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**Congregations as ‘Multivocal’ Mentoring Cultures:
Comparative Research among Three Protestant Denominations**

Penny Long Marler
Samford University

Charles E. Stokes
University of Texas, Austin

Kristen Taylor Curtis
Samford University

Previous research on *religious congregations* focused on their relationship to local contexts (either in regards to community change, mission efforts, church growth, or resource mobilization) or on institutional characteristics such as conflict management, approaches to worship, or responses to denominational directions (Hoge and Roozen, 1979; Roozen and Hadaway, 1993; Chaves, 1999; Eiesland, 2001; and Becker, 2001). Research on *congregational leadership* focuses almost exclusively on gender and/or satisfaction or effectiveness measures in relation to current job role (Gannon, 1979; Hoge et al., 1988, 1995; Lehman, 1993; Chaves, 1997; McDuff, 2001; Marler, et al., 2003). One study focused on the relationship between “calling” and “career” among a clergy sample (Christopherson, 1994), and recent research explores why pastors leave local church ministry (Hoge and Wenger, 2005). Little research, however, examines how and why individuals choose a pastoral vocation in the first place. And whereas *congregational culture* has been described and analyzed as an important component of congregational life (Carroll et al, 1986; Warner, 1988; Ammerman, 1987; Ammerman et al., 1998; Becker, 2001; and Chaves, 2004) no research specifically examines congregations as mentoring cultures for future pastoral leaders.

The results of the National Clergy Survey (2001) as well as denominational statistics (cf. Hadaway, 2002) substantiate a growing need to understand better the dynamics of a ministerial calling or vocation: fewer persons, particularly younger persons, aspire to the pastorate.¹ The

¹Hoge and Wenger, 2005 overview clergy supply and demand and conclude that no general shortage exists in the United States although under/over supply varies by type of church and denomination (see also Chang, 2003). However, as Aleshire (2003) reports, proportionate declines in younger (20-29 year old) seminarians as well as

purpose of this research therefore is to examine the nature of congregations as mentoring cultures. Theoretically, we engage the work of Parks and Daloz et al. (2000; 1996) on the characteristics of mentoring environments and Willimon (2002) on the “multivocal” nature of the pastoral calling. Methodologically, we utilize ethnographic and survey data from Southern Baptist, Christian Methodist Episcopal, and Episcopal churches in Alabama. Features of congregational cultures that evoke and nurture ministerial calling are explored across race, community type, and Protestant denomination.

The Characteristics of Mentoring Environments

In recent years, the developmental and organizational behavior literature has converged around issues of culture and vocation. Laurent Parks Daloz’s work on the nature and character of mentorship and Sharon Daloz Parks’s research on young adult development led to a major qualitative study of “committed lives” among Americans (Daloz et al., 1996). Ethnographic interviews of a stratified sample of 145 adults uncovered not only the well-recognized role of *mentors* in the lives of contemporary adults who exhibit moral and ethical as well as vocational commitment but also that of *mentoring environments* (Daloz, et al., 1996).² Mentoring environments, they found, range from families to schools to the professions, and not surprisingly, include congregations and other religious organizations. The most effective of these, Daloz et al. conclude, are characterized by the active presence of mentors, shared experience with a diverse group of friends and colleagues, and the availability of educational, practical, and technical resources for deepening knowledge and skill (p. 46).

According to Parks (2000), effective mentoring environments—and particularly religious communities that promote personal maturity, ethical strength, and vocational commitment among young adults—tend to do certain things well. They i) create a network of belonging that works “at least well enough”; ii) entertain “big-enough” questions that challenge in a context of relative safety; iii) encourage encounters with and appreciation of religious or cultural others; iv) nurture important habits of mind and “worthy dreams”; and v) provide access to key images, concepts, and practices that foster such environments. The organizational literature, moreover,

decreasing vocational interest in the pastoral ministry among this cohort raises the question for denominations and religious bodies, “Why have they been ineffective in recruiting their own youth and young adults to ministry?”

² Given the disembeddedness of late modern society, Daloz et al. also find (and argue for) a growing role for such subcultural support systems.

reflects similar findings: robust organizational cultures are characterized by the tension between stability and flexibility; they are cultures of creative paradox (Fisher and Alford, 2000; Juechter, Fisher, and Alford, 1998; Denison, 1996; 1990; 1984; Daloz et al., 1996). Such environments are *committed*: they are cohesive and stable enough. They are *connected*: they are internally flexible and/or externally adaptable enough. They are *consistent*: they are predictable and safe enough. And they are *challenging*: they are innovative and involved enough. Bottom line, robust mentoring environments are “this and that” rather than “either/or” cultures (Fisher and Alford, 2000).

The pastoral vocation represents a special case of “this and that” mentoring. Willimon (2002) describes the Christian minister’s calling as “multi-vocal.” Pastoral calling, he argues, arises “from above” as a gift from God/the Holy Spirit and “from below” as a response to the needs and expectations of the congregation. Theoretically, the congregation as mentoring environment not only negotiates the tension between the church and the world but also between this world and the world beyond, through a double process of individual and corporate discernment. Robust congregations, further, tend to nurture what Daloz et al. call “double negative” vocational commitments (1996, p. 197). Individuals mentored in such contexts say they “can’t not” pursue their vocations.

Methods and Sample

We began by approaching local judicatory leaders in a mainline protestant denomination (Episcopal Church of America or ECUSA), a conservative protestant denomination (Southern Baptist Convention or SBC), and a historically black protestant denomination (Christian Methodist Episcopal or CME) in the metropolitan, Birmingham area for nominations of congregations that were objectively successful in nurturing ministerial candidates over the last ten years. Out of those nominated, one congregation from each denomination was chosen for an ethnographic study that included interviewing members and former members who were currently in ministry or working toward ministerial credentials; conducting focus groups or individual interviews with identified mentors within the congregation; and engaging in participant observation of regular (and identified) congregational rituals or programs.

We also conducted a state-wide survey of the three denominations with a 10 percent over sample in the Birmingham metropolitan area. We sampled 5% (150) of SBC congregations,

100% (174) of CME congregations, and 65% (62 congregations) of ECUSA congregations. All surveys were addressed to and completed by pastors; congregations without pastors were ineligible. Both surveys were initially conducted in January with the Birmingham area surveys distributed in 2004 and the remainder distributed in 2005. In the metro area case, those receiving a survey also received a follow-up reminder post card two weeks after the survey was mailed, a follow-up telephone call reminder two weeks later if they had still not responded, and a second survey two weeks after that if response was still not forthcoming. Data collection outside the metro area also included follow-up reminder post cards two weeks after the initial survey mailing followed by a second survey mailed to non-responders two weeks after the post cards were sent. These efforts yielded a total of 59 SBC (39%), 34 ECUSA (54%) and 48 CME (27%) respondents to both rounds of surveys, with an additional 3 respondents skipping the question on denominational identity. This represents a total return rate of 37% with expected lower return rates for the CME (27%) and SBC (39%) samples as compared to the ECA sample (54%).

