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A STRATEGY FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-HONG KONG SYNOD
TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION
OF MAKING DISCIPLES

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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May 1981

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Motivation

There are three reasons for writing this thesis, "A Strategy for the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod¹ to Fulfill the Great Commission of Making Disciples."

In the first place, no one has evaluated the Hong Kong Synod in regard to church growth since it began thirty years ago. It is necessary to know whether our church in Hong Kong has grown effectively or not.

Secondly, since no church on earth is perfect, a study such as this will help in identifying the weaknesses of the Hong Kong Synod as a first step toward improving it.

Finally, the author plans to suggest strategies based on church growth principles for the purpose of improving.

Methodology and Scope of the Study

The central points of this study are to use church growth principles and methods to evaluate the work of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod and to provide a suitable strategy for them to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples

¹The name of this denomination will sometimes be abbreviated as "the Hong Kong Synod" or LC-HKS" in the body of this paper.

For our church's improvement we must evaluate its work in Hong Kong objectively. The official reports in The Statistical Yearbook, which has been published annually since 1949 by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod² is a main source of facts. These reports give accurate and objective data for the past thirty years and a history of the Hong Kong Synod, both in the form of essays and statistics. Therefore, these reports serve as a foundation for evaluation of the Hong Kong Synod.

Since the main purpose of this study is to provide a strategy for The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod, all evaluations are made in accord with this purpose. Other subject areas, such as the general description of Hong Kong in Chapter II, contribute background information which helps us to understand the situation in Hong Kong. Topics relating background information will be treated in a general, rather than exhaustive, way.

The Church Growth Movement, dealt with in Chapter III, is discussed in detail, in order to define the Church Growth Movement so that some of its principles can be applied to the Hong Kong Synod.

When we use the term "church growth", we limit ourselves to the ideas of bringing people to believe in Jesus Christ and of becoming responsible members of the church. Other areas, such as education, medical work, and social welfare work, are different aspects of meeting people's physical, rather than spiritual, needs. Therefore, such dimensions of mission will not be considered in this study. Accordingly, the evaluation of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod in Chapter IV deals only with the area of church growth.

²Hereafter the name of this denomination will sometimes be abbreviated "LC-MS".

Since this thesis is to provide "A Strategy for The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod . . . ," the last chapter will provide a strategy and a plan for that church.

There is no strategy which can give power for a church to grow. It is only God who can give power for His church to grow. May all honour, glory and thanks be to God our gracious Father who saved us from sin in Jesus Christ and brought us to have faith in Him!

CHAPTER II

GENERAL VIEW OF HONG KONG

Historical Background

Hong Kong was originally a part of southern China with no identity of its own. There are only a few traces of the history of Hong Kong before it was declared a colony. It is probable that the first dwellers came to Hong Kong between 207 and 220 B.C. The Li Cheng Uk tomb, discovered in Kowloon in 1955, probably dates back to the Han dynasty (200 A.D.).¹ Migration on a significant scale did not occur until the Sung Dynasty (960 - 1279 A.D.).² The oldest villages of the Tang clan in the northern part of Hong Kong have a continuous history dating back to the eleventh century, and other villages date from the Yuan Dynasty (1280 - 1368 A.D.).³

The history of Hong Kong as a colony began with the Opium War in the nineteenth century. The war started in July, 1839 because China strongly prohibited the British merchants from importing opium into China.⁴ The result

¹The History of Hong Kong (Hong Kong: The Government Printer, 1967), p. 5.

²Ibid., p. 21 The last emperor of the Sung Dynasty escaped from the attack of Mongolia and died in Hong Kong by jumping into the sea, so that many of his followers stayed in Hong Kong as their home.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Robert Elegant, The Great Cities -- Hong Kong (Time-Life Books, Amsterdam, 1977), p. 42. ". . . opium was being smuggled into China at a yearly rate exceeding 30,000 chests (each chest contained from 120 to 160 pounds of raw opium) In 1837, when imports surpassed 40,000 chests."

of the war was that China had to pay an idemnity and ceded the Island of Hong Kong to Britain under the Treaty of Nanking in 1842.⁵ Kowloon and Stonecutters' Island, with a combined area of about four square miles, were ceded to Britain under the Convention of Peking in 1860. The New Territories, 370 square miles in area, were leased to Britain for 99 years in 1898.⁶ From then on, Hong Kong became one of the important trading and commercial cities in Asia.

During the Second World War, the Japanese invaded Hong Kong in 1941. This war ended in 1945. After that, another war raged in China, that being between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Democratic Party. This war resulted in a large number of refugees in coming to Hong Kong.⁷

Population

The first population figure for Hong Kong was reported in the Government Gazette of May 15, 1841, as 7,450 persons. The population increased rapidly as foreign merchants and Chinese laborers moved in. A Registration Ordinance was introduced by the government in 1844 to register all the inhabitants and to check the influx of undesirable elements. By June 1845, the population was estimated to be 23,817.⁸ From 1881 onwards, a series of

⁵Ibid., p. 43. "In 1842, by the terms of the Treaty of Nanking, China agreed to pay \$16 million to the British as compensation and cede to them the island of Hong Kong in perpetuity."

⁶Fan Shuh Ching, The Population of Hong Kong (Swindon Book Co., Ltd., 1974), p. 1.

⁷The History of Hong Kong, pp. 89-93.

⁸Fan Shuh Ching, p. 1. "Including 595 Europeans, 362 Indians, and 300 visitors."

decennial censuses were taken.⁹ The population further increased from 160,402 in 1881 to 221,441 in 1891 and further to 283,905 in 1901. In addition, the New Territories were estimated to have over 100,000 inhabitants.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Hong Kong's population continued to grow rapidly. The total population rose from 456,739 in 1911 to 840,473 in 1931, an increase of 84 percent in these twenty years. After the Japanese invasion of China in the late 1930s, large numbers of refugees entered Hong Kong. It was estimated in 1941 that the total population was 1,640,000, nearly double the 1931 total. As civil war broke out in China in the late 1940s, a large inflow of people streamed into Hong Kong. In 1949, the population was estimated at around 1,860,000. Estimates for the subsequent three or four years fluctuated between 2,000,000 and 2,250,000. The population further expanded beyond the two and one-half million mark in 1956 and the three million mark in 1960.

The first post-war population census carried out in March 1961 returned a figure of 3,129,648 Hong Kong inhabitants. The bi-annual census undertaken in 1966 gave an estimated total of 3,716,400. The second post-war population census completed in March 1971, recorded a total of 3,936,630 inhabitants. At mid-1974, the population was estimated to be very close to

⁹Ibid. Between 1881 and the Second World War, population censuses were carried out in 1881, 1897, 1901, 1906, 1911, 1921 and 1931 in Hong Kong."

4.25 million.¹⁰ In 1980, there were almost 5 million residents, and it is estimated that there will be as many as 6 million by 1990.¹¹

Ethnicity, Place of Birth, and Language

Information on the population's racial distribution was collected in the censuses carried out in the early part of this century. Over ninety-seven percent of the civil population was Chinese. In the postwar censuses, citizens were asked their place of origin rather than race.¹² Over half of the 1971 population indicated that Canton, Macau and adjacent areas were their places of origin. Another one-third of the population said they had originated from Sze Yap, Chiu Chau and other parts of Kwangtung. In 1971 between four and five percent of the population were of Hong Kong origin. Less than

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2.

Population Growth of Hong Kong
(1872 --- 1971)

Year	Total Population	Annual Growth Rate(%)
1872 (December 1)	121,985	-
1881 (April 3)	160,402	3.1%
1891 (May 20)	221,441	3.3%
1901 (January 20)	368,987	2.5%
1911 (May 20)	456,739	2.2%
1921 (April 24)	625,166	3.1%
1931 (March 7)	840,473	3.0%
1961 (March 7)	3,129,648	4.5%
1971 (March 9)	3,936,630	2.3%

¹¹Hong Kong Population --- A 20 Year Projection (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 1978), p. 5, p. 28.

¹²The place of origin was defined for the Chinese population as that part of China from which the family came and for the non-Chinese population as the nationality or country of origin claimed.

two percent were from other countries, including 29,000 Britons, 22,300 Asians, 5,300 from other European countries, and 4,700 from the United States, Canada and other countries.¹³

The proportion of the population born in Hong Kong increased considerably during the post-war period. In the early part of this century, less than one-third of the population was native born. The proportion of those born in Hong Kong increased to 48 percent in 1961 and 56 percent in 1971. On the other hand, the proportion of the population born in Kwangtung Province dropped from over 60 percent in the pre-war period to around 40 percent in later years. Sixty percent of the Hong Kong born population was below 15 years of age, another thirty percent between 15 and 34 years, and only ten percent aged 35 and above. Of those not born in Hong Kong, only four percent

¹³Fan Shuh Ching, p. 18.

Place of Origin

(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

Place of Origin	1961	1971
Hong Kong	260.5	185.7
Canton, Macau and adjacent places	1,521.7	2,072.1
Sze Yap	573.9	684.8
Chiu Chau	257.3	391.4
Elsewhere in Kwangtung	244.2	250.2
Elsewhere in China	222.3	284.8
Other countries	49.7	64.9
Unknown	-	2.7
Total	3,129.6	3,936.6

were youngsters below 15 years of age, nearly thirty percent between 15 and 35 years, and over two-thirds were aged 35 and above.¹⁴

Nearly eighty percent of the 1961 population aged 5 and above spoke Cantonese at home and slightly over 15 percent used Hakka, Hoklo or Sze Yap. According to the 1971 census data, 88 percent of the entire population spoke Cantonese with members of their families, and only 8 percent spoke Hakka, Hoklo or Sze Yap. Other Chinese languages, including Mandarin, were spoken by about 90,000 persons in Hong Kong. Though twenty percent of the

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Place of Birth

(in thousands, 1911 - 1971)

Place of Birth	1911	1921	1931	1961	1971
Hong Kong	143.9	167.2	276.4	1,492.9	2,218.9
Kwangtung Province	280.0	431.9	531.1	1,425.6	1,475.6
Elsewhere in China	3.9	6.6	15.6	153.6	162.2
Other countries	8.1	8.7	18.4	57.5	79.9
Unknown	20.8	10.8	8.3	-	-
Total	456.7	625.2	849.8	3,129.6	3,936.6

population could speak some English, it was the usual language of only one percent of the population. Five thousand persons of the 1971 population were dumb.¹⁵

Housing

The living situation in Hong Kong is complicated by the high population density. More than five million people live together in an area of approximately 400 square miles. The solution of this problem has been to build high-rise apartments for the people. Multi-story buildings are everywhere in Hong Kong. In 1978, there were 2 million people living in government low-cost housing intended for 200 thousand family units.¹⁶ Many of the government housing structures have over 30 stories, and each separately designated housing area may have 1,000 to 8,927 family units.¹⁷ The problem

¹⁵Ibid., p. 19.

Table of Hong Kong Language Groups

(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

Usual Language	1961	1971
Cantonese	2,076.2	3,469.2
Hakka, Hoklo or Sze Yap	407.5	315.6
Other Chinese languages	95.5	89.5
English	31.8	41.1
Other languages	16.3	16.1
Dumb	1.6	5.1
Total	2,628.9	3,936.6

¹⁶The Hong Kong in 1979 (Hong Kong: The Government Printer), p. 74.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 76.

still has not been solved, however, for the poor build their own wooden houses on the hillsides. The housing condition of these hillside squatters is very poor. There is no water-supply, no electricity, and the structure of the houses is too weak and, therefore, unsafe. Very often, the squatters are the victims of typhoon or fire. Apart from these squatters, some of the poor live in abandoned boats. They were originally fishermen, but when their boats could no longer function for fishing, they parked the boats in shallow water and used them as houses.¹⁸

Economy

Hong Kong is not a mere trading centre re-exporting foreign-made goods. Re-exports constituted approximately 22 percent of the total exports in 1977. It is estimated that over 80 percent of Hong Kong's manufacturing output is exported. It is now ranked as a major manufacturing center in the far east.

In September 1978, there were over 38,700 manufacturing establishments in Hong Kong, employing some 791,000 people, or 25 percent of the population's 15 - 59 year old age group. The industries which have made the most rapid progress from 1965 to 1978 are textiles, wearing apparel, plastic goods, electronics, toys, metal products, watches and clocks, and printing.

The clothing and textile industry has been dominant. It accounts for about 45 percent of all industrial employment.

Despite being a small territory, Hong Kong ranked as the world's 22nd largest trading nation, 26th largest exporter, and 21st largest importer in 1977. Excluding OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries)

¹⁸ Elegant, The Great Cities, pp. 168, 169, 171, 175, 190-97.

countries, Hong Kong's positions were higher at 19th, 19th and 20th, respectively. In fact, in terms of trade per capita, Hong Kong is higher than many industrialized countries, including the U.S.A., Germany, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy.¹⁹

Concerning the employment status of the working population, about 21,000 persons of the economically active population were unemployed in 1961. The unemployment figure rose to over 70,000 persons in 1971. Of the working population, about 10 percent were classified as self-employed and between 80 and 87 percent were employees. The numbers of employers and unpaid family workers were significantly lower in 1971 when compared with the 1961 figures.²⁰

The distribution of Hong Kong's economically active population by industry reveals the important contribution of manufacturing industry toward Hong Kong's economy. The manufacturing industry alone absorbed 476,000

¹⁹ Yu Sau Wo, Economic & Public Affairs for Hong Kong (Everyman's Book Co., Ltd., 1979), pp. 61-63.

²⁰ Fan Shuh Ching, pp. 31-32.

Employment Status of Working Population

(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

Employment Status	1961	1971
Self-employed	123.9	130.7
Employer	57.4	40.7
Employee	957.0	1,375.9
Unpaid family worker	52.8	35.5
Total	1,191.1	1,582.8

workers in 1961 and 686,000 workers in 1971, about 40 percent of Hong Kong's working population. Services and commerce took one-third of the economically active force, and construction, engineering, transportation and communication industries together employed another 17 percent in 1961 and 1971. Over 110,000 workers were engaged in agriculture, fishing, mining and quarrying industries. About half of the industrial workers were in the textile industry, and one-quarter were engaged in the production of chemical, metal and plastic products. The remaining quarter was spread over other areas of manufacturing such as the food, beverage, and tobacco industries, the manufacture of wood products, furniture, paper products, leather products, rubber products, wigs, and the printing and publishing industries.²¹

²¹Ibid., p. 33.

Distribution of Economically
Active Population by Industry

(in thousands, 1961 and 1971)

Industry	1961	1971
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	87.6	64.7
Mining, quarrying and unclassified	25.5	51.4
Manufacturing	475.5	685.8
Construction and engineering	100.2	171.8
Utilities	19.0	8.9
Commerce	131.3	211.6
Transport and communication	86.7	119.4
Services	265.3	317.3
Total	1,191.1	1,630.9

Education

The free education plan which began in 1971 gave six years of free education to children who were six years of age.²² But in 1978, the free education plan was extended from six years to nine years in government schools.²³ Because of this plan, many children attended government schools rather than private schools, such as those operated by the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod. Because most of the students preferred enrolling in a government school so that they could receive a free education rather than one paid for by themselves, many private schools were transferred to government-subsidized status in order to survive. Because of this, all schools operated by the LC-HKS have become government-subsidized schools.

Since schools play such an important role in Hong Kong, it is worthwhile to review the education statistics. In 1978, there were 563,384 primary school students (from ages 6 to 11), 462,210 secondary day-school students (from ages 12 to 18) and 67,502 secondary night-school students. There were 21,494 engineering special school students, and the two Government universities had 9,111 students. Two private universities had 5,845 students. Adding these numbers, we discover that 1,129,546 students were enrolled in schools in 1978. Thus, approximately one-fifth of the Hong Kong population was in school. In 1978, the total cost for education was 340 million U.S. dollars.²⁴

²²The Hong Kong in 1979, p. 47.

²³Ibid., p. 45.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 45-63.

Religion

The major religions in Hong Kong are Buddhism and Confucianism. It is very difficult to determine how many Buddhists or Confucianists there are in Hong Kong because many people live in the context of both. Also, because Buddhism and Confucianism have been in China for many centuries, they both contribute much to Chinese tradition. For many people in Hong Kong, religion simply means following their ancestors' tradition. There are over 600 Buddhist and Confucian temples in Hong Kong. These temples were built according to the traditional style and have become famous places for tourists to visit.²⁵

According to tradition, the Chinese in Hong Kong worship a variety of spirits or gods, for example, the god of heaven, the god of the earth, the god of the sea, the god of the kitchen, or the god of the door. Even a stone or a tree might be venerated as a god. Inside most Chinese houses, some places are decorated as the places where the god is present. Usually, Chinese characters are written on a piece of wood or on a piece of paper indicating which god it is. This is a Buddhist custom.²⁶

Christianity in Hong Kong started as a mission about 1841. Most of the work focused on schools, hospitals and welfare agencies because Hong Kong needed those very much at that time.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

²⁶ Harold Ingrams, Hong Kong (London, 1952), pp. 123-29.

²⁷ The History of Hong Kong, p. 61.

According to the Government's statistics in 1979, Christians accounted for 10 percent of the population in Hong Kong. This figure includes Catholic and Protestant Christians.²⁸

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church officially started its mission in Hong Kong in April 1841. In 1979, it had about 256,000 members, 443 priests, 781 nuns, and 54 district churches. Most of the churches use the Chinese language in the worship services.²⁹

In addition to the work of evangelism, the Roman Catholics are also active in education, medical, and social welfare work. They have 310 schools which enroll over 274,000 students. There are 8 social centers, 6 hospitals, 20 general clinics, 6 dental clinics, 3 old people's homes, and 17 nursery schools.³⁰

The Protestant Churches

Hong Kong has about 50 Protestant denominations operating approximately 610 Protestant churches. There are about 190,000 Protestant Christians.³¹ This figure equals 4.04 percent of the population.³² 80.47 percent

²⁸The Hong Kong in 1979, p. 155.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 156

³²Gail Law, A Research Report On Hong Kong's Chinese Church Growth (Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism, 1979), p. 7.

of the Protestant churches have memberships of less than 500. The average total attendance for Sunday worship is 77,000, about two-fifths of the total membership.³³

There are 382 Protestant schools, including 2 post-secondary colleges. The Protestant churches, like the Roman Catholic Church, have contributed medical and social services.³⁴

Other Religions

There are about 30,000 Moslems in Hong Kong, 8,000 Hindus, and 500 Jews. Other religions have only very few adherants.³⁵

³³ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

³⁴ The Hong Kong in 1979, p. 156.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 157-158.

