



**Faith in the City:
Patrick McCrory and the Mayor's Mentoring Alliance**

In November 2003, Patrick McCrory became the first Mayor of Charlotte to be elected for a fifth term—he had consistently won support as a moderate conservative who successfully promoted economic development and a comprehensive transportation plan, advocated environmental sensitivity, public safety, and a concern for troubled youth. Eight years earlier, during his first term as Mayor, responding to the escalating violence, racial tensions, and pleas from the Superintendent of Education for a mentoring program to help struggling youth, McCrory launched the “Mayor’s Mentoring Alliance.” By his fifth term, the initiative had brought together over 50 youth-serving nonprofit organizations and 50 local corporations to work together to recruit mentors for “at-risk” youth. Himself a mentor to two boys, McCrory used his public office and corporate background to encourage various organizations to get involved in mentoring. In 2001, he was awarded the North Carolina Governor’s Outstanding Local Official Award for his efforts.

But problems for the city’s young people continued to manifest. Gang recruitment was reaching new heights; there were startling disparities in academic achievement between white and minority students; and the demand for mentors far exceeded volunteer supply. With the growing acceptance of faith-based solutions to intractable community problems, President George W. Bush himself strongly promoting faith based initiative as an element of his philosophy of “compassionate conservatism,” McCrory decided to reach out to Charlotte’s most abundant source of volunteers—the religious community. Charlotte was home to over 700 Houses of Worship, which spanned over 100 different Christian denominations and a growing number of other faiths.

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Recruitment of the faith community into the Mayor’s Mentoring Alliance would not be easy. As a white Republican Mayor, McCrory has been strongly opposed by some of the city’s outspoken black churches, which traditionally favored Democratic candidates. The religious community was divided not only along political lines but also by race and ideology. Unlike McCrory’s experience of bringing together nonprofit organizations and corporations, this would be a less familiar and more politically charged territory. He treaded carefully taking over a year to set up the first meeting with religious leaders. At the last minute, however, the Mayor decided to postpone the meeting indefinitely as another pressing issue—the controversy over gay marriage—seized the attention of the religious community. Now, with a legacy of cross-sector community engagement, a strong economy, and looking ahead to a bright political future, he would have to consider carefully how to engage the diverse and fractured religious community in his mentoring initiative.

Charlotte

Charlotte is North Carolina’s largest and wealthiest city. Home to two of America’s largest banks¹ and 286 Fortune 500 companies,² Charlotte has been ranked as the third best city for corporate headquarters in the United States and continues to attract new businesses.³ The city’s population has nearly doubled in the last 20 years and now exceeds 600,000. The majority of newcomers have come from the Northeast alongside an influx of Latino and Asian immigrants. In the 1990’s, Charlotte’s Asian population doubled and the Hispanic population grew by 714 percent.⁴ Today, the city’s ethnic make up is 58.3 percent white, 32.7 percent African American, 3.4 percent Asian, and 5.6 percent other. Hispanics, spread out over various ethnic categories, make up 7.4 percent.

For the last 10 years, Charlotte has extended its borders through annexation, which—through the continual expansion of its property tax base—has allowed the city to keep a steady tax rate for 17 years.⁵ Today, Charlotte fills up most of Mecklenburg County and there are plans on the table to annex another 14 square miles. Voters’ consent is not required for annexation and some have expressed concern over possible increases in property taxes and the provision of adequate services to the new areas following the annexations. The Mayor, however, has framed the annexation debate in terms of race relations and social responsibility,

¹ Wachovia Bank and Bank of America.

² Of the 286 Fortune 500 companies represented in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, seven are headquartered here.

³ Khan, Karim. (April, 2003). “Best Cities for Corporate Headquarters,” *Business Facilities Magazine* [online] cited April 14, 2003, http://www.facilitycity.com/busfac/bf_03_04_cover.asp.

⁴ In 1990, Charlotte’s Hispanic population numbered 5,571. By 2000, it had grown to 39,800.

⁵ Rubin, R. (May 11, 2004). City Manger puts tax hike on table: Syfert floats, but doesn’t endorse, rate increase. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. A1.

There is no way that the people of the suburbs can escape responsibility for the inner city. We have been forced to work together. And that has had a tremendous impact in ensuring that the racial divide does not divide any further. We have to work together. Atlanta is a totally segregated city. And Richmond. Or Boston. Not just by race, but by economics. We've been fortunate that we haven't had that.⁶

The racial divide, however, has been a persistent and challenging issue throughout Charlotte's history. In 1965, Charlotte received national attention with the landmark case of *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County (CMS) Board of Education* filed by Rev. Darius and Vera Swann after their son was denied entry into a majority-white school close to their home. Although the 1954 Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that the "separate but equal" (schooling) doctrine was unconstitutional, the overwhelming majority of Charlotte's schools in the 1960's were still segregated. In 1969, after repeated appeals in the Swann case, US District Court Judge James McMillan ordered CMS to use "all known ways of desegregating, including busing."⁷ The ruling focused national attention on Charlotte as the first test case of busing as a means of achieving peaceful racial desegregation and led to sweeping desegregation orders in most of the major cities in the South.⁸

Despite Charlotte's achievements in the arena of integration, the rising tide of violence in the US throughout the 1990's added strain to the fragile race relations in the city. Between 1993 and 1997, Charlotte witnessed three highly publicized shootings of unarmed African Americans by white police officers.⁹ At a heated City Council meeting in April 1997, following the shooting a female passenger at a traffic checkpoint, the African American community threatened to riot if appropriate action was not taken. "If you continue not to hear the people once they ask you, we have no recourse but to visit what has been visited upon Los Angeles," threatened Dwayne Collins, chairman of a local grassroots organization.¹⁰ Hundreds of African American residents, who packed into City Council chambers that day, gave Collins a standing ovation. When McCrory called for quiet, Bishop James Houston, having exceeded the speaking time limit, shouted, "We

⁶ 30 Minutes with Pat McCrory. Interview by Warren Smith, December 20, 2000 [online] cited July 1, 2004, <http://www.thecharlotteworld.com>.

⁷ Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. (2004). *The History of Public Schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg* [online] cited July 2, 2004, <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/discover/history.asp>.

⁸ Charlotte worked hard to maintain healthy race relations and has never witnessed the race riots that occurred following desegregation orders in other cities in the South.

