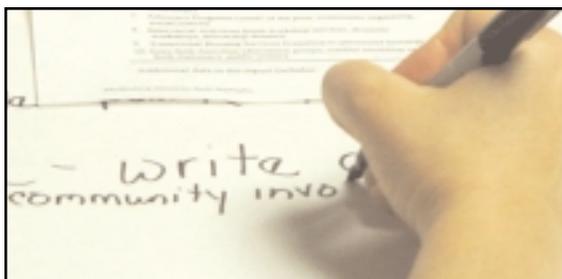




Executive Director Andy Baxter (above) led Mecklenburg Ministries volunteers through the survey Thursday night. Below, scenes during discussion at Covenant Presbyterian.



# Do charity or justice?

## Faith congregations struggle to define role in an ever-needy world

A tiny band of Mecklenburg citizens wrestled last week with an ugly reality: Local action through religious congregations settles for the quick shot and the soothing word – while the heavy lifting of community improvement is going unaddressed.

A survey performed for Mecklenburg Ministries says congregations identify the top three unmet needs of the community as affordable housing, integration and education. Yet the congregations focus on other matters, and even if they had additional resources, wouldn't tackle housing.

MeckMin was formed in 1987 by area clergy in the belief that "Mecklenburg County's diverse religious communities could and should find common ground from which we can speak and act on issues of justice and compassion."

But after a MeckMin meeting last week to review the survey results, Executive Director Andy Baxter was feeling the constraints outlined in the survey.

"I can't spearhead a movement, but at least I can prick people.

"There's no infrastructure.... I don't have buy-in from people in congregations

... for a critical mass." Like all groups, MeckMin struggles just to find times when its supporters can meet.

Baxter says that at high points of congregational activity, as during the civil rights movement, pastors could issue a call, leaflets would be printed, and "it would be done. People would be there. I don't see it now."

If religion was once perceived to be the opiate of the masses, the opiate today is material prosperity, Baxter suggests.

"You can spend all day in creature comforts."

Will people take the key

Continued on Page 5

### Top unmet needs

1. Affordable housing
2. Racial/ethnic integration
3. Education
4. Emergency services
5. Health/mental health

### What they'd tackle

1. Tutoring, mentoring, vocational training
2. Child care, senior services, parenting education
3. Clothing, shelter, food.

# County should retain power to cap school board spending

*The writer is chairman of the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee.*

Promises made by any particular school board are promises by politicians who know they never controlled the capital budgeting process.

When Arthur Griffin was chair he could make all the promises he wished but he could not guarantee who would be elected in the next few years nor that the voters would pass all bond issues presented to them. His were political promises and should be viewed as such.

The majority of the current county commission ran on a fiscal restraint platform and is delivering on that promise. Theirs too is a promise which is only available while they maintain control. (Please note the same voters who elect the school board elect the county commission, so an examination of the voters' message might be in order.)

Thus to complain that a promise made by one set of politicians is being voided by another set of

politicians is complaining about the democratic process we have in this county and state.

The issue, though, is rebuilding the school system, not new schools. Enough new schools can be built for all new students with approximately \$60,000,000 per year which leaves, under the current county commission plan, \$30,000,000 per year for renovations. This should be plenty for a well-managed renovation program.

The problem is the promises made for things which aren't necessary and a maintenance program which has never been funded appropriately.

Even this year the maintenance budget will suffer. In the past, bond money has been used to fill in the gaps, thus increasing the CMSS dependence upon bonds.

Further, the spending spree by the school board has been exacerbated by the county budgeting process which allows any county-funded agency to spend on capital with no regard to the associated debt costs. Thus CMSS has spent

**Continued on Page 9**

## From Readers

### What commissioners won't let schools do is...

*The writer represents District 6 on the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners.*

... According to Tom Cox and others, the cost to build the 23 new schools over the next 10 years is significantly less than the \$900 million planned by the county (\$90 million a year).

Normally, bonds on school construction are done over 20 years (e.g. the term of the bond). As such there is plenty of "capacity" in that annual \$90 million amount to pay for maintenance and other repairs.

What CMS won't be able to do right away are "baseline" standards (the wholesale tearing down of functional schools just because they don't meet some new standard).

That is the difference between the \$160 million CMS wants annually and the \$90 million planned.

Bill James

This journal has only  
9

more issues to publish, based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month. We offer our thanks to the

7%

of people now regularly receiving *Educate!* who have ever helped defray the cost of its publication.

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Kathleen McClain assisted with this edition.

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# Meet candidates Rembert and Dunlap

*Text of introductions presented at an Aug. 14 forum by Wilhelmenia Rembert and George Dunlap, two of the 11 candidates in the November election for three at-large seats on the school board.*

I am Wilhelmenia Rembert, currently serving as the chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, and I come to this position with relevant educational background.

For those of you who do not know, I have an educational degree, actually a doctorate in child development, a master's degree in social work and an undergraduate degree in sociology. So I believe my educational background has certainly prepared me well to serve as a member of the Board of Education. But that's not the only thing.

The other thing is that I also have relevant experience. For the last 24 years I have served in higher education, educating students for the world of work and for even higher education, graduate level work and beyond. And I have valued that work experience because I think that, matched with my educational background, has uniquely prepared me to serve as a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.