CHAPTER III

CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

Historical Background

Dr. Donald A. McGavran is the founder of the Church Growth Movement. It is impossible to discuss church growth theory apart from his personality and work, for it is to a large extent the product of this one man's vision and influence. Therefore, any understanding of the movement must be based in part upon his biography.¹

Dr. McGavran, a member of The Disciples of Christ, had been a missionary in India for thirty years. He first attempted putting his church growth ideas into writing in 1936.²

When he was a missionary in India, he was deeply impressed by two things. One was that the church had spent a lot of money to maintain the mission, but the result was that only a small number of baptized were added to the church. The other thing that impressed him very much was the remarkable movements to Christ among the outcaste and lower caste people of India. McGavran became convinced that the missionary force could be prepared and employed to encourage these "people movements to Christ."³

¹The Challenge of Church Growth--A Symposium, edited by Wilbert R. Shenk, (Indiana, Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1973), p. 15.

²C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow (Glendale, California, Regal Books Division G/L Publications, 1979), p. 11.

³Tetsunao Yamamori and E. LeRoy Lawson, Introducing Church Growth (Cincinnati, Ohio, A. Division of Standard Publishing, 1975), p. 247.

McGavran put his church growth thoughts in writing in The Bridges of God (1955, Friendship Press) and How Churches Grow (1959, Friendship Press). These received world-wide attention, and from these the Church Growth Movement was started.⁴

When he and his wife came back to the United States on furlough in 1954, McGavran was asked by his board, the United Christian Missionary Society, to study church growth in their mission fields in Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand, Congo, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere. This work kept him occupied for the next six years and gave him opportunity to develop his ideas of church growth theory while doing research in these places.⁵

Having completed his research, he decided to organize an institution devoted to the subject of church growth. The Institute of Church Growth (ICG) was established at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon, in January, 1961. It had only a small staff and one student; McGavran became the sole instructor. His student was Keith Hamilton, a Methodist missionary from Bolivia. There was no telephone, no secretary, and only a small budget.⁶

After four and one-half years, although the Institute could not offer a degree to its student, there were, nevertheless, about sixty students studying with McGavran. These students came from twenty-four countries and represented fifteen different mission boards or sponsoring agencies. McGavran's heavy teaching load was lightened by two part-time instructors, Alan R. Tippett and George Martindale.⁷

⁴Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 11.

⁵Donald A. McGavran & Winfield D. Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth (New York, Harper & Row, 1977), p. 4.

⁶Yamanori and Lawson, Introducing Church Growth, p. 247.

⁷Ibid., p. 248.

McGavran was not only teaching at the Institute but also had been invited to give lectures at many other places. In 1963, he spoke to a conference on church growth under the auspices of the World Council of Churches at Iberville in Canada. He also held seminars in Mexico City, Brazil, and Central America. On every free Sunday, he spoke to congregations about God's concern that the lost be found. In 1964, Overseas Crusades began publishing the Church Growth Bulletin edited by McGavran. They also published the first book written by a student of ICG, Hamilton's Church Growth in the High Andes.⁸

Since the number of students at the Institute was increasing rapidly, it moved to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California in 1965, where it received academic standing as a School of World Missions, along with the School of Theology and School of Psychology.⁹ The faculty was strengthened by the addition of four members with missionary experience: Ralph Winter of Guatemala, Arthur Glasser of China, Charles Kraft of Nigeria, and C. Peter Wagner of Bolivia.¹⁰

Since the move to Fuller Theological Seminary, the Institute has expanded at an almost explosive rate. By 1974 two masters degrees were offered as well as a Doctorate in Missiology. In the 1973-74 academic year, 120 were enrolled in Fuller Seminary. Since 1963, 37 books have been published by research associates, and 86 other unpublished theses, dissertations, and independent studies have been completed. In 1969, more than half of the graduate theses in the area of missions reported to the Missionary Research Library came from the Fuller School of World Missions. The faculty members

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 13.

have written extensively and are considered by church leaders around the world to be key resource persons in the field of missions.¹¹

Finally, church growth as a movement entered North America in the fall of 1972. The first course in American church growth offered by the Fuller Theological Seminary was taught by McGavran and Wagner in 1972.¹²

Definition

Since the Church Growth Movement has been influenced mainly by McGavran and by the faculty of the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary, they are the primary sources for determining a definition of the term "church growth." McGavran denotes church growth as,

An application of biblical, theological, anthropological, and sociological principles to congregations and denominations and to their communities in an effort to disciple the greatest number of people for Jesus Christ. Believing that "it is God's will that His Church grow and His lost children be found," church growth endeavors to devise strategies, develop objectives, and apply proven principles of growth to individual congregations, to denominations, and to the worldwide Body of Christ.¹³

According to this definition, church growth emphasizes:

1. It is God's will that His church grow.
2. The business of the church is to make disciples
3. Biblical principles are basic to discipling.
4. Anthropological and sociological principles join the theological in a strategy for growth.

One of the other definitions is given by Peter Wagner, one of the professors of Fuller Theological Seminary. He says, "Church growth means all

¹¹Yamamori and Lawson, Introducing Church Growth, p. 248.

¹²Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, pp. 11-15.

¹³McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 127.

that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership."¹⁴ This definition simply says that church growth is to bring people to Christ and into responsible church membership.

Another definition by a faculty member of Fuller Theological Seminary is the one given by Ralph Winter, who describes church growth as four types of growth:

1. Internal growth

This growth takes place within the church, internally. It includes such things as church renewal, prayer, witnesses, stewardship, social service, fellowship, ministerial training, and so forth. It is growth in grace and growth toward Christ-like maturity. This is that largely immeasurable growth that relates to the quality of a disciple's walk with Christ.

2. Expansion growth

This growth takes place as the local congregation grows by adding members; it is growth by the evangelization of non-Christians within the parish area. So expansion growth is the quantitative growth of a local church.

3. Extension growth

This growth takes place by the establishing of one or more daughter churches within the same geographic area. It is also called "church planting."

4. Bridging growth

This growth takes place by the establishing of churches in significantly different cultural and geographical areas.

¹⁴Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 12.

Furthermore, Ralph Winter describes the evangelism that takes place in church growth in the following way:

(a) (E-0) E-Zero Evangelism

Winning nominal Christians in a congregation back to fervent faith. This is part of internal growth.

(b) (E-1) E-One Evangelism

Evangelization of non-Christians in one's own language and culture. This occurs in the expansion and extension types of growth.

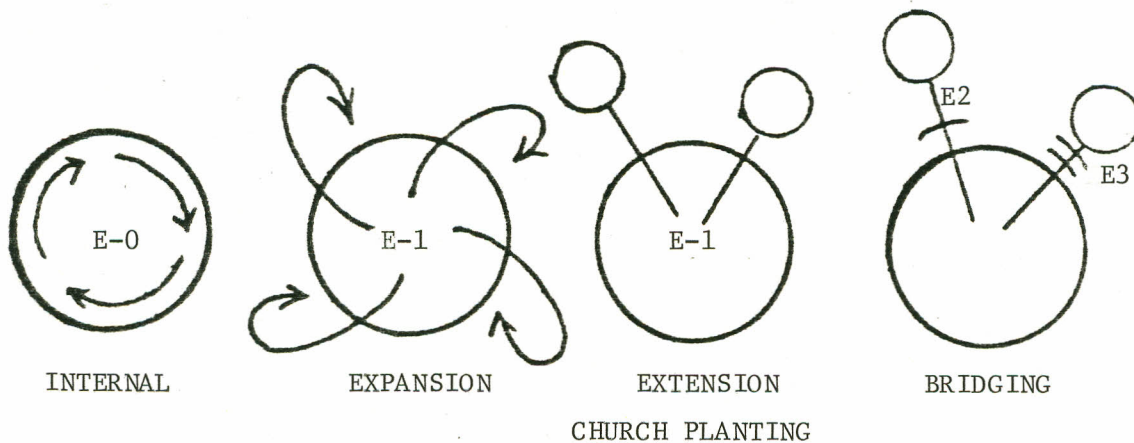
(c) (E-2) E-Two Evangelism

Evangelization of non-Christians in a similar language and culture with usually one barrier or hindrance to be overcome (for example, language or another cultural barrier). This is bridging growth.

(d) (E-3) E-Three Evangelism

Evangelization of non-Christians of a radically different language and culture (two barriers). This is another aspect of bridging growth.¹⁵

Visual Depictions of Four Types of Evangelism



¹⁵ Elmer William Matthias, A Plan for Growth and Renewal at Zion Lutheran Church of Anaheim with Emphasis on Worship (unpublished Doctor of Ministry thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 34-35.

In addition to the foregoing definitions of church growth set forth by several faculty members at Fuller Theological Seminary, definitions from those outside that school also have value.

In the book Design for Church Growth by Charles L. Chaney and Ron S. Lewis, "Church growth is the numerical increase of local congregations through making disciples of those not yet obedient to Jesus Christ as Lord and multiplying new congregations among all people and in all places where these are needed."¹⁶ This definition emphasizes increasing the number of congregations as part of making disciples.

Another definition is found in the book Vision and Strategy for Church Growth written by Waldo J. Werning. He explains:

The church growth approach is a concentrated effort to effectively use the members' time and resources to provide proper motivation for stimulating growth, to provide criteria for analysing the church programs, and to test the soil for potential harvest. There is a stress on the use of spiritual gifts and the adopting of evangelistic methods in a specific community. It is held that growth will result whenever a church believes growth is God's will and they pray for it, plan for it, work toward it, and evaluate the results of carefully followed strategies. The motive is not to increase the membership or raise more money but to tell the world of God's gracious love for all sinners, which is shown in God's gift of His Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of all.¹⁷

Werning points out that although the goal of church growth is to make disciples in great numbers, the motive of church growth is to bring the Gospel to the world.

¹⁶ Charles L. Chaney and Ron S. Lewis, Design for Church Growth (Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1977), p. 7.

¹⁷ Waldo J. Werning, Vision and Strategy for Church Growth (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 15.

In summary, the important components of church growth are:

1. The belief that it is God's will that His church should grow and will grow.
2. The conviction that great effort must be expended to accomplish the goal of making disciples.
3. The conviction that making disciples to disciple others is an on-going task.
4. The intention to base church growth on Biblical principles.
5. The viewpoint that anthropological and sociological principles must join the theological in a strategy for growth.
6. The idea that growth takes place by involvement of the whole Body of Christ, namely, the whole membership of a congregation.
7. The conviction that spiritual gifts must be used to serve the church. Some are evangelists, teachers, leaders and staff members but all are witnesses of Christ.
8. The emphasis that the church should plan, pray and work for its growth.
9. The desire to bring all people, those in families, clans, tribes and nations, to believe in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical Basis

Because the church is God's, the principles and ideas relating to the Church Growth Movement must be based upon God's Word, the Scriptures. If the Church Growth Movement is not based upon the Scriptures, it cannot properly be called church growth. In such case we would be speaking only of a secular organization's growth. Without the Biblical basis, church growth is only another secular movement.

The main questions are: What does the Bible say about church growth? Does God want His church to grow? If church growth is God's will, then how does the church grow? Does God want His church to grow in number only, in grace only, or in both? These are questions to which clear answers must be found.

We begin with four main Bible passages which are often referred to as the Great Commission passages.

(1) Matt. 28:18-20.

And Jesus came and said to them, 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.' (RSV)

This passage has been used by the Church Growth Movement as the clearest and strongest evidence to support its theory.¹⁸

First, Jesus said that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. The aorist ἐδόθη states that all authority in heaven and on earth "was given" to Him. This refers to His human nature alone, because according to the divine nature all authority belonged to the Son of God from all eternity.¹⁹ ἐδόθη implies that this power was given by the Father; it is not inherent in the Son. 1 Cor. 15:27,28 indicates that it is held in subjection to the Father. The power given to Christ is alleged by Him as a reason, not for subduing, but for teaching all nations.²⁰ ἐξουσία denotes

¹⁸C. Peter Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 21.

¹⁹C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932), p. 1151.

²⁰Lyman Abbott, The New Testament with Notes and Comments--Matthew and Mark (New York and Chicago: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1875), p. 327.

active power, the full ability to do as one wills.²¹ This word ἐξουσία signifies that Jesus Christ is the great and only God, the Governor of heaven and earth, that is, of the whole spiritual and material universe.²² Jesus Christ, having such authority, should be obeyed by everyone.

In verse 19, οὖν has a special force in this connection. It draws a conclusion regarding the gift of all authority which has been bestowed on Jesus. It places all of His power and authority behind the commissioning of the disciples to evangelize the world. This οὖν shows that it is impossible for the disciples to have an excuse; they and, by implication, we must obey Him.²³ What are the things in which we should obey Him? Jesus said, "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations" (verse 19). There are four action verbs in verse 19; three of them are participles and one is an imperative. One of the participles is πορευθέντες (going). R. C. H. Lenski indicates that this word is not in a command form. The participle is merely auxiliary to the main verb: "Having gone, disciple!"²⁴ It could be translated, "as you go." This in no way diminishes the full force of the statement.²⁵ Although Jesus has not used the command form for πορευθέντες, it is apparent that we cannot reach out in active evangelism by sitting down and refusing to reach out. In order to disciple the nations, it is necessary

²¹Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 1151.

²²William Bruce, Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: James Speirs, 1910), p. 677-78.

²³Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 1152.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

to go to them. H. Hobbs, indicates that Christians can make disciples only as they go.²⁶ If no one goes to do the task of evangelism, then God's church will not grow. This word *πορευθέντες* is one of the key terms for the work of evangelism.

The word *μαθητεύσατε* is an imperative. It basically means "to turn into disciples," and its aorist form conveys that this is actually to be done.²⁷ In itself the verb does not indicate how disciples are to be made; it designates only an activity that will result in there being disciples. It connotes results, not methods and ways.²⁸ The goal is that people become disciples of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, following Jesus as a disciple means the unconditional sacrifice of one's whole life for the whole of one's life. To be a disciple means, as Matthew in particular emphasizes, to be bound to Jesus and to do God's will. It is important for understanding discipleship to realize that the call to be a disciple always includes the call to service. According to Mark 1:17 and Luke 5:10, the disciples are to be fishers of men. This is a colloquial phrase meaning that in view of the impending reign of God, the disciples are to catch men for the coming kingdom by preaching the Gospel and working in the name of Jesus (Matt. 16:15-17). When Jesus sent out the twelve (Mark 6:7-13) and the seventy (Luke 10:1-13), they were to go out in pairs healing, bringing salvation and peace, and proclaiming the kingdom of God. We may see from this that Jesus sent out

²⁶Herschel H. Hobbs, An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 421.

²⁷Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 1152.

²⁸Ibid., p. 1153.

disciples for service of one kind or another.²⁹ Therefore, to make disciples is one of the ways of serving Jesus Christ.

Regarding the work of people becoming disciples, it should be made clear that it is the Holy Spirit who works inside people's hearts and makes them become disciples. "For man's conversion is the Spirit's work alone. Without His grace, our will and effort, our planting, sowing, and watering are in vain unless He gives the growth."³⁰ We work for the Holy Spirit as instruments. Therefore, on the one hand, one should not claim any merit when people become disciples of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, one should do a faithful job for Him.³¹ Unfortunately, there are two kinds of Christians who miss this point. The one kind consists of those who think that people become disciples because of their work. These steal the glory from God. The other kind consists of those who use the Holy Spirit as an excuse for their not having a strong desire to do their work as instruments of the Holy Spirit. After all, they think it is the work of the Holy Spirit to turn people into disciples, not theirs. The right attitude is that, on the one hand, one knows it is the work of the Holy Spirit alone that people become disciples, and, on the other hand, one understands that people are instruments of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the disciples should care about the results of the work and do the work faithfully.

²⁹D. Müller, "μαθητής", The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 488-89.

³⁰The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 13th printing, p. 470.4.

³¹Ibid., pp. 470.4; 471.13; 472.19; 520.4; 530.48; 535.72.

In the phrase to "make disciples of all nations," the word $\epsilon\theta\eta$ comes from the word $\epsilon\theta\upsilon\varsigma$, which means a group that is held together by customs. So $\epsilon\theta\upsilon\varsigma$ can mean clan, crowd, company or people. In the New Testament, $\epsilon\theta\upsilon\varsigma$ occurs 162 times, including forty-three occurrences in Acts and fifty-four in the Pauline letters. The word $\epsilon\theta\eta$ means all people in terms of clan, crowd, group of people, tribe or nation, as is often made clear by the epithet $\pi\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ (Matt. 24:9; 28:19; Mark 11:17; Luke 21:24; Rom. 15:11).³²

The discussion now turns to the question of how all nations are to be turned into disciples, namely, by going to proclaim the Gospel, by baptizing them, and by teaching them. In other words, proclaiming, baptizing and teaching are the methods of making disciples. The word "going" has already been discussed, so attention is now on the two participles: baptizing and teaching.

Baptism is based upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and is a means through which the Holy Spirit washes (Titus 3:5).³³ A person becomes a disciple by being born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Baptism brings the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Baptism is associated with entrance into discipleship.³⁴

Another aspect of making disciples is "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." The word $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ (verse 20) is the present participle and expresses a continuous activity, thus showing that

³²Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 790-93.

³³The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), Supplementary Volume, pp. 88-9.

³⁴The Book of Concord, p. 436.2.

teaching is a continuous process.³⁵ Jesus used the words διδασκόντες τηρεῖν, "teaching to guard," which means to obey and preserve, and also to preserve and keep inviolate.³⁶ Hence, this teaching will be so dear to the heart that no man will be allowed to take it away by false teaching or in any way to alter it. While baptism is a single act for each person, it stamps and seals us with the Holy Name once for all. But the teaching goes on through life, both preceding baptism and following it.

Baptizing and teaching are both important in making disciples. There cannot be only baptizing without teaching. If such would be the case, the baptizing would not be holy baptism. It would only be a common washing like bathing. Conversely, we cannot have only teaching without baptizing, for those who despise baptism cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5) because they refuse to obey a clear command of the Lord. The church, therefore, needs to emphasize three things to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples: proclamation (going with the Gospel), baptizing, and teaching. If a church is weak in any of these areas, it is not fulfilling God's will, and it will not be strong enough to fulfill the Great Commission.

Finally, Jesus Christ knew that we are sinners. We are always weak in faith. He gave us final comfort and assurance by saying, "I am with you always, to the close of the age." He does not send His disciples out alone into the world of nations. He will always be at their side, assuring their success. These words imply that His Church will continue to the end of time.³⁷

³⁵ Alan Hugh M'Neile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Co., 1949), pp. 435-36.