⁹ In December 1993, an officer shot and killed Windy Gail Thomson after stopping her on suspicion of drunk driving. In November 1996, nineteen-year-old James Willie Cooper was shot during a traffic stop after the police officer mistakenly thought Cooper was reaching for his gun. In April 1997, Carolyn Sue Boetticher, an African American, was caught speeding through a traffic checkpoint with a white man at the wheel. Boetticher was shot dead by police who fired 22 bullets at the car. The driver was unharmed. In all three cases, following internal investigations, officers were cleared of wrongdoing.

¹⁰ Batten, T. (April 15, 1997). Police Killings Decried: Residents revive call for review panel. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1C.

have been shut up and shut down long enough!”¹¹ In the end, it was an elaborate communication network set up between the Mayor’s office and local churches that kept the lines of communication open and helped to prevent the conflict from boiling over into a race riot.

The role played by Charlotte’s religious leaders in 1997 reflects the broader position of religion in this city. Simply put, religion is everywhere. Nestled in the Bible Belt, Charlotte is home to over 700 Houses of Worship—a veritable kaleidoscope of American Christianity and a growing number of other faiths (see Appendix 1). With over 50,000 members, Baptists are the city’s largest denomination; Roman Catholics are close behind with over 40,000 members.¹² Among the city’s largest Houses of Worship—the “mega-churches”—are St. Matthew Catholic Church with a membership of over 5,000 families, Hickory Grove Baptist Church with 11,000 members, and the (Pentecostal) Central Church of God—the largest Church of God congregation in North Carolina with 10,000 members. Of Charlotte’s congregations, approximately one-third is predominantly African American, belonging primarily to Baptist and Pentecostal churches.¹³ While the overwhelming majority of congregations are Christian, there are also two Synagogues serving a Jewish community of 7,000, an Islamic Center and a Mosque serving over 7,000 Muslims, a Hindu Temple, and a Baha’i Center. With a rapidly growing population, and an influx of Asian and Hispanic immigrants, the religious landscape is shifting to reflect the changing demographics.

Mayor Patrick McCrory

In 1995, with 62 percent of the vote, Patrick McCrory became only the fourth Republican to serve as Mayor of Charlotte. McCrory began his career at Duke Energy Corporation in Charlotte after graduating from Catawba College with a degree in political science and education. Over eleven years at Duke Energy he held various positions including manager of business relations and director of training and development. In 1989 he was elected to Charlotte City Council, where he served three terms, including Mayor Pro Tempore from 1993-1995. Throughout his four terms as Mayor, McCrory has served as Chair of both the Environmental Committee and the Housing and Community Development Committee of the US Conference of Mayors and has held the position of President of the Republican Mayors and Local Officials. In 2003, he was appointed by Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to serve on the Homeland Security Advisory Committee.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Roman Catholic Dioceses count their membership in families. The number of Catholics in the Charlotte Diocese is estimated at 41,704—a figure arrived at by multiplying the number of member families by 2.7. (Barbara Gatty, Associate Director of Development, Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte, personal communication, June 30, 2004.)

¹³ Charlotte Post Publishing Company. (2004). *Black Guide: The Urban Renaissance*, pp. 53-60 [online] cited July 15, 2004, <http://www.thecharlottepost.com/BG04web.pdf>. (The “Churches” section lists 246 congregations, of which 96 are Baptist and 84 Pentecostal.)

The City of Charlotte has a Council-Manager form of government with a Mayor and 11 Council Members, who are elected for two year terms. Within this system, the Mayor's power is limited to a tie-breaking vote in City Council and a mayoral veto, both of which can be overridden by a 7-4 council vote. Together, the Mayor and City Council Members are responsible for appointing the City Manager, reviewing the annual budget, setting the tax rate and approving the financing of all City operations. The City Manager oversees day-to-day operations and has direct responsibility for city departments. Charlotte is also the county seat of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners who oversee the provision of social services, especially those related to health, education, welfare, mental health and the environment. Within this governing structure, the Mayor's influence is best described in terms of "soft power"—his public voice, his image, and his power of persuasion.

During McCrory's tenure, bank mergers and the city's pro-business climate positioned Charlotte as a major financial center. Parks Helms, former Democratic Chair of Mecklenburg County Commissioners called McCrory, "a very good ambassador" for the City of Charlotte, helping to sell the city to companies considering a move.¹⁴ In the past 10 years, almost 9,000 new firms have opened in Charlotte creating 77,327 new jobs and investing \$7.4 billion in new facilities.¹⁵ McCrory's critics, however, have accused him of giving too little attention to neighborhoods and average residents and spending too much time in Washington advancing his political career.¹⁶ Democratic challenger in the 2003 Mayoral election, Ella Scarborough (an African American) portrayed the incumbent as "sitting in developers' pockets" and making Charlotte a city for the rich.¹⁷ On balance, the Charlotte Observer reported that, "Even McCrory's critics give him kudos for pushing mass transit, deploying his cheerful salesmanship to lure new companies to town and raising Charlotte's national profile."¹⁸ Improved community relations also contributed to Charlotte's business appeal. Rev. Claude Alexander, Senior Pastor of Charlotte's University Park Baptist Church—who once considered running for mayor—writes,

With Swann, Charlotte has taken pride in its ability to peacefully integrate its school system and to address matters of race. Charlotte became known as a model for the New South in addressing difficult issues such as race in a manner that enabled people to concentrate on the business of business. This image of progressiveness as it relates to race was crucial to

¹⁴ Rubin, R. (October 19, 2003). On track or off course?: After eight years as mayor, McCrory wins cheers for his accomplishments, jeers for his ambition. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

¹⁵ Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. (2004). *Economic Development* [online] cited July 2, 2004, <http://www.charlottechamber.com>.

¹⁶ Rubin, R. (October 19, 2003). On track or off course?: After eight years as mayor, McCrory wins cheers for his accomplishments, jeers for his ambition. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

¹⁷ Markoe, L. (October 14, 2001). McCrory record in spotlight: Challenger Scarborough critiques it, Mayor shows it off. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

¹⁸ Rubin, R. (October 19, 2003). On track or off course?: After eight years as mayor, McCrory wins cheers for his accomplishments, jeers for his ambition. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

Charlotte's ability to recruit companies, especially those with a diverse work force, to the area in the past 25 years.¹⁹

The Concept of a Mentoring Alliance

Throughout his tenure, McCrory has used his “soft power” to champion an initiative—not typically associated with the Mayor’s office—one focused on recruiting volunteers to mentor “at-risk” youth in the city. It was unusual for a Mayor to step into the arena of social services and education, which were administered by county government. The school board, for example, has virtually no connection to the city—administratively or financially. As one nonprofit leader put it, “They live in separate worlds.”²⁰ Several events in the early 1990’s, however, led McCrory to explore the possibility of starting a mentoring program. In 1991, McCrory—then a member of city council—attended the trial of a slain Police Officer Gene Griffin in support of Griffin’s widow with whom he was acquainted. Having followed the trial of the three African American teenagers charged in Griffin’s shooting and become aware of their lengthy police records, McCrory became convinced that an earlier intervention could have saved four lives—those of the convicted teenagers and that of the Gene Griffin. The same year, Dr. John Murphy, the new Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), disaggregated the data on students’ performance and found a “shocking discord” between the performance of white children and African American children. Murphy felt that CMS “had two different school systems—one for majority kids and one for minority kids.”²¹ He approached McCrory with the idea of starting a government mentoring program to reach those who were failing out of the school system.