Three Case Studies and a Survey

Based on their records and reputations as congregations who produced a higher proportion of ministers or ministerial candidates over the last ten years, three congregations were nominated and agreed to participate in the Congregations as Mentoring Environments (CAME) study. Rehobeth Baptist (RBC) is a four hundred member, blue collar congregation located in a demographically transitional neighborhood just to the east of the downtown area. St. Mary Episcopal is a slightly smaller and younger congregation of 350 members located in a newer suburban community on Birmingham's fast-growing southern rural-urban fringe. Southridge CME also has about 350 active members; it is an historic African-American congregation situated in a post-WWII black middle class neighborhood west of the city center.

After congregations agreed to participate, field researchers met with pastoral and other church leaders to identify and locate all persons from their congregation who had or were currently pursuing a ministerial vocation *in the past ten years*. From those lists, the researchers interviewed *eight mentees* (twelve identified) in or preparing for ministry from RBC, *five mentees* (eight identified) in or preparing for ministry from St. Mary Episcopal and *three mentees* (eight identified) in or preparing for ministry from Southridge CME. In interviews, mentees were asked also to identify important individuals, experiences, or groups in the

participant congregation who served as mentors (or mentoring environments) in their call to ministry.

Field researchers then identified and interviewed those individuals or individuals key to those experiences or groups. RBC mentees identified twelve *mentors* and *ten* were interviewed: *three* current or former staff members, *three* parents of mentees, and interestingly, *four* mentees who, in turn, mentored others. St. Mary mentees identified nine *mentors* and *seven* were interviewed: *two* current or former staff members (one, the current rector, was also mentored at St. Mary), *four* lay leaders (one who was also identified as a mentee), and *one* rector of a nearby parish who remains involved at St. Mary. Southridge mentees identified seven *mentors* and *six* were interviewed: *one* former staff member and *five* lay leaders.

Rehobeth Baptist Church

RBC is a post-war, baby boom congregation situated in an older suburb east of downtown Birmingham. It is a community like many others that ring the inner urban areas of southern cities: modest brick homes with carports, small manicured lawns, and shady backyards are clustered street after street into neighborhoods off thoroughfares dotted with strip malls. Like many of the nuclear families that once populated the area, the original businesses, schools, and churches have aged and changed, relocated or died. The largest Baptist church in the area recently moved further eastward to the growing rural-urban fringe, and the older strip malls now house small, Pentecostal congregations, thrift stores, ethnic restaurants, and pawn shops.

The main sanctuary at RBC is an imposing structure. Built in late-seventies' amphitheatre style, the external façade is all red brick and nearly fifty feet in height. Five, arched windows set off-center in the massive curved wall provide the only natural light in the worship space, at the back and above a tiered balcony. A large foyer provides a buffer zone for socializing between the front doors of the building and the cordon of double-doors that are the entryways to the sanctuary itself. A partial verse of Scripture above those portals reads, "AS MY FATHER HATH SENT ME, EVEN SO SEND I YOU. John 20:21" which seems at first a directional miscue but is in fact an apt reflection of the congregation's mentoring culture.

Worship at RBC is not so much a refuge from the world as reclamation of it. Here worship and world, God and country, and church and family cohabit with comfort. Sunday services retain a traditional Baptist structure with a welcome, followed by hymns with a sprinkling of praise choruses, a testimony (spoken or sung), and an offering. All of this activity

leads to and is preparatory for the pastor's sermon, an invitation for worshippers to make public decisions, and a benedictory prayer. At RBC, the pastor and his pulpit are front and center in a very definitive way: all aisles lead to the stage where the pastor preaches enthusiastically in front of a small orchestra with a band set and a formally robed choir. Above it all is a very large, back-lit cross that softly illuminates an elevated baptistry. One Sunday, there are prayers for members who are serving in Iraq, on another, the testimony is given by the ex-quarterback of Alabama's football team, and at yet another, there is special recognition of graduating seniors. On a Sunday evening, the congregation spills out of doors for a parking lot version of "dinner on the grounds": there are family games like tug of war, a patriotic-themed sermon, fireworks, and even door prizes.

Home is Where the Heart Is. The official motto of the congregation, "RBC: A Home For Your Heart," is taken from a song by contemporary Christian artist, Steven Curtis Chapman. It was adopted during the pastorate of Bill Henard, and it continues as the watchword for the Rehobeth church family today. Their weekly worship bulletin is entitled, "The Heartline" and their Wednesday "fellowship supper" circular, "The Heart Monitor." All interviewees described RBC as "friendly, family-feeling with a quickly accepting fellowship." "You don't have to be here a long time," one staff member noted, "to feel like you're at home already." This hospitality, however, is more than simply good manners, it is an extension of the biblical mandate to evangelize and "make disciples."

Socialization into the church family is, in fact, best captured by the gospel admonition to disciple. Young persons, as well as adult converts, have many opportunities to engage in bible study through Sunday School and discipleship groups, to be a part of the age-graded choirs so focal to worship, to go on "mission trips" outside of the deep South and teach the Bible or witness, and to participate in denominational youth camps in Glorietta, New Mexico or Rehobeth, North Carolina. For the most committed, moreover, the connection to the church family is forged in the nuclear family hearth. The current youth pastor, a former mentee at RBC who now mentors other young persons, describes the process in this way,

I grew up in the church. My earliest memory of the church, I would say, is my earliest memory, period. I grew up and my parents were very devoted to the Lord from the earliest age that I can remember. . . . They came and attended and were very regular and served in different leadership positions. And so, my earliest memories would be just those of doing summer camp, children's camp, and going on [mission] trips, and sitting in Sunday school . . . and then, of course, growing up with friends and making friends at

church. Our life in a lot of ways was centered around it—around the church—and more than that, around the Lord. At home, we prayed together and talked about the Lord, and at a very early age, I can remember having devotionals [at home].

The call to ministry, this “nudging at my heart,” is not only nurtured through a variety of ministry activities but also through the practical example of staff mentors and—in the case of two RBC mentees—the example of a sibling. The church both as and at “home” is the incubator for the church as “heart” calling and career.

A Tale of Two Brothers. Carey and Jason Duckett both grew up at RBC, and both of them became ministers. Like the majority of RBC mentees, they “received Christ as [their] savior” as children, Carey at 12 and Jason, the younger by five years, at 8. Carey went to a youth conference in Glorietta at 17 and, as he puts it, “God just really dealt with me . . . but I was real anxious about it.” He “felt the call to ministry” but was not sure until, first, the leader of the conference encouraged “that young man out there who is uncertain about whether or not he should go into the ministry,” and second, a leader from another church found him after the service and said, “I just feel really compelled to tell you that I really believe God is calling you into the ministry.” What confirmed his decision was the affirmation and support of his RBC pastor: within several months, he invited Carey to preach.

Jason Duckett was baptized because he saw people “getting baptized” and started “asking questions.” After which, he was sent to talk to the pastor who said “okay, so you’re ready to be baptized.” Jason admits that “I really didn’t understand it all.” “I assumed,” Jason continued, “that I was a believer because I went to church, knew the lingo, knew everything that was going [on], was very involved, very active and, in fact, I shared my faith.” At fifteen, however, he says “I began to go through a lot of questions.” Jason recalls, “I came and I counseled with our pastor and with our music minister who in many ways has served as our pastor because whenever we’ve had changeovers . . . [he has] been the consistency.” One week, however, after a missions trip to Missouri, Jason said “I just heard the Lord clear as a bell tell me—well, you know, I didn’t hear an audible voice—but I just heard him telling me, ‘Jason, it’s time to settle this issue of doubting, and it’s time for you to trust me completely with your life and your heart,’ and so that night that’s what I did.” Jason was rebaptized, and as he explains, “things in my life began to change.”

