A study of the interests and abilities of the membership of Wheat Street Baptist Church to support a recreation program

Lillian Ethel Rucker
Atlanta University

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A STUDY OF THE INTERESTS AND ABILITIES OF 
THE MEMBERSHIP OF WHEAT STREET BAPTIST 
CHURCH TO SUPPORT A RECREATION PROGRAM 

A THESIS 
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA 
UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK IN 
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS 
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK 

BY. 
LILLIAN ETHEL RUCKER 

ATLANTA, GEORGIA 
JUNE 1942
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<td>25</td>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the churches have widened their scope of activities to include social as well as religious activities. Many churches are recognizing recreation as a social asset in preparing the individual for life.¹ These churches have included recreation as a phase of their social planning. Moreover, many churches have included committees and departments for the supervision and direction of these recreational activities.

Negro churches have from the beginning followed the general pattern as set up by the white churches.² However, Negro churches have been slow to follow the lead of the white churches in the matter of recreation. There are four reasons for this:

1. The point of view of the membership
2. Lack of space, equipment, and personnel
3. Lack of training on the part of the ministers
4. Lack of finances³

In spite of these handicaps, however, a number of Negro churches have recognized the social advantages of such programs and the social needs for such programs. Of this group, Wheat Street Baptist Church is an example.

¹Rex A. Skidmore, "The Protestant Church and Recreation," Social Forces, XX (March, 1942), 364.
³Ibid., p. 178.
Purpose

The purposes of this study were: (1) to determine the financial ability of a church to support a recreation program, (2) to discover the various interests of a membership in recreational activities, and (3) to ascertain the nature and possibility of a church initiating a recreational program.

Scope

This study was limited to a portion of the adult members of Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia. It was further limited to a portion of those adult members on the financial membership roll of the church. The regular membership roll was not used because of the large number of names it included of older persons who had been relieved of financial obligation to the church. This study included only 300 people because 200 failed to return their questionnaires.

Method of Procedure

A questionnaire was prepared. From the financial roll of 2,000 members, a one-fourth sample of 500 people was taken. Questionnaires were given to the selected people through contacts in group meetings, Sunday School, after church meetings, and on home visits.

Interviews were held with the pastor and the financial secretary to obtain additional information concerning the historical background and present set up of the church.

Acknowledgments

The writer expresses her thanks to the pastor and financial secretary of Wheat Street Baptist Church who cooperated in making this study possible.
A Brief History of Wheat Street Baptist Church

In 1870, a small group of seven people and a minister organized a church, which was called Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. This was the humble beginning of Wheat Street Baptist Church.

The group had no church building, so it met in the pastor's backyard on Howell Street. Being a group determined to go forward, they stayed there only long enough to secure money to buy a lot, on which to build themselves a church. This first building was nothing to boast of, for it was only a plank structure, located on Fort Street, between Decatur and Scofield Streets, but this was their first building and they were proud of it.

By 1880, in the short span of one decade, the church had grown so large that the need arose for a larger church. A lot was purchased on Fort and Old Wheat Streets for $69.00 and a larger church was built. This church, renamed Wheat Street Baptist Church, was their home until 1917, when the great Atlanta fire completely destroyed it. Thus, once again the members had to find a new home.

In 1921, the cornerstone of the present edifice was laid, and on December 31, 1925, the church moved into the first unit or basement. For 14 years, worship services were held in the first unit. On July 1, 1939, a completed Wheat Street Baptist Church threw open its doors to the public. It was a church, 69 years in the making, but worth waiting for.
Wheat Street Church is unique among most Negro Baptist Churches in that it has had only five ministers in 72 years. They were:

- Rev. Andrew Jackson 1870-1874
- Rev. William Henry Tillman 1875-1897
- Rev. Peter James Bryant 1898-1929
- Rev. J. Raymond Henderson 1930-1937
- Rev. William Holmes Borders 1937-

The church has been only mildly adventurous in extending its program. A well baby clinic was inaugurated under Rev. Henderson and continued for a time under Rev. Borders. It has now been discontinued.

The present minister has inaugurated a small recreation program for the boys and girls of the community. The activities included in the program are games, stories, song fests, and parties. The program uses the volunteer leadership of students from the Atlanta University School of Social Work. The church broadcasts a social message to the people of Atlanta one Sunday a month. These broadcasts are sponsored by some community Negro business.