³⁶ Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 1159.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 1160.

Only because of His Presence can His Church fulfill His Commission of making disciples. Also, only because of Him, can His Church grow strong and healthy.

In conclusion, Matt. 28:18-20 says that it is God's will that His Church grow because Jesus Christ wants us to make disciples by going to proclaim the Gospel to the non-Christians so that they will have an opportunity to become Christians. This is numerical growth. By baptizing them so that their sins are forgiven, they join the church as members. Then, by teaching them the Word of God, they grow in grace. Therefore, making disciples concerns both growth in numbers and growth in knowledge and grace.

(2) Mark 16:15

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (RSV)

Mark 16:15 and Matt. 28:18-20 contain the same Great Commission and similar great promises.³⁸ They use the same word, *πορευθέντες*, for "going," and both speak of going to the world. They also have differences. Mark indicates that going is for the purpose of preaching the Gospel. Actually, both passages have the same goal, for preaching the Gospel is done for the purpose of making disciples.

The word *κηρύξατε*, preach, is an imperative of the verb *κηρύσσω*. The noun form is *κήρυξ*, which denotes the man who is commissioned by his ruler or the state to call out with a clear voice some items of news and so to make them known. Subsequently, the verb *κηρύσσω* was formed from the noun to describe the activity of the herald, but it is less common than the noun.³⁹

³⁸R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), p. 480.

³⁹L. Coenen, "Proclamation," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), Vol. 3, p. 48.

Thus when the Gospel is proclaimed, it should be proclaimed clearly and should be made known to people.

"To the whole creation" (verse 15) is the correct translation, rather than "to every creature," the former reflecting the presence of the article τῆ ; while the latter neglects the article. κτίσις is not used in the absolute sense, but like Matthew's πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (all the nations), means all groups of people.⁴⁰

The important point of this Bible passage is that Jesus' command powerfully expresses the universality of grace. It is very clear that God wants His church grow in numbers, for there is no human being shut out from the Gospel by Jesus. Absolutely all are to hear this Gospel, with the one divine purpose that they all are to believe, for preaching and believing have a close relationship to each other. There is to be no preaching without the goal of believing, and there will be no believing except by preaching the Gospel.⁴¹

(3) Luke 24:46-48

And said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (RSV).

Luke here gives a summary of the instructions of Jesus during the forty days between the resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:3). We find parallels to these verses scattered throughout Jesus discourses in the other Gospels. Here the words, "should be preached to all nations," recall

⁴⁰ Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels, p. 480.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Matt. 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," and Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." The words: "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached" (verse 46), recall John 20:23, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven." Verse 46, therefore, forms the transition from the past to the future (verse 47).⁴²

The word κηρυχθῆναι, be preached or be proclaimed, is used the same as κηρύξατε in Mark 16:15, because both words come from the word κηρύσσω which means to proclaim in public as a herald and is the standard verb for preaching.⁴³ We have discussed this word in connection with Mark 16:15. "Repentance and forgiveness of sins" (verse 47), are meant in the same sense here as they are throughout the Scripture. They are the essential content of the Gospel.⁴⁴

The proclamation is to be made unto all nations, starting at Jerusalem. This is not because salvation is of the Jews or because Jerusalem is the heart of the Jewish nation but because this is fulfilling the prophecy (Ps. 110:2). Here Jesus will win his first victories.⁴⁵

Who will carry out Jesus' order? Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things" (verse 48). The disciples of Jesus Christ are witnesses for they saw that the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus had been fulfilled. They are to be the witnesses, the heralds. Their proclamation is to be a testimony.⁴⁶ Therefore, disciples of every age also have the duty to proclaim Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection to all nations because they

⁴²F. Godet, A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalis Company, 1887), p. 510.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

too are Jesus Christ's witnesses. The result of this proclamation will be that thousands of thousands of people will become disciples. This is numerical growth.

(4) Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Sammaria and the end of the earth.

This passage is talking about the spiritual power communicated directly by the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost miracle. Such power is complete and adequate equipment of the mind and spirit for the great coming task. The words, "the Holy Spirit has come upon you," describe the Pentecost miracle in advance and explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit⁴⁷ (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). We are not only told to proclaim the Gospel to the world, but we are also assured that we will receive power to carry out the Great Commission. Not only will Jesus be with us always (Matt. 28:20), but He also promises to send the Holy Spirit to us. Because He is with us, we have power to fight against the devil and to fulfill the task of making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).⁴⁸

One of the ways of making disciples is to be Jesus Christ's witnesses. The Greek word for witness is μαρτυρ, it has these several meanings in the New Testament.

1. Witness to facts. The original meaning of witness to facts is shown, for example, when Jesus answers the question from the high-priest whether

⁴⁷R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁸Joseph A. Alexander, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1956), p. 11.

he was Christ or not. Jesus confesses that he is, and "then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, what need have we of any further witnesses?" (Mk. 14:63). This means that there is no need to have witnesses to prove whether Jesus is the Christ or not, because He confesses Himself to be the Christ.⁴⁹

2. Combination of witnesses to facts and witness in the sense of evangelistic confession. This sense occurs in Luke's usage both in Luke and Acts. For example, in Luke 24:47-48, which reads, "and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." These passages indicate that we are not only the witnesses to the fact of the historical Jesus, but also witnesses in the sense of proclaiming these facts to all mankind. The latter is an evangelistic confession. The same sense occurs in Acts 1:8.⁵⁰

Therefore, "witness" in Acts 1:8 means both to be witnesses to the facts of the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus--namely, the Gospel, and to proclaim it to all mankind.

Jesus' disciples were to be witnesses of all that they had seen and heard from the beginning of their relationship with Him, (John 15:27; Luke 24:18), including His doctrines, miracles, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Also, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, eye-witnesses recorded the testimony of Jesus in the Bible. Therefore, when we receive the Gospel through faith in Jesus, we also become witnesses of Jesus.⁵¹ When we are witnesses, we cannot just sit and be quiet. On the contrary, we have a duty to make the Gospel known to people. This duty is to proclaim.

Finally, we must discuss where we should go to witness. The Greek τε . . . και . . . και, "both . . . and . . . and," indicate that Judea and Samaria are a unit under one article and that to reach the utmost or last

⁴⁹Carl Schneider, " μαρτυρῶς," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), Vol. 4, p. 489.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 492-93.

⁵¹Lenski, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, pp. 31-32.

part of the earth involves passing through all the intervening parts. The city is named first and made prominent because the Apostles were to do much work right in Jerusalem as a starting point for the whole world.⁵² The result of being witnesses of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem to the end of the earth is that thousands of thousands of people will be brought to Jesus Christ. This is numerical growth.

The conclusion of these four Great Commission passages is that it is God who wants His church to grow both in numbers and in grace.

In addition to these four Great Commission passages, some of the parables of Jesus also relate to church growth theory. They are discussed below.

The Parables of Jesus

Jesus Christ is not only our Savior but also our teacher. He used the common lives of people as examples in His parables to express His teaching. He used different examples for different kinds of people so that each might understand. To a fisherman He talked about the fish, to a shepherd He talked about the sheep, to a farmer He talked about the seed, soil, trees and harvest.

There is no doubt that Jesus lived in a culture which was predominantly rural and in which even the urban centers were close to an agricultural state. Many people today live in an industrial societies and urban settings. A farmer would have less trouble understanding some of the parables of our Lord than those of industrial and urban background today.

⁵²Ibid., p. 32.

The greatest concern to the farmer is the harvest. Every farmer hopes to have a great harvest. He works hard at sowing, reaping, fertilizing and cultivating in order to keep the soil in good condition, all the while hoping to get more fruit. This is the vision of fruit as expressed in broad terms in John 4:35-36:

Do you not say, "There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?"⁵³ I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

Although sowing and reaping are both important, they are means to a final end, that is, to get the fruit. The farmer hopes that the fruit will be good and plentiful.

Sometimes in missionary work the vision of the fruit has been lost. Attention is fixed upon a novel method of sowing the seed, or perhaps there is a rather vague hope of some kind of a harvest. The result may be little care about the fruit and concentration instead upon the sowing. This is what McGavran calls "search theology," or a theology of seed sowing.⁵³ Those who practice the search theology have various reasons. Some think that "the mission of the church is simply to proclaim Christ. The church is to pay no attention to the response; its duty is complete in proclamation."⁵⁴ Some say that the true Christian proclaims Christ without seeking for any result in the world of persons, thus removing the dangers of manipulation, or in any way of persuading people to become Christian.⁵⁵ Some claim that "the Christian is not concerned with results or numbers. Those are strictly in the

⁵³ Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 34-40.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

hands of God."⁵⁶ Some Christians fear numbers because they see one soul as of infinite value. They argue that a mission which over a period of fifty years leads fifty souls to Christ is as pleasing to God as one which wins fifty thousand and plants the church firmly in an entire country side.⁵⁷ This search theology could be one of the major causes of ineffective mission work because its expectations are not correct. The expectation should be to gain fruit, not to merely search or to sow. We need to restore the vision of the fruit which Jesus expressed in His parables.

Peter Wagner identifies three basic laws of agriculture in the teaching of Jesus:

the law of sowing
the law of pruning
the law of harvest⁵⁸

(1) The Law of Sowing (Matt. 13:1-23)

This parable has been called the parable of the sower; it follows the terminology of Jesus in verse 18. Wagner prefers "The Parable of the Soil" as the most suitable title for this parable.⁵⁹ Why? Of the four kinds of soils in the parable, the roadside, the stony, the thorny field, and the good soil, three fail in the basic agricultural objective of producing fruit. Only one is successful. A good farmer immediately asks, "Why? What makes the difference?"

Several things are constant in this parable. The sower presumably continues to use the same method of sowing. The sower uses seed, which is

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy, pp. 41-44.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the Word of God, for sowing. We assume that the climate is constant. Only one element is different, namely, the soil. A farmer realizes immediately that even the best seed will not produce the desired fruit in bad soil but only in fertile soil.⁶⁰ Therefore, an important point in this parable is the soil and whether the seed is sown in good soil or bad soil. It indicates that the kind of harvest will be determined by where a person sows.

This parable states a missionary strategy, namely, that we should test the soil before we sow the seed of the Word of God. Is this soil good enough so that we should concentrate our efforts and our manpower in this field? Or is this bad soil that would suggest we should use less effort or even close the field and find other places which have better soil? Not all of the people of this world, of a given country, or of a given city or town will have the same response to the Word of God at a given time. The result is varying harvests: thirty, sixty or even a hundredfold. Church growth advocates striving to get the maximum harvest results. This is the correct approach for those who intend to plant new churches. Congregations, district mission boards and denominational mission boards should try as much as possible to eliminate careless sowing.

Therefore, while we have the command to preach the Gospel to every person, we have the responsibility of concentrating our efforts and our manpower in those areas that are ready for the harvest. God's resources must not be wasted. There are about three billion people in the world today who

⁶⁰ Ibid.

are still non-Christians.⁶¹ They are waiting for someone to sow the Word of God to them.

Some may suggest that it does not matter what kind of soil the seed lands on, for God said, "My word . . . shall not return unto me void" (Is. 55:11). God also said, "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit . . ." (Heb. 4:12). Of course, God's Word is full of power. Everything will be done according to what he said in the Scripture. God also said in Rom. 11:25, ". . . a hardening has come upon part of Israel . . ." This passage shows clearly that people can reject the Word of God, and that even the covenant people, Israel, which had been chosen and taught by God, rejected it. Some of them still harden their hearts, rejecting the Word of God. Therefore, although God's Word shall not return unto Him void, and although God's Word is full of power, yet people can still harden their hearts. That is why there are different responses to the Word of God. We must test and evaluate the response of the people to the Word of God and adjust the amount of effort and manpower to be used in each area. The good soil will bear more fruit and the seed will not be wasted.

(2) The Law of Pruning (Luke 13:6-9)

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vine-dresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

⁶¹Edward R. Dayton, That Everyone May Hear, Reaching the Unreached (California, MARC, 1979), pp. 15-17.

This passage speaks of a tree which already for three years has borne no fruit. The owner of the tree wants fruit from the tree. This is what he is looking for and working for. If the tree cannot bear fruit, it not only wastes time, money and manpower keeping the tree alive, but it also uses up the ground in which other trees could grow and bear fruit. So the owner would cut it down and let other fruitful trees grow there. Here again there is a clear focus on the vision of fruit.

Wagner sees this passage as a principle of church growth. When a mission starts at one place, if that place still bears no fruit after a certain period of time, maybe three, five, or another number of years, the mission should close down and move to some other responsible place. As Jesus tells his disciples, if anyone will not receive them or listen to his disciples' words, they should shake off the dust from their feet and leave (Matt. 10:14).⁶²

Some missionary work is just like the fig tree. There is much to see, there is foliage to capture in pictures, but even after decades of labor it has produced little or no fruit. We may continue wasting the resources of God and still go on asking, as the hired man did, to give it one more year. Behind this there is a theology of seed sowing or a theology of search. Of course, there are those who have consciously adopted search theology as their belief. They therefore care nothing for the result of fruit. But there are also those who use search theology as an excuse for lazy and irresponsible work. Whatever the reason why they do not bear fruit, it is clear that they should bear fruit. Furthermore, they should not only bear fruit, but should bear a large amount of fruit.

⁶²Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy, pp. 43-44.

Some may ask how much time is needed to judge whether a place is fruitful or not. We cannot conclude that because the parable says that the owner asked for fruit after three years, therefore, three years is a standard time to judge. Neither can we say that because the hired man asked for one more year, therefore four years is a standard time. Different people have different responses to the Word of God. Some places need longer periods of time; some places need shorter periods of time. One time cannot be adopted as a standard for all. It may be said that every year that passes is an evaluation time. This means we should regularly analyze and evaluate the results of one place in terms of how much fruit has been borne and then adjust the amount of future effort to be given. This is good management, trying as best as possible to avoid wasting resources and to allow the trees to bear the maximum amount of fruit. No matter whether the period of time is long or short, the law of pruning should not be forgotten.

(3) The Law of Harvest (Matt. 9:37-38)

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

A new element is introduced here, that is, the need for an increased number of laborers.⁶³ Every farmer will say that harvest time is the most critical as far as workers are concerned. If the right number of laborers for the harvest is not available at the right time, the farmer will lose much of the harvest. In such cases, all the sowing, pruning, and cultivating will be in vain.⁶⁴

Not all fields ripen at once. Some ripen earlier while some mature later. Farmers know that they will place the greatest number of laborers in

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

the ripest field and not neglect any such fields. This is good farm management as well as good missionary strategy. The most common error in missionary strategy is to deploy an excessive numbers of workers in fields where the harvest is not yet ripe while at the same time much fruit is being lost in the ripened harvest fields because of lack of laborers.⁶⁵ This is bad management because it wastes manpower and loses much of the fruit. Jesus Christ does want any of the fruit to be lost, so He requests that laborers be sent into the fields that are ready for the harvest.

Jesus claimed that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Some may answer that the reason we don't have enough laborers is that not every Christian has been given the gift of being an evangelist. This answer appears to blame God who gave the gift of being an evangelist to only a small number of people. It is not God's fault; it is the fault of humans. We should try our best to make disciples so that the greater the number of disciples, the greater the proportion of evangelists among them. Here again we are focusing on the vision of fruit. God desires that there be more disciples so that there will be enough workers to work on the fields while the harvest is ready so that the fruit will not be wasted.

These three parables teach that before the Gospel is preached in the mission field, the receptive fields should be sought, analyzed, and evaluated in terms of the anticipated harvest. The amount of effort to be expended should be adjusted. Great effort should be expended so that there will also be more evangelists to work on the field.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The Biblical Picture of the Church

The Scriptures use many pictures to describe the church, such as bride of Christ, flock of sheep, a building, a temple, a family, vine and branches, and a body. Here we focus on the latter example.

The Body of Christ

There are three meanings for "Body of Christ" in the Bible: (1) the physical body of the Lord (Matt. 26:12,26; John 2:21; Rom. 7:4; 1 Peter 2:24); (2) His Church, the Christian community (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12; Ephesians 4); and (3) the Bread in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16).⁶⁶ Because the subject here is church growth, attention will be given only to the second meaning, the church as the Body of Christ.

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Articles VII and VIII read, "This church alone is called the Body of Christ, which renews, consecrates, and governs by his Spirit, as Paul testifies in Eph. 1:22,23."⁶⁷

The Body of Christ is the church which is a concrete entity. To Luther the church is "those who believe in Christ."⁶⁸ It is made up of countable people. The Body is indentifiable as members, churches, and denominations. Christians must be concerned with the Body, with winning men to Christ, and with multiplying churches. If there is failure here, then one day there will be fewer churches. Therefore, we must be continually making

⁶⁶ Alfred Kuen, I Will Build My Church (Chicago, Moody Press, 1971), p. 97.

⁶⁷ The Book of Concord, p. 169.

⁶⁸ What Luther Says, edited by Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), Vol. 1, p. 257.

disciples in great numbers.⁶⁹ Every member of the church is a part of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). The body is a unit, although it is made up of many parts; and though there are many parts, they form one body. "For we were baptized by one Spirit into one body." Because we are one body in Spirit, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, evangelists or witnesses, pastor or members, we all belong to the one Body of Christ. Therefore, church growth takes place with the help of the whole Body of Christ, namely, the whole membership. Church growth will be more effective when there is attention to the reality of the whole Body.

There are different functions in different parts of the Body of Christ, such as pastors, evangelists, teachers, administrators, and others. Church growth does not rely upon the evangelists only, but relies upon the whole body with each member of the body helping the other members as they work together. Some are evangelists, others are witnesses of Jesus Christ, some use gifts of service while others show mercy. Whatever the different function of each part, they work as a unit, a unit which is the Body of Christ. Church growth occurs more readily when the Church is viewed as the body of Christ.

Evangelism

The Term "Evangelism"

The word "evangelism" actually comes from the Greek word for "Gospel" which is the modern form of the Anglo-Saxon word "god-spell," a story from or about a god. "Evangelism" is a rendering of the Latin evangelium. The term was, however, understood popularly as meaning "good tidings" (Is. 40:9; 52:7;

⁶⁹McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps For Church Growth, (New York, Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 61, 62.

