



# **The Role of the Church in the Program for the Rural Carolinas**

**Chapin Hall Center for Children  
at The University of Chicago**

**on behalf of The Duke Endowment**

**May 2005**

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## **From The Duke Endowment**

We entered new ground while traversing old trails. The Endowment has been working with rural churches and rural hospitals since its inception and for over 80 years. We take this work very seriously.

Working in concert with our traditional beneficiaries, in August 2001, the Board of Trustees of The Duke Endowment approved the creation of the Program for the Rural Carolinas, an effort to help rural communities in the Carolinas develop their economic assets. The rural program was a three-year initiative and operated on the principle of helping traditional Endowment beneficiaries develop partnerships with other agencies in their communities to work together on a common goal. We believe our beneficiaries and their work will prosper when their communities experience healthy growth and economic stability.

This program was divided into two parts: Option 1, for rural communities demonstrating the ability to undertake large-scale collaborative efforts to energize community development and strengthen economic vitality, and Option 2, for rural communities that choose to undertake innovative smaller-scale projects with fewer partners but still with the potential for economic and community impact. Both groups received direct grants and assistance from the Endowment, as well as coaching, skills training and other assistance from MDC Inc., the Chapel Hill-based economic research and workforce development agency that is the Endowment's partner in managing the program.

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago was another partner. They worked with participants in the Program – the sites, The Duke Endowment, and MDC – to establish a way to learn systematically from the planning and implementation of Program activities and to assess the successes and challenges the Program encounters. This learning and assessment provided information and analysis useful to participants as they refined and implemented their work and, potentially, to inform people and organizations working in other communities.

The Endowment selected 22 sites that received funding in 2002. Two sites withdrew in 2003 and 2004. Twenty sites participated through 2005, 14 sites are in a second phase with a focus on sustainability. The program will end in 2007. We learned much from this program and want to share this information with those interested in helping rural communities develop their economic assets, how rural churches and hospitals can have a role in this work and lessons we learned about managing a program of this scale.

Sincerely,

Eugene W. Cochrane, Jr.  
President

Toni L. Freeman  
Director of Project Research and Evaluation

May 2006

## Participating Programs

The Endowment received 93 completed applications for the program, 57 from North Carolina and 36 from South Carolina. Staff members from the Endowment and MDC reviewed applications and made site visits to the communities submitting the most promising proposals we compared findings in a series of meetings and conference calls. In June 2002, Trustees of the Endowment selected 22 sites that would receive funding under the program. Two sites withdrew by 2005 and 14 sites are in the final phase of the program that will end in 2007. A complete list of the participating beneficiaries and their programs is in Appendix A.

Beneficiary	Service Area County
Allendale County Hospital	Allendale County, SC
Calvary Memorial United Methodist Church	Greene County, NC
Columbus County Hospital	Columbus County, NC
Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church	Georgetown, SC
Greenville District United Methodist Church	Beaufort County, NC
Hildebran United Methodist Church	Burke County, NC
Hinton Rural Life Center	Cherokee, Clay, Graham & Swain Counties, NC
Hot Springs Health Center	Madison County, NC
Hyde County Cooperative Parish (United Methodist Church)	Hyde County, NC
Isaiah United Methodist Church	Colleton County, SC
Maria Parham Hospital	Vance County, NC
Marion County Medical Center	Marion County, SC
North Wilkesboro District United Methodist Church	Alleghany, Ashe & Wilkes Counties, NC
Onslow Memorial Hospital	Onslow County, NC
Pender Memorial Hospital	Pender County, NC
Pilmoor United Methodist Church	Camden & Currituck Counties, NC
Pinetop United Methodist Church	Edgecombe County, NC
Randolph Hospital	Randolph County, NC
Roanoke Chowan Hospital	Bertie, Gates, Hertford & Northampton Counties, NC
The Rockingham District United Methodist Church	Robeson County, NC
Shady Grove United Methodist Church	Lower Orangeburg & Upper Dorchester Counties, NC
Snow Hill United Methodist Church	Stokes County, NC

## **Introduction to the Chapin Hall Learning Project Working Memoranda March 2006**

One of the products of the Chapin Hall Learning Project is a series of Working Memoranda that serve as a vehicle for dialogue about what the Program for the Rural Carolinas (PRC) is accomplishing, what challenges it is facing, and what strategies might help to address these challenges in order to maximize impact. This Introduction describes the purpose of the Working Memoranda, how they were developed, and what they have focused on.

### **What is the purpose of the Working Memoranda?**

The goal of the Working Memoranda is to provide useful information and analysis designed to stimulate mutual reflection and learning about key questions and issues arising as PRC evolved. As expected, significant variation existed across the original 23 (now 20) PRC sites in their histories and contexts, strengths and challenges, and in the local opportunities on which they had to build. Our analysis was at the cross-site level whereby we aimed to draw from the unique experiences of individual sites to identify larger patterns, themes, and lessons. Our focus on learning rather than on assessment positioned us to be learning partners rather than evaluators, although we hoped that the issues covered in the Memoranda helped to shape each site's own self-evaluation.

The Working Memoranda are conceptualized as a collaborative effort, so we periodically asked all of PRC's stakeholders what questions they wanted the Memoranda to address. When we completed a Memorandum, we issued it in draft form so that everyone had an opportunity to review and provide input before it was finalized. We encouraged the sites to review the draft to see where their experience was consistent or not with the narrative: what was the evidence for their assessment? What other confirming or competing points or lessons on the topic could they contribute? What examples could they provide to help deepen the learning from PRC?

Because our aim was to capture the learning along the way, each Memorandum should be understood in the context of the particular stage of PRC's development in which it was released. Sometimes information was updated in later Memoranda and sometimes the same issue was treated quite differently in Memoranda that came out at different times.

