1991) study applies to my research for the following reasons: (1) it is conducted in a church context; (2) it provides a definition of the organization as a rhetorical (communicative) entity and focuses on organizational messages as means of identity management; and (3) and it establishes a link between organizational elements (structure, values, principles, etc.), communication, and identification.

In his (1991) book, Cheney described how a specific religious organization, the Roman Catholic Church, communicated with its multiple audiences by analyzing the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*. Pastoral letters have traditionally served as means of communication used by the bishops to guide and teach the followers. Cheney approached the pastoral letter as a "corporate" (organizational) message created by the top leadership of the church to address specific religious challenges and fulfill specific goals of the church as a whole. My study examines how pastors facilitate member identification with the church.

Another contribution of Cheney's (1991) work is the emphasis of the role of communication in organizational experience. Cheney (1991) treated organizations as "fundamentally rhetorical in nature" portraying them as "systems of communication which necessarily involve the persuasion of individuals and groups" (p. ix). He argued that top leadership of the church designed organizational messages to manage multiple organizational identities. According to Cheney (1991), identity management "(re)present[ed] the organization as a whole *and* connect[ed] the individual identities of many members to [the] collective identity" (p. 14). Cheney explained how the process of managing multiple identities was facilitated in the communication practices of the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote: "The Church has sought to balance its universal, or catholic, identity with local and particular concerns while encouraging individuals, the faithful, to derive a sense of self from allegiance to the Church" (p. 15).

Cheney's portrayal of communication as the core of the organization is useful because it emphasizes communication practices in general and organizational messages in particular. This view is consistent with my research goals since I rely on the data from texts and oral communication and to explore the potential benefits of a communication approach to the leadership and the congregations in the UMC.

An important contribution of Cheney's (1991) study of the Catholic Church is its emphasis of the interrelationships between identity, organization, and rhetoric. Cheney (1991) insisted that "the nature of the organization—its structure, values, practices, and categories—reveals important features of its persuasive strategies and possibilities [that come] from the rhetoric of an organization" (p. 21). This perspective provides additional support for the strong relationship between organizational culture and organizational rhetoric that constructs this culture. The term culture refers to the essence or the core of the organization that develops

through interactions of organizational members. Theories of organizational culture describe it in terms of such elements as structures, values, practices, and norms. The link between communication, identification, and elements of organizational culture is important because it allows the theories of organizational identification and organizational culture to be integrated into a research framework for studying communication in an organization. Since I draw on the theories of organizational culture and organizational identification in studying the communication patterns and practices of the UMC, Cheney's work provides additional validation for a meaningful linking of these theories and constructs.

Another useful study is Mael and Ashforth's (1992) research on identification among college alumni. Although this study is based on a rather unique institutional context, it has concepts that are relevant to the study of the UMC. In response to the perceived lack of clear operationalization of organizational identification (OID), Mael and Ashforth defined the construct and articulated its distinction from other related constructs. They described OID as "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual *defines* him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member" (p. 104). I use this definition to operationalize organizational identification in my study of the UMC by focusing on member identities and their intentional associations with the organization. This clear and concise definition of the construct serves as basis for my analysis of pastors' and members' statements made during interviews.

Mael and Ashforth (1992) also distinguished the construct of identification from such related constructs as internalization and organizational commitment. For example, Mael and Ashforth (1992) pointed out that internalization and organizational identification are linked; however, identification deals with social classification of the self (I am), the "internalization

refers to incorporation of values and assumptions within the self as guiding principles (I believe)” (p. 105). In other words, an individual can identify with the organization without internalizing its values and conversely, one can uphold the values yet not feel one belongs to the organization.

Similarly, the term commitment is sometimes equated with identification and sometimes perceived as a distinct yet related construct. Mael and Ashforth (1992) portrayed identification as distinct from commitment and highlighted several unique features of identification (the specific differences between the constructs are described in the following sub-section).

Another study that is relevant to my research is Adler’s identification research in a church context. Adler (1995) analyzed and compared the rhetorical identification strategies found in the official letters of two Lutheran church leaders. Several helpful conclusions can be drawn from Adler’s (1995) study. First, Adler (1995) emphasized the value for churches to develop identification among members to enhance member loyalty, member commitment, and member activity. This link provides additional justification for increasing member identification to promote strong and vital congregations and facilitate church growth. This was helpful in my analysis of pastor’s communication strategies that focus on increasing member identification and members’ and pastors’ views regarding the relationship of organizational identification to church growth, member commitment, and member retention.

Adler’s study also exemplified the use of the theory of organizational culture in conjunction with the theory of identification. In his work, he used the concept of culture to distinguish the identities of two churches: one as conservative, having a traditional culture; the other, as liberal, with a newly emerging culture. The term culture was also used to describe the

larger Lutheran culture with its common history, language system, doctrine, and style of worship. According to Adler, awareness of the cultural elements associated with the two churches allows the researcher to understand rhetorical strategies in light of values, norms, structures and principles of each of the organizations. Thus, Adler's (1995) study provided a useful framework for using the two theories to study a church organization. Drawing on Adler's (1995) example, I use both of these theories in my study of the UMC.

Methodological considerations. Organizational identification theory is congruent with the methods used in my research. Scholars of organizational identification have traditionally used textual analysis and interviews as their chosen research methods. For example, to identify strategies of identification in organizational messages, Cheney (1983b) examined house organ publications from ten different corporations. Cheney (1983b) explained that the textual analysis “used to examine the identification tactics was essentially qualitative because of the relevance of different types of units (e.g. words, titles, expressions of complete thoughts) and the importance of contextual factors such as the topic of an article” (p. 150). Similarly, in his study of the Roman Catholic Church, Cheney (1991) used moderately structured interviews and textual analysis of Church documents and media commentary. In another (1983a) study, Cheney used moderately-scheduled interviews that provided “retrospective accounts of individual-organization relationships and [explored] the process of organizational identification as it relates to decision making” (p. 148).

Adler (1995) used content analysis of letters of religious leaders of two churches. He coded the monthly letters from each church's periodicals using Cheney's (1983b) typology of identification strategies. The paragraphs of each letter were analyzed for identificatory and non-

identificatory content. The former were classified according to the three categories from Cheney's (1983b) typology.

In their study of the Unity Movement, a group of church organizations, Driskill and Camp (2006) relied on participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and rhetorical analysis of local newspaper articles and video footage from local TV news. The data was triangulated to code Burke's and Cheney's rhetorical identification strategies in prayers, symbols and rituals. They then used rhetorical strategies as descriptive categories to code information from informants. Since my study uses qualitative interviews, observations and textual analysis, organizational identification theory is methodologically appropriate for my UMC research.

Organizational Commitment

Foundational work. Another construct, relevant to my research is organizational commitment. Originally formulated and defined by Mowday et al. (1979) and (1982), organizational commitment includes three factors: 1) a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values; 2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and 3) a desire to maintain membership in the organization. Based on this definition Mael and Ashforth (1992) argued that organizational commitment encompasses internalization (incorporating organizational values and assumptions into one's self), but not identification (defining oneself in terms of organizational membership).

One other distinction between the constructs is that identification in organizations is specific to those organizations whereas internalization and commitment are not. Mael and Ashforth (1992) explain that while the values and beliefs may be shared by various organizations and thus not necessitate individuals' connection to the organization, identification presumes a

sense of shared destiny with the organization and thus necessarily induces a sense of loss if one leaves the organization with which he or she identified. Further, commitment could be distinguished from identification by its narrower scope. Driskill and Camp (2006) explained that unlike identification, commitment refers to “something one has or does at a particular point in time” (p. 451).

Related studies. The study of Meyer et al. (1993) is an example of how the organizational commitment research can be adapted to studying a specific context. The authors adapted and then examined the generalizability of a 3-component model of commitment to occupational context. Meyer and Allen (1991) identified three distinct dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the affective attachment to the organization. Among the antecedents of this type of commitment are the satisfaction with work or organizational experiences. Continuance commitment refers to the perceived cost associated with leaving the organization. Antecedents of this type of commitment include accumulation of investments that would be lost if one was to leave the organization or recognition of limited availability of comparable alternatives. Normative commitment refers to the obligation to remain in the organization. This type of commitment results from belief in the necessity to be loyal to the organization or through the sense of obligation to the organization for providing certain benefits.

An example of a study applying organizational commitment research to church context is the work of Wilson et al. (1993). These authors applied the constructs of commitment and identification to analyze the growth of a particular local church. Wilson et al. (1993) argued that secular operationalizations of these constructs cannot be applied to the church organizations “because ‘work’ and monetary components are not relevant to most members” (p. 259). The goal

of their study was to modify and apply the principles of commitment and identification derived from the analyses of firms and bureaus to the study of a church.

Wilson et al. (1993) built upon on the framework for congregational analysis designed by Carroll et al. (1986). In their study, Wilson et al. (1993) used three of the four dimensions of the framework: program, process, and culture. Specifically, the authors focused on such variables associated with these three dimensions as communication forms (program) and communication style (process and culture) as antecedents of identification and commitment.

The most helpful finding of this study was the list of factors contributing to building member commitment and identification with the church. One such factor was shared culture. According to Wilson et al. (1993), shared culture can be understood as a common set of beliefs held by numerous church members about the philosophy of the church. The authors argued that mechanisms for building shared culture include consistent messages and practices as well as “systematic socialization of new members to the culture” (p. 269). Another factor associated with member commitment and identification was the program factor, which was defined as the value of small face-to-face groups within the congregation. Wilson et al. (1993) insisted that the program factor allowed church members to personalize their experience, enhancing their feeling of belonging and leading to identification and commitment. One of the process factors featured in their study was the perceived freedom associated with members’ contributions. Means of achieving this factor included allowing the members to choose which ministries to support and where to volunteer. Another process factor was members’ full and active participation in the development of the church. This factor increased the “sense of responsibility and motivation leading to increased organizational commitment” (p. 269). In my analysis I rely on the three-

factor approach to commitment and identification to determine how culture, process and program factors were manifested in the context of the UMC.

Another contribution of the work of Wilson et al. (1993) is the conceptualization of indicators of member commitment in terms of frequency of duration of attendance and activity and church growth. These indicators are helpful because of their relevance to the church setting (as opposed to the traditional, corporate indicators such as organizational effectiveness and lack of turnover and absenteeism).

Finally, Wilson et al.'s (1993) study linked member commitment with "joining and sustaining membership within [a church] organization" (p. 260). This linkage is especially important for understanding how churches assimilate and keep members committed to their congregations (Ellis, 1982). Knowing that increased member commitment contributes to sustaining and even increasing membership raises the importance of organizational commitment in church context, making it essential to such desired outcomes as church growth and vitality.

Methodological considerations. Organizational commitment research often uses qualitative methods. For example, Wilson and Keyton (1993) relied on focus group and interview data. The authors first conducted focus groups then interviews with individuals that were not part of the focus groups. They recorded, transcribed, and verified data from both focus groups and interviews. Then, the researchers independently reviewed the focus group data identifying overall themes. After they collectively agreed on the three most pertinent themes, they operationalized them and explored them further through interviews. Wilson and Keyton (1993) explained that as a case study their work did not provide grounds for causal inference. While the elements associated with church member commitment in their study were clearly

important in the context of a select congregation, these elements may or may not be as important in other contexts.

Since the goals of my study do not include generating inferences regarding other contexts (other United Methodist congregations, other denominations or church organizations), qualitative interviews are appropriate for this research.

Organizational Culture

The construct of organizational culture is important for my research and has a variety of definitions. Ackerman (1984) defined it as expression and arrangement of the qualities of a company that make it distinctive. Davis (1984) envisioned culture as a “pattern of shared beliefs and values that give members of an institution meaning, and provide them with the rules of behavior in their organization” (p. 1). According to Sathe (1985), “[c]ulture is the set of important understandings (often unstated) that members of a community share in common” (p. 6). In all, the culture of an organization is what makes the organization unique; it describes the core, the essence of the organization as well as the peripheral and contextual elements associated with that organization.

The construct of organizational culture is especially viable for my research because it focuses on and emphasizes communication. Keyton (2005) pointed out that organizational culture is intrinsically communicative because it is produced through interaction. Keyton (2005) wrote, “Organizational culture emerges from the complex and continuous web of communication among members of the organization” (p. 20). The construct of organizational culture brings communication (its patterns, contexts, meanings) to the forefront of organizational research and thus is applicable to my research goals regarding communication in the UMC.

Methodological considerations. Moreover, the theory of organizational culture is methodologically compatible with my study. Much of the research in organizational culture relies on qualitative methods (interviews, observations and qualitative textual analysis) to evaluate the data. In religious organization research in particular, numerous studies have analyzed organizational culture by focusing on various elements and forms of communication using qualitative methods (Addi-Raccah, 2005; Barclay, 2006, Brumley, 2008; Cameron, & Quinn, 2006; Coopman & Meidlinger, 1998; de la Torre, 2002; Ebaugh, Pipes, Chafetz & Daniels, 2003; Echlund, 2006; Harper & Schulte-Murray, 1998; Oviedo, 2008; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006; Wittberg, 1997).

Related studies. An example of a study relevant to my research is the work of Wiener (1988), who studied values, focusing on uncovering organizational value systems to identify pertinent culture of the organization. Wiener (1988) defined an organizational value system as shared values of organizational members. He explained that organizations may have a central value system consisting of a number of key values concerning organizational state-of-affairs and behaviors shared by organizational members across units and levels. According to Wiener (1988), an organization's shared values range from weak to strong. Strong value systems refer to those in which key values are broadly and intensely shared by members. Weak value systems refer to those in which key values are either shared by few members or/and not highly adhered to. Wiener (1988) proposed the framework for measuring the strength of an organizational value system through such dimensions as intensity and breadth. Wiener's (1988) conceptualization of culture in terms of values and his classification of value systems as strong and weak is helpful in my research.

However, since Wiener's (1988) study was based on secular, for profit organizations, I apply Wiener's (1988) theory with caution. As I draw on his classification of values I seek to determine whether it needs to be expanded to apply to religious context.

Another study of organizational culture relevant to my research is the work of Meyer (2009). In studying the efforts of one church to facilitate worship services in ways that meet the needs of existing members and attract future members, Meyer (2009) explored symbols, rituals, and "patterns of worshipful communication." Meyer (2009) used a case study approach. As a participant observer he documented the efforts of the church to facilitate changes in worship style while maintaining unity among members with varying preferences and opinions.

Several elements of Meyer's (2009) study make it relevant to my research including its inductive approach to data analysis. Meyer (2009) identified elements emerging from the data and grouped them into themes that provided a description of the culture of the church. In my study of the UMC, I approach data collection and analysis inductively. Rather than establishing specific research questions and testing hypotheses, I start with general research questions and rely on the data to provide more specific categories of analysis and themes that describe the culture of the UMC.

Meyer's (2009) work is also relevant to my research because it linked elements of culture and identification. Meyer (2009) claimed that members' identification with the church is often manifested in the use of common terminology and participation in a common set of rituals. The study also showed how the strategic communication of church leaders can encourage member identification with the culture of the church. Meyer observed that "[e]ffective invocation of ambiguity in messages provides for varying levels of identification and adherence" among

church members (p. 66). He also pointed out that, member identification with the church and a sense of unity with its culture are especially important in church contexts, in which “membership is completely voluntary yet actions must be coordinated to successfully accomplish goals of worship that may be vague” (p. 67). This observation relates to my goal of evaluating the actions of the pastors of local UMCs in regard to accomplishing their goals (maintaining and increasing membership, following the mission of the church, etc.). Meyer’s (2009) research also suggested that one of the effective identification strategies that church leaders can use is ambiguity. Meyer (2009) explained that the use of general and ambiguous church messages allows people “to unite in worship as individual variances can be bypassed as an entire group identifies with one another as a church” (p. 67). I examine the role of ambiguity in United Methodist church messages: whether the leadership uses ambiguity intentionally as an identification strategy and whether it is associated with increased member identification.

Another relevant study is the work of Trice and Beyer (1984). These authors claimed that their research framework yielded a holistic, multi-dimensional understanding of culture. They argued that, while most studies of culture focus on “single, discrete elements of culture—such as symbols, myths, or stories [and therefore provide] severely limited understanding of cultures” (p. 653), focusing on specific cultural forms that incorporate multiple elements of culture leads to a fuller, more complex and well-rounded representation of culture. Trice and Beyer (1984) suggested that focusing on *rites* and *ceremonials* (similar to ceremony) allows researchers to study several cultural elements operating in concert with one another. They explained that rites and ceremonials are unique cultural forms in that they encompass such elements of culture as values, assumptions, and norms. Thus, studying rites and ceremonials allows researchers to “uncover networks of interacting meanings that characterize organizational cultures” (p. 645).

According to Trice and Beyer (1984), the exposure to multiple elements and the awareness of the underlying networks of meanings provide a more holistic view of culture. They explained that “although all cultural forms express some part of the meanings of a culture, rites and ceremonials provide especially rich texts that can be used to read culture” (p. 664). In their study, Trice and Beyer (1984) used the term ceremonial (similar to the familiar term “ceremony”) to refer to an occasion or event that encompasses multiple rites. Rites were defined as a unified public performance amalgamating numerous discrete cultural forms.

The authors pointed out that rites and ceremonials are rich sources of cultural elements and underlying processes, and also are accessible to researchers “for intermittent observation” (p. 655). First, they are open to the public and thus present no difficulty in getting permission to observe. Second, they have predetermined beginnings and ends and thus allow researchers to plan periods of observations around the planned time frame of the rite or ceremonial being assured that what they want to observe will most likely be happening at the expected time.

In my study I rely on Trice and Beyer’s (1984) framework of focusing on rites and ceremonials. Being a participant observer in a church includes exposure to numerous rites (baptisms, communions, confirmations, recognition of senior students, welcoming of a new pastor or another staff member, etc.). Many of these rites take place during weekly worship services (ceremonials). Others occur during special events and church celebrations. Using the inductive approach to research, I approach the rituals of the church as sources of relevant cultural elements. These elements are essential for guiding my analysis of the texts and interviews and hence my conceptualization of the culture of each local church. However, since Trice and Beyer’s (1984) study focused exclusively on work organizations, I apply their research framework with caution. In addition to analyzing rites (rituals) and ceremonials, I rely on other

sources of information regarding elements of organizational culture. Similarly, my description of organizational culture is not limited to values, assumptions and norms but also includes commitments and identifications.

Organizational Leadership

The concept of leadership in organizations has been approached from a variety of perspectives; however, the two main approaches to leadership are the situational and the universal. Chapter 1 describes the situational approach to leadership while this chapter explains both in more detail.

Situational Approach to Leadership

Relevant foundational work. One of the foundational studies representing the situational approach is the work of Fiedler. According to his (1967) Contingency Model, organizations or groups can be led most effectively when the type or style of leadership—top-down (directing and coordinating or task oriented), participatory (motivating individuals to work independently or partake in leadership), or interacting (facilitating communication and mutual understanding) – are matched by the type of group or organization and the leadership situation.

Although Fiedler (1967) acknowledged organizational influence on leadership styles, his findings only focused on the elements of the leadership situation. Moreover, the three elements that Fiedler (1967) proposed and tested were based primarily on research in the corporate and governmental context.

This makes the application of the Contingency Model to the UMC challenging and necessitates the model's adaptation to religious organizations. While a church does work to

accomplish tasks (as do all organizations), some of leadership characteristics proposed by Fiedler (1967) are relevant. However, given the religious and voluntary nature of association characterizing church membership, the leadership dynamics in churches are more complex than Fiedler's theory. Thus, Fiedler's (1967) model cannot be applied to the UMC experience without contextual adaptation. To accomplish such adaptation, I investigate which leadership approaches are used in local UMCs and how organizational members perceive these approaches (as desirable or undesirable). The data from my interviews supplements the existing research on leadership by identifying influences that affect conceptualizations and enactment of leadership in the church realm.

I also examine the effects of leadership characteristics that Fiedler (1967) advocated for the groups that most similarly resemble local churches. An Annual Conference important principle of Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model is the link between the leadership style and the type of group situation. The implication of this principle is the necessity for the leadership style to match the leadership situation. That is, the characteristics of the organization (its purpose, size, affiliation, history, etc.) are crucial in determining which leadership style(s) and type(s) of behavior are most successful in that organization. Fiedler (1967) also listed three situational factors determining the degree of leader's influence on the group. These situational factors include position power, task structure, and personal relationships between the leader and the members of the group.

The term position power refers to the degree to which "the position itself enables the leader to get his [or her] group members to comply with and accept his [or her] direction and leadership" (p 22). The position power of the UMC pastors ranges from strong to weak based on the traditions and the history of the local church. However, it is never as strong as it can be in the

corporate context because most of the followers in the church context are members not paid staff. The fact that members are not compensated financially for their work weakens the position power of the office of the pastor because, unlike corporate leaders, pastors do not provide financial incentives.

Task structure deals with the assignment that the group members perform on behalf of the organization. Fiedler (1967) explains that the task structure ranges from precise or specific to general, weigh, or unstructured. He claims that the degree of specificity is directly related to position power; highly structured tasks allow the leader to use his or her position power to accomplish the desired outcomes while unstructured tasks make it very difficult to use the position power or impose directives because they are difficult to enforce.

The UMC pastors deal with both structured and unstructured tasks. Moreover, some processes, such as administering sacraments, are difficult to classify because they include both structured and unstructured elements. The structured elements refer to the requirements for individuals administering the sacrament. The *Book of Discipline* specifies that sacraments can be administered by elders or in the absence of an elder by a deacon who has received (from the bishop) local sacramental authority in his or her primary appointment (UMC, 2008, ¶328). All other deacons, laity, or local pastors are only allowed to assist in administering the communion.

At the same time, the order and process of administering the sacrament is rather unstructured. For example, concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, the elder is asked to invoke the Holy Spirit to administer the sacrament. Although the *United Methodist Book of Worship* provides several Orders of Worship for the

Eucharistic Ministry, the UMC does not require that these specific guidelines and words are followed. The Holy Communion can even be performed silently.

From the perspective of the Contingency Model, highly structured tasks allow the leaders to draw on their position power and use the top-down leadership style. However, this style cannot be used consistently since it relies on strong position power to be effective and position power of the office of the pastor is weakened by the power of the representative bodies. Thus, according to the contingency theory, other models of leadership (participatory and interacting) would be more appropriate in the UMC context when the position power is weak. Since the participatory leadership style deemphasizes the power of the leader, it would be compatible with the church leader's weaker position power. In studying the leadership dynamics in the UMC, it is important to consider the characteristics of the organization, the situational factors, and the effects of the leaders' actions as well as the reactions of the members to those actions. Certain elements of Fiedler's (1967) model are relevant and helpful in understanding the factors involved in leading such groups as the UMC. However, Fiedler's theory alone would not adequately explain leadership processes in the UMC.

The Contingency Model does not include the concepts and characteristics that are essential in the study of churches. Moreover, given the age of the theory some of the conceptualizations presented in Fiedler's (1967) work are insufficiently developed and outdated. For example, one of the situational factors described in the Contingency Model is interpersonal relationship between the leader and the members. According to Fiedler (1967), the relationship between the leader and the group affects the leader's ability to gain acceptance, loyalty, and compliance with his or her directions. Fiedler (1967) insisted that factors affecting the leader's personal relationship with the group depend on 1) the compatibility of the personality of the

leader with group members' personalities, 2) the culture of the organization, and 3) the history of the leader's behavior in critical situations. Based on Fiedler's (1967) model, depending on the relationship between the leader and members, the task or relationship oriented leadership approach may be effective in high position power groups that are devoted to structured tasks. More recently theories of leadership have expanded research on leader-follower relationships incorporating a number of elements that determine that relationship.

Recent related work. For example, Hollander (1993) argued that “[l]eadership is not something a leader possesses so much as a process involving followership. Without followers, there plainly are no leaders or leadership” (p. 29). Insisting on the importance of the relationship between the leader and the followers, he pointed out that the influence and power of a leader depend on his or her legitimacy, which, in turn, is affected by followers and their response to the leader. Hollander (1993) insisted that by influencing the legitimacy of leaders, followers affect leaders' influence, the style of their behavior, and ultimately the performance of the group. This view portrayed the leader-follower relationship as determined by both parties. While Fiedler (1967) presented leader-group member relations as a relatively constant and dependent on the environment and the personality compatibility between leader and members of the group, Hollander (1993) emphasized the active role of followers in making a leader legitimate. He wrote that the leader's power “becomes real when others perceive it to be so, and respond accordingly” (p. 42). Since followers have the power to accept or reject leadership, it is not the ability of a leader to dominate his or her followers but the leader-follower relationship that determines the leader's success. Hollander (1993) insisted that “[e]ffective leadership is more likely to be achieved by processes in which there is reciprocity and the potential for two-way influence and power sharing, rather than a sole reliance on power over others” (p. 31). Therefore,

a leader's relationship with the followers is what determines his or her legitimacy and ultimately effectiveness as a leader.

While Hollander (1993) accorded a more active role for followers in the leader-follower relationship, Maxwell (1993) insisted on the capacity of leaders to facilitate good leader-member relations. In fact, he defined leadership as "the ability to get followers" (p. 2). Maxwell (1993) argued that influence is a skill that can be developed. Maxwell's view of leader-follower relationship differs from the views presented by both Fiedler (1967) and Hollander (1993).

Unlike Fiedler, who assumed that leaders could do little to change their relationships with followers and thus recommended different styles of leadership based on whether leader-member relations were good or moderately poor, Maxwell (1993) believed in leaders' ability to influence relationships with followers. Unlike Hollander (1993), who emphasized individual agency of followers in granting leaders legitimacy, Maxwell (1993) stressed leaders' agency in building and improving their relationships with followers.

Another extension of the situational approach to leadership is represented by the functional leadership framework. Adair (1984) explained that functional approach included elements of situational and qualities approaches. As mentioned earlier, the situational approach conceptualized perceived leadership as specific to the particular situation and dependent on multiple factors associated with the specific group, tasks, and relationships. The qualities approach, on the other hand, maintained that effective leadership was dependent on "certain inborn qualities" (p. 5). It emphasized leader's personality and favored selection rather than training. The functional approach built on the suppositions of both stating that "corporate entities or social organisms" commonly referred to as groups "differ in many ways [situational

assumption] and yet share certain common attributes and needs [qualities assumption]” (p. 9). Adair (1984) identified three areas of needs or *leadership responsibility* and argued that they were dependent on functions and behaviors performed by a leader or leaders. Adair (1984) explained that the functional approach emphasized the personality of a leader as well as the situation and the interaction with the group. In addition, Adair (1984) explained that groups differ in terms of how knowledgeable, skillful, and experienced the group members are regarding the task. Highly knowledgeable, skillful, and experienced members are likely to be capable and even expect to participate in leadership functions. According to Adair (1984) part of the success and effectiveness of a leader from a functional approach lies in his or her willingness to take into account the abilities and experiences of the group members when choosing the leadership style (authoritative, participatory, etc.). Thus, Adair (1984) confirmed Fiedler’s (1967) finding regarding the link between followers’ high levels of intelligence or education and the appropriateness of the participatory style of leadership.

Adair’s (1984), Hollander’s (1993), and Maxwell’s (1993) conceptualizations of the role of followers in determining the effectiveness of a leadership style are relevant to my research because I investigate pastoral leadership from the perspective of local church members. Further, Adair’s (1984) emphasis on the role of the personality of a leader is also important because I seek to identify qualities that members and leaders value in leaders.

Universal Approach to Leadership

In contrast with the situational and functional approaches to leadership is the universal approach. Represented largely by popular literature, the universal approach implies that certain core elements of effective leadership are appropriate in most situations. Similar to the qualities

approach, the universal approach focuses on the individual characteristics, skills, and abilities. However, while the qualities approach maintains that some people are naturally more capable leaders (in other words, leadership characteristics are inborn), the universal approach presumes that most leadership qualities can be acquired or taught.

An example of the universal approach to leadership is the book, *Developing the Leader within You*, by Maxwell (1993). One aspect of Maxwell's (1993) approach that applies to the UMC is his claim that leaders who work with volunteers, white collar workers and younger people may have difficulty relying on the legitimacy provided by their position because their followers are unlikely to feel obligated to adhere to leader's directives. This conclusion may help explain the lack of acceptance of the denominational church mission statements in local UMCs. From Maxwell's (1993) perspective, the fact that the mission statement was developed by the bishops of the church would not guarantee that congregational members whose attendance is voluntary and local church pastors who are used to participation in leadership (especially when it comes to leading their local church) would automatically adopt it for implementation. From Maxwell's (1993) perspective, additional actions by the top leadership might be necessary in order to gain their acceptance and solicit their support. Maxwell (1993) argued that to get people to follow when they are not obligated, the leader needs to get their permission. Maxwell (1993) argued that permission is gained through interrelationships. He explained that by building solid, lasting relationships with followers, the leader can convince them to support him or her. Since solid long-lasting relationships are built through interaction, what Maxwell suggests is leading by permission through leader-initiated communication with followers. This conclusion is relevant to my research because I emphasize the role of communication in making traditional models of leadership applicable to the local church context and to its leaders and members.

Among the limitations of the universal approach to leadership is that it fails to address the different leadership models (participatory, coaching, or authoritarian). The universal approach to leadership does not focus on applicability of each of the models of leadership to unique situations, but rather outlines broad characteristics, abilities, behaviors, and foci of leaders. Given the lack of distinction between types of leadership models, theories representing the universal approach do not provide recommendations regarding which models of leadership are effective in which context.

Another limitation of the universal approach in general and the work of Maxwell (1993) in particular is that despite the claims to be universally applicable, they, in fact, represent specific cultural (U.S. American) and organizational (secular, for-profit) contexts. To illustrate, the majority of advice and illustrations in Maxwell's (1993) book focused on U.S. corporate scenarios where Western individualistic values and economic incentives dominate. Thus, the qualities and characteristics recommended by the universal approach should be viewed as generally applicable in the U.S. corporate and business context but not necessarily to churches.

Similarly, Maxwell's (1993) work lacks distinction between the church context and corporate context. The underlying assumption here as in other work representing the universal approach to leadership is that effective leadership depends on key characteristics, abilities, and qualities that are applicable across contexts. Maxwell (1993) viewed leadership as ability to gain followers. From his perspective, the same principles apply regardless of whether the followers were church members or employees, whether the leader-follower arrangements were characterized by authoritarian or participatory model. Given the universal approach's lack of attention to potential nuances associated with contextual variation, the work of Maxwell (1993) needs to be approached with caution. Taking this into consideration, my study seeks to identify

how Maxwell's (1993) claims regarding leaders' communication and building relationships are applicable in the context of the UMC.

Methodological considerations. Both situational and universal theories of leadership are methodologically consistent with my work. Much of the leadership research was based on observation. For example, Maxwell's work (although not a scientific study) is based on numerous informal interviews and years of observation of leaders in their respective organizations. In my study, I use the method of observations (combined with interviews and textual analysis) and draw on various theories of leadership to evaluate pastors' and members' perceptions of the leadership styles used at the local church level and the relationships between pastors and church members.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of three bodies of literature: organizational identification and commitment, organizational culture, and organizational leadership. It describes theories that are especially relevant to my research and explains how I apply them, draw from them, or modify them in my study of the UMC.

The next chapter provides explanation of specific choices of data collection and analysis methods which are grounded in the literature overviewed in this chapter. Thus, the next chapter links the theoretical and methodological choices with the research objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In this chapter, I first explain how qualitative interpretive methods are congruent with my research goals. Second, I provide the rationale for using the case study approach of constructing congregational profiles. Third, I introduce the three research sites. Fourth, I describe the data gathering methodologies. Fifth, I provide an overview of the specifics of each data type gathered at the sites. Finally, I explain my data analysis methods.

Qualitative Interpretive Approach

As mentioned in chapter 1, the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study are grounded in my philosophical assumptions. Since the goal of my study is to present some of the perspectives existing at the local church level rather than generalize or make predictions about other contexts, I chose methods of data collection and analysis that allow the researcher to understand the experience of the people in their specific context. In this study, I seek to provide an interpretation of how the mission, vision, and church leadership are perceived by some of the local church leaders and congregations (not the entire denomination). I do not attempt to represent all the local United Methodist churches in the U.S. or to portray the most prevalent view, but rather to capture some perspectives out of many possible perspectives. To accomplish these research goals, I rely on a variety of data sources (organizations, people, texts, media, acts, etc.) and on multiple qualitative data collection methods (interviews, observations, and textual analysis).

The Case Study Approach

Because of the goals of the study and its theoretical base my research takes the form of a case study in which I construct three profiles of congregations. I seek to answer such questions as “how do local church members and leaders conceptualize their church’s mission and effectiveness; and how do organizational processes, communication patterns, and contextual constraints affect the church’s effectiveness and the fulfillment of the church’s mission?” Communication researchers maintain that the case study approach is useful for answering the “how” questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). An example of organizational culture research that uses the case study approach is Schroeder and Scribner’s (2006) study of the intercollegiate athletic culture in religious colleges. Schroeder and Scribner’s (2006) work is an *instrumental case study*, in which the purpose is to look at a specific case in order to understand something else (a larger issue of which the case may be an example). Schroeder and Scribner (2006) examined the organizational culture of one Christian college athletic department in order to “clarify the role of religion in athletics” (p. 40).

Schroeder and Scribner’s (2006) research is similar to mine in that it focused on a specific kind of organizational culture. Where Schroeder and Scribner (2006) examined the role of religion in the intercollegiate athletic culture, I focus on the role of church mission, organizational identification, commitment, and leadership in local church culture. My approach differs from Schroeder and Scribner’s (2006) study in that I focus on several (three) cases, called *a collective case study*, which is an instrumental case study that includes more than one case.

The Three Research Sites

My study focuses on three local congregations. Such sample is obviously too small to represent all the local UMCs in the U.S. However, the intention of this study is not to describe cases that are representative of the whole population. Given that qualitative methods require deep exploration, the number of cases used in a qualitative study, even a very large collective study, are limited. Instead, the goal is to provide very thorough and in-depth examination of a few cases that may not represent the entire population of cases but will provide relevant information regarding some of the contexts.

Since the subpopulation of the accessible cases is too small for conventional sampling techniques, I relied on purposive sampling. As I selected my sample, I chose the cases that are situated in significantly different contexts yet are accessible to me for research. The main principle that guided my choices is “how much I am able to learn from the case?” Denzin and Lincoln (2004) point out that in qualitative research studies “[s]ometimes it is better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case” (p. 451). As a result, I maintain that in-depth analysis of almost any case would lead to some important findings regarding the organizational culture of churches and communication in the UMC congregations. By focusing on the three churches that I have attended for a period of time as a member or a visitor, I make sure that the opportunities to learn would be ample, given my familiarity with each church’s history, its rituals and rules, and some of the staff and members of the church. In order to incorporate variety into the selection of the cases, I chose both large and small churches from three different states and three different UMC Annual Conferences. I also focused on both small town and large city churches.

The first site, church V, belonged to the Western Jurisdiction. It was located in a city with the population of approximately 67,700, surrounded by agricultural communities. The congregation had approximately 800 members and an average attendance of 200 people on Sunday mornings. The church employed a UMC elder as a full time pastor and a UMC deacon as a Director of Youth. This church had one service on Sunday mornings in summer and two services on Sundays during the fall, winter, and spring. There were no other United Methodist Churches in the city.

The second site, church M, belonged to the South Central Jurisdiction. It was located in a city with a population of approximately 98,000 according to the 2010 Census. The congregation was large with approximately 1800 members and 400 average attendance on Sundays. The church employed one UMC elder as a full time pastor and a retired UMC elder as a pastoral assistant. This church had three weekly services, all on Sunday morning. This church was one of four United Methodist congregations in the city.

The third site, church K, belonged to the South Central Jurisdiction. It was located in a city with an approximate population of 190,000 people according to the 2010 Census. This congregation was large with (approximately 4100 members and 900 average weekly attending). In addition to the senior pastor, this church employed four full-time pastors as associate and executive pastors and a UMC elder as a Youth Minister. This church had five services every week (four on Sunday mornings and one on Friday evenings). This church was one of many United Methodist churches in the city.

Data Collection Methodology

In this study I used four methods of data collection: 1) participant observations of organizational meetings and religious gatherings at the sites; 2) interviews of UMC clergy and members; and 3) textual analyses of church documents and artifacts. These methods allowed me to address my research questions, helping me to develop an understanding of the organizational culture, communication practices and leadership dynamics at some of the UMC congregations.

Participant Observations

I chose participant observation as a data collection method because it is consistent with the goals of my study. I seek rich descriptions of the experience of church members in order to capture their understanding and their conceptualizations of church mission and church effectiveness. In order to capture people's experience and their interpretations, I needed to be able to engage with their values and assumptions, which means engaging the subjective realm of the population I was studying. I could not simply study their behavior from the distance of a detached, objective spectator; my observation needed to be that of "participation in the world being studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004, p. 643). Thus, the method that I chose was interpretive participant observation.

Because of my focus on the organizational culture of three local churches and my desire to identify the influences of their local context on their understanding of the church mission/vision, church priorities, organizational processes, and leadership, I relied on methods that brought me closer to the studied environment. Denzin and Lincoln (2004) pointed out that participant observations allow researchers "to get closer to the actor's perspective" (p. 12) and thus capture individuals' points of view. Participant observations were appropriate as they

allowed me to experience the local church in its context. Through participant observations I was able to: 1) examine texts and practices that make up the culture of the church; 2) partake in the routine experiences of church members and staff (worship services, staff meetings, etc.); 3) observe the communication patterns and the contextual influences in the specific local churches.

Qualitative interpretive participant observations were also consistent with my axiological perspective. I believe that the researcher and the participants are inseparable; their relationship is of a productive tension and reciprocity (the researcher influences the response of the participant and the participant influences the researcher). This method encourages the interaction of the observer and the research participants rather than attempts to separate the researcher from the elements under investigation. While conducting participant observations, I maintained awareness and sought to acknowledge my background, assumptions, and beliefs as influencing my research rather than trying to isolate them from the research process.

Lastly, I chose participant observations as a method of data collection because it is widely recognized and used to study organizational culture. The theory of organizational culture serves as the primary theoretical framework for my study. Thus, finding methods of data collection and analysis appropriate for this theory is important. According to Martin (2002), participant observations are not only deemed acceptable but are often used in studies of organizational culture. For example, Ecklund (2006) used participant observations (in conjunction with interviews) to study congregational culture surrounding women's leadership. Ecklund (2006) wrote, "I chose these particular means of collecting data because of a research focus on organizational culture, information about which was best obtained through interviews and participant-observation" (pp.85-86). Ecklund's (2006) study focused on the question of how the cultures of the congregations treated the issue of women's leadership. My study's focus is

similar: how the culture of the UMC congregation affects church processes, mission/vision, and organizational leadership. Thus the method of participant observation is appropriate and useful for my study.

Collection of Interviews

The choice of qualitative interpretive interview was guided by the interest in the participants' experience of the local church and their understanding of their roles as members, their conceptualizations regarding religious practices, the mission or the vision of the UMC, and pastoral leadership. Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) explain that qualitative methods, such as interviews, allow researchers "to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 1). I focused on the church members' experience and their perceptions by asking such questions as: What values define the culture of the local church in light of the characteristics of its regional area? How does the local church understand the role of senior or lead pastors? How is the mission expressed at the local church level different from the mission established by the national level leadership? And how do organizational values, norms, assumptions and contextual (regional community) characteristics affect the fulfillment of the church mission, organizational processes, and pastoral leadership in local churches?

Addressing these questions through participant observations alone would be difficult as I would only be able to get information that indirectly supports certain views or perspectives. For example, I would be able to observe behavior and patterns of organizing that support certain conceptualizations regarding mission, effectiveness, context, etc. Interviews, however, allowed me to introduce these topics into the conversation and inquire about participants'

conceptualizations of these phenomena. Unlike conducting an observation or collecting texts, I could prompt the research participant in an interview to elaborate on the part of the story that deals with attitudinal dimensions. By allowing the interviewee to share a narrative with all its details and descriptions in his/her own words, I could gain access to rich descriptions of the interviewee's experience. Thus, qualitative interpretive interviews contributed to my research by providing data that participant observations and textual analysis alone could not provide.

Further, this method was consistent with my philosophical assumption that reality and knowledge are constructed through conversations of individuals rather than discovered by the researcher during the inquiry process. The values and attitudes of individuals were important in this study since values and attitudes help form the culture of the organization. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on objectivity and value neutrality, constructivist qualitative interviews allow the values of the researcher to work together with the values of the participant in the process of joined knowledge production. Guided by such characteristics as “openness, emotional engagement, and the development of the potentially long-term trusting relationship between the interviewer and [the participant],” qualitative interpretive interviews are helpful because they allow the values of all parties involved to be both present and addressed in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004, p. 643). Since the interview process is inevitably influenced, not only by the values of the participant, but also by the values of the interviewer as these values affect his/her interpretations, self-reflexivity is imperative. I described some of my biases, perceptions, and even personal characteristics that could potentially affect the interviewing process, so that the reader is aware of the contingencies associated with the identity of the researcher and the specific methodological choices. This ensures that the readers draw informed conclusions based on the products of my research.

Lastly, similar to participant observations, interviews are often used in organizational culture research. Keyton (2005) asserts that “[i]nterviews are a good way to gather information to both identify cultural elements and to assist in developing explanations of those elements” (p. 169). An example of a religious organization’s culture study using interviews is the work of Wittberg (1997), who used extended taped interviews with the founders and with numerous members of newly established Roman Catholic communities. The author sought to identify and “describe obvious changes in the various beliefs and practices subscribed to by the new groups” (p. 241). The focus of my study was similar to Wittberg’s (1997) study in that both focused on organizational culture and specifically on conceptualizations and interpretations of the study’s participants. However, while Wittberg (1997) was concerned with the official statements of beliefs, my research concentrates not only on individuals’ statements about mission/vision, church priorities, and leadership, but also seeks to uncover some of the underlying elements of the organizational culture (values, attitudes, assumptions, etc.) of three congregations.