Are those requirements for serving? Absolutely not. I just think they have provided me with a unique experience and background to serve in this capacity.

I have lived in Charlotte now for 30 years. My husband and I have two daughters who graduated from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. We believe they were very fortunate. They had a very good education.

I continue to wish to serve on the Board because I am, in fact, committed to assuring a quality education for all children throughout this district. I think we have a moral responsibility, an ethical responsibility, to assure excellence

## 2003 school board election

in education for every child in every school, regardless of where that child attends school, regardless of where that child lives, regardless of that child's socioeconomic or racial/ethnic background.

I think our community has the capacity, it has the resources. I simply think we need to exercise the will to ensure that every child has a quality education.

And that quality education for me requires that every child has access to a high quality teacher who is caring and competent and effective in providing instruction with a rich and engaging curriculum.

I also think it is important for us to have our community, our parents and other community citizens who do not have children in the district, effectively engaged in the education of all children in this district.

I do not believe that the nine members of the Charlotte-

Mecklenburg Board of Education, whomever they are, whoever they are, can provide by themselves a quality education that our children or the students need.

It does in fact require the entire community to look at this elephant, to see the big picture.

So I solicit your support and would entertain any questions you might have about my views, my positions or the positions I have taken on issues. I would ask you and invite you to look at my record, what I have voted for.

I have supported the budget for every year that I've been on the board because that means I support teachers and students. Thank you very much.

My name is George Dunlap. Moreso than the other candidates you see before you, I have eight years of experience as a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. I want you to know that education for me is serious.

It's serious enough because I

Continued on Page 4

## Contact information for at-large candidates

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# Candidates comment on school board

Continued from Page 3

was fortunate enough to have a son who had a great education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. And I want no less than for every child in this community to have that same quality of education.

I'm running for an at-large seat on the Board of Education because, as you've heard already, there are some candidates who I consider to be single-issue candidates, those who are concerned more about the budget, those who are concerned more about test scores.

Any person who seeks a position as an at-large member of the Board of Education needs to have as their utmost responsibility the quality of education of every child who enters our educational institutions. And that's my purpose, that's my focus.

I am so committed to making sure that happens that I myself went back to school to educate myself on the things that I was not aware of.

So I am proud to stand before you tonight and say that last Thursday was my last class. I will be receiving my master's in public administration as my ongoing effort to see to it that children receive a quality education in this community.

As a part of my studies, every research paper I did dealt with education, whether it was what makes a quality teacher, or what it takes to eliminate the student achievement gap. All those things

## Teachers: Better-credentialed, shorter lunch

The National Education Association surveys its members every five years on a wide range of issues. Results are percentages of total responses, unless specified. Excerpts from the report:

	'61	'66	'71	'76	'81	'86	'91	'96	'01
Top degree master's (or 6 yrs.)	23	23	27	37	49	51	53	54	56
Teachers teaching for first year	8	9	9	6	2	3	3	2	3
Teacher's race black	—	—	8	8	8	7	8	7	6
Teacher's race white	—	—	88	91	92	90	87	91	90
Teacher's race other	—	—	4	1	1	3	5	2	5
Teacher male	31	31	34	33	33	31	28	26	21
Teacher single	22	22	20	20	19	13	12	12	15
School level elementary	—	53	49	49	49	47	50	48	53
School level middle/jr. high	—	15	19	20	27	24	20	23	22
School level sr. high	—	24	26	25	33	30	30	29	25
Elementary pupils/class	29	28	27	25	25	24	24	24	21
Secondary pupils/day	—	132	134	126	118	94	93	97	89
Elem. lunch, in minutes	44	41	39	36	34	32	32	31	32
Sec. lunch, in minutes	35	35	34	33	32	32	31	30	32
Wouldn't teach again	11	9	13	19	36	31	22	20	22

### Secondary school teaching assignments

Agriculture	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Art	2	2	4	2	3	2	3	3	3
Business education	8	7	6	5	6	7	4	4	2
English	19	18	20	20	24	22	25	24	22
Foreign language	4	6	5	4	3	4	4	5	5
Health, physical education	8	7	8	8	7	6	8	6	4
Home economics	5	6	5	3	4	3	3	2	2
Industrial arts	6	5	4	4	5	2	2	1	0
Mathematics	11	14	14	18	15	19	15	17	18
Music	2	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	3
Science	12	11	11	13	12	11	13	13	15
Social studies	13	15	14	12	11	14	11	13	15
Special education	0	0	1	3	2	4	5	2	4
Other	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	5	6

— Highlights and the full 364-page report are available in PDF files at [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

I've done as a part of my commitment to see to it that every child receives a quality education.

I solicit your help, your support

in helping me to obtain my objective, which is to be a member of the Board of Education at-large. Thank you.



**OLUNTEER IN YOUR SCHOOLS**

**FOR A RESERVATION, CALL 980-343-6245**



Robert Bayless (center) and Rich Hoard (right) were among those discussing how congregations can collaborate to meet community needs.

## Congregations stop shy of the big ones

Continued from Page 1

step from worship of the great ones of their religious tradition, to following the great ones' call to care for another's life as you would your own?