Carey's period of doubt, however, came later. After he went to college, he had a "kind of wild time." "I got, um, away from home," he confesses, "away from rules, you know, I guess I thought I was going to have some freedom." But he ended up in an empty dorm room with no friends and was feeling very lonely: "I looked up at all the shelf space and there was one book . . . it was my Bible. It was like God said, 'Now, it's just me and you.'" So Carey got back involved with a local Baptist church, and the associate pastor there who had muscular dystrophy became a critical mentor. Eventually, Carey moved in with this minister's family, and they decided to co-pastor a church together. Carey remembers,

[He] was the one that mentored me and really took me under his wing and taught me how to be honest with God . . . he would hold me accountable, in a loving way. He would be firm with me in times when I needed firmness, but there [were] times also that he was very merciful, and very grace-giving to me, to help me kind of bloom, I guess.

The "greatest piece of advice" this "vulnerable" pastor-mentor taught Carey was "always be forthright with God." This advice, Carey continues, was reinforced by his Rehobeth pastor who said, "Always remember, no matter what you do, tell the truth. Always tell the truth to people, no matter how much it hurts them or hurts you to tell the truth." Telling the truth, this minister admits, is sometimes difficult because "you are going to fail and people are going to see it." An important part of a mentoring environment, these RBC mentees agree, is the support of the congregation when young ministers fail as well as when they succeed. Another vital ingredient is the presence and intervention of a mentor: "[B]ecause people can be mean and jump on you with both feet, but if you have mentor there, that person can help you cope with the pain that comes from that."

After his period of early struggle and his rebaptism, Jason spent time with Carey and his co-pastor mentor. Jason says "I just began to feel the Lord nudging at my heart toward what he wanted to do with my life . . ." Spending weekends and going on a "couple of mission trips" with Carey and his mentor, "kind of formed my thinking a little bit, they gave me a taste, anyway, of ministry." But the "battle" that was going on "in my mind and in my heart," was that "I didn't want to be like my brother." So he talked to his RBC youth minister, two friends who were also considering ministry, and "Brother Johnny," the music minister. But the most decisive conversation was with his brother. He remembers,

We were just together one day, and I asked him, you know, how do you know if you're really called to serve the Lord in full time ministry, because everybody's called to

ministry. I knew that, but what does it mean, and how do I know? And he said [that], you know, for him that it was this idea that you can't imagine yourself—you could imagine yourself doing something else—but you can't imagine yourself being in the center of God's will and doing anything else.

Jason concludes, “And, you know, I really prayed about that hard and I couldn't see myself anywhere else except in ministry.” Another Rehobeth mentee comes to a similar conclusion, although framed differently. Mark, whose brother Jeff is also exploring a call to ministry at Rehobeth, remembers that his parents, the youth minister, and pastor all counseled that “[you] could be anything; [you] could be making all the money in the world but you will be miserable unless you are doing what God has called you to do.”

They Help You Hear God's Call. Mentees at Rehobeth identified a wide range of mentors. Many were staff people, and many were laity. One mentee reiterates that Rehobeth is “larger than a typical-sized church in the Southern Baptist Convention” but “it's got the feel of a small church. It's got the feel of a family.” He explains,

[I]t's a really good thing, especially growing up because [my] mentors were very many people from Sunday School teachers to discipleship leaders and the parents of other kids that I hung around with. . . I can remember receiving notes from people, people calling me, people visiting our house, and saying we want you to know that we're praying for you, we support you, and we're here for you. You know, and so those things gave me support, and it took away the fear of going into the unknown.

In addition to encouragement, Rehobeth provides “special opportunities” for aspiring ministers to lead and teach as well as preach. A previous pastor, Bill Henard, was a key mentor for as many as five mentees. One of them, presently the youth minister at RBC, explains,

[He] pulled us in . . . and we met with him for several months, every week. We'd come in and we'd meet with him and that was a tremendous mentoring time because it meant a lot to me as he taught us about ministry. And I'll be honest, I can't remember a lot of the things we learned in that class other than that I learned what a mentor was . . . and I that I needed it. And that taught me I need to be around real wise people [to gain a] greater love and passion for the church, and so anyway, that's how RBC has mentored me along the way.

The current pastor emphasizes the importance of networking in the Baptist tradition. Whenever he brings in a special speaker or well-known pastor, he invites young ministers and their families to spend time with them, to “pick their brains and really talk to them.”

In a denomination with congregational polity that stresses the “priesthood of all believers,” intentional mentoring is seen to be necessary. One father of an RBC mentee muses about the call to ministry and its relationship to vocation.

If you believe that God has a specific will for everyone, every Christian, then you couldn't say that the call to be in full-time ministry would be any different. . . . And at the same time, the career of being a pastor or a missionary seems, at least, from a human standpoint, to be a lot more serious. Therefore, I am hesitant to say that it is no different.

A mother, also of another RBC mentee, describes her approach to the question of calling for her three Christian sons.

Well, our oldest son is not called into ministry, our middle two sons are. And, I know I was a lot more careful talking to them about their profession than I was my oldest I cautioned them to be very careful—because I know that people have said things to them—and I told them that only God could call you to that—don't listen to anybody but God. . . . Somebody might go be a banker and do O.K., and I don't think they have to be doing the will of God and might be O.K. and they could make a living. But you would be an absolute failure without knowing that God called you and was enabling you to be in ministry.

Current staff members at RBC are clear that the call to ministry is different and also difficult.

The pastor explains, “The reason it's different is because it's a spiritual thing You know, Paul was called; Jeremiah was called; Isaiah was called. Scripturally, it's there. The other side of that is that it better be there because sometimes the ministry can be so awful that you would never stay unless you were called.” “At RBC,” one young mentee concludes, “I started learning how to hear and determine God's voice. And, of course you don't hear him audibly, you know, like in the movies But, of course, you hear him speaking to your heart.” In this way, RBC as a mentoring environment is a “home for [the young minister's] heart.”

St. Mary Episcopal Church

Large houses with sprawling lawns line the highway leading to St. Mary Episcopal Church. To get to St. Mary from any direction also means passing several large churches - Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Latter Day Saints. St. Mary's property stands out from the surrounding churches in that the buildings are smaller and lower, resembling a small abbey. The church is also easily distinguished from others in its denomination. Its worship style and space is much less hierarchical and formal than is typical for Episcopalian churches, and its female rector is a minority, especially among Episcopalian in Alabama. In the spirit of St. Mary, the

congregation is best known in the community for its yearly celebration of animals. The congregation's pastoral façade conceals the fact that this is a highly active church, sponsoring multiple ministries and mentoring several individuals into ordained parish work. The congregation maintains its organizational fervor by dynamically balancing internal and external forces. It is counter-cultural, but without rejecting the denominational and social resources available to it. It engages a needy world in a way that facilitates introspection, moving parishioners continually between spiritual growth and spiritual service. Individuals called to ordained ministry find in St. Mary a supportive and challenging community. And all of this happens in a way that seems haphazardly informal.