McCrory wasn’t a stranger to the idea of mentoring. His first exposure to the idea had been through his brother, a mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS), who invited McCrory to a BBBS event in Charlotte in 1979.²² The idea was planted. Shortly after becoming Mayor in November 1995, McCrory approached Debbie Antshel, the Director of Partnerships for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools for help in designing a mentoring program. Having served on the North Carolina Leadership Council and the Governor’s Mentoring Committee, Debbie brought a wealth of local and county-level expertise to the task. With Antshel on board, the initiative also gained an important link into CMS,²³ and thereby, access to children—the target population of the budding initiative.²⁴

¹⁹ Alexander, C. (May 17, 2002). Two decisions will test our community. *Charlotte Business Journal* [online] cited July 1, 2004, <http://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2002/05/20/editorial3.html>.

²⁰ Interview with Stephen Johnston, May 12, 2004.

²¹ Interview with Dr. John Murphy, April 27, 2004.

²² While with Big Brothers Big Sisters, McCrory’s brother had been a mentor to Patrick Cannon, now serving as Mayor Pro Tempore for the City of Charlotte.

²³ In 1960, after more than 11 years of discussion and debate, the two largest school systems in North Carolina - Charlotte City Schools and Mecklenburg County schools merged to form Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Today, CMS is the 23rd largest school system in the US, with 149 schools serving over 117,000 students. In 2002-

From the Mayor's perspective, the central issue driving the disparities between white and minority youth was the absence of positive role models. He said:

Our number one priority must be trying to assist kids who are not being supervised who don't have role models. Parents are either working or they're in jail or they're not being responsible or the parents themselves are children and they're just too immature to handle it.²⁵

But there was no money in the budget to start a mentoring program. McCrory's first instinct was to bring together key Charlotte youth-serving organizations to assess existing resources. Among those present at the first meeting were representatives from Big Brothers Big Sisters, the YMCA, other nonprofit organizations, city and county government as well as the school district. McCrory says,

I found out there were faith-related mentoring programs, social services-related programs, school mentoring programs, peer-to-peer programs. Everyone had their own niche. Now, the issue was, can we form a coalition or an alliance to bring them all together and share resources.²⁶

The result was a budding alliance of resource sharing nonprofit organizations, which focused on the needs of "at-risk" youth. McCrory drew on a combination of business and service provision models among Charlotte organizations and applied these to mentoring.²⁷ He called the initiative the "Mayor's Mentoring Alliance"—choosing not to use attach his own name to it, in the hopes that it would continue beyond his administration.²⁸

The alliance format was administratively simple and extremely cost effective. Debbie Antshel volunteered her time and participating agencies hosted meetings and contributed food for workshops. Eventually, for purposes of administration, the Mentoring Alliance came under the auspices of the Neighborhood Development Department—costing the city only \$9,000 a year.²⁹ To help connect volunteers to mentoring opportunities, the Mayor set up a one-stop-shopping phone service through the Volunteer Center at the local United Way—the Center staff would match interested volunteers with mentoring opportunities that matched their interests and availability.

03, the CMS operating budget was nearly \$830 million. Of total revenue, 59.2% came from the State, 33.2% from the County, 5.6% from the Federal Government, and 2% from local sources. The per pupil expenditure for 2002-03 was \$7,101. Retrieved August 20, 2004 from <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/discover/pdf/fastfactssheet.pdf>.

²⁴ Antshel provided information to other organizations in the Alliance about high need schools and facilitated partnerships between nonprofit organizations, corporations, and individual volunteers and the schools.

²⁵ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

²⁶ McCrory, Patrick. (2002). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, August 9, 2002.

²⁷ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

²⁸ Interview with Patrick McCrory, June 2, 2003.

²⁹ Betty Jackson, the Department staff person, was responsible for setting up meetings, sending out mailings and managing the agenda.

The Mayor understood that if he was going to use his bully pulpit to try to get others to see the importance of mentoring, he would have to be a role model himself. “If you’re going to sell it, you better understand it,”³⁰ he said. Soon after launching the Mentoring Alliance, he began mentoring two young African American boys.

Building the Alliance: Bringing in Nonprofits and Corporations

By 2001, the Mentoring Alliance had grown to include nearly 50 youth-serving nonprofit organizations, spanning a wide range of services and expertise. (See Appendix 2). The Mayor, Debbie Antshel, and Lynn Swisshelm, Director of the Mentoring Training Institute,³¹ worked hard to spread the word about the need for mentors. Over time, they learned to adapt their appeals to people’s diverse interests, availability, and comfort level. Beyond the traditional model of one-on-one community based mentoring (typically associated with Big Brothers Big Sisters), the Mentoring Alliance offered volunteers a “menu” of options and levels of commitment to choose from.

Pooling resources and networking through an alliance-based format opened up new opportunities for member organizations, ones they may not have been able to access on their own such as inviting expert speakers, organizing trainings, as well as recruiting and screening mentors. Alan Seymour, director of a faith-based mentoring program in the Alliance has taken advantage of the Alliance’s various training sessions, such as one on gang intervention, to which he invited teachers from the school that his program partners with. Through contacts established through the Alliance, he has been able to expand his mentoring program to new sites and refer interested parents to a variety of mentoring resources. He notes, “In the Alliance you’re not really fighting against each other. You’re there to impact the community.”³² Jacquelin Peters, Executive Director of the Charlotte Chapter of 100 Black Men of America, Inc., a mentoring organization for African American boys, notes the benefits of participating in the Alliance:

... networking, knowing what other people are doing programmatically, knowing that if somebody calls and it's something that we can't help them with, that there's another organization on the mentoring alliance that could help them, that I can refer them and not just turn them away cold. I think that's a good thing. I commend the Mayor for that. I don't know many other cities where the Mayor takes that kind of a stance.³³

³⁰ McCrory, Patrick. (2003). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, February 7, 2003.