The MeckMin survey was inspired by the book "Bowling Alone" and a subsequent national survey. In the survey, Charlotte ranked high in charitable giving and congregational activity, but low in interracial trust (results, Page 6). It found most congregational activity supported "bonding" within the congregation. There was less "bridging" activity designed to ease racial, economic and cultural divides in the community.

"It became like, wow, we've got our work cut out for us," Baxter told a group of about 90 Thursday night at Covenant Presbyterian.

"We know that congregations don't want that level of distrust." The survey was designed to paint a "general picture of the shape of congregational outreach."

Finding No. 1: Less than a quarter of Mecklenburg congregations even want to talk about it.

After letters and reminders and cajolery and site visits, 185 congregations took part in the survey. Baxter guesses that's about 23% of Mecklenburg's congrega-

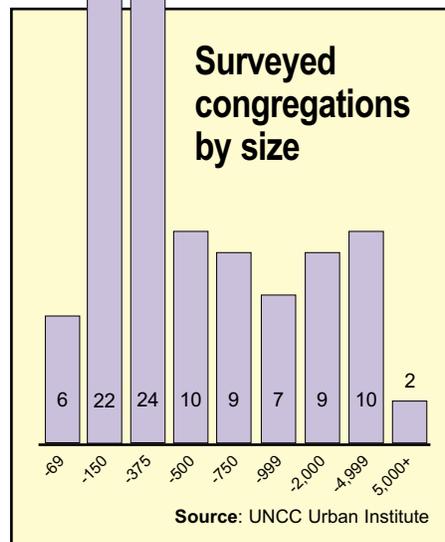
tions.

Community involvement is most highly valued among African-American congregations, then by large congregations, Baxter said.

"It's amazing all the different programs out there that congregations are doing without much fanfare.... If you were to withdraw congregational support from agencies, the social safety net in this community would just be in tatters."

But most congregations focus their efforts on emergency assistance, not the affordable housing, racial integration and education issues they say are the community's most pressing needs.

The largest category of congregational activity is educational services: preschool, afterschool, tutoring and religious educa-



tion. Those efforts do not address the larger education issues raised by the congregations, Baxter said. And some of the programs "have a strong proselytizing feel."

African-American congregations were three times as likely to see education as an unmet need.

White and affluent congregations were twice as likely to say racial integration was a top unmet need. African-American congregations say a barrier to community service is a lack of money. White congregations are more likely to cite a lack of time.

Baxter told a story about how congregations traditionally call on their pastors to be prophets. Talk to the pastors, Baxter said, and they'll tell you that when they speak as prophets they have members of the congregation withdraw financial support.

"It's easy to get in a congregational bashing mode," Baxter said. "Let's try to think that there's a certain amount of good will out there, and it just needs to be channeled."

Taking up that challenge, the group spent a half-hour around eight tables discussing the survey's findings. These themes were among those that emerged:

**Leadership:** Strengthen lay and pastoral leadership. Speak at public meetings. The pastor can't do it all. Mobilize congregation members to be advocates. "Sometimes political action is necessary to solve underlying problems."

**Breaking barriers:** Meet across denominations. Use service work like Habitat house-building as the vehicle to build relationships between congregations. "We really need to have straight talk, instead of 'well, you know' and 'la de da.'"

**Charity:** Encourage apartment owners to hold a rent moratorium. Commit house-of-worship space that is empty Monday through Friday to health agencies and others needing it for workshops.