This study represents conscious planning for the future church program and is a definite indication that the church is moving out of what H. Paul Douglass calls the slightly adapted phase of church urbanization, into the internally adapted phase of church urbanization.1

Organizational Set-Up and Program of the Church

Activities.—There are 42 organizations in Wheat Street church. The enrollment of these organizations embraces from 1700 to 1800 members.

1Julia Pate Borders, Upon This Rock, (Atlanta, 1939).

2H. Paul Douglass defines the slightly adapted church as one going forward with no clear idea of where it is going, while the internally adapted church has passed the slightly adapted church, although going in the same direction. 1000 City Churches, (New York, 1926), p. 157.
There are a few organizations designated for special groups, but the majority of the organizations are not defined in terms of sex or age.

Those that might be classified as young people's organizations are:

1. William Holmes Borders Junior Choir
2. Junior Ushers
3. Junior Missionary Society
4. Sunday School
5. Baptist Training Union
6. Boy Scouts

There are two men's organizations. They are:

1. Deacon Board
2. Men Ushers

The women have four organizations. They are:

1. Women Ushers
2. Matron's Circle
3. Mothers' Board
4. Women's Council

Staff.--The minister is the only paid religious worker in the church. His training is better than the average Negro minister's. In addition to his theological training, he has done post graduate work. His salary is between $2,500 and $3,000 yearly.

The church has a policy against having assistant or associate ministers. There have been only two in the church's entire history and they were appointed by special vote. There is also no paid director of religious education, or young people's work. There are 11 other paid workers in the church: five organists, one financial secretary, one treasurer, one statistical clerk, one church secretary, one assistant financial secretary, and one caretaker. Most of the staff has been employed over five years; the financial secretary has been employed for 20 years.

Membership.--There are 3,000 names on the membership roll of the church.
TABLE 1
LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP IN TERMS OF YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- 4.99</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- 9.99</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 300 persons studied, 142 or 47.3 percent had been members for over ten years. This indicates that the turnover among the membership is relatively small. Only a small number have been members less than one year.

Almost one half or 48 percent of the members studied were regular church goers, attending church every Sunday. All of the members stated that they attended church at least once a month.

TABLE 2
ATTENDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularity of Attendance</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Sunday</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Sundays per month</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Sunday per month</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The weekly contributions of the membership averaged $ .35. The largest number, 131, or 43.7 percent, gave from $ .01 to $ .25 per week. This amount is small, but a later discussion will show that the members studied were mainly of low economic status.
The majority of the people stated that they gave from $10.00 to $20.00 a year. These amounts include not only weekly contributions, but dinners, rallies, plays, and various other church affairs.

One hundred and fifteen members, (38.3) participated in two activities; while 72 members, (.24) participated in three activities. Since there are 42 organizations in the church, and most of the members studied participated in so few of these organizations, some of the organizations must have small memberships.

### TABLE 3

**WEEKLY CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Contributions</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$01-.24</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$.25-.49</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$.50-.74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$.75-.99</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1.00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4

**NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Activities</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that Wheat Street Baptist Church has grown considerably since 1870, both in membership, and in activities; but this growth is not
necessarily an indication of progress made. The program of the church has been slightly extended to include a few social activities, such as the now discontinued well baby clinic, and the small recreation program described in the chapter. The value of these social activities cannot be judged by the writer. Most of the members studied had been members of the church over ten years, and had attended church regularly. Their average contribution to the church, weekly, was $0.35 per Sunday.
CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY

Facilities Available in the Physical Plant

The present physical plant, which houses Wheat Street Baptist Church is worth approximately $500,000. It is located in the heart of the Negro business district and is accessible to three street car lines. It contains three floors: basement, main floor, and balcony.

**Basement**—The basement has a general assembly room which seats about 1,000 persons. It contains a speaker's platform, and a choir stand. Opening off the general assembly room are five private club rooms, a kitchen and a dining room. These rooms vary in size. The small assembly room seats 30 persons, while the remaining club rooms seat from 15 to 20 persons each. There are ample toilet facilities on this floor.

The equipment found in the basement include a piano, pews, tables, chairs, and books. The basement has a concrete floor. The kitchen is well equipped with a gas stove, ice box, dishes, sink, and hot water tank. The dining room contains tables and chairs and usually accommodates 60 persons.

The office of the financial secretary is composed of two rooms. One of these rooms, however, is not used. It could be equipped and used for a club room.