Collection of Texts

I chose text and document collection as a method because it was consistent with the goals of my study. One of my research questions focused on the perspectives of national and local church leadership regarding what the mission of the churches should be. The official statements of the leaders at the national and local church level were thus important. These official statements come in the form of texts and documents. Such texts as bishops’ letters and statements regarding global church mission, documents from the UMC website, printed materials and other media produced by the local churches were useful for this study as they captured the official voice of the church (at the national and local level). Unlike the interview or observation data, which likely includes people’s opinions, their interpretations of the official views and

statements, the unwritten rules and contextual information, these texts and artifacts explicitly present the official organizational perspective. Organizational texts were important for answering my research question that dealt with the influence of organizational culture on the life of the local churches and their fulfillment of church mission/vision. While the interviews and observations provided data regarding the patterns of communication in worship and organizational meetings, the texts and media produced and distributed by the local church leadership were the key to the content and the form of the communication materials used by the local church. Thus, collection of texts and documents contributed data not available through interviews and observations alone.

Lastly, this method is appropriate for the study of organizational culture. Keyton (2005) asserted that some of the conventional methods of exploring organizational culture focus on the archival information, mission statements, internal organizational media, etc. For example, Wittberg (1997) examined written texts in her study of the culture of Roman Catholic communities. In order to get an understanding of the traditional values of the church, Wittberg (1997) collected texts that were widely recognized as cornerstones of Catholic values at the time between sixteenth and the middle of twentieth century. In these texts she identified values that were part of the value system explicitly stated and officially recognized by the Catholic Church.

The Use of Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were an important part of the data collection process. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) recommended following a specific protocol while collecting and processing the fieldnotes. In adopting this protocol I took the following steps. First, I kept detailed notes regarding: 1) the people that I met at the sites (their names and descriptions of their role in the

church); 2) the phenomena and processes that I observed and took part in; and 3) references to unfamiliar terms, events or phenomena.

Second, in my observation notes I recorded my initial impressions, descriptions of the physical surroundings (spatial arrangements, lighting, colors, the décor style, the esthetic appeal, the overall feel, etc.), the order and arrangement of the events and activities (including how long the event or process takes, etc.), the people involved (number, gender, race, appearance, dress, behavior, what role they play, etc.), the media and resources used (literature, videos, slides, presentations, music and what type, and references to books and movies). In addition, both in interviews and observations I documented actions, interactions, verbal statements, and described emotional responses. I noted such nonverbal characteristics as body posture, mood, pace, rhythm, and verbal emphases etc. I also recorded the active verbs, sensory adjectives, and verbatim statements of interviewees and service/meeting participants.

Third, I avoided making interpretations or attributions as I recorded my fieldnotes. I separated and explicitly identified any of my own judgments and assumptions that emerged. I tried to include as much verbatim quoting as possible and used quotation marks to separate the direct quotations exactly.

Fourth, I maintained awareness of my presence and role as a researcher. I recorded my own feelings, emotions, perceptions, and assumptions (separately). I also made notes regarding how I framed my questions or statements when I interact with the members of the organization. These actions helped to ensure that the notion of self-reflexivity penetrated the fieldnotes.

Fifth, as I produced and coded my notes, I labeled them according to their category. The descriptive notes (mainly from participant observations and partially from interviews) were

labeled as “O.” Theoretical notes were labeled “T.” Notes dealing with methods and techniques of data collection were labeled “M.” Such categorization of notes helped in processing and organizing the data.

Descriptions of Types of Data

In my data collection process, I spent three and a half to six weeks at each site. During my time at each site, I acted as a participant observer and an interviewer, taking fieldnotes, audio recording meetings, interviews, and parts of worship services. I transcribed the recorded data from interviews and organizational meetings. At each site I conducted six to eight interviews (details for each site provided below). Interviews lasted from approximately 80 to 120 minutes and were guided by a set of questions provided in the Appendix B. In addition to fieldnotes and transcripts, I collected numerous texts (newsletters, bulletins, announcements, informational, educational, promotional, and fundraising materials, meeting agendas, and other documents). The three sub-sections below provide detailed description of each data type.

Participant Observations

Prior to beginning the formal data collection process, I attended each of the churches as a visitor or a member for a period of time ranging from four months to several years. As a visitor/member I attended worship services and participated in various church activities. This experience allowed me to become familiar with the history and traditions of each of the churches, meet the members, find out some of the unwritten rules and ways of doing things that I would not have been able to learn if I only was a participant observer for several weeks.

After gaining the research approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of New Mexico (UNM), I returned to each of the sites in the role of participant

observer and interviewer (Appendix F). As a participant observer, at each site I attended worship services, organizational meetings, and informal meet-and-greet gatherings that took place before or after the worship services. At the first site, church V, I attended nine worship services and observed six organizational meetings (a staff meeting, a membership committee meeting, two church council meetings, a charge conference, and a landscape/building committee meeting). At the second site, church M, I attended nine worship services and observed three organizational meetings (a staff meeting, a trustee meeting, and a breakfast meeting where UMC pastors of the town gathered for fellowship). At the third site, church K, I attended nine worship services and observed three organizational meetings (a staff meeting, a goal setting meeting, a trustee meeting, and a strategic planning meeting).

During my observations, I recorded the number of buildings on the site, their purpose, age, condition, architectural style, the layout of the space where the worship service or a meeting is conducted, spatial arrangements, and other elements of physical environment.

I also made notes concerning the people who were present and absent (their demographic characteristics as well as the style of clothing and behavior). I described the mundane interactions, spontaneous reactions and unexpected occurrences, as well as the planned events (symbolic and task oriented). For example, in my observations of the formal worship services, I took note of the order and recorded the length, the style of service components, the number of persons involved, their roles, attire, behavior, demeanor, etc. In my observations of organizational meetings, I focused on the content of the meeting, recording the issues discussed, the order in which they were presented, how much time was allocated to each of the issues, how each one was framed, and how the participants responded or addressed the issues. I also focused

on the participants by recording their physical characteristics (including demographics, attire, disposition), describing their behavior including verbal, emotional and nonverbal responses.

At the end of each observation day, I read my notes and organized them according to the appropriate categories. I used the labeling categories described in the section about the method of participant observation.

Interview Transcripts

In addition to my participant observation data, I conducted six to eight loosely structured interviews at each site. At the first site, church V, I conducted five interviews: four with members and one interview with a pastor (this church was significantly smaller than the other two churches and is, thus, represented by fewer interviews). Appendix C provides anonymous profiles of the interviewees from this cite (the marital status of members of this church is omitted in the Appendix to ensure anonymity). At the second site, church M, I conducted eight interviews: six with members, one of whom was on staff, one interview with the senior pastor, and one with the assistant to the pastor (see Appendix D for anonymous profiles of MUMC's interviewees). At the third site, church K, I conducted eight interviews: six with members, one of whom was the former senior pastor, one interview with the current senior pastor and one with the executive/associate pastor. Appendix E provides anonymous profiles of the interviewees from KUMC.

Members that I interviewed at each site represented various demographic categories: those who joined the church a long time ago and those who joined fairly recently; those who were younger and older; single, married, divorced, or widowed persons; those with and without children; working people and retired; and those who were very involved as lay leaders, actively

participated, or just attended weekly worship. This data is presented in anonymous form in Appendices C-E.

I used a different set of questions for pastors and members (see Appendix B). The interviews were conducted either at the church or offsite (if the participant preferred). The goal was to have the interview take place in an environment that is familiar and comfortable to the participant.

Interviews were recorded (with permission of the participants) and then transcribed by the researcher. During the interviews I continued taking observation notes regarding the information that was not part of the verbal responses of the interviewee. All of the recordings were transcribed by me at a later time. Names of interviewees were recorded only in my fieldnotes which were kept in a secure place ensuring that no one other than the researcher had access to the information that links participants to their responses.

Texts

I collected texts produced and or distributed at the church, used during the worship service or as promotional material and at the organizational meetings. I also collected documents and texts available on the church website, including announcements, service opportunities, event advertisings, fundraising materials, organizational histories, new member curricula, etc.

Research Design and Data Analysis

Inductive Approach

Due to the interpretive grounding of my study and my belief in the multiple constructed realities, I took an inductive approach to data collection and analysis. I embrace the notion of

flexibility in regard to the research design. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that “[i]n interpretive research, a priori design commitments may block the introduction of new understandings” (p. 376). Thus, I started with the following research questions (organized by underlying theories):

Research Questions

Organizational Culture

1. What values define the culture of the local church in light of the characteristics of its regional area?

Organizational Leadership

2. How does the local church (congregation and pastors) understand the role of senior or lead pastors?

Organizational Culture, Identification, and Commitment

3. How is the mission expressed at the local church level different from the mission established by the national level leadership?

Organizational Culture, Leadership, Identification, and Commitment

4. How do organizational values, norms, assumptions and contextual (regional community) characteristics affect the fulfillment of the church mission, organizational processes, practices, pastoral leadership in local churches, and congregational identity?

I allowed for their revision and modification based on the preliminary data. Thus, instead of stating and testing hypotheses, I remained open to the data to guide the process of inquiry and analysis.

This approach was used in other studies of culture. For example, Ecklund (2006) explained, “[b]ecause my research question was concerned with how parishes differed in their cultural approach to women's leadership rather than testing specific assertions about women's leadership, I used [interpretive] approach [in research design and] data analysis” (p. 86). The inductive approach incorporates some of the principles of grounded theory. For example, the theoretical explanations are derived from the data. However, while grounded theory presumes the use of a systematic approach to analyzing data that involves coding the data for themes, patterns, frequency, and intensity, the inductive approach merely asserts that the research design and analysis come from the data. This approach was manifested in my study through the use of broad research questions and reliance on the data to provide categories for analysis.

For example, knowing that organizational culture manifested itself in a variety of forms (metaphors, rituals, values, assumptions, norms, identifications, etc.). I chose not to impose any of these terms onto my research questions until I gathered data, showing what concepts described the organizational culture at each site.

Further, the flexibility of the inductive approach was necessary due to my interest in gaining access to the knowledge imbedded within the church community studied and interpreting that knowledge from the standpoint of the member of that community. Since it is their knowledge and interpretations that I was interested in, I needed to be flexible in allowing that knowledge to be shared with me and in allowing their interpretations to emerge.

Theoretical Grounding of Data Analysis

My choices of techniques of analysis were based on the theoretical grounding of my study. The theory of organizational culture served as the primary theoretical framework for the

study of the differences between how the national leadership and the local church (leaders and congregations) defined the mission of the church, how local congregations (members and pastors) understood pastoral leadership, and how local church culture and context affect the organizational mission, pastoral leadership, and the operation of local churches. Some of the conventional methods of exploring organizational culture included archival analysis, analysis of mission statements, analysis of cultural forms and practices, (Keyton, 2005) physical arrangements, and stories (Martin, 1992).

Organizational communication scholars often rely on analysis of texts (Ecklund, 2006; Wittberg, 1997). An example of an organizational culture study that used textual analysis is Wittberg's (1997) study. She utilized textual analysis to get an understanding of the traditional values of the church. She analyzed the written texts that were widely recognized as cornerstones of Catholic values at the time between the sixteenth and the middle of twentieth century. These texts included two classic books on religious practice that "were required reading for generations of postulants, novices, and seminarians" and pre-1950 issues of "the primary 'trade journal' read by priests and nuns" (Wittberg, 1997, p 245). Based on the themes from the textual analysis Wittberg (1997) created the taxonomy of values that she then compared to the values of the newly developed Catholic communities. In my study, I analyzed the interview data, the fieldnotes, and the documents created and circulating in the UMC congregations (mission statements, sermons, bulletins, announcements, and reading materials).

In my analysis of the data, I relied on thematic analysis. First, I coded the data for codes and themes. Second, I identified the most prevalent codes and themes within one type of data. Third, I identified relationships between the emergent codes and themes within each type of data. Fourth, I drew on the three types of data to identify the most dominant themes. Last, I explored

the relationships between the dominant themes of each data type. For example, quite often the church culture was represented differently in the official church media and texts than in the informal conversations and member behavior. Comparison of themes from each data type and follow-up conversations with interviewees (when necessary) allowed for a more holistic view of the culture of the organization.

In addition, scholars advocated reliance on metaphors to learn about organizational culture. Lofland, et al (2005) suggested identifying metaphors in the data in order “to move...analysis from the local particulars to broader generic categorizations” (p. 179). Denzin and Lincoln (2004) defined the term metaphor as “a figurative frame of reference in which we view some aspect of the social world as if it was another, dissimilar object” (p. 233). At VUMC, several of my observations, interviews and texts revealed a metaphor of family that highlighted important organizational values of caring and a subtle value of exclusivity. Thus, metaphor analysis was useful in my research.

Methods of Evaluation

Making sure that the data analyses produce trustworthy and useful results is important. Validity and reliability are the conventional criteria for evaluating quantitative research. However, these criteria could not justly evaluate my study because they were inconsistent with my axiological position (that the values of the participants as well as the values of the researcher influence the resulting interpretation) and my ontological position (that multiple social realities exist that change over time). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) explain, in qualitative research, the objective is not quantification but “the precision of description and stringency in meaning interpretation” (p30).

Denzin & Lincoln (2004) pointed out that that, while “[t]here is no single interpretive truth [in qualitative research], there are multiple interpretive communities, each with its own criteria for evaluating interpretations” (p. 26). As a qualitative researcher my goal was to produce a credible account and to show the readers that the interpretation of the data that I presented is plausible and useful. With these goals in mind, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggested “employ[ing] procedures for evaluating the trustworthiness and credibility of [the research] interpretations” (p. 240). One of the ways to achieve validation in qualitative research is “by evaluating multiple forms of evidence (triangulation and disjuncture) and by cycling some of the accounts back through the participants (member validation)” (p. 240).

Triangulation. The goal of triangulation is to seek “convergence of meaning from more than one direction” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 240). Qualitative researchers advocate triangulation to ensure credibility (Schroeder & Scribner, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Triangulation can take several forms. I used *multiple method* and *multiple source* triangulation.

An example that uses multiple method triangulation is Wittberg’s (1997) study of the culture of emerging Roman Catholic religious communities. Wittberg (1997) triangulated the interview data with the documents produced by the new religious communities in order to better understand “the elements of the new groups’ cultural or ideological system,” their culture that combined traditional and modern practices (p. 241). She compared the data from the texts that captured the traditional (prior to the Second Vatican Council) values of spirituality and religious life. Through the comparison with the triangulated data Wittberg (1997) hoped to see the differences between the values espoused by the traditional Roman Catholic culture as indicated by its sacred texts and the values in the culture of the newly established orders. Wittberg’s (1997) study provided evidence of values that differed from the traditional approach in the

culture of new Roman Catholic communities. The credibility of her claims was increased by the use of examples from both interview data and textual analysis.

Another example of research that uses multiple source triangulation is Ecklund's (2006) study of the issue of women's leadership in the Catholic parish culture. Ecklund (2006) interviewed women in formal leadership positions as well as regular attendees (male and female) who did not hold leadership roles. She also interviewed the person with the highest authority in each parish (parish priest) as well as some male leaders in the parishes. As she summarized the "factors [that] determined whether the culture surrounding women's leadership was progressive or traditional" (p. 86), she drew on the accounts of both leaders and followers. For example, in describing the progressive culture of St. Mark's parish, Ecklund described the "commitment he had to making his parish a place where equality was realized for all oppressed people" (p. 88). This conclusion was based on Father John's statements and descriptions of his actions and the statements of the women Ecklund interviewed at St. Mark. Ecklund (2006) writes, "[i]nterviews with women at St. Mark's confirmed that Father John had a large role in determining how the issue of 'women in leadership' was approached in the parish" (p. 88). While the themes and conclusions such as the one described above were drawn from multiple sources, their credibility was enhanced.

I used triangulation in this study by comparing the data from participant observations, texts, and interviews in order to understand how the mission, the vision, church leadership, and organizational processes are talked about and reflected in people's actions. Further, textual analysis showed how these issues were treated in the formal communication while the interview data showed how they were discussed in informal communication.

For example, I interviewed the pastors of the church who authored the official written texts and planned the order of events, services, and programs. I also interviewed the members and visitors of the church who attended worship services, experienced the ministries and programs, read the newsletters and bulletins, etc. I triangulated the data from both types of interviews with the texts from the newsletters, sermons, mission statements, and bulletins in order to understand how the conceptualizations of the various issues I study differed based on their source (the church leaders vs. attendees or the congregation (members and visitors)).

Member validation. The term “member validation” is defined as “taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true or accurate” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 242). I applied the member validation criterion to my research by asking some of the research participants to read the descriptions and interpretations from their congregation’s case study. This technique brought an opportunity for the research participants to review and critique the interpretation of their experience. While research participants are highly knowledgeable of their social reality, the fact that they reviewed and approved the researcher’s account of their experience increases the credibility of that account.

I approached member validations with humility in order to be more approachable and to treat all the comments as important even if I am tempted to consider them secondary to the main point. I also tried to maintain self-awareness of the possible external influences on the participants’ validations and take them into consideration. Using multiple methods, triangulation, and member validations allowed me to evaluate my study’s trustworthiness and credibility.

In this chapter, I described the use of qualitative interpretive approach, the case study design, the choices of data collection methods and the types of data I focus on. I also described the use of inductive approach, the methods of data analysis, and research evaluation.

CHAPTER 4: DATA AND ANALYSIS OF VUMC

Culture Profile

This section features an organizational culture profile of the VUMC that includes background and the demographics of the church, the description of the characteristics of the regional area, as well as the key elements of culture of the church. The elements of church culture are divided into sections that show their similarity to the regional area and uniqueness to the church community in terms of key values and identifications.

Church Background and Demographics

The church site described in this chapter is called the VUMC; “V” is a letter chosen randomly as a pseudonym so that the real name of this local church is kept secret for the protection of research participants’ privacy. The total church membership (as of November 2011) was 347 with average attendance of 167 on Sunday morning. The largest group of those attending church weekly consisted of people over 50 years old; the second largest group was children and youth (1-17 years old); the third was people in mid 30s and 40s (this group mainly consisted of the parents of the youth and children); the fourth and the smallest group was young adults (18-29 years old). The majority of the people about 90% of the congregation were Caucasian.

The leadership of this church consisted of two pastors (an elder serving as the senior pastor of the church and a deacon serving as the minister of youth and children who also assisted in leading the worship services and preaching). The staff included a choir director, a secretary, a pianist and an organist.

Geographical area. The VUMC is located in the Western part of the U.S. in a city with population less than 100,000 people. The socioeconomic, educational, political, and religious characteristics of the area help situate the church contextually. The city was among the wealthiest cities of the same size in the country and was representative of cities in the area in terms of its high socioeconomic level. In this suburban area, levels of crime were low and few signs of homelessness and poverty visible; the area was politically liberal and more secular than religious. As one of the interviewees pointed out, “In the West, the [general] culture is not as supportive of going to church...on Sunday people like to go to lunch, play golf and tennis, etc. (Interview 5). She added that churches compete for people’s attention with all these social activities (Interview 5). Large non-denominational or community churches with abundant resources, energetic preaching, attractive programs for youth, children, and adults, a variety of social activities, and an evangelical message dominated the church’s regional locale. Many of the churches in the area (both protestant denominations and non-denominational congregations) attracted members by providing activities for children and youth and hosting concerts and theatrical performances of a secular nature.

Elements of Church Culture Similar to the Area

The elements of the culture of the VUMC are similar to the regional context with high incomes, high levels of education, politically and theologically liberal outlooks, and secular or social rather than strictly religious orientation.

Economic and educational levels. First, the socioeconomic level of the majority of people who attended the church reflected the affluence of the area. The combined annual income of most families was over a 100,000 USD (Worship Observation, January 29, 2012). Most members were part of dual income families where both spouses held high paying jobs in

business, government, and corporations. Second, according to one interviewee, the congregation is “very intellectual... [people] appreciate education,” many of the members hold advanced degrees (Interview 5).

High educational levels were likely responsible for formation of the value of intellectualism. From the perspective of organizational culture research, values are “strategies, goals, principles, or qualities, that are considered worthwhile or desirable ideals, and as a result create guidelines for organizational behavior” (Keyton, 2005, p. 24). The value of intellectualism was expressed in VUMC’s members’ by their welcoming intellectual challenges and wrestling with difficult questions as indicated by participants’ descriptions of effective pastoral characteristics (see the leadership section below). The value of intellectualism also was associated with members’ desire for more participation in working with their pastors (see leadership subsection). Leadership theorists attribute this to workers’ (in this case church members’) high levels of intelligence (Fiedler, 1967, 1971), which results from education and leadership experience. The value of intellectualism influenced members’ conceptualization of leadership in this congregation (see leadership section). Thus, awareness of this value is important for understanding which leadership approach could be effective in churches in this context.

Political perspective. Third, the congregation was more politically liberal than the rest of the country with some degree of variation on the liberal-conservative continuum. As one of the members pointed out, “We have both liberals and conservatives in the congregation” (Interview 2). The VUMC is more conservative politically than some other churches in the area and more liberal than others. Among the reasons for this liberalism were their support of Palestine, their belief in the role of the government, their affirmation of the actions of the U.S. president, their

understanding of the U.S. military, and the acceptance of gay and lesbian people in the church, issues that surfaced repeatedly in interviews.

One of the major issues for the congregation was the rights of gay and lesbian people. For instance, this congregation framed its discussion of whether this denomination should ordain gay and lesbian clergy and perform marriages of same sex partners in terms of gay and lesbian people's rights to worship and be active ministers in the church. To illustrate, one of the members that I interviewed pointed out that in response to the question—"How open will we be, to inclusion of gays and lesbians... most people would say, 'fine, we don't ask and we don't tell but...some...would disagree [with such] specific outreach" (Interview 3). Another member noted that "this congregation has not begun the process to study whether it would want to publicly affiliate with other congregations [and organizations within the denomination] that support rights of [Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender people. VUMC] has not strongly affirmed this support... there is a mood to move forward, but it is lots of little steps, rather than big courageous steps that might disturb some people." She concluded: "While I personally support this, I think it's a very divisive issue. While our congregation is not officially a Reconciling Congregation, we are sensitive to the civil rights... there is an undercurrent of that support, but it is not universal" (Interview 2). The statements of the two interviewees demonstrated the following: 1) homosexuality was a sensitive issue that people within the congregation disagreed about; 2) the views of this congregation regarding the issue were quite progressive compared with other churches (see profiles of MUMC and KUMC in subsequent chapters). Note that this is the only congregation in this study that did not have a substantial group of members who openly disapproved of homosexual lifestyle. Further, my interviews and observations that numerous people at VUMC wanted their congregation to become part of the

Reconciling Ministries (a UMC organization that openly supports the rights and inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities). This indicates how liberal the majority of the congregation was in terms of issues of homosexuality.

The VUMC's leadership's liberal position on this issue was demonstrated through sermons and statements. For example, prior to the 2012 General Conference, the VUMC leadership invited a guest speaker who was a lay delegate to the General Conference to advocate for full inclusion of gay and lesbian people. He stated: "it is important for United Methodists of goodwill to make it clear that our minds have been changed that we are ready to open the doors to anyone who professes the living Christ and is willing to contribute to our church" (Worship Service Observation, Feb 19, 2012). The assumption underlying the statement that "our minds have been changed and we are ready to open doors" is that the congregation is open to gay and lesbian people's participation in worship, programs, and ministries of the church.

In a sermon on Martin Luther King Jr. day, the senior pastor suggested that members could put their calling into action by "leading a new ministry of invitation so that gay and lesbian people might feel more welcomed in our congregation" (Worship service, January 15, 2012). Similarly, during the pastoral prayer the congregation was asked to fight for the "equality of every minority [including] people of different sexual orientations" (Worship Service, January 15, 2012). Likewise, the leadership and some of the members discussed reconciling churches in favorable terms. One of the members interviewed mentioned "becoming a reconciling church" as something desirable (Interview 4). This northern California congregation echoed the sentiments of many people in this context in terms of the rights of gay and lesbian people and the responsibility of the church for inclusiveness.

From the perspective of the organizational culture theory, organizational values are essential to the culture of the organization (Wiener, 1988). In fact, Wiener (1988) approached the study of culture through values, which he classified in terms of strength. According to Wiener (1988) strong values are those that are broadly and intensely shared by members; weak values are those that are either shared by few members or/and are not highly adhered to. The prevalence of progressive ideas in discourses of both members and leaders pointed to the breadth of the values of political and social liberalism. The manifestations of these values in different forms of discourse: sermons, prayers, meetings, informal gatherings, interviews, etc. indicated its intensity and thus importance. Comparing this value to other values is essential for understanding how organizational culture forms the organizational experience and affects key organizational processes.

Theological perspective. Fourth, the congregation is theologically liberal, and the senior pastor described it as the “most theologically liberal church in the area” (Interview 5). Examples of theologically liberal ideas expressed by the members of the church included questioning whether God has a gender or whether God exists at all (Interview 3, and 4). Another theme is the practice of not interpreting the Bible literally, which was expressed in the sermons and interviews. For example, in the sermon on February 26, 2012, the senior pastor stated: “It wasn’t God who wrote the Bible, it was people like you and me” (Interview 5). The senior pastor continued, “The Bible [is filled with] picture stories, metaphors, similes...[which] we are not to take...literally” (Worship service, February 26, 2012). Another example was an interviewee’s statement that, “some of the older members have a more literal interpretation of the Bible” (Interview 2). The statement implies that the majority did not interpret the Bible literally.

The descriptions above highlight the strong value of theological liberalism that was expressed by members and pastors and manifested in multiple themes (questioning traditional theology and interpreting the Bible symbolically/metaphorically). This value affects processes; VUMC understands openness as liberal interpretation of the Bible, questioning the traditional theology and even God, supporting the rights of Gay and Lesbian people (this church's enactment of openness is further described below).

Openness and tolerance of conflicting perceptions. Along with being politically and theologically liberal, participants characterized the church culture by describing its openness and acceptance of a range of ideas and opinions. For instance, one of the members stated that this church is very open “as far as politics [, people are] willing to discuss world issues, [talk about] injustices in the world, and we do that a lot” (Interview 1). She explained that such open discussions often occurred in response to challenging issues raised in sermons and presentations by guest speakers.

The member continued, “People are able to voice their concerns, people feel comfortable..., [they feel they are] able to voice [their] opinions” (Interview 1). Another member pointed to the tolerant and open culture of the church saying that she knew people in the church that were on the opposite end of the liberal-conservative continuum, but they openly discussed conflicting ideas and heard each other's differing interpretations. Further, another member added that not only the congregation but also the local church leadership allowed a wide range of beliefs (Interview 3). My observations confirmed this statement suggesting that openness to interpretations of others and even changing one's mind were values promoted by the leadership. To illustrate, in a meeting with a small group of members, the senior pastor declared, “The goal is to be open... it is okay to question one's theological understanding and even change one's

mind” (Meeting Observation, March 3, 2012). Another example was the senior pastor’s statement during a worship service prompting the congregation to think of ways “to live together in harmony even if we disagree as a congregation, because living together with our differences is what it’s all about” (Worship service, 9 a.m., Jan 15, 2012).

The descriptions above pointed to another key value, the value of openness. From Wiener’s (1988) perspective this would be classified as a strong value because of its breadth and intensity. It was broadly shared because it appeared in discourse of members and leaders. It was intensely shared because it appeared in various types of discourse, was recognized by members as an element of culture, and upheld as a desirable value.

The values of political, social and theological liberalism reveal a strongly held church organizational value system. Wiener (1988) defined an organizational value system (OVS) as shared values of organizational members; that is, in a strong OVS key values are broadly and intensely shared by members whereas in weak systems key values are shared by few or not highly adhered to. According to Wiener (1988) OVSs define the culture of the organization, which affects key organizational processes. Recognizing liberalism among strong organizational values is helpful in understanding VUMC’s conceptualization of leadership, church mission and vision, and organizational commitment (see subsections below).

Secular inclination. The secularism typical for this geographical region was part of social orientation of many of the groups and gatherings in this church. As one of the members interviewed pointed out, “A lot of our women’s groups are just social groups” (Interview 2). My observations confirm this statement that the “ladies’ lunch” and “ladies’ night out” gatherings were of social nature. In addition, the church has several seasonal social events, including a drama performance, formal and casual dinners, and cookouts. These events were described by

members and advertised in church texts as opportunities to spend time with family and friends and get to know new people from the church. Similarly, during my observation of a meeting, the pastor noted that the congregation had “quite a few social [events and small groups] already” and suggested that dimensions of spiritual fellowship and accountability be introduced into the gatherings (cottage gathering, March 3, 2012). During a church council meeting, someone mentioned that in the past the committee on membership was mainly focused on social activities for members (church council, February, 2012).

Organizational communication scholars often approach the study of organizational culture through rituals, rights, and ceremonies. Trice and Beyer (1984) argue that these cultural events are especially useful in cultural studies because they “combine various forms of cultural expression [, such as] certain customary language, gestures, ritualized behaviors, artifacts, other symbols, and settings” (p. 653-4). Moreover, rites, rituals, and ceremonies present these cultural forms in a coherent, interdependent pattern (Trice and Beyer, 1984). This contextual information reveals how these forms relate to each other and thus allows a more complete understanding of the culture of the organization. The four rituals described below uncover a pertinent organizational value of socialization. The rituals suggest that opportunities for casual conversations with friends and acquaintances on non- religious topics (children, jobs, parents, health, etc.) were essential to VUMC members’ church experience.

The first ritual I observed was the coffee time before and after services. Every Sunday members and visitors gathered in the courtyard outside or in the fellowship hall (if it rained or was cold) drink coffee, tea, and have breakfast foods (which varied from breads and pastries to a full brunch). While many churches do have snacks and coffee between services, “the coffee time” at the VUMC congregation was a time of authentic social communion. The duration of the

coffee time at VUMC (30 minutes or more) seemed to have the distinct purpose of socialization, not just consumption of a breakfast snack and a quick cup of coffee. The ritual took place after each of the services. The break between the first and the second services was 30 minutes (longer than in most UMCs). This allowed people to sit down on a bench or at a table to talk with each other or walk around and engage in conversations. The Sunday school groups, which gathered during the first service, finished promptly and people emerged into the courtyard to partake in the weekly coffee time. This indicated that they were eager to engage in the ritual of talking with members of their small group and other church friends. I observed that many people who attended the second service participated in this ritual both before and after the service. Although, not all of them had coffee or food both times, the socialization was the constant element. Participating in the first and the second coffee time provided an opportunity to talk to more church friends and acquaintances; they were not only able to talk to those who attended the same service but also to those who were leaving after the first coffee time. I observed that both coffee times were well attended and people did not rush off after the second service but many stayed for 30 minutes conversing with each other. This observation and interviews with members indicated that members valued this ritual as means of socialization.

The second ritual in which the value of social communion emerged was visiting with the pastor, which occurred after services when members and visitors exited the sanctuary. At VUMC this ritual did not consist of just a handshake and a “hello, thank you for coming” statement by the pastor. The line did not move quickly because the pastor took time to not only greet, but also to say a few words or sentences to each person. A member pointed out that one of the ways he knew that the senior pastor truly cared was by the pastor’s willingness to take time to inquire about the members and visitors during the greeting after service (Interview 3). I noticed that

although the line of people waiting to talk to the pastor after the service got long, people did not seem to mind waiting because they had conversations with other members standing in line. After the senior pastor finished greeting all the people exiting the sanctuary, she joined those gathered in the courtyard for social communion. The coffee time (the first ritual) gave the pastor an opportunity to talk longer with those that needed attention (those who were new to the church, who struggled with something, etc.).

The third ritual that incorporated the social communion value was “the passing of the peace.” It was a time in worship when members moved around the sanctuary and greeted each other. The bulletin explained, “All are invited to share the peace with one another” (church, bulletin, April 22, 2012). The social communion element was depicted by the way members described the ritual. One member explained that “the passing of the peace [at VUMC] is much more than [a greeting.]... We get up and hug each other, say ‘hello!’” (Interview 4). My observations confirmed this statement. Oftentimes people not only greeted each other, but they had short conversations. For example, A: “Glad you are back, we’ve missed you... hope you are feeling better!” B: “Oh, thank you, it’s good to be back... I am taking it one day at a time.” A: “Well, take care.” I also observed that during a training of lay readers the senior pastor emphasized the importance of announcing the conclusion of this ritual in timely manner. She warned that, if the announcement was not done on time, people would begin visiting, asking about each other’s family (lay leader training observation, November, 2012). This statement also illustrated how much members enjoyed the social component of this ritual.

The fourth ritual that showed the value of social communion was the focus on sharing “joys and concerns.” I observed that on average, 8.5 minutes, was devoted to sharing joys and concerns. One Sunday a number of people (7-8) raised their hands and each described in some

detail what they wanted the congregation to pray for and/or what they rejoiced over (worship service, January 29, 2012). Examples included requests for prayers for health, travel, job search for self or loved ones (family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues). People also expressed gratitude to the congregation for their prayers as they reported improvement in someone's health or a positive outcome of a situation that they brought up before. Some descriptions were rather detailed (approximately a minute long). The ritual was concluded with a prayer where the clergy person leading worship (the senior pastor or the Minister to Children and Youth) briefly mentioned these requests, added a few others and expanded some of the requests to give them a more global perspective.

The ritual of sharing joys and concerns has been modified since I started the observations at the VUMC. A new version emerged that included members writing down their joys and concerns and the clergy sharing them with the congregation. As before, the pastor's prayer concluded the ritual. The clergy described each joy or prayer request in much less detail, which made the ritual shorter. The change of the format of the ritual did not reduce the number of people in the congregation sharing their joys and concerns, which indicated that members were comfortable with both formats and valued the opportunity to communicate their requests to the congregation.

The pervasiveness of social interaction in VUMC's rituals and activities indicated that socialization was a strong value (Wiener, 1988). Attention to this value is important because as any strong value, it affects organizational processes such as leadership, church mission, and building member identification and/or commitment.

Elements of Church Culture Unique to VUMC¹

VUMC differed from the culture of the area where it is situated in terms of its racial and ethnic composition.

Racial and ethnic homogeneity. The congregation of the VUMC was more than 90% white, which contrasted with the racial and ethnic diversity of the city in which the church is situated where white people accounted for less than 75% of the population (2009 demographic profile of the city). Interestingly, my observations suggest that members of the congregation held conflicting views about how diverse the church was. During one of the small group gatherings, a person mentioned that he felt that the church was “pretty diverse,” referring to “a lot of” non-white members and visitors in the congregation. In response, another person pointed out that the percentage of minorities in the church was much smaller compared to that of the city. The senior pastor confirmed that the church had only a few families of different races (cottage gathering observation, March 3, 2012).

The theme of increasing racial diversity of the church surfaced in my observations and interviews. Several people mentioned that VUMC lacked diversity and that being more diverse would be a positive change for the church. Two members stated that they believed the congregation of VUMC was welcoming to people of different nationalities. For instance, a member said, “we are open to [people of] all faiths, income levels, sexual orientations...it’s nice to be able to welcome all these different people” (Interview 1). At the same time, the senior pastor suggested that one of the reasons for the lack of racial diversity at VUMC was because most of the members did not have friends and close acquaintances of different races. As a result,

¹ Although these elements differ from the general context of the area, they may not be unique to this church. Other churches (both United Methodist and non-United Methodist) may have similar elements.

although members likely would welcome racially diverse people at the church, they did not know many diverse people that they could invite to come to church.

The theme recurred consistently in members' conversations, prayers, and sermons. For example, during one of the meetings, a member brought up a question whether the congregation was welcoming to some that are like them. She wondered if people of different racial background would feel very comfortable when visiting (cottage gathering observation, March 3, 12). Questions like these indicated that some members not only upheld the value of making the church more welcoming to racially diverse people, but also were willing to be critical of the VUMC's progress toward fulfilling that value.

Increasing the church's openness to diversity (including racial and ethnic diversity) was brought up in worship. For example, the pastoral prayer asked God to "help us to be a congregation open to all people, welcoming visitors as friends" (worship service, January 29, 2012, 10:30 am). The pastor explained that the term "all" referred to people of different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, etc. She promoted the value of increasing diversity in the church by suggesting what the congregation could do to advance toward this goal.

The statements above indicated that racial and ethnic diversity was a value. From Wiener's (1988) perspective this value was weak. Although the positive view of diversity was widely shared, the intensity to which members wanted to increase current levels of diversity at VUMC varied among groups. One group assumed that having few members of different races and ethnicities made VUMC diverse, and they were satisfied with the status quo. Another group openly challenged this assumption and called for change in behavior and active pursuit of increasing congregational diversity.

Scholars of organizational culture explain that in some organizations, groups of people have conflicting views and/or uphold opposing values thus dividing the culture of the organization into subcultures. The differentiation and fragmentation perspectives represent the divided view of organizational culture (Keyton, 2005). While both perspectives assume that division into subcultures is unavoidable, the differentiation perspective assumes that “the inconsistencies between or among subcultures are usually clear” (Keyton, 2005, p. 63); the fragmentation perspective states that subcultures “appear briefly, but with boundaries that are permeable and fluctuating” (p. 63).

My observations were that the subgroups held conflicting views regarding diversity that were not clearly marked. For example, during a small group gathering, one member that talked about VUMC as “pretty diverse” agreed that the congregation should focus on outreach to different racial and ethnic groups in response to the suggestion of a member of the subgroup that viewed VUMV as homogeneous. The fact that a member of a subgroup easily and quickly changed his group affiliation demonstrates that the boundaries of this subgroup were fluid. Thus, the fragmentation perspective best explains this example.

Elements of Church Culture Most Valued by Members

Three elements of culture that VUMC members appreciated most about their congregation were care for members, focus on the youth and community outreach.

Care for members. The theme of caring for members surfaced frequently in members’ description of the congregation and in my observations. All of the members I interviewed mentioned the loving, caring nature and friendliness of the congregation. Several talked about the “friendliness” of the congregation in terms of member interactions going beyond casual greetings to include inquiries about each other’s families, health, etc. A member mentioned that

when someone was hospitalized, reported being ill or having a concern, others often offered support and asked for updates. Another member provided an example of being a recipient of the “overwhelming” love and help from members of the church during a time of health difficulties. She said, “I must have received over a hundred cards, flowers[;]...they set up meals[;]...everybody was so worried and concerned about me, it was amazing” (Interview 1). She added that these caring gestures came from “all church members” some of whom she did not know well (Interview 1). Another member stated, “we help our members, that’s for sure,” people make meals for members who had a death in the family, went through a serious health treatment, or returned home after hospitalization (Interview 4).

I observed that when someone shared a prayer request members inquired about the situation, asked if they could help and in the following weeks asked for updates and offered more help or prayers. I also observed that people often thanked the congregation for prayers and support, which indicated that they felt that the congregation prayed and supported them in times of need; they appreciated being the recipients of such support and prayers; and they felt comfortable acknowledging their appreciation.

Care for the members was also embedded in the “family” metaphor that the congregation used to describe this church. From the perspective of organizational culture research, metaphors are rich sources of information regarding organizational values, and thus warrant attention (Keyton, 2005). The “family” metaphor repeatedly surfaced in the observations and interviews. For example, the pastoral prayer at the second service on January 22, 2012, included references to the congregation as “our church Family,” prayers for specific families that were named by name, and prayers “for the families of this church.” The church newsletter often called the congregation “church family.” Several members used the “family” metaphor to describe the

church. Two of them explicitly stated that the value of caring for the members was embedded in this metaphor.

Interviewees also mentioned the negative aspects associated with both the family metaphor and the value of care for the members. For example, one interviewee criticized the exclusivity associated with the family metaphor. She explained that, “you are only family when you are a member and your family tends to look like you and... have common experiences” (Interview 5). This statement challenges the exclusiveness of the value of caring for those we know and are comfortable with but not extending love to the larger community, not loving those who do not look like us, and not including those with different experiences. Another interviewee talked about the VUMC as “tightly bound in our own congregation” (Interview 3) but lacking involvement with other United Methodist organizations or denominations. A different member mentioned that it would be great if the VUMC could start “doing the same kind of service beyond ourselves...[partnering with others] on projects...throughout the world” (Interview 2). She suggested that “this church could be more of a partner with a church that is very different (rural or urban vs. suburban) to bring more of a sense of diversity” (Interview 2). These statements indicate that although people appreciated the value of caring for members, some of them saw the need for outreach beyond care for those who were close and familiar.

The above descriptions highlighted the value of caring for members and the norm of subtle exclusivity. From Wiener’s (1988) perspective the value of caring for those belonging to VUMC can be classified as a strong value because of it is widespread (appearing in various discourses) and intensely shared (described as important and positive). Norms refer to patterns of behavior of organizational members, the way things are done (Keyton, 2005). Norms could be explicit, openly recognized by members and leaders or implicit, subtle and mostly or completely

unnoticed within the organization. The norm of exclusivity is an example that was not recognized widely or discussed repeatedly. Norms could be intentionally cultivated or emerging as a consequence of organizational values and processes. The norm of exclusivity is likely an unintentional byproduct of focusing on friendliness and caring within the congregation. This norm was certainly not intentionally cultivated, since those who recognized exclusivity described it in negative terms and urged for related church practices to change as one member urged the church to start “doing the same kind of service beyond ourselves” (Interview 2).

The awareness of the norm of subtle exclusivity that was explained by interviewees suggests that a group of members viewed the value of caring for members differently than the majority of the congregation. This points to another subculture, the boundaries which seemed to be fluid when I observed members of this subgroup appreciating the value of care for the members. I also noticed some members of the majority group agreeing with the statements of the subgroup about the danger of the subtle exclusivity associated with the family metaphor and the value of congregational care. Such change of subculture boundaries was evidenced by the decision of the church to change the name of one of the committees from “Congregational Care” to “Care.” This change was initiated by members of the subgroup that challenged the congregation to expand the “family” boundaries and to take the value of caring beyond the local congregation into the community.

Focus on the youth and children. The second element of culture that VUMC members found appealing was the focus on the youth and children. One of the most obvious observations was the size and the strength of the children and youth programs at the VUMC. On Sundays a large group of children (at least 10% of the total attendance) gathered at the altar for the “children’s moment,” led by the VUMC minister of youth and children and then the children met

their teachers (8 adult volunteers serving each Sunday) for Sunday school. The large number of children attending consistently indicated the strength and vibrancy of the program. The fact that an ordained deacon was hired to lead youth and children indicated that developing strong youth and children programs was a priority at VUMC. Additionally, the large number of adult volunteers leading children's Sunday school classes suggested that the congregation valued children's programs and supported them.

Similarly, the youth program at VUMC was well attended. I observed that a large number of young people (approximately 10% of the congregation) participated in coffee times before and after the second service. During the second service, the youth attended age appropriate Sunday school classes. On the first Sunday of the month, however, instead of having Sunday school the youth of VUMC attended and participated in the worship service as lay readers and communion servers.