**Other:** State reforms over the

Continued on Page 6

# Social capital community benchmark survey for 40 U.S. cities

	Giving, volunteers	Faith-based involv'm't	Association involvm'nt	Diversity of friendships	Civic leadership	Social trust	Convent'al politics	Protest politics	Interracial trust	Informal socializing
1	Rural S.D.	Rural S.D.	Seattle	Seattle	Rural S.D.	Rural S.D.	Bismarck	San Fran.	Rural S.D.	Lewiston
2	<b>Charlotte</b>	B. Rouge	Montana	Boulder	Bismarck	Bismarck	Lewiston	Seattle	Lewiston	Kalamazoo
3	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Birm'ham	Birm'ham	Denver	B. Rouge	St. Paul	Montana	Boulder	Bismarck	Bismarck
4	Gr. Rapids	<b>Charlotte</b>	Detroit	Boston	Seattle	York, pa.	Rural S.D.	Denver	N.H.	Detroit
5	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	Bismarck	Rural S.D.	Kalamazoo	Montana	Seattle	Kanawha	Boston	Montana	Indiana
6	B. Rouge	Gr. Rapids	Gr. Rapids	Fremont	Boulder	Montana	Boston	Detroit	Boulder	Montana
7	Atlanta	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Syracuse	N. Minn'olis	Yakima	Gr. Rapids	San Fran.	N. Minn'olis	York, pa.	Yakima
8	St. Paul	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	<b>Charlotte</b>	Minn'olis	Birm'ham	Minn'olis	Seattle	Yakima	Seattle	B. Rouge
9	Bismarck	E. Tenn.	Boulder	Yakima	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Rochester	St. Paul	Montana	Minn'olis	Fremont
10	Cincinnati	Atlanta	Cincinnati	Atlanta	Cleveland	Silicon Val.	Minn'olis	Kanawha	Rochester	Phoenix
11	Kalamazoo	St. Paul	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Phoenix	Cincinnati	Boulder	Yakima	Syracuse	Denver	Syracuse
12	E. Tenn.	Houston	Kalamazoo	Silicon Val.	Kanawha	Lewiston	B. Rouge	Cen. Ore.	Gr. Rapids	Seattle
13	York, pa.	Cincinnati	Yakima	Los Angel.	Denver	Birm'ham	Delaware	Kalamazoo	Syracuse	York, pa.
14	Delaware	Indiana	Delaware	Rochester	N. Minn'olis	Kalamazoo	Detroit	Fremont	St. Paul	Minn'olis
15	Montana	York, pa.	Fremont	<b>Charlotte</b>	Cen. Ore.	Cincinnati	N. Minn'olis	Cleveland	Silicon Val.	Boulder
16	Yakima	Minn'olis	Cleveland	Cen. Ore.	Delaware	N.H.	Denver	Lewiston	Delaware	Cincinnati
17	Los Angel.	Yakima	Cen. Ore.	San Fran.	Syracuse	B. Rouge	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	N.H.	Indiana	Rochester
18	Minn'olis	Delaware	Bismarck	Montana	Gr. Rapids	Denver	Silicon Val.	Minn'olis	Boston	San Fran.
19	Denver	Kanawha	Atlanta	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	York, pa.	Delaware	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	Gr. Rapids	Kalamazoo	Gr. Rapids
20	Detroit	Syracuse	Minn'olis	Delaware	Kalamazoo	Syracuse	Boulder	Chicago	Cen. Ore.	N.H.
21	Fremont	Fremont	B. Rouge	N.H.	Rochester	Yakima	Gr. Rapids	Los Angel.	Yakima	Denver
22	Seattle	Kalamazoo	Denver	Gr. Rapids	<b>Charlotte</b>	Indiana	Syracuse	Silicon Val.	Cincinnati	Delaware
23	Syracuse	Los Angel.	Indiana	Detroit	Fremont	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	Cen. Ore.	E. Tenn.	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Kanawha
24	Birm'ham	Chicago	N. Minn'olis	Indiana	Los Angel.	Fremont	Cleveland	Indiana	Detroit	Chicago
25	Indiana	Cleveland	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	B. Rouge	Detroit	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Fremont	Rochester	N. Minn'olis	Cleveland
26	N. Minn'olis	Delaware	Los Angel.	York, pa.	Indiana	Cleveland	<b>Charlotte</b>	Rural S.D.	Kanawha	E. Tenn.
27	Rochester	Montana	Chicago	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	St. Paul	San Fran.	Phoenix	San Diego	Fremont	Birm'ham
28	Kanawha	Rochester	York, pa.	San Diego	Chicago	<b>Charlotte</b>	E. Tenn.	Bismarck	Cleveland	St. Paul
29	Phoenix	Phoenix	San Fran.	Cincinnati	Lewiston	San Diego	Birm'ham	Cincinnati	Atlanta	Silicon Val.
30	Boulder	Denver	N.H.	Syracuse	N.H.	Cen. Ore.	N.H.	Birm'ham	B. Rouge	Cen. Ore.
31	Houston	San Diego	E. Tenn.	Chicago	Phoenix	Detroit	Indiana	York, pa.	Birm'ham	San Diego
32	Lewiston	Lewiston	Kanawha	St. Paul	Atlanta	Phoenix	Rochester	St. Paul	Chicago	L.A.
33	Chicago	Seattle	Phoenix	Lewiston	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	Kanawha	Kalamazoo	Delaware	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>
34	N.H.	N. Minn'olis	San Diego	Houston	E. Tenn.	Houston	Chicago	<b>Charlotte</b>	Houston	N. Minn'olis
35	San Diego	Silicon Val.	Rochester	E. Tenn.	Minn'olis	Atlanta	Atlanta	Phoenix	San Fran.	Rural S.D.
36	Silicon Val.	Boston	St. Paul	Birm'ham	San Fran.	Los Angel.	Los Angel.	<b>Gr'nsboro</b>	Los Angel.	Houston
37	San Fran.	Boulder	Lewiston	Kanawha	San Diego	Chicago	Cincinnati	Atlanta	E. Tenn.	<b>Charlotte</b>
38	Cleveland	N.H.	Boston	Cleveland	Boston	E. Tenn.	Houston	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>	San Diego	Boston
39	Cen. Ore.	Cen. Ore.	Houston	Rural S.D.	Houston	Boston	San Diego	B. Rouge	<b>Charlotte</b>	Atlanta
40	Boston	San Fran.	Silicon Val.	Bismarck	Silicon Val.	N. Minn'olis	York, pa.	Houston	Phoenix	<b>Winst.-Sal.</b>

Data source: UNCC Urban Institute

## Congregations stop shy of the big ones

Continued from Page 5

next five years will release back into the Charlotte community about 200 mental patients from Raleigh's Dorothea Dix Hospital. Will we be ready to serve them, or will they land in jail? Make

Mecklenburg Ministries the "211" for congregational support – a location of expertise and advice on starting programs and addressing community issues. Some people think working on housing is too political. "We have more issues we need to deal with" than they did in the '60s and '70s.

