

# African American Faith Communities Project



## A Note From the Director

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! We are thankful to God for blessing us with this opportunity to share with you about the progress of the project. We hope that you would take some time out of your schedule to read the newsletter for information about the project, upcoming events, and the results from two data collection periods.

The research team on the African American Faith Communities Project extends an especially warm welcome to clergy, churches, and families receiving this information about our project for the first time.

Thanks to the clergy and participants who have been supporting the project, we have completed Study 1 and Study 2. We were blessed to have 211 parents and 135 adolescents from eighteen churches participate in Study I from April 1 - October 31, 2000. In Study 2, from March 1 - October 31, 2003, we were blessed to have 211 parents and 212 adolescents from twenty-five churches participate. In July 2004, we will be conducting parent and adolescent interviews for the Parenting Ministry Curriculum. For more information about this phase of the project and how you may be able to help please see the section titled "Upcoming Participation." For those who have already agreed to help with the Parenting Ministry Curriculum, we look forward to your participation on next month!!

Finally, I would like to personally thank all of the many wonderful believers who prayed for my father during his battle with cancer. I was truly touched by your wonderful testimonies and constant encouragement during my father's going home celebration.

God Bless You,

Dr. Pamela P. Martin, Director  
African American Faith Communities Project  
North Carolina State University



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## How can you become involved?

During the month of July, we will be meeting at different churches in Lansing, MI and Detroit, MI to ask parents about the different ways they teach religious values to their adolescents. The findings from these interviews will be used to develop the Parenting Ministry Curriculum. Our goal is to give the curriculum to the churches by Summer 2005. In order to participate in the interviews, adults must have reared an adolescent between the ages of 12-19. Adolescent participants need to be between the ages of 12-19. If you would like to participate, please contact us at 1.877.485.0045. Look forward to seeing you in July.

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# About the African American Faith Communities Project



The African American Faith Communities Project is a study conducted by researchers at North Carolina State University. The project is designed to investigate the many different ways faith communities support families as well as what Christians can teach adolescent girls and boys about their Black heritage. Churches and families represent significant institutions within African American communities.

Working together, churches and parents play important roles in

teaching values for adolescents to follow. The adolescent years can be difficult as children become more independent and participate in activities away from the home. The messages or values adolescents receive from their church and parents during these years help to shape the decisions teens make about **work, school, and friendships**. Your participation in this project helps churches, clergy, parents and researchers understand how adolescents include religious messages in decision making for their daily lives.

## Results from Study 1 and Study 2

The African American Faith Communities Project seeks to understand the different ways churches support families. Churches and families represent significant institutions within African American communities. Therefore, the purpose of the project was to study how faith communities support families as well as what Christians can teach adolescent girls and boys about their Black heritage.

In Study 1, a total of 211 African American parents/primary caregivers were recruited from eighteen churches. Eighty-eight percent of the parents were official members of a church. These participants represented many denominations such as Apostolic, Baptists, Church of God in Christ, Methodists, Nondenominational, and United Church of Christ. The parent participants were predominately female (85% female, 15% male); average age was 40 years old; and the average household income was \$42,000.

In addition, fifty-six percent of the parent participants were married and the majority of this sample (84%) had attained some level of higher education. The adolescent sample contained a nearly equal percentage of males (51.1%) and females (48.9%). The adolescent participants averaged 14 years old and eighty-two percent of the adolescents attended public schools.

In Study 1, parents were asked a variety of questions about their private and public worship experiences, questions about what it means to be African American, and what they taught their children about religion and race. The parent responded honestly and their answers

reflected how churches and parents play important roles in rearing children. Overall, parents reported that their church is important in communicating and imparting values about African American heritage. They also reported that their church helped them teach values about hard work and excellence to their adolescents. Parents

also mentioned that churches do instill positive values about being African American, especially pride in their culture and history.

*In summary, Study 2 participants agreed (95% of parents and 94% of adolescents) that parents should send or take their children to church.*

In Study 1, adolescents reported their church was a significant institution in promoting their cultural background. They also reported that their church and parents were consistent in teaching them values about their relationship with God, self-development messages (i.e., working hard, excellence, and getting along with others), and pride in their racial background. Through sermons, various programs, and educational ministries such as Sunday school, churches instill values in both parents and their adolescent children about spiritual development and racial heritage. Thus, participants in Study 1 report that their churches promote both the

messages of the Gospel as well as the cultural legacies of African Americans.