We are All Children of God. The worship service at St. Mary is a great balancing act. Transitional cues such as a bell, musical shifts, and processions and recessions move the service between informal chatter and formal liturgy. The worship space conveys both transcendence (with high ceilings, dramatic lighting, and gilded symbols) and accessibility (flat and circular space, entrance not oriented toward the altar). The construction of both service and space is very intentional, reflecting some of the most deeply held values at St. Mary.

One parishioner says, "St. Mary is a friendly, welcoming community, committed to Jesus Christ and to the idea that we are all children of God." It is this concept that all are the children of God, with something to contribute to the life and worship of the church, which is core to St. Mary's identity. The flat worship space levels the clergy and congregation, while also making the space accessible to people with mobility disabilities. The circular space further unites clergy and congregants, especially during communion when the congregation moves forward around the circle and the clergy move into the circle to distribute the elements. "Our worship atmosphere is more casual than some churches," says one member. "Men don't wear suits, we don't have ushers directing people when to go up for communion, children may be present throughout the service, but our worship is always reverent, adhering to the practice and the spirit of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer." St. Mary refuses to choose between clergy-centered awe-inspiring worship and more participatory and inclusive worship. Members' comfort with informality makes it easier to do the constant shifting necessary to emphasize equally the disparate aspects of worship. The emphasis is neither exclusively on the "children" nor on "God," but the worshipping community comprised in the phrase.

This is not to say that such a dynamic tension is held without struggle. At one congregational, covered-dish meeting there was spirited discussion about the procedure for taking communion. The present mode involves some worshippers moving from their seats to form a semi-circle on the edge of the circular space, receiving communion and then returning to their seats so others can move into the circle. Some members were concerned that the moving, semi-circle was too confusing, and especially that it was less intimate than the previous mode (used in the older worship space) of everyone linking hands and forming a complete, static circle. The rector agreed that the closed circle is intimate, but wondered about the message it sends to outsiders who might find it difficult to break in to the close-knit group. A member countered that rather than being put off, she was so impressed by the closed communion circle that she wanted to join the “family.” Another minister in the group mentioned that the gathering in a circle for communion is unusual among Episcopalian churches, to which another member said, “That’s why we are so passionate about it. It’s who we are.”

A Parish House is Not a Home. The disagreement about the openness of the communion circle points to another key aspect of St. Mary’s identity, the church’s efforts to balance engagement with the outside world with the nurturing safety of the church family. A recent twelve week class offered at St. Mary was called “A Parish House is Not a Home.” The flyer advertising indicates, “The destination of the Christian journey is not the church. It is the world which God loves.” The flyer lists the purpose of the class: “To clarify and become more articulate about Our Story/My Story and to sharpen our sense of mission in the arenas into which we are being sent.” The class is aimed at helping refocus members on outreach after a long building campaign. One long-time member explained the situation.

At St. Mary, there are so many good, decent, loving people there who have been involved in ministry. Personal involvement in ministry was credo at one time – we reminded each other to be prayerfully “in the world, but not of it”. The focus on construction has taken a lot of energy. Before that 80-90% of people in parish had an outreach ministry. We need to recover that sense where almost everyone in the congregation has an outreach ministry.

Not all members, however, agree that the emphasis on outreach has flagged. Still, heightened concern about any diminishment in such work only underlines its perceived importance. Indeed, the amount of outreach in the church is never immediately evident because most of it is not centrally controlled but ad-hoc and entrepreneurial, following the interests of individual members. Individual members participate in children’s homes and ‘soup kitchens,’ work with the

disabled and the elderly, and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and other social justice organizations.

Still, St. Mary's ministry is not all outwardly focused. There is also significant "in-reach" taking place, including assisting with worship, serving church members' emotional and physical needs, and reflective and introspective group meetings. One member says, "St. Mary is a place where members are welcomed and encouraged to take part in whatever way they feel inspired: teaching, serving as lay readers and acolytes, being part of a prayer circle, preparing food for the homeless, working on Habitat houses, or serving on the vestry."

A key feature of ministry at St. Mary is how outreach activity and community introspection are often linked. One member explains:

It is important to have a mechanism to organize small groups and process the ministry – recognize where Jesus is and isn't. Church members should learn a different way of "being Christ-like". Today people are so concerned with individual and personal freedoms. Mentoring churches should help people see that being in a lifestyle of emptying brings fulfillment, living that way together. A church has to be community first.

The culture of linking the inward and outward journey goes back at least 20 years to the previous rector, Martin Bell, who used small group discussions to challenge members to look both inside themselves and outside at the needs of the world. One member recalls this time, "There were a lot of shared experiences. There were thematic, informal small groups. Wednesday night Eucharist with conversations following, a Sunday night group that met explored personal journeys. We asked each other, "How is the gospel working out in your work place?" Another says, "Martin Bell got me to thinking about God, the church, and the life of faith in a way I'd never done before. His class on "Christian Self-Understanding" was a turning point in my spiritual life. (I took it four times!) In addition, the Sunday night adult-ed seminars that he led showed me what Christian community can be."

Friendships Develop and Mentoring May Follow. What makes St. Mary a good mentoring environment? The current rector sums it up: "People invite others into areas of ministry because we're friendly and because we need help. Friendships develop and mentoring may follow." A long-time member added, "A church mentors those called to any form of service by helping them identify the call and enabling them find their own way of responding. A community that offers opportunities for many kinds of service and helps members find their own ways of serving is a mentoring environment." One minister who interned at St. Mary said the

identity of the church was crucial to its mentoring culture. “[A church has to] have the DNA within the body that that’s who we are, that’s what we are about, we’re about worship but within that context we’re not about quenching the spirit or grieving the spirit. When we don’t encourage others in our midst, it does quench the spirit. I think the body would have to understand that . . . we all have a ministry and we’re going to find that, for everyone.”

The current rector’s leadership style is crucial. A minister who received training at St. Mary and still retains a close relationship with the church says, “St. Mary is an open congregation because of informality. It’s more easy going about new people coming in to help, a lot of what they do is ad hoc, flexible internally, leadership has to do with it, [the current rector] is slow to legislate, and people feel ownership.” A member of the church adds, “She pays attention to people. She is very quick to recognize what they are good at. Her refusal to play the star helps demystify the role of rector and make it appear to be something attainable by others.” A lay leader says, “She is open to any ministry that anybody wants to get involved in and offers encouragement and support. She lets those people be the ones to head up that ministry. She does not have a need to be in charge of everything.”

Lay leaders in the church also play important roles in fostering the expectation that members will be involved in ministry and insuring that such opportunities are easily accessible. One lay leader expresses it this way:

The congregation as a whole is receptive to new ideas and getting involved in outreach and starting and sustaining ministries. Even if individuals are not interested in doing that, they are supportive of other people who are interested including providing financial support So if you are interested in something that is going on, you can easily find out who to get in contact with. If you are interested in starting a ministry, you know you are not going to be shot down, you can go to someone on the vestry, or the Outreach Department or [the rector] or whoever you feel most comfortable with, and you will find someone who is willing to listen and somebody to put you in touch with the right people if they aren’t the right one.