The group reconvenes in November.

"Go back to people in your

organization or congregation," Baxter pleaded. "Talk about this... about specific ways you might want to get involved." In November, "let's see what we've learned and try to make some plans."

"It would be an amazing thing if, just by opening our doors to each other" congregations could help address the community's key needs.

# Excerpts from MeckMin's survey of faith community

*From "Community Outreach Activities of Faith Institutions in Mecklenburg County: Survey Results" dated August 2003, prepared by UNCC Urban Institute for Mecklenburg Ministries:*

Notably, small, predominantly African-American faith institutions were more likely than their White counterparts to cite lack of money as an obstacle to community outreach.

Conversely, larger, predominantly Caucasian institutions were more likely to cite lack of time as a barrier....

Professor Putnam also found that the social engagement in the Charlotte region represented more "bonding" type of activities than "bridging" activities. In other words, citizens of the Charlotte region use their networks, associations and social engagement patterns more as a way to "bond" with people who are similar to them rather than as a way to "bridge" to people who are different from them.

For example, most giving and volunteering is through the place of worship. Associational involvement is also most often through faith-based organizations and activities. Clearly then, Charlotte's houses of worship are the community's greatest strength in that these institutions are the strongest builders of social capital.

However, Putnam's argument is that they are building social capital within their own sub-group. Charlotte's faith institutions tend to be segregated by race and creed, so the predominance of bonding social capital over bridging social capital may have negative conse-

## 'The need is very great'

*Comments made during the polling process:*

"Churches must become more involved in communities. Many churches can do much more than they are currently doing in the community. In the community that we serve, many people attend other churches, but would never dream of asking for help from them. They do not associate 'their' church with being able to help with their physical needs. Every day we serve people who come all the way across town for a food referral. I am sure they pass many churches. All churches must do more. The need is very great."

"The goal of the church is not to transform the community, but share with individuals how Jesus can transform their lives. The growing influence of lives transformed by Christ then impacts the community. Does the church have a responsibility to its community? Absolutely. Our ministries should be filled with concern, compassion and love. But this is a love that cares too much about the person to just give them bread without telling them about the bread of life."

"Due to our size and budget, at this point, we serve the greater community primarily by assisting other organizations in their efforts."

"It's much harder to reach people because a lot of what we encounter is people wanting money or food but not what we are really trying to offer them, which is a better way of life. Many come here for a handout and they go to many other churches in the area only for that reason."

quences, particularly with regard to inter-racial trust.

Survey results indicate that most of the individual faith institutions' outreach activities are small scale. However, it must be noted that for 30% of the reported activities, respondents either did not know how many people were served or chose not to report this information. For the 70% of activities for which data exists, Charlotte faith institutions' projects generally served 100 individuals or less per year.

Twenty-five statements relating to the quality of education in the county were provided. Most comments focused on either the quality of education or the disparity of test scores. For example, one respondent stated, "Monitoring schools for equity in educational opportunity." This comment represents the opinion that stronger measures should

be taken to ensure quality education across all social classes. A few comments captured in this subject category also referred to a need for initiatives like "tutoring programs" and "vocational training."

However, the most consistent message was the need to focus on improving educational standards.

The results of the survey also revealed a notable trend regarding an organization's racial make-up/socio-economic level and the likelihood of citing the quality of education as a top unmet need. The findings indicate that smaller, predominately African-American organizations are more likely than their White, more affluent counterparts to list education as a primary unmet need in Mecklenburg County.... 31% of African-American institutions, 39% of institutions with a budget of less than \$200,000 per

Continued on Page 8

## Charity vs. Justice

# Excerpts from faith community survey

Continued from Page 7

year, and 46% of congregations with 150 members or less said that quality education was a principal unmet need.

In contrast, only 22% of the survey population as a whole said that education was a top need. It is probable that the small, African-American organizations represent lower socio-economic communities for whom quality of education is a major concern.

However, it is also important to note that less than a dozen (n=11) small, African-American organizations responded to this survey, and as a result, this finding can only be deemed tentative.

Two significant relationships were identified with regard to congregation age and barriers to outreach, although the number of cases in each category is somewhat small.

Among organizations whose median congregation age is over 50 years old or older, 44% of respondents reported lack of support as a barrier to community outreach. This amount is twice that of the 35-49 age group (22%).

The same trend was identified between the older congregations and the inclination to list lack of expertise as a barrier.

The oldest age group was more likely (36%) to list this as a barrier than the 35-49 age group (22%).

Survey respondents were asked, "If you could expand your congregation's community involvement, to which of the following would you be interested in allocating resources?" A list was provided... from which the respondents could choose one or more options.

Fifty-percent or more of the faith-based organiza-

tions would allocate their resources to educational, family, and/or emergency services.

Approximately one-third of the faith-based organizations were interested in affordable housing, counseling services, health-care services, advocacy programs, and inter-racial activities.

The results... are interesting, because they are somewhat inconsistent with the survey results about the greatest "unmet needs" in the Charlotte community. The top three unmet needs were 1) affordable housing, 2) integration of racial/ethnic groups and 3) education.