Youth and children were also often mentioned in services; for example during the pastoral prayer on January 29 a member of the congregation asked that "the children and youth of [VUMC may] find [the church] a place where people care about them and nurture them as they grow in wisdom... and faith" (Worship service, January 29, 2012, 10:30 am).

In addition, VUMC had a Youth Council, a Children's Council, and two children's choirs. The Children's Council and the Youth Council met monthly to establish the direction of the youth and the children's programs and to plan various activities, trips, and events. The Children's Council consisted of 7-8 adult members of the church and the Youth Council of 12 members of both youth and adults. The fact that VUMC has separate committees dedicated to planning and organizing youth and program development suggested that the congregation was intentional in providing the programs for the younger generation.

The VUMC had two children's choirs that included children of various ages. The choirs met every Sunday (except the summer) to rehearse with their choir directors and an accompanist. Both choirs performed periodically during worship. The active involvement of the children's choirs (not one but two) suggested that the church emphasized programs for children.

The VUMC's focus on the youth and children was also evident in church texts. The bulletins and monthly newsletters described a variety of programs for children and youth. For example, the May 2012 newsletter announced the Summer Sunday School program and invited adults to "teach the kindergartners through 5th graders" by sharing a skill or a topic of interest. The same newsletter listed the following opportunities for youth (social and educational) "Broom Hockey," "Swim Party and BBQ," "game of Hide-and-Seek," "Youth Summer Sunday School," and joining the "delegation to the Annual Conference."

The interviews confirmed VUMC's focus on the youth and children. For example, one member pointed to the "viable [children's] Sunday school population" as something that "makes [this] church unique" (Interview 1). She explained that not every church had so many elementary school age children in Sunday school. Another member mentioned that the congregation was passionate about raising children. She explained that "raising kids [is something that] we all go through" and is therefore important to most in the congregation (Interview 2). She said that this focus on the children and youth was "good for the church because it is a way to grow the church" (Interview 2). She explained that "the things done for the kids involve parents of the kids, the things done for the youth involve the parents of the youth," as the children and youth become engaged in the church programs, so the parents begin to attend (Interview 2).

The focus on youth and children at VUMC revealed two values: caring for members and growing the church. By providing multiple activities for children and youth the church further promoted caring for members (children and youth are members of the congregation). At the same time, practices that supported youth and children were intentionally cultivated for their ability to induce church growth by attracting families and nurturing the young people into becoming lifelong members. Members' statements about church growth indicated that this value was upheld as necessary and desirable.

Outreach. The third element of the VUMC culture that members appreciated was community outreach, which was heavily emphasized in all the interviews. For example, one member said, "The outreach [at VUMC] is beyond anything I've ever seen, it's amazing" (Interview 1). Similarly, the senior pastor mentioned several times during the interview that this church did much outreach. In a meeting on March 3, 2012, she commended VUMC outreach efforts saying that, this church "probably [does] more than any other church I've been to" (cottage gathering observation, March 3, 2012). Likewise, a member explained that this church has had "a long history of serving the community at large" (Interview 2). Members named a number of local organizations and projects that the church supported. The majority of the recipients of the church outreach were from the local community with the exception of such overseas initiatives as mission trips to Haiti, supporting UMCOR disaster relief projects, and collecting books to send overseas for children trying to learn English.

Another indicator of the strong focus on outreach was the VUMC monetary support. A portion of VUMC budget was designated specifically for outreach and mission work, including disaster relief campaigns and projects helping the underprivileged in the community. The senior pastor of VUMC commended the church on this, stating that most UMCs do not have money for

missions in their budget but have to raise funds to support each mission initiative. The VUMC also paid its apportionments in full; apportionments or shared ministries are the financial contributions to the national organization that the United Methodist Church asks each congregation to pay. The amount is determined by the size and income of each congregation. The purpose of apportionments/shared ministries is to fund a variety of ministries and programs throughout the world (*Book of Discipline*, 2012). So by paying its apportionments, the VUMC supported the worldwide mission of the United Methodist Church.

Note that not all of UMCs pay their apportionments in full. Churches that struggle financially often choose to pay the local church expenses first, while contributing to the ministries funded through the national organization is secondary. The fact that VUMC paid full apportionments and contributed a portion of its budget to outreach was celebrated by the VUMC congregation in its newsletters and bulletins, which described church giving as “exceptional” and “worth celebrating.” It was proudly mentioned during committee meetings with such statements as, “we are doing everything right, we are meeting the criteria” (vitality meeting, February 14, 2012). At the same time, some pointed out that VUMC paid full apportionments because of the affluence of the congregation, not because of being “extravagantly generous.” One of the interviewees stated, “We can afford to give” (Interview 2). Another said, although there is much pride in how much we give, “we are giving out of our abundance... [and] are not doing anything daring— no one is giving half of the income away” (Interview 5).

The observations and the statements of the interviewees about outreach revealed a strong value of service in the community. Appreciation for community outreach was openly stated and widely embraced among members who enthusiastically supported these initiatives. Attention to this strong value is important because of its effect on organizational processes and definitions.

Interviewee's descriptions of giving revealed contradictory views of members regarding giving at VUMC. The majority perceived giving as generosity and were eager to celebrate it. An example of this is the way that the congregation took great pride in its members' generosity and praised the congregations' desire to give to a cause. Some people, however, attributed large gifts to affluence of members claiming that VUMC's giving was not of sacrificial nature. This group challenged the value of celebrating generosity insisting that "privilege is not something to be proud of" (Interview 5).

Members' criticism of VUMC's pride in giving suggests that a few members opposed the view of the majority of the congregation. The fragmentation perspective of organizational culture theory applies here because there was no clearly defined group representing the subculture of challenging the value of the majority of the congregation. An example of a shift in group identification regarding this issue occurred in a meeting where members of the majority group agreed that much of the generosity of the church stemmed from the "good financial decisions" of previous and current leadership rather than from extraordinary acts of generosity by members (church council meeting, February 2012).

The data regarding subcultures in organizations is very helpful as a way of explaining organizational commitment theory that suggests that elements of culture that members find attractive cultivate member commitment to the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) explained that satisfaction with organizational experiences fostered member's affective commitment, their affective attachment to the organization. VUMC's cultural profile suggests that openness to various theological interpretations and social perspectives, care for members, focus on the youth, and community outreach were the antecedents of affective commitment in this church. This has implications for leadership since VUMC leaders could cultivate members' affective commitment

by strengthening and promoting these elements of church culture; leaders of other congregations and religious organizations could evaluate whether the same or different elements of organizational culture are valued and appreciated by their members and use those elements to strengthen members' affective commitment. However, the congregations' efforts to increase member commitment should take into account not only the views of the majority of the congregation but also the views and values of the subgroups within the congregation.

Church Mission

This section describes how the leaders and members of VUMC viewed the mission of the denomination and the local church. I describe the view of the pastor regarding her role in introducing the denomination's mission and the nationally established areas of focus to this congregation. This section also highlights members' views of the foci that their congregation should take.

VUMC Leaders' and Members' Views of the Denomination's Mission

The senior pastor said that she communicated the mission of the denomination, "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," (*Book of Discipline*, 2012), by including information printed in the bulletin, referring to it often in sermons, and writing about it in the newsletter. In regards to the four foci established by the national organization, the senior pastor indicated that she was aware of it but could not name the four. She also mentioned that, the four foci were not emphasized by the bishop and the leadership of this Annual Conference and that she was not asked to promote them to the congregation.

The denomination's mission, however, was emphasized by the Annual Conference and local church leadership. The senior pastor of VUMC believed that the lay "leaders of this church [were] aware of it" (Interview 5). My interviews indicated otherwise: only one of the members I

interviewed was able to name the UMC mission correctly. Others either could not articulate it or quoted something different: the social principles of the church or the UMC motto “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” (Interview 2), which was heavily promoted by the national church and even became the title of the organization website’s homepage: “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors. The people of the United Methodist Church” (The United Methodist Church, 2013). Interestingly, those who misquoted the mission were active members (engaged in a ministry or served on a committee).

My observations and interview data indicated that VUMC was a vital and effective congregation with strong identification and commitment among leaders and members. This church fulfilled the national mission of the UMC in its local community. The senior pastor observed, “We are preaching the gospel, committed with the time and the money, making a difference in the community, teaching Sunday School classes -mainly children not adults as much,...doing church as it has been done traditionally” (Interview 5). Church members also confirmed that “the church is growing, promotes the mission of reaching out to the community” (Interview 2); “we are growing the youth program, pushing the youth beyond their comfort zone” (Interview 1); we are also “trying to be recognized in the community as a place for United Methodists” (Interview 2).

One of the possible explanations of why the global mission was not widely known among the VUMC congregation was the congregations’ desire to be unique rather than identify with the national organization. The senior pastor explained that “people don’t care about the district and the conference... they want to be unique not like other churches” (Interview 5). Similarly, in a meeting that discussed the UMC guidelines on building “vital congregations,” one of the lay leaders said, “We don’t care, it’s the conference effort, we care about our own vision, we want to

be unique” (vitality meeting observation, February 14, 2012). The notion of longing for uniqueness also emerged in interviews; one member said “there are a lot of large congregations in [this town] and how are we different from them?” (Interview 2). In addition to the desire to be unique, the congregation has a strong focus on the local community. The senior pastor noted that the people in “this church care more about their own community” than being involved beyond the local area.

VUMC Leaders’ View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

Given the emphasis on uniqueness that was characteristic of VUMC culture it is not surprising that this church emphasized its on vision over the national UMC mission. The senior pastor explained that church visioning was a “big movement this year” (Interview 5). She recalled that the congregation was eager to engage in the visioning process, that the people chose the vision through a “very inclusive process [, involving] free expression” and open discussion (Interview 5). She continued saying that “leadership is committed to the vision, the congregation is supporting the pillars” of the vision (Interview 5). She trusted “it as a way to go because... this is how the people of the church want to do the mission of the church” (Interview 5).

VUMC Members’ View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

Conversations with members confirmed the congregation’s awareness and support of the vision. All the interviewees were familiar with the vision and able to explain its components. For example, one member talked about fulfilling the vision of the church through the newly formed social justice committee and social justice themed projects in which the youth were involved (Interview 1). Members also commented on their appreciation of the visioning process. One member appreciated it for its inclusiveness and providing an opportunity to engage with others in

conversation when “there might be different opinions [about such important issues as] the mission [, the vision] of the church (Interview 4).

Areas of focus. Members named five areas that they believed VUMC needed to focus on in order to fulfill its new vision. The first area was the focus on social justice. VUMC members talked about increasing VUMC’s dedication to “social justice” (Interview 1), being more proactive, being “more out there” with social justice concerns, “being a reconciling church, being known for social responsibility when it comes to injustices in the world and in our community” (Interview 4).

The second area was the focus on incorporating more diversity. Several people talked about the need for the church to be “diverse in terms of nationalities and races” (Interview 1, 2, & 4). One member observed that “we live in an area with diverse population, we are to serve all of them” (Interview 4). He explained that, even though increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the congregation “hasn’t been a focus in the past...[the people of VUMC] would be equally as comfortable with other races [because most] value diversity” (Interview 4). Another member talked about introducing more diversity by partnering with churches in the area that are very different (in terms of socio-economic class, race, and ideology) (Interview 2). This focus was strongly supported by the leadership, and the senior pastor emphasized the need “to be more diverse” and advocated it in meetings, preaching, and writing (Interview 5).

The third area was expanding mission or outreach beyond the local community. Although members commended the outreach efforts of VUMC, some felt that this area needed to expand. One member suggested “doing the same kind of service beyond ourselves—we could be partners on projects...throughout the world” (Interview 2). Another member stated that, “a lot more people can be involved with the outreach... we are capable of that” (Interview 4). He continued:

“It wouldn’t be much of an effort to do that...a spark or push” is needed to encourage the congregation to “go out in the community and see the hidden things that happen” (Interview 4).

The fourth part of the mission was to have more spiritual education for adults, and the need for adult education came up in meetings and interviews. Members advocated having adult education groups such as open discussion groups, where members discuss and wrestle with theological issues. Another example is spiritually enriching service oriented groups where people, led by a lay volunteer, would unite around an interest in a topic, which they would study and put into action (Interview 4). The senior pastor emphasized the importance of adult education in meetings and working with members. She has also initiated several adult education programs; some of them she led and others were facilitated by lay volunteers.

The fifth area was learning about the UMC. One member suggested that “the congregation needs to learn more and be taught more about the Methodist connections” (Interview 4). Another person said, “We need to reeducate the congregation all over again, what their apportionments are for, why we have apportionments, what the six special offerings are for, get everybody attuned to what it’s all about and how these different groups operate” (Interview 3). He explained that “we are a United Methodist Church and we depend on each other to fund all these things and in order to fund them properly we need to know what it’s all about” (Interview 3). This member as well as another member talked about the need to strengthen the connection with other churches in the circuit, to move beyond the connection “on paper” (Interviews 2 & 3).

The discussion of the church mission suggests that members of this congregation did not find identification with the national organization appealing. They had little interest in following the mission created by the bishops of the organization for all the UMCs. Instead, this

congregation desired a unique identity that would set it apart from other churches in the local community. This has several implications for leadership. First, members welcome an opportunity to create their own church vision and acknowledge shared areas of emphasis, practices that emphasize participation in leadership was a strong value at VUMC. Members' descriptions of preferred pastoral leadership style (see leadership section below) confirm this supposition. Second, knowing that denominational identification was not as relevant to VUMC members as congregational identification, pastors focused their efforts in generating church commitment and identification with the values and the culture of the local church. While many of the local and national church values are the same, this congregation might be more inclined to identify with the values created by the national organization if they were presented as part of the local church identity.

Local Church Leadership Profile

This section features a VUMC local church leadership profile consisting of the descriptions of characteristics of local church leaders that members reported as desirable. I outline the role of the senior pastor based on the descriptions given in the responses of the members and the current senior pastor that I interviewed. Lastly, this section highlights members' preferences regarding how participatory or authoritarian they wanted their senior pastors to be.

Members Descriptions of Desirable Pastoral Leadership

Pastors' communication practices. Members valued such practices as caring, encouraging, inspiring, and planning or organizing, and in their interview responses they provided examples of their experience with the current senior pastor in terms of positive outcomes and impressions.

Caring. One member explained caring pastors were more effective in attending to members “in need...making the personal visits, being available to the congregation when there are real needs” (Interview 2). Members said that the current senior pastor “truly cares for members” because she makes an effort to get to know members and to inquire about their needs (Interview 3). One member observed, “When [the pastor] is reporting that someone is ill you can tell [she] cares about them” (Interviewee 1). Care was operationalized in terms of communication practices and relationship building. The communication approach to leadership emphasizes both of these elements and thus allows the leaders to convey care. This observation confirms the appropriateness of this approach in pastoral leadership.

Encouraging. Interviewees described encouragement as promoting the work of the church, supporting ideas of church members and “not setting roadblocks” (Interview 2). Several members said that the current senior pastor is “encouraging of things that already have been started [such as the drama team], “being open to letting [the group] come back and try again” (Interview 1). Interviewees explained pastoral encouragement as actions such as inviting the drama participants onto the stage after the performance so that the congregation could express their appreciation with applause (worship service, January 8, 2012); and such statements as, “I want to thank you for all you do, you do a lot. I appreciate it so much!” (Membership Care meeting observation, March 2, 2012).

Members described encouragement in terms of communication (open, supportive, and reassuring statements). Thus, a pastor who understands and uses communicative approaches to leadership may easily interact with others and express a sense of encouragement to the congregation.

Inspiring. Being inspiring was described in context of preaching. Interviewees valued pastors who were not only “articulate” (Interview 3) but had “thought provoking” sermons (Interview 2). For example, members commended their current senior pastor for addressing pertinent issues in sermons. They observed that through preaching she “addresses the injustices” (Interview 1) and contested issues (Interview 2 and 3). One interviewee explained that this “congregation enjoys ministers that can inspire, challenge us” (Interview 2). Another member expressed appreciation for the senior pastor “push[ing] us to look outside ourselves...tr[ying] to encourage people to look beyond themselves” (Interview 1). A different member explained that it was important to him that the sermon provided something new and original, “something to think about” (Interview 3).

Members’ descriptions indicated that the pastor communicated inspiration through her preaching and teaching practices. Both of these practices were described by members as essential roles of the senior pastor. This finding is helpful for defining effective preaching and teaching. First, it indicates that the desirable outcome is inspiration. Second, it suggests specific strategies (addressing pertinent and contested issues, challenging members to think or act differently) that members at VUMC deemed effective. The use of a communication approach by pastors is, thus, warranted. However, adoption of preaching strategies should be done with caution. As the data on church cultures indicated, strategies that are effective in one church may not be perceived as effective in another.

Planning. Members also valued organized and focused administrative qualities. One member commended the current senior pastor for “keep[ing] us focused...in meetings, keep[ing] the agenda, remind[ing] us of things that need to be done...” (Interview 2). Other interviewees

appreciated her “being organized” and clear in providing directions so that “everything is precise ...and spelled out” (Interview 1).

All of the qualities mentioned at VUMC were also emphasized at KUMC and MUMC, thus suggesting that effective communication both at the interpersonal and through public speaking is at the top of the list of the most important leadership qualities for pastors.

Pastors’ Roles and Responsibilities

Adjusting to context. Given that this church did not have an associate pastor, the conceptualization of pastoral role was attributed to the role of the senior (lead) pastor as described by the pastor and the members. The senior pastor described her roles as the leader of this local church in terms of “spiritual leadership, pastoral care, administration and worship” (Interview 5). The same roles surfaced in members’ descriptions of communication practices that they appreciated in their pastors’ enactment of these roles.

Spiritual leader role. The senior pastor explained that she understood her role as a spiritual leader of this congregation in terms of the relationships with members and as the voice of a spiritual leader that she could express through her sermons and writing. Lastly, she mentioned the importance of serving as an example of “being there not for ourselves but for others, the society” (Interview 5). In fact, this theme of caring for the wider society, the wider community, the world was strongly present in the sermons, prayers and announcements at VUMC. For example, on January 29, 2012, the pastoral prayer stated: “We pray...not only for ourselves but also for the community and the world. Help us to care for those in poverty and despair” (worship service, January 29, 2012, 10:30a.m.). Members expressed appreciation for their current senior pastor’s persistence in promoting the notions of “thinking beyond ourselves”

and caring for the wider world. They recalled these notions repeatedly and consistently surfacing in sermons, teachings and prayers.

From the perspective of Wiener (1988), the global focus is classified as a strong value because of its breadth and depth. This value was broadly shared (mentioned by VUMC members and the pastor), and it was deeply adhered to as indicated by the pastor's commitment to promoting and using various means of communication and as noted in the members' reports of appreciation of the pastor's actions. The influence of this strong value was evident in formation of social justice and interfaith awareness committees at VUMC (described below). This value also affected how the pastor performed her role of spiritual leadership.

In Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model, the task of providing spiritual leadership is classified as highly unstructured. Interviewees defined spiritual leadership in terms of preaching, teaching (through studies and writing), and praying (in worship, at events, and in meetings). All of these communication tasks may lead to the same desired outcome; the definition of spiritual leadership can be derived by the UMC's commissioning of the pastors to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (UMC, 2008). However, pastors have liberty in how they pursue this outcome because the UMC does not provide a protocol to follow or a list of actions to achieve effectiveness in preaching, teaching, or praying. For example, a liberal and progressive congregation may appreciate a sermon that challenges the status quo and invites a new interpretation; a conservative and deeply traditional congregation may resonate more with reinforcement of foundational values and a call to deepen sincerity in performing familiar rituals. Thus, the task of preaching is unstructured because different approaches may yield effectiveness with one context and audience and not in another.

Pastoral care role. Another responsibility of the senior pastor according to the VUMC's senior leader is pastoral care, which the pastor described as "so critical in times of need...when someone dies or is in the hospital" (Interview 5). Members valued the caring nature of their pastors. One member said: "You can tell when she is reporting that someone is ill...[that] she cares about them" (Interview 1). Another member recalled how appreciative she was when a former senior pastor came a great distance to visit her family member in the hospital (Interview 2).

From Fiedler's (1967) perspective, this task would be highly unstructured because the desirable outcome of creating a feeling in members that they are cared for is imprecise and difficult to measure. Further, the components necessary to fulfill this task are open to interpretation. The disadvantage of Fiedler's model is that it does little to address the emotional and experiential outcomes associated with leadership. Although, Fiedler acknowledged that a highly unstructured task would not warrant the use of position power and would depend on the relationship between members and the leader, his model does not offer recommendations regarding managing an unstructured task or distinguishing between types of unstructured tasks or explain how these change as the type of organization changes.

The administrative role. VUMC's senior pastor emphasized her role in working with committees by explaining that the local church leader is responsible for "the decision making of the church regarding its health and vitality, financially and in terms of member involvement" (Interview 5). She added that the senior pastor is to guide the committee work in such a way "that we all more actively become the disciples of Jesus" (Interview 5). Members confirmed the importance of the senior pastor's role in administrating and guiding the committee work. One member said that he appreciated the senior pastor for wanting to know what goes on in the

committees, attending meetings, “keeping the committee on track” by reminding of the goals of the meeting, items on the agenda, and pertinent deadlines (Interview 3).

From the perspective of Fiedler’s (1967) theory, the administrative role of a pastor is structured because it requires meeting certain financial, organizational and structural criteria. Fiedler (1967) suggested that structured tasks could be performed effectively by using top-down leadership and relying on position power for influence. Interviews with church members, however, indicated that in church context, top-down leadership derived from position power might not be appropriate. For example, members of VUMC envisioned effective administration in terms of participatory approach. They commended their senior pastor for inviting participation by organizing “more council meetings” (Interview 3), which she attended but “didn’t dominate” (Interview 4). This observation suggested that participatory rather than top-down approach might be more appropriate in performing such structured tasks as local church administration. However, since churches differ in terms of their culture, which influences members’ preferences regarding leadership approaches, it is possible that in some churches a more top-down administrative approach might be effective. Thus, attention to cultural and contextual influences is essential to successful adaptation of leadership approaches with even the best track records.

Ceremonial role. The last and “the most obvious” of the local church pastor’s responsibilities mentioned by the VUMC senior pastor was worship, which included such elements as sermons, sacraments, hymns, prayers, etc. She explained that the sermon and the greeting after church “are the most important [aspects of worship] to most people” because the visitor’s first encounter with the pastor takes place through the sermon and the greeting at worship. The ceremonial role overlaps somewhat with the spiritual leader role because preaching and prayer are important communication elements of both roles. However, the way these

elements contribute to fulfillment of each of the roles differs. For example, from the perspective of the spiritual leader role, the sermon allows the pastor to exercise his or her voice. At the same time, the pastor fulfills the ceremonial role by performing the duty of the preaching that he or she was ordained by the UMC to do and is expected by the congregation to fulfill. Since the same sermon serves both purposes, Fiedler's (1967) theory fails to provide an appropriate classification for preaching. Using Fiedler's terms, preaching can be considered unstructured as indicated by the description above of preaching to fulfill the spiritual leader role. At the same time, preaching can be seen as a structured task as indicated by the description below of preaching as an element of the ceremonial role.

By using Fiedler's (1967) perspective, worship tasks that fulfill the ceremonial role would be structured. *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* does provide the "Basic Pattern of Worship" for UMC pastors to follow when leading worship in their local church (UMC, 2007, p. 2, 3). The pastors are not required to include all the elements outlined in the "Basic Pattern of Worship" or to present the listed elements of worship in order that they are listed there. However, most UMC church services that I observed varied slightly in terms of components of service and even their order. One of the reasons that most pastors choose to follow the prescribed order in leading worship is because an implicit expectation exists among United Methodists that worship at a UMC would include certain elements (rituals and texts) and that they would be presented in the long-established order. Such expectation is likely rooted in years of UMC tradition and the sense of identification with the larger denomination that members of denominational churches experience. These communication elements provide a specialized meaning for structured tasks in churches, and thus serve as an important supplement to Fiedler's conceptualization of types of leadership tasks.

Descriptions of Current Pastor's Leadership Style

Bringing change. VUMC members expressed appreciation of the senior pastor's leadership by calling attention to the "new things" that the senior pastor introduced. In fact, interviewees expected that the new senior pastor would bring change. Members appreciated the senior pastor being "willing to try things" (Interview 1), pushing us to start new initiatives, (Interview 4), and the senior pastor "try[ing] a lot of new different things [such as forming new] committees, [and] trying to change the service [format for one of the services] once a month" (Interview 1). The senior pastor confirmed, "I'm not afraid to initiate new things."

One example of change introduced by the senior pastor was improved communication using more media forms. A member noted that the senior pastor "instituted more publicity" of church activities in the community by submitting ads to a local newspaper (Interview 3). Another member commended the senior pastor for introducing a weekly ritual of sending a short email noting the main church announcements and activities (Interview 1). Members also appreciated the senior pastor prompting the update of the church website. Several members mentioned how much they liked having the sermons posted on the website.

Changes were also manifested in the senior pastor's efforts to strengthen several existing groups and practices: revitalizing the Church and Society Group, encouraging the Drama Team (Interview 1), having regular and more frequent Church Council meetings (Interview 3) and initiating the process of forming VUMC vision. The senior pastor explained that in the process of learning about the congregation, she found out that in the past VUMC congregation tried to create a vision for the church. The senior pastor believed that now the time was right for the church to develop a vision; she found members interested in this initiative and provided support and encouragement as they lead this effort.

Other new initiatives included creating a new member class, Lenten groups, a Bible study, a discussion group, and an interfaith group. The new member class, offered periodically, included not only prospective members but also regular attendees and existing members interested in learning about the United Methodist Church and/or VUMC. This class consisted of three two-hour sessions that included lunch, which was provided by the committee in charge of caring for the congregation. The meetings were held on consecutive Sundays after worship; they consisted of presentations and times of sharing of participants' church journeys. The Lenten groups and an ongoing Bible study were started and facilitated by the senior pastor. In 2012, Lenten groups took place at two different times to accommodate members. The senior pastor initiated a new discussion group based on a book about the role of the church in the contemporary world led by a church member, and an interfaith awareness group for members interested in learning about other religions. In addition to establishing a group for Interfaith Awareness, the senior pastor promoted interfaith events that were held in the community and invited the congregation to host speakers from other religions and interfaith programs. In this way interviewees at this congregation praised the new initiatives of the senior pastor, which are a form of top-down leadership.

Congregational involvement as part of leadership. Although the senior pastor initiated most of these changes, she was able to find volunteers to take the lead in these new tasks. In introducing changes, the senior pastor used communication approach to leadership. Through interpersonal interaction with members she identified areas of members' interest and introduced change in those areas. She also identified members who were likely to support each change effort and invited them to take leadership roles. Through continuous communication with the emergent lay leaders she provided encouragement, resources, and support necessary for the new practices

to thrive. Although this style has elements of the participatory approach, what makes it uniquely effective is its heavy reliance on interpersonal interaction. In this approach the leader effectively used her communication skills to foster strong relationships with followers in order to gain legitimacy (Adair, 1984) and thus improve her effectiveness as a leader in the minds of the congregation because of her ability to develop relationships with them.

Examples below illustrate how the pastor relied on her legitimacy to introduce change. Pastor facilitated changes included new issues and activities for the congregation. Examples of new issues included social justice concerns such as homelessness, poverty, family violence, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The senior pastor displayed her commitment to social justice issues by incorporating them into sermons and prayers (Interview 1 and 3). A member explained that the senior pastor brought social justice issues “to attention of the congregation [and] opened up debate about it, [so that] eventually [members] arrived at the consensus to make those ideas visible to the community” (Interview 4). Another member said that the senior pastor encouraged the congregation to be more daring by addressing these issues (Interview 1).

After members responded positively to the social justice issues, the senior pastor initiated a committee on social justice. One member stated that the church has been “more or less open about it,” but there has not been an actual program addressing it, and “this is the first time there is a committee focusing on addressing these issues” (Interview 1). In this example, first, the pastor used the legitimacy of her position power as a senior leader to introduce an issue that was important to her. Second, through communication with members she identified social justice issues that were of interest to them. Third, the leader’s willingness to listen and encouragement of open discussion resulted in improved pastor-member relationships and thus improved

members' response to the change. Members perceived change as positive and some joined in promoting this change.

Church Traditions Regarding Leadership Styles

Participatory leadership style preferred. Several members expressed dislike of authoritarian approaches to leadership in the church. A member stated that the congregation did not want the senior pastor exercising strong “top-down authority, but [rather] to be collaborative [and] open” (Interview 5). Interviewees described the desired style of senior leadership in terms of knowing the established traditions, seeking members' input, expressing sensitivity to strong preferences and norms, and sharing own opinion while promoting the climate of openness.

Awareness of norms. One aspect of participatory leadership that emerged from interviews was the leaders' need to be aware of church traditions, norms, and members' preferences. For example, a member expressed appreciation of the senior pastor's efforts “to learn about the church,” its history and traditions instead of dictating her own way of doing things (Interview 2). I also observed that the senior pastor often asked in meetings “if [there] has been a tradition” of some sort or “has there been a history of” doing things a certain way (staff meeting observation, February 2012). The senior pastor admitted that she “listen[ed] a lot, ask[ed] ...questions to get feedback, [met] with the [committee] chairs to get a sense of what [they] think... and what other people have told” them (Interview 5). This allowed the senior pastor to stay informed of the preferences of individuals and groups within the church and instigate change in accordance with these preferences. This senior pastor's responses to suggestions regarding new things illustrated the point. For example, when a member said, “This is more in line with the visioning” team's work, the senior pastor explained that “the vision team is not very interested in this” (Vitality meeting, February 23, 2012).

Input from others. VUMC's senior pastor explained that she intentionally sought the input of others. In one of the meetings she repeatedly inquired about what others thought. When some offered suggestions and the consensus started to emerge she asked those who did not share their opinions for feedback (vitality meeting, February 23, 2012). Members commended the senior pastor for seeking input from others by presenting her ideas and ideas that emerged at committee meetings to the church council for their vote.

Sensitivity to tradition. Further, the senior pastor expressed sensitivity to traditions and strong preferences of members and groups. She explained that knowing the history and traditions of the church as well as members' interests was helpful in introducing new things, which she did with care and intent. She added that in the process of bringing change she always tried to "test things out, put out questions, see if, where [she thought VUMC] can go comes out of people's conversations" (Interview 5). Afterward she remained flexible and willing to step back if necessary. For example, when she promoted a program that "had a good track record in other churches" but did not generate VUMC members' interest she decided "not ...to push it right now" (Interview 5). She explained: "I don't have the backing of the church, I'm not gonna do this alone, so I'll bring it up at another time in another way" (Interview 5).

Open climate. VUMC members expressed appreciation of this pastor's expression of her opinion in a climate of openness. One member said, "She is willing to listen [but] states [her] opinion as well" (Interview 4). My observations confirmed in a meeting on church effectiveness or vitality (as the national UMC leadership calls it) that the senior pastor firmly stated her opinion and the underlying reasoning. She insisted that "as far as building vitality, [VUMC needs to focus on having] more people in mission, and [small groups that] focus on spiritual growth [rather than on] more money going to mission" (Interview 5). She promoted the strategies of

building church vitality advocated by the national UMC leadership: “I’m convinced that this is a good thing for” us (vitality meeting observation, February 14, 2012). However, when making decisions the senior pastor remained open to different ideas. Members appreciated her openness as an element promoting the climate of free expression. Some commended her “willing[ness] to look at suggestions of other people” (Interview 1), to say “let’s hear more about it” (Interview 4), let’s “try new things” (Interview 1). Others noted that the senior pastor was “open to the range of [ideas and] people in the congregation” and that such openness enabled “people [to] voice their disagreements” easily (Interview 3), to have civil, “respectful disagreement” (Interview 4).

The qualities and behaviors that emerged as data from interviews conducted at VUMC contribute to creating a profile of an effective senior leader at the local church level and expand the definition of participatory leadership in church organizations. When comparing these qualities and behaviors to those described at other UMCs, it is important to consider the differences in contextual influences and organizational cultures of these churches. Knowing that the characteristics mentioned above were described as desirable by a small, affluent, liberal, white congregation in Northern California would foster a better understanding of the complexities of church leadership in a large organization associated with cultural and contextual influences.

Chapter Summary

This section features an organizational culture profile of VUMC that shows how the characteristics of the regional area influenced the elements of culture of this church organization and how the culture affected key organizational processes, practices and conceptualizations. The demographics of the church, such as political and social liberalism, high levels of education and secularism fit with the demographics of the area; however, other

demographics such as racial and ethnic homogeneity and caring for each other do not fit with the regional area. The elements of this church's culture are organizational value systems, values, and identifications. The leadership of the church is represented by participatory approach to leadership, characterized by ample communication and attention to the interests and concerns of members. The unique identify of the church is represented in the strong OVS of liberalism (social, theological, political), the values of caring for and socializing with members, and desire for unique identity rather than denominational identification. In addition to the widely accepted values and identifications, the culture of VUMC is also characterized by emerging subcultures represented by values of racial and ethnic diversity and global or outward focus rather than caring for church family only. Together these cultural elements shaped the focus of church ministries, enactments of leadership, and conceptualizations of church mission, visions and priorities, as well as the interviewees' understanding of established norms and practices.

CHAPTER 5: DATA AND ANALYSIS OF MUMC

This section features an organizational culture profile of MUMC. It includes background and the demographics of the church, the description of the characteristics of the regional area, as well as the key elements of culture of the church. The elements of church culture are divided into those that are similar to the regional area and unique to the church community; both are discussed in terms of key values and identifications.

Culture Profile

Church Background and Demographics

The church site described in this chapter is called the MUMC; “M” is a letter randomly chosen as a pseudonym so that the real name of this local church is kept secret for protection of research participants’ privacy. The total church membership as of November 2011 was 1,806 with average attendance of 368 on Sunday morning and as of November 2012 was 1,773 with average attendance of 306 on Sunday morning. The largest group of those attending church weekly consisted of people over 65 years old, the second largest group were people in their 30s and 40s, the third largest group were people in their 50s and early 60s, followed by the children and youth who are 18 to 29 years old. This last group had few members.

The leadership of this church consisted of two pastors: an elder serving as the senior pastor of the church and a retired elder serving as the assistant to the senior pastor. The staff included an administrator, a secretary, and directors of music, children’s, and youth ministries, and a Child Development Center Director.

The MUMC is located in the Southwestern part of the U.S. in a city with population of approximately 100,000 people. The economic, racial/ethnic, religious, political, and educational

characteristics of the area are demographics that help situate the church contextually. The city has been named one of the “Best Places to Retire” by Best Boomer Towns (2013), Top Retirements (2013), and others. One of the key contributing factors to receiving such ratings is the low cost of living and a median family income lower than national annual household incomes (CNN Money, 2010,) the city had more than 20% of its population living below poverty level (2006-2010, census). This made homelessness and poverty visible and economic struggles wide spread among the population. The racial/ethnic composition of the city shows diversity with 57 % of the population reported Hispanic or Latino origins (this category includes people of any race), 37.5% of the population reporting being non-Hispanics. The area was characterized by higher than the national levels of religiosity with 77.3% of the population reporting affiliation with a religious congregation compared to 50.2% national levels and 34.9% for the city where VUMC is located and 59.1% for the city where KUMC is located (City Data, 2013). More than 79% of the population are Roman Catholics and less than 3% are members of the United Methodist Church (Jones et al., 2002). Given that more than half of the population of the city claimed Latino or Hispanic identity, it is not surprising that this city has a majority Catholic religious affiliation (Murray, 2012). In this city the politics are divided with a fairly equal representation of Republicans and Democrats (City Data, 2012) who vote in low numbers. The political demographic differs from those of the area surrounding VUMC, where 80% of the people voted democratic in the 2008 presidential election and only 19% republican (City Data, 2012). In regard to education, the data for 2006-2010 census indicated that over 83% of the population older than 25 years reported graduating high school, and 31% reported earning a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Elements of Church Culture Similar to the Area

The demographics described here for the city in which MUMC is located are similar to those of the members of the MUMC congregation and influenced the culture of the church. Responses from interviewees at this church showed the way that demographics impacted the congregation.

Economic prudence. In describing the economic situation at MUMC one member stated, “Our church has a huge mortgage....We’ve always had trouble paying it” (Interview 3). Another member said, “We definitely have the building fund debt” (Interview 4). The culprit of indebtedness was the large building campaign undertaken in 1990s. The expansion was rather costly but a dramatic decrease of membership at the start of the project made it even more difficult to finance. The interviewees recalled that members disagreed regarding whether to proceed with the building campaign and that after the congregation voted, many of those who voted against expansion either left the church or decreased their financial support. One member’s story illustrated the situation:

Because of the building program...we have lost a lot of the members, [who] got disappointed...we wanted to go ahead and add to this church...we voted on it and then, all of a sudden, some people said, ‘that’s not what we voted for!’ There was a lot of fighting going on,...so many people pulling and pushing their way,...A big group has left. We had an average of almost 600 members attending on Sunday morning –all services, now we are having about 300, which is a big drop (Interview 2).

All of the stories of interviewees confirmed that the building project and the disagreement over it resulted in “dwindling membership and dwindling giving” (Interview 3). Members stated, “We’ve lost great many members” (Interview 1); and “some could have given

money but [did] not because they were angry and they [held] back” (Interview 2). The situation was further exacerbated by the economic difficulties of 2007-2009. One interviewee stated, “the church has been consistent at paying it off [the debt] except for a couple of years when the economy was not consistent...people...have cut back” (Interview 4).

Clearly the 1990’s building campaign resulted in a large debt that the church struggled to pay for years due to decreased levels of giving which were attributed to loss of membership and economic prudence in members’ giving. The latter became a norm because some members were not able to sustain the same level of giving due to decreased incomes and others intentionally reduced their giving. Two major factors increased the problem: the congregation’s fear of financial difficulties and their expressions of discontent with decisions of former and current leaders. This is an example of the powerful effect that members’ assumptions can have on such an essential organizational outcome as its financial state.

Perception of scarcity. The decisions of church leadership were also affected by money problems. One member stated, “The finances of the church have been the culprit of disagreement: ‘Should we not be paying this so that we can pay that?’” (Interview 4). This member recalled, “We cut some staff positions a few years ago”(Interview 4). Another interviewee confirmed this statement, “We stopped having an associate pastor after the last pastor left due to financial and budgetary needs” (Interview 8).

The leadership responded to the financial difficulties by raising funds for individual projects and for ministries instead of the customary reliance on the budget. One member stated, “If it is something that people really want they would take a collection for it instead of things coming out of the budget” (Interview 4). Another member noted, “We do support several [mission and outreach] things [in state]... but it’s above and beyond” (Interview 1). She

continued, “We do have to find ways to finance [the music program and church choirs] and that is through fundraisers” (Interview 1). Church texts confirmed that a significant portion of the giving (more than 25% in 2008) was toward items that were not in the general budget of the church (MUMC newsletter, February 27, 2009). The church’s written texts also indicated that much of the financial contributions in recent years were devoted to “help with the monthly mortgage payments” (MUMC newsletter, February 27, 2009). In 2011, for example, approximately 12% of the budget of the church was devoted to reducing the debt, 18% to operational expenses, approximately 7% to mission and outreach, and approximately 6% to programs.

This focus on paying off the debt resulted in decreased giving to various ministries. For example, one of the interviewees recommended MUMC hosting numerous community events on its campus, “one or two every week that people from the community will come to” (Interview 6). However, he noted that some of the members were against allowing community organizations to use the building. Some members complained that “they are using our facility, we have electricity, we have gas, water supplies... they are using the bathroom...[but] are they paying?” (Interview 6). The interviewee acknowledged that the church “had some expense in it” and that many of the members were looking at it from the perspective of “what it’s costing us to have a group here?” (Interview 6). Thus they criticized the church’s rituals and programs that aimed at “try[ing] to be a good neighbor and to bring people into the church” (Interview 6). Another interviewee described some of the members’ unwillingness to support select ministries. She explained, “People are ... worried about their Social Security... They think, ... ‘I cannot afford my groceries right now why should I buy them for somebody else!’” (Interview 1).

The congregation's knowledge about economic scarcity and their belief in the norm of prudent giving framed church discourses about the problem and adversely affected church attendance and growth. The "poor" financial situation was discussed in church newsletters, bulletins and informal conversations (observation, November, 2011), committee meetings and Sunday school gatherings (observation November, 2011). I noticed that during the meeting of the trustees, committee members carefully evaluated whether a certain need or concern warranted attention given the "poor" financial state of MUMC (November, 2011). One member said, "the biggest issues that we have are the financial issues, there's so much focus on the financial issues" (Interview 3).

Members argued that the church debt made it less attractive to new people and thus negatively affected membership growth. An interviewee explained that, "If you have not been here for many years and you are just choosing a church, you would not want to take on the baggage that this church has right now" (Interview 1). Interviewees' statements indicated that focusing on the poor financial situation became a norm that negatively affected members' organizational experience. This norm shifted the focus of the church away from other priorities (mission and spiritual growth), which limited the fullness of the religious experience that MUMC offered. As a result, the church became less attractive for visitors and some of the members. The indebtedness and financial struggles were blamed for lack of membership growth, curtailing programming and limiting outreach. However, I argue that, in reality, the assumption of scarcity, the norm of economic prudence, and the norm of seeing financial state of the church as poor were the underlying reasons for these undesirable organizational outcomes.

In attempt to determine whether any of the assumptions and norms at MUMC changed over time, I interviewed four members 11 months after my observations and the first set of

interviews. These members admitted noticing an improvement in the financial situation of the church and the attitudes of the congregation toward the debt and giving. One of them said, “We still have this huge debt but [in the past year] I’ve seen a more positive attitude in the congregation that, ‘yes, we can do that, because it is going down’ and they see it going down... people have a better attitude (Interview 4). These statements further illustrate the effect of elements of organizational commitments and attitudes on change. Focusing on the positive elements of culture rather than the negative processes and outcomes at a given time can contribute to natural transformations (not forced) in organization and more stability (rooted in assumptions and norms) of that organization.

Religiosity. The culture of MUMC was similar to that of the geographical location in terms of high levels of religiosity. The language that members used to describe their experience at MUMC was infused with religious terminology and rituals. Attention to terminology and rituals is important because both of these elements point to organizational values, assumptions and norms and that serve as means of describing the culture of the organization. An analysis of members’ choices of terminology can reveal their understanding of a situation or phenomena. Similarly, scholars of organizational culture claim rituals are appealing because these complex patterns of interaction often reveal multiple elements of culture. Since church members derive meaning through their participation in rituals (Meyer, 2009), an examination of these rituals may shed light on some of these meanings and thus help understand organizational culture. Meyer (2009) cautioned that, “a variety of perceptions and goals may exist in the minds of ... individuals participating together in worship [and other church] rituals” (p. 67). Thus, supplementing the study of rituals with the analysis of organizational texts and members’ oral

communication is important in order to understand values, norms, and assumptions in this church organization.