³¹ The Mentoring Training Institute was created in 2001 with a \$100,000 grant from the Knight Foundation.

³² Interview with Alan Seymour, May 11, 2004.

³³ Interview with Jacquelin Peters, May 10, 2004.

The same year, the Alliance branched out to include another source of potential volunteers—corporations. Charlotte was a major financial center and home to 286 Fortune 500 companies, many of whose CEOs McCrory had met, recruited to Charlotte, and cultivated relationships with. With the help of Kristy Davis, Community Affairs Vice President at Wachovia Bank, McCrory created the “Corporate Council” of the Mentoring Alliance. The Council now consists of over 50 local corporations, including the city’s five largest. Representatives of member corporations meet every two months to share resources and be paired with high need schools in their area. “When businesses come to town, the Mayor lets them know immediately of the cultural expectation in Charlotte—that businesses do get involved in the lives of kids,” says Antshel.³⁴ Wachovia Bank, for example, allows employees up to four hours off a month for community service.³⁵ In 2001, North Carolina Governor Michael Easley, recognized McCrory’s efforts to encourage mentoring with the Governor’s Outstanding Local Official Award.

With over 100 organizations in the Mentoring Alliance, what was the impact of this new network? How many mentors were participating and being recruited by member organizations? How many more were needed? There had been no formal evaluation and there was no budget for this type of assessment. McCrory acknowledged that measurement was necessary but that quantitative measures were difficult to come by—organizations were simply not used to this. Based on qualitative reports, however, the mayor and Antshel were confident that the program needed to be “reaching more kids.” McCrory own experience of mentoring had met with mixed success, he recalled.

In my own mentoring experience—I’d give myself a B on one [youth] and a D on the other. One of them just had a terrible time. I think I got there too late. Joel³⁶ was 15, he was so far behind. He got kicked out of school. We’d lost contact and I kept leaving messages. Actually he was too embarrassed to call me because he had been arrested.

McCrory recounts a visit to Joel’s home at Christmas two years later. Joel was holding his six-month old brother in his arms. “His mother has a 17-year-old trying to stay out of jail and now she has another child by another father,” the Mayor recalls with a note of disbelief. I said, “How are you and your girlfriend doing?” And he said, ‘Well, we broke up but she’s pregnant.’³⁷ McCrory wasn’t sure what impact his relationship with Joel had had on the young man but he, himself, was deeply affected by the experience.

Where it has helped me, as Mayor, is that it has shown me some environments that I wasn’t privy to seeing in detail. You can’t tell the

³⁴ Personal communication, June 10, 2004.

³⁵ Approximately 10 percent of the 2000 IBM employees 20 percent of the 1,500 Royal and Sun Alliance employees in Charlotte are engaged in some form of mentoring.

³⁶ Name has been changed.

³⁷ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

environment by going to a neighborhood and giving a speech. You can tell an environment by going inside their house, meeting the parents. Not just one time but twenty or thirty times and then you start seeing it.³⁸

In 2001, Harvard University released the results of its “Social Capital Benchmark Survey”—a study designed to assess the level of social capital (a measure of social cohesion) in 40 communities throughout the United States—Charlotte included.³⁹ To the surprise of many in Charlotte, the survey revealed that their city ranked 39th out of the 40 communities surveyed on levels of inter-racial trust. It appeared that the rich volunteer and associational life in Charlotte, rather than serving as a “bridging social capital” linking different populations, more often promoted “bonding” with people like oneself. After four years of community building initiatives which followed the 1990’s shootings, Charlotte had a long way to go to rebuilding trust between its diverse populations. The survey concluded:

[The] Charlotte region needs to build social capital including social and inter-racial trust if it is to continue to be viewed as a growing, dynamic Southern and national city. Failure to develop a higher level of social capital will defer if not destroy this dream.⁴⁰

Engaging the Faith Community

McCrorry enjoyed the success of the Mayor’s Mentoring Alliance. He talked about mentoring in many of his speeches, made himself readily available to the volunteer leaders of the Alliance, proudly showcased the Mentoring Alliance on his website along with the over 100 organizations that were now a part of it, and continued to mentor two young men, with whom he had been matched eight years ago. In 2002, having assembled a sizeable number of nonprofit organizations and corporations under the umbrella of the Mayor’s Mentoring Alliance, McCrorry he decided to reach out to a constituency which represented the most abundant source of volunteers—the religious community.⁴¹

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Rash, B. C., McCoy, B. (2001). *Social Capital Benchmark Survey for the Charlotte Region*. Foundation for the Carolinas [online] cited April 15, 2004, http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/docs/carolinas_sh.pdf.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁴¹ Although he hadn’t yet appealed to religious organizations in a systematic manner, the faith community was already a presence in the Alliance. Of the 53 nonprofits in the Alliance, 13 had a faith-based component or were run directly out of a church. Through Antshel, schools in underserved communities were being paired with churches willing to support the school financially or through volunteer resources. Covenant Presbyterian Church, an affluent Charlotte church, had established a program called “Hearts for Highland” through which it gathered resources for its partner school—Highland Renaissance Academy, one of the poorest in the city. Similarly paired through Antshel, Christ Episcopal Church raised money for their partner school to support two full-time teacher mentors (hired by the school)—in an effort to increase teacher retention.

In Charlotte, the birthplace of Rev. Billy Graham, it is almost impossible to take even a few steps without encountering a person, a program, or an organization in some way affiliated with a faith community. Religion is everywhere. Rates of weekly church attendance, faith-based volunteering and tithing are all above the national average.⁴² Rev. Andy Baxter, Director of Mecklenburg Ministries, an interfaith clergy group in Charlotte says, “The social safety net in Charlotte would unravel if congregations didn’t exist.”⁴³ According to a 2003 survey of faith-based community activities in Charlotte, educational activities including mentoring and tutoring are the most common form of community engagement among congregations.⁴⁴ The majority of mentors coming to BBBS over the years had been from the faith community. Similarly, Kristy Davis and Debbie Antshel—volunteer coordinators of the corporate and nonprofit arms of the Mentoring Alliance respectively—were active in their church.