However, when faith institutions were asked how they wanted to utilize their community outreach dollars, only one of the top three unmet needs, i.e. education, was the top priority for allocation of resources.

Affordable housing was fourth on the list and inter-racial activities were eighth.

The objectives of the "Raise the Social Capital Project" survey were to ascertain how extensive faith-based community involvement was in Mecklenburg County and to assess whether faith institutions were using their community involvement activities as opportunities to "bond" with similar demographic groups or alternatively as opportunities to "bridge" to dissimilar people or communities.

The present study found that

Charlotte's churches, temples, and synagogues engage in both "bridging" and "bonding" social capital. However, bridging activities tend to focus on established nonprofit networks, such as Crisis Assistance Ministry, Loaves and Fishes, and Habitat for Humanity.

In contrast, the grassroots activities of many local faith institutions tend to be small scale and are more likely to reflect "bonding" types of activities.

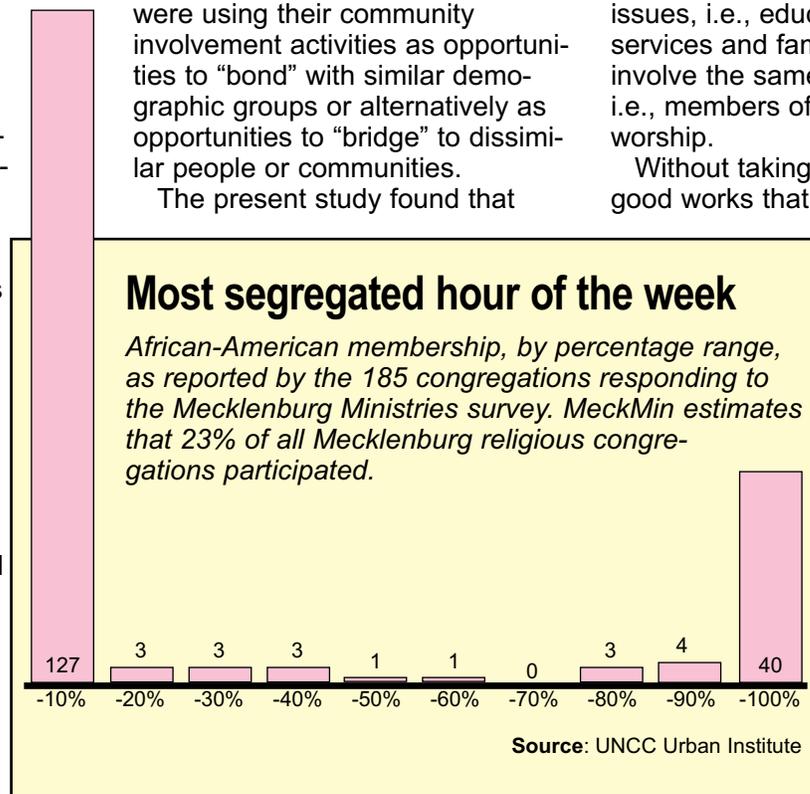
Of all the grassroots initiatives reported on this survey, less than half involved any sort of collaboration, not to mention collaboration with dissimilar individuals or groups (i.e. a different denomination, race, socio-economic background or sexual orientation).

In sum, Charlotte's houses of worship are a leading source of community involvement. Faith institutions provide anywhere from five to one hundred volunteers per outreach activity. For approximately one quarter of the grassroots/individual projects reported in this study, congregations contributed more than \$20,000 to each project.

However, these projects tend to revolve around the same types of issues, i.e., education, emergency services and family services and involve the same types of people, i.e., members of one's own place of worship.

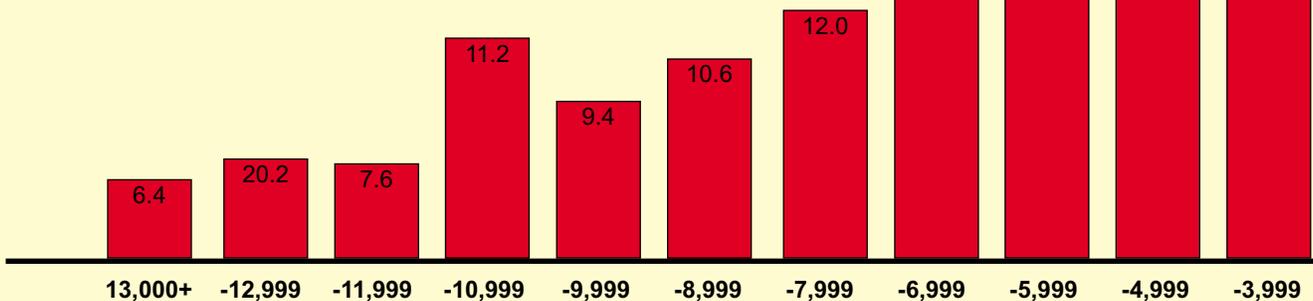
Without taking away from the good works that are currently in

place, the results of this study suggest a need for more "out of the box," collaborative initiatives, particularly with regard to affordable housing, racial understanding and education – the top unmet needs in our community.