Another longtime member and lay leader notes that lay people at St. Mary are always “on the alert for new blood.” And while she says that she tends to think of her work at the church related to “practical things” like “editing the newsletter, training acolytes and LEMs, making schedules,” she does admit that she’s doing something more than simply “looking for help.” She’s also “hoping to get folks to try new roles that maybe they’d not seen themselves taking on.” After almost twenty years at St. Mary, she concludes, “I’ve see that taking an active,

physical role in the life of the church helps tremendously to increase folks' spiritual commitment. If trying to put people to work is mentoring, then, maybe I'm a mentor."

We Love These People. Among those "sucked into the Body of Christ" (as one younger member put it) at St. Mary are several individuals who have moved into ordained ministries. In every case, these individuals realized a call to ministry as an adult and were already involved in another career. Comments from both those who were mentored and the people they identified as mentors reveals St. Mary as a place where aspiring clergy can struggle with their call, practice ministry, and receive support and encouragement.

Struggle and questioning is highly valued at St. Mary. One mentored individual said, "Spiritual growth includes questioning, doubt, rethinking of positions. A church that acknowledges this process rather than stifling it creates an environment conducive to those want to follow their personal spiritual journey into seminary studies." Another said St. Mary, "accepts all sincere seekers and allows them to find their way gradually rather than forcing them into doctrinal corners before they're ready." Such questioning is institutionalized at St. Mary through formal and informal discussion groups and studies. Former rector Martin Bell describes some of these groups during his tenure. "No question was ridiculous. Jesus was not the answer to my questions . . . but the question to all my answers. The whole issue was the journey and the question."

St. Mary offers mentees a unique environment in which to practice because the busy ministry schedule provides multiple opportunities, the small staff is willing (even eager) to share leadership with them, and the people believe mentees have important gifts to share. One former intern said of her time at St. Mary, "I got to help in many ways, I felt respected." Practical, encouraging, and ongoing support sustained those individuals mentored at St. Mary. All the mentored individuals expressed how much they appreciated the words of encouragement, phone calls, letters, and financial support that St. Mary has offered them. "This may sound a little silly," one lay leader says, "but we love these [mentees]. I think they are surrounded by our love. St Francis is a loving community but the people called to ministry are loved in a special way which I find hard to put into words." She added, "[The members of St. Mary] are my family. They are a constant source of support and encouragement. They make me feel like I can do anything, and deal with any adversity."

Southridge Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Paintings of former bishops, pastors, and stewards line the hallways of Southridge CME church. In the main conference room, black and white photographs of the ground breaking are situated in a handsome glass display case, more evidence that this is a church proud of its rich and long history. Founded in Birmingham's early twentieth century African-American urban community, Southridge now stands in a post-WWII, African-American middle-class suburb. One of the larger church buildings (among many) along a main thoroughfare, the church is surrounded by modestly sized houses and a sprinkling of small businesses.

A typical worship experience at Southridge begins outside the doors of the sanctuary where children enthusiastically hand out orders of worship. The worship space is warmly lit, with many earth tones, enhanced by the incandescent chandeliers and natural light passing through colored glass. The sanctuary is a long space with a center aisle leading to a split chancel and slightly raised platform area. Most worshipers dress more formally, but several wear casual attire. Clapping and movement is encouraged both from the leaders on the stage and the congregants. Worshipers eagerly seek out visitors to take under their wings, suggesting by their motions, smiles, and nods the appropriate postures for the service.

Young and old alike play important roles in the service. Older children and teens lead congregational prayers and read scripture. One Sunday, after a young man stumbled through a reading, the pastor jumped to the pulpit to congratulate him on his first time to read scripture in public, and to call for applause from the audience (who responded enthusiastically). The senior choir has a prominent place on the stage and in the worship order, and the sermon is occasionally delivered by an elderly minister.

Sermonic and musical themes celebrate God's work among his people, especially how God's work offers purpose and direction. Otherworldly benefits await God's people both in the future and the present, offering strength for today and a welcome escape from suffering tomorrow. The worship experience gives tantalizing hints to why this church is an effective mentoring environment. Southridge has a proud and robust identity, welcoming family atmosphere, and dedication to engaging its unique community.

When it Happens to One, it Happens to All. Southridge members are eager to discuss the gregarious spirit that pervades the church. A long-time member describes the culture.

One thing that I feel good about this church is that when it happens to one, it happens to all. If somebody is going through something . . . we're on it. We are there for them. I mean, we stick with it no matter what it takes, you know. All you have to do is make a phone call, and say, "Hey, Miss So-and-So need our help," and everybody is on it.

An important element to Southridge's concept of family is that it is rarely bounded by status. A former minister remarked, "Over time we had grown to pride ourselves in being warm and friendly, very receptive of anybody." A minister who was mentored in the congregation credits the leadership of a former pastor in making sure Southridge has remained egalitarian.

He didn't overlook anyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Someone who scrubbed floors for living was just as important as a doctor or a lawyer to him. Everyone's opinion was important, regardless of if they held a position in the church or not. The members who just sat in the pew on every Sunday were just as important as those who were at board meetings.

The family culture, moreover, extends beyond the church walls. A member says, "It is not just in the church either, I mean, I see people outside at the mall, at the store or something, and they grab you."

Eventually, You Know, They'll Come. A former pastor describes Southridge, "I think it was a small environment that made us feel like we were family but yet we were large enough to be recognized as a very valuable church in the community." One of the great strengths of Southridge is the church's ability, over a long period of time, to balance its intimate family atmosphere with an active community presence and reputation.

Southridge has long enjoyed the favor of local bishops and other denominational officials. Several of the ministers who were mentored at Southridge said the bishop specifically assigned them there. Bishops and other officials frequent Southridge's worship services. Members claim the officials' visits happen much more at Southridge than at other local churches. Two prominent older members proudly discussed the situation.

Somehow, it always appeared that the preachers who were assigned to this area always took a liking to Southridge. I don't know the reason why but I know they would spend more time with Southridge.

And [people] who are not even associated with Southridge will have their funerals here for some reason. Anytime a bishop or an elder or something in this area should pass and he's in this area, that's when you end up having the funerals right here.

And also the bishops' wives joined.

In addition to denominational favor, Southridge is known in the community for the activities taking place at the church. One member says the music plays an important role in reaching the community. A long-time Sunday School teacher points to the role of the church's outreach program but he notes that the influence is two-way:

Our outreach program allows this church to go out into the various communities dealing with all these people, addicted people, you know, of drug and alcohol and all that, and we have an addiction or recovery type program here at this church. We sit there and we listen to what they have to say, and a lot of them have really turned their lives around. Some of them are still here with us, some of them come and gone, but those guys have allowed us to look at a whole lot of different aspects of how this church operates. [For example] we started using real wine in our communion. And this continued until the church got involved in the outreach program, and we cut it out because we didn't want to put those guys back into that environment.