### **On what data are the Working Memoranda based?**

The Working Memoranda are based on a number of sources of data collected over a three-year period starting in April 2003: at least two site visits annually to the Option 1 sites, during which Learning Project staff attended team meetings and community events and interviewed team members, staff, local officials, program participants, and other observers. We also read site materials, communicated with team members and staff by phone and email; attended learning cluster workshops and annual cross-site learning institutes; administered surveys; talked periodically with MDC staff and coaches; and interviewed relevant program staff at The Duke Endowment.

## **Who is the audience for the Working Memoranda?**

PRC teams, staff and other local stakeholders are a primary audience for the Working Memoranda. Other key audiences include The Duke Endowment and MDC. Finally, the memoranda may also be of interest to other practitioners, funders and policymakers concerned with rural economic development, community building, and the role of philanthropy in community change. A list of the working memoranda topics is in Appendix B.

### **Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago**

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## **The Role of the Church in the Program for the Rural Carolinas May 2005**

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### **Introduction**

Rural Methodist churches and rural nonprofit hospitals have long been beneficiaries of grant programs of The Duke Endowment (TDE). The grant programs have worked largely to strengthen these key institutions, build new facilities and services, and support their leadership. The Program for the Rural Carolinas (PRC) presented rural churches and hospitals with a different kind of opportunity, inviting them to take on a lead role, including that of fiscal agent, for an ambitious community economic development initiative. The hope was that these institutions could be leaders but not be in charge and that they could produce results but share that responsibility and credit with a range of other community partners, all of whom would work to sustain the community change process after TDE support ended. This was definitely not business as usual for rural churches and hospitals.

This Working Memorandum examines the experience of the eleven Endowment-eligible United Methodist Churches or church-related entities participating in PRC.<sup>1</sup> Our focus is on the role church leaders (in most cases, pastors) and their UMC institutions have played in PRC and the impact of PRC on these institutions. The Memorandum is based primarily on interviews with the pastors of Option 1 and Option 2 church-led teams. While many PRC teams have engaged leaders and volunteers from other religious institutions in the community, the focus here is on the Endowment-eligible UMC institution because we want to explore the opportunities and challenges they experience as potential forces or vehicles for community economic development.

The Memorandum begins with a look at the backgrounds and characteristics of the participating UMC institutions. Then we turn to the roles that the churches and their leadership have played so far in PRC, including a discussion of the challenges pastors report in engaging their congregations. This is followed by a summary of the impact that pastors suggest PRC has had on their UMC institutions. Finally, the Memorandum ends with a discussion of some emerging ideas and strategies that church leaders suggest could help the rural church become an increasingly effective partner in community economic development.

### **Who Are the Churches Participating in PRC?**

The eleven PRC sites with UMC-related fiscal agents include seven that are led by individual churches, three that are District-led, and one that is a nonprofit associated with the UMC. The Table on the next page lists the eleven sites and the individual leader we interviewed for this Memorandum; profiles the congregations of the seven churches; and provides some demographic information on the county in which the UMC institution is located. All but the two UMC churches in South Carolina had previous grants from The Endowment, largely to support building projects or the church's role in flood relief.

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<sup>1</sup> An additional church site, Duncan Memorial UMC, is not participating in PRC's third year and is not included in our sample.



**TDE-Eligible UMC Institution Profile**  
**February 2005**

	UMC Institution			Population						Unemp.	Educ.
	Pastor/ Church Lead Interviewee	# of Mem.	Predom. Racial Comp.		Racial/Ethnic Composition						
PRC Sites				<i>Total Pop.</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Amer. Indian</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hisp.</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Adults w/o HS Ed.</i>
<b>Beaufort County</b> (Greenville District Office of the United Methodist Church)	<b>Tim Ware<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>44,958</b>	68.4%	29.0%	0.2%	0.2%	3.2%	7.4%	25.0%
<b>Burke County</b> (Hildebran United Methodist Church)	<b>Wade Ogle</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>89, 148</b>	86.0%	6.7%	0.3%	3.5%	3.6%	6.7%	32.4%
<b>Camden/Currituck</b> (Pilmor Memorial United Methodist Church)	<b>Scott Wilson- Parsons</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>White</b>								
Camden County				7,863	80.6%	17.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%	2.9%	17.9%
Currituck County				20,834	90.4%	7.2%	0.5%	0.4%	1.4%	2.5%	22.4%
<b>Colleton County</b> (Isaiah United Methodist Church)	<b>Eliza Williams<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>50-60</b>	<b>African Amer.</b>	<b>38,264</b>	55.5%	42.2%	0.6%	3.0%	1.4%	7.6%	30.4%
<b>Far West</b> (Hinton Rural Life Center)	<b>Clay Smith<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>54,034</b>							
Cherokee County				24,298	94.8%	1.6%	1.6%	0.3%	1.2%	4.6%	26.7%
Clay County				8,775	98.0%	0.8%	0.3%	0.1%	0.8%	3.3%	23.5%
Graham County				7,993	91.9%	0.2%	6.8%	0.2%	0.8%	7.4%	31.6%
Swain County				12,968	66.3%	1.7%	29.0%	0.2%	1.5%	6.3%	29.5%
<b>Greene County</b> (Calvary Memorial United Methodist Church)	<b>Claire Clyburn<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>300</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>18,974</b>	51.8%	41.2%	0.3%	0.1%	8.0%	5.4%	34.6%
<b>Hyde County</b> (Hyde Charge)	<b>Ken Davenport</b>	<b>25-70</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>5,826</b>	62.7%	35.1%	0.3%	0.4%	2.2%	6.6%	31.6%
<b>Lower Orangeburg/Upper Dorchester</b> (Shady Grove United Methodist Church) <sup>1</sup>	<b>John Elliott</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>African Amer.</b>	<b>187,995</b>							
Orangeburg County				91,582	37.2%	60.9%	0.5%	0.4%	1.0%	4.4%	28.5%
Dorchester County				96,413	71.0%	25.1%	0.7%	1.1%	1.8%	11.6%	46.3%
<b>Northwest</b> (The United Methodist Church - North Wilkesboro District)	<b>Alan Rice<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>100,693</b>							
Alleghany County				10,677	95.7%	1.2%	0.3%	0.2%	5.0%	5.9%	32.0%
Ashe County				24,384	97.2%	0.7%	0.3%	0.2%	2.4%	5.3%	31.4%
Wilkes County				65,632	93.0%	4.2%	0.1%	0.3%	3.4%	6.0%	34.0%
<b>Robeson County</b> (Rockingham District UMC)	<b>Ed Morrison<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>123,339</b>	32.8%	25.1%	38.0%	0.3%	4.9%	8.0%	35.1%
<b>Stokes County</b> (Snow Hill United Methodist Church)	<b>David Childers</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>44,711</b>	93.4%	4.7%	0.2%	0.2%	1.9%	5.1%	26.8%