Focus on prayer. An emphasis on prayer surfaced in data from interviews, observations, and texts. In describing this congregations' outreach an interviewee talked about the importance of "praying for [people who are out of work], praying for the economy to improve, praying for businesses to move here, praying for more jobs" (Interview 8). Another interviewee talked about prayer and leadership. He admitted: "I still believe that the bishops do pray about the appointments that they make" (Interview 2). He also noted that he believed in the need for the congregation to "pray over" its top leadership (Interview 2).

The ministry team involved in outreach was called "prayer and care team." The order of the interviewees' descriptors ("prayer" being first) indicated the significance of the prayer rituals in the work of this group. Members confirmed this supposition. For example, one member described the congregational care ministries as "very important [because] people have needs [and the] care group[s], they pray for people in need, they visit" (Interview 4). Again, the word "pray" preceded the word "visit," thus indicating the importance of the prayer ritual over the visitation ritual. Similarly, the Annual Church Conference Report highlighted the importance of prayer among the ways the congregation supported the care ministries stating that "not only have people donated...and delivered food, but most importantly, they have prayed for it" (November 9, 2008). The use of the words "most importantly" indicated that prayer was valued by members and it was a source of strength for the congregation in a time of adversity. Rituals of prayer likely empowered members by providing a way for them to minister to and support others without having to rely on finances.

Members' and pastors' frequent references to the significance of prayer rituals suggest that prayer was a strong value at MUMC. From Wiener's (1988) perspective, the strength of this value was rooted in its intensity because it was heavily emphasized and wide acceptance that surfaced in interviews and texts. This value influenced the focus and the behavior of the committee on care for members. This committee saw prayer as an essential element of their work and commitments thus spent a significant amount of time engaging in this practice. The value of prayer also affected members' conceptualization of leadership; members emphasized the spiritual role of bishops and pastors facilitated through public and private prayer. This has implications for leaders (bishops and pastors) because awareness of the levels of religiosity in their congregations allow leaders to understand how members conceptualize their roles and, thus, this understanding can be the basis for leaders to revise their practices so that they are more aligned with the values of the congregations.

Focus on the Bible. The religiosity of this congregation was also evident in the frequent references the Bible, the Word, or scriptures. In describing worship at MUMC, an interviewee explained that people came to "hear the word preached, spoken through the Word in music, [and hopefully to] find God [through] the scriptures, readings, music and then the spoken word" (Interview 6). This statement contains such religious terminology as "Word," "preach," "scriptures" and "God," suggesting that worship was both deeply religious experience (rather than social) and rooted in the United Methodist spiritual traditions and practices.

Interviewees also referred to Scripture and the Bible in describing the work of the pastor. One interviewee said: "the pastor has a year around teaching responsibility in the Bible studies he offers and devotionals at committee meetings and leadership at things like vacation Bible school, confirmation class... [in preparation he or she has to read] carefully the Bible text [well]

in advance, gather materials, resources, translations if needed, and reference works” (Interview 8). The word “Bible” was used four times in describing the role of the pastor as a teacher and preacher, which indicated that this interviewee saw the Bible as a crucial component defining the work of the pastor, and hence an indication of the pastor’s religiosity. The Bible was mentioned in describing church fund-raising efforts when a member of staff said: “Once a year we send out two to three financial planning letters [in which] we put biblical ideas about giving and invite people to sign a pledge card (Interview 8). This statement indicates that the Bible was central to this annual fund-raising ritual. Similarly, another interviewee said that when encountering conflicting opinions or social issues, “We need to go back to the Bible” (Interview2). These two statements referred to the Bible as a text that had authority.

The participants focus on the Bible showed a strong value that was heavily emphasized by the members who viewed it as the source of their religious commitment to the church. Literal adherence to the scriptures surfaced through the terminology members used. In the statement, “We need to go back to the Bible,” (Interview 2) the words “go back” refer to returning to the original as contrasted with a more progressive verb “interpret. Other members described the Bible as the cornerstone of Christian experience, thus emphasizing the importance of focusing on the Bible in various elements of worship (sermons, music, and prayers). Members’ conceptualization of pastors’ leadership responsibilities (teaching, leading committee meetings, fund-raising, and addressing sensitive issues) presumed frequent references to the Bible. The assumption that the Bible could be interpreted literally affected members’ preferences for how MUMC leaders should cite the Bible in worship and other congregational gatherings. Awareness of these elements of congregational culture and of its strong influence on key organizational

processes and definitions helped to inform leaders about how they perform their roles, conduct their rituals, resolve conflicts, and thereby facilitate change (if necessary) more effectively.

Focus on spiritual growth. Another example of MUMC's religiosity was an emphasis of members on spiritual growth. To illustrate, several members talked about spiritual growth and spiritual education (in worship, Sunday school, and studies). One member observed that "Christian education is very big" at MUMC (Interview 1). Another member highlighted the importance of spiritual growth. She suggested, "Let's focus on spiritual growth" because it would help the church increase membership. She explained that those who grew and are nourished spiritually were likely to invite others to church (Interview 3). Another member talked about his appreciation of the liturgical rituals that focus on spiritual education. He explained that during "the Lenten season, on Holy Week [the church focused on] how you prepare for crucifixion and prior to Easter [provided] a good week of explanation of what we are supposed to be experiencing and paying attention to" (Interview 2).

For congregational members, spiritual growth was also facilitated through Sunday school and Bible studies; both were seen as important by members. For example, when the church instituted a weekly worship services during the Sunday school hour some members objected. One member explained, "When you have the church that overlaps services you are sending the message that Sunday school is not important" (Interview 3). She insisted that it was important for members to attend both Sunday school and a worship service. Statements of other members suggested that attending worship and Sunday school was a norm for most members of the congregation. Moreover, church leaders and members strongly encouraged visitors to attend age appropriate Sunday school classes.

A staff member described Sunday school as a major component of facilitating new member assimilation (Interview 8), and another interviewee described it as a contributor to member commitment and retention. A member admitted that teaching a Sunday school class “kept [her] at the church much longer than I would have stayed otherwise” (Interview 3).

Participants’ descriptions point to the value of spiritual growth and a norm of attending Sunday school and or Bible studies as the means for spiritual growth. This value was heavily emphasized by interviewees, which means that it was both intensely and broadly shared (Wiener, 1988). Awareness of the value of spiritual growth and the norm of Sunday school/Bible study attendance is important because members conceptualize them as key organizational processes. Knowing that members viewed these elements of culture as essential components for the church growth, member commitment, and member assimilation could increase leaders’ awareness and effectiveness in facilitating these processes.

From the perspective of organizational culture theory, MUMC’s values of prayer, spiritual growth, and focus on the Bible reveal an organizational value system (OVS) of religiosity. Wiener (1988) defined an OVS as shared values of organizational members. MUMC’s OVS of religiosity would be considered strong because the religious values were broadly and intensely shared by members and leaders of the congregation.

The strength of the OVS of religiosity at MUMC was associated with the high levels of religiosity that characterized the geographical area where MUMC was situated. However, it is possible that one of the reasons the congregation embraced values of religiosity was that some members dealt with their frustrations with the financial difficulties and the conflicts associated with them by turning inward. Realizing that the outward financial circumstances were difficult to deal with and even had the potential to threaten the future existence of the church, some may

have turned inward to draw upon religious beliefs and practices. In search of something that they could control, members may have decided to focus on the spiritual aspects of their church experience.

It is important to note that such inward spiritual responses were not characteristic of the entire congregation. My interviews with members and pastors indicated that in response to the controversial building campaign and the financial problems that it brought numerous members left the church (Interview 2, 4, 6,). Those who stayed were prompted to reevaluate their priorities. Some of the members who stayed reduced their levels of giving or chose to support only select ministries and projects (Interview 1 & 2); others became less willing to support the church through volunteering and involvement in certain ministries (Interview 1 & 6); yet others became critical of the actions and policies of church leadership and began to evaluate them constantly in light of the financial situation (Observations, November 2012). However, the current senior pastor, the staff, and most of the members responded by clinging to their spiritual values and religious rituals (prayer, Bible study, religious education) and thus became closer to the principles of the UMC.

Wiener's (1988) claim that OVSs define the culture of the organization and shape key organizational processes is validated by MUMC's experience; at MUMC the strong OVS of religiosity affected members' conceptualizations of the roles of their leaders (clergy, staff, and lay), expectations regarding worship and rituals, and understanding of their own roles in the church.

Political outlook. The congregation was similar to the regional locale in terms of the political views. One interviewee said, "we have people who don't like what President Obama has been doing, and we have some that do and would vote for him again" (Interview 8). The fact that

the interviewee referred to the group that voted with Democrats in the 2012 election as “some” indicates that this is a smaller of the two political party affiliations. One member confirmed that the congregation was “primarily Republican” (Interview 1). An interviewee explained, “The culture of the town being Roman Catholic and macho-male head of household but MUMC is still very conservative church. It’s just a conservative group as a whole” (Interview 1). This statement highlights the role of the cultural and political climate of the area in influencing the political outlook of the members of the congregation and indicates that although the general area had almost equal representation of Republican and Democratic voters, most of the MUMC membership embraced the value of political conservatism.

This value was weak because not all the members adhered to it (as indicated by the reference to a group of members who supported a democratic president). This value has implications for leadership since it is likely to affect members’ perceptions regarding political and social issues. Awareness of this value also could help pastors perform their preaching, teaching, and conflict resolution roles more effectively by providing clues to topics that should be addressed by pastors in their communication.

Educational levels. One interviewee described members of MUMC as “highly intelligent” (Interview 8). He explained, “the average person here has a master’s degree in some field, (sciences and math) their communication ability [shows] it” (Interview 8). My observations confirmed this statement since I noted that several members were professors at the local university and some were scientists who currently or previously worked for the military institutions in the area. However, only one interviewee mentioned the educational levels of the congregation; therefore, in Wiener’s (1988) terms this is a weak value. Members’ levels of education typically dictate their preferences regarding the content of sermons, lectures, and

lessons. However, my observations and interviews revealed members' desire for biblical and spiritual preaching and teaching rather than for intellectually challenging theological content. Similarly, members' levels of education have been linked to members' desire to participate in leadership. Fiedler's (1967) study showed that the more intelligent workers responded positively and performed effectively to participatory approach. However, my interviews with members and pastors as well as my observations suggested that members of MUMC favored authoritarian rather than participatory leadership style (see leadership section below).

Elements of Church Culture Unique to MUMC²

Some of the elements of the MUMC culture that differed from the culture of the area where the church is situated included ethnic homogeneity, conservatism toward social issues, and a predominance of elderly members in the congregation.

Ethnic homogeneity. MUMC differed from the regional context in terms of ethnic composition. Even though more than 50% of the population of the city is Hispanic, the majority of the people (95%) in the congregation were Caucasians. The congregation of almost 1,800 members had 18 to 20 Hispanic/Latino families and 1 to 2 African American families. Members described MUMC as “a pretty white middle class church, [with] very few black families, not many Hispanics” (Interview 1). Only one interviewee mentioned that she thought the church should invite more Hispanics to worship at MUMC. However, this statement was made as a criticism of the UMC practice of “starting new churches.” The interviewee said, “They’ve started a Spanish speaking church...very close to MUMC. I think [our town] is way too small for four United Methodist Churches” (Interview 3). The reasoning she offered for trying to attract “those people to MUMC” was not to make the congregation more diverse and culturally enriched but to

² Although these elements differ from the general context of the area, they may not be unique to this church. Other churches (both United Methodist and non-United Methodist) may have similar elements.

save money. The interviewee believed that since “it takes a lot more money to start a new church than to find a pastor who will translate [everyone should] worship together” (Interview 3).

Several members admitted that the church was not very diverse racially or ethnically, but did not question why or express desire for the status quo to change. The leadership seemed to share these sentiments; neither the senior pastor, nor the two staff members indicated that making the church more diverse was a priority.

Social conservatism. The culture of MUMC was characterized by conservative attitudes toward social issues. Members described the culture of the congregation as “traditional” and “up tight.” One member noted that although the congregation was slowly becoming more open, the trend of being socially conservative was still quite prevalent.

Traditional family. A member explained, “Historically, there was a time it was not a place for single people, the church was extremely strict, they were very much into traditional family” (Interview 1). She noted that, ‘the living together families’ [-] the families that have not married that live together and had children...could be welcomed, but they are looked down a bit on” (Interview 1). She noted that the judgmental attitude was subtle, “Some people think they should marry,...they see it as a sinful style of life [and] they say it to other people” not to the actual unmarried individuals (Interview 1). My interviews confirmed this position: one member told me that he disapproved of “young couples living together- cohabiting,” and others accepting it (Interview 2).

The statements above indicate that a value of traditional family was part of MUMC’s culture. This value was expressed subtly and not shared widely. Thus, it could be classified as a weak value according to Wiener (1988). Even though it was weak, the value of traditional family affected the church’s outreach. Some of the members expressed their disapproval by refusing to

support initiatives that helped single mothers on welfare. For example, when the church wanted to do “a diaper drive, food drive [for] young women having several children and being on welfare...[some people were] saying, ‘they should not be in that thing, they decided to have these children...if they are on welfare they should stop having babies’” (Interview 1). This example highlights the likelihood that even the subtle elements of organizational culture can affect organizational commitments, outcomes and goals.

Women’s roles. Conservatism toward social issues was also demonstrated in attitudes toward the role of women in pastoral leadership. One member recalled, “Historically, [there was] a very strong bias at our church against women in the clergy. A former pastor very openly got rid of the women, he had a personal bias against women in the pulpit, against women on church staff, he believed, like a lot of the older churches, in the male clergy” (Interview 1). Another member confirmed, “The first time that we were going to have a female associate pastor some people were not too keen on that. But [since] the individual was going to be an associate, not necessarily a senior pastor, it was allowed” (Interview 2). She noted that the congregational attitudes were slowly changing, “It is not as bad as it used to be 40 years ago... more accepting, [although,] if a woman was appointed to be a senior pastor at MUMC, some of the older [members] would [have a problem] with it” (Interview 2). Three other interviewees (one woman and two men) talked about the culture of MUMC as supportive of women in leadership. A staff member provided this example: the United Methodist Women (UMW) group was changing its meeting times to accommodate women who worked outside the home and could not attend meetings during the day.

These statements point to a value of conservatism toward women in leadership. In Wiener’s (1988) terminology, this value is weak because it is not widely shared (interviewees

attributed it to “some members”). Moreover, it is not intensely shared (proponents of this value accepted women being associate pastors). Since this value guided MUMC’s conceptualization of church leadership, it limited leadership opportunities for women. However, as the value began to change, more opportunities emerged as the prior reference to the UMW’s group indicated.

Homosexuality. The value of conservatism was especially evident in their approach toward homosexuality. One member observed that “a gay person would not be welcomed at our church. I’ve tried to personally welcome some gay families but there’s been some opposition from the church. [People say,] ‘it’s against the Methodist Church’” (Interview 1). Comments of another member confirmed: “The Bible is very clear about homosexuality. We need to address what the Bible says” (Interview 2). He criticized “churches that ha[ve] allowed homosexual ministers” (Interview 2). He insisted that, “if we going to be Methodist we need to know what Methodists believe in” (Interview 2).

Members admitted that homosexuality was a “sensitive or controversial” issue and thus was not openly addressed. One member said, “I don’t think you can talk about that [homosexuality], I don’t think people really understand it. It’s a visceral feeling, those people are not welcomed, you can see it but they will never admit that they won’t welcome them” (Interview 1). Another member confirmed, “We don’t bring up homosexuality. It is a touchy subject because a lot of people have their own opinions about homosexuality” (Interview 2). Another interviewee said, “We do have homosexuals that are members here and have been members for years (2 to 3 members, both male and female). People who disagree with that are very polite and quiet about it” (Interview 8).

These statements reveal a value of conservatism toward sexual orientation. This value is rooted in the assumption of some interviewees about the literal interpretation of the Bible as the

statement “the Bible is very clear about homosexuality” (Interview 2) indicated. In Wiener’s (1988) classification, this value would be weak because it is not shared broadly (“some” members adhered to it). However, those who did adhere to it seemed to do so intensely.

Wiener’s (1988) classification of values as either strong or weak fails to provide a proper category for this value. I argue that classifying values on a strong to weak continuum addresses this limitation. I suggest adding the dimension of influence to Wiener’s (1988) dimensions of intensity and breadth. The influence of a value is determined by whether it influences organizational processes (one or more). This new classification of values would include such categories as very strong, strong, and weak. Very strong values incorporate three dimensions: breadth, intensity, and influence. Strong values would be defined as influential and either broad or intensely shared. Weak values are defined as either broadly or intensely shared but not influencing other processes. The expanded classification provides a category for such values as the MUMC’s conservatism toward sexual orientation, which was not broadly shared but highly adhered to and thus affected organizational practices. First, homosexual people from the community were not invited to MUMC. Second, when homosexual or transgendered individuals entered the church, many members of the congregation exhibited unfriendly behavior toward them (see the subsection below describing the sense of welcome at MUMC). The new classification provides a category for values that influence other processes despite the fact they are not being shared widely and expressed intensely.

Organizational culture theory recommends viewing organizations where certain values are shared by some, not all, members of the organization in terms of subcultures rather than one unified organizational culture. Two perspectives represent the view of organizational culture as divided in subcultures: the differentiation and fragmentation perspectives (Keyton, 2005). The

differentiation perspective states that members differentiate into subgroups based on inconsistent interpretations (Martin, 2002). This perspective assumes that “the inconsistencies between or among subcultures are usually clear” (Keyton, 2005, p. 63); therefore it is most useful in case of MUMC where such values as conservatism toward sexual orientation were shared intensely by members of a subgroup. The differentiation perspective assumes that the cultural differences between subgroups are inescapable and even desirable at times (Martin, 2002) and thus calls organizational leaders to manage the diverse identifications and commitments of subgroups through communication.

One strategy that scholars recommend is strategic ambiguity. Sellnow and Ulmer (1994) argue that ambiguity in messages can appeal to groups with contradictory needs. Meyer (2009) applies this technique in church context. He argues that “ambiguity in church messages serves for all effectively to unite in worship as individual variances can be bypassed as an entire group identifies with one another as a church” (p. 66?) He explains that “[a]t times, too much information can be unwelcome or cause conflict. Not sharing all can allow individuals to agree without negotiating through every last detail of meaning” (p. 66). Meyer’s statement was confirmed by the data from MUMC where leaders and members intentionally avoided discussing the topic of homosexuality to prevent conflicts within the congregation.

Sense of welcoming. The ritual of welcoming visitors was described as a means of expressing kindness and receptiveness to most visitors. Members’ descriptions of MUMC included: “a very warm and friendly congregation” (Interview 1), a “warm and caring and friendly church, inviting” (Interview 6). One member described the congregation taking steps to actively welcome visitors: “We have a reputation for being a very friendly congregation, so people in Sunday school, if they see someone they don’t know they’ll invite them to come”

(Interview 8). The assistant to senior pastor confirmed: “I keep hearing from people that they were welcomed in the parking lot, invited to a meal after the service, invited them to Sunday school or to sit by them in worship or showed them brochures if they needed information...[the congregation is] informative, ...good at telling people how to find things” (Interview 8). It is important to note, though, that these are examples of MUMC members welcoming those who were like them-conservative, white, and middle-class individuals.

Members highlighted the importance of friendliness in facilitating church growth by attracting and retaining members. Members insisted that friendly congregations made churches appealing to visitors. One interviewee said: “People want to come here because they want to feel welcome... it is very important that the right people come and talk to them...If I go to a church and the church makes me feel welcome, I’ll probably attend it again” (Interview 2). Another member confirmed: “for new people, I see [such friendliness] as one of our strengths” (Interview 6). Based on their own experience at MUMC, interviewees linked congregational friendliness with member retention. One member recalled: “When I came to [this church] there was one couple who invited me to their Sunday school class and they were very sincere. And because of them I am still here... They made [me] feel welcomed” (Interview 2). Another member confirmed, “I have lots of friends in the congregation. I enjoy being there, ... being with my friends. I made a lot of new friends” (Interview 4). Another member also stated that she appreciated this church because “it feels like home, I have so many friends, my kids have grown up there, all their friends are there” (Interview 5).

However, members noted that, the sense of welcome was not felt by everyone. One member said: “I’ve heard people tell me that no one said ‘good morning’ to them” (Interview 2). Another member confirmed, “the majority of the congregation [acted in ways to demonstrate

that] the seekers in the church are not welcomed” (Interview 1). Examples of groups of people that were not welcomed included homosexual persons, transgendered individuals, single mothers, families “whose children had drug problems or have been in prison” (Interview 1).

The above descriptions indicate that actively welcoming most visitors was a common ritual and that friendliness toward members and some like-minded visitors was a value. The conservative social values of the congregation are likely the reason the ritual of welcoming did not extend to all visitors. It is likely that members did not know how to or did not want to socialize with those who they disapproved of. Since members assumed that friendliness toward visitors encouraged them to become members, they extended genuine welcome to those whom they perceived as “desirable” new members and avoided contact with others. It is possible that most members were unaware that the ritual of welcoming visitors was based on their “desirability” because people rarely question the underlying assumptions of the familiar rituals. This finding is important because it confirms that even the most subtle and unnoticed assumptions can exert strong influence on organizational outcomes.

Elderly congregation. Another element of culture unique to MUMC was the large number of older people among its members. One interviewee said, “We are an older congregation in our demographics, the median age is well above fifty. Over the years it has changed but in the last ten to fifteen years we have not had a lot of new members, especially young new members. People who are active in the church, who are here two to three times a month are older” (Interview 6). Another member agreed, “We have an elderly congregation” (Interview 3).

Members discussed how this demographic affected church programming. One member attributed the dwindling enthusiasm to the congregation being “older” and “tired” (Interview 6).

He explained, “A lot of our workers, people who come to events, who run a particular function tend to be older, retired. The same people have done [these events] for years, and years, and years. They are willing to help, but they are tired of it because they have done it for twenty years and there’s not enough younger people coming behind them and take over” (Interview 6). Other interviewees admitted wishing MUMC “had more young people” (Interview 1, 4, 5, and 6). The need to attract younger members was emphasized because it was seen as key to congregational growth, new congregational leadership, and the future of this church.

To address this need, members proposed age-targeted programming. One member proposed instituting ministries that targeted younger population. She claimed, “There’s not very much for middle aged people and [high school age] children..., there’s nothing for college age people” (Interview 3). Another member suggested creating more cross-generational programs. He said, “We have a lot of elderly people, but I know that we don’t have enough [younger] people going to them... We need more interaction between the elderly and the young church members” (Interview 2). Yet another member suggested reaching out to younger retirees. He explained that, the area where MUMC was situated “continues ...to have a lot of growth with retirees and there is, as far as I know, nothing that the community is doing other than the country clubs and things like that for these retirees... So I think that that is something that we need to be doing” (Interview 6).

The descriptions above reveal a value for church growth and the need to prepare for the future. Applying my classification based on Wiener (1988), the value is considered very strong because it is shared intensely and broadly and influences the focus of church practices.

Elements of Church Culture Most Valued by Members

Members seemed to appreciate and consider positive two elements of their church culture: focus on congregational care and community outreach.

Congregational care. An emphasis on congregational care likely was affected by having an elderly congregation and the value of church growth. The value of caring for members, which is common to many churches, was manifested in the focus of MUMC programs and rituals on elderly. The Care Ministries team of MUMC had twelve areas: “shut in visitation, hospital visitation, follow-up to hospital visitation, ... prayer team, a telephone team, letter...and card writing team, prayer shawls, [a team that] provides meals to people... being ill, and [a team that] link with... the people who joined... or are interested in joining the church” (Interview 8). Since the majority of people at MUMC were elderly and thus had health difficulties more often than younger people, many of the areas of the ministries and rituals dealt with health: hospital visitation and post hospital visitation ministry; meal preparation ministry (serving those who has been ill); visitation of the “home bound members” (serving people whose poor health prevents them from getting to church); and a prayer shawl ministry (the creation of a shawl is accompanied by a ritual of prayer for an individual facing difficult health issues and the presentation of the shawl also includes a ritual of prayer for the recipient).

The congregation’s focus on the health needs of its members was a concern of MUMC. For example, one member stated that the purpose of congregational care was “visiting, calling, following up, visiting people who are sick, visiting people who are in the hospital” (Interview 3). Another member described the work of one of the congregational care ministry teams, in terms of taking care of the members that are “in the hospital or is sick or someone” dying (Interview 1). Other ministries at the church that focused on caring for members’ health needs included a

lay facilitated “healing service” (Interview 1) and a “Primetime” group, described by the Annual Church Conference report as “providing an opportunity for those 55... and above to... share food, ... fellowship, and ... interesting programs” (November 9, 2008).

The foci of MUMC ministries and rituals on attending to the needs of the elderly reflected the value of caring for members. This value was very strong because it was shared broadly and intensely and influenced MUMC practices.

Community Outreach. Another value that influenced MUMC programming was the value of church growth. Members and leaders at MUMC assumed that outreach to the community increased church membership, thus, several programs of the church emphasized outreach. For example, “Cooking for Christ” prepared and delivered meals “to those within [the] church as well as those in [the] community” (Annual Church Conference Report, November 9, 2008). One of the members noted: “if it is someone who is not a member that’s no problem,” the Cooking for Christ group was open to helping those outside of MUMC (Interview 1). This group made food deliveries to families in need during Thanksgiving Holidays; made brownies for students at the local college (Annual Church Conference Report, November 9, 2008); sent cookies to service people overseas (Interview 1), employees of local businesses who worked on Christmas Eve and inmates at the local prison (Annual Church Conference Report, November 9, 2008).

Other programs that promoted church growth through outreach included supporting a local elementary school, providing space for various community groups to meet, having a Christian preschool on campus (Interview 6). Members’ descriptions of these programs indicated that they were strategies for making disciples, a mission that is aligned with the Methodist church. One of the interviewees explained, “Persons who committed the DWI offence [meet at

the church monthly for a DWI] class... [and the hope is] that something... here will have a positive impact on their life and may help them turn their lives around...may be, they will see the Christ in it somehow” (Interview 6). Another member confirmed, “we are trying to ... welcome... people [who use our church], put a face on the building, ... and show them that this is a personal place. Volunteer ... hosts... answer questions and help find restrooms. We have fliers” about the church and its programs (Interview 4).

Similarly, members described MUMC’s preschool as means of outreach and disciple making. One member said that preschool was one of the “important priorities...a major outreach ...as well as service” (Interview 4). Another member confirmed, “Our preschool is one of our biggest priorities..., one of our best sources of outreach. Most of our pre-school families are not church families and we are trying to help then cross over into the mainstream church by inviting them to functions ...and programs” (Interview 6). Efforts to welcome people from the community into the church and to try to make a connection with them have been noted by the senior pastor and the assistant to the senior pastor (Interview 7 & 8). For example, the senior pastor said that the church made it a point to invite the preschool children and their parents to various events at MUMC. He provided an example, “our child development center is growing and more and more people bringing their children there. I am trying to encourage the staff and other ministries to involve those people [in activities], so that when there is a special activity that promotes Sunday school they would get a notification of that” (Interview 7). Many of the parents have not been to church before, so getting them into the building was a way to convey an image of a church being a non-threatening, welcoming place. The assistant to the pastor explained, “Sometimes it’s just inviting them to other events that are held on the campus to get them familiar with our environment, surroundings and our buildings. When we get them into our buildings usually then

we can get them other information that would help them get involved in Bible study or Sunday school or things like that” (Interview 8).

MUMC leadership hoped that attending an event on MUMC campus would make “unchurched” people more open to a possibility to come to church. My interviews and observations suggested that this value was introduced and promoted by pastors who encouraged the staff and the members to adopt it. The following example confirms this supposition. One of the members of the staff explained that he and the Senior Pastor “are very community oriented, our philosophy is, ‘if you can get a group into the church for something, even if it’s secular, they are in the church and may be they will see something or experience something that will make them want to come back for something church oriented’”(Interview 6).The senior pastor confirmed, “It is not being overtly evangelistic saying ‘you have to be here because otherwise you are going to go to hell, it is saying that if you are looking for something that has meaning in life this is somewhere you can find that’” (Interview 7). The pastor concluded that such outreach efforts through preschool were intended as “ways ... to reach new people” and make disciples (Interview 7).

These descriptions indicated that the assumptions and values of leaders and members regarding church growth affected MUMC programming. These assumptions and values also guided how outreach was conducted and who was involved (members were eager to support programs that they believed in). The data indicated that the view of the leaders differed from that of some members. According to the differentiation concept of organizational culture theory, these differences reveal subcultures that upheld conflicting views regarding money, diversity and outreach. This has important implications: in order to perform their roles effectively, leaders

need to be aware of the cultural identifications of their members and address those identifications in order to facilitate desired outcomes.

From the perspective of organizational commitment theory, elements of culture that members find attractive cultivate member affective commitment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguished three dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. They defined affective commitment as the affective attachment to the organization and found that satisfaction with work or organizational experiences were among the antecedents of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This study makes a contribution to Meyer and Allen's (1991) theory by providing examples of antecedents of affective commitment from religious organizational context. The data from MUMC suggests that the strong religious emphasis, the sense of welcome, and care for members were the antecedents of affective commitment in this church. However, as the experience of MUMC suggests, differences among subcultures of an organization could result in conflicting interpretations of seemingly "agreed upon" elements. While being a welcoming congregation seems to be a desirable, organizational subgroups may disagree regarding who the "welcome" should extend to. Awareness of opposing values and conflicting interpretations of desirable outcomes could help leaders cultivate members' affective commitment more effectively. Rather than merely promoting antecedents of affective commitment, leaders may need to take into consideration the nuances of members' interpretations of these antecedents. This may require altering messages targeted at different subgroups based on these subgroups' values.

Church Mission

This section describes how the leaders and members of MUMC viewed the mission of the denomination and the mission of the local church. It describes the view of the pastor regarding

his role in introducing the denomination's mission and the nationally established areas of focus to this congregation. This section also highlights members' views of the local church vision and priorities.

MUMC Leaders' View of the Denomination's Mission

MUMC leadership informed the denomination's mission and the four foci of the UMC. The senior pastor and the pastor's assistant named the mission of the church and were aware of the four foci. The senior pastor was also able to name all four areas of focus but admitted that he has not promoted them in this congregation. He believed that some of these foci should be addressed at the conference level rather than the local church level.

In regards to the mission of the UMC, the staff and most members I interviewed named the mission established at the national level, "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (*Book of Discipline*, 2012). The assistant to the pastor stated: "our mission is to make disciples, [to] transform the world by making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (Interview 8).

MUMC Leaders' View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

In describing the work of MUMC, the pastors and staff emphasized MUMC fulfilling the mission of the denomination rather than enacting the local church vision. Although the clergy mentioned that MUMC had a vision, they could not name it verbatim, an indication that the local church vision was not among the top priorities of the leadership. In fact, it seemed that the priorities of this congregation were closely tied to the mission of "making disciples for the transformation of the world," and that the leadership viewed the mission as the vehicle for building member commitment.

The assistant to senior pastor listed ways MUMC fulfilled this mission, “we do that by welcoming people, inviting them to worship, to Sunday school, to our Bible studies, [and] other events that are held on the campus. Invitation is crucial, it’s at the top of our list” (Interview 8). This was primarily done through communication: preaching (Interview 7), “announcements in the worship service, [and] in the bulletin, ...[and] verbal information that [staff] and volunteers [provided] at the ‘welcome table’” (Interview 8). Wilson et al. (1993) classified communication practices such as the four described as “communication style,” the process dimension linked to organizational commitment and identification. In their 1993 study, Wilson et al. found that leaders were able to foster identification and commitment in members through intentional development of certain “process” practices. Thus, MUMC leaders’ strategies to fulfill the mission were consistent with the strategies emphasized by the scholars of organizational communication. Interestingly, the interviewees did not use the word commitment but described fulfillment of church mission as “develop[ing] people’s discipleship” (Interview 6) or “making disciples” (Interview 7 and 8). A disciple is defined as “A: a convinced adherent of a school or individual [and/or] B: one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary online, 2013). I argue that discipleship epitomizes organizational commitment. The B component in the definition of a disciple constitutes a factor of commitment—“a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization,” and A constitutes another factor “a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values” (Mowday et al., 1979 and 1982). Further, members described discipleship as “encourag[ing] people to make [the values from the preached message] important in their lives, to help them know what to yearn for and be involved in” (Interview 6), which, in essence, is internationalization or “incorporating organizational values and assumptions into one’s self”

(Mael & Ashforth, 1992). These authors argue that commitment encompasses internalization and thus support my earlier claim.

In addition to the strategies, described above, MUMC leaders and staff claimed church programs fulfilled the mission by building member commitment. A staff member said, “We started a [new member class],...our Sunday school classes help develop [discipleship/commitment] through prayer, through reading the Bible...and ...translat[ing] that to their lives” (Interview 6). The senior pastor also said that MUMC fulfilled the mission “through the child development center,...the music,...youth,... children ministry,...adult ministries, [and] through community” involvement (Interview 7). He provided an example: “Next Sunday the...pre-school class is going to be performing at 10:45 am service and this will give parents an opportunity to be in worship, ...to see how it is that we worship” (Interview 7).

From the perspective of commitment theory, the new member class, the Sunday school, Bible studies, and such ministries as the child development center, the music, the youth, the children, the adult, and community outreach ministries exemplify program antecedents of commitment. Wilson et al., 1993 defined program factors as forms of communication that contributed to member commitment and identification. My data confirms that the MUMC leaders developed member commitment through multiple strategies they used to fulfill the mission of the UMC.

The senior pastor talked about his efforts to encourage church-wide involvement in fulfilling the mission of “making disciples for the transformation of the world” (Interview 7). He provided the following example: “If the choir director is directing 12 choirs I will be on their case because [they] need to multiply themselves and...find other people to direct the choirs and...to involve...in ministry,...I don’t want [the staff] to be working harder, I want [them] to

find others ...that would help” (Interview 7). As the assistant to senior pastor pointed out that one of the top strategies of fulfilling the mission and promoting member involvement was “enlisting members in hands on mission projects or at least [in] support[ing] these mission projects locally and globally” (Interview 8). He explained that, the goal was to “get everybody involved in some kind of Christian mission, because when you take hands own experience it becomes a part of you and you become a part of it and you grow in a way that you would not have grown if you had not got involved” (Interview 8).

The pastor’s attempts to involve members in the life and ministries of the church exemplify the cultural antecedent of organizational commitment. Wilson et al. (1993) defined shared culture as a common set of beliefs held by numerous church members on the philosophy of the church. The authors listed such mechanisms for building shared culture as consistent messages and practices as well as “systematic socialization of new members to the culture” (p. 269).

MUMC Members’ View of the Denomination’s Mission

Members had a slightly different view of the mission of the Methodist church and how the congregation should address it. Most members were able to name the mission of “making disciples” either verbatim or in their own words (interviewees 1, 2, 3, and 5 paraphrased it). Interestingly, most members talked about the mission of “making disciples [for the transformation of the world]” as MUMC’s mission; only two of the members I interviewed recognized it being the mission of the denomination (UMC). This could be attributed to the emphasis the leaders of MUMC placed on fulfilling the mission (rather than the vision of the local church) and could be a result of the efforts of the leaders to get members to commit to the church and internalize its values (members who internalize the values of the organization are

likely to think of these values as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Members' statements that support this explanation include the following: "According to our mission statement, the mission is to make disciples for Jesus" (Interview 4) and "making Disciples of Christ is a priority" (Interview 6).

These statements exemplify the effects of the unifying symbols technique (promoting the mission of the organization as something that the congregational members have in common) that Cheney (1983b) suggested for building identification with the organization. Cheney (1983b) argued that stronger identification with the organization encouraged organizational members to perform in ways consistent with organizational interests. The following member's statement confirms this argument: "We are there to bring people into the church to be disciples, to find Jesus to better their lives" (Interview 4). The words "we are" indicates that this member views the mission of the church as her own, which Mael and Ashforth (1992) call internalization.

MUMC Members' View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

Since members of MUMC claimed the denomination's mission as the mission of this congregation, their statements regarding how this mission was fulfilled also describe the vision and priorities of the local church. MUMC members expressed doubt that "making disciples" was among top priorities of MUMC. For example, one member stated: "We say [that the mission of our church is] to make disciples... but I am not sure that I see that ...we are doing everything we could, I am not sure that this is [a strong goal]. We are doing a lot of good things in our community, ... inviting persons that are not necessarily members or come regularly; we are striving for that focus, but not quite there yet" (Interview 6). Another member described the mission as "very lacking" (Interview 3). She said, "I don't feel like we have direction. I think

[the mission] should be to make disciples of Jesus Christ. You are not making disciples of Jesus Christ when your membership dwindles” (Interview 3).

Several members described MUMC’s involvement in mission and outreach. Regarding global mission, members talked about their support of the global efforts of the UMC. For example, one member stated: “We are ...[supporting] the United Methodist Church in our congregation, working with the missionaries;” (Interview 2) and another confirmed, “We have a missionary ... we sponsor with donations” (Interview 6). Others referenced the congregation’s work with the national organization United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (VIM) and financial support of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). One interviewee explained: “Our VIM group will take people and do hands on work down in Mexico or [in state]. We have a global missions committee [that is] actively involved in promoting VIM trips [and] try to do at two trips a year, one in our conference and one outside” (Interview 6). Members described UMCOR as “one of the best things about the UMC, ...an amazing organization” (Interview 3) and stated: “we always took an extra collection that was not from our budget [for UMCOR] to help people where they need help ...in the world” (Interview 1).

MUMC members also acknowledged that the church had a “pretty active local missions group” (Interview 4) but expressed desire for more local mission. One member said, “my feeling is: ‘The church should care [more] about feeding the poor [than about its] building!’” (Interview 1). Another member agreed that MUMC “should focus on mission and outreach” (Interview 3). Similarly, another member stated: “Everyone involved [lacks care,], they ignore [homeless persons] coming into this church, they don’t talk to them, they don’t say, ‘hey, here are some coffee, some dough-nuts, have some’ or ‘could we help you with anything?’ ...what does it tell you about the church?... that they don’t care...That’s not good” (Interview 2).

Some members' criticism of the lack of MUMC's involvement in mission, outreach, and caring for the poor indicated that they internalized the mission of the church. Members' use of the word "we" to describe the actions of the organization indicates their "belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values" and thus their commitment to the organization (Mowday et al., 1979, & 1982). Further, their willingness to look at the actions of the church critically as "not... doing everything we could" (Interview 6), and "very lacking" (Interview 3); suggests that the values imbedded in the mission of the denomination were deeply internalized, adopted by the members as their own.

The experience of MUMC suggests that by building identification with the values of the (national or local) organization leaders can encourage members to support the mission and the priorities of the organization. Further, when members internalize the values of the organization they typically act to fulfill them and/or even challenge the organization's strategies for enacting these values.

Local Church Leadership Profile

This section features the local church leadership profile generated from interviews at MUMC. First, I describe the characteristics that members valued in a senior leader. Second, I identify the role of the senior pastor that members and the current senior pastor outlined. I conclude by explaining the leadership styles that members perceived as effective and ineffective.

Members Descriptions of Desirable Pastoral Leadership

Pastors' communication practices. In describing the current senior pastor members contrasted his leadership style with that of the previous pastors. They reported appreciating such practices as listening, caring, openness, and involvement; these traits are related to effective communication practices.

Listening. Interviewees emphasized the importance of communication skills. For example, the assistant to senior pastor said: “I had to learn to be a better listener to find out what people really love and need. I had to read widely and write a lot because communication skills are the utmost [important]... skill in writing and speaking, skill in teaching..., communication between the staff and committee members and lay people” (Interview 8). Members commended the current senior pastor for being a good listener: “He’ll ask the question and than he listens for the response [unlike some] pastors who ask the question [and immediately] give their own opinion [which] is not listening” (Interview 2). .

Caring. Members valued caring pastors, describing care as expression of authentic concern for and attentiveness to the needs of the congregation. A member said: “He has been very available..., has come to the hospital, has set with me, I felt comfortable with it” (Interview 1). Another member recalled: “He took all these youth boys to cut Christmas trees for the church. He spent all day in the cold with these boys cutting down trees. That’s not something a senior pastor typically does.... these [genuine] actions ...are absent in many senior pastors” (Interview 5). The depth of concern and the amount of time spent seem to be key phrases for explaining how a pastor exhibits care. This finding contributes to leadership theory research by suggesting a possible operationalization of caring in church contexts, which could be helpful in researchers’ attempts to measure care and leaders’ efforts to communicate care to organizational members.

Openness. The senior pastor’s openness and approachability was also mentioned frequently. One member described the current senior pastor as “warm and gracious and genuine, a gentle, kind man, who really cherishes everyone in the congregation [and] is very comfortable to talk to” (Interview 5). She also commended the pastors’ spouse for having a “heart for the older members of the population of our church and ha[ving] the strength and fortitude to go sit

over coffee with them and talk to them” (Interview 5). She described the senior pastor and his spouse as “very approachable people who you feel you can confide in” (Interview 5). She commended the pastor for being warm and easy to relate across generations noting that her entire family “find him very easy to talk to (Interview 5). Another member said: “His door is always open, he is over available to visit. He would bring breakfast from time to time. He is very relaxed and easy going” (Interview 6). The practice of openness and being approachable is communicatively expressed and closely related to listening and caring. In fact, interviews indicated that the person’s willingness to listen made others perceive him or her seem open and approachable. Further, one’s expression of concern made him or her seem receptive and an open confidant. This practice is especially important because it deepens the level of trust between the followers and the leader. Members who feel they can confide in their leader are more likely to follow him or her because they trust his or her decisions.