## More poor kids = lower school spending

Chart shows data for U.S. districts with more than 1,000 children. Left bar, for example, indicates that districts spending \$13,000 or more per pupil have 6.4% of their students living in poverty. Right bar shows that districts spending less than \$4,000 per pupil had an average of 22.6% of their students living in poverty.



– From “What Research Says about Unequal Funding for Schools in America” by Bruce J. Biddle and David C. Berliner. Data from the Common Core of Data for 1995, School District Data Book, National Center for Education Statistics (2000a), covering districts enrolling 1,000 or more students that year. Student poverty data from 1990 Census School District Special Tabulation component found in same source. Full report may be downloaded at [www.WestEd.org/policyperspectives](http://www.WestEd.org/policyperspectives) or <http://edpolicyreports.org>.

## County should cap schools spending

Continued from Page 2

billions of dollars on capital in recent decades but the associated debt service is not part of their budget so they ignore those costs and try to continue spending as if tax money is free.

Well, to them it is. They spend and the county commission has to answer to the taxpayers about tax rates and tax bills when half of their budget is spent on the schools.

All of which is why, when a member of the Education Budget Advisory Committee, I recommended the county allocate to CMSS half of all county revenue and let CMSS decide how to spend it. This would include debt service, operations and maintenance.

But as CMSS is notorious in not taking care of maintenance properly, I recommended, as has the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee, that the county fund maintenance separately so we are

more assured maintenance of our capital assets will occur properly.

This idea makes CMSS responsible for their own budget. If the county changes ANY tax rate, then 50% of the change accrues to CMSS. CMSS’s decision is whether to spend the increasing (so long as Mecklenburg is growing) money on buildings, teachers or other.

At that point, for all intents and purposes, CMSS has its own taxing authority, but a limit is set by the county commission. Then the school board can promise anything they want and have the authority to fulfill that promise, so long as the supporters of the idea maintain control of the school board.

Lewis Guignard

## New group wants schools built now

A group calling itself FUME (Families United for North Mecklenburg Education) has a planning meeting scheduled for Monday at 7 p.m. at Huntersville’s town hall.

“This is not intended to be a gripe session,” says an e-mail announcement, “but a meeting to develop a concise action plan to get our message heard.”

The message is about overcrowding and a CMS building plan that won’t address the crowding issues quickly enough. County leaders may slow the plan even further to avoid raising taxes (see letters, Page 2).

In a possible reference to administrative and school board efforts to ease crowding by filling unused seats south of I-85, the organizers write, “We want our children to attend schools in Northern Mecklenburg County. We are proud of our current schools, our excellent staff and teachers and most importantly our children, but the schools are busting at the seams with no apparent end in sight.”

## Briefs

**Title VI complaint:** The Florida state conference of the NAACP filed a complaint last week with federal regulators, accusing Florida of racial bias in its schools. The complaint covers student assignment; access to gifted, advanced-placement and special education programs; testing, dropout prevention and graduation policies; staffing policies; and unequal financing of school districts. The Miami Herald quoted Harvard desegregation expert Gary Orfield as saying the Office of Civil Rights had, since the 1960s, rarely imposed what the NAACP seeks: a freeze on funding until corrective action is taken.

[www.miami.com](http://www.miami.com) [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

**Education cuts:** The Senate was scheduled this week to take up a White House education budget bill that cuts \$200 million from current spending, according to The New York Times. The cuts include cuts to ESL, migrant education, teacher training, and eliminate a high school dropout prevention program and the Thurgood Marshall Scholarships.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

**Music takes a hit:** Music programs are being shelved in districts both rich and poor, the Christian Science Monitor reported. It also quoted Texas drug abuse commission research showing that “students who participated in band or orchestra reported the lowest use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs.”

[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)

**Out-of-pocket:** The average first-year-teacher spends about \$700 on classroom supplies, according to research firm Quality Education Data, the Washington Post reported.

[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

**Go it alone:** In a letter to the

## DidYaHear?

*Reports from Educate! readers:*

● Lunch at Vance High described: Twenty are waiting to use the vending machines. There’s a crush at the food lines. And kids are eating while standing.

● Hopewell High “... is bursting at the seams. I don’t care what anyone says, it simply is not a healthy environment for students, teachers or administrators.”

– *Send intelligence to [swannfello@aol.com](mailto:swannfello@aol.com)*

editor, Larry Vigon, a Chicago school council teacher representative, suggested states avoid the excesses and impossibilities of No Child Left Behind by refusing federal assistance. “This would place a huge burden on taxpayers, but there would be major benefits. School districts would not have to spend money in order to comply with federal standards, and it would empower people at the local level to do what they are supposed to be doing, which is to run their own public schools.”

[www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com)

**Small high:** Small high schools in San Francisco get \$1,000 per student more for the first three years. But the key financing secret, the Chronicle reported, is labor savings: The small schools, where teachers know each student well and act as counselors, will have no vice principals, counselors, truancy officers and disciplinarians.

[www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)

**Plagiarism redefined:** In a Rutgers survey of 18,000 students on 23 college campuses, half the respondents said that cutting-and-pasting material from the Internet directly into their own work without citing the source is not cheating, the Star-Ledger reported. Admitting the practice

were 63% of business majors, 60% of education majors, 59% of journalism and communication majors and half of science majors.