Unlike McCrory’s predecessor, Mayor Sue Myrick, an Evangelical Methodist who identified strongly with Charlotte’s evangelical community, McCrory isn’t publicly linked to any denomination. He says, however, that his faith has had a “tremendous impact” on his personal growth on how he thinks about his job.⁴⁵ Over the last several years he has developed a close relationship with Rev. Dr. David Chadwick, Pastor of Charlotte’s Forest Hill church. The well-known evangelical pastor, who was chaplain to the Charlotte Hornets⁴⁶ and a mentor to various political and civic leaders, invited McCrory to give a guest sermon at his church in 2001. McCrory notes,

It’s through my faith that I’m hopefully going to do the right thing. On this job, there are political pressures to take the easy way out. I have come to understand that no matter how bad things are, I have much more than I deserve. This community has much more than we deserve. We’d better recognize that.⁴⁷

But this time, McCrory couldn’t simply call a small group of churches together to brainstorm next steps like he had done at the start of the Mentoring Alliance with the nonprofit organizations—there were no obvious candidates who stood out as leaders in the religious community or as experts in the field of mentoring. Nor could he build on pre-existing relationships as he had with the corporations—there were over 700 churches in his city and many of them new. Despite the lack of instructive precedents for partnerships between Mayors and the faith based

⁴² Rash, B. C., McCoy, B. (2001). *Social Capital Benchmark Survey for the Charlotte Region*. Foundation for the Carolinas [online] cited April 15, 2004, http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/docs/carolinas_sh.pdf.

⁴³ Interview with Andy Baxter, April 12, 2004.

⁴⁴ University of North Carolina Urban Institute. (August 2003). *Community Outreach Activities of Faith Institutions in Mecklenburg County. Survey Results: Analysis and Report*.

⁴⁵ *30 Minutes with Pat McCrory*. Interview by Warren Smith, December 20, 2000 [online] cited July 1, 2004, <http://www.thecharlotteworld.com>.

⁴⁶ The Charlotte Hornets were the city’s NBA team until 2002.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

community, the idea that religious organizations had a role to play in solving difficult community problems was gaining momentum nationwide. The Charitable Choice provision of the 1996 Federal Welfare Law paved the way for federal funding of community and faith-based social services. In January 2001, President George W. Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and began encouraging public officials to take note of and support the capacity of faith based organizations to meet the needs of “poor Americans and distressed neighborhoods”⁴⁸

This wouldn’t be the first time that the City of Charlotte turned to the religious community for help. In the fall of 1996, following the highly publicized shootings, McCrory leaned heavily on the faith community to assist with rebuilding peaceful community relations. Diane English, then Director of Mecklenburg Ministries—an interfaith clergy association, was asked to lead the community relations initiative, which continues to this day.⁴⁹ McCrory noted that, “churches and the faith-based organizations are the best way to set up these forums for communication.”⁵⁰ Targeting the needs of youth, the city also provided financial support to several faith-based after-school programs as well as an anti-violence initiative headed by the Pastor of Charlotte’s Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church. Following the enactment of the 1996 Charitable Choice provision, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Department of Social Services launched a “Faith Initiative,” which fostered collaborative relationships between the Department and faith-based organizations with the aim of better serving the needs of disadvantaged citizens.⁵¹

McCrory’s experience with churches in helping to manage race relations in the city opened his eyes to the role they played in the city but also exposed him to the growing diversity of Charlotte’s religious institutions. He recalls reaching out to the faith community after the 1996 shootings and finding churches in his city that he didn’t know existed. “We were stuck in the old traditional 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s churches. It’s not just Southern Baptists or the Presbyterian Church anymore—there’s a lot of new Charlotte here.”⁵² He was not the only one in the dark. “If you asked what our largest church was to the powers in those towers [pointing to the Charlotte skyline], they wouldn’t know it was Hickory Grove Baptist Church. They have no idea what the largest church in Charlotte is.”⁵³ The “new Charlotte” also presented a challenge in terms of communicating a shared vision of the city’s needs. In the 80’s and 90’s Charlotte saw an influx of

⁴⁸ Bush, G.W. (January 29, 2001). *Executive Order: Establishment of White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives* [online] cited May 3, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/01/20010129-2.html>

⁴⁹ The City of Charlotte has spent almost two million dollars on this initiative.

⁵⁰ Maharaj, N., Bullock, D. (June 23, 2003). *Mayoral Leadership On Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Workshop US Mayors* [online] cited June 25, 2004, http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/us_mayor_newspaper/documents/06_23_03/faith_based.asp.

⁵¹ Charlotte-Mecklenburg Department of Social Services. (2002). *The Faith Initiative: A Joint Effort* [online] cited April 13, 2004, <http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/DSS/Faith+Initiatives/Home.htm>.

⁵² Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

people from parts of the country whose histories had not been shaped by desegregation and for whom the *Swann vs. Board of Education* case had no relevance. The Mayor felt that there wasn't enough diversity in the community initiatives around race relations:

I need to get some of the more suburban churches involved and engaged. We get the same hundred people involved in all of these issues and 60 percent of my people are new to Charlotte in the last two years. I'm their only mayor and I've got to somehow get them engaged in this dialogue.⁵⁴

Despite the ubiquity of religious institutions and faith-based volunteering in Charlotte, McCrory faced a changing religious community, made of largely independent units, many divided by race and doctrine. Of Charlotte's over 700 Christian congregations, for example, only a handful could be said to be racially integrated. In 2001, when the *Swann vs. Board of Education* ruling allowing busing to achieve integration, was reversed, a group of religious leaders concerned about re-segregation tried to convene a dialogue among clergy about challenges facing public education in Charlotte. "The Committed Thirteen," as the group was called, led by Lutheran Pastor and grassroots organizer Richard Little, struggled to maintain a diverse membership. Often, noted Stephen Johnston, Director of the Swann Fellowship and member of the "Committed Thirteen," phone calls to more conservative clergy members were simply never returned; the issue raised both religious and ideological questions and some religious leaders preferred not to enter the debate.

An equally deep and persistent divide exists between the conservative and liberal churches. The mayor notes that the churches are also "segregated politically." He describes:

We have our liberal ministers. We have our conservative ministers. We have our non-political ministers. But they are segregated—very similar to our neighborhoods. I'm not talking about racial either. Most people who live together think alike. Pick out your liberal neighborhoods and your liberal churches. Most people tend to gather toward people that think like them or look like them and act like them. And I'm trying to figure out, which is the best way to integrate the ministers.⁵⁵

Diane English, Executive Director of the Community Building Initiative (CBI) in Charlotte is cautiously hopeful about the possibility of bringing people together across racial and doctrinal divides although she said it would need to be convened by a "neutral source," and "probably around a crisis."⁵⁶ She understands the difficulties firsthand. CBI has struggled to maintain a level of diversity among its participants but often found itself unable to recruit or maintain the presence

⁵⁴ McCrory, Patrick. (2003). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, February 7, 2003.