The Population and Education data are from the 2000 United States Census Survey. The 2004 Unemployment data are from the North and South Carolina Employment Security Commissions.

<sup>1</sup> Although PRC focuses on an economically distressed region within the two counties, these data cover the two counties in their totality.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Ware is a lay member of the First United Methodist Church in Washington, NC and serves as chair of BCPRC.

<sup>3</sup> Eliza Williams is the chair of the Colleton County PRC initiative and longtime lay member of Isaiah United Methodist, which is serviced by a part-time pastor.

<sup>4</sup> Clay Smith is the Executive Director of the Hinton Rural Life Center, which focuses on small membership churches within the United Methodist Church in the Southeast.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Clyburn was interviewed for this Memorandum but has since left her position

<sup>6</sup> Alan Rice is the Superintendent, North Wilkesboro District United Methodist Church, which encompasses 8 counties, including 3 PRC counties.

<sup>7</sup> Ed Morrison is the Superintendent, Rockingham District United Methodist Church, which encompasses 3 counties, including Robeson County.

The Table indicates the substantial variation among the UMC sites. The seven churches represent tremendous diversity in history, size, and resources. One has over 700 members, while others have 25-70 people in their congregations. One church is 20 miles from the nearest grocery store, while another is located in an area that is rapidly becoming suburban. Several churches date back to the 1800s, and some have a much shorter history. Most pastors work in a single church while one, Ken Davenport in Hyde County, has four churches. Two of the seven churches are African-American, while the others are largely white. Some churches, like Isaiah UMC, do not have a full-time pastor who lives in the community, so we interviewed a respected church layperson, Eliza Williams, who also serves as PRC's chair.

The three UMC District Offices that serve as PRC fiscal agents also function differently in PRC. Although it was represented early on by a member of a rural church in the area, the Greenville District Office has not been substantially involved in or represented on PRC's team. In this case, we interviewed Tim Ware, PRC's chair and a lay leader of a UMC church based in the county seat.<sup>2</sup> The District leaders from the North Wilkesboro District and the Rockingham District, however, have been very involved in PRC, both sitting on the boards and providing leadership and access to church resources and facilities. The final UMC-related PRC site, the Hinton Rural Life Center, has also been substantially engaged in PRC: Hinton's Executive Director sits on the Far West team and Hinton provided space to the Far West team until recently when the team moved its office to another location as part of an intention to become an independent nonprofit organization.

In addition to the different ways in which the UMC sites structured their involvement in PRC and the different capacities they developed to get the work done, the sites varied considerably in their pre-PRC relationships to the community. Almost all of the churches had sponsored some kind of church ministry within their membership, such as visiting the sick or helping elderly members with home repairs. Most of these churches also had active programs in the community, such as food pantries, youth programs, or helping families hurt by hurricanes or floods. Several had long histories of providing community services such as housing repairs. The few churches that were not active in the community at PRC's inception either had had little capacity to do so or had not articulated or prioritized the link between church's mission and community work.

Although community ministry was not new to many of the UMC sites, PRC's focus on employment and asset development was. Few of the churches had any experience with the language, the players or the programs in this area. Further, most of the community ministry they sponsored had been framed as charitable, "doing for" work, as compared to PRC's emphasis on asset development and "doing with" people left behind by the economy.

## **What are the Churches' Responsibilities in PRC?**

### ***The Role of Fiscal Agent***

A key role performed by the UMC institution is receiving, managing, and reporting on all of PRC's finances. All our respondents reported that their institutions have performed this role

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<sup>2</sup> Like many other teams, Beaufort PRC's board includes active church leaders from other denominations. Our focus here, however, is on the role of the Endowment-eligible UMC institution.

satisfactorily either in-house or by contracting to another institution to do it. In one case, the pastor carried out the fiscal agent responsibilities himself, *“Every bill, every receipt comes through me ... we don’t have any paid staff, so everything is volunteer, which makes it difficult to get the work done.”* Although the role of fiscal agent clearly requires resources and, in some cases, substantial time on the part of church leadership, **PRC’s experience demonstrates the willingness and capacity of participating churches to take ultimate responsibility for managing the finances of a grant program even when the church is not the primary beneficiary.**

A number of pastors reported that one of the challenges of being the fiscal agent was that their congregations had initially understood that the funding was directly for their church. Some had participated in TDE building initiatives and assumed that this grant would be the same as the others. As one pastor reported, *“The shock to the church was that the money was not for the church to spend.”* In these cases, pastors provided the necessary education to bring their congregations up to speed so that all now understand the church as a “conduit for the funds” and a partner in a broad community collaboration.

### **Leading without being the Leader**

The UMC site received the PRC funds but joined with a diverse group of local citizens and representatives from public and nonprofit organizations to design and implement PRC. While sharing power and responsibility is never easy, the church-led teams have for the most part been successful at working out the dynamics of collaboration. The pastor generally sits on the team but is the chair in about one-half of the cases; few report control problems: *“As a UMC minister, I’m used to being in control and calling the shots, but as a matter of fact, it’s good to work with others. I find out that I don’t have all the answers . . . It would not be possible to do alone what we are doing as a group.”* As part of its role in PRC, the church often contributes space, bookkeeping, and other back office supports. Perhaps as important, the church offers an established community presence and an extensive community network that can provide an important springboard for a community economic development initiative.

