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The Church in Rural Missouri

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Impressions from the Windshield

In Missouri, if you leave the interstate highways and drive leisurely through the countryside, you encounter numerous small towns and you can still see many churches located in the open country. If churches are not directly observed, signs are placed indicating their direction and distance. At the edge of many small towns is a sign offering a welcome from the churches of the community, but the listing is usually not a complete directory of the local religious groups. Most likely to be missing are the less well established groups such as Pentecostal congregations. Other signs along the way present theological positions in terse phrases "Jesus Saves" or in a Burma Shave sequence of "Hail Mary." On closer inspection some regularities emerge. Most places of any size have more than one church. Denominational names are repeated—Baptist, Methodist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Church of Christ, Assembly of God. But, it is somewhat surprising to come across an Episcopal Church and, if a Roman Catholic or Lutheran Church is encountered, it is surmised that you are in an ethnic area. This is often confirmed by architectural features of nearby homes or at least by names on mailboxes.

There are also apparent differences in the size and condition of church buildings. On occasion you can see a virtual cathedral in the field or on the Missouri River bluffs you can see churches reminiscent of those found on the Rhine. The buildings, however, are more likely to be modest structures more in keeping with the little brown church in the wildwood. But, often it is white and in need of a coat of paint. Unlike the open-country school, the open-country church is not a rarity in Missouri.

Denominational identity and outward appearances are somehow, although imperfectly, related. For example, one comes to expect Methodist churches to have an unpretentious but well-established look—not large, but the appearance of having been there a long time. In the villages, the Methodist church is likely to have a prominent location. In the countryside, a sign may indicate the congregation was established before the Civil War.

The adjoining cemetery usually dates from the beginning of the church. It is sometimes interesting to stop and check the dates on the headstones. Family names on the stones can also be traced from an earlier date to the present through these marble (or granite) documents. In many cases such tracing is easy because family plots are maintained. Weeds that overgrow some parts of the cemetery indicate that a particular family has died out or moved from the area.

We are not as apt to see Presbyterian churches and when we do they are more likely to be in the larger rural places. They also tend to have the appearance of permanence.

There is some confusion in denominational names as they appear in local congregations. The Church of Christ and the Christian church (Disciples of Christ), both common in rural Missouri, although of common ancestry, are different groups. There

are further name complications with Independent Christian churches and the United Church of Christ (the latter formed on the basis of merger of the Congregational Christian church and the Evangelical and Reformed church).

The Christian churches (Disciples of Christ) tend to resemble the Methodist or Presbyterian churches in physical appearance and location, but the Churches of Christ we see are more likely to be in converted residences or to have the appearance of new construction. The structures often have the appearance of a studied lack of ostentatiousness. The presence of a Church of Christ is likely to be proclaimed on a sign on the road or highway going through the town.

The name most likely seen on churches as you drive through rural Missouri is Baptist. They are also hardest to pigeonhole in terms of outward appearance. They range from what looks like the most affluent church in town to very modest structures and they have an odd ecological distribution that tends to defy rules of distance between service facilities. Baptist churches are not easy to classify by appearance of age or permanency. On the basis of signs and cornerstones and from appearance and surroundings, many Baptist churches are old and well-established components of the community. In the open country, the Baptist church may be identified with a neighborhood name and be the principal institutional prop for the neighborhood.

You soon become aware of different designations of Baptist churches—Freewill Baptists, Primitive Baptists, Fundamental Baptists, Missionary Baptists, Landmark Baptists, Independent Baptists and others. Most often, however, the churches in Missouri are Southern Baptist. Sometimes you can identify these churches by the architectural characteristics of white pillars in the front, but for the most part, this identifying mark is found only on newer and larger churches. The Southern Baptist churches seem to be characterized by add-ons or separate adjacent buildings which provide space for educational and recreational activities.

You are not likely to see many Catholic churches in rural Missouri. It depends a great deal on where you are in the state. If you are in the Ozarks, a Catholic church is likely to be found only in the larger villages and even there it may have the appearance of being an outpost church which is a fair description of the situation. On the other hand, if you are in central Missouri in the German ethnic area that extends roughly along the Missouri River or in the area which extends down the Mississippi from St. Louis with its early French settlement; the Catholic Church might be represented by an imposing brick structure which visually dominates the small town or open country. At the same time, it might be noticed that often there is no other church in these communities, or, if there is, it is likely to be one of the newer sect-type denominations. In this same area, you might see imposing church buildings that are not Catholic but Lutheran (Missouri Synod) or United Church of Christ (Evangelical and Reformed) which reflects not only the religious divisions among the Germans who immigrated to this area, but also their common attention to religion.

In the villages, especially in the larger ones not in the open country, you are likely to see other churches identified as Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, Church of God, or perhaps a Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses. These may be new structures often without the churchly appearance of some of the older denominations. Some of these buildings are continuously undergoing renovation, not on a grand scale, but piecemeal and as time and resources of the congregation members permit. It is not uncommon for the church to have been a family residence before its remodeling. At certain times of the year it is common to see a banner draped over the front of the building telling the dates of a revival.

In the countryside and small towns of Missouri activity is greatest on Sunday mornings in a two hour span between 10 a.m. and noon. There is a break in activity

Table 1. Size of Local Churches by Church/Sect Type

Roll Membership	Number	Church-type (percent)	Sect-type
Total	505	71.1	28.9
Small (-50)	171	55.0	45.0
Medium (50-99)	151	68.2	31.8
Large (100+)	183	88.5	11.5

$$\chi^2 = 49.3, \text{ d.f.} = 2, \text{ sign.}^*$$

* All tests of significance in following tables at the 5 percent level.

Table 2. Size of Place in Which Church Is Located by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Roll Membership	Number	Size of Place		
		1,000+	200-999	-200
		(Percent)		
Total	505	18.8	23.2	58.0
Church-type	359	15.6	25.9	58.5
Sect-type	146	26.7	16.4	56.8
Small (-50)	171	14.0	18.1	67.8
Church-type	94	5.3	19.1	75.5
Sect-type	77	24.7	16.9	58.4
Medium (50-99)	151	15.9	21.2	62.9
Church-type	103	9.7	22.3	68.0
Sect-type	48	29.2	18.7	52.1
Large (100+)	183	25.7	29.5	44.8
Church-type	162	25.3	32.1	42.6
Sect-type	21	28.6	9.5	61.9

		Church/Sect (2d.f.)	Size (4d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (4d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (4d.f.)
Size of Place	$\chi^2 =$	10.8(s)	22.6(s)	36.3(s)	1.4(n.s.)
		Church/Sect (small size) (2d.f.)	Church/Sect (medium size) (2d.f.)	Church/Sect (large size) (2d.f.)	
Size of Place	$\chi^2 =$	13.2(s)	9.3(s)	4.8(n.s.)	

between the first and second hour representing the division between Sunday school and worship services, but the same people attend both. In some churches, activities begin earlier but few extend beyond noon. If you could extend your visit over the weeks of a month you would observe that for one of the hours on Sunday morning some of the churches are unused every other Sunday or in some cases three Sundays in four. A regularity is maintained in this pattern, however, that would not be hard to determine. On the other hand, the Sunday school hour is most likely held each week without interruption.