Luke 2:10) or "glad tidings" (Rom. 10:15). The Revised Standard Version (RSV) usually translates it as "good news." It has been used in this sense in the Protestant translations of the Bible since Tyndale. The Latin term goes back to the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον*, which is found in the New Testament only. The Septuagint has only the verb *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι*, which in the older translations is rendered "to preach," "to tell," or "to publish."⁷⁰

In the New Testament, the frequent synonym of *εὐαγγέλιον* is "word" (*λόγος*, *ῥῆμα*), and all verbs used in connection with "gospel" and also applied to "word" (for example, "proclaim," "obey," "announce," "hear," "confirm," "speak," "have," "give," "come"). A full understanding of the nature and meaning of the Gospel must, therefore, include whatever is said in the Bible concerning the Word of God and its proclamation.⁷¹

The Definition of Evangelism

Today, many churches have been redefining evangelism in terms which bring it straight into everyday living. Here are some of these modern definitions and their sources:

The Madras Foreign Missions Council: Evangelism is so to "present Jesus Christ to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, accept Him as their Savior and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of His church."⁷²

⁷⁰International Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 2, pp. 441-43.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²George Z. Sweazy, Effective Evangelism: The Greatest Work In the world (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 19-21.

The World Council of Churches at Amsterdam: Evangelism is "so making Christ known to men that each is confronted with the necessity of a personal decision, yes or no."⁷³

Toyohiko Kagawa: "Evangelism means the conversion of people from worldliness to Christlike godliness."⁷⁴

Albert W. Beaver: "Evangelism is simply the contagion of enthusiasm for Jesus Christ. The methods which we employ are only channels through which this enthusiasm flows."⁷⁵

Archbishop Temple: "Evangelism is the winning of men to acknowledge Christ as their Savior and King, so that they may give themselves to His service in the fellowship of His church."⁷⁶

Samuel Boon-Itt of Thailand (formerly Siam): "Evangelism means living, doing and talking for Christ."⁷⁷

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: "Evangelism, in a broad meaning, is to denote every activity by which Christians reach out into the world of men to witness to the love of God in Christ."⁷⁸

Evangelism in The Lutheran Church-
Missouri Synod (1970)

Theodore A. Raedeke, former Secretary for Evangelism of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, set up an evangelism resource book called Reaching People For Christ which was published in 1970. He used the three Greek words

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ T. A. Raedeke, Reaching People For Christ (LC-MS, Department of Evangelism, 1970), pp. I-B-1.

koinonia (community), diakonia (service), and kerygma (proclamation) to explain that true evangelism must have these three concepts as one unit.⁷⁹

1) koinonia (community). A traditional translation for this word is "fellowship." In this community there is to be "no neglecting to meet together," but an "encouraging of one another," a "holding fast the confession of our hope," a "considering how to stir up one another to love and good works." (Heb. 10:23-25)⁸⁰

Jesus points to one reason for this "community," the new relationship that He has established, and the fact that it is to be clearly seen among His followers when He says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35). In their relationships with one another Christians show the oneness that they have with the Father through Christ. True evangelism, therefore, must include a concern for the "community" of Christians. We must address ourselves to the task of providing opportunities so that such care, love, forgiveness, and peace may have rich expression in our midst.⁸¹

2) diakonia (servanthood). Jesus Christ, who came as a servant, calls His followers to follow Him by serving. "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43-45). "If I, then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14-15).

⁷⁹Ibid., p. I-B-2

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. I-B-3

Servanthood is the mark of distinction and the badge of identification for Christ's true followers as He describes their self-effacing service to Him in the lives of others (Matt. 25:35-40). The servanthood of Christians is part of the content of the message that we are offering to others.⁸²

3) Kerygma (proclamation). Proclamation as Raedeke, defines it, is "communicating the Gospel to man's situation." By "man's situation," he means man's situation as God sees it, a situation in which man's whole panorama of problems and ills arises from his inherited separation from God in sin, and as man himself sees it in his current moods, tensions, and hopes. The Gospel is the message that God in His love acted in Jesus Christ and in His life, death, and resurrection atoned for our sin. Therefore, the Christians who are in the community of Christ and serve Him must determine the most effective way to express the Gospel by studying the variety of ways in which the Scriptures themselves express the basic content of the Gospel and by understanding the situation of their hearers.⁸³

When evangelism is properly understood, the whole life of God's people, koinonia, diakonia, kerygma, will be seen to cluster about the hope that the next person may know Jesus Christ. This is the church in mission to the world.⁸⁴

Evangelism in Church Growth

There are different emphases in the approaches to evangelism of Raedeke and Wagner. Wagner defines evangelism with three elements: presence,

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., p. I-B-5-6

⁸⁴Ibid.

proclamation, and persuasion.⁸⁵ These are not three different ways to evangelize, rather they are three aspects of one unity.

Presence evangelism

Presence evangelism is what the name implies: evangelism carried out by one's very presence, by one's life, and by one's works of telling people about the Christian faith. It has a measurable goal expressed in the question of how many people are helped in the name of God.⁸⁶ We find a basis for this in the Scriptures where Jesus says, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). The light should not be hid, for He says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matt. 5:14,15). These two passages clearly indicate that Jesus is talking about our good works as the light. Christian good works should not be hid; they should be seen among men. Some may ask to whom we practice our good works, Christians toward Christians, or Christians toward non-Christians? When we consider another passage, we know that Jesus wants us to practice good works toward all men. He says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). "All men" includes Christians and non-Christians. Because we here are especially talking about evangelism toward non-Christians, the discussion focuses on the good works toward them. Some professing Christians hesitate to do good works among non-Christians for they are afraid that this may be called the Social Gospel.

⁸⁵Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy, p. 125.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 134.

Here it should be made clear that there is a great difference between the good works of the Social Gospel Movement, on the one hand, and in "presence evangelism," on the other. In the Social Gospel Movement, good works become the end and only work of evangelism. There is no proclamation of the Gospel. That is why Wagner says, "Doing good works should not be called evangelism,"⁸⁷ and evangelism cannot stand without the Gospel.⁸⁸ In "presence evangelism" good works are only the beginning.

The good works in "presence evangelism" provide the good foundation for the other elements of evangelism. Through good works, one may establish a proper identification with the people to whom the Gospel is proclaimed and build up a good relationship with them.⁸⁹ Thus, they may become more open and easier to relate with. When one then proclaims the Gospel to them, they will not reject it so strongly that there is no other chance to talk with them. As long as the relationship continues, there will be opportunities for the work of the Holy Spirit. This approach is better than that which loses the audience before the evangelists have opened their mouths. There are those who are impressed by Christians' good works and who will hear the Gospel and, by the power of the Spirit, become Christians.

Presence evangelism is not all there is to evangelism, for it refers only to one's presence and the life, love, and care which come from a person's faith. There is generally no spoken Gospel in it. Therefore we also need "proclamation evangelism."

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 127.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 126.

Proclamation Evangelism

"Proclamation evangelism" is the telling of the Gospel to men. It has a measurable goal: how many people hear and understand the Gospel message?⁹⁰

It is clear that the witnesses of Jesus' time proclaim to us, through the Scriptures, that they saw and heard Jesus Christ who died, was buried, and was raised for men's sins (1 Cor. 15:3,4). Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). This is called the Gospel by which faith in Jesus Christ is established. For "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Faith in the Gospel makes one a disciple of church. A person cannot be Jesus' disciple unless he believes the Gospel. The Gospel is the main and basic element in "proclamation evangelism."

There are those who think that proclamation is the final end and goal of evangelism. They think that when the Gospel is proclaimed to men, they are finished, and the results are up to God. This concept is what McGavran calls a search theology, a subject we have already discussed. There is no doubt that the work of conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. The point is, however, that the Holy Spirit works through the preacher. The Scriptures say, "How are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher . . . ? So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Rom. 10:14-17). The preacher has the full responsibility of carrying out the task of making disciples. A story will illustrate this.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

The owner of a farm hires a farmer to run the farm and expects the farm to produce plenty of fruit under his work. The owner provides the seeds and everything necessary. The farmer only goes to the field and sows the seeds without cultivating and fertilizing the field, saying, "Leave the result to God; my job is finished. Soil, if you can keep the seeds alive and make them grow, let the glory be to God alone, not to me. If the seeds all die, let the fault be yours, bad soil, not mine, nor God's! I will keep on sowing in other places because I have been hired by the owner to sow the seeds."

This story explains the situation which results when search theology is used. There is merely sowing of the word of God without accompanying attempts to convince people to believe the Gospel.

Finally, in addition to presence evangelism and proclamation evangelism, the third kind, persuasion evangelism, must be performed.

Persuasion Evangelism

"Persuasion evangelism" is proclaiming the Gospel in as convincing, powerful, and persuasive a manner as possible. It also has a measurable goal: how many people become disciples?⁹¹

The word "persuasion" repels some people because it seems to involve some form of synergism by which man cooperates with God in conversion. A synergistic approach is to be rejected for the conversion of men belongs to the Holy Spirit alone. Also rejected is the viewpoint that "persuasion evangelism," here being considered, is synergistic. The concept of persuasion as understood here has Biblical precedent. It is presented in detail below.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 127-134.

The key Biblical word is πείθω. According to A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, the basic meanings are convince, be convinced, persuade, be persuaded, appeal to, trust in, believe, obey and follow.⁹²

In Scriptures, Paul always persuaded people. "He argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded (ἐπειθέεν) Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4). He not only worked at persuading people every Sabbath, but also "for three months spoke boldly, arguing (πειθών) and pleading about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). He did not argue or persuade people concerning the things on earth, but concerning the kingdom of God. In regard to Christians, we note that Paul and Barnabas spoke to them and "urged (ἐπειθον) them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). With reference to non-Christians, Paul knew that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade (πειθομεν) men" (2 Cor. 5:11). It is clear then that with regard to the believers, we persuade in order to urge them to continue in the grace of God. With regard to the unbelievers, we persuade in order to save them from fear before God in the judgment day. These are the two ways in which Paul used the word "persuade."

Our focus here is persuading non-Christians. Paul says that when he persuaded them, "My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4,5). Two things should be noted. First, when Paul speaks of his speech and his message, he is talking about the Word of God. It is very important that when we persuade

⁹²Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, pp. 644-45.

men, we use only the Gospel, for "there is salvation in on one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Second, when Paul presented the Word of God to men, he always preached as a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He disregarded life and death in order that the hearers would be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul knew that God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (1 Peter 3:9). This is why Paul is so eager to persuade men to become Christians.

Therefore, persuading the non-Christian has its base in the Scriptures. The term "persuade" should not be feared for here it does not connote synergism. It is certain that we cannot cooperate with God or with ourselves to cause someone to change from a situation without faith to one of faith in Jesus Christ. The conversion of men belongs to the work of the Holy Spirit alone. No one is qualified to cooperate with God. God is holy and almighty; people are sinners. God declares us righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ. He commanded us to fulfill the great commission of making disciples and expects us to bear fruit. This is the desire and the final goal of evangelism, namely, to persuade men with the Gospel in a convincing manner in order that they understand the Gospel and believe in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit alone.

"Presence evangelism," "proclamation evangelism" and "persuasion evangelism" belong to one unit called evangelism. When any one of them stands alone and the others are excluded, the result cannot be called evangelism. They are like the three stories of a house. The third story is "persuasion evangelism." It rests on the second which is "proclamation evangelism." There is no persuasion without verbal proclamation of the

Gospel. But proclamation rests on the first story, which is "presence evangelism." If the first story is withdrawn, the whole structure topples down.⁹³ For "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2:17) Therefore, presence, proclamation and persuasion must be connected to each other and be mutually interdependent. The Church Growth Movement calls this "3-P evangelism."⁹⁴

Caution must be taken, however, not to be satisfied with only "1-P" or "2-P" evangelism. The third "P," persuasion, is always the final goal of biblical evangelism.⁹⁵

Evangelism according to church growth thinking, as described above, is somewhat different from Raedeke's definition of evangelism. Raedeke's emphasis in the proclamation of the Gospel is in reaching people with the message. He certainly implies that men are to be saved through the Gospel message, but his strong accent is on the verbalizing of the Gospel, on getting the Word out. He emphasizes that we are not doing evangelism unless we are making disciples.

Church growth stresses that the goal of the great commission is "making disciples of all nations." It does not emphasize the means to that goal. Lutherans stress the means, the proclamation of the Gospel, to the extent that the impression is sometimes given that the proclamation is an end in itself.

⁹³Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy, pp. 133-34.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

Church Growth Methodology

The Church Growth Movement freely adapts many of the theories and methods of such scientific fields as anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and computer and communications technology. It is also sensitive to the lessons of history and literature and to various cultural factors. Its primary methodological concern is to break out of any theoretical confinement into the freedom of dealing with facts. Hence, case studies are needed to portray actual situations.⁹⁶

The purpose of using the scientific method is to answer carefully the questions which have been defined. The questions, however, must be expressed in such a way that the answers to them provide information which can be verified by observation or experimentation. Therefore, church growth researchers are dealing with scientifically observable data. They conduct their research for two reasons. One reason is for the sake of knowing or understanding. This satisfies the intellectual desire. The other reason is more practical. One wishes to know or understand for the sake of being able to do something more efficiently. The former is called pure, or basic, research, and the latter is called applied research. Church Growth research is conducted not only for knowing or understanding the real situation but also for application to the work of church growth.⁹⁷

The following reviews the Church Growth Movement in relation to several major scientific fields of study.

⁹⁶Yamamori and Lawson, Introducing Church Growth, p. 51.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 91.

Anthropology

McGavran defines anthropology as one of the sciences of man which "describes how men act, how they innovate, how they govern themselves, what restraints they set up for their societies, and a thousand other matters of note."⁹⁸ McGavran believes that anthropology can help with church growth. The more we understand the human family, the more there will be church growth.⁹⁹

Anthropology shows that different people have different systems of behavior, thinking, learning, and valuing.¹⁰⁰ For example, going barefoot in America is very common, but it seldom happens in Hong Kong because Chinese think that going without some foot covering is impolite and offensive. Thus if an expatriate missionary has the habit of going barefoot, people will reject him before he opens his mouth to talk about Jesus. It is therefore necessary to adapt one's ways to the society one lives in as anthropological studies help to describe that society. The same principle applies to church growth. We first study those who have different systems of behavior, thinking, learning, values and customs and become aware of what may be offensive to them, all in order to save them. Anthropology gives information which is needed to bring about an understanding of the people whom we are trying to reach with the Gospel.

By using this approach, we are following a principle expressed by St. Paul when he said, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

⁹⁸ McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, p. 106.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Yamamori and Lawson, Introducing Church Growth, p. 65.

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessing." (1 Cor. 9:22,23).

Sociology

McGavran explains why Church Growth Theory needs help from sociology.

He says:

Church growth takes place within the societies in which men live. Therefore, it is necessary to understand their structure in order to grasp how the church grows. Men do not exist as isolated individuals, but rather as members of some societies. The laws of social changes are very significant in determining the direction, speed and size of movements toward Christianity.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, he says humans are products of their environment. For example, they cannot choose the language which they speak. This is determined for them by society. In the same way, society exercises a strong influence in everything that a person says, thinks, and does. Every society has its own organizational form, its own values, its own philosophy of what is most important in life. The more we study a society, the more we will understand the people who are members of that society. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze social structures in order to understand better how the church may extend itself within these structures. There are some elements which are found in every society: value systems, power structures, leadership patterns, social classes, and so forth.¹⁰² McGavran holds that sociology shows that men prefer to become Christians without crossing the barriers of race, language, or class. He also claims that there is nothing in the Bible

¹⁰¹Wayne Weld and Donald A. McGavran, Principles of Church Growth (California: William Carey Library, 1974), Ch. 9, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰²Ibid., Ch. 9, p. 2.

which requires that one must cross barriers of language, race or class to become a Christian.¹⁰³

McGavran's point is well taken, and its application is already evident in the hundreds of different translations of the Bible which have been or are being produced. It is true that people understand the Gospel better when it is presented in their own language. Yet we must make clear that this does not mean that it is impossible for people to become Christians when they have to cross cultural barriers. It also does not mean that there is a law requiring every church to gather its members according to the overall state of its culture. We rather mean that, in general, people like to gather with the same kind of people and to use their native language in the church.

Measuring Church Growth

One of the complex matters of Church Growth is the measurement of whether the church is growing or not. Some may think that such measurement is easy. They may say, "Simply look at the statistics of every year's membership and compare them, then you will know whether a church is growing or not." But McGavran points out that there are three ways that church growth takes place in any local church. They are biological growth, transfer growth and conversion growth. Only conversion growth is real growth which adds significantly to the church.¹⁰⁴

Biological growth means "children of existing members who come into the church."¹⁰⁵ It is good growth, but it is limited to the children of

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 24-29.

¹⁰⁴ Donald A. McGavran and Win C. Arn, How to Grow a Church (Glendale, Calif: Regal Books G/L Publications, 1979), pp. 57-59.

¹⁰⁵ McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 128.

members. On one hand, in regard to biological growth, the church grows very slowly because it takes a long time for a new generation to join the church. On the other hand, there is the possibility that some or many will be lost as they are growing up. Consequently, biological growth is slow and not reliable.

Transfer growth means "members of one church who unite with another church."¹⁰⁶ Actually, transfer growth does not mean any gain in terms of the world wide church. As W. Arn says, "transfer growth always means increase for one church and decrease for another."¹⁰⁷ If a church has increased membership recently and most of the new members have joined by transfer, this church may regard itself as a growing church, while, in reality, it is not building the Kingdom. This is why an increase in figures may not indicate real growth.

Conversion growth means "the coming into the church of people of the world who are converted by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."¹⁰⁸ This growth is the only kind that really adds significantly to the church. What church growth aims for is conversion growth. Even though transfer growth and biological growth are taking place in any church, a church should not be satisfied unless it is growing by conversion. This is the attitude of church growth thinkers.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷McGavran and Arn, How to Grow A Church, p. 58.