The general assembly room and the club rooms are not in use during most of the week. The recreation program now in progress is carried on in the first unit about two days per week. Other activities could be
carried on also. The club rooms could be used for group meetings, and interest groups, both by the church, and by other community agencies.

Main floor.—The main floor contains the church auditorium. This auditorium seats 2,000 persons. It is equipped with a pulpit, pews, piano, organ, loud speaking system, and a baptismal pool. Also on the main floor are two dressing rooms, used for baptismal purposes, the financial secretary's upstairs office, the combination nursery room and secretary's office, and the pastor's study.

The large auditorium could be used for large gatherings and the loud speaking unit makes it ideal for dramatic presentations, concerts, and recitals. The financial secretary's upstairs office is unused, except on Sundays and the pastor's study is not used, except for an occasional group meeting. The pastor uses his study in the parsonage most of the time. These rooms could be put to the same use as the rooms in the basement.

Balcony.—On the balcony are two choir dressing rooms equipped with toilet facilities, lockers, and divans for resting. Also located on the balcony is the Social Service Guild room. This room is used only occasionally, because the guild meets only on call.

All of the rooms in the first unit on the main floor, and on the balcony could be used to a larger extent. Some of them are used once a week for defense classes. Why could they not be used every night for defense classes, or for handicraft, or club meetings, or adult education classes, or other activities that require no more equipment than tables and chairs and books? There seems to be no reason.
Qualifications of the Personnel

The personnel now being paid could not be drafted into service as volunteer leaders in a church recreation program. Most of them are qualified to do only what they do now: stenographic work, clerical work, and maintenance work. The pastor is qualified to direct recreational activities, but he is too busy to undertake this responsibility. Except for the financial secretary and her assistant, the educational status is not above high school. Additional training that they might have, is for the type of work in which they are now engaged. The financial secretary is over 60 years of age, and is not in favor of having the program that is already in the church. The assistant financial secretary is otherwise employed, and is further limited by her household duties after working hours. Training, attitude, and leisure time definitely exclude the personnel as potential volunteer leaders.

Group Work Agencies in the Vicinity of the Church

Six community agencies, members of the Social Planning Council, now exist in the vicinity of Wheat Street Baptist Church. They are: Phyllis Wheatley Y.W.C.A., Butler Street Y.M.C.A., Atlanta Negro Boys' Club, Atlanta Urban League—group work department, Lyons Avenue playground, and David T. Howard community center and playground. The Carnegie Library is also located in this vicinity and offers some group activities. These agencies offer: clubs, classes, special interest groups, educational activities, music and drama, athletics, games, and library facilities.
According to Mr. Kendelsperger's study, these facilities are not adequately coordinated to meet the needs of the community, since this community is one of the critical areas of Atlanta in bad housing, delinquency, poor health, and other social problems. There is duplication in membership in some of these agencies. For example, the boys who are members of the Boys Club go to the Y.M.C.A. also, but it must be remembered that the Boys Club has no swimming pool, so the boys may go to the Y.W.C.A. to swim. This lack of facilities may account for the other duplications in membership among the other agencies.\(^1\)

Since the programs of these existing agencies do not reach the masses, it may be necessary for Wheat Street to duplicate some of their activities. Where there is no indication that duplication is necessary, Wheat Street may work in cooperation with the existing agencies, by availing itself of whatever activities they offer.

There are approximately 10 churches in the vicinity. None of these churches have much in the way of activities for recreation.

**Commercial Amusements in the Vicinity of the Church**

There are a large number of commercial amusements in the vicinity of the church. These include a theatre, several pool rooms, bowling alleys, a night club, several eating establishments that serve as "hang-outs" for the young people, several taverns, and a large number of "juke joints." These amusements draw large numbers of people, and operate in direct opposition with the church. It would be well if the church would try to offset the influences of these amusements, by providing character building activities in the church. These activities will have to be made

---

\(^1\) W. L. Kendelsperger, "Informal Education and Recreation Program of Member Agencies, Fulton and DeKalb Counties," pp. 48-66.
attractive enough to draw the people from the commercial amusements.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

Social and economic characteristics of groups to be served should be of utmost importance to the recreation leader. Certain of these characteristics are conditioning factors of the leisure of the groups.

If the majority of the members of the group are in the low income bracket the amount of money that they can spare for things, other than necessities, will be very small.