In Study 2, we were interested in understanding how parents and adolescents incorporate the Word of God into their lives. We asked parents and adolescents about how they communicated with God and how they continually strengthened their relationships with God. In Study 2, a total of 211 African American parents/primary caregivers were recruited from ninety-one percent of the parents in Study 2 were official members of a church. Similar to Study 1, these participants represented many denominations such as Apostolic, Baptists, Church of God in Christ, Methodists, Nondenominational, and United Church of Christ. Eighty-five percent of the participants were female while sixteen percent of the participants were male. Consistent with Study 1, the average age of adult participants was 40 years; and the majority of the Study 2 sample (80%) had also attained some level of higher education. Forty-eight percent of the participants were married; nineteen percent were single. The remaining thirty-three percent were either divorced, separated, or widowed. The average household income for Study 2 participants was \$40,000. For the Study 2 adolescent sample, thirty-eight percent were males and sixty-two percent were females. Similar to adolescents in Study 1, the Study 2 adolescent participants averaged 14 years old and the majority of these adolescents (76%) attended public schools.

In addition, an overwhelming number of the parents (73%) reported they attended at least one to three religious services a week and an additional 16% mentioned they attended four or more religious services a week. Figure 1 shows the percentage of parents who participate in services offered at the church, other than the weekly worship services. Eighty-two percent of the parents reported they read religious books or materials throughout the week. In addition, seventy-six percent of the adult participants reported watching and listening to religious programs on radio or television at least once a week. Ninety-five percent indicated that it was important for African American parents to send or take their children to religious services. Regarding parents' relationship to God, ninety-five percent of them reported they felt inspired to be a better person and seventy-five percent felt like they knew themselves better through God. In Study 2, the majority of parent participants (76%) confirmed that their faith communities were very helpful.

For adolescent participants in Study 2, ninety percent of them reported being an official member of a church. The majority of the adolescents (65%) attended at least one to three religious services a week, twenty-four percent mentioned they attended four or more religious services a week, eight percent attended services a few times a month, and three percent mentioned they attended less than a few times a year. Figure 2 presents adolescents' involvement in church organizations. In

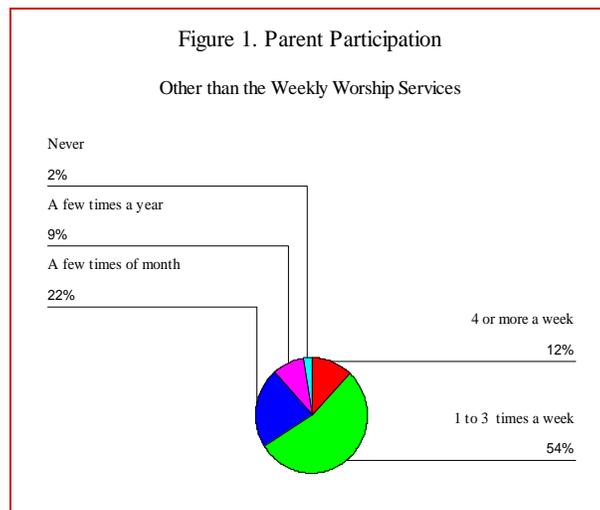
addition, sixty-two percent of the sample reported they prayed daily, twenty-six percent prayed at least once a week, eight percent a few times a month, and the remainder (4%) mentioned they prayed less than a few times a year.

Additionally, ninety-four percent of the adolescent sample believed it was important for parents to send or take them to church. In communicating with God, the majority of the adolescents (69%) was receptive or open to God's Word. They also reported trying to understand God's Word. Seventy-four

percent of the adolescent participants claimed that God helped them feel less alone. Furthermore, ninety-three percent of the adolescent sample felt that God understood their feelings.