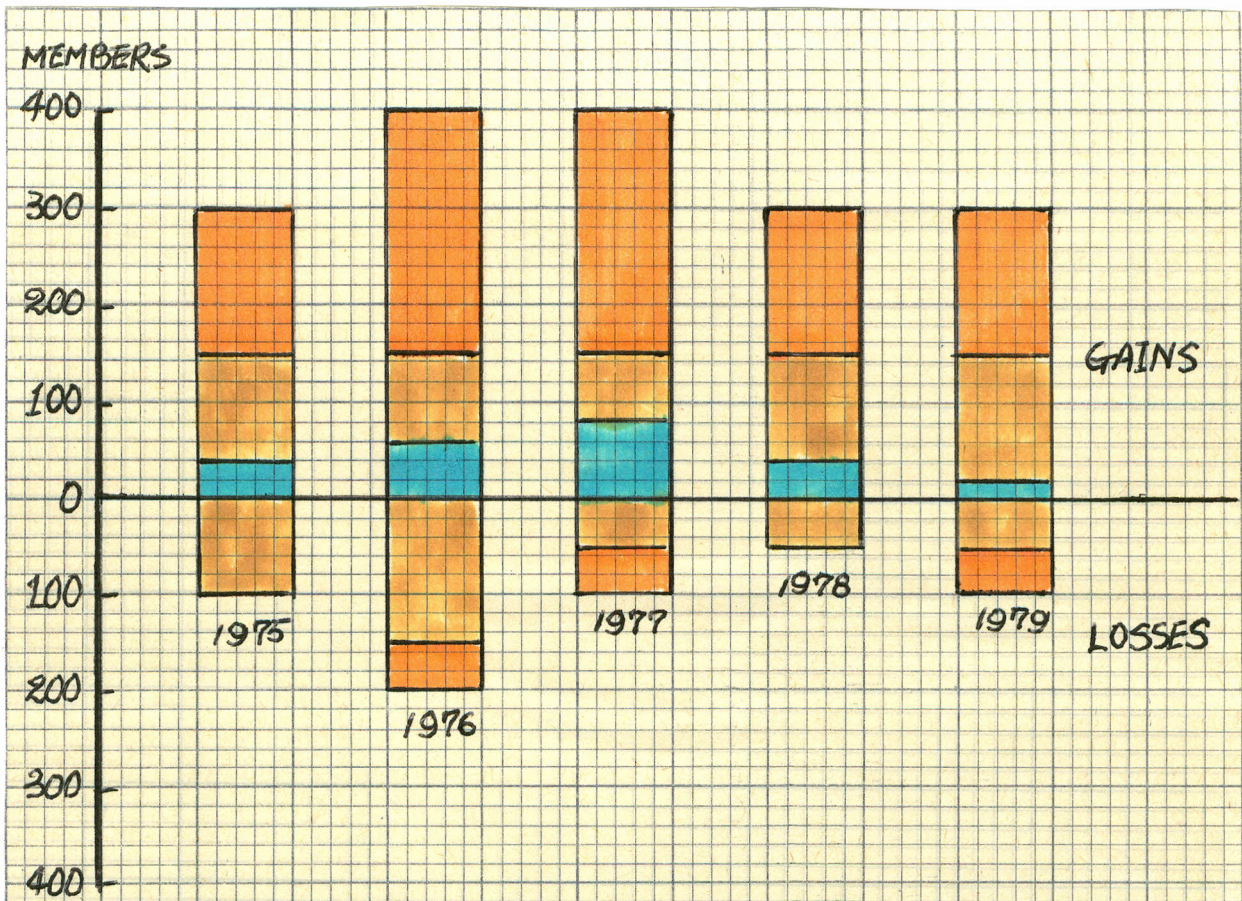
¹⁰⁸McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 128.

¹⁰⁹McGavran and Arn, How to Grow a Church, p. 59.

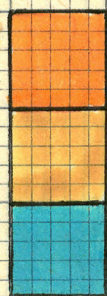
When we measure church growth, we are not only looking at the gains but also at the losses. There are three ways by which people leave the church. They are by death, by transfer and by reversion. These three terms are very easy to explain. There are some Christian who will die as time goes by, there are some who will transfer to other churches, and there are some who will lose their faith.

If we want to see the real picture of a church in terms of growth, we must consider the above three ways of increase and of decrease.

In order to more clearly see the overall picture of a church's growth, information may be put into graphs like the following one.



KEY

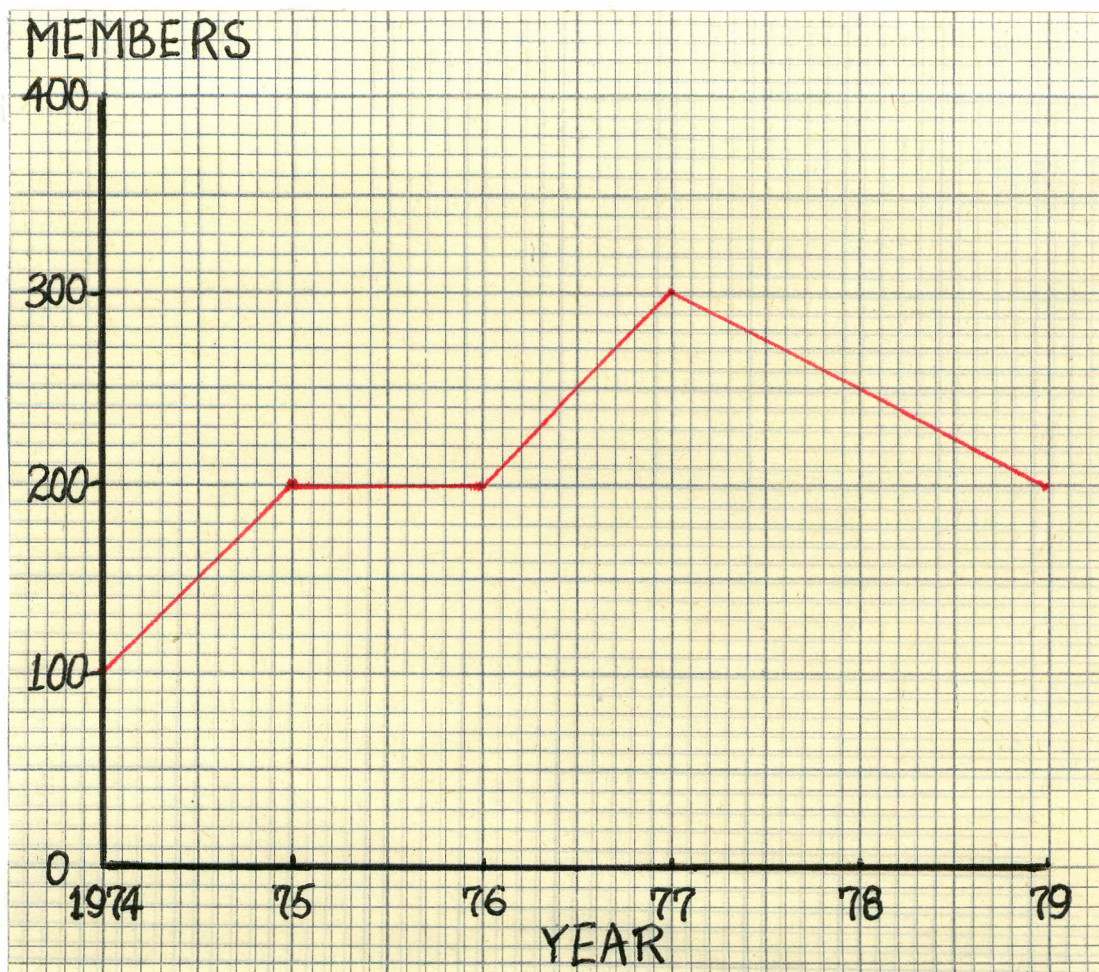


Conversion or Reversion

Transfer in or out

Biological Growth or Death

Graphs can be a great aid in reporting numerical growth or loss in a congregation. Graphs quickly tell the statistical facts, communicating with ease.



For example, the linear graph above tells a great deal. The church grew from 100 members in 1974 to 200 in 1979, an increase of 100 members. This looks like a healthy church, and it may be. But the preceding bar graph, showing gains and losses in the same congregation, forces us to ask one hard question: Why did 400 people transfer out of the church in five years? There were 950 members added by conversion growth over the five years, but the net membership increase was only 200. What happened to the other 750?

The fact that 400 transferred out is not necessarily a sign of poor church health. Maybe they are starting new daughter churches in other parts of the city. On the other hand, maybe they are leaving because they do not like the worship service or because the believers are continually squabbling among themselves. The point is that a responsible church leader must find the explanations for their departure if he is going to do the best job possible. Without the bar graph, the question might never even have come up. This is why McGavran strongly recommends the use of graphs for measuring church growth. Graphs can measure the real growth of the church.¹¹⁰

Church Growth Principles

A church growth principle is "A worldwide truth which, when properly applied, along with other principles, contributes significantly to the growth of the church."¹¹¹ This relates to the following major subject areas: homogeneous units, indigenous church, people movement; the laity and the formula "celebration + congregation + cell = church." What follows examines each of these in detail.

Homogeneous Units

Each society is made up of numerous social units with characteristics of its own. The persons belonging to a social unit have much in common, and the characteristics of their own group distinguish them from other social units in society. For this reason, McGavran uses the term "homogeneous unit" to refer to a cohesive segment within society.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Weld and McGavran, Principles of Church Growth, Ch. 5, p. 5.

¹¹¹McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 127.

¹¹²Yamamori and Lawson, Introducing Church Growth, p. 85.

The homogeneous unit is simply a portion of society in which all the members have some characteristics in common. It might be a political unit or subunit, the common characteristics being that all the members live within certain geographical confines. The homogeneous unit may be a segment of society whose common characteristic is a particular culture or language. Examples of such units are the Puerto Ricans in New York City, the Chinese in Thailand, or a tribe or caste, such as the Jews in the United States or the Brahmans in India.¹¹³

Church growth theory suggests that no one should be forced to cross a language, racial, or socio-economic barrier to find Christ. He or she should be able to hear of Christ in his own dialect from his own people.¹¹⁴ This makes an individual feel more comfortable. Individuals often "feel comfortable" with some groups and "feel uncomfortable" with others. In regard to the church, every person should be invited but no one should be compelled to become a Christian among people with whom he or she is uncomfortable. This does not mean that churches should be closed to racial or language groups. A church with a closed door policy cannot call itself a New Testament church. Jesus Christ did not die for one group of people only; He died for all mankind. We should therefore welcome any race or class of people to the church.¹¹⁵

If the above is true, why does church growth theory say that a growing church should find those who belong to homogeneous units and attempt to

¹¹³ McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, p. 85

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 198-200.

¹¹⁵ Chaney and Lewis, Design for Church Growth, pp. 170-72.

penetrate them?¹¹⁶ Research has shown that church growth is more effective within groups of the same kind of people, that is, within homogeneous units. It is a natural phenomenon that people will feel more at home when they worship in the church with people of their culture.¹¹⁷

McGavran claims that he does not mean to suggest any racial segregation in the church. He is saying that it is easier for the church to grow within a single homogeneous unit than within several homogeneous units.¹¹⁸

This is a good principle for church growth in Hong Kong. The Chinese in Hong Kong emphasize the clan system very much. They feel more at home when they get together with people who have the same family name. The family name indicates which clan they are in, from which place in China they came, and to which ancestors they belong. Even though over 88 percent of the entire population speaks Cantonese, when people of the same homogeneous unit get together, they, nevertheless, prefer to speak their own dialect. For this reason, it is appropriate for the church to identify the different homogeneous units and to attempt to form a church within each homogeneous unit.

Indigenous Church

The idea of the indigenous church was originated by Henry Venn, a missionary theorist of the nineteenth century. In a paper entitled "Native Church Organization," published by Venn's society, he outlined the purpose of the church missionary society to be the development of native churches, with the ultimate view of a self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ McGavran, Understanding Church Growth. pp. 85-87; 198-215.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

system. When these three points have been achieved in an area, there is no further need to have a missionary or a missionary agency in that area. Either may be transferred to another region.¹¹⁹

McGavran adopts this concept as one of the church growth principles in order to say that a church will grow more rapidly if it is an indigenous church. The indigenous church can establish a kind of self-identity in which one can see his or her responsibilities. As everyone in the church sees one another's responsibilities, the whole membership will fully support the church with the money, time, and effort needed for the work inside the church and outside the church. When a church comes to this point, it will grow rapidly.¹²⁰

The church growth school of thought uses this principle against the traditional method of mission work. They point out that the traditional method of mission work fails to promote the work of evangelism properly because it conditions the new converts to depend upon missionaries and mission agencies. Therefore, whenever there are any needs all people need do is to ask for help from the mission agency, and the mission agency will satisfy their needs. It may also be that everything in the mission field, no matter how big or small, is decided by the missionaries. They may act as bosses. Even after a mission field has become a church with its own pastors and church offices, it still may have a strong desire to ask for financial support from the mission agency year after year.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Alan Tippett, Verdict Theology in Missionary Theory (Lincoln, Ill. Lincoln Christian College Press, 1969), p. 132.

¹²⁰ McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, pp. 336-53.

¹²¹ Melvin L. Aodges, The Indigenous Church (Springfield, Mo: Gospel Publishing House, 1967), pp. 9-21.

In Hong Kong, after thirty years of evangelism work, The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod is still asking for funds from The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Why does this situation exist? The church growth advocates would, no doubt, answer that part of the problem is that the church in Hong Kong has been trained for thirty years to have an attitude of asking for help and has never developed a strong desire to become a self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending church.

The indigenous church principle must be defined very carefully before it is applied to the mission field for it may be applied incorrectly and lead to an extremist position. That is, some may think that a new mission station should not be supplied with any help from outside. The reasoning goes, "Let them use their own resources to support themselves. All we have to do is to send some missionaries there to preach the Gospel and to train local evangelists. After they have been trained, the missionaries may then be transferred to another new mission field." This position is too extreme and therefore impractical. The crucial point is not whether needs should be supplied from outside or not, but how to educate the new converts of a mission field with a strong desire to become a responsible and self-supporting church even while they are being supported. This is an appropriate concern because it may indeed be difficult for those new converts, who may be very poor, to support the church sufficiently.

Thirty years ago, many of the people in Hong Kong were refugees. They had nothing to eat, no place to live. How could those who became Christians have used their resources to support themselves and the church without help from outside? The correct way of applying this indigenous church principle is, on the one hand, to do the best possible job of helping

the work in the mission field and, on the other hand, to teach people the Word of God by emphasizing how to be faithful servants before Him. If these two points can be worked out successfully, the church in the mission field will automatically become self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending.

People Movement

McGavran denotes that a people movement is one type of church growth. At least two-thirds of all the converts in Asia, Africa and the islands of the Pacific have become Christians through people movements. After the Reformation, the Protestant faith was diffused through Europe in a series of people movements of various types. These facts indicate that people movements have had a great influence on church growth in history.¹²²

What is a people movement? McGavran gives the following definition:

A people movement results from the joint decision of a number of individuals--whether five or five hundred--all from the same people, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation, while remaining in full contact with their non-Christian relatives, thus enabling other groups of that people, across the years, after suitable instruction, to come to similar decisions and form Christian churches made up exclusively of members of that people.¹²³

This definition does not mean that a people movement is characterized by a large number of people becoming Christians. Actually, it consists of a number of small groups coming to Christ. At any one time only one group becomes Christian, is instructed, and is baptized. This does not imply careless accessions or hurried baptizing. On the contrary, a people movement relates to small, well-instructed groups, one this month and one several

¹²²Weld and McGavran, Principles of Church Growth, Ch. 13, p. 2.

¹²³McGavran, Understand Church Growth, pp. 297-98.

months later, becoming Christians. Sooner or later the whole group of the same people becomes Christian.¹²⁴

There are four kinds of people movements which are defined by McGavran:

(1) Lyddic movement (Acts 9:32-35)

A movement in which the entire community, like the one at Lydda, becomes Christian

(2) Lystran movement (Acts 14:8-11)

A movement in which a part of the people, like some of those at Lystra, becomes Christian.

(3) Laodicean movement (Rev. 3:14-22)

A movement that slows down and stagnates, like the one at Laodicea, and becomes full of nominal Christians.

(4) Ephesian movement (Acts 19:1-20)

A movement that is carried out by a small church, such as the one at Ephesus composed of twelve men and their families, and becomes a major extension of the church.¹²⁵

These four kinds of people movements show that there are different degrees of people movements. The best kind of people movement is that in which the entire community becomes Christian and extends to win other communities, by whole extended families, by minor lineages, and by villages moving together. He regards the people movement as the God-given way to greater church growth of the future.¹²⁶

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 319-20.

¹²⁶Ibid.

In short, McGavran is saying that the ultimate goal for a mission in one place is to win the entire community. The method is to use families as starting units to spread out to their relatives and friends. If every family functions like this, the entire community will soon become Christian.

This is the exact way that the early New Testament church developed. McGavran uses the term "people movement" to describe the phenomenon of the early church. It is natural for a new convert to tell good news to his family, relatives and friends, or even to strangers if he has put himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit after being converted.

As to the Chinese in Hong Kong, because they emphasize the unity of the family very much, it is difficult for children to become Christians without the permission of their parents. It is easier to win the children by first concentrating on the parents. Once they have been converted, their children will easily follow them. In some tradition-oriented families, because of the belief that parents always have authority to govern their children's lives, they may even control their children's marriages. In the light of this situation in Hong Kong, any church growth people movements there will also center largely upon the family and relatives, just as in the early church.

The Laity

McGavran thinks that if a church is serious about the Great Commission, the involvement of the laity is of the utmost importance. The growth of every church is uniquely dependent upon its laity. The pastor is the one who helps them to discover and utilize their God-given gifts.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps For Church Growth, p. 108.

The concept of classes of leaders is an aid to understanding the kind of activity in which the leadership is involved. McGavran classifies leaders into five groups:

Class 1 - Leaders whose energies primarily turn inward toward the service of existing Christians and existing church structures, such as church offices, Sunday School teachers, emphasizing growth in grace and knowledge.

Class 2 - Leaders whose energies primarily turn outward toward non-Christians in an effort to bring them into the Body of Christ, for example the members of an evangelism committee.

Class 3 - Leaders who are part-time paid employees, such as part-time secretaries.

Class 4 - Leaders who are full-time paid professional staff workers of churches, for example pastors.

Class 5 - Denominational leaders, such as district presidents.¹²⁸

Most churches usually have enough Class 1 leaders to carry on the ministries of teaching Sunday School, teaching Bible Class, visiting the sick, and holding fellowship meetings within the Christian community. There usually are not enough Class 2 leaders who carry on the work of evangelism, namely, bringing non-Christians into the church by believing in Jesus Christ. If a church has many Class 1 leaders but only a few Class 2 leaders, it cannot grow. The harvest needs laborers to go and reap. If the laborers are not enough, the result will be a small harvest. If a church has enough Class 2 evangelists, the result will be that more people will become disciples, and the church will have a better chance to grow.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

According to Wagner, not everyone has the gift of evangelism. He further says, "the gift of evangelism is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to share the Gospel with unbelievers in such a way that men and women become Jesus' disciples and responsible members of the Body of Christ."¹³⁰ According to this definition, Wagner would attempt to find out how many people in a given church have the gift of evangelism. Wagner did research on Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Using the results of his study, he established the hypothesis that in the average evangelical church, ten percent of the members have the gift of evangelism.¹³¹ That means that a church of 100 members will have about ten people who have the gift of evangelism.