Although PRC may be seen as sponsored by the Methodists, we heard little about it being perceived as a Methodist-only or an internally focused initiative owned and operated by the church. Rather it appears that **PRC’s diverse teams have created a perception in the community that the initiative is for the most part collaborative and non-denominational.** While individuals come from various religious backgrounds and denominations, teams are made up of people who serve mostly in their professional or civic capacities rather than as representatives of other denominations. *“We don’t even ask what denomination people are,”* says one UMC leader in referring to team members.

Some churches partner through Ministerial Alliances, and others solicit volunteers from multiple denominations for efforts such as food pantries or housing repair work. But most pastors report **limited formal collaboration with other denominations** and attribute this to several challenges:

- ☀ Historically most churches tend to operate in isolation except when they come together to address a disaster, as they did for Hurricane Floyd.

- ✳ Churches are reluctant to make their limited volunteer resources available for other church's ministry.
- ✳ Some churches are disinclined to work with "non-true believers."
- ✳ Many rural churches are small and lack the infrastructure with which to partner including, in some cases, a pastor who lives in the community.
- ✳ The church is used mainly is for worship, weddings, and funerals.

### **UMC Leadership and Participation in PRC**

The church's main involvement in PRC has been through the UMC leader. As PRC team members, these individuals often serve as one of its "public voices" with community groups and the press. They also function as the main spokesperson for PRC to the church membership, providing general information and regular updates. Finally, as the individuals ultimately responsible for making sure the grant funds are spent in the way they were intended, the UMC leaders serve as the primary liaisons with TDE.

Most of the UMC leaders indicate that PRC has taken more time than they originally expected, but the actual amount of time they devote depends on a number of factors, including the staff the team has employed, the contracts the UMC institution has established with community partners, and the other priorities of church life. While most pastors say they can manage PRC's time demands and find the flexibility to participate, those who feel they are working to "*get their churches up to speed*" report a concern that PRC takes away from their work.

The UMC leaders come to PRC with varying levels of experience in community economic development and social change. One has worked on affordable housing for over twenty years; others have served on state and countywide boards and committees or have been involved in other collaborative initiatives; and still others simply have an interest in community work. For these people, PRC has served as an opportunity to channel or leverage their own activist energy. One pastor said that PRC has created the space for "*engaging questions of economics from the perspective of justice and not just from the perspective of charity. The program gives us the opportunity to impact people on the front end and not just the backend.*" Another talked about how PRC has provided the kind of challenge he needed to stay fully engaged in the ministry.

For others, economic development is a new concept, and PRC has provided the opportunity to learn about it. "*It has really opened my eyes and broadened my horizons as to what the church can do and opportunities for service in the community.*" These UMC leaders cite the coaching and training offered through PRC as critical to enabling them to play a substantive role in shaping and implementing PRC, "*If it hadn't been for the Endowment training and the coaching of the MDC people, we would have been in big trouble.*"

UMC's policy of transferring pastors to new communities every three to six years presented significant challenges for three out of the seven pastors who inherited PRC as part of their new UMC posts. Being asked to step into the center of a community collaboration without knowing the community required that these pastors learn the church, the community, and PRC simultaneously and in short order. Said one of these three: "*The biggest barrier was my ignorance. I had no experience with the church. I had no knowledge of the community. I had no*

*knowledge of economic development. I didn't know what this program was. I just kind of got dropped in the middle of it."*

### Engaging the Church's Membership in PRC

The degree to which the membership of the TDE-eligible church is engaged in PRC varies considerably among sites. Some pastors have tried to develop ownership by asking members to serve on the PRC team, while others have focused on recruiting volunteers for PRC programs or support services such as help with tax preparation or childcare. Overall, however, the **congregation's engagement in PRC has been rather limited**: while members of the church may be aware of PRC, they tend to perceive it as *"something that the preacher is doing."*

To understand why this is the case, we asked pastors to identify the factors they thought constrained their members' involvement in PRC. A number of pastors reported struggling over the level of involvement and ownership they and particularly their congregations should have in PRC. Pastors generally believe that the church has an important role to play in community ministry and that one of the main advantages of partnering with the church is the extended networks that it brings to the table through its congregation and the people it touches. However, asking or expecting the congregation to feel a sense of ownership for a collaborative community enterprise like PRC is not straightforward.

The interviews suggest that five quite different factors that explain why the church membership has not for the most part become involved in PRC:

#### PRC's mission is too remote from the core function of church.

✱ A number of pastors report that their congregations don't see the overlap between what the church is about and PRC, *"I think some of our folks have difficulty understanding exactly how this falls under Christian mission...They're comfortable with direct aid to some individual in need, but when you talk about partnerships with government and other non-profits and doing job creation and things like that, it sounds a little secular to them."*

✱ In fact, some parishioners understand the ultimate goal of ministry as strengthening the church by increasing membership or saving souls, and may consider PRC ineffective if it is not doing this. *"Our work has primarily been geared in a non-spiritual, non-religious direction. That's really something that may be a barrier for some people. Some of the church folks think that ... it can't be Christian mission if the name of Jesus isn't all over it."*

#### There is a tension about whether PRC is viewed as a faith-based enterprise or one that simply involves faith-based institutions.