⁵⁵ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

⁵⁶ Interview with Diane English, April 23, 2004.

of diverse, particularly, more conservative voices at the table. There are exceptions. Black churches will sometimes find common ground with churches on both sides of the divide—at times, joining forces with white evangelical churches, holding in common the “Jesus language,”⁵⁷ other times, joining with liberal Protestant churches on public policy issues of common concern such as ‘living wage’ (which, according to Baxter, “often feels like socialism to the white Baptists”⁵⁸). In general, however, Charlotte churches are independent units—most often preferring to take on community issues as a congregation rather than as a group of churches.

By actively engaging the diverse religious landscape, McCrory faced the risk of further polarizing the community along political lines. Throughout his four terms, much of his support had come from conservative congregations, although not to the exclusion of more liberal Protestant churches and less frequently the African American churches (which have traditionally supported democratic leadership). Several of the Mayor’s decisions throughout his tenure have drawn sharp criticism from the religious community. In 2000, the religious left mobilized to fight for a death penalty moratorium and garnered a majority of votes to support the resolution. Going against the majority, McCrory vetoed the resolution. In 2001, a local IAF organization, Help Empower Local People (HELP), was negotiating with City Council and the Chamber of Commerce to push a living wage ordinance. Black ministers at the forefront of the negotiations were put off by what some perceived to be the Mayor’s dismissiveness of the issue. McCrory saw this as a “political faith agenda” and refused to support it. Later the same year, Charlotte citizens voted to defeat an advisory referendum regarding the building of a second sports arena in the city. (The high turnout of African American churches, led by HELP, helped to secure the majority vote.) In one his most controversial moves, the Mayor supported the construction of a new arena and pushed the deal through. Leading up to the November 2003 mayoral election, McCrory’s opponents accused him of being “disconnected from the citizens” and making Charlotte “a city for the rich.”⁵⁹

As he prepares to engage the faith community in the Mentoring Alliance, among the Mayor’s greatest concerns is some churches’ engagement in the political process. According to McCrory, Charlotte has “a very strong black church, and also a very strong right organization.”⁶⁰ The “religious left,” in particular has repeatedly, and often vociferously, challenged him during his tenure:

I do see much more activism in some of the churches which you could designate as the ‘religious left.’ The media does not mention the ‘religious left’ like they mention the ‘religious right,’ but the fact of the matter is that

⁵⁷ Interview with Andy Baxter, April 12, 2004.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Rubin, R. (September 15, 2003). Castano, McCrory, Mulheren vie for Republican nomination: Challengers emphasize arena, transportation. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

⁶⁰ McCrory, Patrick. (2003). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, February 7, 2003.

the 'religious left' is very active in the school board, on the recent death penalty moratorium issue, and in other political issues that have recently been in the city and county spotlight. They are extremely visible and politically active.

McCrorry has voiced his concerns about political pressure coming from congregations. "I don't mind political pressure from individuals," he says, "but I don't believe that a public servant should get political pressure from a church, whether that comes from the left or the right."⁶¹ Problems can occur, for example, when a religious leader raises an issue in a government forum, seeking to push a particular agenda. "If we speak against the minister," McCrorry argues, "it's as though we're speaking against the church. In fact, many times these are not church issues, but strictly political issues."⁶²

Reaching out to the faith community raises a number of challenging political issues for McCrorry, particularly "turf" issues among Charlotte's churches and accompanying "power struggles between ministers trying to see who's got the greatest power in the community."⁶³ McCrorry is pleased with the spirit of collaboration that has characterized relationships between member organizations in the Alliance so far (faith-based organizations included) and doesn't want power struggles or politics to enter what he sees as a cross-sector grassroots initiative.

There are differing opinions, however, among the faith community as to what role religious organizations should play in the lives of at-risk youth, and what form that intervention should take. Jacquelin Peters, African American Executive Director of the Charlotte Chapter of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. — a youth mentoring organization, feels that "the positive values that faith-based mentoring can bring may be missing in a lot of young people's lives now."⁶⁴ Alan Seymour of "Faith Hope and Love"—a faith-based mentoring program at Grace Covenant Church that works with children in the underserved Wilmore community,⁶⁵ feels that mentoring without a spiritual foundation is only a 'band-aid' solution. Spiritual education (alongside an academic education), Seymour says, teaches children about broader goals in life, "Why shoot for anything

⁶¹ *30 Minutes with Pat McCrorry*. Interview by Warren Smith, December 20, 2000 [online] cited July 1, 2004, <http://www.thecharlotteworld.com>.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ McCrorry, Patrick. (2003). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, August 9, 2002.

⁶⁴ Interview with Jacquelin Peters, May 10, 2004.

⁶⁵ In Wilmore community, the rate of violent crime is six times that of the City of Charlotte; median income half that of the Charlotte average; rate of success on CMS exams is half the city's average; the adolescent birth rate is three times the city's average. The Faith, Hope, and Love mentoring program is a member of the Mentoring Alliance and costs \$2,500/ child/ year. The program is among the few that diligently tracks the children's academic and behavioral improvement at school throughout the course of mentoring program. Almost all of the children being mentored in the program have reached or exceeded grade average in math, science, reading, social studies, and behavior in the last two years.

besides making money? Why make \$7.50 at McDonald's when you're 16? You can make \$300 a day running a bag of marijuana or crack down the street."⁶⁶

Dr. Rev. Dan Burrell, Pastor of Northside Baptist Church, a large evangelical church, doesn't think that churches should accept federal funds for social services. He sees this as having the potential to undermine the separation of Church and State due to the danger of government controls being attached to federal funds. Burrell describes his church's mission as primarily an evangelical one: "If we succeed in taking people off the street or if we feed them or help them materially in any way—that's a good byproduct but our aim is primarily evangelical. We believe it's the spiritual education that will ultimately help them to overcome their difficult situations."⁶⁷ For Rev. Richard Little, Pastor of Advent Lutheran Church, the issue is one of form rather than substance when it comes to congregational involvement in mentoring. He thinks churches could work most effectively by setting up partnerships with schools through CMS, without dealing with an intermediary like the Mentoring Alliance. There are also broader, more challenging questions—like those that seek to understand the prophetic role of churches that goes beyond charitable works. Stephen Johnston asks:

Why is it that the children have adults in their lives who have to work three part-time jobs and even then do not have enough money to buy coats for their own children? Do we feel good about that? Why is it that as human beings we tend to be comfortable only with people who look like us, or are as rich or poor as us? Is that what we should be doing or do we lose something when we do that?