Although ten percent of a church's members have this gift, Wagner asserts that only about one-half of one percent are actively using it. The other 9.5 percent have the gift, but they do not know they have it and some do not even know that there are such things as spiritual gifts. Thus, the focus of attention for mobilizing the basic evangelistic potential of a church should be on the 9.5 percent of the members who have the gift of evangelism but are not using it.¹³²

What about the other 90 percent of the members? Are they useless or do they become second-class Christians? No, they are witnesses of Christ. Even if they do not have the gift of evangelism, they can nurture the new converts, for, as far as church growth is concerned, the process of keeping

¹³⁰C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Glendale, Calif: Regal Books, G/L Publications, 1979), p. 173.

¹³¹Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 77.

¹³²Ibid., pp. 76-79.

them within the body is equally as important as the conversion of people. Even a pastor may not have the gift of evangelism but still function in the role of pastor. As Wagner sees it, the key function of the pastor is not that he evangelize, but that he lead his people into discovering, developing, and using their God-given spiritual gifts.¹³³

The greatest potential for effective evangelism in a church is in mobilizing that 10 percent of the Christians who have the gift of evangelism and in utilizing the other 90 percent of the Christians who have spiritual gifts for service inside the church. This kind of lay involvement has a greater potential for bringing about church growth.

McGavran's emphasis upon the involvement of the laity in church growth is good. Ten percent of a congregation's members serving as evangelists is better than one man's (pastor's) effort. Those without the gift of evangelism are witnesses in the Body of Christ. If we can practice this principle, it will assist the expansion of the church.

Involvement of the laity is one of the vital signs of a healthy growing church. This alone is not enough, however. There is still another vital sign related to the simple formula explained below.

Celebration + Congregation + Cell = Church

This formula: "celebration + congregation + cell = church," denotes one of the vital signs of a healthy growing church. The formula is suggested by Peter Wagner. What follows discusses it part by part.

What is meant by celebration? Celebration is the congregation gathered for public worship. This is a special experience because the entire

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 79-81.

local body of believers, often a large number of people, comes together to meet God. This group experience is what he calls celebration.¹³⁴

Wagner uses the word celebration to indicate that every worship service should have a festive spirit. It is similar to a festival to which many friends, relatives, and members of the family are invited for celebration. Wagner claims that, unfortunately, in a large number of churches, the Sunday morning service is more like a funeral than a festival. This is why many churches do not grow.¹³⁵

Wagner has touched an important point. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world and died for our sins. We become justified by His grace through faith. This wonderful good news is the highest joy in our life. How can one who has received His grace come to worship Him without any joy appearing on his face? When some of the Pharisees wanted to stop Jesus' disciples from praising Him, Jesus said, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40). Even stones that do not have a mouth would cry out for joy, rejoicing in Him.

A worship service of celebration does not just happen. It has to be well planned and developed. It is then possible for an entire congregation to enjoy an exciting celebration every Sunday morning.¹³⁶ Even after the service, the joy of celebration may still remain in people's hearts, in their homes, in their daily life, and in their expectation of the next celebration worship. There are always things troubling people's hearts and making them sad or worried. After a service-emphasizing celebration, such sadnesses and

¹³⁴Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 97.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 98.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 99.

worries may be lessened, and joy may come into the heart. As the Apostle Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." (Phil. 4:4).

A good worship celebration makes for a healthy, growing church. But another element needs to be added. Wagner calls it "congregation."¹³⁷

Congregation, according to Wagner, has the unique meaning of a fellowship group of up to 150 people. This is the group in which people can know each other by name, in contrast to the whole church which Wagner calls the "membership group."¹³⁸ Wagner's concept of congregation is different from the common use of the word congregation meaning the whole congregational membership. Wagner's concept of congregation refers to those fellowship groups within the whole community of membership such as a Sunday School class, a prayer meeting group, an evangelism team, a softball team, or a camping club. These small groups or "congregations" within the larger church membership group function like the membership of a small country church in America may be expected to function.¹³⁹

If a church only offers celebration, it may not be a church. The reason is that in celebration, the participants, by nature of the celebration gathering, maintain anonymity. They don't know each other. That is why Wagner points out that Billy Graham's evangelistic rallies, although they are great celebrations, are not a church. In large groups anonymity is common. What Wagner calls "congregation" is missing. If a believer misses only one meeting of the small fellowship group, he is worried about, called upon, prayed for and made to understand that there are people around him that care.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

Everyone needs to have others know his or her name and to use it for communication. So the major characteristic of this concept of congregation is that everyone in the group should know everyone else. Here is where fellowship starts.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, churches can only grow for a time by having large celebrations. Such growth may be in vain, however. Church growth advocates have found that a healthy growing church has a strong Christian education program, namely, an active Sunday School. If there are two different churches, and both of them have good worship celebrations, it will be the one which combines celebration with small group fellowship which has the stronger growth. The one which has only celebrations may not survive. Thus it is that the composite membership figures which balance Sunday morning attendance and church membership rolls with involvement in small groups more accurately tell whether a church is growing or not.¹⁴¹

Since groups are so important in the church, Wagner feels that in many cases they can be strengthened even more by a careful process of decentralization. If properly decentralized, they can contribute to church growth in a much more powerful way. This decentralization takes two forms:

(1) multiplication of groups, and (2) a higher degree of self-government.

Church growth men discover that, "if a church makes the multiplication of fellowship groups a definite part of its planning for growth, the church will almost invariably grow faster."¹⁴² A question arises immediately: When is a group big enough for multiplication? Larry Richards suggests 250 as the

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 101

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 102-103.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 104.

maximum size. If a group has grown to 250, it might be time to plan for division.¹⁴³

Multiplication of groups is the first aspect of decentralization. The second is a greater degree of self-government in the groups themselves. This means giving responsibilities to every one in a large group so that they have a sense of belonging and can be identified by others in the group. They come to know each other very well. The love and care they practice toward one another, encourages membership in the group. The group will thus grow effectively.

Therefore, the mandate to, "multiply adult congregations within the church and let each enjoy a congregational form of government"¹⁴⁴ can contribute to church growth in a much more powerful way.

The third part of the formula under consideration is the cell. The congregation is only the beginning of the fellowship circle. The cell can bring about the deeper kind of interpersonal relationships that are necessary to meet another important set of human needs.¹⁴⁵

The cell is also called "small group." It is so close to a family situation that Wagner likes to call it a "kinship circle." Larry Richards defines the cell as "eight or twelve believers gathered to minister to each other, to grow in their sensed love and unity, and to encourage one another to full commitment to Christ."¹⁴⁶

The "small group" is nothing new in Christian history. Jesus spent three years in a small group relationship with twelve men. Although one of them deserted the group, the rest actually changed history.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 105. ¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 105-6. ¹⁴⁵Ibid. ¹⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 107-8.

¹⁴⁷Chaney and Lewis, Design for Church Growth, pp. 176-77.

The ingredients for a small group include:

(1) A contract or covenant

Establishment of a contract includes a lot of sharing and understanding about the purpose of the group and about how it is to function. The group itself sets its agenda, topics for consideration and number of meetings, perhaps for eight to ten weeks.

(2) Commitments

A small group needs such disciplines as regular attendance, confidentiality, not majoring in advice-giving, and an understanding of the leader as facilitator, not teacher. The kind of activity also needs to be decided. Shall it be a fellowship, Bible study, or prayer group?

(3) Content

The group should have spiritual input from the Bible. It should never only be characterized by shared feelings.

(4) Caring

All in the group must really care for each other and meet one another's needs.

(5) Communication

A healthy small group is not dominated by one individual. Also, a key to small group is communication with God.

(6) Crying, conflict

A good balance of honest feelings is needed, including expressions of sorrow and tension

(7) The center of every small group is Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 61-62.

The principle of small groups is a basic principle of church growth. Any organism that lives is made up of cells. The church is a living organism. In the New Testament it is frequently referred to as a "body." The church, too, is made up of cells. These cells are made up of people from varying backgrounds, with a variety of personality traits, involved in a variety of vocational pursuits, made up of infinite physical and emotional variations, and varying quantities and qualities of energy. The individuals have a common bond that gives them the capacity to mold into the cell life, the forgiveness of sins. We all come together from a background with one common ingredient, imperfection.¹⁴⁹

A characteristic of any living organism is that it grows by cell division and cell multiplication. Churches grow as the members of small groups or units within the church contribute to the growth and development of each person in the group.¹⁵⁰

Once a week congregational worship will not be sufficient nourishment for all the members of the church. Small groups meeting more often can better meet the individual needs of the church members of today.¹⁵¹

In the cell group, gifts are discovered, developed, and expression takes place. Church growth can only occur when individuals are growing as members of the body of Christ. Growing individual parts form growing cells. Growing cells form growing organisms which are made up of the individual parts. This overall sequence of growth depends on small cell groupings within the church.

The existence of these small groups may be recognized formally or their existence may be unrecognized. That they do exist, however, is

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

certain. A basic principle to growth is recognition of their existence and utilization of them to produce growth within the church.¹⁵²

A person who is led by the Holy Spirit attends church. He or she looks around until finding a group with which to identify. When one finds that group with which one feels at home, he or she joins it. Surveys are available which substantiate the fact that few people select, attend, and join a church because of the membership or theology of that church. People tend to find a group in that church with which they can identify; otherwise they will join another church with which they can identify. Once this discovery is made, they, like chromosomes, feel they have found a match. They join in the relationships and fellowship of a small group. The closer a person feels to this group, the more naturally he or she can function effectively in the church.¹⁵³

The formula: "celebration + congregation + cell = church" can be applied to any church. Enactment of the formula is the sign of a healthy, growing church.

These five major principles: homogeneous units, indigenous church, people movement, laity and "celebration + congregation + cell = church" are important factors in church growth. As they are applied to the church with the help of the Holy Spirit, the church of God will have a better opportunity to grow.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 59.

CHAPTER IV

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-HONG KONG SYNOD

Historical Background¹

In November 1949, four missionaries² of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod came from the mainland of China to Hong Kong, waiting for transportation back to the United States. During their stay, which was supposed to be a brief one, they found out that there were many refugees who had fled from China because of the civil war and who urgently needed help. Subsequently, these four missionaries changed their mind about going home and decided to stay in Hong Kong to proclaim the Gospel to the people there. Thus the work which resulted in the establishment of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod

¹There are only three written resources of the history of Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod in Hong Kong. One is The Statistical Yearbook (1949-1979), published by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the other two are written by Dr. Andrew Chiu, the president of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong synod (1969-1980), one of the two is called The Past Thirty Years of the Hong Kong Lutheran Church, the other one is written in an outline form according to The Past Thirty Years of The Hong Kong Lutheran Church and records only the big events in the past. This one is called The Great Events of the Past Thirty Years, published by The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod, 1979.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to write the history of Hong Kong Lutheran Church in detail. All information in this chapter is based upon these two resources only: The Statistical Yearbook (1949-1979); and The Great Events of the Past Thirty Years.

²The Statistical Yearbook (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1949, p. 166.

Those four missionaries were: Miss Lorrarire Behling, Miss Martha Boss, Rev. Wilbert V. Hoelt, and Miss Gertrude Simon.

was begun. This church was formally recognized by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1977 as a partner church.³

The past thirty years may be divided into three ten year periods: (1) 1950-1959, (2) 1960-1969, (3) 1970-1979.

The First Period (1950-1959)

At the beginning, in 1950, the missionaries began to work among the Chinese refugees. They borrowed space in a school and began to hold worship services there. The total attendance on the first day was sixty-four. After three-months of work twenty-six were baptized by the missionaries.

These ten years may be called a preparatory period because many creative activities began during that time. A Bible Institute starting in August 1950; the Lutheran Weekly magazine and some materials for Bible classes and evangelism were published, a seminary was established (this was approved by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1959), and national workers who had been trained received their calls from the mission stations.⁴

At the end of 1959, there were 124 Chinese workers: two pastors, thirteen evangelists, eighty-two teachers, and twenty-seven in miscellaneous staff positions. There were 5,966 members, 1,896 of them communicants in twenty mission stations.⁵ The church was operating its own seminary.

³Andrew Chiu, The Great Events of the Past Thirty Years (The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod, 1979), p. 7; 20.

⁴Ibid., pp. 7-10.

⁵The Statistical Yearbook (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1959), pp. 198; 203.

The Second Period (1960-1969)

During these ten years, seventeen seminary students graduated and many congregations were formed. Up to this point, the mission work in Hong Kong had had a good foundation. Consequently, according to the statistics, a riot in 1967⁶ did not have a bad effect upon or cause damage to the churches. On the contrary, many people became Christians after the riot.⁷

In this period, four church leaders were sent to the United States for further studies. One enrolled in a Master of Sacred Theology program, one studied for the degree of Master of Arts in Religion, and the other two studied in the field of education.⁸

This plan of sending Chinese workers overseas to study showed that the missionaries knew that they should train national workers to replace them and that they would give the responsibility for mission outreach to the national workers. During that time there were many discussions concerning how to be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. One such discussion took place on July 28, 1963, at Concordia Seminary in Hong Kong. The participants were all representatives of congregations. The result was a

⁶One of the Communist parties of mainland China wanted to take over Hong Kong, as they tried to achieve their goal by violence. The Government of mainland China then clearly declared to Britain that they did not want to take over Hong Kong, so Hong Kong still remained a British colony.

⁷Chiu, The Great Events, p. 13; and also see The Statistical Yearbook (1968), pp. 216-17.

⁸For the Master of Sacred Theology program, Rev. Andrew Chiu began his studies on January 23, 1965.

For the Master of Arts in Religion, Rev. Chan Kong Chuen began studies on August 27, 1965.

In the field of education, Mr. Lee Wing Ching and Mr. Chan Sing Kwong, both began their studies on February 14, 1969.

plan to achieve the three goals of self-support, self-government, and self-propagation. But the church in Hong Kong still depended largely on the financial support of the United States.⁹

Somehow, at the end of this period, in 1969, the work in Hong Kong began a downward trend. The membership figures in that year were entirely different from those in 1968. The number of Christians went from 8,789 down to 5,310; the number of communicants dropped from 3,690 to 2,946; and the number of mission stations dropped from twenty-eight to twenty-two. Unfortunately, there was no indication as to why the work was suddenly going downward.

The 1969 files of the Board of Missions of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, housed in Concordia Historical Institute, provide some information to suggest reasons why there was such a dramatic change in statistics at that time. Several explanations follow.

1. The Chinese translation of the statistical forms was inaccurate. At a special meeting of the General Conference of the Hong Kong Mission of the LC-MS on Feb. 14, 1969, the president of what was to become the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod presented a paper in which he drew several things to the group's attention. The fourth point that he made related to statistical forms. He pointed out that a number of the Chinese categories on the statistical forms were not accurate, leading to some confusion. For example, Item No. 26 "Losses Through Excommunication" was inaccurately translated as "Lost members." This false translation led to the recording of the incorrect idea of 431 people being excommunicated in one year.

⁹Chiu, The Great Events, p. 11.

2. There were many contradictions in wording between the original statistical forms and the forms printed in the statistical yearbook in 1968. The following table will show examples.

Churches	1968 Original Form	1968 Statistical Yearbook
1. St. Mark	337 Souls	1002 Souls
2. Savior	1210 Souls	1919 Souls
3. Grace	169 Souls	234 Souls
4. St. Paul	362 Souls	411 Souls
5. St. Peter	65 Souls	96 Souls

3. In the original statistical report of True Word Church in 1969, category No. 30, "total souls" is reported as 98. After the figure 98 there is appended the information, "(active members)." This was added by the person who filled in the form.¹⁰

The president of the Hong Kong Synod had paid close attention to the 1969 statistics. He subsequently discovered several inaccurate translations of the English statistical forms. It is very possible that after he had found the mistakes in translation which had led people to supply incorrect information, he may have asked the congregations to pay attention to the statistics which they were going to supply in 1969. He might have urged those who filled in the forms to have accurate figures and may also have given definitions to each item on the form. So it was that True Word Church in its original report for 1969, after the figure "98 souls," indicated that these 98 souls were the active members. Clearly, those who were not active were not taken into account.

¹⁰ Minutes of Hong Kong Synod 1969.

It appears, therefore, that different ways of recording the statistics and different understandings of what was being asked for resulted in extremely different statistics in 1968 and 1969.

The Third Period (1970-1979)

The greatest single event in this period was that some pastors and some representatives of the churches of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod walked out of the election conference on May 11, 1974, and founded a new denomination separate from the Hong Kong Synod. The members of this new organization claimed that they did this because of doctrinal reasons. They claimed that they had found that the Hong Kong Synod was full of false doctrinal teaching, one such being universalism. The president of the Hong Kong Synod claimed that it was not essentially a doctrinal matter but a struggle for power.¹¹

The author of this thesis supports the president's point of view that it was a power struggle, for those pastors who walked out did so just after all the new offices of the Hong Kong Synod had been elected. It appears that their candidates lost, and therefore they left. Actually, there are two main groups in the membership of the Hong Kong Synod. One is comprised of those who use Mandarin as their native language, and the other is made up of those who use Cantonese as their native language. The ones who walked out were Mandarin speaking. After the new officers of the Hong Kong Synod had been elected, those who spoke Mandarin found that they had lost positions which had formerly belonged to them. They were very dissatisfied, and this led

¹¹Chiu, The Great Events, pp. 17-18.

them to walk out of the conference. The crisis in 1974 was not primarily doctrinal but chiefly a political matter.

High authorities of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, serving as mediators, attempted to bring about a reconciliation. After their efforts, most of those who had walked out were reconciled and came back.

During the years of the conflict, the number of souls increased annually, from 5,888 souls in 1973 to 6,328 souls in 1974 and to 6,065 souls in 1975. After that, membership declined each year, and a total of 4,881 souls was listed in 1979.¹² This may be due to the fact that during the power struggle, most of the members of the church were very much concerned about the church in terms of supporting their own pastor. The laity became very active in the church at that time. The involvement of the laity is a vital sign of a growing church. This may be the explanation as to why the churches grew during the crisis. After a crisis is over, as long as there is nothing to fight for, most of the members may remain quiet and become inactive. In such case, church membership drops rapidly. This appears to be what happened.