The choice of activities of the young people may not be the choice of activities of the older people. The choices of the married group may differ from that of the single group. Differences in occupations, incomes, education, and living arrangements, all have to be taken into consideration in planning for recreation, to insure the representation of interests, in the total program.

It is not the purpose of the writer to go deeply into the matter of social and economic characteristics of the members because time does not permit it.

Ages of the Members

The ages of the members studied cannot be considered representative of the church as a whole because of the large number of older people who were not on the financial membership roll. However, the largest number of the members studied were between 30 and 39 years of age. There were 98 members in this group. This group exceeded by a very small number the next age group. Only eight of the members studied were over 60 years old.
TABLE 5

AGES OF THE MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages of Members</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Attainments of Members

Table six indicated that the majority of the members were educated past the fourth grade. This was surprising in view of the fact that a large number of the questionnaires had to be filled out for the members. The largest number claimed to have gone "to the eighth grade". It was hard to determine whether they meant the end of the seventh, or the end of the eighth grade. Eighty-seven attended high school, while 52 had some college training. Fourteen members had postgraduate or professional training. Since a church's membership is usually composed of a variety of people from all walks of life, the educational attainments of the members were a little unusual. No one was illiterate.

TABLE 6

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS OF MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marital Status of Members

Nearly one-half, or 43 percent of the members studied were married. Twenty-seven percent were single, 26 percent separated or widowed, and only three percent divorced. The large number of single people bears out the fact that a large part of the members studied were young people.

TABLE 7

MARITAL STATUS OF MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8

DEGREE OF HOME OWNERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of ownership</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home owners</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying their home</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Degree of Home Ownership

Over one-half of the members studied lived in rented homes. This was not surprising in view of the fact that Table 10 shows that a vast majority earn between $1-10 a week. More people owned their homes than were buying them. This difference was only eight per cent. This may not be representative of the church as a whole, since a number
of the older people probably do own their homes.

Occupational Classifications of Members

Thirty-four percent of the membership were engaged in domestic and personal service work. This was in keeping with the study made by Mr. Ira DeA. Reid, seven years ago. In his study of 751 families in Atlanta, the majority of them were engaged in domestic and personal service work. Twenty-three percent were in the business and professional field. There were more people in this field, than were in the unskilled and skilled fields.

TABLE 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic and personal service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives and unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weekly Earnings of Gainfully Employed Members

The majority of the members studied earned between five and ten dollars weekly. The mean average income was $8.89 per week. This was low but could be accounted for by the large number of persons who earned from one to five dollars. Only 11 percent of the members earned over $20.00 weekly.

1Ira DeA. Reid, "Incomes and Expenditures of 751 Negro Families in Atlanta, Georgia," (Atlanta, 1934), p. 3.
### TABLE 10

**WEEKLY EARNINGS OF GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly earnings</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-5</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter shows that the majority of the members studied were rather young. All of them had some formal education, therefore, there were no illiterates. Most of the members were renters rather than owners or buyers of homes. This was not surprising in view of the fact that most of them earned between five and ten dollars weekly, and their mean average income was $8.39. The majority of the members studied were engaged in domestic and personal service work, with business and professional, unskilled labor, housewives and unemployed, and skilled work following in the order named.
CHAPTER V

AN INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

Some interesting facts were brought to light by an individual analysis of the membership. Some of these facts were: that the best educated people did not alone constitute the highest paid group, but the majority of the poorest educated people constituted the lowest paid group; that willingness to pay for the desired activities was not based upon ability.

Two hundred and twenty members were willing to pay for the program, while only 80 were unwilling to pay. Ninety-four members were willing to pay from $ .25 to .50 per month for recreation. This represents almost one-half of the entire group. Fifty were willing to pay $1.00 and over; 15 were willing to pay from $ .75 to 1.00; 47 were willing to pay a reasonable amount; while 14 were willing to pay, but not able to pay at the present time.

There were 42 members in the highest income groups. Thirteen earned between $15.00 and $20.00 weekly, and 29 earned over $20.00 weekly. Most of these persons fell almost exclusively into the business and professional, and skilled occupational groupings.

Age Groups

The age group, 30 to 39, was the most outstanding group, both in income and in higher education. Of the 18 persons in this group, 14 had college educations or better. The four exceptions were: a brick layer who made over $20.00 per week, but who had only a fifth grade education; a business man who made over $20.00 per week, but who had only a sixth grade education; a mechanic who made over $20.00 per week, with a high
school education; and a lowly office porter, with an eighth grade education, and a salary of $20.00 per week.