He cautions, "If faith-based organizations are the prophets and the conscience of a community, and end up becoming service providers, can they fulfill both roles at the same time?"⁶⁸

There are no easy recipes for how to tread but McCrory is watching the local development of "Amachi"—a faith-based mentoring program for children of prisoners administered through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Charlotte.⁶⁹ Successfully piloted by the former Mayor of Philadelphia, Rev. Dr. Wilson Goode, in 2001, the program has received national attention and attracted millions of dollars in federal funding. The Charlotte chapter of BBBS is currently working with 20 African American churches—a key element of the Amachi model—with the aim of making

⁶⁶ Interview with Alan Seymour, May 10, 2004.

⁶⁷ Interview with Dan Burrell, April 29, 2004.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stephen Johnson, May 11, 2004.

⁶⁹ In 2003, BBBS of Greater Charlotte was awarded one of twelve \$75,000 Amachi grants to establish a faith-based mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents. The grant was also supported by a \$238,500 federal grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. The word, "Amachi" means "look what God has brought us through this child."

300 matches annually.⁷⁰ McCrory sees Amachi as “one of our first true tests,”⁷¹—waiting to see how this program will engage African American churches and in turn, work with other members of the Mentoring Alliance. So far, a 2003 BBBS report about Amachi notes that the initiative requires “an enormous cultivation of churches,” and that BBBS is now developing plans to systematically recruit and cultivate partnerships with local churches.⁷² In setting up Amachi, Lee has found that small to midsize churches that didn’t have so many things on their plate were much more eager to join. The smaller churches, she says, “seem to be much more anxious to link with an outside organization. The partnerships that we’re forming aren’t the ones we initially went after.”⁷³

In the absence of clear precedents, McCrory decided to structure the mentoring dialogue with religious leaders in the same way that he structures his relationship with business community: he would invite Charlotte’s religious leaders in groups of 10-20 for quarterly breakfast meetings as a way of starting the conversation. After a year of planning, the meeting was scheduled for February 2003. At the same time, however, the controversy over gay marriage erupted in Charlotte pushing this heated issue ahead of mentoring on religious leaders’ agendas. Flooded with calls asking for comments, they Mayor felt it necessary to postpone the meeting indefinitely in order to deal with the issue at hand.⁷⁴ As of June 2004, the meeting has still not taken place. The Mayor attributes the delay to logistical matters—it’s difficult to find a time for everyone to meet, and more importantly, who should be invited and in what groupings? “Do I bring all the conservative churches together? The liberal churches? The moderate churches? The Presbyterians?” he asks.⁷⁵ The process, in this case, weighs as heavily as the outcome.

In his bid for re-election for a historic fifth term in November 2003, McCrory focused on his accomplishments, “the city’s decreasing crime rate, economic vitality and urban planning for a stronger city.”⁷⁶ In his ninth year as mayor, however, he faces many of the problems he inherited in 1995, and many of them along racial lines. Gang recruitment is a rapidly growing concern in a city now ranked 17th in the US for rates of violent crime.⁷⁷ BBBS of Greater Charlotte has formed an African American Recruitment Task Force to try to meet the large demand for African American

⁷⁰ Lee, Carole. (2004). BBBSGC Receives \$327,000 for Amachi Program to Mentor Youth of Incarcerated Parents. *Big News*, Volume V (Spring 2004). (To date, 11 churches have signed contracts to be Amachi sites.)

⁷¹ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

⁷² Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Charlotte. (January 31, 2004). *Amachi: Quarterly Grant Performance Report*.

⁷³ Interview with Carole Lee, May 10, 2004.

⁷⁴ Dennis Marstall, personal communication, March 30, 2004.

⁷⁵ Interview with Patrick McCrory, May 10, 2004.

⁷⁶ Rubin, R. (September 15, 2003). Castano, McCrory, Mulheren vie for Republican nomination: Challengers emphasize arena, transportation. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

⁷⁷ Manware, M., Moore, R.F. (October 5, 2003). Gangs of Charlotte: Numbers grow, crime spreads. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1A. (Overall Charlotte crime index is almost twice that of the national average, robberies in Charlotte are at three times the national average.)

mentors, especially men.⁷⁸ White students are three to five times more likely to earn “proficient” academic scores than African American or Hispanic students.⁷⁹ In 1999, the federal court’s decision to release the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools system from operating under the guidelines of the Swann decision has accelerated the trend toward re-segregation. The Harvard Civil Rights Project reports that, “There is no greater challenge facing our nation than race.”⁸⁰

After eight years in office, the Mayor remains committed to developing the Mentoring Alliance—even if it means moving into the unfamiliar politically charged territory of the religious community. While it is clear that the human resources of Charlotte’s many congregations would be an important asset to the initiative, how can the Mayor link into and across a politically active and ideologically diverse religious community? How will he know if he has been successful? “My goal,” McCrory says, “is for mentoring to become a natural part of the dialogue, whether you’re in a corporation, in government, in a nonprofit or whether you’re in the faith community.” And as for the unique contribution of the faith community, “the best way the faith community can help government is in the dialogue because, if you don’t have the dialogue and the trust, you’re wasting your time on everything else.”⁸¹