Another member summed up the church's outreach efforts as a natural extension of the church's activities. "You know a lot of times, like if I'm somewhere, I'm always talking about what's going on at the church, what we're doing, how we did a certain thing, and how what a success it was, and people say, 'There's always something going on at your church and I'm going over there to see.' Eventually, you know, they'll come."

A Unique Experience as a CME Church. When asked for reasons why Southridge is an effective mentoring environment, lay leaders were quick to point out some ways that Southridge is unusual among CME churches. First, the church has parlayed its favor with the denominational hierarchy into unusually stable pastorates. One long-time member said, "Rev. C. C. Kalsey was the first pastor we had, I think, that stayed as long as 10 years. I don't know why the bishop would allow him to stay that long, but I know he did. Since that pastor, we have had two or three stay over 15 years." Several members agreed that the longer-term pastors contributed greatly to the church's strong mentoring identity and family atmosphere.

One of the first long-term ministers, W.W. Thomas, worked to involve young men in leadership. An older member, who benefited from Thomas's reforms, discusses their importance:

W. W. Thomas was one of the early young mentors as far as I'm concerned. . . . See, for years and years we would have special days and one of the old brothers would be the chairman. But see W. W. Thomas wanted that to change. W. W. Thomas sort of wrapped his arm around us and when we had those special days he would want one of us younger men to be the chairman. He pastored this church for [fifteen] years and he sort of brought us along.

Sylvester Williams, yet another long-term pastor, was mentioned for his work to keep Southridge's developing leaders investing in Southridge, rather than building reputations by traveling to different churches (apparently a common CME practice). A member discussed Williams's reforms, "During his administration he always wanted his officers at Southridge. He didn't go along with the idea of us attending anywhere else on Sunday mornings but Southridge. He said, 'I want my officers and teachers here.'"

Lay leaders lauded two other Southridge oddities that they say have contributed to the mentoring environment. First, the church has been a haven for women to enter the ministry. A leading member observed that Southridge has had "a unique experience as a CME church in nurturing and bringing up people who went into the ministry. And the thing that makes it most unique is that most of ours have been ladies." He continued, "Because the environment [at another church] or the attitude there suggested to them that they wasn't go'n to be able to be accepted into ministry . . . they would end up here."

Second, several ministers who received mentoring at Southridge found their way to Southridge because denominational leaders placed them there for the expressed purpose of grooming them for the ministry. One member commented on how the church's support and denominational favor aided mentees, "In the CME church and when you're getting into the ministry is that first of all this is a long, long, long drawn out process unless you got somebody behind you like we was behind them or whatever. They skipped some steps, you know, because they were well trained and they didn't have to go through a lot of stuff because they were well trained."

Come On, Ride with Me. Mentoring takes place at Southridge at a number of levels. An important initial aspect of mentoring is identifying potential mentees. At Southridge this is a natural part of the involving culture, as denominational leaders, laity, and clergy all help funnel people into service at Southridge. A long-time member discussed how she was drawn into church leadership, "I think Ms. Manning, my cousin, influenced me with being a stewardess in our church to serve there. [They] worked with communion and took it to the poor and it's just that they were always working trying to help, you know, somebody in the community or somebody in need." Former pastor Sylvester Williams talked about how current leaders helped identify potential leaders and developed mentoring relationships.

[Members] have identified persons, who, in their assessment, exhibited those fruits of the spirit, that they felt were called, and/or were just [a]waiting their acknowledgement of the call . . . and they usually evidence their gifts even prior to accepting and [we] know whether or not they have this zealously for doing the will of God or we watch them and see how they get into prayers or lead worship services, and you know, things of that nature. [We see] Even their devotional life and how committed they are to the church—especially at times when others may not be as committed and devoted. Those are the types of things that make people stand out.

And once they are identified, Pastor Williams says, more formal mentoring begins. Church leaders might provide extra reading materials or say, “hey I’d like for you to be my prayer partner” or “hey come on, ride with me” to upcoming workshops or church conferences.

A lay leader in the church shared her story, which illustrates the process Sylvester Williams described above.

Reverend Williams would always say “When you coming to Sunday School? I’m haven’t been seeing you in Sunday School?” So finally I made up my mind one morning I was coming to Sunday School. When I kept coming, kept working, kept going and putting the books out in the classes and setting up the chairs every Sunday morning, finally that’s when Ms. Freeman [lay leader] say “Ms. Crenshaw, how would you like to be my Youth Department Superintendent?” And I say, “Me? Superintendent?” I was just like, “What?” I’m just like, “Why do you think I could even do something like that” and she said, “Yeah, you, think about it. I talked it over with the pastor.” . . . and that’s why I said, “Reverend Williams, I cannot do what Ms. Freeman does.” He said, “Just be you. Do what you can do and don’t try to be anybody else.” But Ms. Freeman really, really put it in me, that confidence I guess. She put that confidence in me about me being the Sunday School Superintendent, the General Superintendent, and I wouldn’t even come to Sunday School. . . . I look at her and go, “Wow, I could never do that” and now, you know, me and her hanging together, right together doing everything, speaking, doing everything.

Its Go’n Be Alright, Baby. Once potential ministers were involved at Southridge, they had an opportunity to practice their gifts in a setting where they were free to make mistakes. A long-time member described the situation. “They had the opportunity to do a good bit of preaching . . . even before . . . they go through a licen[sure] procedure and all that kind of stuff. A lot of times before they even get to that stage our pastors would always give them the opportunity to do [things]. They would get a good bit of their exposure and experience here before they go anyway else.”

One former mentee described the pastor who mentored him at Southridge, “He was very patient, and the type that allowed people to make mistakes, because many places you go, they

don't want you making mistakes." Another former mentee described her experience of practicing ministry at Southridge.

In my blundering, they were very encouraging in the sense that "it's go'n be alright baby, you just keep working on it." I think that was it, just excepting me as who I was, and knowing that I haven't arrived. That I was a work in process, and I still am That was it, the encouragement in spite of the mistakes, and being able to take me on like a child, in the sense that when I fall flat on my face, they would kind of pick me up.

Southridge mentors like a wise, patient, and nurturing parent, and mentees respond like mature, independent but still appreciative children. A member related, "Yeah we really, really rally around them, and they still feel like we are a part of them." Another member shared an example, "[A former mentee] has been moved to a large church in Chicago, and every time she see us at conferences or whatever she go, "That my family. I just love y'all, you know." And she says, "I don't care where I go, it will be nothing like, you know, Southridge."

The CAME Survey

As described above, we also conducted a state-wide survey of pastoral leaders among the three denominations. The survey included eighty-eight items on the congregation and three on the pastoral leader. *Demographic* items focused on the congregation's founding, denominational affiliation, location, average total worship attendance for each of the past five years, racial composition, and the proportion of the congregation that is female, college graduates, age 35 or younger, over sixty years old, new to the congregation in the last five years, living in the immediate area around the church building, and in households with children under 18.