[www.nj.com](http://www.nj.com)

**Play or pay:** The Los Alamitos Unified School District is asking parents of absentees to donate \$40, the amount lost in state per-diem funding whenever a student is absent, the Los Angeles Times reported. Another California district that has made such appeals for some years recoups half its losses through parent donations.

[www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)

**Pushing ahead:** In an article for Principal Leadership, Kay Woelfel says overage youth are pushed back on track at Rhode Island’s 130-student Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program not through remediation but with acceleration. Half the students master three grades in two years, and most of the rest accomplish a year’s worth of work in one year, a previously unattained goal. Woelfel quotes College of Charleston professor Christine Finnan as saying “acceleration is an answer – compact the curriculum; handle the basics; and then go deep.”

[www.nassp.org/publications/pl/pl\\_backontrack\\_0503.cfm](http://www.nassp.org/publications/pl/pl_backontrack_0503.cfm)

Continued on Page 11

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## Briefs *continued*

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**Bathroom access:** Young children up to third grade may not have developed sufficient bladder control to stay healthy under school policies, HeathDayNews reported. A recent study found 69% of kindergartners were allowed free access to the bathroom, but numbers dropped quickly: 40% at first grade, 35% by second grade and 25% by third and fourth grade. Between 5% and 15% of school-age children deal with incontinence.

[www.healthcentral.com](http://www.healthcentral.com)

**No Child tutoring:** Last year in New York City, according to the Times, about a quarter-million children in 312 of 1,200 city schools were eligible under No Child Left Behind for tutoring services. Only 30,333 or 12.5% registered for the service, and only 3,640 received outside tutoring service, with the rest depending on "the very school system that had already failed them." Less than half the available federal tutoring money was used.

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

## Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

- 4 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., 11th floor conference room, Government Center.
- 4 State Board of Education chair Howard Lee and State Supt. Mike Ward continue a Charlotte visit, over breakfast with principals at Westin Hotel, 7:30-9:00, then with school visits at Smith Academy (9:30), Montclair Academy (10:45) and Westerly Hills (12:15).
- 6 District 6 parent leaders meeting, 9 a.m., Community Room, Matthews Presbyterian Hospital.
- 8 Lisa Graham Keegan, former Arizona schools superintendent and former Republican Women Leaders Forum's Educator of the

Year, "The Abyss Gazes Also: Staring Down the Face of the Opposition in Education Reform," 6:30 p.m. reception and dinner, Charlotte City Club, 121 W. Trade. Sponsor: Lindalyn Kakadelis' N.C. Education Alliance within the John Locke Foundation. For \$35 tickets: [www.johnlocke.org/events/event.html?id=54](http://www.johnlocke.org/events/event.html?id=54)

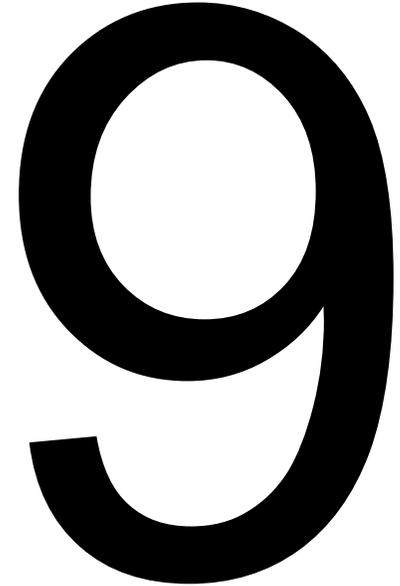
- 9 School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room, Education Center, 701 E. 2nd St.
- 12 Equity Committee, 8 a.m., Board Room.
- 12 Grand opening of City West Commons, West Boulevard and Remount Road, 5-8 p.m. A collaborative effort involving city, chamber and community development corporations.
- 15 School board work session on student assignment, 5 p.m., Board Room. Not televised.
- 16 Bond Oversight Committee, 7:30 a.m., Building Services, 3301 Stafford Drive.
- 16 Joint lunch forum of Mecklenburg elected leaders, Noon, Government Center, room 267.
- 16 Board Policy Committee, 3:15 p.m., Room 414, Education Center.
- 17 Education Budget Advisory Committee, 7:30 a.m., 11th floor conference room, Government Center.
- 18 Finance, Capital & Facilities Committee, 4 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 23 Board Curriculum Committee, 3 p.m., Board Conference Room.
- 23 School board meets, 6 p.m., Board Room.

### OCTOBER

- 25 "Do Children/Youth Need Our Time?" sponsored by Parents on the Move, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., UNCC Cone Center. Information, Blanche Penn, 704-890-4101.

### NOVEMBER

- 8 Education Fair, exhibits by area nonpublic, charter and public schools, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Merchandise Mart.



Based on the funds on hand at the beginning of this month, this journal will be able to publish just 9 more issues.

A community journal must have the support of its readers. Are you doing your part?

To make a tax-deductible donation, send your check to The Swann Fellowship, 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204-2410.

Or if you prefer to donate online or anonymously, go to [www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org). Use keyword Swann Fellowship.

Thank you