On Sunday evening some of the buildings are lighted again and cars are parked in the lots but not in as large numbers as in the morning. During the week there appears to be little activity at all. On Wednesday evening there are gatherings in some of the churches and occasionally at other times.

Some impressions from the outside about the social institution called the church may be gained. It appears to be an organization that is common yet varied and one to which people devote considerable attention and resources. To know more about what goes on inside the rural church in Missouri than is observable from a "windshield" survey a detailed study was made.

What Are the Rural Churches Like?

This report is based on a sample of churches from rural areas for which interviews were conducted in 1967.* Interviews were obtained from 505 local churches. The major denominations, as well as a large number of smaller denominations, were represented in the sample. The Southern Baptist Convention was the largest denomination, accounting for 24 percent of all congregations and the "Baptist family" of churches accounted for 37 percent of the total. There were 89 Methodist churches (84 of which were United Methodist churches) accounting for 18 percent of the total. If the Christian church (Disciples of Christ) brotherhood and non-brotherhood are combined, this denominational grouping has the third largest number of congregations with 39 or 8 percent; the fourth largest is the Church of Christ with 7 percent of the congregations. Three bodies of Presbyterians (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Presbyterian Church U.S., and Cumberland Presbyterian Church) taken together represented 5 percent of the congregations. The above denominational designations represented about three-quarters of the congregations. No other denomination accounted for as much as 5 percent of the total congregations. Obviously, the churches were overwhelmingly Protestant with only three percent being Roman Catholic. There were no Jewish congregations in the sample.

Size. There are two ways of reporting size of congregations—roll membership and resident-active membership. Although we report certain socio-economic characteristics of the resident-active membership, size of congregation refers to roll membership. Roll membership may include local people no longer active in church affairs or those who have left the community but still retained on the membership roll. Roll membership in these cases over-represents the number of active members. At the same time, it does not take into account those who are active participants in the congregation but who are not officially members. Some churches do not maintain membership records. For these, an estimate of membership was made by the person interviewed.

Churches in rural Missouri are, in general, very small. Over one-third of them have fewer than 50 members and about two-thirds fewer than 100. They range in size from less than 10 members to about 1600. Because of the extreme skewness of the

*See appendix for details of sampling procedure.

membership distribution, average figures have little meaning. For example, the two largest churches have more members than the 100 smallest churches. We have found it convenient to classify congregations by size as small (under 50), medium (50-99), and large (100 and over) for use in further analysis. At the same time, it should be remembered that most of the churches in the "large" category would not meet the criteria of adequacy used by many denominations.

Church-Sect Types. Church/sect is a way of classifying local churches according to the denomination to which they belong. There is a large body of sociological literature on the church/sect typology but no clear consensus on denominations which should be designated as one category or the other. In fact, within denominations individual congregations vary in their church-like or sect-like characteristics. In general, church-type groups have a tendency to adjust to secular society and are represented by the "mainstream" denominations. The sect-type groups, on the other hand, have a tendency to reject or withdraw from the secular society. In spite of problems with the classification, the earlier study of the church in rural Missouri (see the methodological appendix) found the church-sect distinction useful in analyzing church programs and activities. In this report we have followed the earlier study in assignment of denominations to the church/sect categories (see Lawrence M. Hepple, *The Church in Rural Missouri*, Missouri Agriculture Experiment Station Research Bulletin 633A, 1957, pp. 35-36). Denominations classified as church-type were: Southern Baptist, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Protestant Episcopal church Lutheran churches, United Methodist, Presbyterian churches, Roman Catholic, and Federated and non-denominational community churches. The remaining denominations were classified as sect-type. Among the most numerous congregations were: the Church of Christ, Missionary Baptist, Freewill Baptist, General Baptist, Pentecostal, Assembly of God, and Church of God. When congregations were grouped on this basis, 71 percent were church-type and 29 percent were sect-type. As Table I shows, church-type congregations tended to be larger than sect-type groups.

Location of churches. We divided the places in which congregations were located according to size—those below 200 population (including the open-country), places from 200-999 and places 1,000-2,499. These were designated open-country, small villages, and large villages. More than half the churches (58 percent) were located in the open-country (or places up to 200 population), 23 percent were located in small villages, and 19 percent in large villages.

As you might expect, larger churches were more likely to be found in larger places. Of the smallest churches (-50 members), 68 percent were located in the open-country (or places up to 200 population) while 14 percent were located in the large villages. This may be contrasted with the largest churches (100 members or more) of which 45 percent were located in the smallest places and 26 percent in the largest.

There is a distinct difference in the way in which location by size of place is associated with the size of the church for church-type and sect-type congregations (Table 2). Of the small church-type congregations, 75 percent were located in the open-country (or places to 200 population) while 5 percent were located in places above 1,000 population. In contrast, of the small sect-type congregations, 58 percent were located in the smallest size of place category and 25 were located in the largest. In general, size of church-type congregations was related directly to size of place in which they were located while size of sect-type congregations was quite independent of the size of place where they were located. A further observation from Table 2 is that sect-type groups for all size categories of churches were more likely than church-type groups to be located in the larger places.

Characteristics of the Membership

Racial Composition. There were few churches with both white and black resident-active members (only 8 congregations representing less than 2 percent of the total). The membership of 93 percent of the congregations was entirely white; of 5 percent it was entirely black.

Sex Composition. Few congregations (3 percent) had more male than female resident-active members although in almost 40 percent the number of male and female members was reported to be about equal. In about one-quarter of the churches it was estimated that 60 percent or more of the members were women. Larger churches tended to have a higher proportion of female members than medium or small churches did, although the difference was not statistically significant. Church-type groups had a somewhat higher proportion of female members than sect-type groups but again the difference was not significant.

Age Composition. In half the churches, persons 65 or over comprised 19 percent or more of the resident-active members. In 25 percent of the churches they comprised 30 percent or more of the membership and in 6 percent those 65 or over were reported to comprise a majority of the membership. The smallest churches tended to have an older membership, and the sects a younger membership.

Educational Composition of Members. For 43 percent of the churches, it was reported that none of the resident-active members had a college education and in almost two-thirds (62 percent) not as many as 10% had a college education. Larger churches are more likely than smaller churches to have college educated members (Table 3). And church-type are more likely than sect-type to have members with a college education.