✱ *"We didn't go into this believing that these folks that we helped ... needed to come to church ... we are doing this because we want to help people, not to gain membership."* Although many teams begin their meetings with a prayer, in order to reach as broad a population as possible, some pastors stressed the importance of not proselytizing or offering services in a way that "non-churched" folk might find offensive. In fact, some sites have made a clear separation between the church and the project, with different offices, different staff, and different boards, *"Many of the people that we are assisting in the grant have little or no*

*stomach for the church itself, for whatever reason, . . . and would not have come into a church to get that service.”*

- ✱ Some respondents, on the other hand, see PRC without a doubt as a faith-based, church-based program, and understand this as the rationale for engaging in the effort. For some, community outreach is the centerpoint of Christian faith and is the driving motivation for church involvement in PRC. *“The three issues—Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform the World—are both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, love thy neighbor as thyself. Love is at the center. PRC was begun to help the left behind in rural areas through the rural church [and is an opportunity to] reach out to persons in need, see persons as neighbors.”*
- ✱ Although different perspectives exist on the question of the “faith-based” nature of PRC, most pastors agree that the church provides a unique platform for community work. One pastor who sees this platform in a positive light said: *“In many instances folks won’t participate in something because they have hang ups about wealthy agencies or, conversely, they won’t participate in something because they see it as welfare and there’s a stigma attached to that. But having the church doing something puts it in a different light. People hold their heads up when they work with us because they know it comes from the church.”*

#### People may not see themselves reflected in PRC’s mission.

- ✱ Parishioners may not perceive PRC as it is currently framed as a “volunteer opportunity” or as a program through which to express their faith. As with most hands-on opportunities, however, once people are actively involved their interest is peaked – one parishioner told his pastor, *“... I just didn’t pay attention when you’ve been talking about this before [I joined the board] ...”* The challenge, however, is to get parishioners to the point of active involvement.
- ✱ Another pastor pointed out that community economic development is not the language of the church. While the terms and language used in the project may resonate for the economic development, government, and nonprofit professionals who compose the teams, they may not do the same for lay people who may be very interested in the concepts, but unfamiliar with that language.
- ✱ In some cases, parishioners and even pastors see community economic development as the domain of the experts who have the talents and skills to participate:
  - *“The nature of the work is very technical. Not everyone can do it.”*
  - *“We have a limited number of people that are gifted in the things that PRC does. I think that is where it is.”*
  - *“It’s intimidating for a lot of them. It’s too big. They’re just a little church.”*

#### Lack of consensus exists about whether engaging the congregation is a necessary, feasible or even desirable part of the PRC mandate.

- ✱ Several pastors were not convinced that the church and its congregation should necessarily be any more engaged in community economic development than it is or has been, *“I’m not sure that I agree off hand that is something that the church should do. It doesn’t float everyone’s boat.”*

- ✳ Nor were all the pastors sure of the desire or interest on the part of their congregations to be any more involved in PRC than they have been. They sensed that some members of the congregation might actually see PRC primarily as a drain on church resources, particularly the pastor's time. *"I don't know that they would want to do more ... The vast majority think it's a great thing, but they're not wanting to get involved. Some think that it's taking me away from things that I could've been more focused on."*

#### Practical time constraints and competing priorities leave less time to focus on PRC.

- ✳ For some there are just more pressing priorities that make it so that a pastor is not focusing on bringing the congregation into PRC, *"I'm struggling hard enough to get them [the congregation] to move into general ministries ... it's enough just to keep them involved in the day-to-day operations."*

### **What Impact has PRC had on Participating Churches?**

Although PRC sometimes strained church resources, especially the pastor's time, it has also strengthened the church from an institutional perspective. Most commonly, **PRC has had a positive impact on the church's image, both internally and in the community.** With the exception of the one site where the District has not been involved, every pastor or church leader indicated that PRC had enhanced the institution's reputation:

*"It has shown the non-church community that the church cares."*

*"When people see the impact of this work, there is a great deal of pride and satisfaction that our congregation is being viewed as being at the forefront of community ministry . . . Not everyone is on the same page, some think that pastors don't need to be doing these things. But the majority are pleased that we are well received in the community."*

By positioning the church to be at the center of a community-wide collaboration, PRC has also provided an opportunity for new partnerships with, for example, government agencies, community colleges, community development corporations, and local businesses. These new relationships have both enhanced the church's profile in the community and, according to some pastors, expanded its thinking about the role of the church in addressing community needs.

A related result of participation in PRC for about one-half of the churches has been a greater understanding among church members of the poor in their communities. In some cases, "hidden" poverty has been made more visible; in others, members of the congregation have learned more about what problems the poor face and what resources are and are not available to address these problems. For example, one pastor noted that PRC has challenged his members' assumption that existing government programs should and can address all social problems. This new understanding has often led to a greater willingness to devote time and resources to charitable endeavors in the community.

*"Some of the folks in the church have led sheltered lives in that they've always been pretty much middle class and they don't realize that you can walk to folks"*

*who are struggling. I think part of that awareness has come through members of the church working in PRC and that has, in turn, spread to the congregation. It's a good thing."*

In several cases, PRC has also had indirect consequences for the church as an institution. In one church, membership has increased 25%. Although not entirely attributable to PRC, the pastor notes that *"people want to make a difference and want to be a part of something that makes a difference."* In another case, the church's outreach budget has grown significantly, the result of what the pastor saw as an increased awareness among members of the needs of the disadvantaged in the community. In a third instance, PRC resources helped to expand the visibility, geographic reach and scope of an existing program within the UMC institution and leverage additional resources for its charitable work in the community.

### **Summary and Potential Strategies for the Long Term**

We have seen that despite different capacities and circumstances, the **UMC institutions that have participated in PRC have for the most part been successful intermediaries**: they have served as effective fiscal agents for TDE; they have collaborated with a diverse group of local citizens and representatives from public and nonprofit organizations; they have worked to make PRC inclusive and non-denominational; and they have provided church leadership that has sat on the PRC team but shared power with others. **PRC, in turn, has had a positive impact on participating UMC institutions**. It has enhanced the church's reputation in the community, built new capacities within church leadership, facilitated new partnerships with community groups and organizations, and, in some cases, fostered a greater understanding on the part of the church's membership about the poor in their community. **What has not emerged from the churches' experience to date is the substantial involvement of their congregations in PRC**.