Occupations represented in this group were: Social Work, Stenography, Teaching, Ministry, Medicine, skills, and business.

In the age group, 40 to 49, there were ten persons in the highest income groups. Seven of the people earned over $20.00 per week. They were: four business men, two teachers, and a caterist. A presser, a brick layer, and a painter made $20.00 per week, respectively.

Excluding the teacher, who had done graduate work, the remainder had only high school educations, ranging from two to four years. The 30 to 39 year old group was better educated than the 40 to 49 year old group, but the latter group received about the same rate of pay.

Six of the seven persons in the 50 to 59 year old group made over $20.00 per week. One of these persons, a brick layer, had vocational education in college. There were two contractors in this group, one with a high school education, and one with a college education. A plasterer, a nurse, and a doctor made up the remainder.

The only person who made between $15.00 and $20.00 per week was the manager of a grocery store. He had completed one year in college.

In the 20 to 29 year old group, two people made over $20.00 per week. One, a school teacher, had four years of college work, and the other, a nurse, had two years of college work, and two years of nurse training. The remainder, a painter's helper, two receptionists, and a stenographer, had from two years of high school work to two years of college work. It would have been thought that the younger group would have had the best education, since they have been exposed to it and have
had more opportunities for obtaining it than have some of the older members, but this was not the case. In this age group was found some of the very low educational attainments, and some very low wages.

The group under 20 years of age had only one representative in the higher education—higher income group. This person was a teacher, who made over $20.00 per week, and who had completed four years of college work.

**Occupational Groups**

**Domestic and Personal Servants.**—The majority of the domestic and personal servants made between one and four dollars per week; contributed from one to 24 cents per week to the church, and were willing to pay from $.25 to $.49 per month for recreation. Seventy-five percent of all the domestic people fell somewhere between one and ten dollars per week in income; and contributed somewhere between one cent and $.50 per week to the church. Twenty-two percent of these people were willing to pay from $.75 to $1.00 per month for recreation; as compared to 22 percent of the business people, 22 percent of the unskilled laborers, and eight percent of the housewives and unemployed. None of the skilled group were willing to pay as much as this group of domestic servants.

The amounts that the domestic and personal servants were willing to pay, showed that these amounts were not based upon ability, as much as they were based upon willingness.

Forty-three domestic and personal servants were not willing to pay. Their incomes and contributions were in the same range as their more willing brothers.

**Laborers.**—The laboring group came out five to one in favor of paying for recreation. Their salary range, and their contribution range, were
about the same as those of the domestic and personal service group.

Skilled.—The skilled group came out 100 percent in favor of supporting the program. This was encouraging news, in view of the fact that they were in the higher income group. However, they were not willing to pay more than $ .75 per month for recreation. In proportion to their earnings, this amount was small.

Business and Professional.—When one studies the income and education of the business and professional group, it compares unfavorably with the domestic and personal service group in their attitudes toward recreation. It may be that they have other resources, and interests elsewhere that are out of the reach of the domestic group. The majority of them contributed only $ .50 per week to the church. This was small, indeed, compared to what they earned per week. The majority of them were willing to pay no more than this per month for recreation.

Only eight of the domestic group felt unable to pay for recreation, as compared to one business man, one laborer, three housewives, and one skilled person.

The findings of this chapter indicate that those who have the most, are not those who are willing to give the most. The differences in opinion among the members studied is shown by these four examples: a stenographer earning $20.00 per week, contributing $ .25 per week to the church, is willing to pay for recreation, but does not feel able; a teacher, earning over $20.00 per week, contributing $ .75 per week, and is willing to pay $ 4.00 per month for recreation; another teacher, earning over $ 20.00 per month, contributing $ .25 per week, and is not willing to pay for recreation because she cannot afford it; and a maid, earning $ 5.00 per week, contributing $ .75 per week, and is willing to pay $ .75
per month for recreation.