Table 3. Percent of Resident-Active Members with a College Education by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) and Church/Sect	Adult Active Members with College Education Number	Adult Active Members with College Education (percent)		
		0	1-9	10+
Total	505	43.4	18.2	38.4
Church-type	359	35.7	19.2	45.1
Sect-type	146	62.3	15.8	21.9
Small (<50)	171	69.0	8.2	22.8
Church-type	94	63.8	11.7	24.5
Sect-type	77	75.3	3.9	20.8
Medium (50-99)	151	43.7	21.2	35.1
Church-type	103	37.9	18.4	43.7
Sect-type	48	56.2	27.1	16.7
Large (100+)	183	19.1	25.1	55.7
Church-type	162	17.9	24.1	58.0
Sect-type	21	28.6	33.3	38.1

Education x Size: $\chi^2 = 91.3$, d.f. = 4, (s)

Education x Church/Sect Type: $\chi^2 = 32.3$, d.f. = 2, (s)

Occupational Composition of Members. Seventy percent of the churches had resident-active members classified as business or professional workers, but in only one-quarter did such workers represent 10 percent or more of the membership. Large congregations and church-type congregations were likely to have business and professional workers as members (Table 4). Farmer members were present in 83 percent of the congregations; there was greater tendency for large congregations and church-type congregations to have farmer members (Table 4).

Perception of Churches. Informants were asked to describe their church as: farmer's church, working men's church, business and professional men's church or retired people's church. As can be seen in Table 5, most were placed in one of the first two categories (47 percent were described as a farmer's church; 45 percent as a working men's church). About 3 percent were placed in the business and professional men's category and 5 percent in the retired people's category. The smallest churches were almost never described as business and professional men's churches while they were relatively frequently described as retired people's churches (20 of 27 churches so described). Small sect-type churches were most likely to be working men's churches while middle-size church-type congregations were most likely to be farmer's churches. Overall, all sect-type congregations were more likely than church-type congregations to be classified as working men's churches while church-type congregations were more likely to be classified as farmer's churches. Although few congregations were described

Table 4. Occupational Characteristics of Resident-Active Church Members by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Any Members Business and/or Professional Workers	Any Members Farmers
		(percent)	
Total	505	70.1	83.0
Church-type	359	76.9	86.4
Sect-type	146	53.4	74.7
Small (<50)	171	46.8	74.3
Church-type	94	51.1	73.4
Sect-type	77	41.6	75.3
Medium (50-99)	151	70.2	82.8
Church-type	103	76.7	89.3
Sect-type	48	56.3	68.8
Large (100+)	183	91.8	91.3
Church-type	162	92.0	92.0
Sect-type	21	90.5	87.7

Any members business or professional x Church/sect: $\chi^2 = 27.2$, d.f.=1, (s)

Any members business or professional x Size: $\chi^2 = 85.5$, d.f.=2, (s)

Any members farmers x Church/sect: $\chi^2 = 10.4$, d.f.=1, (s)

Any members farmers x Size: $\chi^2 = 18.1$, d.f.=2, (s)

as business and professional men's churches, almost all of them were church-type congregations (12 of 13). In general, the church/sect distinction was related more closely than size to perception of local religious groups.

Table 5. Informants' Description of Churches by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Description of Church				
		Farmer's Church	Workingman's Church	Business and Retired Man's Church (percent)	Professional People's Church	Other
Total	504	47.2	44.6	2.6	5.4	0.2
Church-type	358	51.7	39.9	3.4	4.7	0.3
Sect-type	146	36.3	56.2	0.7	6.8	0.0
Small (-50)	171	38.0	49.1	0.6	11.7	0.6
Church-type	94	45.7	39.4	1.1	12.8	1.1
Sect-type	77	28.6	61.0	0.0	10.4	0.0
Medium (50-99)	151	54.3	39.7	4.0	2.0	0.0
Church-type	103	61.2	33.0	4.8	1.0	0.0
Sect-type	48	39.6	54.2	2.1	4.2	0.0
Large (100+)	182	50.0	44.5	3.3	2.2	0.0
Church-type	161	49.1	44.7	3.7	2.5	0.0
Sect-type	21	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0	0.0

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
Farmer's and * Workingman's	$\chi^2 =$ 11.3(s)	6.1(s)	4.1(n.s.)	4.5(n.s.)

* Only columns 1 and 2 used in χ^2 analysis.

Facilities of Rural Churches. Only rarely do congregations exist without providing themselves with special facilities for religious observance and activity, and in all but a few (2 percent), the church building is owned by the congregation. In about one-quarter of the churches, the sanctuary is the only room in the building except for possibly an entrance hall or similar areas.

Table 6 shows proportions of congregations having selected kinds of facilities. Most have a piano, about half have a kitchen, and a similar proportion have a dining room. Somewhat over one-third of the congregations provide a parsonage for the minister. Similar proportions (about one-quarter) of the congregations reported having an organ, a minister's study, and a cemetery.

Table 6. Facilities of Churches by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Selected Facilities						Parsonage	Cemetery
		Organ	Piano	Kitchen	Dining Room (percent)	Minister's Study			
		(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	
Total	505	28.9	88.1	51.7	52.5	23.0	36.0	25.7	
Church-type	359	35.9	93.6	60.4	61.0	25.1	39.6	27.9	
Sect-type	146	11.6	74.6	30.1	31.5	17.8	27.4	20.5	
Small (-50)	171	7.6	85.4	24.6	25.7	5.8	14.0	25.1	
Church-type	94	7.4	92.6	22.3	25.5	3.2	6.4	26.6	
Sect-type	77	7.8	76.6	27.3	26.0	9.1	23.4	23.4	
Medium (50-99)	151	16.6	89.4	45.7	48.3	17.9	23.8	26.5	
Church-type	103	19.4	98.1	56.3	57.3	15.5	20.4	30.1	
Sect-type	48	10.4	70.8	22.9	29.2	22.9	31.2	18.8	
Large (100+)	183	59.0	89.6	82.0	80.9	43.2	66.7	25.7	
Church-type	162	63.0	91.4	85.2	83.9	43.8	71.0	27.2	
Sect-type	21	28.6	76.2	57.1	57.1	38.1	33.0	14.3	

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) Organ	$\chi^2 =$	29.8(s)	129.7(s)	97.2(s)
(b) Piano	$\chi^2 =$	35.6(s)	1.9(n.s.)	5.3(n.s.)
(c) Kitchen	$\chi^2 =$	38.2(s)	119.8(s)	99.8(s)
(d) Dining Room	$\chi^2 =$	36.2(s)	109.3(s)	86.7(s)
(e) Minister's Study	$\chi^2 =$	3.1(n.s.)	72.8(s)	59.8(s)
(f) Parsonage	$\chi^2 =$	6.7(s)	120.1(s)	126.5(s)
(g) Cemetery	$\chi^2 =$	2.9(n.s.)	0.1(n.s.)	0.7(n.s.)

In general, the percentage having a given facility was directly related to size of congregation. Notable exceptions were for pianos which most of each size group possessed and a cemetery on the church grounds which was present in about one-quarter of the congregations in each size category.