The potential advantages that the church brings to a community change effort are much acknowledged both within PRC and in the broader field. We have seen that individual church leaders have clearly played an important role in bringing the church into PRC. But it is also clear, as one leader notes, that the advantages the church brings to an effort like PRC cannot depend on the church leader alone: *"It [PRC] has to be laity driven. In small rural churches the strength of the church is in the long-term relationships. You need to build out of those relationships a capacity to change community."* The UMC practice of transferring church leadership on a regular basis further heightens the need to engage church membership in order to provide continuity and sustain the long-term commitment of the church to PRC's interests. Another church leader agrees: *"One of the keys to continuity is to get the laity involved ... Most good collaboration comes down to relationships and these take more time to develop than the short tenure of the pastor allows."*

Involving the congregation in PRC is, of course, easier said than done – there are no well-tested formulas or definitive answers. Rather, at this stage, PRC presents the church with the opportunity to experiment with different approaches to increase church members' involvement in PRC and PRC-like activities. Below, in the voice of UMC leaders whom we interviewed, are some of the emerging ideas, tools, and strategies being considered or tested:



### ✳ **Strengthen the articulation of the theological rationale for PRC**

Several pastors cited John Wesley and the history of the Methodist church as providing a strong rationale for doing “good works” to improve the quality of peoples’ lives. *“United Methodism is exactly about changing society and looking at the whole person, not just the spiritual part. If you see the whole person as an arena for ministry, then you have to take on a person’s health, housing, education, food, and so forth.”* However, not all pastors have the skills to articulate this message to their congregations in a way that members can understand in concrete terms. One participant in a discussion of this challenge suggested that it would be useful to work with the seminaries on curricula to help educate students going into the ministry about community ministry and to provide them with implementation strategies and tools.

### ✳ **Encourage a shift in church focus from internal maintenance to community mission**

One UMC leader noted that *“Many small rural churches focus inwardly on their own members. PRC creates an opportunity to broaden the congregation’s focus and turn it towards becoming a missionary organization, change agent, and disciple of Jesus. Doing so requires helping a congregation to get more comfortable with a social change agenda and may require education about poverty in the community and building on the service orientation to broaden the mission to include social change.”* Several pastors have undertaken a “consciousness-raising” approach with their members, finding ways to expose them to the problem of poverty in their communities and the gap between need and existing strategies to meet those needs. *“This [the education we have done] has helped our congregation realize the importance of getting involved in the community. Understanding things like, ‘How do we learn what the issues are behind why people can’t find decent work?’”*

One vehicle that a few sites have used to engage church members in community mission is a Ministerial Alliance, which pools the resources and volunteers of a number of community churches. One UMC leader has helped to found such an Alliance. *“Regardless of size or congregation membership, all of the member churches are the same in the Ministerial Alliance – this has been one of our galvanizing forces. Once we started meeting, we realized that we really enjoyed one another even if we do still have divisions.”* Besides sponsoring a number of charitable endeavors in the community, the Alliance has taken on a broader social change agenda that has resulted in getting out votes to change single member districting, electing the first African American Chief of Police and City Councilman, and advocating for a new high school in the community.

### ✳ **Develop language and approaches that speak to lay-people**

One pastor whose team is sponsoring employment training says that *“The church language is a little bit different from traditional economic development. I don’t know that we really approach it from the perspective that we’re trying to change the economic whatever of the community. I put a face on it, we’re helping people to be that person who can go in to work, show up on time, be courteous and helpful.”* Since the church tends to approach things from a personal as opposed to technical orientation, focusing on people rather than programs makes sense, *“I mainly focus on the people, because ... as churches, that’s who we are. We’re about people, we’re not about the programs. They are just the conduit through which we help the people.”*

✦ **Mobilize membership by communicating successes and building credibility**

Keeping members of the church informed not only generates their confidence about the possibilities of success but can also spark their interest in getting involved. *“I talk about our success stories ... tell a story and people, their eyes light up and they think ‘wow, how can I be a part of that?’”* Pastors report that circulating information and stories about PRC to the broader public—through local newspapers, radio and television—has helped to build the credibility of the effort both inside and outside the church. *“Something goes in [the newspaper] practically all of the time. When we have our graduation exercise over at the Tech school, we have the news media there. They take the picture and within the next week, it’ll come out, giving the name of the individual and things of that sort.”* This credibility, in turn, becomes a good recruitment tool.

✦ **Create opportunities to express faith through doing good in a hands-on way**

*“I think for many years, they have been aware of it and wanting to do something. These people have a heart for folks who are disadvantaged and ‘left-behind,’ if you will. But things stood in the way... a method to do it, being financially able to do it ...”* Another UMC leader agrees that an effective strategy is to build on peoples’ inclinations and desire to contribute to the community by giving them concrete, doable tasks that yield results in a relatively short amount of time: *“We were able to build local housing teams that recruited over 60 volunteers last year, mostly from local Methodist and Baptist churches, because we made it user friendly for them. We came in with a little money, and showed them how to design and manage a home repair and affordable housing program, how to build the team. And then they were off and running.”*

✦ **Develop capacity and build leadership in the rural church more broadly**

One respondent reframed the question from how PRC can use the church to accomplish its goals to how can the church be strengthened so that church members could use PRC or PRC-like programs to meet their missions? Leadership development, including the management skills needed to develop a focus, plan, mobilize resources, and execute, is critical for both pastors and for lay people, as one leader said, *“Change requires three key strategies—community development, economic development and leadership development. If one is missing, you don’t have a stable situation. Every change strategy requires leadership at its center.”*