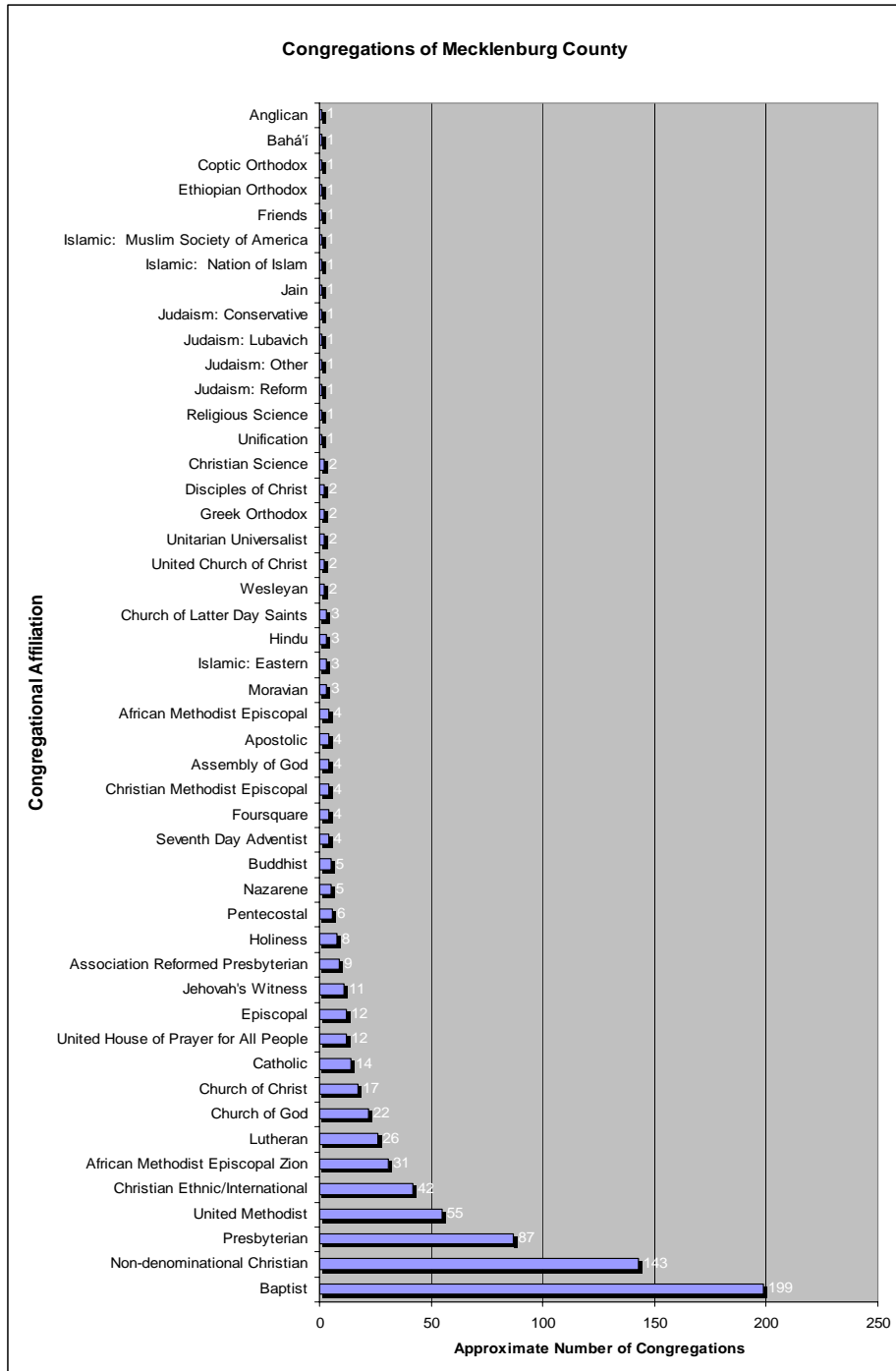
⁷⁸ Carole Lee, Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Charlotte notes that ‘race-matching’ (i.e. pairing youth with mentors of the same race) has been especially important for African American boys. “It’s very important for our moms and that makes it very important to us,” she says. Interview with Carole Lee, May 10, 2004.

⁷⁹ Helms, A. D. (January 16, 2004). Activists push for CMS to close test-score gap: Highlighted problems cover poverty, isolation. *The Charlotte Observer*, p. 1B.

⁸⁰ Civil Rights Project, Harvard University (May 29, 2002). *Mission Statement* [online] cited February 13, 2004, <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/aboutus.php>.

⁸¹ McCrory, Patrick. (2003). *Harvard University Executive Session on Faith Based and Community Approaches to Urban Revitalization*. Transcript, February 7, 2003.

Appendix 1



Source: Mecklenburg Ministries. (2004). REL 140: Mecklenburg County's Religious Diversity. *Congregational College*.

Appendix 2

Organizations in the Mayor's Mentoring Alliance

Nonprofit Organizations

(Source: Mentoring Training Institute. 2003. Mayors Mentoring Alliance. <http://home.bellsouth.net>)

A Child's Place	Girl Scouts Hornets Nest Council
Ada Jenkins Community Center After School Program	Girls on the Run International
Alexander Children's Center	Greater Enrichment Program
Anita Stroud Youth Development Center	Guardian Ad Litem
Another Choice for Black Children	Habitat for Humanity of Charlotte
Bethlehem Center	Hands On Charlotte
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Charlotte	Junior Achievement
B.R.I.D.G.E. Jobs Program	Mecklenburg Council on Adolescent Pregnancy
Boys & Girls Club Of Our Towns	Mecklenburg County Cooperative Extension Service
Cannon Memorial YMCA	Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation
CPCC Educational Talent Search	Mentoring Training Institute
Chapel of Christ the King	The National Conference-NCCJ
Charlotte Community Partners	Nile Academy
Charlotte Emergency Housing	Partners in Out of School Time
Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools	Project Hope
Charlotte Weed & Seed	Right Moves for Youth
Children's Comprehensive Services	Thompson's Children's Home
Children's Theatre of Charlotte	Time Warner Cable's "Time to Read"
City of Charlotte	Trips for Kids Charlotte
Communities in Schools	United Family Services
Crisis Assistance -Partners in Hope	United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc.
Dell Curry Foundation	YMCA of Greater Charlotte
Elon Homes for Children	YWCA of Central Carolinas
Faith, Hope & Love Mentoring	Youth Homes
Florence Crittenton Services	Youth Network

Corporations

(Source: Davis, Kristy. (May 8, 2003). "Mayor's Mentoring Alliance: Corporate Council," personal communication.)

City of Charlotte	United Way
Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools	
Charlotte Hornets	Wachovia
Transamerica Reinsurance	BF Goodrich
Charlotte Mecklenburg Police	Charlotte Center City Partners
Adelphia-Business Solutions	Family Dollar Stores
Carolinas Medical Center	NMC6
Duke Energy	Time Warner Cable
Mercy Hospital	The Business Journal
WBTB-3	Harris Teeter
US Airways	The Keith Corporation
Trammell Crow Company	First Citizens Bank
IBM	Royal & Sun Alliance
HDR Engineering	Charlotte Knights
Charlotte Chamber of Commerce	Youth Homes
Bellsouth	Carolina Partners
Time Warner Cable	Merrill Lynch
Dell Curry Foundation	Charlotte Sheriff Department
Neighborhood Development	Piedmont Natural Gas
Bank of America	Colliers Pinkard
	Carolina Cobras