The relationship between size and possession of selected facilities appears to be stronger for church-type congregations than for sect-type congregations. Among the small churches, sect-type congregations had as many or more facilities as church-type congregations did, but as size increases the church-type groups increase their possession of facilities faster than do sect-type groups. It turns out that, in general, small sect-groups are more like large sect-groups in the facilities than small church-type groups are like large church-type groups.

Religious Group Activities and Services

Worship Services of Churches. The basis for including groups in the sample of churches was that they had conducted worship services on some regular basis within the year preceding the interview. Regular services did not necessarily mean every Sunday, but could have been bi-weekly or monthly. Of the churches, 70 percent conducted worship services on a regular weekly basis and 30 percent less often.

Table 7. Frequency of Worship Services by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Frequency of Service	
		At Least Weekly (percent)	Less than Weekly (percent)
Total	505	70.3	29.7
Church-type	359	64.6	35.4
Sect-type	146	84.2	15.8
Small (<50)	171	54.4	45.6
Church-type	94	31.9	68.1
Sect-type	77	81.8	18.2
Medium (50-99)	151	68.2	31.8
Church-type	103	61.2	38.8
Sect-type	48	83.3	16.7
Large (100+)	183	86.9	13.1
Church-type	162	85.8	14.2
Sect-type	21	95.2	4.8

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
Frequency of Services	$\chi^2 = 19.2(s)$	45.2(s)	76.4(s)	2.3(n.s.)

Overall, the size of the congregation and whether or not weekly services were held was related. When church-type and sect-type congregations were considered separately, it was found that the relationship between size of congregation and frequency of worship services for church-type groups was quite substantial ($X^2 = 76.4$, d.f. = 2, $C = .42$), but that for sect-type groups the relationship between size and frequency of services diminished to insignificance ($X^2 = 2.3$, d.f. = 2, not signif., $C = .12$). As one observes Table 7, it becomes clear that the vast majority of sect-type congregations have worship services each week without regard to size of the congregation so that 82 percent of the smallest, 83 percent of the middle size, and 95 percent of the largest sect-type congregations have at least weekly worship services. On the other hand, and in contrast, among church-type congregations 32 percent of the smallest, 61 percent of the middle size and 86 percent of the largest congregations had weekly services.

By way of explaining the difference in pattern of worship services by church-type and sect-type congregations, sect-type groups depend to a greater extent upon a lay and part-time ministry. Therefore, they are not so dependent upon the resources as reflected by size of membership in order to have weekly services.

Other Religious Services: Sunday Evening Services, Midweek Services and Revivals. Sunday evening services, midweek services and revivals are associated with traditional protestantism. Each of these activities were held in a substantial number of the rural churches in our study. Fifty-two percent had Sunday evening services, 42 percent had midweek services (this was usually a Wednesday evening prayer meeting) and 64 percent of the churches reported having a revival during the year. The revival activity most often lasted a week during which nightly services were held. An outside evangelist might participate.

There was some relationship between size of church and whether or not these types of religious services were held, although Table 8 indicates the relationship is not large. A clearer picture is obtained when you examine the relationship of size to religious services separately for church and sect-type congregations. Small church-type groups are not likely to have these activities but the likelihood of having them increases with congregation size. On the other hand, even the smallest sect-type congregations are likely to have these three types of services and because the proportion is so high for the smallest groups, there is relatively little chance for increase with size.

Educational Activities

Religious groups provide educational activities for members and potential members as a means of socializing them. The most common educational activity is Sunday school which almost all groups conduct each week (we consider Sunday school as a suborganization of the church in the next section). Other activities include Daily Vacation Bible School, provisions for training new members, and the use of religious films.

Vacation Bible School. Vacation Bible school is conducted during the summer on a daily basis for a relatively short period of time—most often one week. It is a program which slightly more than half of the churches conducted in the year previous to the date of the survey. The program was related to size of the group so that less than one-quarter of the smallest churches compared with more than three-quarters of the largest churches had this activity. Church-type congregations were more likely to have this activity than were sect-type groups, especially in the middle and large size churches.

Table 8. Services of Local Rural Religious Groups by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Percent Having Service		
	Sunday Evening Services (percent)	Mid-Week Services (percent)	Revival (percent)
	(a)	(b)	(c)
Total	52.1	42.0	64.4
Church-type	42.3	33.7	59.6
Sect-type	76.0	62.3	76.0
Small (-50)	43.9	36.8	53.8
Church-type	21.3	16.0	41.5
Sect-type	71.4	62.3	68.8
Medium (50-99)	53.6	39.1	68.9
Church-type	43.7	32.0	64.1
Sect-type	75.0	54.2	79.2
Large (100+)	58.5	49.2	70.5
Church-type	53.7	45.1	67.3
Sect-type	95.2	81.0	95.2

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) Sunday Evening Service	$\chi^2 = 47.2(s)$	7.8(s)	26.1(s)	5.3(n.s.)
(b) Mid-Week Services	$\chi^2 = 34.9(s)$	6.3(s)	23.1(s)	4.6(n.s.)
(c) Revivals	$\chi^2 = 12.2(s)$	12.7(s)	18.0(s)	6.9(s)

Training for New Members. Provisions for training new members were made in just over one-third of the congregations. Only 13 percent of the smallest churches provided this activity while 61 percent of the largest churches did. It might be suggested that for the smallest churches the question is not very relevant because new members are not common. The provision for training new members was more common among church-type groups for each size category reaching a difference of 25 percentage points for the largest religious groups (Table 9).

Showing Religious Films. Almost half the congregations had used religious films at some time during the year. As with other educational activities, size of congregation was related directly to whether or not films were used. The difference between church and sect, although present, was not as great when size was controlled.

In general, it can be said that religious education activities were related directly to size of congregation, and in contrast to worship activities, within each size category church-type groups were more likely than sect-type groups to conduct the activity.

Table 9. Educational Activities of Local Religious Groups by Size of Church and Church/
Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Percent Having Activity		
	Daily Vacation Bible School (percent)	Training for New Members (percent)	Religious Films (percent)
	(a)	(b)	(c)
Total	52.1	35.2	46.7
Church-type	60.4	41.5	53.5
Sect-type	31.5	19.9	30.1
Small (-50)	22.2	12.9	21.1
Church-type	23.4	13.8	19.1
Sect-type	20.8	11.7	23.4
Medium (50-99)	55.0	25.3	46.4
Church-type	63.1	32.0	55.3
Sect-type	37.5	25.0	27.1
Large (100+)	77.6	60.7	71.0
Church-type	80.2	63.6	72.2
Sect-type	57.1	38.1	61.9

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) Daily Vacation Bible School $\chi^2=$	34.8(s)	109.3(s)	81.3(s)	11.4(s)
(b) Training for New Members $\chi^2=$	21.3(s)	91.3(s)	66.4(s)	8.6(s)
(c) Religious Films $\chi^2=$	22.7(s)	88.7(s)	68.0(s)	12.1(s)

Contributions to Extra-Local Institutions

Local religious groups have traditionally provided support for charitable, health, and educational institutions in the form of benevolent giving. Here seems to be a clear test of the relationship of local congregations to wider interests. Therefore, we should expect church-type groups to support such institutions to a greater extent than sect-type groups and for support to be directly related to resources (as measured by size).