**The Duke Endowment  
Program for the Rural Carolinas  
Participants**

The Duke Endowment Beneficiary	Program Name/Summary	Participating Years
<b>Option 1 Programs</b>		
Greenville District United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">Beaufort County Program for the Rural Carolinas Beaufort County, NC</p> <p>Affordable housing, IDAs<sup>1</sup> and an EITC<sup>2</sup> programs; small business development; and raising income levels through education and training.</p>	2002-2006
Hinton Rural Life Center	<p style="text-align: center;">Far West Mountain Economic Partners Cherokee, Clay, Graham &amp; Swain Counties, NC</p> <p>Heritage tourism, small-scale agriculture, and affordable housing.</p>	2002-2006
Maria Parham Hospital	<p style="text-align: center;">TEAM VANCE Vance County, NC</p> <p>Reducing disparity between available jobs and unemployed people with skills. Identify key growth sectors. Affordable home-ownership. Connecting unemployed with jobs that have a career path towards a sustainable wage.</p>	2002-2006
Marion County Medical Center	<p style="text-align: center;">Marion County Collaborative Action Network Marion County, SC</p> <p>Industry retention through improved productivity increasing employment, the expansion of existing and development of new sectors, and increasing income and wealth of the left-behind.</p>	2002-2005
North Wilkesboro District United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">Northwest Alliance Program for the Rural Carolinas Alleghany, Ashe &amp; Wilkes Counties, NC</p> <p>Leadership, marketing, program development, and entrepreneurial development.</p>	2002-2006
Randolph Hospital	<p style="text-align: center;">Randolph Program for the Rural Carolinas Randolph County, NC</p> <p>Goals are directed at increasing employment and wealth.</p>	2002-2006

<sup>1</sup> IDA is an individual development account for savings to purchase a first home, pursue job training or capitalize a small business.

<sup>2</sup> EITC is an earned individual tax credit that people of low wealth may use to reduce and individual's taxes. The reduction may be returned in the form of a refund.

The Duke Endowment Beneficiary	Program Name/Summary	Participating Years
Shady Grove United Methodist Church	Shady Grove Program for the Rural Carolinas (LO/UD) Lower Orangeburg & Upper Dorchester Counties, SC  Increasing the employment income, financial literacy, and wealth of people left-behind.	2002-2006
<b>Option 2 Programs</b>		
Allendale County Hospital	Helping Hands Allendale County, SC  Develop viable health care training programs and trustworthy communication links for the left-behind.	2002-2006
Calvary Memorial United Methodist Church	Contentnea Development Partnership Greene County, NC  Employment business development, wealth building through EITC and homeownership. Increasing public awareness of economic development issues.	2002-2005
Columbus County Hospital	Discover Columbus Columbus County, NC  Eco-tourism / Agri-tourism, Agri-business, and Leadership Development.	2002-2006
Duncan Memorial Untied Methodist Church	“Project Reach <sup>2</sup> ” Georgetown, SC  Goals are to improve housing conditions while simultaneously providing job skill training for youth.	2002-2004
Hildebran United Methodist Church	East Burke Learning Alliance Burke County, NC  Involve existing business and industry in creating employment opportunities; increase the involvement of the left-behind and access to distant markets, people, and educational opportunities through public Internet sites.	2002-2006
Hot Springs Health Center	Madison PRC Madison County, NC  Increase the incomes of local farmers and craftsmen/artists and build the leadership and infrastructure that will sustain the increased income.	2002-2006
Hyde County Cooperative Parish (United Methodist Church)	Hyde County Program for the Rural Carolinas Hyde County, NC  Supporting development of the Hyde-Davis Business Enterprise Center; developing a plan for the Machapungo Park Project <sup>3</sup> ; and providing a framework for economic development, leadership training, and team building for the team.	2002-2005

<sup>3</sup> The Machapungo Park Project showcases the history and cultural heritage of Native American, European settlers and Civil War-era residents.

<b>The Duke Endowment Beneficiary</b>	<b>Program Name/Summary</b>	<b>Participating Years</b>
Isaiah United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">CAN Program/The Collaborative Colleton County, SC</p> <p>Increasing employment and wealth through IDA program.</p>	2002-2006
Onslow Memorial Hospital	<p style="text-align: center;">Onslow PRC Onslow County, NC</p> <p>Assessing the needs of the left-behind, improving their financial literacy, and building their wealth through the establishment of EITC and IDA programs.</p>	2002-2006
Pender Memorial Hospital	<p style="text-align: center;">Pender Rural Economic Development Task Pender County, NC</p> <p>Complete a comprehensive needs assessment showing key demographic and economic issues, and development of a plan for implementing the new ideas identified by these studies.</p>	2002-2006
Pilmoor United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">Steps-to-Success Camden &amp; Currituck Counties, NC</p> <p>Develop jobs, provide life skills training and mentor the left-behind. Create sustainable non-seasonal employment opportunities for coastal area citizens.</p>	2002-2005
Pinetop United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">Pinetops PRC Edgecombe County, NC</p> <p>Creating a new economic environment that provides new opportunities for employment and asset building through business development and growth.</p>	2002-2004
Roanoke Chowan Hospital	<p style="text-align: center;">Roanoke-Chowan PRC Bertie, Gates, Hertford &amp; Northampton Counties, NC</p> <p>Workforce development and increasing employment.</p>	2003-2005
Snow Hill United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">Stokes PRC Stokes County, NC</p> <p>Support local farmers and foster workforce development.</p>	2002-2006
The Rockingham District United Methodist Church	<p style="text-align: center;">The Robeson County Program for the Rural Carolinas Robeson County, NC</p> <p>Develop a countywide CDC to help team achieve wealth building through home ownership, small farm and agricultural development, small businesses, and create a plan for the long-term sustainability.</p>	2002-2005

**The Duke Endowment  
Program for the Rural Carolinas  
Working Memoranda Topics**

**Constituting Effective Teams for Rural Development in the PRC (November 2003)**

This memorandum reviews the rationale for the central role of collaborative teams in PRC's design and then examines the composition and structure of the newly constituted teams. Although teams differ considerably in their composition, most are relatively diverse by race and background but less so by class and age. The memorandum reviews the committee and governance structure each team has put in place to help it make decisions, allocate resources, and carry out the work. Even this early in PRC's implementation, about half of the teams are considering incorporating as a new nonprofit organization as a possible way to institutionalize the change process at the end of PRC. Teams also face the challenge of how to deploy staff effectively so that team members neither burn out nor reduce their much-needed engagement.