A huge program of re-education will have to take place among the highly educated, and highly paid people of the church, if they are to be utilized in the recreation program. It would be thought that their superior training would have done this for them, but somewhere along the line, preparation for recreation has been left out.
CHAPTER VI

MEMBERSHIP'S SUGGESTIONS FOR A CHURCH RECREATION PROGRAM

Recreation may be called the physical, mental, or spiritual satisfaction which comes to an individual or group, from participating in certain forms of activities. Such activities are freely chosen and are usually enjoyed during leisure time. They are chosen because the participant seeks self expression or relaxation in their performance.¹

Many ministers of Protestant churches are agreed that the leisure of the people is of direct concern to the church.² This is a far cry from the church attitudes of the past. The early attitude of the church was to frown on leisure time and play activities.³ The idea that play was a form of idleness had such deep roots that it retarded recreation by centuries.⁴ However, our modern industrial society has created forced leisure and the individual has had to find some means of using it. The church can and should have an important place in the leisure of the community. It, like other private institutions, can point the way for the public institutions in the matters of minimum standards, good leadership, and wholesome recreation. It is no longer difficult to apply religious ideals to a recreation program. If the activities contribute to the development of character and personality, and lead to a more

²J. E. Neumeyer, op. cit., p. 324.
³Rex A. Skidmore, op. cit., p. 365.

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abundant life, then they are acceptable to the church. Then too, recreational activities can be utilized by the church to produce wholesome socialized attitudes towards and thus make for better human relationships.\footnote{\textit{J. H. Neumeyer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 325.}}

Christianity stresses the abundant life and brotherhood of men. In no other place can it be better taught than in a church recreation program. This does not mean that the church must now make recreation its chief function, but it must make it a vital part of it.

\textbf{TABLE 11}

\textbf{CHOICES OF MEMBERSHIP IN TERMS OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR A CHURCH TO INCLUDE}\footnote{\textit{The list of activities used in Table 11, were taken from Recreation Year Book Number, (June, 1941), XXXV.}}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur drama</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outing activities</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid classes</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative handicraft</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' clubs</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion groups</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading clubs</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debating societies</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry clubs</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choices of the Membership

Music was the choice of 226 people. The general heading of music was broken down, on the questionnaire, for the purpose of determining
what phases of music were mostly preferred. These phases, in order of preference were: choral groups, community singing, community orchestra, and music clubs.

The educational and religious values of the desirable types of music cannot be over-estimated. Some types of present day music do not have wholesome influences, so they were eliminated. Swing rhythm gospel songs, and juke box music are especially undesirable. Churches have used music for centuries as a part of their worship program. Instrumental music, choral and community singing, as well as congregational singing, verse speaking choirs, and other forms of music, provide opportunities for self expression and wholesome social contacts. Desirable music should be an integral part of any church recreational program.

Amateur drama was the second choice of the group, with 117 members for it. It was broken down into its various phases which were, in order of preference: story hours, children's theatre, plays, festivals, and drama clubs.

There is a lot of potential force in the dramatic presentation of religious themes. The drama can be utilized to get across almost any religious or moral message. It is much more interesting than a lecture and commands much more attention. Drama has been criticized and opposed by the church very strongly. This is due to the fact that the ministers and leaders in the church have not yet been awakened to the possibilities of utilizing it.

Poetry clubs were the preference of the smallest number of persons. Under the heading of other, the members made original suggestions. These suggestions were very interesting and although not checked by a large number, showed a definite need for the inclusion of these
activities. The suggestions and the number suggesting them were: vacation Bible school, five; spelling clubs, four; writing clubs, four; consumer information center, three; and work training, two. The large number of questionnaires that had to be filled out for the members indicated that writing, spelling, and adult education generally, is very much needed in the church.

Types of Leadership Preferred

A majority of the members studied preferred trained leadership, but this majority was not an overwhelming one. The number was rather close, (180-120).

According to Neumeyer, equipment and types of recreation are less important than trained workers. Trained leadership is necessary to stimulate and organize group recreation, and to create interest in the program. This means that the program, however good, may collapse from lack of trained leadership.

E. C. Worman feels that to best serve the interests of the group, the trained leader must have a broad cultural background, and potentialities for growth and development. Therefore, leaders should be chosen with the utmost care. Most churches use volunteer leadership to a large extent, but the same care in selection should be observed by the church.

The National Recreation Association has tried to raise the standards of recreation leaders, by setting forth certain qualifications. These qualifications are: a college education, plus special training and

1Recreation, Year Book Number, (June, 1941), XXXV.

2E. C. Worman, op. cit., p. 475.
experience. Where institutions have qualified people, it will come in
and conduct institutes to give them special training in recreation
leadership.¹

Wheat Street has some members with the basic requirement, a college
education. Among the members studied were 62 with college educations
and graduate work. Most of these persons were teachers, as was shown in
Chapter V. A large number were housewives. From this group could
probably be drawn enough interested people to act as volunteer leaders
in the church recreation program. However, these people would have to
be given special training in recreation leadership, and the value of
recreation, as was shown in Chapter V.