Homes for Aged. Fifty-seven percent of the congregations supported homes for the aged. Church-type congregations were much more likely to provide support to these types of organizations. More than two-thirds of the church-type groups contributed to homes for the aged compared to just over one-quarter of the sect-type groups. Three-quarters of the largest congregations and slightly more than one-third of the smallest congregations provided support to homes for the aged.

Hospitals. About 44 percent of the congregations supported hospitals with 55 percent of the church-type groups and 15 percent of the sect-type groups doing so. Even the largest sect-type congregations were less likely than the smallest church-type congregations to support hospitals. Overall, however, there was a clear relationship between size of congregation and support of hospitals.

Orphanages. More local congregations supported orphanages than any other of the extra-local activities examined. The support was similar in pattern to other extra-local activities considered in that church-type congregations were more likely than sect-type congregations in each size category to provide support. At the same time it can be observed among sect-groups support for orphanages was usually favored over other types of extra-community activities by a wide margin. Size of congregation was clearly related to support of orphanages for both church and sect-type groups.

Colleges and Universities. Fifty-seven percent of the local religious groups provided support for institutions of higher learning. This is the same proportion that supported homes for the aged and interestingly enough the division between church and sect and among size categories is very similar (Table 10). Thus church-type groups in each size category are much more likely than their sect-type counterparts to support these institutions and there is a strong overall relationship between size of congregation and support of colleges and universities.

In general, for the four extra-local activities, the pattern of support is quite consistent varying only in proportion of congregations which provided financial support to a given extra-local activity.

Suborganizations of the Churches

Local religious groups commonly have suborganizations which are instrumental in inducting members into the church, maintaining control, and serving special needs. Observation of suborganizations is one way of determining the complexity of local congregations. Most suborganizations can be subsumed under the following categories: Sunday school, women's organization, youth's organization, choir, men's organization, young adults' organization, older adults' organization.

Sunday School. The most common suborganization was the Sunday school with 92 percent of the congregations reporting this organization. In some ways the Sunday school is the most characteristic organization of the rural church. Worship services may be less frequent than weekly but the Sunday school tends to have weekly services which in some respects stand for the worship service. There is relatively high participation of adults in Sunday school classes. The absence of Sunday schools from any of the congregations is accounted for largely by Roman Catholic churches and by churches that have reached a very low level of activity. Smallest churches are least likely to have a Sunday school program (although even in this size group 87 percent do). There is virtually no difference between church and sect-type groups in frequency of having this suborganization. The presence of other suborganizations is much less frequent and more closely related to size of congregation and the church/sect distinction.

Women's Organization. A women's organization, present in about 56 percent of the congregations, is the second most common type of suborganization. The traditional term for the women's organization is "ladies aid." This name implies that the organization provides financial assistance and many do so in the form of church dinners, bazaars, and other fund raising activities. The women's organization also provides social activity for women of the church and can be used as a religious education and service vehicle. There was a strong relationship between size of congregation and the presence of a woman's organization with 85 percent of the largest congregations hav-

Table 10. Local Religious Groups Contributing to Extra-Local Institutions by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	(a) Home for Aged	(b) Hospital	(c) Orphanage (percent)	(d) College or University
Total	503	57.0	43.8	64.4	57.0
Church-type	358	69.0	55.4	74.3	67.9
Sect-type	145	27.6	15.1	39.6	29.9
Small (-50)	170	35.9	24.2	40.3	35.9
Church-type	94	46.8	35.5	48.9	45.7
Sect-type	76	22.4	10.5	29.3	23.7
Medium (50-99)	151	58.3	41.7	67.5	56.3
Church-type	103	72.8	53.4	78.6	68.9
Sect-type	48	27.1	16.7	43.8	29.2
Large (100+)	182	75.8	63.7	83.5	77.4
Church-type	161	79.5	68.4	85.7	80.1
Sect-type	21	47.6	28.6	76.7	55.0

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) Home for Aged	$X^2 = 72.2(s)$	68.0(s)	30.7(s)	5.3(n.s.)
(b) Hospital	$X^2 = 57.4(s)$	57.9(s)	26.0(s)	3.2(n.s.)
(c) Orphanage	$X^2 = 54.0(s)$	74.4(s)	45.0(s)	10.1(s)
(d) College or University	$X^2 = 60.6(s)$	61.5(s)	33.0(s)	6.3(s)

ing the suborganization compared with 50 percent of the middle-size congregations, and 31 percent of the smallest congregations ($X^2 = 106.7$, 2d.f.). Size and having the suborganization was directly and significantly related for church-type and sect-type congregations considered separately but the relationship was stronger for church-type congregations (church-type: $X^2 = 71.0$, d.f. = 2, $C = 0.41$; sect-type: $X^2 = 11.7$, d.f. = 2, $C = 0.27$).

Youth Organizations. The lament is often made that churches cannot attract or hold their young people. Youth groups in the church have the special function of offering a substitute for secular recreational activities. About 2 in 5 (39 percent) of the congregations maintained this type of suborganization as a part of their program. The presence of a youth group was strongly related to size of the church so that 15 percent of the smallest, 33 percent of the middle-size, and 68 percent of the largest congregations had an organized youth group ($X^2 = 108.1$, d.f. = 2). The range of

percentage having a youth group for church-type congregations by size was considerably greater than for sect-type congregations with only 7 percent of the small congregations compared with 69 percent of the large church-type organizations having this suborganization.

Choir. Of the suborganizations, choir was the next most common with one-third of the churches having this organization. In addition to contributing to worship services, the choir may represent a group within the church in which social activities take place. Large churches were more likely than small ones to have a choir ($X^2 = 88.2$, d.f. = 2). And the relationship between size and having a choir was stronger for church-type congregations than for sect-type congregations (church-type: $X^2 = 61.4$, d.f. = 2, $C = 0.38$; sect-type: $X^2 = 6.8$, d.f. = 2, $C = 0.21$).