Involvement. The pastor’s involvement was mentioned frequently in reference to his work with staff and volunteers. One feature of involvement was encouraging others. One interviewee said: “He’s kind of a ‘ra-ra’ guy for the ministry programs, the youth, the children, the music, [etc.] It is nice and helpful [because] he can go in, talk, and encourage the department head, ‘what’s happening in this area and have you tried this?’ and ‘have you thought about this?’ and talk this stuff out and encourage the person to continue to do a good job” (Interview 6). He recalled, “There were some personal issues that [the youth director] was going through, so to help her with the new...program...the pastor had a meeting to encourage her to be open to this and to see that this is something that was going to be very helpful for her” (Interview 6). In these examples, the pastor’s involvement was expressed through statements of support and positive affirmation.

Involvement was also expressed through the practice of participation in the programs and activities of the church. One member recalled: “If we have a supper – [the senior pastor]’ll be cooking or he’ll be there, he attends the concerts... he teaches a weekly Bible study... he is very supportive of what the congregation does” (Interview 1). She described his behavior as exceptional, “the two pastors [prior to him] were not quite as supportive: they would miss meetings” (Interview 1). Another member confirmed, “He is dedicated to the work of MUMC, spends a lot of time doing the work for us, very committed [and] involved” (Interview 5). She continued: “Because we have an elderly congregation, we have a lot of people who are [in] nursing homes...[and] in the hospitals, and you hear all the time [that ‘he] was there!’” (Interview 5). This practice was expressed behaviorally: by “being there” the pastor communicated his support and interest in the initiatives and topics valued by the congregation.

Three out of four characteristics outlined by MUMC members: listening, caring, and involvement (encouraging) were also mentioned at VUMC. These qualities seem to be appreciated by members and thus are part of a profile of a successful and well-liked pastor who is a leader that develops relationships with the congregation.

Pastor’s Role and Responsibilities

Adjusting to context. Given that this church did not have an associate pastor position, the conceptualization of pastoral role was represented by the descriptions of the senior pastor (offered by the pastor, the staff, and the members). Although another clergy-member served as an assistant to senior pastor, his role was to support the work of the senior pastor and thus was not included in the conceptualization of pastoral leadership. However, the pastor’s assistant’s descriptions of the role of the senior pastor were included because they represent the view of staff.

When asked to describe the role of, the MUMC clergy talked about the teaching/preaching, the sacramental, and the administrative responsibilities. The assistant to senior pastor explained, “We are ordained to word, sacrament, and order [so] the senior pastor has to take these three areas very seriously and give them quality time” (Interview 8). However, the senior pastor noted that the role of a leader of a large congregation is significantly different from that in a small congregation. He explained that as the senior pastor of a large congregation “[I] have multiple staff. My primary responsibility to the congregation is through the staff. I meet frequently with the staff and I share my expectations and I know what they are doing and give them encouragement” (Interview 7). He insisted: “It is not essential for me to know everything that is going on at the church nor do I have to have a hand in [everything], I have to have the trust and the confidence that the leaders in those areas are doing what we are trying to do together in a plan to accomplish ministry and I have to give them encouragement and support and ideas and guidance but I do not have to be there” (Interview 7). He asserted that the main difference between being a leader of a large vs. small church is that the senior pastor of a large church cannot be directly involved in every aspect of the ministry. Delegating responsibilities and tasks is necessary on large churches just as it is in large organizations.

Preacher and teacher role. The “word” responsibility was associated with preaching and teaching. In reference to the preaching role, the assistant to senior pastor said: “Whether in the office or at home, spending several hours a week or sometimes a day in study and in preparation...reading carefully the Bible text ... gathering materials, resources, translations if needed, reference works and putting it together in a 20-25 minute service” (Interview 8). In reference to teaching, he mentioned “a year around teaching responsibility in the Bible studies..., devotionals at committee meetings, and [lessons] at things like vacation bible school,

confirmation class” etc. (Interview 8). While the assistant to senior pastor talked about preaching and teaching as responsibilities that a pastor had to fulfill, the senior pastor described the way these tasks were implemented. He mentioned such communication practices and strategies as “making [the sermon] personal by including examples” of own experiences and even struggles (Interview 7), communicating the vision of the desirable future— “the Promised land,” and highlighting “the positive” or reminding the congregation of its accomplishments and progress to inspire perseverance toward the goal.

In Fiedler’s (1967) Contingency Model preaching and teaching would be classified as unstructured tasks, because they offer much flexibility in terms of execution. An effective sermon or lesson does not necessitate following a clearly defined protocol or rigidly outlined steps leading to a desired outcome. Different approaches and strategies may be equally effective.

Sacramental (ceremonial) roles. The assistant to senior pastor emphasized the importance of “offer[ing] Holy Communion at least once a month and on other occasions” and preparing for baptism by teaching those who intend to be baptized or participate in the ceremony, which he noted, “can take in as little as an hour or half an hour visit or as long as weeks if you prepare people who are brand new to the church” (Interview 8). The senior pastor alluded to his ceremonial role in describing his commitment to administering sacraments and performing weddings and funerals for members and non-members of MUMC. He explained his interpretation of the ceremonial role of the church in terms of not making participation in rituals conditional on membership at MUMC.

According to Fiedler’s (1967) theory, administering sacraments and performing such ceremonies as weddings and funerals, have elements of structured and unstructured tasks. They are structured because the UMC requires that only clergy ordained to sacramental role administer

the sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion) and that such element as the prayer to invoke the Holy Spirit is present during Holy Communion. The elements of an unstructured task include having the freedom in wording elements of the ceremonies. For example, *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* provides suggested patterns or models for administering ceremonies: worship (p. 2, 3), baptism (p. 33, 39, 45, 50), Holy Communion (p. 6, 12, 15, 26), Christian marriage (p. 864), and funeral or “the service of death and resurrection” (UMC, 2007, p. 870). However, the pastors have freedom in how they administer the sacraments and in whether they choose to follow any of the orders prescribed by the UMC.

Administrator role. The responsibility called “order” was defined as “administration of the church... taking into account how the church is structured according to *The Book of Discipline* and making sure that the church is in somewhat compliance with regard to the main institutional committees. Making sure that each committee has an agenda and regular meetings. Keep[ing] the chairman informed with things that you want to have done and to think about” (Interview 8). The assistant to senior pastor described his current senior pastor as an “outstanding administrator... because things are running very smoothly when there is an event happening, ... because he has done his homework in the background... he is making the phone calls, he is writing the letters, he is rounding up people, he is talking to people, all the good behind the scenes things to make sure that the needs of the church are met” (Interview 8).

From the perspective of Fiedler’s (1967) theory, the administrative role of a pastor is structured so that he or she can ensure the church pays its bills and continues to grow in order for the congregation to support itself. Additionally, the UMC requires local churches to have certain committees, so the pastor has to make sure that members are nominated and elected to fill those positions.

Descriptions of Current Pastor's Leadership Style

Participatory leadership. The senior pastor described his style in working with staff in terms of providing support and encouragement. He said: “[I] do not try to micromanage their programs or activities but hold high expectations of what they can accomplish and promise them that I have their back and if they take a risk and something does not work well I will defend them and support them in public” (Interview 7). He clarified: “I may chastise them in private but I will support them in public and encourage them” (Interview 7).

One of the staff members confirmed that the senior pastor exercised a “hands-off [leadership] style” (Interview 6). He explained that the pastor “expects the director of a program to know what they need to be doing and to do that but would not micromanage or get into the day-to-day things” (Interview 6). He described the pastor's style as “I'm always there if you need me... but I am not going to interfere... unless you are dangling off the cliff, unless I see you really in trouble. [Otherwise,] I'll give you all the support that I have to give you but it's your program and you have to run with it” (Interview 6). The assistant to senior pastor also talked about the unautocratic, hands off approach of the senior pastor noting his “great ability in delegating, meaning finding people who could do a great job” (Interview 8). The staff that I interviewed expressed appreciation for the participatory leadership style of the current senior pastor.

Church Traditions Regarding Leadership Styles

Dominant top-down leadership traditions. The senior pastors' attempts to get the MUMC congregation comfortable with his participatory leadership style were met with some resistance. He explained: “I followed two pastors who were more autocratic, more authoritative, and more top-down” (Interview 7). A member confirmed that the participatory approach of the

current senior pastor was “something that we have not seen ... in the previous couple pastors. It was a slight change from the previous pastor and a huge change from the one before” (Interview 6). He explained: “Our leadership style at the church in the past has been very heavy top-down... everything came down from the top person, it takes a while to overcome that, to get past that to where people feel comfortable individually in their committees to make decisions and know that they’ll be supported in that. We’re starting to see that turn around in the last few years but it’s a slow process” (Interview 6).

Top-Down leadership style preferred. This staff member admitted his own preference for a more authoritative action. When asked what things he would have liked to be different, he stated: “I would like to see a little more direction [and] focus from the top. I think the [top] leader needs to be a little more proactive ...not just letting [things] occur. I think at one point we were very far to the one point where everything is top-down and I think we moved now to the other end of the pendulum where there is not a lot from the top. I think we need to move back a little more to the center so that there is a little bit more direction and focus” (Interview 6).

Conflict management as part of leadership (Interpretation of pastors’ style). Accustomed to the top-down, authoritative approach, members interpreted current senior pastor’s style as passive, unnecessarily non-confrontational, and lacking direction. For example, one member criticized the pastor’s decisions not to confront or chastise staff publicly: “he does not like to shake things up...instead of rocking the boat and addressing personnel issues that are not working ...he tries to have meetings with parents and address their feelings, he tries to deal with the people that were unhappy... He is not always willing to face problems head on... he is not one to deal aggressively with his employees... [But] sometimes people, [both staff and lay leaders], need to be reprimanded... for what they’ve done” (Interview 5).

As mentioned earlier, MUMC's senior pastor intentionally avoided publically criticizing and reprimanding staff in order to support their development as leaders. He explained that to encourage staff to take initiative in leading their programs, "I have to be very careful to not criticize staff in the presence of other people in the church but to speak highly of them... and if somebody says [something negative about them], I try to tell them, 'but look, though at what they have done.' I try to refocus that and redirect that" (Interview 7). Members, however, interpreted such behavior as a weakness and attributed it to the pastor being "compassionate, kind person [who] takes it personally, tries to handle things that are not his to handle for the sake of that person" (Interview 5). One member said: "I think, confrontation isn't his thing...I find him being very passive; I think he doesn't handle [conflicts] all that well" (Interview 5). She recalled "a couple of situations [this senior leader] could have handled differently...more aggressively," and noted that some people "have left the church because they wanted [the pastor] to address a situation more aggressively" (Interview 5).

Congregational involvement desired. Members expressed appreciation for the senior pastor's efforts to encourage congregational involvement in the life and ministries of the church. One member commended the pastor for keeping members informed, "He'll let the congregation know what happened the previous week, ... what happened in our administrative meetings. He'll pick up on a couple of things each meetings and [talk about] the impact that this is making on our community" (Interview 6). Another member described this senior pastor seeking input and encouraging participation from the congregation. He recalled that the pastor "called meetings [of] 20-30 people [and] asked, 'what can we do to make this place better?' ... [because] he cares enough that he wants to understand 'who we are,' ... to make good decisions, to know what to do and where to do it, ...not just using his ideas [but] the ideas of the people" (Interview 2). The

above statements exemplify how the senior pastor communicated with the congregation his concerns about the future of this church.

Limited lay participation preferred. Although members reported appreciation of senior pastor's efforts in keeping the congregation informed and seeking their input when making decisions, they also expressed desire for less lay participation in leadership.

A member observed, "We don't have enough people to help [the senior pastor] ... a lot of the...good leaders are no longer here. The leaders who are left behind are overworked and they are not willing to step up and say, 'I'll help you out.' We don't have enough of them... There are a lot of people who are not willing to help... [who] are holding back" (Interview 2).

The senior pastor confirmed this lack of responsiveness from the congregation: "The majority of the people are very proud of all the things that the church takes part of [and are] quick to say: 'we need to support this things!' [and] 'we need to be doing that,' but the 'we,' is not 'them,' it is the collective 'we' but the individuals are not necessarily involved in that 'we,' [they] are not very interested in doing more than what they are doing right now" (Interview 7). He pointed to one possible explanation: "The weakness that I see in that, we have some tried and true leaders but not as many leaders as we need, so I am trying to intentionally develop and work with some younger leaders (laity 30s and 40s) and trying to work with them and trying to give them encouragement and training to help them shape the future. There is ...resistance ...not because they are not interested [or] have a commitment to the church [but because] they are raising families ...and have less time" (Interview 7).

One member from that demographic category confirmed the mixed responses to the pastor's attempts to foster member involvement. Her story is that "he wants it to be our church, he has told us over and over, 'this is your church, you need to do the work!' ... he does really

encourage all of us to go out and do... something that we like to do, to find our gifts and to find a place in the church where that can be used... [However] members' responses were fifty-fifty..., we do want it to be our church but... [some] of us that are young [are] running and crazy, ...we want to be at the end" have less responsibility (Interview 5).

Members expressed desire for more involvement from the staff and a more directive approach from top leadership. Members criticized the pastor for expecting "a little too much [from members and] a little too little of the staff, [telling the staff:] 'It's the congregation's church, your job is just to be there for support but let them do everything'" (Interview 5). This member insisted that "there still has to be a leader, ...we want leadership and guidance, somebody to be at the helm,... somebody in charge..., a leader, a paid staff member to help us,...that's what they are paid for" (Interview 5).

These statements pointed to a significant discrepancy in the views of members' and the senior leader regarding church leadership. The pastor attempted to exercise a participatory approach to leadership by inviting members and staff to share leadership through taking more responsibility. Members responded to having more responsibility as a burden rather than means of sharing power and thus resisted assuming leadership roles in the church. Their comments about the senior leader and the staff not doing "what they are paid for" suggested that members had a different understanding of enactment of church leadership than the pastor did. The resulting misunderstanding could be resolved by strengthening the lines of leader-member communication. Specifically, by discussing their perceptions and expectations of church leadership roles and styles, members and leaders could arrive at a better understanding of the emerged situation. Open discussion of each other's views and preferences may lead to a more mindful sharing of responsibility and enactment of leadership.

These statements emphasized the value of communication for strengthening the member-leader relationships and thus improving the leader's effectiveness in bringing more participation. Another communication strategy suggested by a member was to organize "workshops helping our lay leadership to grow, [and] take ownership and...initiative, to...see a larger vision for the church, to gain some knowledge and then helping them to become confident to lead" (Interview 6).

Chapter Summary

This chapter features an organizational culture profile of VUMC that shows how the regional context affected the values and assumptions of members of this organization and thus influenced organizational processes. The culture of this congregation reflected the religiousness, the economic levels, and the social conservatism of the area; however, other demographics such as the race, ethnicity, and age of the congregation did not fit with the regional area. The elements of this church's culture are Organizational Value Systems, norms, and assumptions. The leadership of the church is represented by a participatory style, but members prefer more authoritarian approaches because of their conservatism and the long history of authoritarian leadership in this church. The unique identity of the church is represented in the key values of religiosity, social conservatism, and racial/ethnic homogeneity, the norm of prudence in giving, the assumption of economic scarcity and commitments related to church growth and the mission of making disciples.

CHAPTER 6: DATA AND ANALYSIS OF KUMC

Culture Profile

This section features an organizational culture profile of this third congregation, KUMC. It includes background and the demographics of the church, the description of the characteristics of the regional area, as well as the key elements of culture of the church. The elements of church culture are divided into those that are similar to the regional area and unique to the church community and are discussed in terms of key values and identifications.

Church Background and Demographics

The church site described in this chapter is called the KUMC; “K” is a letter randomly chosen as a pseudonym so that the real name of this local church is kept secret for protection of research participants’ privacy. The total church membership as of August 2012 was approximately 4,000 with average weekly worship attendance of 962 people.

KUMC is a large congregation with multiple pastors, services, and programs. The leadership of this church was represented by the senior pastor (Interview 7), two associate pastors, and one executive pastor (Interview 8). In addition, two clergy members served on staff in non-pastoral positions yet assisted in facilitation of worship. One of them was the director of the KUMC Foundation and Church Columbarium, and another one was the Youth Minister. In addition to clergy, the church had staff in charge of music and the arts (5 people), children (4 people), youth (2 people), programs (3 people), and missions (1 person), as well as an assistant to the senior pastor, a receptionist, a treasurer and people in charge of administration, kitchen, library, maintenance, housekeeping, and custodial duties.

The church had two Sunday morning traditional services, two Sunday morning contemporary services, and a casual traditional Friday evening service. The three types of services differed significantly in terms of their style, atmosphere, content, and attendees.

The Sunday traditional services were held in the large Gothic sanctuary, with intricate stained glass windows, wide wooden pews, a grand organ and piano, lavish flower arrangements, and an extravagantly adorned altar with ornate gold crosses and banners. One of the sanctuary services was televised throughout the region. The primary preacher for these “classical worship” services was the senior pastor, whose goal was to “impact the heart and engage the head” (Interview 7). These services were facilitated by a large worship team that typically included at least two pastors (one preaching and one leading other service components), a liturgist, three acolytes, a pianist and/or an organist, a sanctuary choir of twenty or more people, and four or five ushers. These services were dominated by formal rituals. For example, at the beginning of each service the pastors, the choir, and the acolytes entered the sanctuary in a long procession and were seated on pews behind the altar. All of them wore long white robes; acolytes also wore white gloves and belts. The actions of the participants of the procession were highly scripted and well rehearsed: the participants walked in pace with the music and maintained equal distance between each other; the acolytes maintained straight posture and held the worship regalia in a certain prescribed way. Another ritual included the reading of scripture, which was done from the speakers’ stand (one of two in KUMC’s sanctuary) designated for readings and announcements. This stand featured an extra large Bible with gold gilded pages. The ritual concluded with a statement: “This is the word of God, for the People of God!” by the reader and the response of the congregation: “Thanks be to God!” Other rituals included hymn singing (performed by the choir or the choir and the congregation, accompanied by the piano, the organ,

or both), prayers (typically performed by clergy from the reading stand and concluding with a scripted congregational response), and the “Lesson for Young Christians” (performed at the foot of the altar by one of the clergy and involving numerous children who attended the entire service with their parents).

These rituals demonstrate KUMC members’ assumption that worship should be a formal event. This assumption reveals a value of honoring the church tradition and following the scripted tradition of behavior in church passed down from previous generations of believers. This value is a component of KUMC’s Organizational Value System (OVS) of religiosity (Wiener, 1988).

I observed that the congregation attending the Sunday traditional services consisted of three primary groups: the largest group was adults 50 to 90 years old; the second largest was couples 30 to 49 years old with or without children; the third included small children and very few youth. The children participated in all the components of the service or sat quietly and colored in the Christian-themed books provided by the church.

Most of the people who attended these services dressed formally. For example, at the 11 a.m. traditional service on June 24, 2012, I observed that most men wore slacks and buttoned up shirts, some even had coats with ties; most women wore summer dresses or blouses with skirts or pants; most young adults and youth wore khaki pants and short sleeve shirts or polo-shirts; and children wore dresses (girls) and pants with polo shirts (boys). From the perspective of organizational culture, this dress code indicates members’ assumption of worship being a formal event that requires special preparation and attire. This assumption reveals a value of honoring God through respectful and formal clothing. This value is a component of KUMC’s Organizational Value System of religiosity (Wiener, 1988).

The other two services at KUMC on Sunday morning were contemporary. These services were held at the same time as the traditional services in a large modern room resembling a fellowship hall. This service had its own preacher, with the title of KUMC's Pastor of Preaching and Evangelism. The contemporary services offered a drastically different style of worship featuring contemporary worship music, a praise band, flashing stage lights, and multimedia on big screens. The worship team was smaller and dressed casually (the pastor often wore shorts and sandals). The decor was simple and featured a bare (no flowers or decorations) and a plain cross at the back of the stage. Rituals were almost completely absent from these services. Most of the components of the service seemed unscripted and even spontaneous. The church website described this service as "offer[ing] a more casual atmosphere that incorporates praise songs and hymns, with preaching that is conversational in tone and strongly rooted in the Scriptures" (KUMC website, July, 2013).

The congregation at the contemporary services differed significantly from that at the traditional services. The majority in attendance were under 50 years old. The largest group was young families 30 to 45 years old; the second largest group was small children, who also sat beside their parents and either listened to the service or colored in the church coloring folders; the third largest group was youth and young adults under 30 years old; the smallest group was those over 50 years old (it constituted approximately 1/5 of those in attendance).

In addition to the two types of Sunday morning worship, the church offered a worship service on Friday evenings. This service was both casual and traditional. Held in the sanctuary, it included the traditional hymns and liturgy but lacked the formal attire-and most rituals of the traditional services. The worship team was small and maintained the "Friday casual" dress style. The pastor did not wear a robe or a tie and preached from the floor (closer to the congregation)

rather than from the pulpit (the second reading stand in the KUMC sanctuary designated for preaching).

Members of the congregation who attended this service dressed more casually than those at the Sunday contemporary services. I observed at the Friday evening service on June 15, 2012, most men wearing jeans or khaki pants with shirts or t-shirts, some wore shorts and sandals, several women wore pants and blouses, some had capri pants and t-shirts. The majority of the people in attendance were young adults (under 50 years old), primarily singles and couples 30 to 45 years old without children. However, several older couples were also present.

From the perspective of the organizational culture theory, the casual dress code and lack of traditional rituals that characterized the contemporary and Friday casual worship services point to drastically contrasting assumptions and values. For example, the casual dress code points to the assumption that God cares about the “meditations of our hearts” much more than about the clothes we wear and that believers need to not concern themselves with preparing special garments as much as with preparing their spirits and hearts. The casual dress code also indicates that the church is willing to deviate from tradition to attract and minister to more people. As one of the interviewees explained, the KUMC leadership intentionally introduced the casual dress code for the Friday service, so that people could come after work without having to change into more formal attire (Interview 6). This statement indicates that the leadership valued an opportunity to welcome those who may not be able or willing to dress formally for church. The casual dress code and the lack of traditional church rituals reveal a value of openness toward the “unchurched,” people “not belonging to or connected with a church” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online, 2013) and thus not brought up with the value of honoring God through clothes or aware of the significance of traditional church rituals. The fact that the lack of traditional

rituals in the Friday casual and the Sunday contemporary services was coupled with biblical worship and “strongly rooted in the Scriptures” preaching (KUMC website, July, 2013) indicates the strength and the pervasiveness of the value of respect for the Bible. Although KUMC was willing to alter tradition and accept alternative dress styles to minister to diverse congregations, its emphasis of the Bible remained strong, thus indicating that religiosity was a strong OVS at KUMC (Weiss, 1988).

Geographical Area. KUMC is located in the Southern part of the U.S. in a city of approximately 200,000 people with a metropolitan area population of slightly over 700,000 people according to the 2011 census. The racial-ethnic composition of the city was equally divided between white (non-Hispanic) individuals and African-American (non-Hispanic) individuals. Socio-economically, the median family income was under \$50,000, with males having a \$10,000 higher median income than females. Almost 15% of the population were living below the poverty level. Educationally, approximately 89% of the population over 25 years old have completed at least a Bachelor’s degree and almost 38% have completed a graduate degree or higher. The population of this regional area was almost equally divided in terms of political affiliation: 56% of the people who voted in the 2008 presidential election voted for the Democratic candidate and 44% for the Republican candidate. In terms of religiosity, the city is located in the “Bible Belt,” defined as “an area chiefly in the southern United States whose inhabitants are believed to hold uncritical allegiance to the literal accuracy of the Bible [or] an area characterized by ardent religious fundamentalism” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online, 2013). Common practices in the area included literal interpretation of the Bible and the view of scripture as “the word of God,” belonging to a church, and attending weekly worship and Sunday school.

Elements of Church Culture Similar to the Area

The culture of KUMC mirrored the area's religiosity and the values characteristic of the Bible Belt. In the interviews I conducted, KUMC members revered the Bible and emphasized the value of biblically rooted adult education although not necessarily literal interpretation of scripture.

Religiosity. Most of the members I interviewed noted the importance of studying the Bible and the role of Sunday school in facilitating spiritual growth. For example, one member emphasized the value of “hav[ing] a personal time to ... study the Bible because that is the basis of ‘what the church is all about’” (Interview 2). Another member described “Sunday school [as] a very important part of the religious experience [because it provided] an opportunity to study the Bible” (Interview 5). Members' descriptions of the Bible as an important text and an essential component of the Christian experience point to the assumption that this text has authority and thus should be incorporated into the life of the church and its members.

Additional examples of communication that reflected reverence for the Bible included members' statements about adult education at KUMC. One member commended the church for having a “good Sunday school program for adults, small groups, [and] impressive Bible studies” (Interview 2). Another member said, “the church has really splendid biblical studies ... in a Sunday school and also in extra-Sunday school settings” (Interview 6). Other interviewees agreed: “There are lots of support and events to... encourage you to hone in on ... where you are in your relationship with God or with Christ” (Interview 1); and, “we like our Sunday school class, we've been with them ever since we started coming” (Interview 4).

These statements suggest that attending Sunday school is a norm among KUMC members. The fact that members mentioned Sunday school and Bible studies when asked, “what

do you appreciate about KUMC?” indicates that members find KUMC’s focus on adult education appealing or “very enticing” (Interview 6). The fact that members described small groups in terms of biblical education and spiritual growth rather than socialization indicates an assumption that small groups gather for religious rather than social purposes.

The theme of reverence for the Bible affected the practice of preaching. My observations and analysis of texts indicated that quotations from the Bible and references to biblical figures and events were a substantial part of the majority of the sermons at KUMC. The assumption that studying the Bible was an essential part of the Christian experience as was the norm of attending Sunday school; both shaped the focus of KUMC programming. I observed that KUMC had numerous Sunday school classes for various ages (in fact more than one Sunday school option was available for most age groups). The church also offered multiple evening and weekday studies taught by different clergy and laity. The Sunday school classes and weekday studies were well attended thus indicating that members likely found them appealing and valuable.

Elements of Church Culture Unique to KUMC³

Some of the elements of the KUMC culture that differed from the culture of the area where the church is situated included ethnic homogeneity, high socio-economic and educational levels, diversity of political and social perspectives, and climate of openness. Other elements that were unique to KUMC and valued by members included a sense of welcome, diversity of worship styles, strong lay leadership, a focus on the music, and attention to children and youth as well as missions—local and international.

³ Although these elements differ from the general context of the area, they may not be unique to this church. Other churches (both United Methodist and non-United Methodist) may have similar elements.

Ethnic homogeneity. The church was majority white, which did not reflect the racial-ethnic make up of the city. In my observations, I noticed few African Americans attending worship. The executive pastor (who was the only African American clergy-staff at KUMC) confirmed: “This is a majority white church...we might have twenty five [non-white] families that feel comfortable here” (Interview 8). Members confirmed that, although “there is some diversity in the church [including] racial ethnic diversity, [KUMC] is not as diverse as other congregations” (Interview 3); “We have a few [non-white people] scattered here and there [but we could be] welcoming more different ethnic groups of people” (Interview 5). Members admitted that “this is one area where we haven’t reached out enough” (Interview 5). Two of the members said that they did not remember the church focusing on bringing in more racial-ethnic diversity but that “the leadership is more focus[ed] on generally being welcoming, ... there is certainly no attempt to exclude people” (Interview 3). The executive pastor confirmed that, “The church has never been intentional on increasing racial or ethnic diversity per se but rather saying that ‘everybody is welcome!’ ... People know that they are welcome here, and I think that this is the big thing” (Interview 8).

In discussing the reasons that KUMC was not more racially diverse, interviewees pointed out that “birds of feather flock together”(Interview 8) or “the two racial groups don’t tend to worship together” (Interview 3). However, the former senior pastor envisioned KUMC becoming “a congregation where people of any race, any sexual preference or even sex could find someone on staff who also shared that circumstance” (Interview 6). He explained that during his appointment at KUMC, he intentionally looked for diverse individuals when hiring staff, in order to encourage more diversity (including racial-ethnic diversity) within the congregation as well as diversity of theological perspectives (conservative, moderate, liberal).

These statements indicate that members and staff were aware of the lack of diversity within the congregation. However, increasing the racial-ethnic diversity of the church was not a priority. Members and pastors assumed that racial and ethnic homogeneity within congregations was natural, as indicated by the statements, “Two racial groups don’t tend to worship together” (Interview 3) and “birds of feather flock together” (Interview 8). The pervasiveness of this assumption among members and leaders explains the comments of the leadership and their choice to cultivate the practice of openness to all people rather than focusing on bringing more racial and ethnic diversity.

Socio-economic level. The socio-economic level of the majority of people who attended the church was noticeably higher than that of the general area. This element of culture was reflected in how large, modern and technologically equipped KUMC’s buildings were and how many resources each ministry had. The children’s program also was well supported. KUMC had four persons on staff working full time with the children: a Director of Children’s Ministries, an Associate Director of Children’s Ministries, a Director of the childcare center and an Associate Director of the childcare center (KUMC’s weekday ministry for children). The program was housed in a large facility with numerous, spacious rooms, new furnishings, elaborate decorations, and electronic equipment. KUMC’s technological investments included pagers for parents whose children or infants were in the nursery.

The ample space, numerous staff, and latest technology resulted not simply from having large numbers of affluent members but from members valuing giving and supporting church programs and facilities. Interviews with KUMC members and leaders indicated that generous financial contributions were a strong value. Most members I interviewed described giving as essential to being a committed member of the congregation (Interviews 2, 3, 4 & 5). The current

and the former senior pastors named fundraising and educating the congregation regarding giving among key pastoral responsibilities (Interviews 6 & 7). Both members and pastors valued quality leadership and emphasized the importance of investing finances and time in attracting and nurturing outstanding leaders (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, & 8). Members and pastors took pride in the first class facilities of KUMC for their ability to provide space and resources for church programs that not only engaged members and attracted visitors, but also facilitated outreach to the community. Interviewees provided examples of how KUMC's first class facilities enabled the church to host the homeless overnight, invite people from the community to use the gym for basketball (Interview 2), or walk in the church labyrinth (Interview 3). Pastors emphasized the role of church facilities and highly qualified leaders in attracting people from the community to such KUMC programs as weekday childcare, music and arts programs, and lecture series (Interviews 6 & 7). The discourse of members and pastors regarding investing in facilities and staff indicates a strong value of generous giving to support the church and its expenses and the assumption that ample facilities and numerous staff foster ministry and enable outreach. This finding has important implications for leaders, suggesting that generous contributions can become a norm if members internalize the value of giving to support the church and its programs.

The socio-economic element of KUMC's culture also affected organizational identification. All of the interviewees described KUMC as "affluent" and proudly referred to having many wealthy members. For example, one member observed that there is "lots of money in the congregation [because] very influential people [in the city] are members there" (Interview 1). Another member agreed, "we have a lot of people (who) give a lot of money" (Interview 2). The executive pastor confirmed that KUMC has "a lot of people who are very wealthy and give a

lot of money” (Interview 8). The fact that members talked about KUMC having numerous well-known and wealthy members with pride indicates that the socio-economic aspect of KUMC’s culture was a key antecedent of identification with KUMC. This is an example of social identification leading to organizational identification. The social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), contends that “individuals tend to classify themselves and others into various social groups” in order to mentally organize the social environment and locate themselves and others in that environment (p. 104). The term “social identification,” thus, refers to “the perception of belongingness to a group classification” (p. 104). Social identification enables individuals to perceive themselves as actual or symbolic members of that group. Since affluence and social status are prominent values of the U.S. culture, it is not surprising that KUMC members sought to identify with the upper class. At KUMC, social identification with the upper class was possible through organizational identification. Mael and Ashforth (1992) explain that “organizational identification is a specific form of social identification where an individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization” (p. 105). As members “perce[ived] oneness with [KUMC,] they define[d themselves] in terms of the organization” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p.104).

Since organizational identification is linked to member loyalty, member commitment, and member activity (Adler, 1995), it is a desirable organizational outcome. Thus, it is important for church leaders to realize that elements of organizational culture that people consider desirable can foster organizational identification. Leaders could make their congregations more attractive to members through promoting desirable elements of culture or emphasizing the appealing aspects of the existing elements of culture in line with how members view them.

Educational level. The educational level of the congregation was also different from that of the regional area where the church is located. Several interviewees mentioned the educational and intellectual levels of the congregation. For example one member said, “Most people who go to this church are professional (there are not many blue collar workers); I would think well over half of [the adults in our church] have college degrees” (Interview 2).

Members and leaders frequently remarked about the high education levels of the majority in the congregation and talked about it as a positive aspect of KUMC’s culture. This indicates that appreciation for education and high intellectual levels was broadly and intensely shared and thus a strong value (Wiener, 1988). Note that, the notion of pride in having many educated members was also characteristic of the cultures of VUMC and MUMC. This suggests that the predominance of a certain intellectual, social, and economic class may make the church attractive to people who desire to identify with that class.

Since KUMC stood in sharp contrast with the regional location in terms of the socio-economic and educational levels of its members, it was often perceived as exclusive and elitist. One member said, when I invited a friend to KUMC, he responded, “I can’t afford to go to your church!” The member admitted that the church has “been called elitist... [as a] certain type of people... gravitate to this church” (Interview 2). Another member said that some perceived KUMC as “an upper-crust church” (Interview 6).

Some members disagreed with the idea that the church was so conscious of class, when they brought up examples that challenged this idea. They claimed that KUMC was open and welcoming to people regardless of their education level and socio-economic class. One member said, “I don’t think we try to be [elitist], I’d like to think [KUMC] is equally available to everyone...I may be naïve about that” (Interview 2). Another interviewee called KUMC “a great

mixture...of different kinds of people: different economic strata, different educational and economic levels, different backgrounds” (Interview 6).

These statements indicate two conflicting perceptions: the outsider view of KUMC as elitist and the insider view of the church as inclusive. The perception of the outsiders was likely based on seeing the traditional worship service on TV with its formally dressed congregation and richly adorned sanctuary. The perception of the insiders was likely based on their experience of different worship styles and interactions with members. The following statement supports this supposition: “I drive the church van...[and see] some people who do not fit the upper echelons of society and ... they don’t seem to ever feel uncomfortable about coming” (Interview 2). Both perceptions are valid, however; the leadership could influence the outsiders’ perception through active outreach to people of different economic classes rather than merely welcoming people once they were at KUMC. Such strategy would integrate the reality of the demographics of the regional area with the value of openness of The United Methodist Church.

Diversity of Political and Social Perspectives. KUMC differed from the surrounding area in its approach to politics. Interviewees described KUMC as “very unique” in its political astuteness (Interview 8) because a number of members were “very influential people...who [were politically involved and] active...in the community” (Interview 1). One of the pastors noted that a “Republican lieutenant governor, a Democratic governor, a state senator,...the Chief of Staff in the Clinton administration” had been or still are members of KUMC (Interview 8). As a result the church is extremely “politically astute, [and] politically aware” (Interview 8).

Since many KUMC members were powerful political figures of opposite ends of the conservative-liberal spectrum, KUMC leadership addressed politics with caution. Pastors constantly managed political tension and promoted peaceful coexistence of radically opposing

political views by emphasizing the common spiritual values of leaders and members rather than their political differences. Burke (1972) identified this as a “common ground technique.” Cheney (1983 b) expanded Burke’s work by distinguishing specific forms of common ground technique that “involve associational process whereby the concerns of the employee [organizational member] are directly or indirectly identified with those of the organization” (p. 153). KUMC provides an example of Cheney’s (1983b) “espousal of shared values” form of Burke’s (1972) “common ground technique” identification strategy. The former and the current senior leaders applied this identification strategy consistently, which enabled them to “unit[e] all of these people [, make the church] a neutral ground [to] have good conversation ... and discussion, ... come together under the banner of Christ” (Interview 8). The former senior pastor explained that to encourage “openness to people who come from different backgrounds, different educational levels, [and] different perspectives, [he made] very conscious [hiring] choices, so that ...there would be someone on staff” representing different age, gender, race, sexual orientation, and socio-theological perspectives (Interview 6). From the perspective of the identification theory, this strategy is an example of Burke’s identification through similarity. He explained that allusions to similarity between one person and others that are members of a group foster identification (Burke,1972). By hiring staff that represented diverse demographic groups the church communicated to each of those demographic groups that someone among the leaders was similar to them and thus was likely to represent their ideas, beliefs, and values.

The former senior pastor explained that he was “building upon the tradition of openness already” and embracing the denominational emphasis of openness through promoting the slogan of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors,” (Interview 6). This is an example of Cheney’s (1983b) unifying symbols strategy, which focuses on the power of a group’s name, logo, or

trademark to promote identification. Adopting the UMC statement-“open, hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors,” the leadership of KUMC was able to incorporate the value that the national organization developed. As a result, KUMC not only promoted identification with the national organization but also acquired such beneficial effects of this symbol as openness to opposing perspectives, social progressiveness, and member commitment (these are discussed in detail below). Four interviewees described KUMC as a congregation that genuinely embraces this UMC slogan and truly tries to implement it (Interviews 1, 2, 6, & 7).

Climate of Openness. Most of the interviewees mentioned “openness” as one of the key aspects of KUMC’s culture, which indicates that KUMC leaders effectively cultivated the norm of openness. Members pointed out that KUMC “emphasized over and over [its] non-dogmatic way of worship [where] everyone comes to the table” (Interview 3). Openness here refers to diversity in worship practices and the vision of bringing in or ministering to a broad range of members with different preferences. The OVS of openness was very strong because it fostered the development of the norm of openness and affected multiple organizational processes such as conflict management, preaching, teaching, and small group discussions.

Respect of opposing perspectives. One of the values that comprised the OVS of openness was the value of respectful treatment of opposing perspectives. This value enabled strong supporters of liberal and conservative political perspectives to thrive and flourish because common religious values transcended political differences. Five interviewees confirmed that several liberal groups actively participated in the life and ministries of the church alongside a conservative evangelical coalition called the Confessing Movement (Interviews 2, 5, 6, & 8). Church texts confirmed this point: one newsletter announced that a KUMC member received an award from the Confessing Movement at the Annual Conference (KUMC Newsletter, July 1,

2012, p. 1.); and another newsletter described a KUMC Sunday School classes' affiliation with the liberal UMC group, the Reconciling Ministries (KUMC Newsletter, October 10, 2011).

Social progressiveness. The OVS of openness also included the value of social progressiveness. Interviewees mentioned that KUMC “had the first woman in the city in the pulpit...[and currently she] is on the forefront in gay rights issues” (Interview 8). A member confirmed, “We are getting to the point of not looking at whether a woman ...or a person of color could do the job [of the senior pastor], but looking at who is the best person” (Interview 2). He continued, “Our congregation is probably one of the most welcoming congregations [toward homosexuals]; and I know that there would not be that acceptance in many other Methodist Churches” in this state’s Annual Conference (Interview 2). At the same time, he noted that some of the conservative members “really try to make [it] known that that they are dissatisfied with” gay and lesbian people (Interview 2). He concluded that, compared to other churches in the state “our church is ahead of the curve on allowing the discussion on both sides” (Interview 2). This social progressiveness seemed at odds with strong Republicans and Democrats coexisting in this congregation, but the espousal of shared religious values (Cheney, 1983b) effectively promoted member identification with the organization.

Members Commitment and Church growth. The OVS of openness made the church attractive to visitors. One member recalled that her family was “looking for a place that is open, tolerant and accepting of different view points and welcomes everyone to the table without judging who they are” and that KUMC was exactly such a place (Interview 3). This statement indicates that the climate of openness influenced outsiders’ decision to join the church. This member continued, “I really appreciate ...the openness of this particular congregation which ... you will not find everywhere, not even in all Methodist churches” (Interview 3). This statement

indicates that, although openness was promoted by the denomination as a whole, the exceptional strength of this value at KUMC indicated by its breadth, depth, and influence contributed to member commitment to this particular congregation. The following statement confirms that we “like very much that Methodism [in general and this church especially] says, the table is open to all, it’s important to us” (Interview 4). Another member said that people in this congregation “really want to fulfill these ... goals of ‘Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors’ and it goes beyond the staff; people have really taken it upon themselves to do this” (Interview 1). This statement indicates that KUMC leadership was effective in drawing on a value that promoted denominational commitment to foster identification within the congregation. It also suggests that members internalized this value (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Furthermore, visitors recognized the denominational symbol of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” and were attracted to KUMC because it boldly embodied it. This exemplifies the power of this congregation in using unifying symbols to foster organizational identification (Cheney, 1983b).

Members noted that this church was much more open and progressive than many other congregations in the area. This made the congregation especially attractive to visitors who valued non-dogmatic theology and social progressiveness. Since these values appealed to younger generations, the church acquired numerous young couples and families as members.

Elements of Church Culture Most Valued by Members

Elements of KUMC culture that were described by interviewees as attractive or positive included being welcoming; providing a diversity of worship styles; showing strong lay leadership; offering children, youth, and music programs; focusing on mission and community outreach; and caring for members.

Warmth and sense of welcome. All the members that I interviewed described the culture of KUMC as “welcoming,” “warm,” or “inviting.” (Interviewees 1-6). One member provided three examples of the leadership being intentional about creating the sense of welcome. First, “we have these people who are greeters in various places across the church [and] our ushers are so warm, open, and inviting” (Interview 2). Second, “people on staff ...are smiling...[and are] genuinely interested in people, [and] seem to be exceptionally happy to see you, ... [and most members] walk around with smiles on their faces” (Interview 2). Third, the logistics also promote the welcoming spirit: “we have so many doors, so many ways you can get into the church...it looks like it’s accessible” (Interview 2). The leadership made it a priority to keep the many entrances into the church open on Sunday and during the week; the ease of church access promoted the sense of welcome.

Three of the interviewees specifically remembered feeling welcomed during their first visit to KUMC. One couple recalled, “Everyone that we talked with was interested in talking with us, kept inviting us back repeatedly, and it really made us feel like we were at home” (Interview 3). Another member talked about everyone being genuinely friendly to visitors, “people introduce you by name...wear name tags to church”(Interview 1).

These statements indicate that providing a warm welcome was a very strong value that the congregation put into practice. It was broadly shared, intensely expressed, and influenced such organizational outcomes as member identification and church growth in line with the recommendations of Wiener (1988).

Diversity of worship styles. Another element of KUMC culture that members appreciated was the diversity of worship services. One interviewee said, “I like that we have opportunities to have diverse types of worship, whether it is traditional or contemporary, or

Friday night [casual traditional]; we used to have a communion service on Thursday morning” (Interview 2). He explained that different worship styles attract different people and thus help the congregation become more diverse: “there are a lot of people that find the traditional service dull, not happy enough, [and] they go to the contemporary service, it is...less stuffy...,a whole different group of people [attends this service]. If you ask me what socio-economic group they belong to, I’d have no clue” (Interview 2). Interview 3, 4 and 6 also expressed appreciation for the diverse types of worship services accommodating preferences of different groups of people within the congregation.