**Doing Development Differently: Innovation and Learning in the PRC (November 2003)**

The focus of this memorandum is on two challenges teams face as they translate new ideas about economic renewal into operational realities. First, how do they innovate without starting a large number of new programs that may neither maximize the use of existing community resources nor generate long-term support for sustainability? The memorandum describes how the teams are catalyzing innovation by creating and brokering partnerships and by strengthening the capacity of existing organizations to implement new programs. Second, how do teams build learning and evaluation into implementation in a way that enables them to reflect upon and refine their strategies as part of ongoing practice? Given implementation challenges, teams often have trouble finding the time to engage in iterative cycles of intentional learning, planning, doing, and evaluation that could improve their work.

**The Role of the Duke Endowment's Eligible Institutions in the PRC (November 2003)**

The rural Methodist churches and rural nonprofit hospitals that serve as team members and fiscal agents for PRC in each site face a number of challenges in PRC. They are expected to be leaders but not to be in charge, to produce results but to share that responsibility and credit with a range of other community partners, and to institutionalize the change process but not necessarily within their own structures. This memorandum examines what assets these churches and hospitals bring to PRC and how they have addressed the challenges inherent in their new roles. The potential for other rural churches and hospitals to develop increasing interest in playing leadership roles in promoting their community's economic renewal is also addressed.

**Managing and Implementing the PRC: The Role of Staff (May 2004)**

This memorandum reviews the role of staff in supporting the work of the PRC teams. It describes the central role of the project coordinator in facilitating, coordinating, and communicating; keeping team members engaged; and sustaining the pace and momentum of the work. What the coordinator and project staff actually do depends in part on what tasks the team members are willing and able to take on and what additional vehicles the team can create or

access for carrying out the work—such as using consultants, partnering with other organizations, or involving community members on PRC committees or task forces. The memorandum challenges teams to use staff and other vehicles to implement their agendas in ways that both produce program results and build enduring community capacity and support for a continuing partnership.

### **Leadership Development in the PRC (December 2004)**

This memorandum examines the different ways that teams have tried to identify and cultivate a cadre of people who are committed to working on behalf of PRC's goals. Potential leadership can come from PRC team members, as well as from diverse sectors of the community: ordinary citizens who express an interest in community improvement, traditional power brokers, people who work in organizations and agencies that serve the disadvantaged, and people left behind by the economy. All of these different kinds of citizens are necessary constituents of a long-term partnership to advance and sustain PRC's goals over time. But diverse strategies are needed to identify, engage, and develop these different leaders. The memorandum reviews both the formal and informal ways that the teams have fostered leadership and challenges teams to develop ways of monitoring the success of these efforts.

### **Public Sector Involvement in the PRC (December 2004)**

The focus of this memorandum is on the different ways in which the teams have approached the complexities of engaging the public sector, both elected officials and those who work for various government departments or offices at the municipal and county level. Clearly, teams cannot ignore the public sector and still access the resources and achieve the changes that are required for local economic renewal. But the timing and nature of the relationship involve strategic challenges, which teams have addressed in quite different ways with different results. The memorandum reviews the progress teams have made in garnering public support for their agendas, as well as for changing public sector policies to be more supportive of the interests of people left behind by the economy.

### **The Role of the Church in the PRC (May 2005)**

This memorandum examines the experience of the eleven Endowment-eligible rural United Methodist Churches or church-related entities that are participating in PRC. The focus is on the role church leaders and their UMC institutions have played in PRC and the impact of PRC on these institutions. Overall, the churches—like their rural hospital counterparts—have been successful intermediaries and effective fiscal agents. In turn, PRC has had a positive impact on their reputations in the community and their capacities as community partners. Few of the churches, however, have engaged their membership in PRC in a substantial way. The memorandum outlines why this has been the case and summarizes the emerging tools and strategies that UMC leadership is testing to get the laity involved in order to provide continuity and sustain the long-term commitment of the church to PRC's interests.

### **The Role of the Hospital in the PRC (September 2005)**

This memorandum examines the experience of the nine Endowment-eligible rural hospitals or health entities participating in PRC. The focus is on the role hospital executives and their institutions have played in PRC and the impact of PRC on these institutions. Overall, the rural hospitals—like their United Methodist Church counterparts—have been successful

intermediaries and effective fiscal agents. Despite increasing fiscal constraints, the hospitals have been able to draw upon their long history in the community, their stable leadership, and their close relationships to local business to help facilitate a broad community change agenda. As major employers, they have understood PRC's potential to address local workforce needs. A key question for these hospitals has been how much to engage their boards and embrace PRC as part of their core business. The memorandum ends with a strategic framework for leveraging health institution assets for community economic revitalization.

### **Managing and Supporting PRC (February 2006)**

This memorandum examines the management and provision of support to PRC with an eye toward drawing lessons for other foundations, intermediaries and nonprofits considering similar multi-year, multi-site initiatives. As PRC's intermediary, MDC provided a rich and diverse portfolio of supports, such as coaching, cross-site meetings, and access to a technical assistance pool, that were intended to convey information, inspire, challenge, facilitate and connect sites to additional resources. For the most part, these supports complemented the Endowment's unique relationship with its beneficiaries. Both MDC and the Endowment report that it would have been useful to develop additional clarity at PRC's inception regarding how success in PRC was to be defined, measured and reported. Further, both organizations would have benefited from more structured opportunities for mutual reflection and learning about how the ideas behind PRC were playing out in practice.