Table 11. Suborganizations of Churches by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	(a) S.S.	(b) W.O.	(c) Y.O.	(d) Choir (percent)	(e) M.O.	(f) Y.A.	(g) O.A.
Total	505	91.5	56.2	39.4	33.7	15.8	7.3	5.0
Church-type	359	92.2	66.6	43.2	40.7	21.2	8.6	5.9
Sect-type	146	89.7	30.8	30.1	16.4	2.7	4.1	2.7
Small (-50)	171	86.6	31.0	14.6	13.5	5.3	2.9	1.2
Church-type	94	87.2	37.2	7.4	16.0	8.5	1.1	1.1
Sect-type	77	85.7	23.4	23.4	10.4	1.3	5.2	1.3
Medium (50-99)	151	96.0	50.3	33.1	25.8	4.0	4.6	4.0
Church-type	103	98.1	60.2	35.0	29.1	4.9	6.8	3.9
Sect-type	48	91.7	29.2	29.2	18.8	2.1	0.0	4.2
Large (100+)	183	92.4	84.7	67.8	59.0	35.5	13.7	9.3
Church-type	162	91.4	87.7	69.1	62.3	38.9	14.2	9.9
Sect-type	21	100.0	61.9	57.1	33.3	9.5	9.5	4.8

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) S.S.	$X^2 = 0.8$ (n.s.)	9.5(s)	8.8(s)	*
(b) W.O.	$X^2 = 53.9$ (s)	106.7(s)	71.0(s)	11.7(s)
(c) Y.O.	$X^2 = 7.4$ (s)	108.0(s)	96.7(s)	9.1(s)
(d) Choir	$X^2 = 27.3$ (s)	88.2(s)	61.4(s)	6.8(s)
(e) M.O.	$X^2 = 26.4$ (s)	83.5(s)	56.4(s)	*
(f) Y.A.	$X^2 = 3.1$ (n.s.)	17.3(s)	14.0(s)	*
(g) O.A.	$X^2 = 2.1$ (n.s.)	12.8(s)	9.8(s)	*

* Not enough cases for X^2 test.

S.S. = Sunday School

M.O. = Men's Organization

W.O. = Women's Organization

Y.A. = Young Adult Organization

Y.O. = Youth Organization

O.A. = Older Adult Organization

Men's, Young Adult's, and Older Adult's Organizations. Only a small minority of congregations had any one of these suborganizations. The highest was men's organization in 16 percent of the congregations followed by young adult's organization in 7 percent and older adult's organization in 5 percent. In general, the larger the church the more likely the suborganization was to be present so, for example, 5 percent of the smallest congregations compared with 35 percent of the largest had men's organizations. In most cases sect-type groups were less likely to have the suborganization in each size category, although there were some exceptions (Table 11).

Suborganizations as a Whole. When we look at Table 11 as a whole it is apparent that congregations vary greatly in complexity of organization from the simplest type of organization which conducts some type of religious worship service on a weekly basis or less often to organizations of considerable complexity which maintain an impressive number of suborganizations. Size is an extremely important variable in determining whether or not a congregation will have a particular suborganization. Also, as the data have repeatedly shown, the church/sect distinction makes a difference (at any size level) whether or not a suborganization is maintained by the congregation.

Table 12. Frequency of Official Board Meetings by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Frequency of Official Board Meetings		
		None Regularly Scheduled	Once a Month or More (percent)	Less Frequently than Once a Month
Total	505	59.0	31.3	9.7
Church-type	359	51.0	36.8	12.2
Sect-type	146	78.8	17.8	3.4
Small (-50)	171	84.8	7.0	8.2
Church-type	94	80.8	6.4	12.8
Sect-type	77	89.6	7.8	2.6
Medium (50-99)	151	60.3	29.1	10.6
Church-type	103	53.4	33.0	13.6
Sect-type	48	75.0	20.8	4.2
Large (100+)	183	33.9	55.7	10.4
Church-type	162	32.1	56.8	11.1
Sect-type	21	47.6	47.6	4.8

	Church/Sect (2d.f.)	Size (4d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (4d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)*
Frequency of Board Meetings	$\chi^2 =$ 33.9(s)	106.9(s)	57.0(s)	18.0(s)

* Categories 2 and 3 combined.

Frequency of Official Board Meetings. Our examination of the suborganizations within the church raises questions about other formalized arrangements of the local congregation. One is whether there are regularly scheduled meetings of the official board. This is not the question of whether or not there is a board but whether the board meets regularly.

A majority of congregations do not have a regular schedule of board meetings. Large congregations are more likely than small congregations to regularize this activity and church-type more so than sect-type. Therefore, two-thirds of the large church-type congregations had regularly scheduled board meetings compared with one-tenth of the small sect-type congregations (Table 12).

Contracts with Ministers. Another formal arrangement that a congregation may have is a formal contract with a minister. Only one-third of the congregations were reported to have such a document. The church-type, sect-type distinction appeared to be more important than size of congregation in determining whether or not there is a written contract with the minister. Forty-two percent of the church-type congregations had a contract while only 10 percent of sect-type congregations did. When church-type and sect-type congregations were considered separately, size was not a significant factor in whether or not a contract was offered (Table 13).

Table 13. Formal Contract with the Minister by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Does congregation have a formal contract with minister?	
		Yes (percent)	No
Total*	453	32.9	67.1
Church-type	323	42.1	57.9
Sect-type	130	10.0	90.0
Small (<50)	140	22.1	77.9
Church-type	76	34.2	65.8
Sect-type	64	7.8	92.2
Medium (50-99)	145	35.2	64.8
Church-type	98	45.9	54.1
Sect-type	47	12.8	87.2
Large (100+)	168	39.9	60.1
Church-type	149	43.6	56.4
Sect-type	19	10.5	89.5

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
Formal Contract	$\chi^2 = 52.9(s)$	21.4(s)	3.0(n.s.)	0.7(n.s.)

* Excluded those with no regular minister and no information.

Resources

Most congregations are dependent upon their own membership for support. In addition, many provide financial support to denominational activities. Few, however, receive direct financial support from either their denomination or other churches. The overriding impression gained from examining the data is the extremely low level of financial support of most rural churches.

Income. More than one-third of the congregations had yearly incomes under \$2,000. This appears to be a very low figure and its validity might be questioned. However, it is quite consistent with the earlier study of the same area which showed budgets substantially lower. For example, 50 percent of the congregations had budgets of less than \$1,500 in an earlier study (Missouri A.E.S. Research Bulletin 633B, 1957, p. 135).

Income is related directly and strongly to size of the church. More than 70 percent of the smallest congregations compared with less than 30 percent of the medium size, and only 7 percent of the largest report total annual income of under \$2,000. In

Table 14. Income of Churches for the Year 1966 by Size of Churches and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	-\$2,000	\$2-3,999	\$4-9,999 (percent)	\$10,000+
Total	498	35.8	22.6	19.5	17.1
Church-type	358	30.4	21.5	26.5	21.5
Sect-type	140	49.3	25.7	19.3	5.7
Small (-50)	165	73.4	19.4	6.7	0.6
Church-type	94	78.7	17.0	4.3	0.0
Sect-type	71	66.2	22.6	9.8	1.4
Medium (50-99)	151	29.1	41.1	25.2	4.6
Church-type	103	24.2	47.6	22.4	5.8
Sect-type	48	39.6	27.1	31.3	2.1
Large (100+)	182	7.1	10.4	40.1	42.3
Church-type	161	6.2	7.5	52.2	44.1
Sect-type	21	14.3	33.3	23.8	28.6

	Church-Sect (2d.f.)	Size (4d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (4d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (4d.f.)
Church Income* $\chi^2 =$	23.6(s)	268.8(s)	247.6(s)	24.0(s)

* Columns 3 and 4 combined for χ^2 analysis.

contrast, less than one percent of the smallest churches, five percent of the medium size, and 42 percent of the largest report an income of \$10,000 or more. The church-sect division did not reveal much difference when size of congregation was controlled. For the small and medium size congregations, sect groups tended to support their congregations at a slightly higher level. For large congregations, church-type groups offered a higher level of support. However, this may have resulted from different distributions of size of church and sect groups within this open-ended category.