Further, I observed individuals attending both types of worship— a contemporary service one Sunday and then a traditional or Friday night service the following week. Interviews also confirmed that it was a regular practice for many of the KUMC members to attend more than one type of worship regularly. Some even reported going to more than one type of worship the same weekend to hear both pastors’ sermons.

These statements of interviewees indicate that diversity of worship practices was a very strong value. It was intensely and broadly shared by members and leaders (Wiener, 1988) and influenced such organizational processes as church growth and diversification of membership. The diversity of services also made the church attractive to potential new members who preferred a specific style of worship and to those who sought to participate in more than one type of worship. It also made the church attractive to additional demographic groups and thus contributed to diversification of membership. Further, it likely contributed to church growth by engaging populations that were ignored by churches that did not have diverse worship styles. The former senior pastor noted that from 1992-2010 the membership of KUMC increased and the average age of the congregation dropped from 57 years to 38 years (Interview 8).

Strong lay leadership. Interviewees described KUMC's strong lay leadership. One member said that the church had "very strong lay leadership practically in all areas" (Interview 4). Another member agreed, "There's lots of people that are involved in all different areas, there's tons of committees,...volunteers...help out with children's group, some always volunteer with the homeless....It's neat to see that people have found their niche within the church,...a ministry" (Interview 1). From the perspective of organizational commitment theorists, this is a process factor. Wilson et al (1993) explained that allowing members to choose which ministries to support and where to volunteer contributed to member commitment. The comment of the former senior pastor confirms this point: "The church has so much talent and ability in its lay people, [who are] very devoted to [KUMC] ministries [and] when...shown the need...will travel half-way around the world" or go out of their way to help someone" (Interview 6). This statement describes KUMC members as being highly committed, since commitment is defined in part as "willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization" (Mowday et al., 1979, 1982).

According to the former senior pastor, KUMC developed strong lay leadership by providing "quality worship and ministries [that encouraged members'] open[ness] and responsive[ness] to God's presence and the calling that they receive[d]" (Interview 6). Organizational identification theory confirms this point. Mael and Ashforth (1992) defined organizational identification as social classification of the self, "I am" (p. 105). In the KUMC example, when members sensed God's calling, they were prompted to explore their social classification. Since classification is always contextually bound, they classified themselves in relation to the church context and decided whether they identified with KUMC and/or certain ministry that it offered. Members and leaders of KUMC described the programs and ministries of

the church as “quality” (Interview 6), “exceptional...[offering] a rich experience” (Interview 4), “very interesting” (Interview 3), and “attractive [and] very strong” (Interview 2). This implies that KUMC’s worship and ministries were appealing and valued by both members and leaders. Members who found what KUMC offered appealing, were likely to identify with the organization or at least with a certain ministry. Adler (1995) found that members’ identification with the organization led to increased member activity, thus providing the theoretical grounding for the KUMC’s lay leader development strategy.

Focus on the youth. The youth program at KUMC was also mentioned by most interviewees. One interviewee said, “every time you look in the [newsletter] there are all these youth opportunities, all these programs that they do, all these mission projects that they are going on” (Interview 2). One member commended KUMC for having a strong “focus on the youth,...more youth involved in participating in the [worship] service and [in various] projects off-site” (Interview 5). My observations confirmed: KUMC had its own Face-book group and a website that featured announcements and posts about the numerous activities. This suggests that KUMC fostered identification with youth through the use of new media and by focusing its programming on the types and styles of activities that appealed to youth.

The KUMC youth Sunday school met for an hour between Sunday worship services, so that the youth could attend worship with their families. The youth were “strongly encourage[d] to participate in one of the many worship services,” which included the four Sunday services, the Friday evening service, and the weeknight “Youth-led service for Senior High youth” (KUMC youth website). The youth website described the weekly youth group gatherings, small groups, and Bible studies as “core activities of the youth ministry” that fostered accountability and growth in faith (KUMC youth website). The youth also had a vocal choir and a bell choir that

met weekly for practice with the youth choir director and an accompanist. These choirs performed at KUMC worship services and outside the church during special outings and the annual youth choir tour (KUMC youth website). In addition to the ongoing meetings KUMC annually hosted several events including a “Back to School” gathering, a worship night featuring music bands, and a bingo night with the KUMC older adults (KUMC youth website). The youth were also heavily involved in mission initiatives in the local community, the city, the state, and the country.

The number of the activities, service, and learning projects and the frequency of the meeting time of the KUMC youth suggest that the youth program was strong and well attended. Further, it indicates that KUMC not only valued having a strong youth program but also was willing to invest significant resources in the program. KUMC has three full time staff members devoted exclusively to leading the youth program: the Youth Minister, an Associate Youth Minister and a Youth Support Staff member. In addition to these staff members, a youth music director, two youth interns, and numerous mentor volunteers constituted a large team that lead, supported, and mentored youth. This indicates that supporting KUMC youth was a value shared by members and leaders and that the leadership used effective communication strategies to act on those values.

Although the focus on youth is a common element in many churches, making the values of church culture influenced its manifestation at KUMC. The value of religiosity shaped the focus on youth gatherings making them more religious than social. KUMC youth was heavily involved in Bible studies, Sunday school, and worship. The affluence of the congregation resulted in an abundance of resources made available for youth. KUMC hired numerous staff (including clergy) to lead the youth program. KUMC also invested significantly to provide a

large, lavishly furnished, and electronically equipped space for youth. The youth ministries at KUMC had their own building with numerous, spacious, and comfortable classrooms with large flat screen televisions, sound systems, and multiple large game tables (Observation notes, June 2012).

Focus on children. KUMC also had a well supported, strong, and popular program for children. The support of the children's program was seen in how much the church had invested in it. KUMC had four persons on staff working full time with the children and a large, impressive facility devoted to children's ministries. The support of the congregation was evident in the large number of parent volunteers involved in children's ministries. They led the weekly Church Services for Children and the Sunday school class for toddlers, and helped with the Vacation Bible School programming and music ministries.

The numerous children's ministries and the variety of youth groups highlighted the strength and popularity of the children's program. The church had three choirs providing musical opportunities for children of various ages. The childcare that KUMC provided on Sunday mornings during the 9 a.m. and the 11 a.m. service times included nursery (two groups for infants and two for toddlers) and preschool (four age based groups). KUMC also had a vibrant weekday children's ministry, the daycare center for ages 6 weeks to 4 years. The KUMC's state accredited childcare program was popular in the city and considered "among some of the best in the state" (KUMC bulletin, October 24, 2010) providing an exceptional level of preparation for the children (KUMC website, August 12, 2009).

This shows the organization's commitment to caring for the youth, the children and their families and vice versa: the young families, the youth, and their parents' commitment to the church. KUMC's commitment to children, youth, and young families suggests two values: caring

for members and growing the church. By providing multiple activities for children and youth the church promoted caring for members. Children and youth were members and valuable constituents —the “future of the church” and thus needed care. Caring for children and youth was important to their parents, who experienced the church caring for them through the care provided to their offspring.

At the same time, practices that supported youth and children were intentionally cultivated to induce church growth by attracting families. Several interviewees credited the strong children and youth programs for attracting them to KUMC and influencing their decision to become members (Interviewees 2, 3, & 4). The former senior pastor also talked about the weekday childcare program as a vehicle for outreach and evangelism. He explained that the “award-winning curriculum” attracted people from the community; some of them might not ever have gone to church (Interview 6). KUMC leadership made an effort to invite them to activities and events at the church; this practice resulted in many of them becoming members (Interview 6). This statement supports the claim that the norm of focusing on children was intentionally cultivated by the leadership of the church as a vehicle for outreach and church growth.

Further, since organizational commitment theory suggests that elements of culture attractive to members cultivate member affective commitment or attachment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), the findings regarding the elements of KUMC culture have valuable implications for church leadership. The culture analysis of KUMC suggests that members appreciated KUMC for promoting openness to diverse political and social perspectives, being welcoming, ministering to diverse congregations by providing different worship styles, emphasizing religiosity and spiritual growth, nurturing strong lay leadership, focusing on mission and community outreach, and caring for members by offering programs for each age

group. The data from KUMC also indicates that some members found identification with the upper-classes of society appealing and saw the high education and socio-economic levels of the congregation as appealing. Knowing this, KUMC leaders could cultivate members' affective commitment by strengthening and promoting these elements of church culture. Drawing on the data from VUMC, MUMC, and KUMC leaders indicates how other congregations and religious organizations could evaluate which elements of organizational culture are valued and appreciated by their members and then use those elements to strengthen members' affective commitment.

Church Mission

This section describes how the leaders and members of KUMC viewed the mission of the denomination and the local church. It describes the view of the pastor regarding his role in introducing the denomination's mission and the nationally established areas of focus to this congregation. This section also highlights members' views of the local church vision and priorities.

KUMC Leaders' and Members' Views of the Denomination's Mission

In discussing the denomination's mission, "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," (*Book of Discipline*, 2012), the senior pastor admitted, "I almost don't have to [address] it, it almost drives itself. Everything we do is promoting the mission of the church. [I mention it directly] primarily in my writing and my preaching" (Interview 7). However, none of the members were able to name the mission of the United Methodist Church. Examples of responses included: "I would have no clue" (Interview 2, June 2012); "I don't know about our national goals right now (Interview 1, June 2012); and I recall some "mission statement thing that was read in church for a while" (Interview 4). Some members attempted to name the national mission in their own words. For example, one member stated that the mission

of the UMC is to “go into the world and preach the gospel [and that it is] just the biblical” mission (Interview 5).

Although members were not able to name the national mission of the organization, the congregation fulfilled the mission of “making disciples for the transformation of the world” through its leadership and the programs and ministries. In fact, KUMC was the only congregation in my study that addressed not only the national mission but also the four areas of focus that the national leadership established for the denomination. Although the KUMC pastors that I interviewed were unable to recall all four areas of focus from memory, the current senior pastor insisted that, “We [fulfill the four areas of focus] here continually, [rather than] mention[ing] the four [explicitly and] try to memorize them, it is fluid here, it’s just who we are, it’s just part of our identity” (Interview 7).

My observations and interviews provided examples of how KUMC fulfilled the national areas of focus. The first area of focus, “developing Christian leaders for the church and the world,” was among the top priorities of KUMC. Members and pastors referred to strong lay leadership as an essential element of KUMC culture. My observations and interviews at KUMC also revealed that the congregation valued highly qualified leadership (lay, clergy, and staff) and was willing to invest in it.

The executive pastor described KUMC’s pursuit of the second area of focus, “creating new places for new people by starting congregations and renewing existing ones [as] ‘transferring the DNA’ [or] taking what is happening here at KUMC, and train[ing] people [elsewhere] to do those things” (Interview 8). He clarified, “basically, the church like here that has something that is going good- you resource with a little church down in somewhere [and the churches become] more effective and reaching more people” (Interview 8). In my observations I

noticed the senior pastor as well as the staff talking about a church start at a different location (in a neighborhood of a different racial-ethnic and economic composition). The senior pastor also used the terminology of “transferring the DNA” of KUMC (Interview 7), and a staff person called it “starting a new campus” (Observation, June 28, 2012).

In describing KUMC’s pursuit of the third area of focus, “engaging in ministry with the poor,” the executive pastor claimed that “this church [already] does a wonderful job... but a lot of people would rather send their money somewhere than be with the poor” (Interview 8). The current senior pastor of the church admitted, “We have a lot of people in mission, but there’s still thousands [whose] idea of church is coming here or watching it on TV, they never understood that discipleship means getting your hands dirty, being involved, changing the lives of others” (Interview 7). KUMC leadership challenged this norm by promoting more “hands on” involvement in ministry with the poor. To this end, the current senior pastor developed a “plan to provide opportunities for people who [say] ‘I don’t know where to go’ in order to help others!” (Interview 7). He clarified that the goal was to get people involved in new mission initiatives, new ways of serving, and helping the poor in a “‘hands on’ [way requiring them] to get out of their seats and go out and actually do something” (Interview 7). He continued, “We are going to ask people to report in [so that] there’s some accountability built in” (Interview 7). When asked what he hoped to achieve through this new practice, the pastor said, “The church is alive [when we] do something for someone else” (Interview 7). The executive pastor confirmed the necessity of getting people involved in “hands on [mission, because] the church is dying” (Interview 8). He explained that “for every church the mission has been to ‘make disciples of Jesus Christ’ ...but so many churches lately have been dying and... We think it’s because they are not doing the ‘hands on’” (Interview 8).

KUMC addressed the fourth area of focus, “stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally [through its support of the bishop’s efforts to] eradicate malaria by the year 2015-2016” (Interview 8). KUMC committed to “raise a lot of money for that” as well as other overseas mission projects that focused on improving health (Interview 8). My interviews and observations confirmed this statement. On June 17, 2012, when the bishop delivered a sermon at KUMC, the church presented him a check for several thousands of dollars to one of the global mission initiatives that he avidly supported. In addition to the mission initiative promoted by the national leadership, KUMC members conducted annual medical mission trips to Central America. This ministry involved several doctors, nurses, medical assistants, and volunteers traveling to Guatemala to bring medications and provide free medical services including certain complex procedures. The former senior pastor explained that this ministry was initiated by one of the members and strongly supported by the congregation.

It is a fact that KUMC has fulfilled the mission and the four areas of focus established by the national organization without actually naming them as the national mission and the four foci points to implicit identification with the UMC. Burke (1972) argued that this kind of rhetorical identification was most powerful because it allowed persuasion in a subtle and unnoticeable way. KUMC’s pastor confirmed Burke’s statement when he said that the mission “almost drives itself” (Interview 7). This statement indicates that the strategy of implicit identification resulted in members’ internalizing the values imbedded in the denomination’s mission to such an extent that they supported the fulfillment of the denomination’s mission. The experience of KUMC suggests that member internalization of key values can result in tangible behavioral outcomes (members enacting the mission and supporting specific ministries). Knowing this, leaders can

use identification strategies (such as implicit identification) to persuade organizational members to behave in ways that promote the work of the organization.

KUMC Leaders' View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

KUMC pastors described the vision and priorities of their church in terms of how it fulfills the national mission of the organization. To illustrate, the current senior pastor said that in his view “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world ... means personal change [and] social change” (Interview 7). He explicated: “It means feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison. It means transforming the whole culture, transforming the world” (Interview 7). The executive pastor illustrated how these changes occurred. For example, social change was facilitated because of “this church [being] very responsive toward mission..., [having] people who volunteer all over the city” (Interview 8). Personal change occurred as people found “the things that [they] love [because people committed to mission or to service] when they [did] things that they love[d]” (Interview 8).

These descriptions point to KUMC’s strategies to incorporate the mission of the denomination and to internalize this mission’s values as KUMC values. By interpreting the mission in terms of “personal change [and] social change” (Interview 7), the leaders of KUMC derived the desirable outcomes of fulfilling this mission in their congregation. They operationalized the first outcome in terms of members’ volunteering (Interview 8), “feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison” (Interview 7); and the second outcome in terms of increased levels of commitment among members (Interview 8). Through internalizing the values of the denomination’s mission, KUMC leadership was able to build commitment to the UMC mission implicitly. This strategy is slightly different from the implicit identification

strategy described by Burke (1972) because identification is organization specific, thus implicit or unnoticed identification does imply connection to an organization.

I argue that implicit commitment, on the other hand, can be accomplished without allusion to what you are committing to (an organization, a mission, a vision, etc.). This is possible because commitment and internalization are not organization specific (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Mael and Ashforth (1992) explain that the values and beliefs may be shared by various organizations and thus may not necessitate individuals' connection to the organization. However, I argue that individuals who internalize the values and commit to fulfilling the mission that an organization upholds implicitly commit to that organization because commitment is defined as incorporating the values of the organization and acting in ways to uphold and promote those values (Mowday et al., 1979, 1982). This suggests that local churches can promote commitment to their congregation and implicit commitment to the denomination by internalizing the values upheld by the denomination. The paragraphs below demonstrate how this congregation implemented the strategy of implicit commitment.

The executive pastor talked about the process of creating a uniquely KUMC vision of the denomination's mission. He said, "Right now we are working on our emphasis and our goals, every area [in the church], we are creating our own four areas of focus that would piggy back on the [UMC's] four areas" (Interview 8). This is an example of adopting a principle or framework created by the national leadership into the culture of the local church. This example includes adaption of the principle since KUMC leaders seek to envision what the foci of their congregation should be.

Among the priorities of KUMC that both pastors and members described as important was maintaining openness (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, & 8). The executive pastor said, "The slogan of

the Methodist church: ‘Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors’ this church takes very seriously.... This church seeks to be an open church where people feel that they have a place, whether they are wealthy or not wealthy, they ought to feel Christ’s presence in this church and we want people to know that they can be heard here...that somebody knows that they exist and know their story, ...that they are a person with hopes and dreams” (Interview 8). Examples of practices that are focused on fulfilling this priority included having staff members who varied in age, race, sexual orientation, theological background, etc. (Interview 6); having numerous greeters and ushers trained to be welcoming (Interview 7) and to approach all who visit with warmth and openness (Interviews 2, 3, & 4).

To make openness a priority, the leaders used the unifying symbols tactic (Cheney, 1983b). By adopting the UMC motto of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” (<http://www.umc.org/site>), they not only promoted this denominational value but also encouraged identification with the national organization (Cheney, 1983b).

Another priority or component of KUMC’s vision was modeling the fulfillment of the UMC mission. The current senior pastor stated: “This church is so important is in its visibility,...if we are [fulfilling the UMC mission and] conveying it to the world..., we are encouraging...other churches. We are kind of a teacher, leader among other churches” (Interview 7). Other interviewees confirmed that “because of its position as one of the flashier churches in town or in the state, [and] because of its size, [KUMC has a] responsibility of being an example to folks” (Interview 4).

The executive pastor explained that KUMC fulfilled the vision and the mission of the national organization by being “a teaching congregation, a television congregation, a leading congregation, a flagship congregation” (Interview 8). He noted that KUMC was constantly

increasing its already large numbers of “volunteers who participate[d] in every ministry in the church, [adding new members, and baptizing] two or three babies every week” (Interview 8). He also added that the church had “two preachers...set aside to focus on [preaching] and ... preachers [for] all the visits in hospitals, [as well as] preachers set aside just for caring, staff people set aside to focus on mission [with one person specifically working] to communicate the mission” (Interview 8).

The priority of modeling the fulfillment of the denomination’s mission is an example of how the values of the UMC mission were internalized and adapted to the local context. Together these strategies enabled KUMC to fulfill the mission of the denomination at the local level, to build commitment to the local church, to promote the values of the denomination among its members, and to build implicit commitment as well as promote identification with the national organization.

KUMC Members’ View of Local Church Vision and Priorities

Church Vision. In describing their local church, KUMC members used the terms mission and vision interchangeably. They were not able to explicitly name the mission or vision of KUMC; however, most of them reported hearing about it and knowing its general sense. One member attempted to recall the motto of the church, saying that he believed that the current motto was to “Love God, Love Neighbor, Change the World” and recalled that “before it was something like... ‘a church connected to the community and the world’” (Interview 2). Another member expressed the vision/mission of KUMC in her own words. She stated that the main premises of the mission were “to journey in faith together because we are richer for the shared experience [and] to spread God’s love, to share Jesus’ way and invite everyone to the table to share in God’s love for us, and to lead by example” (Interview 4).

Church priorities. In describing the priorities of the church, KUMC members mentioned mission and service to the community.

International, regional, citywide and local mission. The description of the KUMC mission focus dealt with international, regional, citywide and local church mission and outreach. International mission initiatives included: the annual member initiated medical mission trip to Guatemala, that was mentioned in most interviews (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6) and discussed with much enthusiasm and fondness by both members and clergy (Observations, June 2012); the ongoing relationship with the Russian United Methodist Church focused on building and strengthening UMCs in Russia (Interview 2 & 6); and the youth group trips to Mexico to build housing (Interview 2), and others.

The regional mission work included in state and out of state mission trips for both youth and adults (Interviews 2 & 6). Examples of citywide mission work included “weekly food drafts [and] hosting homeless people for a night” at the church, providing them with food, places to sleep, and to shower (Interview 1). In addition the church maintained a food pantry that allowed KUMC to deliver groceries regularly to the people in the city (Interviewees 3 & 4) and to “support homeless people and people who are in need ...one on one basis” by providing donations of food and bus tokens for those who came to the church asking for help (Interview 5). Other examples included youth group projects such as “build[ing] a handicap ramp or ... handing out electric fans in the heat of the summer to people who can’t afford it” (Interview 2).

The local church mission referred to care for the physical and the spiritual needs of the congregation. Members emphasized the importance of the work of KUMC in reaching out to “the people who are homebound or dealing with specific” medical issues or conditions (Interview 1, June 2012). Examples of such outreach included various health ministries and

support groups (Interviews 1, 5 & 6). One member emphasized the importance of the local church mission in terms of “caring for the members [as well as] taking care of the facilities, so that the programs would go on” (Interview 4).

As one member explained, “Mission also involves taking care of our own spiritual selves and by that I mean the mission to make sure we have an adequate Sunday school for our young adults or our older adults and the mission that takes care of our youth and children. Proper missions with the older adults, because they are older and older people have the marvelous wisdom that we can tap into and to utilize and that is an important mission” (Interview 2). He concluded, “I think that the most important thing that our church does is not only take care of others that we see in need but also take care of each other” (Interview 2).

Service to the community. Members described community service in terms of KUMC’s involvement in the city. One member stated that “the congregation has a lot of service to the city...This is one of the biggest churches in town...Because of its position,...it is very visible in town,...it spearheads the Sunrise Service for Easter which is citywide, every time there is an interfaith denomination service for whatever reason the church is always there with it; there are a lot of different service projects that go on in this town as well as outside of this town that this church is involved in” (Interview 3). He also highlighted the focus of the church on “bringing people in the community together” and its financial support of the numerous organizations in the city and the area (Interview 3). Another interviewee confirmed the involvement of KUMC in citywide interfaith initiatives and in the service to the local community (Interview 6).

Additional priorities. Most members struggled to identify additional priorities that KUMC could focus on. Two of the members even joked about the church having “almost too many programs” already (Interviews 3 & 4). Only one interviewee mentioned what she would

have liked for the church to do differently in terms of its priorities. She mentioned that “the church [did many] seemingly flashy things—big overseas missions—while it could focus more on something less flashy and local.” She admitted that she would have liked for the church to do even more mission work in the surrounding areas “focus[ing] more on the ‘have not’s’ in the local community” (Interview 1).

These priorities represent the desired outcomes of fulfilling the denomination’s mission that KUMC leaders established for their congregation. Since KUMC leaders operationalized the social change outcome in terms of this congregation’s focus and involvement in mission, this outcome was indeed fulfilled. KUMC’s focus on mission work and its attempt to provide numerous programs that serve the congregation and the community was exemplified by members saying that the church had numerous (Interview 1 & 2) and “almost too many” (Interviews 3 & 4) mission and service opportunities. Several aspects of members’ descriptions of the priorities of their church demonstrated the fulfillment of the personal change outcome. First, members were informed and able to name numerous mission and service programs that KUMC offered. This means that much attention and publicity of the church was devoted to the mission and service opportunities resulting in such personal change as increased awareness and perhaps concern for these mission and service needs. Second, the example of the medical mission trip, which was mentioned by most interviewees and discussed with fondness, indicated members’ support of the mission and service initiatives (increased involvement and hence commitment). Third, members attributed their spiritual growth (personal transformation) to the efforts of the church to care for the physical and the spiritual needs of the congregation by providing Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and programs for the youth and the elderly.

The fact that members of KUMC demonstrated involvement and commitment to the values of the denomination's mission and the programs that fulfilled this mission despite being unable to name the mission/vision of the congregation or the denomination demonstrates the power of implicit identification and implicit commitment in facilitating behavioral change at KUMC. The experience of KUMC demonstrates that rather than focusing on promoting the mission statement or getting members to learn the components of the church vision, it is possible to fulfill the vision or the mission if the leadership and the members internalize the underlying values. Deep internalization of values results in personal transformation and the transformation of organizational culture. These transformations in turn facilitate organizational commitment and even identification.

Local Church Leadership Profile

This section features a KUMC local church leadership profile consisting of the descriptions of characteristics of local church leaders that members reported as desirable. It also outlines the role of the senior and associate pastors based on the descriptions of members and pastors. Lastly, this section highlights members' preferences for the senior pastor's leadership style.

Members' Descriptions of Desirable Pastoral Leadership

Pastors' communication practices. Members highlighted the following communication practices as highly important attributes of effective pastoral leadership.

Compassion. Members valued such personality traits as compassion and approachability. The theme of being compassionate was expressed in terms of caring, listening and reaching out. One member explained that compassionate leaders "know how to talk to people that are hurting, how to be sympathetic yet not...condescending" (Interview 2), "they are warm" (Interview 4),

“caring...being 100% there” (Interview 5). Compassion was also expressed in terms of listening skills, such as “when they ask a question they sit there and listen and don’t try to tell you what the answer should be” (Interview 2) or take “the time to just stop and say ‘hello’ rather than rushing by...and just waving, [but] not just making small talk, [being] involved and listen[ing]” (Interview 5).

Compassion was also expressed in terms of reaching out. Members described it as using one’s “own resources or know[ing] how to find other resources to support someone [who] is hurting or in need them” (Interview 2).

Approachability. Approachability was another theme that emerged. Members described their pastors as “very approachable, personal, laid back, thoughtful, [and] open-minded,” (Interview 3) as “very nice people, very down to earth, [easy] to talk to, ... genuinely interested in you” (Interview 4). Although most interviewees described the senior pastor as “approachable” (Interviewees 1, 3 & 4), “very personable [and] low key” (Interviews 3 & 4), some of the more conservative members saw it as “a negative” quality (Interview 5). Those who appreciated casual style and the informal approach tended to be under 50; some of the older members preferred clergy who transmitted a sense of reverence or distinction (Observations, July 2012).

Involvement. Members emphasized the importance of pastoral involvement in the ministries and with members of the congregation. One member praised the executive pastor’s “determination to visit regularly,... to check frequently on those who are hospitalized or homebound or have little contact with others.” She expressed appreciation for this pastor’s dedication to this aspect of ministry saying that “he’s there for everyone, ...he’s in touch with family of every person he has knowledge of ... through the [small] groups and through the hospital list that comes in every day.” With a smile on her face, she recalled when this pastor

visited her in the hospital and offered a “cinnamon roll prayer” in which he prayed as the people who were present formed a cinnamon roll as they were standing in the hospital room. She also commended this pastor’s involvement with and support of the programs facilitated through the health ministries. She said that he regularly visited the health ministry meetings and events “to share a prayer or just to give ... his wishes.” She emphasized his actions’ impact and insisted that “it lifts each member who is there” and draws in the participants who are not members but are moved by the pastor’s presence. She concluded, “[w]hat he does with these health ministries touches [almost] every family” (Interview 5).

These statements emphasized the importance of leader-follower relationships described by Hollander (1993) and Maxwell (1993). Furthermore, they provided additional reasoning for the use of the communication in describing a leadership approach in the church context due to its advantage in building and nurturing relationships.

Openness and humility. Members reported appreciating pastors who encouraged members to grow in exploration of their beliefs by sharing their own faith struggles. The following statement illustrates the point: “[o]ne thing that really struck me, [on the associate pastor’s blog in the process of] discussing the issues of homosexuality ... he really discussed his evolving views on the issue of gays and lesbians in the United Methodist Church... and what struck me about it is the sense that he is human and that he is willing to think about his views” (Interview 3).

The behavior described above exemplified the communication approach to leadership. The pastor cultivated positive relationships with church members through disclosure of personal faith struggles. Members’ appreciation of this pastor’s humility strengthened the relationship between members and the pastor leading to the growth of pastor’s legitimacy. This process

occurred through interaction as the pastor used the communication strategy of disclosure. Thus, the above example provided additional reasoning for using the communication approach by pastors.

The qualities of compassion, approachability, involvement, humility, and openness constituted an important element of a pastoral leadership profile. However, it is not clear whether members saw compassion and approachability as inborn personality traits or as acquired qualities. The former view would be consistent with the qualities approach to leadership, while the later with the functional approach to leadership of Fiedler (1967) and with the situational approach to leadership of Adair (1984).

Effective preaching. All of the interviewees highlighted the importance of effective preaching. Three primary themes emerged in the members' descriptions of desired preaching characteristics: making sermons intellectually substantive, applicable to life, and inspiring action. One member, for example, said that "you could tell that [the Senior Pastor] has studied, he has read...the Bible, [he]...studies for hours, you can tell he puts in hours of preparation, [and] lots of research" (Interview 2). Another member described the exemplary sermons as "very thoughtful,...very well researched,...very rewarding to listen to, [and providing] a new way to think about a topic" (Interview 4). Another member confirmed liking to "learn something every time" (Interview 3). These statements indicated the value of sermons being educational, or intellectually substantive as evident in preparation and presentation of ample factual information.

The second theme, making sermons personal or applicable was described as "relat[ing] the Bible to our lives today" (Interview 2), "to what's happening in the world" (Interview 5). Members also mentioned storytelling (Interview 2). One explained that "to bring [scripture] to the understanding of the congregation [pastors] tell a contemporary story that...parallels

it...to...make it much more personal” (Interview 2). Another member, however, criticized preaching that included “too many personal stories if they didn’t relate directly” (Interview 5). This suggests that personal stories are effective only when the connection to the message is clear and thus should be used with caution.

The third theme, making the sermon inspire action, was repeatedly mentioned in interviews. One member described the current senior pastor as “passionate about asking you to participate as far as your own faith and want[ing] you to be committed to that, [and being able to inspire people] just from the pulpit” (Interview 1). Interviewees suggested that inspirational preaching was an intentional practice at KUMC. The senior pastor admitted, “I preach for transformation, to help move people... to help them see something they have not seen, to help them grow in their discipleship, to ... get them out of their seats” (Interview 7). Similarly, the executive pastor said, in “preaching, I want to engage people...[to fill the] rift between theory and practice” (Interview 8). He used action motivating questions in sermons to reach the “faith response,” to inspire people for action. To illustrate, the executive pastor explained, “every Sunday to me is a little Easter, so my message is to that you are going to die and be resurrected just as Christ was, and what are you doing in between? How are you living out your faith? How are you sacrificing yourself for others?” (Interview 8).

The fact that preaching was emphasized indicated that effectiveness in fulfilling the task of educating the congregation in spiritual matters is considered to be one of the pastors’ primary attributes. The three themes that emerged in members’ descriptions of effective preaching are important for understanding which leadership characteristics are of most value in pastoral leadership. Comparing these with the themes from other congregations is useful in compiling the desired pastoral leadership profile.

Pastors' Roles and Responsibilities

Adjusting to context. In this chapter, the conceptualization of a pastor's role is comprised of the descriptions of the role of the senior and the associate pastors. Due to the large size of this church, some of the roles that would be considered prerogatives of the senior pastor were allocated to associate pastors. The descriptions of the associate pastor's roles and responsibilities that emerged from interviews with members and one of the KUMC's associate pastors are a vital component of the conceptualization of pastoral leadership.

When asked to describe the role of the senior pastor, the current KUMC pastor emphasized the difference between being a senior pastor of a small and a large church. He recalled that at "a church of 100 members, [his] role really was to be the country pastor—to be the nurturer, caregiver, and encourage them and try to meet the new people," performing such duties as planning worship, choosing hymns, greeting everyone by name, visiting all the members who were in the hospital, etc. (Interview 7). However, in a congregation with several thousand members his role of the senior pastor was quite different because other pastors and numerous staff shared these duties. He explained, "In a church of 3000 plus members...most people do not expect me to know them and even remember their name; it's a different kind of role...it is representative...ministry...my role is to model [for the congregation] what they need to be; I can't talk to them about giving if I don't give,...I can't go to every hospital everyday, but I try to model the nature of loving and caring" (Interview 7). He described his role as a senior pastor of KUMC in terms of being the chief administrator, the ceremonial figure, the preacher, and the chief fundraiser.

Chief administrator role. In describing his administrative role, he explained that at KUMC his "primary responsibility is to see that the organizational structure is kept intact, that

the staff is effective” and accountable (Interview 7). As mentioned earlier, in Fiedler’s (1967) theory’s terms, the administrative role of a pastor is structured due to the specificity in the definition of its goals and essential elements.

Ceremonial role. The current senior pastor said: “I am the ceremonial figurehead... I do ribbon cuttings and represent the church” (Interview 7). He explained the importance of this responsibility: “I represent what the UMC is for the state [because] KUMC is extremely [well-known]... it’s been around for more than 50 years, we are one of the few that are more ceremonial and liturgical [churches. Through our television ministry] we are all over the state... some of the first introductions people have to The United Methodist Church is by watching KUMC, [so] I take it seriously” (Interview 7).

From Fiedler’s (1967) perspective, the ceremonial role described here is rather structured because of the specificity of the expectations associated with it. Given the long history and the strong ceremonial role of KUMC and its leadership, the congregation, the community, and the Annual Conference expect certain behaviors and actions to be performed in fulfilling this role.

Preacher role. The current senior pastor emphasized his role as a preacher. He recalled that “when I came here, I was given a list of what they were looking for in the pastor. Preaching was the first one. There has been a tradition here that the pulpit speaks” (Interview 7). The former senior pastor confirmed, “It’s really important that when people come on Sunday that you are well prepared and that you have something to say that is going to make a difference in their lives” (Interview 6).

The current senior pastor said, “Sunday morning is the time of the week when I can get the most people together to hear what they need to hear” (Interview 7). He continued, “My sermons extend beyond Sunday morning pulpit, from my newsletter columns to email blasts [to]

the monthly financial statements sent to the contributors.... There's a lot of communication" (Interview 7).

From the perspective of Fiedler's (1967) theory this task has elements of a structured and an unstructured task. It is structured in having a clear desirable outcome and measures of effectiveness. Effective preaching draws both existing members and new people. Increased attendance during worship serves as a measure of a leader's success in this role. At the same time, this task can be considered unstructured because effective preaching can take many forms, as indicated by members in the three churches.

Chief fundraiser role. The current senior pastor explained his role as a fundraiser: "I am, kind of, the chief mouthpiece for raising money, building buildings, [and] calling the church to [financial] accountability" (Interview 7). He insisted that "the money piece is huge...practically it's a necessity... It's not inexpensive here, ... but we do a lot of mission out of this church, we... need these walls to work within in order to do this" (Interview 7). Members confirmed the importance of the financial resources in the work of KUMC's senior leadership. One of the members recalled that both the former and the current senior pastors "talked about [the importance of giving] from the pulpit and in board meetings; [as well as] made a great effort through the ... newsletter to [highlight items that] were the result of us being able to pay our apportionments [and] tithes" (Interview 2).

From the perspective of Fiedler's (1967) theory, the administrative role of a pastor is rather structured because the goals are clearly defined (getting the amount necessary to fill the financial need or cover a project). However, pastors have some flexibility in terms of the strategies they utilize to accomplish the fundraising goals.

Visionary role. The former senior pastor also pointed to the importance of setting the direction for the future. He explained that the leadership of this church needed to “provide the direction in which worship would move” and how the church would fulfill its mission (Interview 6). For him, setting direction included planning for the “year in advance [by] select[ing] all the scriptures for [his] sermons... [and providing this information to] the worship staff [so that they could] plan... what would happen in these worship services” (Interview 6). It also included working to “create a climate in which people are excited about growing and developing in their faith ...and continuing to develop and refine the mission of the congregation in a way that people understand” (Interview 6).

From Fiedler’s theoretical (1967) perspective this task is fairly structured. It includes two structured elements: a clearly defined desired outcome and measures of effectiveness. The pastor is to set the goal for the congregation to fulfill. The pastor’s effectiveness is measured in terms of whether the congregation fulfills the goal. This task also has an unstructured element; there is no protocol for fulfilling this task. In the UMC, the pastor retains flexibility in terms of what goals he or she sets and how to lead the congregation in accomplishing these goals.

The roles of associate pastors. Given that large churches have multiple clergy, pastoral leadership is also performed by executive and associate pastors. KUMC’s executive pastor defined the roles of the associate and the executive pastor in terms of leadership over an area, support of the senior pastor, preaching, building relationships, and caring for members.

Presiding over a ministry. The executive pastor explained that his role at KUMC “is to preside over all the caring ministries” (Interview 8). He described his responsibilities in finding and training people: “It is my job as the chief equipper to find people who have that gift, to call them forward, and to train them to go into all these areas” of caring ministries (Interview 8).

Fiedler's (1967) perspective suggests that this task is fairly structured because it contains a clearly defined outcome and measures of effectiveness. The outcome is for the pastor to find enough people and train them appropriately. The pastor's effectiveness is measured in terms of whether the ministry is effective because it grows and fulfills its purpose. However, this task is not rigidly structured as the pastor retains much flexibility in terms of the strategies he or she uses to find the people needed and to train them.

Supporting the work of the senior pastor. The executive pastor provided an example of his supporting role in furthering the work of the senior pastor by advancing "the vision [of] where the church is going in the future" (Interview 8). He explained, "The vision starts with the bishop and is communicated on down and then I have to take and communicate that. And the bishop's vision really came from Jesus. The mission of the church is 'to make disciples,' so the bishop takes that and he has a vision for that, and it filters down to the district superintendent, and it filters down to the senior pastor, and when it comes to me, I have to have a vision to communicate that to the people" (Interview 8).

Preaching and teaching. The executive pastor also talked about his role in the pulpit. He noted: "every pastor has an emphasis. When I preach I have to say something about my vision: the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, so I have to say something about that mission [or vision], every time" (Interview 8). Members also thought of preaching as an important part of the work of the associate and executive pastors. One member declared, "It's important to hear them from the pulpit from time to time because it helps us get to know them better to know their beliefs, to see how they relate to the whole congregation as opposed to one on one. [It is only in preaching that] you can see how [the pastor] presents himself to the congregation" (Interview 5).

Members emphasized the importance of the associate pastors' role in nurturing the spiritual growth of the congregation through teaching. One of the members pointed out that KUMC "pastors do get involved in teaching special Bible study series, [for example,] they did a whole [lecture] series about gays and lesbian people in the church, it was a lecture series" (Interview 4). One member expressed appreciation for the associate pastor "present[ing] a strong argument about how we need to move on" (Interview 3). Other members also talked about how their pastors' teachings and storytelling persuaded people in the congregation to explore their own faith (Interviews 1 & 2). As mentioned earlier, preaching and teaching are unstructured tasks as they lack a clear definition of a desired outcome and do not necessitate following a step-by-step protocol.

Building and maintaining relationships. The executive pastor also emphasized the importance of extensive work with people (members, volunteers, and staff). His approach to working with people was one of "get[ting] consensus...to [get] people to be a part of it and to have ownership in it" (Interview 8). He explained, "I have four thousand bosses... and people feel comfortable with me; they come in [to just say,] 'what's going on?'" (Interview 8). Interviews and observations confirmed this statement. Members highlighted the executive pastor's people skills, friendliness, and approachability. One member praised his "ability to relate personally to members especially those who have needs" (Interview 5). She noted that both in sermons and conversations "he is able to relate personal examples or experiences to whatever the situation is" (Interview 5). The executive pastor admitted being "very focused on people and their relationships with other people,...helping people to overlook each other's faults and seeing their needs" (Interview 8).

In Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model relationships are classified as an unstructured task because of the ambiguity imbedded in the definition of this task and its outcome. Effective relationship building can take many forms and lead to outcomes that cannot be easily measured or compared.

Ministering to the congregation. One theme that emerged from the interviews with members was the associate pastors' ministry to the congregation, especially the sick and homebound. One member emphasized "the importance of hospital visitation and being there before a major surgery or any surgery just to offer a prayer" (Interview 5). Members recalled examples of how the pastors of KUMC responded to people's needs through the ministry of their presence and prayer.

This task would be classified by Fiedler (1967) as unstructured because of the ambiguity imbedded in the definition of this task and its outcome. There is no clear definition of how many or what kind of prayers should a pastor offer, how much and how often should he or she visit the members in need, and what constitutes a member in need. Since the fulfillment of this role is open to interpretation it constitutes an unstructured task.

Members emphasized the role of their pastors in facilitating a climate of cohesiveness and unity while addressing conflicts and controversial issues. Recalling past disagreements and conflicts that arose due to the diversity of social and political ideas and beliefs within the congregation, several members mentioned the importance of the work of the pastors in addressing conflicts and promoting reconciliation. The congregation valued pastors' attempts to address controversial issues in sermons (Interviews 3, 4, & 5).

The task of fostering the climate of openness is unstructured as the desired outcome (openness or reconciliation) is difficult to define. Further, fulfillment of this task does not

necessitate following a protocol; many strategies for meeting the illusive goal of the climate of openness exist.

Descriptions of Current Pastor's Leadership Style

Interviewees compared leadership styles of their current senior pastor and his immediate predecessor. Although both leaders claimed to use an unautocratic approach to leadership, the degree of participation that they invited varied. The former senior pastor was described as more participatory, less confrontational. The current senior pastor described himself as “not a micro-manager, want[ing] staff members who know what they are doing... who can grow at it” (Interview 7). He admitted that compared to the former senior pastor his “style is a little more confrontational... I can't let things go...If I feel like it's not being done,...I'm gonna step in and say, 'Look, I know I am not a micromanager but we gotta work on this!’” (Interview 7). He added: “My preference is to trust the staff... and, although I make decisions easily, I like to build consensus...by...inviting people in to hear [my agenda or vision] and buy into [it] (Interview 7). Interviews with members also confirmed that in working with the staff the current senior pastor exercised a more top-down leadership style.

Church Traditions Regarding Leadership Styles

Strong position power tradition. Several members of KUMC mentioned that the leaders of their church were visible or well-known throughout the area. One member recalled that before her first visit she heard much about KUMC's senior pastor. She explained that he was well-known among the Methodists in the state and was respected by many (Interview 1). Another member mentioned that the same pastor was “the institution” and “a legend” (Interview 3). Members described the current pastor and several former senior pastors as visible and well-known leaders (Interview 2).

These statements suggested that, historically, the position power of the senior pastor was strong in this congregation and the KUMC pastors' influence was derived from the legitimacy that the followers granted them based on what they knew about the pastor. In case of two former popular senior pastors, they gained respect of the followers through demonstrating success in previously held leadership positions. These comments supported Hollander's (1993) conceptualization of influence as dependent on followers granting their leaders' legitimacy. These comments seem to relate directly to the pastor's reputation, which is certainly linked to legitimacy. Since Hollander's (1993) conceptualization of legitimacy does not mention reputation, this concept needs to be added to Hollander's theoretical construct.