In Study 2, parents and adolescents reported that they both experienced personal results from their relationships with God, results that are promised in the Word of God to believers. Specifically, their responses may relate to certain Biblical promises about the comfort and character of those who believe the Word of God. For example, a majority of adolescents (74%) feel less alone as a result of their personal relationship with God; a promise that can be found in Psalms 46:1-2a, "*God is our refuge and strength, very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.*" In comparison to the comfort that a majority of adolescents reported, parent participants laid similar claims to the inspiring influence of faith. In Study 2, a majority of parent participants (95%) claimed that their relationship with God impacted their individual character. These parents' responses seem to demonstrate the truth of Galatians 5:22-23, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*" The responses from both parents and adolescents in Study 2 appear to reflect such Biblical truths.

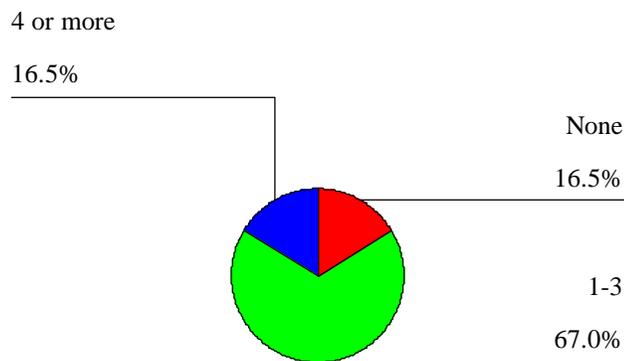
In summary, Study 2 participants agreed (95% of parents and 94% of adolescents) that parents should send or take



their children to church. The unified opinion of the importance of Christian parenting can be supported by Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it." The confirmation of this truth by parents and adolescent participants is evidence that believers can have personal experiences with God, direct results of their faith in God and God's Word. Finally, the results of Study 2 document the participants' application of Biblical truth, specifically, Psalms 78:4, 6-7:

*We will not conceal them from their children But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, That they should put their confidence in God. And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.*

Figure 2. Participation among Adolescents  
in Church Organizations



Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that these results describe a limited number of faith communities in Mid- and Southeastern Michigan; thus, the results may not be representative of all faith communities. The research that has been completed, however, does reflect the input of various clergy, parents, and adolescents. Therefore, I want to thank the clergy, parents and adolescents who participated in both studies. Words of thanks

are also due to colleagues, Dr. LaTrese Adkins and Dr. Sigrid Dixon, who have supported the research in the name of Christian service. I also gratefully acknowledge the student researchers who have worked on the African American Faith Communities Project: Simone Robinson, Sheretta Butler, Sinead Younge, Brandy Watson, Erin Banks, Keon Pettaway, and Avril Smart.



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## UPCOMING PARTICIPATION...

### JULY

WHEN: 5<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004  
WHAT: Interviews in Lansing, MI and Detroit, MI/TBA

### OCTOBER

WHEN: 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004  
WHAT: AAFCP  
Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 2

### MARCH

WHEN: 7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
WHAT: Curriculum Planning  
Meeting in MI location/TBA

### JULY

WHEN: 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
WHAT: Curriculum complete

community corner

**Biblical Names**

A H S U S E J O N A H Y A S E  
 G M T O A S O L O M O N R J O  
 B W I E H D Y L L N A H E O M  
 O E E R S D I E E U S O H H B  
 A H U M I E T Z L I K S T N D  
 Z T T A L A M E K E N E S E A  
 H T H D E U M K R R H A E T V  
 H A I A H A P I N I A C D N I  
 N M H A I P E E S R C M A E D  
 C I N P G M V L T O I O E R I  
 N O A H E G E T O E M Z M J S  
 U U S L O S A R I I R A O A A  
 L S E S O M O H E A B E L M I  
 N O S M A S N J T J M E A E A  
 J M A R Y N T B O C A J S S H

Abel  
 Adam  
 Amos  
 Boaz  
 Cain  
 Daniel  
 David  
 Elisha  
 Esay  
 Esther  
 Eve  
 Ezekiel  
 Ezra  
 Haggai  
 Hosea Isaiah  
 Jacob  
 James  
 Jeremiah  
 Jesus  
 Joel  
 John

Jonah  
 Joseph  
 Luke  
 Lydia  
 Mark  
 Mary  
 Matthew  
 Micah Miriam  
 Moses  
 Nahum  
 Naomi  
 Noah  
 Paul  
 Peter  
 Rachel  
 Ruth  
 Salome  
 Samson  
 Seth  
 Solomon  
 Tamar