Space and Equipment

A majority of the members felt that the ground floor, including the
club rooms could be used for recreational purposes. This, no doubt, was
conditioned by the fact that it is already in use for just such purposes,
as much as by anything else. These members also indicated a willingness
for whatever equipment was on the ground floor to be used.

Only about one-half of the preceding number were willing for the
entire church to be used, including whatever equipment it had to offer.
A still smaller number thought that the upstairs auditorium was
sufficient for a recreation program.

Membership’s Suggestions as to How the Church
Should Attempt to Hold Young People

The suggestions offered by the members as to how the church should
attempt to hold the young people, were entirely subjective.

¹Recreation - Year Book Number, (June, 1941), XXXV.
Many of the older people lamented the fact that the young people were straying away from the church. They felt that if the church would keep them busy, they would not stray into mischief. They also felt that a recreation program in the church would be all right if it could keep them busy.

It was discussed in Chapter III that there were a large number of commercial amusements in the vicinity of Wheat Street Church. The church is constantly opposed by these amusements. These amusements keep the young people busy, but not at the type of activities that the church would like for them to engage in. Therefore, the church should provide constructive recreation within its walls and try to draw the young people back into the church. It cannot be expected of recreation that it can right all of the wrongs of our society, but it can help to do so.

Other suggestions were by: wholesome recreation, prayer and revivals, Baptist Training Unions, creating more organizations, and social activities. Surprising indeed, was the suggestion that prayer and revivals would hold young people in the church. This method is a glaring failure, as is shown by the existing results. If this method had worked, the older members would not have to lament now over the amount of straying.

Membership's Suggestions as to the Benefits to the Community of a Recreation Program in their Church

A few far sighted people in the church recognized the gaps left by the community provisions of facilities for recreation, and how these gaps might be filled in part by the church. Most of them thought that the greatest benefit the community would receive, would be to keep the
children off the streets and give them some place to play.

Still others thought that providing wholesome recreation for the young people would be the greatest benefit that the community would receive.

Other benefits suggested were: community uplift, closer contact among the members of the community, leisure time activities for the young people, a chance to become better acquainted with the community problems, and an opportunity for self-expression on the part of the members of the community.

Unfortunately, there was no way of determining just what the members had in mind when they checked these suggestions, so that it will have to be assumed that they meant literally what they said.

In this chapter, the members studied, more or less, planned the type of recreation program that they would like for the church to include. This program included a list of activities, and the type of leadership that they wanted to carry out these activities. It was evident that they needed to be educated to the importance of trained leadership. Re-education is also indicated in the matter of the needs of the young people and how the church might attempt to meet these needs. A group of the members studied need to know more about recreation, what it is, and how it works.

There seems to be a lot of potential leadership in the church. A trained leader could coordinate the efforts of these people, and also lend supervision and instruction to them.

Most of the members studied showed some knowledge of the community problems and seemed to want the program in their church to help alleviate some of these problems.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The material for this study was taken from 300 questionnaires that had been given to selected members of Wheat Street Baptist Church. An analysis of this material led to the following conclusions:

1. The church contains a large amount of space that can be used for recreational purposes but the equipment is rather limited.

2. A majority of the members studied were between 30 and 39 years of age and were married. All of them had some formal education, ranging up to eighth grade, generally.

3. Domestic and personal service was the occupation of the largest number and their average income was $8.89 per week. Most of the members studied rented their homes.

4. Almost one half of the members studied had been members of Wheat Street Church over ten years and attended church regularly. All of the members gave a weekly contribution which averaged $ .35 per week, per member.

5. The interests of those studied seemed to center around music and amateur dramatics. All of the members were interested in recreation but had only vague ideas as to what it was and how much it could do. Trained leadership was preferred to volunteer leadership.
6. Finally, all of the members studied showed a willingness to share the church recreation program with the community, and felt that the community would benefit by it.