Authoritarian approach with some participation. According to the situational approach to leadership (Fiedler, 1967), because of the strong position power tradition, KUMC's senior pastors may be expected to use this power and the top-down leadership to fulfill certain highly structured tasks. However, my observations and interviews with members and pastors suggested that the degree to which KUMC pastors relied on their position power varied. The more authoritarian style was exemplified by the current senior pastor's use of his position power to introduce change regarding worship times. However, his approach also included some elements of participation. Even though this was a primarily top-down decision, meaning that it did not arise from the consensus among members and staff, the pastor invested time and effort in encouraging the congregation and staff to support this decision. He met with key stakeholders, explained the reasoning behind the decision, listened to and addressed their concerns, and asked for their support in making the transition (Interview 7). My observations indicated that reliance on position power to make a top-down decision led to effective acceptance of change (worship times and worship practices associated with it). My conversations with staff and volunteers

indicated that most followers (members of staff and volunteers) were willing to adjust to this more directive and regulative approach. Members described the current leadership as “excellent” (Interviewees 3 & 4) and noted that the current senior pastor came to KUMC highly recommended due to his success leading a comparably large church (Interview 2). This statement indicated that the acceptance of the more authoritarian style was likely due to the strong position power of the KUMC senior pastor position. None-the-less, those members and staff whom I interviewed indicated that they disliked authoritarian, top-down leadership and preferred a more participatory approach.

More participatory style preferred. The more participatory approach was exemplified by one of the former senior pastors, who invited the staff to make most decisions “with him.” He reported spending weekly staff meetings discussing ideas with the staff, letting everyone express their opinions and attempting to arrive at consensus before making the decision (Interview 6). This approach included minimal use of the leader’s position power in performing structured tasks (administration). This is contrary to Fiedler’s Contingency Model (1967), which suggested top-down, position power driven approaches. This finding expands Fiedler’s theory to include the contextual dimension; it suggests that even when position power is strong and the task is structured, the use of participatory approach could be effective and preferred by followers.

This approach invited more participation than the approach of the current senior pastor; followers took part in making the decision. Followers shared their opinions in both situations. In the case with changing the worship times, the decision was already made and the concerns of the followers could do little to change that. Their effect was primarily on how that decision was implemented (how their needs were accommodated given the change). In the case with the former senior pastor’s style, the concerns of the followers actually influenced the decision and

sometimes resulted in the decision being different from what he had envisioned. My conversations with some of the staff and volunteers indicated that this approach was not only deemed effective for administrative tasks but also preferred by most staff due to enhanced participation. One volunteer said: “I have really missed him [, his leadership style, and] ...his presence in pulpit” (Interview 5); others confirmed this sentiment.

Positive leader-follower relationships desired. The fact that members missed their pastor suggested that this leader had strong, positive relationships with his followers and thus supported the importance of leader-follower relationships described by Hollander (1993) and Maxwell (1993). From the perspective of Fiedler’s (1967) contingency model, in performing highly unstructured tasks, leaders who have strong positive relationships with the followers are most effective when relying on their personal relationships. Further, since unstructured tasks are vague and open to interpretation, they invite elements of participation rather than top-down direction. While participatory leadership is appropriate in such situations, a communication approach to leadership has additional benefits. The communication approach not only invites participation but also helps strengthen the positive relations with followers. This approach emphasizes the quality and quantity of interaction, which is essential in building and nurturing relationships.

Lay participation in leadership desired. The value of communication approach to leadership was confirmed by members’ expression of appreciation for their pastors’ ability to nurture lay leadership. For example, one member praised the pastors who “try to cultivate the leadership of the lay people,...do not try to tell the lay people how to do it...but ... be there to assist them” (Interview 2). He reasoned, “the lay people are [going to] be there much longer than the senior pastor or the associate pastor” (Interview 2), thus an effective pastor can build

sustainable future for the church by developing lay leadership. These statements not only indicated members' appreciation for the leadership cultivating lay responsibility but also provided reasoning for using a communication approach. The statement below emphasized the importance of interaction between the pastor and the followers as ways to teach and encourage. The pastor "would acknowledge you [and] what you are doing in a positive way,...in working with staff... he encouraged them [so] that they knew that he was giving [them] approval. [He met with the staff] weekly...and ... he listened, and they had a feeling that they are being heard" (Interview 5). This statement emphasized communication as it stressed listening and continuously providing instructive and positive feedback.

One of the reasons members and staff of KUMC accepted the more authoritarian approach of the current senior pastor is that he also invested time and effort in building relationships with followers. When he met with staff and lay leaders, he allowed them to express their opinions and listened to their concerns. Although he did not invite them to participate in decision-making quite as much as the former pastor, he took time to address the emerging concerns and to explain the reasoning behind those decisions that he made unilaterally. It was due to his efforts to communicate with the followers that he was described as an effective leader and a "very thoughtful,...good" person (Interviews 3 & 4). This pastor's commitment to communication with followers is likely the reason for his success in the congregation that preferred a more participatory style of leadership.

Chapter Summary

This section features the organizational culture profile of this congregation, which showed that the religious and political demographics of this congregation reflected a few of the demographics of the area, but the racial-ethnic and educational levels were noticeably different from those of the regional area. The socio-economic demographics of the church also contrasted with the working class characteristics of the regional area. The financial ability of this large church was a strong congregational value because money was seen as means of doing mission and supporting church programs.

The key elements of culture of this church were the congregational values of religiosity, social progressiveness, intellectualism and racial/ethnic homogeneity, the norm of large financial contributions, identification with the higher socio-economic class, and commitments to the denominational principle of openness, the UMC mission and the Four Areas of Focus. Since this congregation has several capable leaders and significant human and financial resources, they were also able to fulfill the mission and the Four Areas of Focus of the national church in ways that are not possible for the other churches in this study.

Members' conceptualizations of leadership were rooted in the congregational values of intellectualism and social progressiveness and the tradition of participatory leadership. Members of this church preferred participatory style of leadership but accepted a more authoritarian approach of their senior pastor because of the ample communication in his approach.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the findings of this study from the interviews and observations that I presented in the previous three chapters according to the research questions I posed at the beginning of the study. Additionally, I discuss the theoretical implications of my organizational analysis of three United Methodist Churches in three different regions of the U.S. This chapter concludes with specific contributions to methodology and the UMC as a complex organization, implications for future research and limitations of this study.

Research Questions and Findings

This study posed the following research questions:

RQ 1: What values define the culture of the local church in light of the characteristics of its regional area?

RQ 2: How does the local church (congregation and pastors) understand the role of senior or lead pastors?

RQ 3: How is the mission expressed at the local church level different from the mission established by the national level leadership?

RQ 4: How do organizational values, norms, assumptions and contextual (regional community) characteristics affect the fulfillment of the church mission, organizational processes, practices, pastoral leadership in local churches, and congregational identity?

Organizational Culture and Values

In response to RQ 1 regarding organizational culture of local churches, my analysis revealed several key values that defined each congregation.

VUMC. The Organizational Value Systems (OVS) that defined the culture VUMC included: liberalism, intellectualism, secularism, distinction from other churches, caring, and racial diversity. Liberalism was comprised of the values of political, social, and theological liberalism accompanied by a strong value on intellectualism or educational achievement. All of these values were strongly rooted in the political and social liberalism of the regional area in which this congregation is located. The participants from this entire congregation embraced the values of liberalism and intellectualism.

The congregation was divided in regard to some other values. Secularism, although strong, was in tension with a weak value of spiritual growth. This weak value was promoted by the senior pastor and supported by some of the members, who emphasized the importance of the spiritual element of their church experience. The value of caring was strong; however, the congregation disagreed regarding how to enact this value. The majority of the congregation emphasized the importance of locally focused caring (caring for members and the immediate community). However, some interview participants from VUMC indicated that caring should have an outward focus. The weak values comprising the outward focus included social justice, racial and ethnic diversity, and global awareness. These values coexisted along the mainstream congregational value of locally focused caring: attending to the needs of church members and inviting to church primarily family and friends rather than intentionally seeking out people of ethnically, racially, culturally, socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. Locally focused caring sustained and perpetuated the racial-ethnic homogeneity of this church organization. This

emphasis on the value of caring for the members and reaching out to the familiar people was rooted in the regional churches' tendency to work contextually with individuals in the region rather than to spend time connecting to the foci of the larger denomination, which include an outward emphasis and global awareness. The value of working contextually, making a mark in local community, conflicted with a weak value of denominational identification that some members expressed. This emergent value gained strength because VUMC was open to interests of congregational members and willing to widen the scope of its care to include a more global, outward focus while continuing the inward focus (caring for members, their families, and friends).

MUMC. MUMC held very different values than VUMC. The prevalent characteristics of the culture of MUMC included: the assumption of economic scarcity, the norm of prudence in giving, the OVSs of conservatism and religiosity, and the values of church growth, and increasing member commitment. The assumption of economic scarcity and prudence in giving were rooted in the economic characteristics of the regional area and influenced by the difficulties that this congregation encountered because of an ill-financed building project. The OVS of this congregation consisted of the values of political conservatism, traditional family norms, conservatism toward women in leadership, and conservatism toward members' sexual orientation. These values associated with the social conservatism of the people in this regional area. Although these values were not shared by the entire congregation, and thus according to Wiener (1988) were classified as weak, their impact on the culture of the church was significant. The OVS of religiousness included such strong values as praying, focusing on the Bible, interpreting the Bible literally, and growing spiritually through Sunday school and Bible studies. Although some participants expressed concern with decreasing attendance and the lack of young

members, the congregation did little to change this situation and instead focused on retaining its homogenous population primarily composed of elderly members. This became the defining characteristic of the congregation, and MUMC emphasized caring for its elderly members and did not intentionally reach out to ethnically diverse populations, younger people, or to those with socially liberal views.

KUMC. The third congregation of KUMC had a culture that differed in significant ways from VUMC and MUMC. The defining values of KUMC's culture were affluence, intellectualism and education, liberal and conservative political astuteness, the OVS of openness, and religiosity. The value placed on affluence was very strong, and it reinforced KUMC's members' identification with high socioeconomic class, a value that contrasted with that held by many people in this regional area. Related to this value was the norm of generous financial contributions resulting from the affluence of numerous members and from a pervasive viewpoint or assumption of members and leaders that their financial contributions facilitated the mission of the United Methodist Church and its programs. The value of intellectualism was also very strong. It emerged from the majority members' high levels of education, which contrasted with the educational attainment of others in this regional area. Similarly, the value of political knowledge and involvement was unique to KUMC as was the number of members who were prominent political figures in this community. For this reason, KUMC members held conflicting values; some embraced political and social liberalism and others voiced political and social conservatism. While these values were in constant tension, neither one of them dominated because both were represented by large and powerful subcultures that agreed to coexist within this religious organization. Rather than leading to factions or unmanageable conflict, these disparate values led to the development of the OVS of openness, which promoted the respectful

treatment of opposing perspectives, social progressiveness, and welcoming visitors. Another very strong value was religiosity, a value that did reflect a commonality with people in this regional area. The culture of this church included ethnic homogeneity, which contrasted with the demographics of this regional area. Related to this characteristic was KUMC's value of racial ethnic diversity and the leaders' and members' viewpoint that racial/ethnic homogeneity in churches was normal and acceptable. This viewpoint as voiced by interviewees is surprising since KUMC lacked racial diversity in its members and leadership. They seemed to embrace the position of the national United Methodist leadership but did not act to make their congregation diverse.

Church Mission

RQ 2 asks: How is the mission expressed at the local church level different from the mission established by the national level leadership? My interview data from the three UMC churches suggested differing answers to this question. Although the pastors of all three churches understood the UMC's denominational mission, congregational members differed in their ability to name the mission and how their local congregation should approach or incorporate that mission into the mission of their local church. The UMC's mission is described in terms of four areas of focus: (1) "developing Christian leaders for the world; (2) creating new places for people by starting new congregations and renewing old ones; (3) engaging in ministry with the poor, and (4) stamping out killer diseases by improving health policy." These foci are specific goals that the United Methodist Church disseminates as the mission of the denomination. These foci were abstract ideas for the members of two of the three churches but were known to the pastors and often reframed so they could be addressed by the local church in smaller ways that

would also serve the general mission of the church, which is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (*Book of Discipline, 2012*).

The Four Areas of Focus, the National and the Local Mission

Responses of VUMC’s members and pastors. The senior pastor of VUMC said that the four UMC foci were not emphasized by the bishop and the leadership of this Annual Conference and that she was not asked to promote them to the congregation. Instead, she promoted the denomination’s mission, which was emphasized by the Annual Conference. This allowed the pastor to implement the UMC vision in the way that she viewed it as fitting with her congregation. Although this senior pastor believed that the lay leaders of her church were aware of this mission, only one of my interviewees named one of the foci correctly or seemed to understand how this mission could be implemented by the congregation to which they belonged.

Instead of following the guidance of the denomination in terms of the specific foci of implementing the mission, this congregation took the initiative in creating its own particular vision, which was generated through an inclusive lay-led process and resulted in the congregation’s reframing and indirect commitment to the UMC vision. Most of the members were able to name this vision, which was short and included three main areas of emphasis. At the time of my interviews VUMC was in the process of envisioning how this congregation was to fulfill the pillars of their congregation’s vision. Those I interviewed emphasized five parts of the visions rather than three: focus on social justice, incorporating more diversity (racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic), expanding mission or outreach beyond the local community, providing more spiritual education for adults, and learning about the United Methodist denomination.

Responses of MUMC’s members and pastors. The senior pastor of this church was the only pastor who named all four areas of foci of the UMC. He admitted that he had not promoted

them in this congregation, because he believed that these foci should be addressed at the conference level rather than the local church. In regard to the mission of the UMC, the staff and most members I interviewed named the general mission statement established at the national level, “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (*Book of Discipline*, 2012). Thus, members of this congregation were better informed regarding the nationally established religious mission of the UMC than the two other congregations were.

Moreover, members and leaders of this church claimed that fulfilling this mission was a priority. Members not only described the importance of focusing on “making disciples,” but also criticized their church leadership for not doing enough to advance this general mission. This suggested that the congregation accepted the values of the denominational mission and thought their church should help fulfill this mission but did not really know how they could do this or envision themselves actively involved in addressing the mission.

Interestingly, most members talked about the mission of “making disciples for the transformation of the world” as MUMC’s mission, not the denominational mission. The pastors of MUMC mentioned that their church had its own vision but could not name it verbatim. This suggests that advancing the local church vision was not among the top priorities of the leadership, and instead the priorities of this congregation were closely tied to the mission of “making disciples for the transformation of the world” by specific forms of preaching and providing programs in their own congregation.

In describing how MUMC fulfilled the general mission, the pastors mentioned that they welcomed visitors and engaged them in small groups, provided Sunday school and Bible study opportunities to facilitate spiritual growth, built strong programs and ministries to attract visitors and retain members, and encouraged church-wide involvement in supporting the mission.

Members acknowledged the importance of the priorities that the pastors mentioned. However, they emphasized additional priorities, which they believed needed to be strengthened. These priorities included global and local mission trips, community outreach, and caring for the poor. These findings show that this congregation understood the general mission of the UMC, but that they also constructed practical means at the local church level for implementing this mission that they believed were appropriate and doable for their congregation.

Responses of KUMC's members and pastors. The pastors of KUMC that I interviewed were unable to recall all four areas of UMC's focus from memory. The senior pastor explained his strategy of incorporating the denominational foci into congregational activities and identity rather than getting members to memorize the terminology. KUMC approached the church mission in the same way the senior pastor said he wanted them to approach it.

My observations and interviews with members confirmed these statements. Although, none of the members were able to name the mission of the United Methodist Church, the congregational members noted that their congregation fulfilled the general mission of "making disciples for the transformation of the world" through its programs and ministries. In fact, KUMC was the only congregation in my study that addressed both the national mission and indirectly addressed the four foci that the national leadership promoted for the denomination.

This congregation fulfilled the first area of the first focus, "developing Christian leaders for the church and the world" by developing numerous, strong, and devoted lay leaders. KUMC incorporated the second focus of "creating new places for new people by starting new and renewing existing congregations;" they included plans for starting a satellite congregation and/or partnering with a church that lacked resources and addressed a different demographic group. KUMC responded to the third focus of "engaging in ministry with the poor," through large

financial contributions and member involvement in international and local mission trips and outreach projects. However, the leadership proposed to advance this goal further by increasing the number of members involved in “hands-on” mission and by persuading those who were already involved in mission to take on new, “hands-on” projects. KUMC addressed the fourth area of focus of “stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally” through its commitment to provide substantial financial support for denominational mission projects that focused on improving health. In addition, KUMC members organized and led annual medical mission trips to South America to help address health problems there.

Thus, the priorities of this congregation were closely tied to the UMC’s church wide mission and the four foci, which indicate that members and leaders acted upon the values imbedded in the mission and foci. This suggests that members identified with the mission and the four foci; however, member identification was implicit because they did not name this mission and the foci or talk about them as the goals of the national organization but as service projects. KUMC’s focus on mission work and its attempt to provide numerous programs that serve the congregation and the community was exemplified by members saying that the church had numerous (Interviews 1 & 2) and “almost too many” (Interviews 3 & 4) mission and service opportunities. Several aspects of members’ descriptions of the priorities of their church demonstrated the fulfillment of the personal change outcome. It seems that KUMC’s ability to fulfill these foci was chiefly determined by the financial and human resources that this congregation had. Since these resources were not as readily available to the other two churches I studied, it is not surprising that they did not address the four areas of foci.

Senior Pastor Leadership Profile

In response to RQ 3 about church leadership, my analysis of interview data and church documents indicated that each church offered a definition of pastoral leadership that consisted of the description of the role of the pastor, the desired characteristics of the pastor, and the preferred leadership style.

Leadership Role of a Senior Pastor

The pastor and members of VUMC described the role of the senior pastor in terms of these responsibilities: worship, spiritual leadership, pastoral care, and administration. Worship leadership referred to the pastor's responsibility for sermons, sacraments, hymns, and prayers. The role of spiritual leadership was defined in terms of preaching, teaching, and praying.

At MUMC, the definition of pastoral role included preaching, teaching, administering sacraments, and overseeing the church (administration). KUMC's members and pastors defined pastoral role in terms of senior and associate pastor roles. Senior pastor responsibilities included administration of the church, ceremonies and sacraments, preaching, fundraising, and visioning. Associate pastor responsibilities included preaching and teaching, relationships, ministering to the congregation (caring for the sick and homebound), and fostering a climate of openness (effectively addressing conflicts and controversial issues).

The leadership responsibilities that surfaced in interviews conducted at VUMC, MUMC, and KUMC helped to identify what types of tasks comprise the work of a senior pastor. This information is essential for understanding the dynamics of leadership at the local church level. The religious/spiritual roles of the pastors are similar in each of the congregations, but these roles

are enacted differently because of the size, location, and culture of the congregation as well and the demographics and values of congregational members.

Leadership Characteristics of a Senior Pastor

Church members' definitions of desired leadership characteristics varied slightly. Members of VUMC valued such practices as caring, encouraging, inspiring, and planning or organizing. Members highlighted the communicative practices associated with the first three practices. They operationalized care communicatively in terms of relationship building; and encouragement in terms of open, supportive, and reassuring statements. They noted that the quality of inspiring was communicated through open expression of one's own ideas (perhaps marginal) and by challenging members to look beyond themselves.

Members of MUMC listed the following communication practices as desirable: effective communication or listening, caring, openness, and involvement. They defined caring as expression of authentic concern for and attentiveness to the needs of the congregation. Openness was described as being approachable and expressing concern for members. Participants said that leaders expressed involvement by encouraging members to share ideas and participate in activities and programs of the church.

Members of KUMC valued communication when it was enacted by qualities of being caring, approachable, involved, open or humble, and effective as a preacher. Participants said they understood caring in terms of such pastoral traits as compassion and approachability. Members described compassion communicatively in terms of listening and behaviorally in terms of reaching out in acts of kindness. Most members valued approachability; however, some disliked senior pastors whose communication was too "casual" and "informal." Interview participants described pastors' participation as attention to various ministries of the church.

Members described openness and humility as the disclosure of a leader's personal faith struggles, and they defined effective preaching as making sermons that are intellectually substantive, applicable to life, and inspiring action.

Members of all three churches mentioned caring, involvement (encouraging), openness (inspiration), and effective communication or preaching. These outcomes of effective communication are qualities that seem to be appreciated by members and thus are part of a profile of a successful and well-liked pastor. Most of the qualities mentioned at VUMC, MUMC, and KUMC were communication related practices that suggested effective interpersonal and public communication as necessary skills for pastors leading congregations.

Preferred Leadership Style of a Senior Pastor

Members of VUMC expressed dislike of authoritarian leadership but had appreciation for participatory approaches to church leadership. Interviewees described the desired style of senior leadership in terms of knowing the established congregational traditions, seeking members' input, expressing sensitivity to strong preferences and norms, and sharing one's own opinions while promoting the climate of openness.

Members of MUMC preferred a modified top-down leadership style by describing the desired style of senior leadership in terms of limited congregational involvement. Participants concluded they preferred top-down directives from the senior pastor and wanted the ministries to be run by staff rather than members of the congregation. Members also expressed preference for a direct and even assertive conflict management style rather than one that is indirect and passive.

KUMC's members and staff preferred a participatory leadership style that allowed for congregational participation in leadership. However, some participants said that they accepted authoritarian approaches that invited limited lay and staff participation in leadership if they were

characterized by effective communication using multiple channels between the senior leader and followers. Members and staff seemed to appreciate leaders' openness to explain their decisions to them even if they were made without the input of the followers. Thus, participants concluded that effective and open communication practices fostered positive leader and follower relationships that permitted this congregation to accept a less desirable style of top-down leadership approach.

Organizational Culture Influences

RQ 4 asks: How do organizational values, norms, assumptions, and contextual (regional community) characteristics affect the fulfillment of the church mission, organizational processes, practices, pastoral leadership in local churches, and congregational identity? The participants in the three churches suggested differing interpretations.

Influences on Mission

The fulfillment of the denominational mission and its four foci and the local church vision were affected by pastors' understandings of their roles in promoting the mission to the congregation and partially shaped by their interactions with the documents provided by their Annual Conferences and bishops. The pastor of VUMC saw the written and oral reports from her Annual Conference as emphasizing the denominational mission but leaving out the four foci. Thus she promoted the UMC mission rather than the four foci. The pastor of MUMC noted that some of four foci were not intended to be implemented by local churches, thus he did not emphasize them. Instead, he focused on developing members' identification with the denominational mission. The pastor of KUMC said he was responsible for introducing the mission and the four foci to his congregation. However, he emphasized meeting the underlying

objectives of the mission and its foci rather than teaching members about this mission. Therefore, he said that he encouraged his congregation to internalize the values of the mission and the foci and thus identify with them.

The fulfillment of the mission and/or four foci were also affected by organizational values and norms. For example, despite the pastor's efforts to introduce the national mission, members of VUMC preferred creating their own vision and choosing how to implement it. This congregation's viewpoint that they are different from other churches was likely responsible for members lack of interest in fulfilling the denominational mission and their desire to create a uniquely VUMC vision and priorities. The vision of this church was also influenced by the OVS of liberalism. The theme of questioning the traditional interpretation of the Bible and questioning the dominant societal structures and political ideas was a prevalent theme in the interview data that I gathered at VUMC's about the vision. Even weak organizational values, such as global focus and racial and ethnic diversity, affected the foci of this church's vision. Members said they wanted to fulfill their church's vision by focusing on social justice issues and increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the church.

At MUMC, such strong values as church growth and increasing member commitment, affected how the leadership envisioned the fulfillment of the denominational mission. Participants from this congregation envisioned "making disciples" in terms of these values. Thus they focused on educating potential new members about the church through new member classes, encouraging them and existing members to commit to attending a Bible study, and/or a Sunday school class. Further, MUMC tried to fulfill the mission by providing Bible studies, Sunday school, and religious education opportunities as part of the value of religiosity, which was an equally strong value in this congregation.

At KUMC, the value of religiosity shaped members' and pastors' understanding of the mission and its fulfillment. For example, a member drew on the Bible when she stated the denominational mission in her own words as "go into the world and preach the gospel, it's just biblical" (Interview 5). An example of a pastor relying on the Bible to define how the mission is to be fulfilled appeared in this statement: "it means feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison" (Interview 7). Examples of organizational culture affecting this congregations' interpretation of the four foci included the value of affluence, the norm of generous contributions, and the value of intellectualism. For example, these church participants showed their commitment to furthering the bishops' efforts in eradicating malaria in the world by making a substantial financial contribution to this cause. At the same time, knowing that generous donations were a norm in this affluent congregation, the leadership of this church challenged its members to step out of their comfort zone and commit to "hands on mission" rather than assuming the familiar, more passive role of providing financial support. The influence of KUMC's educational value surfaced in KUMC fulfilling the first focus of developing Christian leaders. KUMC enacted this goal by focusing on identifying potential leaders among members and training them to assume leadership roles in this congregation.

Influences on Organizational Processes

The effects of church culture on organizational processes appeared in my data when interview participants noted the influences of congregational values, assumptions, and norms. Examples of organizational processes most affected by the culture of the organization were programs, practices, rituals, and priorities. While all of the values influenced organizational processes, the influences of the liberalism/conservatism, religiosity/secularism, and

affluence/scarcity values, assumptions, and norms were the most salient to the participants in my study.

Liberalism-conservatism. The OVS of liberalism affected this congregation's enactment of the climate of openness. This church defined openness as acceptance of various interpretations of the Bible, questioning of traditional theology, challenging of established norms and values, and acknowledging the need to reach out to all people including those who were drastically different. These conceptualizations of openness appeared in the practices and priorities of this church.

At MUMC, the OVSs of conservatism helped to determine what kind of programs the church offered, limited organizations and ministries that this church partnered with and supported, decided which groups within the church and in the community this church ministered to, and affected this church's practice of welcoming. Due to its conservatism most of the members were not open to welcoming people whose behavior or choices they disapproved of including gay and lesbian visitors, transgendered individuals, unmarried couples who lived together, people with criminal records, and drug or alcohol addictions, etc. Because of the prevalent view among some members of MUMC of these people as "Others," many in the congregation did not want to engage with them.

KUMC appeared to have both liberal and conservative subcultures that influenced the OVS of openness. The climate of openness, in this church, was enacted through the practices of respectful treatment of opposing perspectives and welcoming everyone who came to KUMC. In addition, this congregation allowed conflicting viewpoints and identifications to coexist and even instituted a practice of avoiding discussions of sensitive political ideas and controversial issues in

Sunday school, Bible studies, and social gatherings. The resulting climate of openness based on toleration of diverse perspectives promoted church growth by attracting visitors who identified with the UMC value of openness. Emphasizing commonality rather than difference allowed this congregation to transcend both conservative and liberal political and social views by concentrating on common religious values.

Secularism-religiosity. Church programs and practices seemed to be affected by how secular or religious the congregational culture was. At VUMC, the secularism typical to the geographical region and the resulting value of socialization shaped such church rituals as the “coffee time,” “the joys and concerns,” and the after worship visiting with the pastor. Several small groups and church events had a social rather than religious purpose.

In contrast, the cultures of MUMC and KUMC were situated in more religious regions of the country, and so it is not surprising that participants stressed the value of religiosity. At MUMC, the OVS of religiosity strongly affected how this congregation enacted rituals, attracted new members, increased member commitment, and how members conceptualized their roles. For example, the ritual of prayer was incorporated into the work of several committees and interview participants viewed this as central to the caring ministry of their congregation. Similarly, this congregation emphasized the role of Bible studies and Sunday school as a means for increasing member commitment and assimilating new members. The congregation envisioned their religious roles in terms of regularly attending a Bible study or/and Sunday school.

Similarly, the congregation of KUMC defined the member/regular visitor roles as attending Sunday school weekly. The congregation’s small groups for youth and adults were religious rather than social. The participants valued religiosity and made it the core of its

programs and ministries for all ages. Children's and youth² programs focused on spiritual education and strongly emphasized participation in religious practices such as weekly worship and Sunday school.

Affluence-scarcity. Central to the organizational culture of VUMC and KUMC was high social-economic class. The affluence of these churches was evident in how much financial support the members provided to the programs of the church, to the national denomination's shared ministries or apportionments, to local ministries and outreach. Economic affluence was a demographic trait value in both of these churches, and pastors encouraged members to contribute generously and finance and support the church in order to make a positive impact on others. Members' internalization of this assumption affected how much they contributed to this church, how many big mission and service projects they undertook, and how many costly building projects they completed. At VUMC, most members acknowledged the affluence of the congregation and took pride in the financial contributions that their church made to the UMC and to local outreach. The value of affluence shaped how members of VUMC talked about church giving and they celebrated high levels of financial contributions. In contrast with this value, however, was a view of a few participants that the source of VUMC's high levels of giving was affluence not generosity. Those who did not support the value of affluence encouraged a spiritual interpretation of giving and thereby challenged this organization's cultural norms. Such divided viewpoints about affluence (money and how to use it) shaped the discourse about money and affected the content of this church's fundraising messages by trying to reframe these messages in spiritual terms.

In contrast to these churches' values of affluence and norms of large contributions were the reality of economic scarcity and the norm of prudent giving that characterized the culture of

MUMC. These cultural aspects influenced the financial state of the church, including how much support and resources church programs and ministries had, how many outreach initiatives the church could undertake, and whether it could afford to have adequate staff. These economic realities and norms of prudent giving also affected how the budget was distributed, reduced this church's levels of giving toward shared ministries of apportionments, and limited outreach to select organizations and groups that members were willing to contribute to. Moreover, the economic characteristics of this church's culture of giving transformed MUMC's discourse. The negativity and frustration in members' discourse about this subject according to some participants adversely affected church attendance and growth as well as their identification and commitment to the congregation.

Influences on Conceptualizations and Enactment of Leadership

Liberalism-conservatism. At VUMC, the OVS of social and theological liberalism affected preaching, which often called for liberal and metaphorical interpretations of the Bible. It shaped pastor's choices of curriculum for the seasonal and ongoing studies. It also influenced the pastor's decisions of whom to invite as guest speakers and what topics to highlight in sermons, in written congregational addresses, and at special events.

At MUMC, the OVS of conservatism influenced what topics the senior pastor avoided in sermons and discussions, how he addressed conflicts, and what identification and persuasion strategies he could use when addressing the congregation. In addition, the OVS of conservatism contributed to members' desire for a more top-down leadership style. Members resisted the attempts of the current senior pastor to introduce participatory leadership. They expressed desire for more involvement from the staff and a more directive approach from the senior pastor.

Members wanted to be involved but “to be at the end” and have less responsibility (Interview 5). They conceptualized the roles of paid staff in terms of giving directives, that is, exercising top-down leadership. Since some participants challenged conservatism by opposing some subcultural values, the congregation became divided in terms of valuing authoritarian vs. valuing participatory leadership. The staff that I interviewed expressed appreciation for the participatory leadership style of the current senior pastor and some members noted that lay leaders were beginning to accept more responsibility and thus participate in leadership.

At KUMC, the liberal and conservative subculture factions persuaded the senior pastor to address with care or even avoid political topics and social issues in preaching, teaching, and writing to the congregation. Similarly, the needs of the two subcultures shaped the hiring practices in this church. KUMC had members on staff of different age, gender, race, sexual orientation, and religious identification. The former senior pastor explained that he instituted this practice to increase representation of different perspectives and thus balance the conservative and liberal subcultures. The leadership in this congregation learned to avoid certain issues in order to preserve the common religious mission of the congregation and to take an ambiguous position in regard to controversial issues.

Religiosity-Secularism. As a result of the secularism and social values that adhere in the regional area and are part of the culture of VUMC, most members of this congregation did not consider attending weekly Sunday school and/or a Bible study an essential part of their church experience. As a result, the work of the pastor of this church did not include organizing as many Bible studies and adult education programs as the work of the pastors of MUMC and KUMC where members considered it essential for pastors to teach several Bible studies and multiple religious education programs. Similarly, when instituting new spiritual and religious education

programs or practices, the pastor of VUMC promoted the subcultural value of spiritual growth rather than denominational commitment because these were the values of this congregation rather than other congregations that valued the OVS of religiousness and associated it with Methodist tradition.

At MUMC, the OVS of religiousness influenced the congregation's conceptualizations of leadership. Members defined the role of the pastor in terms of religious duties: preaching, teaching spiritual education, administering sacraments, and performing religious rituals. Further, since members valued the Bible, they responded positively to biblical examples, and the senior pastor relied on the Bible in preaching; as a result members viewed him as an effective preacher.

Since the culture of KUMC was also defined by religiosity, members described the pastor's teaching responsibility in terms of nurturing the spiritual growth of the congregation. As a result the senior and the associate pastors focused much of their time on nurturing the spiritual development of KUMC's members. Additionally, because the culture of this congregation was influenced by the religious values in the Bible belt region of the country, members defined effective preaching as demonstrating the knowledge of the Bible. It is not surprising then that KUMC's pastors "preached from the Bible" and treated it as a sacred and divinely inspired text and aligned the content of their preaching with the values of the congregation.

Intellectualism or education (as a weak or strong value). The value of intellectualism and/or education was strong at VUMC and KUMC and affected members' preferences of pastoral leadership style. Members of VUMC valued pastors who inspired and challenged them, which reflects the value of intellectualism. They also considered the participatory approach to leadership most appropriate for their congregation. Members appreciated the current senior pastor's efforts to invite their congregational participation in the church leadership by seeking

their input and considering strong preferences and norms before introducing change. Likewise, members of KUMC preferred participatory style of pastoral leadership, and they also showed a desire for more lay involvement in leadership.

At MUMC, the value of intellectualism was weak. Members of this church preferred a more authoritarian leadership style and desired more directives from the senior pastor. They wanted to be involved but have less responsibility. These preferences are consistent with the Contingency Model of Leadership that links followers' high levels of education to their ability and desire to participate in leadership and low levels of education and knowledge to less desire for leadership (Fiedler, 1967).

Contextual Considerations. The size and the resources of the church also affected the enactment and conceptualization of leadership in churches. For example, VUMC had one pastor who performed the role of senior pastor but was called a lead pastor. Thus, members conceptualized pastoral leadership in terms of the work of one pastor of a small church (compared to MUMC and KUMC). MUMC was larger but did not have an associate pastor position due to financial reasons. The conceptualization of pastoral role in this church was represented by the descriptions of the senior pastor (offered by the pastor, the staff, and the members).

The largest of the three churches I studied was KUMC. This congregation had a senior and several associate and executive pastors. The current pastor of KUMC emphasized the difference between being a senior pastor of a small and a large church. He recalled that at “a church of 100 members, [his] role really was to be the country pastor - to be the nurturer, caregiver, and encourage them, and try to meet the new people,” (Interview 7). However, in a congregation with several thousand members his role of the senior pastor was quite different

because other pastors and numerous staff shared these duties. He explained, “in a church of 3000 plus members, it is representative...ministry...my role is to model [for the congregation] what they need to be; I can’t talk to them about giving if I don’t give,...I can’t go to every hospital everyday, but I try to model the nature of loving and caring” (Interviewee 7). He described his role as a senior pastor of KUMC in terms of being the chief administrator, the ceremonial figure, the preacher, and the chief fundraiser. These contextual considerations are important for understanding how leadership is conceptualized and enacted in different local churches.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study pertain to the research on organizational values, organizational identification, and leadership.

Organizational Values Research

The findings of this study complicate scholars’ understanding of organizational values. Wiener (1988) approached organizational culture through studying values, focusing on uncovering organizational value systems to identify pertinent culture of the organization. He defined an organizational value system (OVS) as shared values of organizational members. Wiener (1988) measured the strength of an OVS through such dimensions as intensity and breadth and classified value systems as strong and weak. In Wiener’s (1988) classification strong value systems referred to those in which key values were broadly and intensely shared by members and weak value systems to those in which key values were either shared by few members and/or not highly adhered to.

My use of Wiener’s (1988) theory in this study led to the following conclusions about this theory and how it can be used with church organizations. First, the strong/weak classification

of the OVSs is limited because it does not take into account how much the OVS influences organizational processes and outcomes and thus, in turn defines the culture of the organization. The definition of an OVS as strong implies that the OVS strongly affects organizational culture and processes. Likewise, Wiener classifies value systems as weak because their influence on the organizational culture and processes is also weak. However, my study demonstrated that a weak OVS can significantly influence organizational processes and thus define the culture of the organization as much or even more than a strong OVS can. For example, at MUMC the OVS of conservatism consisted of values that were not shared by the entire congregation. Thus, from Wiener's (1988) perspective this OVS would be classified as weak. However in my study, the OVS of conservatism was a defining element of this organization's culture because it shaped multiple organizational processes, including the practice of welcoming; pastor's choices of topics to address in preaching, teaching, and interactions with members; members' choices of what topics to avoid in Sunday school and small group gatherings; members' conceptualization of effectiveness in conflict management; and members' desire for a more top-down leadership style.

Wiener's (1988) classification of OVSs as either strong or weak does not account for the intricacies of the culture of the three United Methodist congregations that I studied. To address this limitation, I propose adding the dimension of influence to Wiener's (1988) dimensions of intensity and breadth. The influence of the value system would be determined by whether it has significant influence on one or more organizational processes. This new dimension would include such categories as very strong, strong, and weak. Very strong OVSs would incorporate three dimensions: breadth, intensity, and influence. Strong OVSs would be defined as influential and either broadly or intensely shared; weak—as either broadly or intensely shared but not

influencing other processes. The expanded classification provides a category for such OVSs as the MUMC's conservatism, which was not broadly shared but highly adhered to and thus affected organizational processes.

Second, while Wiener's (1988) classification applies to OVSs, I advocate using the same principle to classify other characteristics of culture such as values, assumptions, and norms. In this study I applied the dimensions of breadth, intensity, and influence to classify values as very strong, strong, and weak. For example, at MUMC church growth and increasing member commitment were very strong values that were broadly and intensely shared and affected multiple organizational processes. They shaped this congregation's understanding and enactment of church mission, making this congregation view the mission of the denomination as means of facilitating church growth and building member commitment. These values also became the foci of church programs. In addition members internalized these values to such an extent that they viewed the decisions of their leaders in light of church growth and increasing member commitment.

Examples of strong norms are MUMC members' prudent giving and KUMC members' large contributions. I argue that both of these norms can be classified as strong because of their intensity and influence. At MUMC, the prudence of some of the members was quite apparent to both the congregation and the leadership. Similarly, at KUMC some of the wealthy members made such significantly sized contributions that they asked to remain anonymous to avoid the consequent publicity. This indicates that these norms were intensely shared in the two congregations. These norms' influence was indicated by how much they affected organizational processes. MUMC's norm of prudent giving affected attendance, church growth, this church's financial state and its ability to contribute to the shared ministries of the UMC, and they also

shaped the decisions of leadership regarding church budget, programs, ministries, and staff. KUMC's norm of generous contributions affected how this church did mission and what large service and building projects it undertook. It determined the amount of resources that the programs and ministries of the church had and influenced KUMC's fundraising practices.

Organizational Commitment and Identification

This study expands the research on identification and commitment in organizations by adding a new concept of implicit commitment and by expanding conceptualization of Cheney's (1983b) unifying symbols technique in church context.

First, the new concept that emerged from this research is implicit commitment. The example of KUMC showed that by persuading their congregation to internalize the values imbedded in the denomination's mission, the leaders of KUMC increased members' commitment to this mission. This claim is consistent with organizational commitment theory, which defines internalization as the incorporation of values and assumptions within the organization's guiding principles (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and identifies internalization as a factor of commitment (Mowday et al., 1979). However, KUMC's leaders focused on promoting the values rather than on explaining that these values were part of the denomination's mission. Thus, by internalizing the values and committing to fulfill them, members of KUMC also committed to the mission of the UMC without knowing that.

This implicit commitment to the mission refers to a belief in the organization's underlying values and willingness to exert considerable effort to uphold or promote these values. My definition is based on Mowday et al.'s (1979 & 1982) conceptualization of organizational commitment as encompassing a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values and a

willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. My assumption is that commitment can be built implicitly if it is based on commitment and internalization that is not specific to an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

A strategy of building implicit commitment refers to commitment to a mission - not to an organization. However, I argue that KUMC's implicit commitment to the denominational mission fostered member implicit commitment to the denomination. Members of KUMC may not have known that the values they internalized were the values of the denominational mission. Nonetheless, they already incorporated the values of the denomination and acted in ways to uphold and promote those values and in that they committed to the organization implicitly.

This finding has theoretical and practical implications. My theoretical contribution is the expansion of the theory of organizational commitment by adding a concept of implicit commitment, which distinguishes cases where commitment is tied to a specific organization or when it is not. The practical contribution of this finding is the identification of a new rhetorical strategy based on Kenneth Burke's implicit identification strategy, where individuals are persuaded that they have something in common with each other, the speaker, or the organization (Burke, 1972). However, the rhetorical strategy of building implicit commitment refers to building commitment to an entity (an organization or a mission) without naming that organization or mission. This study provides an example of a strategy of building implicit commitment by promoting the values imbedded in the mission of an organization. Leaders of local churches can apply this strategy to promote commitment to their congregation and implicit commitment to the denomination by persuading members of their church to internalize the values upheld by the denomination.

Second, this study provides an example of the use of Cheney's (1983b) unifying symbols technique and describes possible benefits of this identification strategy for local churches. Cheney (1983b) emphasized the power of a group's name, logo, or trademark to promote identification. He claimed that focusing on these unifying symbols was a powerful persuasion strategy. The example of KUMC confirmed Cheney's (1983b) claim that unifying symbols can foster organizational identification. In order to promote the climate of openness, the leadership of KUMC embraced the denominational emphasis of openness through promoting the UMC slogan of "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" (Interview 6). Through this technique, the leadership of KUMC was able to incorporate the value that the national organization developed. As a result, KUMC promoted identification with the national organization and accomplished the desirable outcome of building the climate of openness by acquiring such beneficial effects of this symbol as openness to opposing perspectives and social progressiveness.