Two series of items were included as measures of the congregation's *identity* or culture. The first replicates six, 7-point scale items from *Hartford Seminary's Parish Profile Inventory* on whether a congregation is more influenced by history and tradition than contemporary ideas and trends, feels more like one large family rather than a loosely knit association, emphasizes an educational approach to social issues rather than an activist one, and gives strong expression to its denominational identity or is more opaque. Two additional items were created for this series based on preliminary findings from the ethnographies: one, whether a church includes those who are different or is primarily concerned to be different and two, whether a church expects its ministers to nurture the congregation or sees itself as a nurturer of ministers. A second series of items were constructed to measure characteristics of mentoring environments suggested by Daloz et al. (1996), Parks (2000) and Willimon (2002) including how well a congregation creates

a sense of belonging, emphasizes God’s sovereignty, engages others who are different, inspires creativity, makes room for silence and contemplation, confronts issues of injustice, fosters a sense of safety or security, laughs, provides space and time for fellowship, welcomes outsiders, tolerates prophetic voices, supports struggle, nurtures a sense of God’s presence, makes connections to larger issues, encourages a call to ministry, and invites serious questions.³

Table 2 shows bivariate correlations between the number of members entering ministry in the past ten years and selected demographic, identity, and program variables. Based on the responses of pastoral leaders of SBC congregations, significant demographic correlates of the dependent variable included the suburban location of the primary place of worship, average total worship attendance, number of active members, number of paid staff, and percent of members age 35 or younger. For SBC congregations, like Rehobeth Baptist, suburban congregations with a younger membership, larger worship attendance and active membership, and especially larger numbers of paid staff are more likely to produce young or aspiring ministers. This has certainly been the history of RBC, although community change is likely to threaten their demographic viability as a mentoring culture.

Identity variables that significantly correlate with the dependent among the SBC subsample include balancing a more activist and sanctuary stance on issues of injustice which coincides with the strong correlations *both* with congregational “inreach” activities (Bible study, discipleship, fellowship, and “gifts for ministry” exploration) *and* “outreach” activities (community service and firsthand mission or ministry opportunities). That early socialization in the life of the church, and then, into ministry is key in SBC congregations is underlined by the especially high correlations between the dependent variable and an emphasis on student and children’s programs. Finally, among Baptist congregations in Alabama encouraging a call to ministry, developing especially groups for young and aspiring ministers, and featuring them in worship services are all related to the numbers of members entering ministry. As the Rehobeth case study shows, a congregational polity and an emphasis on “all as ministers” make it necessary to encourage strongly a call to ministry.

As for the SBC sample, responses from Episcopal congregations show that the number of ministerial candidates is strongly related to the relative size of worship attendance, active membership (even slightly higher than worship attendance), and numbers of paid staff. Among

³ Table 1 describes pertinent variable construction and scaling.

Episcopal congregations, however, there is no significant correlation between location and percent of members less than 35 years of age. Indeed, St. Mary has an older membership than Rehobeth or Southridge, and so also, strong student and/or children's programs are not correlated to the dependent. For Episcopal congregations, in particular, strong inreach programs of bible study, discipleship, and the exploration of "gifts for ministry" are especially conducive to a mentoring culture. Different from SBC congregations for whom balancing issues of justice or mission are important, balancing congregational inclusiveness with exclusiveness is critical for Episcopal churches. This correlation, in fact, resonates strongly with our case study findings: witness tensions over the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the Eucharistic circle in St. Mary's worship. Consistent with their liturgical and table-centeredness, featuring ministerial candidates in worship also is an important component of a mentoring culture in Episcopal congregations.

In the case of CME congregations, the number of members entering ministry is highly correlated with average worship attendance and the number of paid staff. Like the SBC, CME congregations that nurture young and aspiring ministers well have strong student programs. Interestingly, small group life is less determinative for CME respondents, and the relative financial health of the church appears to be especially critical. As we saw in the case of Southridge, denominational visibility and clout tend to facilitate access to resources as well as opportunities for mentoring. In the black community, spiritual and social uplift often go hand-in-hand. Moreover, increased financial health assures numbers of paid staff who can serve as professional models. Finally, for CME churches that mentor well attention to larger social issues needs to be balanced with attention to the needs of the individual and the congregation itself. Too much or too little politicization, it appears, may decrease the power of a mentoring environment in the black church.

Table 3 shows the estimated net effects of demographic, identity, and program variables on the numbers of members of a congregation that have entered ministry or become candidates for ministry in the last ten years for the full sample. What are the determinative factors for mentoring young and aspiring ministers into ministry? At least among SBC, Episcopal, and CME congregations in Alabama the answers seem to be: a) the number of paid staff—increasing the availability of models for vocational ministry—even when controlling for size of congregation (.331); b) the extent to which congregations balance inviting questions with providing guidance or answers and supporting struggle with encouraging decisions and action

(.212); and c) intentional mentors or groups organized to assist young and aspiring ministers with ministry practice and vocational discernment (.197). The standardized regression coefficient for the full model is .390, explaining nearly forty percent of the variance in the dependent.

Conclusion

For this sample of SBC, ECUSA, and CME congregations, nurturing young and aspiring ministers is clearly a matter of ministry involvement and connection with both clergy and lay mentors. Rich webs of mentoring are present in each case study congregation. Young and aspiring ministers at RBC are encouraged by parents, pastors, lay people, and peers; they are given special opportunities to hone ministerial skills; and they, in turn, mentor others. In many cases, young and aspiring ministers are hired by the congregation and/or by former ministers at their new churches. At St. Mary, aspiring ministers become involved in congregational life through smaller discipleship and ministry groups and a nurturing (and also overlapping) web of clergy and laity quickens their vocation. A former rector and a long-time laywoman, for example, mentored several ministers, including the current rector; the current rector and her lay mentees, in turn, are mentoring the next generation of Episcopal clergy. Whereas RBC and St. Mary tend to mentor (and keep) their own mentees, Southridge tends to mentor (and disperse) young and aspiring mentees, many from outside their congregation. The bishop both recognizes and cultivates the mentoring environment at Southridge through the longer-term placement of notable pastors and the shorter-term placement of “minister trainees.”

The language and trajectory of mentoring, moreover, differs depending upon denominational polity and theology. Against the backdrop of a congregational polity and with a conversionist soteriology, Rehobeth mentors emphasize (and prepare young and aspiring ministers for) the “special call” to ministry which only they, in the end, can and must “hear.” In the context of denominational turmoil, an increasingly consumerist laity, and the general erosion of religious authority, mentees are clear that this vocation is “difficult” and only the support of realistic mentors and the certainty of divine sanction make it vocationally feasible.

While the mentoring environment at Rehobeth moves mentees out of the congregation and up into the pulpit, the culture at St. Mary moves the mentor down from the ranks of the hierarchy into the Eucharistic circle, in the words of a mentee, “demystifying” her. Here the mentee comes to vocation through immersion in a loving, involving, and spiritually invigorating

community. Ordination is made accessible—perhaps as a counter to a highly professionalized ministry. Also as a reflection of denominational soteriology, this supportive Episcopal congregation confirms the mentee’s decision through/after a process of deliberate discernment.

Southridge CME, like Rehobeth Baptist, sets mentees on a particular professional ministry path although without the spiritual angst. Due to the connectional polity of the denomination and Southridge’s favored place in that system, the church itself claims a “special calling” as a mentoring environment. Members with ministerial gifts are identified either by the laity and pastoral staff (inside) or the bishop (outside), given special opportunities for leadership, and then, moved quickly into the itinerant system. We suspect that this kind of straight-line professional socialization was more the case in the SBC and the ECUSA in the past. If that is, indeed, the case, then, it may well reflect the improved social location of the CME, the erosion of cultural clout among the mainline, and a denominational identity crisis in the SBC.