At the end of this period, there were twenty congregations, eight mission stations, a seminary, twenty-one schools and four social service centers in the Hong Kong Synod. This period is characterized by the overall loss of members.

Evaluation

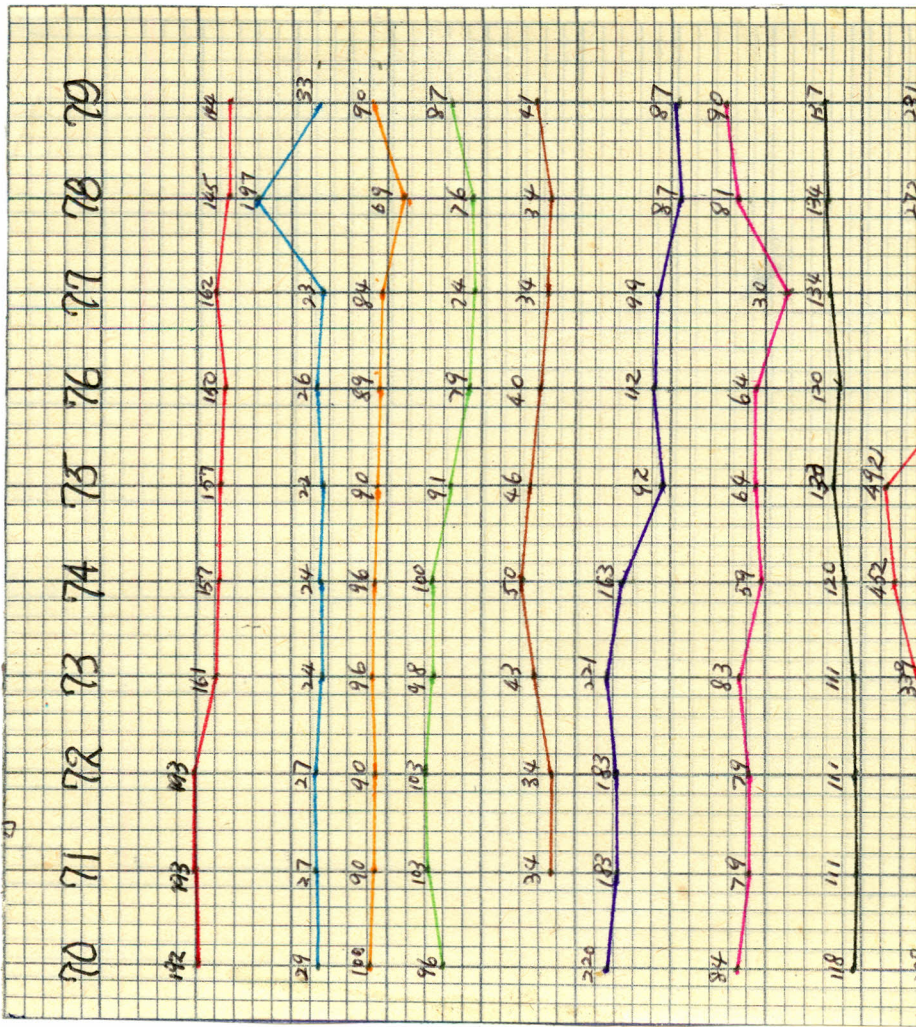
One of the resources for this thesis, as was mentioned in the introduction, is the information about the Hong Kong Synod found in The

¹²The Statistical Yearbook (1973-1979).

Statistical Yearbook published by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This report has appeared annually from 1909 to 1979. This report is used here because it provides accurate data for the past thirty years of history of the church in Hong Kong. It does so both in the form of essays and also in statistics. The data will here be interpreted and evaluated in order to find out whether the church in Hong Kong is a growing church or not. What weaknesses does the church have? This question will be addressed so that there can be planning of a strategy for the church in Hong Kong, so that suggestions for overcoming weaknesses can be made, and so that plans for the church in the future may be provided. Such plans will be suggested in the conclusion to this paper.

The graph on page 92 shows the actual situation of all the congregations of the Hong Kong Synod from 1970 to 1979. However, before the statistics of this graph are evaluated, the use of composite figures to indicate whether a church is growing or not must be explained. A composite figure is the average number of church attendance, Sunday School and communicant membership. These three elements represent three things, namely, worship, teaching the Word of God, and membership. These three are related to one another. An analysis of church growth does not rely only upon one of them. If worship attendance figures are neglected, the statistics do not reflect the idea of the members being believers in God. If the figures related to participation in activities for learning the Word of God are neglected, there is no indication of the believers possible growth in knowledge of what they believe. Without the overall church membership figures, there is no comprehensive view of the group as a church. The average of these three important elements can more accurately reveal the actual situation of a church.

Composite¹³ figures o



Concordia

Eternal Life

Grace

Holy Cross

Hong Kong Deaf

Holy Trinity

Kowloon Deaf

Nathan Road

¹³ A composite figure is an average computed by adding number of Sunday School members, and the annual per Sunday School members, and dividing the resultant total by three.

Referring to the graph, it is noteworthy that most of the lines run steadily downward. This phenomenon indicates the decline of most of the congregations in the Hong Kong Synod during the ten years period.

Four congregations, (Resurrection, St. John, St. Paul and St. Peter) at one point gave no statistical report. Resurrection and St. John have given no report since 1976; St. Paul and St. Peter none since 1974. This is because these four congregations wanted to separate themselves from the Hong Kong Synod after the crisis of 1974, so they didn't give any reports to the Hong Kong Synod.

Some congregations struggled with the matter of whether to separate from the Hong Kong Synod or not. This struggle is reflected in some of the composite figures which show a rapid downward turn after the 1974 crisis. The following are examples.

1. Savior Church

The composite figure goes upward after 1972, but after the crisis in 1974 it drops rapidly to 71 in 1976. The actual fact is that after the crisis began in 1974, Savior Church separated into two groups. The group supporting the pastor in leaving the conference became the majority group that remained in the church building for worship. The other group which was unwilling to follow the pastor's walk-out and which claimed that they belonged to the Hong Kong Synod became a minority group. The statistics show that they totaled about 71 souls. They used space in Concordia Seminary for worship, and they called another pastor in 1976. From 1976 on, the statistical report reflects only the group led by this pastor. The other group has given no statistical report since 1975 and retains no relationship to the Hong Kong Synod.

2. Holy Trinity

This congregation grew from 183 in 1972 to 221 in 1973. But when the crisis began on May 11, 1974, Holy Trinity Church separated into two groups. The number of people in each group was about equal. Both groups tried to remain in the church. The result is that they both worship in the same church at different times. One worships at 9:00 and the other at 10:00 on Sunday morning. The group which separated from the Hong Kong Synod gave no report to the Hong Kong Synod. Only the group which still belongs to the Hong Kong Synod have submitted their statistical report. This explains why the composite figures dropped from 221 in 1973 to 163 in 1974, and 92 in 1975. After the death of the pastor in 1975, the group which had separated from the Hong Kong Synod gradually declined until now there is only one group remaining. It can be seen from this that the role of the pastor in the congregation is very important. Without a shepherd, the sheep will scatter. Usually, sheep will listen only to their shepherd's voice. They will follow him and may not know whether the way is right or wrong. The pastor has a very important role to play in the matter of church growth.

These two congregations, Savior and Holy Trinity are a characteristic sampling depicting the results of the struggle which accompanied the crisis of 1974. When the graph is viewed as a whole, most congregations are seen to have declined after 1974. This indicates that most congregations were affected by this crisis. It also demonstrates that the church is affected by changing situations. In this case, the changed situation brought about by the crisis of 1974 caused the whole church to decline in numbers. This

emphasizes that the church may change either from a situation of growth to one of decline or from a situation of decline to one of growth.

Besides those congregations discussed above, there are four congregations whose composite figures fluctuate rapidly. They are St. Matthew Church, Sharon Church, Eternal Life Church and Redemption Church. This may be explained in the following way.

Among these four congregations, there are three in which the composite figures are very much alike, namely, St. Matthew Church, Sharon Church and Eternal Life Church. Their composite figures go up and down within two years. They are easy to identify in the graph. The composite figure for St. Matthew Church goes from 70 in 1976 to 627 in 1977 and down to 72 in 1978. The composite figure for Sharon Church, goes from 121 in 1976 to 887 in 1977 and down to 22 in 1978. Eternal Life Church's composite figure goes from 23 in 1977 to 197 in 1978 and down to 33 in 1979. What reason can be advanced to explain this?

Examining the congregations again, we discover that all three have steady church attendance and communicant membership figures for the last ten years. The Sunday School figures are different however. St. Matthew's Sunday School figure jumps from 53 in 1976 to 1714 in 1977 and down to 40 in 1978; Sharon Church's Sunday School statistic goes from 140 in 1975 to 2492 in 1977 and then down to 45 in 1979.¹⁴ For Eternal Life, the figure goes from 20 in 1976 to 520 in 1978 and down to 15 in 1979.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sharon Church had not filled out the item of Sunday School both in 1976 and 1978.

¹⁵ Eternal Life Church had not filled out the item of Sunday School in 1977.

The reason that the composite figures of these three congregations fluctuate relates to the changes in the Sunday School figures. Because the Sunday School figures show such wide variations, the composite figures, those figures representing the average church attendance, Sunday School and communicant membership combined, also show such variation.

There is no other evidence available to assist in the understanding of what happened in these Sunday Schools. St. Matthew Church and Sharon Church both have schools. It is very possible that these two congregations had some activities which involved the students of their schools and the congregations added these attendance figures to their Sunday School figures for 1977. Thus it appears that they had a large Sunday School enrollment that year.

Eternal Life Church is different from St. Matthew Church and Sharon Church for it has no school. Why do its Sunday School figures go from 20 in 1976 to 520 in 1978 and down to 15 in 1979? As we look at the last ten years' statistics, the Sunday School figures are all under 22 except for 1978 when 520 are supposedly enrolled. It is possible that the figure 520 is an error in recording and may be intended as 20, not 520. For whatever reasons, the Sunday School figures of these three congregations for the times mentioned are not reliable.

The fourth congregation in which the composite figure shows wide fluctuation is Redemption Church. It is different from the three just discussed. The composite figure of Redemption Church moves upward from 184 in 1972 to 339 in 1973. Afterwards, it moves steadily upward from 339 in 1973 to 452 in 1974, to 492 in 1975. After 1975, the figure drops rapidly to 131 in 1976 after which it goes upward steadily year by year.

As we examine these statistics again, we see a strong upward turn from 1972, when the composite figure is 184, to 1973 when it is 339. Considering the three elements which make up the composite figure, for the time from 1972 to 1973, church attendance goes from 230 up to 399, Sunday School enrollment jumps from 85 to 408, communicant membership reduces from 237 to 210. What caused church attendance and Sunday School enrollment to go so rapidly within one year?

Looking at The Great Events written by Andrew Chiu, we see that on September 16, 1973, Redemption Church called an assistant pastor who had just graduated from the seminary. Although Chiu's account does not include the information, this pastor established a youth center at Redemption Church in 1973 and a senior citizens center in 1974.¹⁶

The purpose for these two centers is to attract non-Christians to the church, to lead them to believe in Jesus Christ, and to move them to the church. It appears that this congregation had mobilized their entire membership for making disciples, a situation conducive of growth. The composite figure drops rapidly from 492 in 1975 to 131 in 1976, however. What is the reason?

It was mentioned before that Savior Church divided into two groups in 1976. One group remained in the same building for worship; the other one used the seminary for worship. This latter group called the above-mentioned man to be their pastor in 1976. He had served at Redemption Church from 1973 to 1975. In 1976, then, Redemption Church lost an assistant pastor who had worked for the involvement of the laity. It is this author's judgment, that

¹⁶Chiu, The Great Event, p. 17.

the reason that the composite figure dropped so rapidly from 492 in 1975 to 131 in 1976 is that this man left Redemption Church to serve Savior Church. Redemption Church was unable to continue with the follow-up work of the two social centers. The laity became inactive and so the church declined that year. Later, the church again followed up on the work of the two centers and the church grew steadily.

Those factors which affected the growth of this church in Hong Kong may be summarized as follows.

1. To a large extent, the crisis in 1974 affected most of the congregations and caused them to decline after 1974. This supports the contention that church growth may be affected by some environmental or internal factors. Church growth theory tries to identify those factors which cause the church to decline and the factors which cause the church to grow.

2. The role of the pastor in the church is very important for church growth. During the crisis in 1974, most of the members did not know much about the actual facts of the crisis. They thought that their pastors must be right. As a result, eleven congregations separated from the Hong Kong Synod.¹⁷ Among the eleven, two congregations separated into two groups, one belonging to the Hong Kong Synod; the other separating itself from the Synod. The pastors of these two churches wanted their congregations to separate from the Synod but some of their members did not follow them.¹⁸

3. Some congregations did not give correct statistical reports. Apparently some congregations did not attach much importance to statistics.

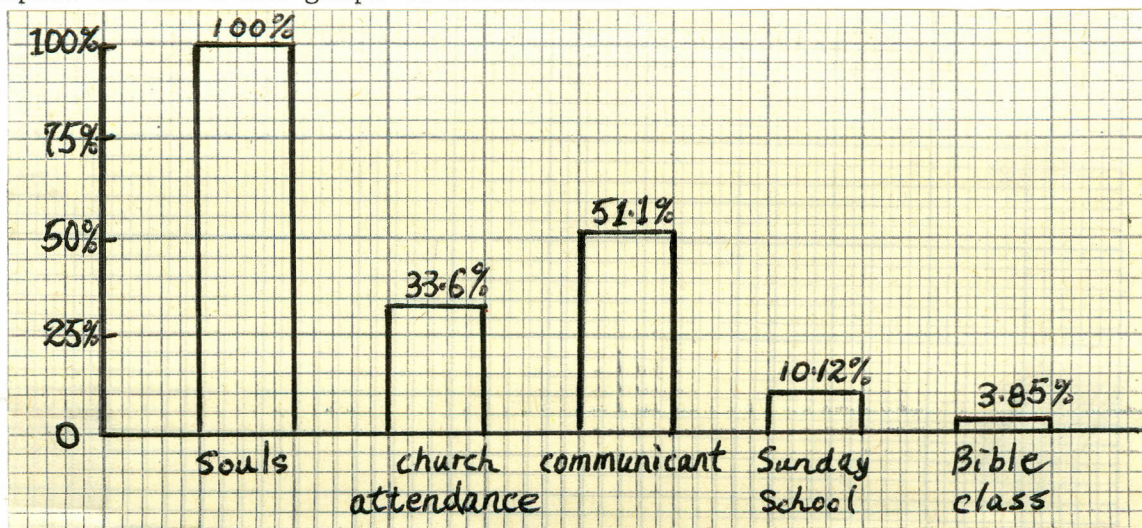
¹⁷Minutes of the special General Conference on June 22, 1974. The eleven congregations separating from the Synod are: Eternal Life, Holy Cross, Hong Kong deaf, Resurrection, St. John, St. Mark, St. Paul, St. Peter, Zion, Holy Trinity and Savior.

¹⁸These two churches are Holy Trinity and Savior.

4. If a church plans for and works for growth with the involvement of the laity, the church will have a greater potential for growth. This is illustrated above in the discussion of Redemption Church. This example demonstrates the power of the involvement of the laity.

What are the factors which cause the church to decline? In asking this question, we need to realize that each congregation is unique. The problem in one church may not exist in another church. It is not valid to say that because one or two churches have weaknesses, therefore the other churches have the same weaknesses.

In determining factors which are related to the overall decline of the Hong Kong Synod, it will be useful to focus upon one year's statistics, namely the last year for which statistics are available, 1979. It will be helpful to use a bar graph to illustrate.



The above graph means that in 1979, 4,881 souls represent 100 percent. This percentage can then be viewed in comparison with the percentages for annual average church attendance, communicant membership, and Sunday School and Bible class enrollment. Several matters stand out.

1. Relationship Between Total Number of Souls and Church Attendance:

Only 33.6 percent of the total number of souls attend Sunday worship services. This low attendance indicates that most of the members do not attend Sunday worship every week. They may attend once or twice a month, only a few times a year, or perhaps not at all. Such low church attendance indicates that the members of the Hong Kong Synod fail to see worship as an important element. This is a sign of a weak church.

2. Relationship Between Total Number of Souls and Communicants:

About 51.1 percent of the total number of souls are communicant members. Half of the total have not become communicants yet. Are these 50 percent children, not old enough to enroll in the confirmation class? Have they gone away without being confirmed? The Hong Kong Synod has no statistics on the ages and sexes of church members, so we really don't know whether those who comprise this 50 percent are children or not.

3. Relationship Between Total Number of Souls and Sunday School and Bible Class: Only 10.12 percent of the total souls enrolled in the Sunday School and 3.85 percent enrolled in the Bible class. These two figures indicate very low fulfillment of the function of teaching the Word of God to the disciples.

Thus far, the graph indicates that most of the members of the Hong Kong Synod have low church attendance, that they are infrequent communicants, and that their Sunday School and Bible Class attendance is low.

What causes a church to have poor attendance, low attendance at communion, and poor Sunday School and Bible Class attendance? These may be discussed one by one according to some church growth principles.

1. The Homogeneous Unit Principle. The homogeneous unit played a part in the crisis of 1974. It was mentioned in Chapter III that the Chinese emphasize the clan system very much. They feel more at home when they get together with people who have the same family name. The family name indicates the clan to which they belong, from which place in China they came, and to which ancestral family they belong.

Although there are many homogeneous units among the Chinese, there are two major homogeneous units in Hong Kong, namely, those who came from the northern part of China, with Mandarin as their language, and those who came from the southern part of China, with Cantonese as their language. Because Hong Kong is dominated by Cantonese speakers, those who came from northern China and spoke Mandarin have had to learn and use Cantonese as their daily language. Even though they can speak Cantonese, it is not difficult to identify them as coming originally from north China. Their body structure and customs are different. The most obvious characteristic is that they have an accent when they speak Cantonese. This is why it is not difficult to identify them. Naturally, both groups feel more at home when they speak their original language with their own kind of people. In fact, there are many conflicts between these two groups.

May 11, 1974, as mentioned before, was the date for electing new church officers of the Hong Kong Synod. It was designated to be an election conference and gathered together all the pastors and representatives of the churches.

When the new church officers had been elected, some of the pastors and representatives suddenly walked out of the conference. They later

claimed that they wanted to separate from the Hong Kong Synod because it had faulty doctrine.