The above conclusions showed that the members studied were ready, in attitude and favorable disposition, for a church recreation program. However, a program of re-education is needed among the membership generally, and among the higher income groups, especially. This program of re-education would have to be carried out through the use of trained leadership.
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Unpublished Material

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Reid, Ira DeA. "Study of Family Incomes and Expenditures During Week of October 18, 1934." Department of Sociology, Atlanta University, 1935. (Mimeographed).
Name ___________________________ Co-carnation ____________________

Address __________________________ How long have you lived in Atlanta? ______

Do you rent? ______ Own home? ______ Buying home? ______ (Check one)

Education (Check highest grade attended in school)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
Elementary High School College

Other (Specify) __________________________

Age (Check one) Under 20 30-39 50-59
20-29 40-49 60 and over ______

Weekly income (Check one)
$ 1-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 Over 20 ______

Marital status (Check one)
Single Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Number of children
Male ______ Ages ______ Female ______ Ages ______

How long have you been a member of Wheat Street Baptist Church? (Check one)
Less than 1 year 1-5 yrs. 5-10 yrs. over 10 yrs. ______

Means of getting to church: (Check one)
Walk Ride on street car Ride in your own car ______

Attendance (Check one)
Every Sunday ______ 1 Sunday per month ______
2 Sundays per month ______ Less than 1 Sunday a month ______

Do you give a weekly contribution? Yes ______ No ______

How much do you contribute? (Check one)
1-25¢ 25-50¢ 50-75¢ 75¢-$1.00 over $1.00 ______

How much do you estimate that you pay annually into your church? (This includes all donations) ____________________

How many activities do you belong to in the church? ______

Do you feel that additional ones take up too much of your time? ______

What forms of recreation do you like best? (Check your preferences)
Handicraft Outings Games Giving plays ______
Athletics Forums Social Clubs ______
Music Debates Hobby clubs ______

Would you be willing to pay for the recreation you checked? ______

35
How much could you afford? ________________________

Which of these activities would you like for a church to include?
(Check choice)

Creative handicraft ______ Outing activities ______
Athletic activities ______ Camping ______
Amateur drama ______ Gardening ______
Clubs ______ Hiking ______
Children's theatre ______ First Aid classes ______
Plays ______ Adult Education classes ______
Festivals ______ Mothers' clubs ______
Story hour ______ Reading clubs ______
Music ______ Poetry clubs ______
Choral group ______ Others (Please specify)
Community singing ______
Community orchestra ______ ______
Clubs ______ ______ ______
Discussion groups ______ ______ ______
Debating clubs ______ ______ ______

Would you like for your church to include these activities? __________

Do you think a recreation program in a church should be directed by volunteers? ________ By trained workers? ________

Should such workers be paid? __________

Would you be willing to pay for the activities mentioned above? __________

What space in the church could be used for recreation activities?

__________________________________________

What equipment in the church could be used for recreation activities?

__________________________________________

In your opinion, how should the church attempt to hold young people?

__________________________________________

How do you feel that the community will benefit by a recreation program in your church? (Check one)

Keep the children off the street
Provide wholesome recreation for young people ______
Leisure time activities for young people ______
Community uplift
Closer contact among the members
Chance to become better acquainted with the community problems ______
Opportunity for self expression by the members ______
Others (Please specify) __________________________________________
A STUDY OF THE INTERESTS AND ABILITIES OF
THE MEMBERSHIP OF WHEAT STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH TO SUPPORT A RECREATION PROGRAM

Abstract of Thesis

By
Lillian Ethel Rucker

The purpose of this study was to determine the interest and ability of the membership of Wheat Street Baptist Church to support a church recreation program. Questionnaires were given to 500 members selected from the financial membership roll of the church. The data for this study were obtained from the 300 questionnaires returned.

The majority of the members studied were between 30 and 39 years of age and had some formal education, ranging to the eighth grade. Most of them were married. Domestic and personal service was the occupation of the largest group and their average income was $8.89 per week. Most of the members studied lived in rented homes. Almost one half of the entire group had been members of Wheat Street Baptist Church over ten years and attended church regularly. All of the members gave a weekly contribution which averaged $ .35 weekly per person.

The interest of the members in recreational activities centered around music and dramatics. Most of them were rather vague about what recreation was and thought that it could correct the social ills of the community. Trained leadership was preferred to volunteer leadership. All of the members seemed willing to share their church recreation program with the community.

Seventy-three percent of the members studied were willing to pay for a church recreation program while 26 percent were unwilling. The amounts
ranged up to $1.00 per month. These amounts were not based on the individual members' ability to pay.

The findings of the study indicated that the membership was ready for a church recreation programs, in attitude and favorable disposition, but that a program of re-education would have to be undertaken with them.