Consistent with organizational and vocational theory, these mentoring congregations are—to varying degrees—“this and that” cultures. Similar to Parks (2000), we found that congregations as mentoring environments are not so much strongly “this” and strongly “that” as somewhat “this” and somewhat “that.” Further, they vary by denomination on which aspect of identity they uniquely balance: the SBC, with a strong evangelism and missions focus (sometimes at odds), favors mentoring cultures that balance justice concerns; the ECUSA, with a more recent history of contested “political correctness,” favors mentoring cultures that balance inclusiveness concerns; and the CME, with a strong human and civil rights heritage, favors mentoring cultures that balance political concerns.

What is striking, and what tends to support Parks and Daloz et al.’s developmentally-oriented approach, is the finding that it is balancing inviting questions and supporting struggle that marks all of these mentoring congregations. Both the quantitative and qualitative evidence reinforce that mentoring cultures invite questioning and support struggle neither “too strongly” nor “too little.” They do it, according to Parks (2000) and Fischer and Alford (2000), in a tensional “balance” or just “enough.” Who does it? Mentors of all stripes and particularly “paid staff” who are the models for professional ministry. In each case, “calling” is truly “multi-vocal”: it arises from the congregation, from below, and also from above, through the “nudging in my heart” (RBC), a process of spiritual revelation (St. Mary), and a call confirmed in practice (Southridge). Especially when vocational (re)direction seems difficult, the culmination of a

double process of discernment is a “double negative” commitment: “you can’t imagine yourself doing anything else.”

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TABLE 1
Variable Construction and Scaling

Primary place of worship is suburban	0=All other places 1=Older suburb around a city; newer suburb around a city
Percent of members age 35 or younger	1= 0% 2=1-10% 3=11-20% 4=21-40% 5=41-60% 6=61-80% 7=81-100%
Number of paid staff	Sum of paid full- and part-time staff if all paid staff position were currently filled
Number of active members	1=1-30 2=31-50 3=51-70 4=71-90 5=91-150 6=151-350 7=351-900 8=901 or more
How well does the congregation encourage a call to ministry?	1=Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite well 5=Very well
Congregation balances inviting questions and supporting struggle with discouraging questions and struggle.	Sum of recoded items "How well does your congregation do each of the following?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite serious questions • Support spiritual and intellectual struggle Items were originally coded in a 5 point scale 1=Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite well 5=Very well And were recoded to a 3 point scale where 1 or 5 = 1; 2 or 4 = 2; 3 = 3 Then the two items were summed.

TABLE 1 (continued)
Variables Construction and Scaling

<p>During the past 12 months, opportunities for community service, outreach, or firsthand mission/ministry experience were offered</p>	<p>Sum of items: “During the past 12 months, did your congregation have any community service or outreach activities?” (Recoded from a 3 item response, to a 2 item response) 0= No; 1= Yes and “In your opinion, which of the following does your congregation do best? (check 3): Firsthand mission or ministry experiences” 0=Not checked; 1=Checked</p>
<p>During the past 12 months, groups for Bible study, prayer, or discipleship were offered</p>	<p>Sum of “During the past 12 months, did your congregation have any of the following programs or activities?” Bible or other study groups (in addition to Sunday school) Prayer groups or spiritual retreats Discipleship programs 1=No; 2=Minor Emphasis; 3=Key Activity</p>
<p>During the past 12 months, groups or mentors to support young or aspiring ministers were offered</p>	<p>1=No; 2=Minor Emphasis; 3=Key Activity</p>

TABLE 2
Bivariate Correlations Among Number of Members Entering Ministry
And Demographic, Identity, and Program Variables

	Full Sample	Episcopal	Christian Methodist Episcopal	Baptist
Demographic Variables				
Place of worship is suburban	.313**	.042	-.048	.401**
Average total worship attendance, 2004	.509**	.432*	.407*	.557**
Number of active members	.472**	.481**	.390	.528**
Number of paid staff	.483**	.430*	.316*	.737**
Percent of members age 35 or younger	.207*	.112	.192	.392**
Identity Variables				
Is congregation more influenced by history and tradition or by contemporary ideas and trends	.181*	.011	.041	.201
Congregation balances supporting struggle with discouraging struggle.	.206*	.074	-.002	.249
Congregation balances engaging others who are different with discouraging engaging others who are different	.124	.490**	.259	-.085
Congregation balances making connections with larger issues to discouraging making connections with larger issues	.139	-.052	.364*	-.038
Congregation balances inviting serious questions with discouraging serious questions.	.210*	-.071	.115	.206
Congregation balances confronting issues of injustice with discouraging confrontation with issues of injustice	.225*	-.077	.043	.316*
How well does the congregation encourage a call to ministry?	.188*	.339	.012	.280*

TABLE 2 (continued)
Bivariate Correlations Among Number of Members Entering Ministry
And Demographic, Identity, and Program Variables

	Full Sample	Episcopal	Christian Methodist Episcopal	Baptist
Program Variables				
Congregation's current financial health	.256**	.141	.432**	.103
Largest worship service features young or aspiring ministers	.314**	.417*	.252	.379**
During the past 12 months, Bible or other study groups offered	.259**	.368*	.189	.337*
During the past 12 months, prayer groups or spiritual retreats offered	.225*	.234	.281	.246
During the past 12 months, discipleship programs offered	.300**	.445*	.132	.276*
During the past 12 months, help for members who want to explore their gifts for ministry offered	.316**	.395*	.268	.389**
During the past 12 months, community service or outreach opportunities offered	.196*	.095	.120	.372**
Congregation offers firsthand mission or ministry opportunities (does best)	.281**	.282	.185	.340*
During the past 12 months, groups or mentors to support young or aspiring ministers were offered	.249**	.357	.206	.459**
During the past 12 months, fellowship or other social activities offered	.251**	.168	.247	.284*
During the past 12 months, student ministry offered	.370**	.084	.346*	.402**
During the past 12 months, children's programs offered	.227*	.115	.176	.308*

*p<.05; **p<.01

TABLE 3
Estimated Net Effects of Demographic, Identity, and Program Variables
On number of members of a congregation that have entered ministry or become
candidates for ministry in the last ten years

N=113	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Model Adjusted R²	.281	.343	.390
Demographic Variables			
Percent of members age 35 or younger	.108	.088	.050
Number of paid staff	.336***	.339***	.331***
Number of active members	.262***	.229***	.163*
Identity Variables			
How well does the congregation encourage a call to ministry?		.147*	.090
Congregation balances inviting questions and supporting struggle with discouraging questions and struggle.		.252***	.212***
Program Variables			
During the past 12 months, opportunities for community service, outreach, or firsthand mission/ministry experience were offered			.079
During the past 12 months, groups for Bible study, prayer, or discipleship were offered			.112
During the past 12 months, groups or mentors to support young or aspiring ministers were offered			.197***
Constant	-2.549*	-7.986***	-9.658***

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01