The principal means of raising money in the rural churches is through free will offerings, including collections at various services and donations which might be made annually but not pledged. Such giving might involve tithing by the individual or family. More than two-thirds of the churches obtained virtually all of their income (95% or more) from free will offerings. It was the main method of financing for all three size categories of congregations, although it was somewhat less prevalent for the largest congregations. Sects were more likely than church-type congregations to depend almost exclusively on free will offerings.

Table 15. Use of Free Will Offerings and Pledges as a Means of Raising Money by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Churches with 95% or More of Income from Free Will Offering	Churches with Any Percent of Income from Annual Pledges
	(a)	(b)
	N = 499	N = 478
Total	68.5	15.1
Church-type	63.7	20.2
Sect-type	80.9	8.0
Small (-50)	73.5	11.5
Church-type	72.3	14.8
Sect-type	75.0	7.2
Medium (50-99)	72.8	12.7
Church-type	64.1	15.5
Sect-type	91.7	6.4
Large (100+)	60.4	24.9
Church-type	58.4	26.2
Sect-type	76.2	14.3

	Church-Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
(a) Free Will Offering	$\chi^2 = 31.8(s)$	8.7(s)	5.4(n.s.)	5.7(n.s.)
(b) Pledges	$\chi^2 = 10.5(s)$	22.2(s)	7.0(s)	*

* Not enough cases for χ^2 test.

At the same time, ministers' salaries were more likely to represent a larger proportion of the total income of smaller churches than larger churches. As can be seen in Table 17, a majority of the smallest churches spent one-half or more of their total income on ministerial expenses compared with 36 percent of the medium size churches and 18 percent of the large churches. The pattern for church-type and sect-type groups did not differ much in this respect for the two smaller categories, but a substantial difference was observed for the largest category on the basis of church and sect-type.

Table 17. Congregations in which Ministers' Salary and Expenses Represent One-Half or More of the Congregation's Total Income by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	Minister's Salary $\frac{1}{2}$ or more of Total Income of the Congregation (percent)
Total	489	34.3
Church-type	351	29.9
Sect-type	138	45.7
Small (-50)	157	52.2
Church-type	87	49.4
Sect-type	70	55.7
Medium (50-99)	151	35.8
Church-type	103	34.9
Sect-type	48	37.5
Large (100+)	181	17.7
Church-type	161	16.1
Sect-type	20	30.0

	Church/Sect (1d.f.)	Size (2d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (2d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)
Minister's Salary	$\chi^2 =$ 10.9(s)	44.7(s)	31.6(s)	6.3(s)

Paid Employees. About one-half of the churches had spent money for employees in addition to the minister. Sixteen percent of the congregations employed two or more persons. Almost all employment was part-time. The most common employment was for custodial services. Almost half of the churches paid some money during the year for this kind of service. The next most common service paid for was secretarial employment, but only 5 percent of the churches reported such expenditures. Almost no paid professional services were provided other than those of the minister. Three percent of the churches paid musicians, but only two churches (not percent) had a paid associate minister and one had a director of education.

Size and church/sect type were related to having paid employees in addition to the minister with fewer than one-quarter of the small sect-type congregations compared with more than three quarters of the large church-type congregations having paid employees (Table 18).

Table 18. Number of Paid Employees Other than the Minister by Size of Church and Church/Sect Type

Size (Roll Membership) Church/Sect	Number	None	One (percent)	Two or More
Total	505	49.7	34.1	16.2
Church-type	359	42.9	37.0	20.1
Sect-type	146	66.4	26.7	6.8
Small (-50)	171	73.1	21.6	5.3
Church-type	94	70.2	22.3	7.4
Sect-type	77	76.6	20.8	2.6
Medium (50-99)	151	54.3	36.4	9.3
Church-type	103	52.4	38.8	8.7
Sect-type	48	58.3	31.3	10.4
Large (100+)	183	24.0	43.7	32.2
Church-type	162	21.0	44.4	34.6
Sect-type	21	47.6	38.1	14.3

	Church/Sect (2d.f.)	Size (4d.f.)	Size (Church-Type) (4d.f.)	Size (Sect-Type) (2d.f.)*
Other Paid Employees	$\chi^2 = 26.0(s)$	102.8(s)	64.2(s)	8.4(s)

* Columns 2 and 3 combined.

Summary

Discussion of the rural church in Missouri began with a view from the windshield. A great deal of diversity among congregations was discovered. This includes many denominational divisions, a wide range in size, differences in membership characteristics, and differences in facilities, suborganizations, activities, and resources. For convenience, the term *program* will be used to refer to facilities, suborganizations, activities, and resources.

Size explained many differences in program that existed among congregations. The distinction between church-type and sect-type was also helpful in sorting out the dif-

ferences in congregations. When size and church-sect were considered in combination as they related to program, a clearer picture emerged. This is because size of congregation was related in a different way to programs of church-type than to programs of sect-type congregations. For example, for sect-type congregations frequency of worship services and size of congregation were related only slightly (almost all sect-type congregations had weekly services regardless of size), but in church-type congregations size and frequency of services were clearly related (32 percent of the small congregations, 61 percent of the medium congregations, 95 percent of the large congregations had weekly services). Other programs showed this same tendency, although generally not so sharply, so that programs of church-type congregations were usually related more closely to size of the congregation than they were in sect-type congregations.

The factor of size of rural churches deserves additional attention. An overriding fact about the churches in rural Missouri is that most of them are small groups with limited resources. In spite of this they maintain a program which at the minimum consists of regular (not necessarily weekly) worship services and regular (almost always weekly) Sunday school programs. These limited resource groups must be admired if only for their ability to survive in a society that places emphasis on size and economic ability. They do this by carrying on a kind of subsistence program in which little is spent for facilities or their maintenance or for program personnel beyond the services of a minister. And, although the cost of a minister represents the largest item of expenditure in most churches, in many congregations he or she is a lay preacher whose principal income is from a secular occupation.

Because rural churches are small and their generation of economic resources is low should not necessarily predict their early demise. Their lack of dependence on income may work as an asset in the survival game. As fellowship groups with few secular activities and largely removed from obligations to larger social structures (including denominations), they present different criteria of survival or even adequacy than many other groups in the community (i.e., a school must meet minimum standards set by the state department of education, local government must stand audit of its books, local merchants must show a profit). In contrast, the church can exist where a few are gathered together. The lack of obligations outside the group as a survival asset is particularly relevant to sect-type groups. More than half of the sect-type groups in the sample have a membership of under 50. In spite of this, over the 15 year period from 1952-1967 sect-type congregations showed a net increase of about four percent. Almost by definition these groups sustain themselves without outside support. They concentrate heavily on worship services and are less disposed toward elaborate internal sub-organizational structure and secular activities. As such they are not in the market place and but little affected by the economic situation. Of course, these observations do not mean a local congregation or any other organization does not require a minimum membership level for survival but for the rural church it can be low indeed.