Other beneficial consequences of this strategy (that were not discussed by Cheney (1983b) included member commitment and church growth. Several interviewees attributed their decision to join this church to KUMC's effective application of the unifying symbols technique. Members explained that they recognized the symbol of "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" and found KUMC's embodiment of the denominational principle of the openness appealing. Thus, this symbol and the resulting climate of openness influenced outsiders' decision to join the church and thus facilitated church growth. Interviewees indicated that people in this congregation "really want to fulfill these [UMC] goals of 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors...' and it goes beyond the staff; people have really taken it upon themselves to do this"

(Interview 1). This statement indicates that members supported the values associated with these denominational symbols and thus committed to this congregation's efforts to fulfill these values.

Thus, by applying the unifying symbols strategy to increase the climate of openness, KUMC's leadership accomplished three additional goals: denominational identification, church growth, and member commitment.

Organizational Leadership

This study contributes to theories of organizational leadership by applying the premises of the Contingency Model of Leadership (Fiedler, 1967). The Contingency Model shows that leadership effectiveness depends on choosing a leadership style appropriate for the group situation, which Fiedler (1967) defines in terms of task structure, position power, and relationship between the leader and followers. The term "task" refers to the assignment that the group performs on behalf of the organization. Fiedler (1967) classifies tasks into structured (precise, specific, with an established protocol or definition of desired outcome) and unstructured (general, vague, and without an established protocol). The term "position power" refers to degree of power associated with the leadership position or organizational title itself (high and low). Fiedler (1967) explains that the more structured the task, the more the leader is able to use his or her position power or draw from the power of the organization to exercise the authoritarian approach. He states that because unstructured tasks are difficult to enforce leaders are less able to use their position power or the power of the organization to implement their decisions. Fiedler (1967) adds that in performing unstructured tasks leaders who have good relationships with followers may be effective using either authoritarian or participatory approach to leadership. Fiedler (1967) also identifies several less influential situational characteristics, such as the

intelligence of the followers. According to Fiedler (1967), the more educated or skilled workers performed better under participatory style than less educated or skilled workers. Although linked to leadership, followers' intelligence is not among the three major situational factors that determined leadership style's appropriateness in Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model.

The application of the Contingency Model to church organizations confirmed one and challenged three of Fiedler's (1967) findings. First, the examples of KUMC and MUMC supported Fiedler's (1967 and 1971) assertion that high levels of intelligence of followers are associated with effectiveness of participatory leadership style. This finding is important for understanding factors that contribute to determining the effectiveness of different leadership approaches in church context.

Second, Fiedler's (1967) classification of tasks as structured and unstructured did not adequately categorize the roles performed by the pastors. For example, Fiedler's (1967) theory failed to provide an appropriate classification for preaching. Using Fiedler's terms, preaching could be considered structured and unstructured. It is structured in having a clear desirable outcome and measures of effectiveness. Effective preaching draws both existing members and new people. Increased attendance during worship also serves as a measure of leader's success in this role. At the same time, this task can be considered unstructured because effective preaching can take many forms as indicated by members of the three churches.

To address this limitation, I classified the different roles performed by pastors on a continuum (structured, fairly structured, fairly unstructured, and unstructured). I distinguished between these categories based on whether the task had more structured or unstructured elements. For example, I classified the visionary role of the senior pastor described at KUMC as

“fairly structured,” because it includes two structured and one unstructured element. The first structured element is a clearly defined desired outcome--the pastor is to set the goal for the congregation to fulfill. The second structured outcome is the clearly defined measures of effectiveness. Pastors’ effectiveness is measured in terms of whether the congregation fulfills the goal. The unstructured element of this task is the lack of a protocol for fulfilling the task. In the UMC, the pastor retains flexibility in terms of what goals he or she sets and how to lead the congregation in accomplishing these goals.

Third, Fiedler’s (1967) claim that the task structure was one of the three situational factors determining the appropriateness of a leadership style did not apply in my research. To illustrate, one of the essential roles of a senior pastor is administration. From Fiedler’s (1967) perspective this role is structured because it requires meeting certain criteria--financial, organizational and structural. Fiedler (1967) suggested that structured tasks could be performed effectively by using top-down leadership and relying on position power for influence. Interviews with members of VUMC, however, indicated that in this congregation, top-down leadership derived from position might not be appropriate. Members of VUMC envisioned effective administration in terms of a participatory approach. They commended their senior pastor for inviting participation by organizing “more council meetings” (Interview 3), which she attended but “didn’t dominate” (Interview 4). This response suggested that participatory rather than top-down approach might be more appropriate in performing such structured tasks as local church administration. Similarly, the pastor of MUMC performed this role using communication approach to leadership that emphasized participatory elements. The assistant to senior pastor highlighted the centrality of communication and participation in the administrative work that occurred in this church. He said his current senior pastor was an “outstanding administrator...

because things are running very smoothly when there is an event happening,...because he has done his homework in the background...he is making the phone calls, he is writing the letters, he is rounding up people, he is talking to people, he is directing all the good behind the scenes things to make sure that the needs of the church are met” (Interview 8). The two examples dispute Fiedler’s (1967) claim about the connection of structured tasks to top-down leadership.

In fact, church members’ preferences regarding the desirable leadership style were unrelated to task structure. To illustrate, members and pastors of all three churches conceptualized pastoral leadership in terms of performing roles that had elements of structured and unstructured tasks. Members’ preferences regarding the pastor’s leadership style were consistent in their descriptions of all the roles. Members of the two congregations that valued participatory leadership preferred when the pastor used this approach to perform both structured and unstructured tasks. Members of the congregation that preferred authoritarian leadership called for a more top-down communication in which the pastor told the congregation what tasks they should perform.

My analysis of the three congregations indicated that the characteristics of the culture of the organization influenced members’ preferences regarding leadership styles. VUMC members’ preferences of participatory style were rooted in the value of intellectualism, which Fiedler (1967) linked to followers’ desire to participate in leadership, and the OVS of liberalism that characterized this church and its regional area. MUMC members’ preferences regarding authoritarian leadership were rooted in the OVS of conservatism, the social conservatism of the regional area, and the long history of authoritarian senior pastors. At KUMC, members’ preferences were rooted in the history of participatory leadership and in the strong value of

intellectualism. Even though the position power at KUMC was strong, members still preferred participatory leadership.

These findings contradict Fiedler's (1967) claims regarding the role of task structure and position power in determining the appropriateness of a leadership style. I argue that in order to adapt Fiedler's (1967) theory to study a church context, new situational factors need to be identified. The findings from my study revealed that organizational culture and the regional context influence church members' preferences regarding pastoral leadership style. The characteristics of culture that influenced preferences of members of the churches I studied exemplify situational factors that apply in church context.

Communication

The data from the three churches validated the need for effective interpersonal communication and preaching as well as the style of leadership in these Methodist congregations. In each church I identified instances where this approach was effective. For example, members of VUMC stated that they did not want the senior pastor exercising strong "top-down authority, but [rather] to be collaborative [and] open" (Interview 5). They described the desired style of senior leadership in terms of knowing the established traditions, seeking members' input, expressing sensitivity to strong preferences and norms, and sharing own opinions while promoting the climate of openness. Since communication is the means used to enact all of these practices, the approach that members described as desirable is, in fact, the communication approach to leadership.

The senior pastor of VUMC relied on a communication approach in introducing changes. Through interpersonal interaction with members she identified areas of members' interest and introduced change in those areas. She also identified members who were likely to support each

change effort and invited them to take leadership roles. Through continuous communication with the emergent lay leaders she provided encouragement, resources, and support necessary for the new practices to thrive. Although this style has elements of the participatory approach, what makes it uniquely effective is its heavy reliance on communication. The senior pastor “listen[ed] a lot, ask[ed] ...questions to get feedback, [met] with the [committee] chairs to get a sense of what [they] think... and what other people have told” them (Interview 5). In this approach the leader effectively used communication skills to foster strong relationships with followers in order to gain legitimacy (Adair, 1984) and improve her effectiveness as a leader in the minds of the congregation. In particular, through communication with members she identified issues that were of interest to them. She was willing to listen and encouraged open discussion. These communication strategies improved pastor-member relationships and consequently improved members’ response to the change. The effectiveness of the communication approach was indicated by the fact that members not only agreed with this change but also joined the pastor in promoting it.

Members of MUMC perceived the leadership of their current senior pastor as too “unautocratic.” However, they acknowledged his effectiveness in encouraging congregational involvement in the life and ministries of the church. The senior pastor used communication approach in performing this role. The senior pastor communicated to the congregation the latest developments in the church. Through interaction with members he learned their preferences regarding the future of MUMC thus inviting their participation in leadership. My interviews with MUMC members indicated that they appreciated this approach because of its communicative focus and follower centeredness. Thus, even members who valued authoritarian leadership

acknowledged that communication approach that had elements of participatory leadership could be effective in their congregation.

KUMC experienced a communication approach to leadership in two forms: one with elements of participatory and another with elements of authoritarian approach. Members expressed appreciation for the first approach because it nurtured lay leadership through interaction between the pastor and the followers. Members recalled that the former senior pastor “would acknowledge [them and their work] in a positive way, ... in working with staff ... he encouraged them [and communicated] approval. [He met with the staff] weekly... and ... he listened, and they had a feeling that they are being heard” (Interview 5). Similar to the illustration from MUMC, this example of leadership is follower centered and rooted in communication.

Members of KUMC also seemed to accept a certain degree of top-down authority when it was part of a communication approach to leadership. Members and staff described the current senior pastor as more authoritarian and noted that they favored the participatory style over his approach. However, they were willing to adjust to his style because they appreciated him investing time and effort in building relationships with followers. Interviewees explained that this pastor allowed staff and lay leaders to express their opinions and listened to their concerns. The authoritarian aspect of his leadership was that he limited their participation in decision-making. However, he communicated with them frequently taking time to address their emerging concerns and to explain the reasoning behind those decisions that he made unilaterally. Interviewees insisted that it was due to his efforts to communicate with them that he was described as an effective leader and a “very thoughtful, ... good” person (Interviews 3 & 4). This example is similar to the one from MUMC in that members of this church also accepted a less

favorable leadership style when it was presented as part of communication approach to leadership.

The examples above describe how a communication approach to leadership was enacted in each church. These examples highlight two characteristics that seemed to make this approach effective: focus on communication and follower centeredness. Each example included ample communication, emphasizing its role in accomplishing the desired outcome (change, member involvement, lay leadership development, etc.). Each example was also characterized by the leader's attention to followers (their interests, needs, opinions, and concerns). Attention to and communication with the followers strengthened the leader-follower relationships, which, in turn, resulted in members perceiving this approach as effective. These findings not only support my claim regarding the effectiveness of communication approach to leadership but also confirm Adair's (1984) and Fiedler's (1967) findings regarding the importance of leader-follower relationships. This study challenges Fiedler's (1967) conceptualization of leader-follower relationships as either positive or negative, emphasizing leaders' ability to build positive relationships with followers through communication and attention to the needs, interests, and concerns of the followers.

This study applies the theories of organizational culture, commitment, identification, and leadership to a large non-profit, religious organization by conducting field research on three Methodist congregations in three different regions of the United States. My analysis identifies multiple ways communication influences organizational processes and practices in these churches and explains the implications of these influences for members and leaders. The findings of this study also extend the classification of cultural elements (values, norms, and assumptions); suggest a new concept and strategy: implicit commitment; and uncover limitations of applying

Fiedler's (1967) Contingency Model of Leadership so that it helps explain what occurs in a church context.

Methodological Contribution

This study applied a complex method that provided thick descriptions of how congregations (members and pastors) constructed their organizational identities and conceptualized organizational processes. The three fold method of participant observation, textual analysis, and interviews provided insight into churches as organizations. The method of participant observation enabled me to experience the local church in its context. Analysis of texts demonstrated what and how the leadership communicated to church members, visitors, and the community; thus it represented the official organizational voice. Interviews with members and pastors revealed their conceptualizations, values, and assumptions regarding the culture of the church, organizational mission, and pastoral leadership. Together, these indirect and direct methods produced a comprehensive portrayal of the studied phenomena in the context of local UMCs, thus allowing me to extend and develop existing organizational theory so that it can be used to study church organizations.

Contributions for the UMC

This study revealed the uniqueness of the UMC's definition of Connectionalism, a principle that links local churches across the globe. The experience of the three churches suggested that the UMC is a constellation of congregations that are loosely united but retain unique identities. Such a definition of Connectionalism allows the UMC to remain one of the largest protestant denominations in the U.S., uniting people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. It enables local churches to retain their unique identity and allows them to choose how closely to be tied to the UMC. In the UMC, people whose social, political, and theological views represent

opposite ends of spectrum are united with like-minded individuals. Thus the UMC is able to provide a place for numerous diverse people who could not seemingly coexist within one denomination. People who are conservative and liberal, deeply religious and rather secular, those embracing traditional liturgy and those gravitating toward the contemporary expressions of faith call themselves United Methodists. Although their church identities and their conceptualizations of religious practice and faith vary substantially, the theological, social, and structural principles that constitute the core of United Methodism (as stipulated in the *Book of Discipline*) hold these people together in the loosely connected societies (local churches).

An essential part of the UMC's definition of Connectionalism is strategic ambiguity. The leaders at the national, district, Annual Conference, and local church levels intentionally avoid specificity in terms of defining the boundaries of what it means to be a United Methodist. The enactment of strategic ambiguity is evident in the lack of clear consensus regarding particular social, theological, and structural principles that are essential to being a United Methodist. Rather than having strict boundaries regarding what it means to be a United Methodist, the UMC is characterized by an ongoing negotiation between the congregations and the leadership and the leadership and the congregations. Such negotiation, in turn, is an essential part of United Methodist identity, its Connectionalism. It allows the denomination to adapt to the changes in the environment and thus remain current and relevant to its members and the society. Further, such conceptualization of Connectionalism makes the UMC different from other denominations because it allows freedom of interpretation of roles, goals, and activities of each congregation in light of the general theological, social, and structural principles and the abstract mission statements of the United Methodist Church.

It is important to note, however, that strategic ambiguity does not include complete vagueness but necessarily includes boundaries. Boundaries are essential to being a denomination, they provide people something to believe in, something to be proud of, and something to unite around.

The examples from the three churches defined the boundaries of the UMC identification in terms of certain structural, theological, and social principles. Interviewees in the three churches described UMC structure as an arrangement of circuits. In the UMC appointments are done by the bishop; churches do not hire and fire their own pastors. Pastors, when ordained agree to serve in their Annual Conference, and to move within that conference when the Bishop decides to move him/her. These structural boundaries constitute the norms and ways of doing things that are often taken for granted and unnoticed by members of local churches.

The theological and social principles that define the identity of the denomination are represented by the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions of the UMC*. For example, when joining a local United Methodist Church, a person is asked to declare his or her loyalty by supporting the particular congregation and the denomination by his or her “prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness” (KUMC Newsletter, February 2013). These words are taken from the *Book of Discipline* (2012, ¶ 228) and are part of the definition of what it means to be a member of the UMC. In the three churches I studied, these words were part of the ritual of accepting new members. Other components of the *Book of Discipline* (2008) that were part of the United Methodist identity in these churches were drawn from “the Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task” (¶¶ 101-104), “the Social Principles” (¶¶ 160-166), and the “Organization and Administration” (¶¶ 201-2406). Each of the three churches emphasized some of these rules and provisions over the others, thus constructing a unique identity. The UMC allows local

churches flexibility in terms of adhering to the rules stipulated in the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions* thus accounting for the diversity of local churches across the globe.

The UMC structures - Annual and General Conferences - enable civil and ritualistic negotiation of these social and theological boundaries, thus perpetuating the fluidity of UMC Connectionalism. Every four years, lay and clergy representatives of the global church (from all of over the world) meet at General Conference to decide on the common doctrine, rules, and principles guiding the entire denomination. Every year, lay and clergy representatives of each Annual Conference, (typically involving one or more states; some larger states contain multiple conferences) meet and decide on the constitution, doctrine, and rules proposed at the General Conference. The conference debate necessarily results in some members' and leaders' ideas being accepted and ideas of others being rejected. Those whose ideas get rejected remain part of the denomination; their church identification often changes little because of the rejection of their ideas at the conference. They often continue pursuing the same ideas at the local church level and bring them to the next conference, which may or may not incorporate them into the rules and principles for the entire denomination.

In all, what seems to be essential to UMC Connectionalism is the tension between autonomy and denominational identification: having a doctrine and rules to believe in and adhere to yet having flexibility to interpret them creatively in light of the local context and the uniqueness of that experience. The leadership of the UMC effectively employs the tactic of strategic ambiguity to link connected societies into a denomination that they support and identify with in multiple unique ways.

Future Research

This study demonstrated that the task structure and the position power in churches were not as influential in determining whether authoritarian or participatory approach to leadership was most effective as stated by Fiedler (1967). The data I gathered from three United Methodist churches showed that the effectiveness of a leadership approach depended primarily on the culture of the organization. This study also provided examples of cultural elements that strongly influenced members' conceptualization of pastoral leadership styles. These elements are church traditions of authoritarian or participatory leadership, organizational values of liberalism/conservatism, religiosity/secularism, and intellectualism. Further research is necessary to investigate the role of these and other cultural elements in categorizing and explaining how to modify existing theory so that it takes into account the context, the interaction between leaders and those they lead, and the goals and missions of different types of organizations. Clearly leaders and those they lead participate in the construction of their organizational goals, roles, and cultures by the way they communicate with one another. This study showed one way these are constructed in three different churches.

My research also provided examples of leadership characteristics that members valued in their pastors. These characteristics were described in terms of communication practices, thus indicating that effective communication was at the core of pastors' leadership. Further research is necessary in order to generate a profile of characteristics valued by members in their pastors.

Lastly, this study indicated that attention to and communication with the followers were central to the communication approach to leadership. Future studies should investigate which (if any) additional factors made this approach favored by members and whether these factors depended on the cultural and contextual influences.

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Appendix A

The United Methodist Church

History

The roots of the United Methodist Church go back to the ministry of John Wesley (1703–1791) and his brother Charles (1707–1788), who started Methodist societies as a new way of Christian practice in England. John Wesley assumed the position of the top leader. Uniting converts in societies, classes, and bands, Wesley appointed clergy and laymen as preachers to minister to them. He called these men his personal “helpers” and insisted that they were “directly responsible to him in their work” (Outler, 1964, p. 19). Beginning in the 1760s, Methodist preachers ministered in the American colonies. Wesley maintained a strong claim to authority as a leader of the Methodist movement and its followers.

In fact, the nature and function of the early formed conferences demonstrated the strong power held by Wesley as the leader. He decided which clergy and lay preachers to invite and whether to have a conference at all. The conferences resembled an interrogation or a debate where all who were present could pose questions and make comments. However, “the final answers were always pronounced by Wesley himself” (p. 135).

However, his authority over Methodists in America was weakened significantly after the American colonies won independence from England. In the 1780s, postwar leaders of the American Methodists, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, sought to be elected as “superintendents... by the free suffrages of the American preachers” (p. 25). From this point, Wesley ceased to be an actual leader of American Methodism but was considered the theological founder of the movement or “father in God” (p. 25).

In 1784, Coke and Asbury supervised the formation of a new and autonomous denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), which united with the Methodist Protestant Church in 1939 to form the Methodist Church. In 1968, the United Methodist Church was formed from the unification of the Methodist Church with the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB), which was comparable in structure elements and similar in theology. At the time of its formation, the United Methodist Church had more than 10 million members and was one of the largest protestant denominations in the world (Tinley, 2008).

Structure

The structure and the organization of the United Methodist Church are central to understanding the leadership dynamics in the organization. The organization and structure of the 21st century United Methodist Church is based on principles of decentralization and democracy (UMC, 2011c). The top leadership of the church is represented by three bodies that have distinct purposes and responsibilities: legislative, executive, judicial. The representational nature of these bodies, and the democratic processes governing their activity ensure that “clergy and laity alike help determine the ministry and workings of The United Methodist Church” (UMC, 2011c). The democratic structure of the church involves several levels of policy making and voting that allows the local congregations (represented by clergy and laity) to be included in decision-making.

General Conference . The top leadership with legislative authority is the representative assembly called the General Conference, which summons approximately 1000 delegates from the U.S and abroad. The decisions and actions of each General Conference are recorded in the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions*, which are produced quadrennially (coinciding with the meeting of the General Conference). The procedures and processes that take place at the

General Conference resemble the gathering of a congressional body in which representatives of larger audiences discuss pertinent issues, regulations, and policies.

Council of Bishops. The top executive leadership is represented by the Council of Bishops. In the UMC, bishops, who could be both men and women, are elected at quadrennial Jurisdictional Conferences and serve for four-year terms until age 68. All bishops (active and retired) are part of the Council of Bishops, which meets at least once a year, however, only the active bishops can vote.

The Levels of the Organization

Local church. The first level of the UMC organizational hierarchy is represented by the local church. According to the UMC website, “[m]ost individuals have their initial contact with the denomination in the local church. Some local church members don't realize that they are part of a bigger whole — the connection: an Annual Conference, a Jurisdiction, the General Church, and churches and Annual Conferences around the world” (UMC, 2011c). The local church is a crucial element in the structure of the denomination. It is often referred to as “*a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society* [italics from the source]” (UMC, 2011c).

Local churches maintain some similarity in their organization and structure as the *Book of Discipline* mandates certain rules and organization for all local churches. However, the UMC gives local churches considerable flexibility within these rules in allowing for adaptation of their ministry to the communities and the congregations they serve (UMC, 2011c).

District. The second level of hierarchical structure of the UMC is the district. Districts group local churches geographically. Each district is led by a district superintendent (“DS”) who

is appointed by the bishop. The DSs are not based in any specific local church; they oversee the work of all the churches in their districts, provide pastoral leadership, and work with the bishops in making appointments of ordained ministers to the churches in their districts.

Annual Conference. The third level of hierarchy is the Annual Conference (here the term is used to refer to a regional body). Annual Conferences group several districts. Annual Conferences vary in size. In the U.S., an Annual Conference may cover a part of a state, a whole state, or parts of several states. The U.S. has 63 Annual Conferences (including three missionary conferences which are funded by the denomination as a whole). The other 59 Annual Conferences are located in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.

Each Annual Conference has a central office. The Annual Conference office has professional paid staff that coordinates the ministry and the business of the conference. Here the term “Annual Conference” refers to an organizational body. Annual Conferences (as organizations) have conference boards, commissions and committees composed of clergy and laypersons.

The term “Annual Conference” also refers to a yearly meeting of members of the Annual Conference (as a regional body). The gathering usually takes place in May or June and lasts 3-5 days. It gathers all clergy members that belong to the Annual Conference (regional body) along with an equal number of lay members selected from the local churches. They join together to worship, fellowship, and conduct the business of the Annual Conference which includes listening to reports of past and ongoing work, discussing future goals, programs and budgets, electing delegates to Jurisdictional (explained below) and General Conferences (UMC, 2011c). Such structure allows the pastors and lay leaders to represent their congregations.

Episcopal area. The next level of the organization is represented by episcopal areas. An episcopal area may include one or more Annual Conference (as a regional body). The UMC has 68 episcopal areas: 50 in the U.S. and 18 in other countries. Each episcopal area has one bishop assigned to it. Each bishop, in turn, has only one episcopal area where he or she has specific leadership responsibilities. In the U.S., bishops generally serve one area during two four-year terms before they are assigned to another area. This hierarchical structure gives power to the bishops to provide spiritual leadership, guidance, and inspiration for the denomination and to help enforce the practices and rules developed collectively at the national level throughout the larger church.

Jurisdiction. The fourth level of organization is the Jurisdiction. Jurisdictions include several episcopal areas, Annual Conferences, and districts. The UMC in the U.S. is divided into five jurisdictions: Western, South Central, Southeastern, Northeastern, and North Central. These jurisdictions elect bishops, nominate individuals to serve on General Boards of the UMC, and provide program and leadership training events for the Annual Conferences. Every four years the Jurisdictional Conferences (term used here as a gathering) meet to elect new bishops and select members of general boards and agencies. Outside the U.S., Annual Conferences are organized into Central Conferences (like jurisdictions). The seven Central Conferences are Africa, Central and Southern Europe, Congo, Germany, Northern Europe, Philippines, and West Africa.

Leadership Arrangements between the Levels

These four levels or structures that make up the church are connected through participatory as well as top-down leadership approaches. For example, the relationship between

local churches and their respective Annual Conferences presumes “top-down” leadership arrangements. In many ways, local churches are under the authority of their Annual Conferences. The directions and provisions of the Annual Conference are communicated to and enforced at the local church level. Similarly, the District Superintendent has the “directive” or “top-down” leadership role in relation to many important aspects concerning local churches in his or her district.

At the same time, the local church is connected to its Annual Conference through the participatory leadership arrangements as each church sends its representative(s) to the yearly meeting of the Annual Conference to participate in voicing concerns and decision-making.

The descriptions of the hierarchy and the relationships between the organizational structures in the UMC provide the contextual information that is necessary for fuller understanding of the inconsistencies in the UMC’s conceptualizations, enactments, and communication about leadership.

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Members

Organizational Culture

1. What made you want to join this particular congregation?
2. What do you appreciate the most about your congregation?
 - a. What would you like to be different?
3. What words (metaphors) would you use to describe your congregation?
 - a. What made you chose those words?
 - b. Can you think of examples or stories that illustrate these descriptions?

Identification & Commitment

4. Describe the kind of involvement you have with the church?
 - a. ...with this congregation
 - b. ...with the UMC
5. Give an example of the kinds of things that someone who you consider a committed member does as part of the congregation?

Organizational Culture

6. Describe what you think are some of the most important priorities and things this church directs its attention to?
 - a. How does the congregation demonstrate its priorities in these areas? In other words, what does the congregation do?
 - b. What other priorities and issues you think should be present?
 - c. Describe what you think is the mission of this congregation?
7. What kinds of ministries does this particular congregation have that may be somewhat different from those of other UMC congregations or other denominations?
8. Are there things that this congregation focuses on that make it unique from other UMC congregations? If so, what are they?
9. Describe some ways that you think your congregation connects with the larger church (UMC).
 - a. Describe some other ways that this congregation is unique or different from other churches (both United Methodist and other denominations).
10. What are some of the things that this congregation is passionate about?
 - a. Can you describe a situation or an example of that?
11. What do you see as conflicts (disagreements or clashes between groups within the UMC) in this church?
 - a. Can you give an example of how such conflicts had been played out in this church?
12. Do you feel that in this church people are able to express themselves freely in regard to things (social or theological issues) that they disagree about?
 - a. Why or why not? (if not, What is anything would you like to see the leaders

- (pastor or bishop) do different?)
- b. In regard to things members of the church disagree about, how do you see the position of the local church vs. your own?
- c. What about the position of the national church?

Leadership

13. Can you recall specific information that you have read or heard about the mission and priorities (goals) of the larger church?
 - a. Where did you find this information?
14. How would you describe the role of the bishops or local bishop in this church and in the UMC?
 - a. What do you appreciate most about the behavior or leadership characteristics of the bishop?
 - b. What if any would you like to see different?
15. Use some adjectives to describe the kind of leaders that your pastor or pastors are.
 - a. What made you chose those adjectives?
 - b. Can you think of examples or stories that demonstrate these descriptions?
 - i. What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of your pastor(s)?
16. Can you describe situations in which you've seen the pastors work with lay leaders? (members who are active volunteering in the congregation?) with the staff?
 - a. Can you think of examples or stories from your time at this church that demonstrate these descriptions at play?
17. In what ways does the pastor promote or fail to promote the work of the congregation?
 - a. Can you provide an example or describe a situation you have seen?
18. Can you describe a situation where the pastor addressed issues that congregational members disagree about?
 - a. What if anything do you appreciate or dislike about that approach?

Interview Questions for Pastors

Introductory Questions

1. When did you arrive at/was appointed to this church?
 - a. Where were you before you moved here?
 - b. How long were you at your prior appointment?
2. Where else have you served before this appointment?
 - a. How long at each appointment?
3. When were you ordained as an elder?
 - a. What was your profession (if any) before that?

Leadership

4. The global mission and Four Areas of Focus. How do the bishops want this implemented in your church?

- a. How and by whom was that communicated to you and your congregation?
 - b. Are there particular examples, metaphors or stories that are used by the bishop(s) to communicate the global mission and the Four Areas of Focus? If so, what are they?
5. If you were to imagine the ideal leadership style of the bishop toward this congregation, what would that look like?
 - a. What actions, behaviors and personal characteristics?
6. Describe your style of leadership in this church.
 - a. (Optional) What are some of the key qualities and characteristics associated with this leadership style?
 - b. (Optional) Can you describe a situation in which this leadership style is enacted?
 - c. What do you see as your main assets as a leader?
 - d. Can you give an example of a situation where they are enacted?
7. What is your vision of the role of the church's (senior) pastor in the life of the congregation and the denomination?
 - a. How if any is this different from your current role?
 - b. (if different) Why is it different?
 - c. Are there aspects of the Bishop's leadership that you believe could be stronger?
 - d. If so, what are they and what would you like to see?
 - e. If you were to change anything about your role in this congregation and in the denomination what would that be?
8. What are some of the ways that you communicate the UMC mission within your congregation?
 - a. Do you discuss the Four Areas of Focus of the UMC with your congregation? Why and how and why not?
9. Give some examples of how your vision of this church's purpose (mission and priorities) enters into the preaching, staff meetings, and the work of church volunteers?
 - a. What are some of the things you (and other pastors) do or say? What are some of the new programs, rituals, and ways of doing things that you (or other pastors) have brought?
 - b. What has been the response of the congregation?
 - c. What are the challenges that you or other leaders have confronted in the process?

Commitment and Identification

10. What if any are the techniques and strategies you use to increase member involvement in the life and ministries of the church, member commitment?
 - a. Can you provide an example to illustrate that? (is it something that you say?)
 - b. What if any changes in rituals and practices have you implemented to increase member commitment and involvement in the life and ministries of the church?
11. What do you do to help assimilate new members into the congregation?
 - a. Can you provide an example that illustrates that?
 - b. Has there been any new practices or rituals that you have introduced? If yes, what kind?

Organizational Culture of the Congregation

12. What words would you use to describe your congregation?
 - a. What made you chose those words?
 - b. Can you think of examples or stories from your time with the congregation that demonstrate these descriptions at play?
13. What are the mission and immediate priorities (needs of the church, goals of the pastor, program/initiative foci) for your congregation today in this context?
 - a. Do these match up with the mission and goals of the top leadership? If no, how are they different?
 - b. How are those different or similar to the other congregations where you have served?
 - c. What do you see as the culprit of those differences/similarities?
14. What sort of things (initiatives, areas of ministry, theological or social issues) does the congregation eagerly embrace/ get most excited about?
 - a. Can you give me an example of a situation in which you see that enacted?
 - b. (Optional Prompt) Why do you think these and not other things?
 - c. How do those differ or are similar to the other congregations where you have served?
15. Are there topics or issues about which members of the congregation disagree?
 - a. Can you describe a situation that demonstrates this disagreement?
 - b. (Optional Prompt) Why do you think these particular issues?
 - c. How do those differ or are similar to the other congregations where you have served?

Culture and Leadership

16. Give some examples of how these important topics and controversial issues enter into the preaching, staff meetings, and the work of church volunteers?
 - a. What are some of the things you (and other pastors) do or say?
 - b. What are some of the new programs, rituals, and ways of doing things that you (or other pastors) have brought?
 - c. What has been the response of the congregation?
 - d. What are the challenges that you or other leaders have confronted in the process?

Appendix C

Interviewee Profiles: VUMC

Members

Interview 1: Female, 45-55 years old, white, no children. She has been a member of this church for over 8 years. She has served on several committees, and has been involved in various small groups and programs of the church. Currently attends regularly, volunteers and is part of several small groups.

Interview 2: Female, 60-70 years old, white, with grown children. He has been a member of this church for 16 years. For several years attended the Annual Conference gatherings as a lay delegate from this congregation. Has served as a board member on one of the Annual Conference boards. Involvement at the local church level included serving on committees, participating in small groups, and volunteering. Currently involved in a small group.

Interview 3: Male, 70-80 years old, white, with grown children. He has been a member of this church for almost 32 years. Has served and continues to represent the church on one of the Annual Conference committees. Previously attended Annual Conference as a delegate. Over the years has participated in various small groups and volunteered. He continues to volunteer and participate in a small group.

Interview 4: Male, 50-60 years old, white, with children. He has been a member of this church for 24 years. Over the years has participated in various small groups and volunteered. Currently is part of one of the small groups.

Pastor

Interview 5: Female, 50-60 years old, white, with grown children. Current Senior Pastor. Ordained in the United Methodist Church in 2010. Has been in this appointment for less than a year at the time of the interview. Prior to that served two churches. She is a second career pastor and was a school teacher before.

Appendix D

Interviewee Profiles: MUMC

Members

Interview 1: Female, 60-70 years old, white, married, (retired), with grown children. She has been a member of this church for 48 years. Throughout those years she has been actively involved in the life and ministries of the church by being a member of a Sunday school class, attending Bible studies, serving on committees, volunteering, and supporting through financial contributions and attending special events. Previously she has been involved at the conference level by attending the Annual Conference and writing letters to the bishop soliciting his involvement when the congregation was voting on the building project in the 1990s. She is currently involved at the local church level but continues to stay informed about the work of the UMC on the conference and district levels by periodically reading the statements of the bishop.

Interview 2: Male, 55-60 years old, Hispanic, divorced, with children. He has been a member of this church for over 40 years. He is currently serving in a church leadership position, working with the congregation and coordinating other volunteers. Over the years has been consistently involved including attending Sunday school, participating in Bible studies, and supporting various church ministries. He maintained awareness of some of the work of the UMC at the conference and district level by reading the nationally produced UMC publications.

Interview 3: Female, 50-60 years old, white, married, with children. Has attended this church for over 8 years but has recently left the congregation. Previously has been involved in the life and ministries of the church by serving on a committee, attending Sunday school,

teaching a Sunday school class, and supporting various church ministries. She has been primarily involved on the local church level.

Interview 4: Female, 55-65 years old, white, married with children. Has been a member for more than 50 years. Has been consistently and continually involved. As a youth was an active member and a leader, taught Sunday school, worked in preschool, held a number of offices on church committees. Her involvement at the conference level included leading workshops for Sunday school teachers. Currently serves on several committees at the church.

Interview 5: Female, 35-45 years old, white, married, with children. She has been a member for almost twenty years, raising her children in this congregation. Throughout the years she has been continuously involved in the life and the ministries of the church including attending Sunday school, serving as a youth sponsor, and supporting various ministries. She has not been involved at the national, district or conference level.

Interview 6: Male, 50-60 years old, white, married, with grown children. Currently serves on church staff and is a member. Has been a member for over 38 years. He has been and continues to be actively involved in the life and ministries of the church. Currently is engaged in several small groups, supports various ministries of MUMC, and serves on several committees one of which is at a conference level. Previously has served on a committee at a district level.

Pastors

Interview 7: Male, 55-60 years old, white, married with grown children. Currently serves as the senior pastor of the church. Ordained in the United Methodist Church as Deacon in 1970s and as Elder in 1980s, at the time of the interview he has been in this appointment for over four years. Prior to that he served for 10 years at the conference office; for 7 years as a Senior pastor

of a large metropolitan church in the same state; for 6 and a half years at a medium sized church in a small town; and prior to that for 3 and a half years at two small churches in the same state. Following ordination as UMC elder he served for two and a half years as a lead pastor of a small town church. While in seminary was ordained as deacon and served at his first church as part of the seminary internship.

Interview 8: Male, in his 60s, white, married with grown children. Currently serves as assistant to the senior pastor. He has been in this appointment for approximately a year and a half. Ordained in the United Methodist Church in early 1980s. Prior to this appointment has served 9 other churches including small and large congregations in cities of various sizes. Each appointment averaged 3-4 years. Pastoral appointments included associate pastor as well as lead or senior pastor positions. Prior to becoming a pastor was an engineer.

Appendix E

Interviewee Profiles: KUMC

Members

Interview 1: Female, 30-40 years old, white, married, no children. She has attended this church for 8 years. She has been involved in Sunday school and volunteered. Currently attends regularly and occasionally helps with the youth program. Previously attended Annual Conference but currently is not involved with the national level ministries.

Interview 2: Male, 60-70 years old, white, single, no children. He has attended KUMC for almost 30 years. Has served on several district and Annual Conference committees, commissions, and ministries. For several years was a lay delegate to Annual Conference. Involvement at the local church level included participation in the choir, volunteering for ongoing ministries, and teaching. Currently involved in several projects and small groups.

Interviewees 3 and 4: married couple with 2 children. Both regularly attend one of the contemporary services and adult Sunday school (have been members of their adult Sunday school class since they joined 4 years ago).

Interview 3: Male, 35-45 years old, Asian American. He helps with the youth choir and supports mission and ministry opportunities. He has not been involved with the national, district or conference level work of the UMC.

Interview 4: Female, 35-45 years old, white. Currently serves as a lay reader and volunteers. She has volunteered for VBS and other children's ministries but has not been involved with the national, district or conference level work of the UMC.

Interview 5: Female, 70-80 years old, white, widowed, with grown children. She has attended this church for 25 years. Has been consistently attending Sunday school and Bible studies. She is currently involved at the local church level through volunteering for ongoing ministries, helping in the church office, serving on a committee, and participating in several small groups including support groups.

Interview 6: Male, 60-70 years old, white, married, with grown children. Currently a member of this church, formerly its senior pastor. Ordained as an elder in 1960s. Has served three churches as an associate pastor, three churches as senior pastor and held two directorial positions at the conference level.

Pastors

Interview 7: Male, 50-60 years old, white, married with grown children. Current Senior Pastor. Ordained in the United Methodist Church in 1980s. Has been in this appointment for two years at the time of the interview. Prior to that served for 10 years at a church with 3,000 members and averaging worship attendance of 970 people; for 8 years at a suburban church in the capital city; and for 3 years at KUMC as an associate pastor. The first appointment following ordination was in a small town church. Prior to becoming a pastor, was a farmer for 8 years.

Interview 8: Male, 50-55 years old, African American, married, with grown children. Currently serves as the Executive Pastor. Ordained in the United Methodist Church in 1980s. Has been in this appointment for fourteen years at the time of the interview. Prior to that served for over 17 years in four African American churches. Started working as a local pastor at age 16.

Appendix F

The University of New Mexico Church Member Consent to Participate in Research Organizational Culture of the Local Church Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Alexandra “Sasha” Arjannikova, who is the principal investigator, and Dr Janice Schuetz, from the Department of Department of Communication and Journalism. This research is studying communication in churches.

This form will explain the research study, the possible risks, and benefits. If you have any questions, please ask Sasha Arjannikova.

This research studies communication in churches (in particular how people in local churches understand leadership, church mission, and organizational priorities or goals). Leadership, organizational priorities, and mission are important to any organization, including churches. The United Methodist Church has spent time and resources to create global church mission and outline priorities that make churches effective. Most of the research conducted in the UMC has focused mainly on the national/international, Annual Conference and district levels. This study fills the gap in existing research as it focuses on communication and organizational culture at the local church level.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an adult (18 years or older) member of one of the churches chosen as research site for the project. There will be approximately 5-6 participants from this church. The total number of research participants including those from this church will be 15- 18 people.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

You will need to contact Sasha Arjannikova to schedule a meeting at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview which will take about 60 minutes of your time, will be audio recorded (if you permit).

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During the interview, she will ask about your experience of the church (your understanding of the purpose of the church (mission and goals/priorities), of the role of the local bishop and your church pastor(s)). In addition to the interview, Sasha, will also conduct observations of select church events, gatherings, and meeting. Thus, your participation in the study may involve one-on-one interview and periods of observation. Participation in this study (interview and observation) will take anywhere from 1 hour to 5 hours over a period of two to four weeks.

Your involvement in the study will remain confidential. Nothing that you share with Sasha Arjannikova will be linked to your identity. Your name, the name of your congregation, or the name of your city will not be disclosed.

Your name and contact information is necessary to set up the interview. It will be stored in a secure location (locked bag when traveling or locked drawer). Any of the personal information that you share during the interview will only be featured in the audio recordings. There will be a document that would identify your name and link it to a pseudonym which will be used in the transcriptions of the recordings and notes. Pseudonyms are needed to limit the use of your personal information in transcripts and notes and to give you an opportunity (if desired) to review your interview.

During your interview Sasha you can indicate that you would like to review the statements from your interview. If so, she will contact you after all the data is gathered and analyzed and send you a document from your interview for your review and evaluation.

What are the risks of being in this study?

The main risk in being part of this study might be sharing information about the church with someone you may hardly know. Also, in an unforeseen case of breach of confidentiality there may be risks of stress and emotional distress. For more information about risks and side effects ask Sasha.

What are the costs, compensation, and benefits to being in this study?

There will be no costs, no financial compensation or direct rewards for your participation. However, information from this project might help understand how certain vital issues are seen at different levels of the church and help improve communication in the UMC.

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What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?

Your decision to participate in the project is voluntary and will be kept confidential. If you decide to participate, the research team will protect your participation and the personal information you share. If you decide to not participate, nothing will happen; your decision will be kept anonymous.

How will my information be kept confidential?

The research team will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but confidentiality of all study data cannot be guaranteed. The document linking the names to pseudonyms will be kept in secure location (locked drawer) along with consent forms and sheets with participants' names and contact information until it is destroyed. All the recordings and documents that contain your name or personal information will be destroyed after the data analysis is finished and the review by participants is complete. All documents containing personal information will be kept separately from those documents that use pseudonyms. The data that does not contain personal information but uses pseudonyms will be kept for three years after completion of the research.

Your name or personal information will not be used in any published reports about this study. The name of your church or the city where it is located will not be revealed. Sasha Arjannikova will be the only one with access to that information. All interviews will be one-on-one with her. Other participants will not know who else from the church or which other churches participated in this study.

How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?

You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available (risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research, new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating).

Can I stop being in the study once I begin?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to stop your participation at any time without affecting your relationship with the

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researcher or anyone in this church.

Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study, Sasha Arjannikova will be glad to answer them at 505 604 2140 (9am to 9pm daily). If you would like to speak with someone other than Sasha, if you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you believe that you have been treated carelessly in the study please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131, (505) 272-1129. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may also access the IRB website at <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/>.

CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you read the information provided (or the information was read to you). By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research subject. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Adult Participant (print)	Signature of Adult Participant	Date
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INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her legal representative and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

Name of Investigator/ Research Team Member (type or print)	Signature of Investigator	Date
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