For denominations with centralized authority, the small rural church presents a special problem for the denominational level. The denomination has a program of activities and a model of congregational organization that the small church may not be able to fulfill, at least not to the denomination's standards. Thus the small rural congregation appears inadequate. Attempts are made to bring local congregations into the mainstream of denominational activity through consolidation or cooperative plans such as the "larger parish" or "group ministers."

If one looks for a common element in the program of the rural church, attention is fixed on the Sunday school. Virtually all congregations, church and sect, large and small, engage in this activity on a weekly basis. The only major exception is the Roman Catholic churches and protestant congregations that are truly moribund. The Sunday school is largely a layman's activity and provides continuity of program in those congregations which do not hold weekly worship services. In some rural congregations Sundays are distinguished by whether or not there is preaching, not whether or not there are services. Preaching merely represents the capstone of the regular Sunday service. Sunday school leadership is a position of importance in the congregations and in some long tenure as "superintendent" or a comparable office is a mark of elder statemanship.

It is hazardous to predict the future of the rural church but its tenacity in a changing society suggests that another survey in a decade would find the bulk of the congregations operating at the same stand and at about the same level of activity. They will continue to be essentially fellowship groups engaged in internal activities and a frustration for denominational executives.

Methodological Appendix

This study was undertaken as a restudy of a survey done in 1952. Anyone familiar with the original study will be aware of our extreme debt to the earlier research team for the conceptualization of the problem and format in presentation. Our debt is much deeper than that, however, because they designed, carried through, and reported in detail research which we can confidently use as a baseline for comparative research. The principal reports of the earlier study are contained in a series of seven Missouri University Agriculture Experiment Station Bulletins (Research Bulletins 633A, 633B, 633C, 633D, 633E, 633F, 633G). The project was directed by the late Lawrence M. Hepple and had as authors Hepple, C. Milton Coughenour, John S. Holik, and George T. Blume.

A major overall objective of the present study is to observe changes that have taken place in rural churches from 1952 to 1967. In order to make such a comparison, the 1952 sampling framework was used for collecting the 1967 data.

The original sample consisted of an eight percent random selection of rural townships (no place as large as 2500 in the 1950 Census) stratified on the basis of size of the largest place in the township, area of the township, and number of persons living in the township. (See Milton Coughenour and Lawrence M. Hepple, *The Church in Rural Missouri, Part II Rural Religious Groups*, University of Missouri Agriculture Experiment Station Research Bulletin 633B, September 1957, p. 42). This resulted in the selection of 99 townships. The units of observation were all active churches within the townships.

In the survey conducted in 1967 which we are reporting here, the same townships were used and information was sought for each church in the sample area. In 1967, 511 active churches were identified and we were able to complete information schedules for 505 of them. Field interviews were conducted in which information was obtained from the ministers of the church or, where there was no regular minister, from lay officers.

The schedule of questions used in this survey followed closely the one developed for the earlier survey so that we could make comparisons. Also, for the same reason, in reporting the data here we have used the same categories where feasible. Thus we have called churches with roll membership of -50 small churches, those 50-99 medium

size churches, and those 100 or more large churches. Similarly, for size of place, open country is any place up to 200 population, a small village is a place of 200-999, and a large village is a place of 1000-2499. The operational definition for church-type and sect-type developed in the earlier study was also used in this study.

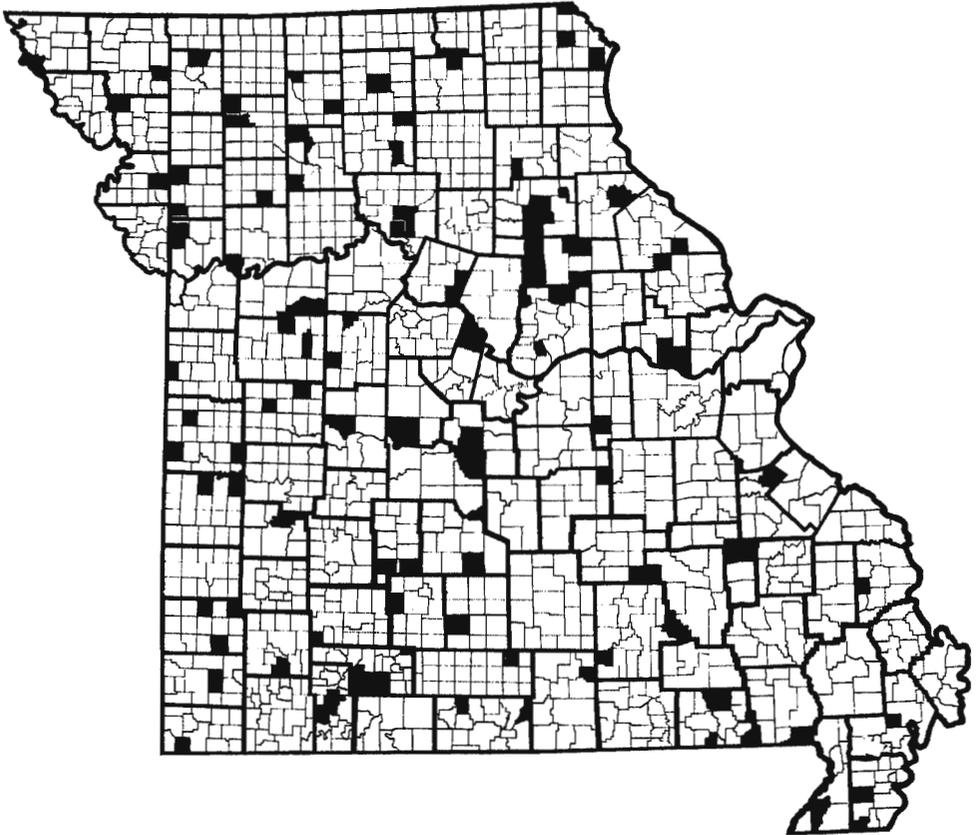


Figure 1. The State Sample of Rural Townships

The reader may wish to make comparisons between the data presented here with the earlier study as reported in University of Missouri Research Bulletin 633B. A certain caution should be exercised in doing so. In the earlier study data on facilities, suborganizations, inter-group activities, and intra-group activities were presented on the basis of percentages derived from scale scores. In the present study actual percentages are reported. Thus the two sets of reported data are not exactly comparable. As we make comparisons in subsequent reports, the data from the earlier study will be reported in actual percentages, thus making the two sets comparable in this respect.