As has been mentioned before, this writer contends that this separation was probably not a matter of doctrine, but more a struggle for power. If it was really a doctrinal matter, the question arises, why did most of the pastors, with the exception of three, eventually come back?¹⁹

All of the pastors who wanted to separate from the Hong Kong Synod, with one exception, belonged to the Mandarin speaking group. The pastors who had not separated from the Hong Kong Synod, with the exception of two, all belonged to the Cantonese speaking group.²⁰ The group which walked out included eight pastors representing eleven churches and only one pastor was not Mandarin speaking. The remaining group involved eight pastors and nine churches and two pastors were not Cantonese speaking.²¹

¹⁹Rev. Dante Yang, Frank Chang and Silas Chang (died in 1976).

²⁰The group which walked out included Rev. Allan Yung, pastor of Eternal Life; Rev. Titus Lee, pastor of Zion and Hong Kong deaf; Rev. Dante Yang, pastor of Resurrection and Savior; Rev. Frank Chang, pastor of St. John; Rev. Steven Chu, pastor of St. Mark; Rev. Lee Fu Cheng, pastor of St. Paul and St. Peter; Rev. Silas Chang, pastor of Holy Trinity; Rev. Peter Pang, pastor of Holy Cross. The above pastors belonged to the Mandarin group except for Rev. Peter Pang, who is a Cantonese speaking Person also able to speak Mandarin. Therefore when this Mandarin group claimed to separate from the Hong Kong Synod, it included a total of eight pastors and eleven churches.

There were only two Mandarin speakers from the above group who remained in the Hong Kong Synod, Rev. Mark Li, pastor of Redemption, and Rev. Philip Ho, pastor of Nathan road. The Mandarin-speaking group of the Hong Kong Synod was, and is to this day, a minority.

²¹The group which remained with the Hong Kong Synod on May 11, 1974, included:

1. Rev. Daniel Tsang, pastor of Concordia
2. Rev. Luke Mak, pastor of Sharon
3. Rev. Mark Li, pastor of Redemption
4. Rev. John Lai, pastor of St. Philip
5. Rev. David Chiang, pastor of True Word
6. Rev. Mark Lai, pastor of Grace

The crisis of 1974 was a conflict between two different homogeneous groups, namely, the Mandarin speaking group and the Cantonese speaking group. This supports the contention that people naturally like to gather with the same kind of people and that it is not easy for them to be together with a dissimilar group of people. The homogeneous unit principle explains, in part, the crisis of 1974.

2. The Indigenous Church Principle. This principle says that the church must be supported by the people of which it is formed. Financial self-support is one of the keys to indigenization. Most of the congregations of the Hong Kong Synod have not become financially self-supporting. There are only two churches who are able to become self-supporting, namely, True Word Church and Savior Church. The reason that these two churches can support themselves is that they don't have a full-time pastor; each has a part-time pastor.²² These two pastors have full-time jobs elsewhere and work part-time in the church. In the case of these pastors, should it be that the central church would not have adequate funds to pay their full salaries, it would be easy for them to support themselves. Most of the present subsidy from the LC-MS is largely for the salary of pastors, suggesting that most pastors are largely dependent upon outside funds for support. The pastors in the Hong Kong Synod are actually paid by the Missouri Synod, albeit indirectly.

7. Rev. Philip Ho, pastor of Nathan Road and Kowloon Deaf

8. Rev. Richard Law, pastor of St. Matthew.

This group involved eight pastors and nine churches. All the pastors in this group are Cantonese speaking except for Rev. Mark Li and Rev. Philip Ho.

²²Part time pastors: Rev. David Chiang, pastor of True Word and Rev. Daniel Cheung, pastor of Savior.

This financial situation is what McGavran calls the traditional method of mission.²³ Once the pastor is paid by someone else, not by the local church, the members of the church will have the impression that they don't have responsibility to support the pastor and the church because there will always be someone to take care of them and their pastor.

If members of the church cannot see their responsibility to work for the church and to support the church, the church may not grow. In regard to bringing about church growth, the strength of the whole membership is greater than one man's. Financial self-support is a vital sign of a growing church. The lack of financial self-support by the members, may be listed as one of the reasons why many of the Hong Kong Synod congregations have declined.

3. The Principle of Winning the Whole Family: It has been mentioned before that the Chinese strongly emphasize the unity of the family. Parents always have the authority to tell their children what to do, and their children generally have no problems obeying them. If a young person wants to become a member of the church, opposition from his parents will usually keep him from attaining his goal. Similarly, if one of the parents in the family becomes Christian, if he or she is not told to win his whole family, he or she will probably remain alone in the church, that is, without the company of other family members. It is also possible that he or she will be influenced by the other spouse to leave the church.

There is a potential for future loss of membership when only individual members of the family are won to Christ, especially if the individuals are children who become Christians without the permission of their parents.

²³McGavran, Understanding the Church Growth, p. 337.

This is the reason church growth principles emphasize winning the whole family as a unit and then winning their relatives, friends until the whole community of one place becomes Christian.

It is possible that the Hong Kong Synod has not emphasized winning units. This may be one of the reasons why the Hong Kong Synod has poor church attendance, poor communicant membership and poor Sunday School enrollment.

4. The Principle of the Laity. Most of the decision making in the congregations of Hong Kong is dominated by the pastor. This point can be supported by the 1974 crisis. When a congregation's pastor decided to separate from the Hong Kong Synod, most members of the congregation supported him. That is why the crisis of 1974 caused some of the congregations to separate from the Hong Kong Synod. During the crisis, when the laity became very concerned about supporting their pastor's action of walking out of the Hong Kong Synod, they became very active in the church. Although their motive for involvement may have been wrong, they did become very active in the church, and the church grew during the crisis. This supports the idea that the involvement of the laity is a vital sign of a growing church.

When the crisis was over and there was seemingly nothing more to fight for or to support, many lay people became quiet and inactive. The church declined again. This indicates that involving the laity must be more than involving them at times of crisis only. It also suggests that the motives for lay involvement are important.

The right understanding of the principle of the laity is that the church is the Body of Christ, and everyone in the church has a priestly duty to use their different spiritual gifts to serve God. No matter if you are

an evangelist, staff member, or typical member, everyone must work together toward the goal of making disciples.

5. The Effect of Worship and Groups. Why is it that the churches of the Hong Kong Synod have poor church attendance, low participation in what the church Growth Movement calls celebration? Wagner's comment that "some of the worships are like funeral worships" may apply here. According to this writer's observation, not all of the worship services are conducted in a lively and meaningful way. No one enjoys drab worship, but worship characterized by celebration does not come naturally. It must be planned for and worked for.²⁴

Most of the congregations in the Hong Kong Synod have fellowship groups or other small groups. Although there are such groups, it seems that they do not work effectively. It may be, as Wagner suggests, that these groups do not have enough sense of self-governing.²⁵ Recalling how we saw above that role of pastors was dominant in the church during the crisis of 1974, it may be that some pastors are afraid to give congregational groups too much opportunity for self-rule, thinking that they may lose their dominant role in the church. Some pastors may simply not know that groups are more healthy when they govern themselves.

6. The Principle of Planting Churches. As Ralph Winter explains, extension growth takes place by the establishing of one or more daughter churches within the same geographic area. This is called church planting.²⁶

²⁴Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 98.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 103-7.

²⁶The definition of church growth in Chapter II.

Since 1963, no new congregations have been planted by the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod.²⁷ There were seven mission stations in 1979.²⁸ Three of them were started in 1979, one in 1978, one in 1977, one in 1976 and one in 1974.²⁹ None were started between 1964 and 1973. This indicates that the Hong Kong Synod did not see the need of planting churches until the crisis happened in 1974. Initially, eleven churches separated from the Synod. The Synod then saw the need to plant churches to replace the lost ones.

It is important for a church to establish as many mission stations as possible and to focus on ways that these can become fully independent congregations. Planting churches is the duty of every growth-minded church.

²⁷These twenty congregations are: 1950: Savior and St. John; 1952: St. Peter and Grace; 1954: St. Matthew; 1955: St. Philip and Redemption; 1956: Resurrection; 1957: Sharon, Holy Cross, Zion, Concordia, True Word, St. Mark; 1958: St. Paul; 1960: Eternal Life; 1962: Holy Trinity; 1963: Nathan Road, Kowloon Deaf, and Hong Kong Deaf.

²⁸Statistical Yearbook 1979 indicates those seven mission stations are 1. Cheung Shan, 2. Choi Hung, 3. Sham Shui Po, 4. Morning Star, 5. Abiding Grace, 6. Pak Tin (Blind), 7. Wong Chuk Hang.

²⁹Ibid. The years that the mission stations started: 1. Cheung Shan 1979, 2. Choi Hung, 1976, 3. Sham Shui Po, 4. Morning Star, 1974, Abiding Grace, 1978; 6. Pak tin (Blind), 1979; 7. Wong Chuk Hang, 1977.



³⁰ Church attendance is the average of weekly church attendance each for all of the congregations.

In the preceding ten year graph, we find that the composite figure actually goes downward after 1974. Beginning in 1976, it goes upward within one year to a point higher than any previous years. After that, it drops rapidly to the lowest point on the graph. How can this be explained?

Once again reviewing the graph which gives the composite figures for all the churches for the last ten years, it is seen that most of the congregations with the exception of Sharon Church and St. Matthew Church, declined in 1977. These two were discussed before in regard to their unreliable Sunday School figures in 1977. Those unreliable statistics made it appear that the whole Hong Kong Synod was growing in 1977. Actually as we interpret this graph, the Hong Kong Synod declined from 1974 until 1979, the last year for which statistics are available.

There is a method which can be used to judge whether a church is growing or not. It is a method based upon the "biological growth rate." What is meant by this term? Biological growth refers to the children of existing members joining the church when they are old enough. This growth in membership is called biological growth. Church growth personnel have done research in typical congregations to show that there should be a biological growth rate of 25 percent of the total membership in one decade or 2 percent growth per year. If a church does not achieve this 25 percent rate in ten years, it is labeled a non-growing church.³¹

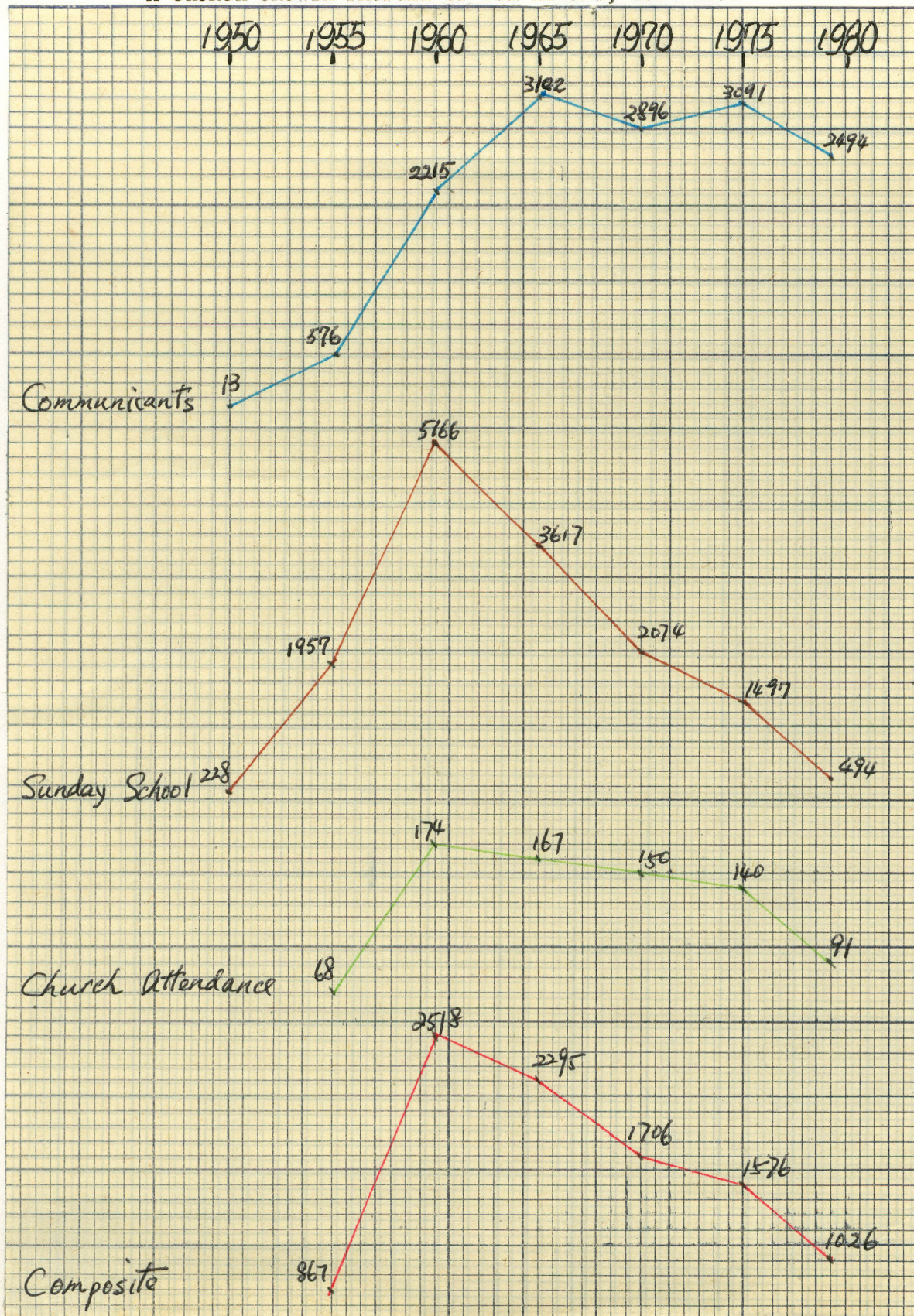
Looking at the graph and applying the principle, the biological growth rate of the LC-HKS should be 3,620 in 1979, that is, 25 percent more than the membership of 3,620 recorded in 1970. The communicant figure, which

³¹Gerber, God's Way to Keep a Church Going and Growing, pp. 54-56.

is also called the membership figure, it is only 2,494 at the end of 1979. This figure shows that the Hong Kong Synod is not achieving a normal biological growth rate of 25 percent per decade. Actually the figure decreases from 2,896 in 1970 to 2,494 in 1979. From this viewpoint, it is clear that the Hong Kong Synod is actually a declining church.

Finally in order to give a full picture of the Hong Kong Synod from its beginning until the present, the following is presented. It depicts thirty years of this church's work in Hong Kong.

A CHURCH GROWTH PROFILE OF THE LC-HKS, 1950-1979



As we look at the composite figures of the Hong Kong Synod for the past thirty years, it is clear that the church declined after 1960. Sunday School enrollment and average church attendance show rapid drops from 5,166 (Sunday School) and 174 (church attendance) in 1960; to 494 (Sunday School) and 91 (church attendance) in 1979.

The declines represent lack of growth. If the Hong Kong Synod is to grow in the future, some solutions to the problem must be advanced. This thesis concludes by offering some suggestions.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Buddhism and Confucianism are deeply rooted in the minds of most Chinese people and have become part of their lives, traditions, customs, thinking and religious beliefs. It is very difficult to remove Buddhist and Confucian thought and practice from people's lives and replace them with Jesus Christ, a totally new deity. It is difficult for the Chinese of Hong Kong, people who have a long history of their own religions to become Christians. This may be advanced as the main reason why appropriately 10 percent of Hong Kong's population is Christian in spite of the fact that Christianity has been in Hong Kong over a hundred years. It may be that in the future, after several generations, the religious cultural barriers hindering people from becoming Christians in Hong Kong will not be so hard to overcome as they are now.

The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod is just like a young man at thirty years of age. He is not trained enough, is not knowledgeable enough, and does not practice the Word of God enough. Especially relevant here is the fact that he does not view the making of disciples as his goal for

fulfilling the Great Commission of God. Many mistakes and conflicts have come upon him. Therefore he may become ill and even die.

Church growth theory can assist in determining the weaknesses of a church and in providing a suitable strategy so that the church will have a better chance to grow healthy and effective under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Hong Kong Synod began to decline from 1960 on. After the crisis of 1974, the situation worsened. The downward trend has continued up to the present. Some ways to stop the decline of the church in Hong Kong should be found.

On the basis of the information about the Hong Kong Synod set forth in Chapter III, a strategy for the Hong Kong Synod, utilizing church growth principles to begin solving the church's weaknesses, is now suggested.

Suggestions

A Strategy For The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod

The following strategy is a plan for the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod to grow. Just as a person who wants to build a house first sits down and plans how to build, we must make a plan for church growth. Planning is a common way of starting to work. If the church grows successfully after following the plan, it will not be the plan itself that gave power for the church to grow. Only God gives power to the church to grow through His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Below is a suggested strategy for church growth in The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod.

Four things must first be considered. They are: a) The matter of establishing measurable goals, b) Who is in charge? c) How to carry out the plan? and, d) Time of evaluation. Without measurable goals, any plan will be too abstract, and it will be impossible to know how to begin the plan or when its goals have been achieved. Without someone in charge of the plan, it cannot be effective. Without a method telling how to carry out the plan, people will not know how to do it. Without establishing a time of evaluation, there will be no means by which it can be determined if the plan has been effective. These four things must first be considered before anyone begins to make plans. The overall plan has the goal of making disciples. In order to make disciples, there must be evangelists. The first suggested action relates to this.

Equipping the Evangelists to Reach Out

According to Wagner's research, about 10 percent of the members of the church have the gift of evangelism. Among the 10 percent who have the gift of evangelism, only 0.5 percent are usually actively involved in the work of evangelism. 9.5 percent of those who have the gift of evangelism are not exercising it. It is this 9.5 percent which must be mobilized and actively involved in the making of disciples. Any plan intending to enlist 10 percent of the church's membership in evangelism will have to be designed in a realistically possible way.

Before planning for the training of evangelists in the church, it should be realized that the present pastors are the ones who should initiate this training. Pastors are the spiritual leaders in the church. It is their duty to begin training the laity to become evangelists. Their duty is not

only preaching, visiting or caring, but also teaching and equipping the believers. It is their task to plan to train evangelists. But before a pastor can begin to train the laity, he may have to be trained first. Since church growth theory is quite new to Hong Kong, most of the pastors in The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod do not know much about its principles and methods. A plan for training pastors to reach out is needed. The training of these key people should incorporate church growth principles and methods.

A Plan For Training Pastors to Reach Out

Measurable Goal

According to the 1979 statistical report there were eighteen pastors of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod. The goal is to train these eighteen pastors to have knowledge and skill to reach out within a given calendar year.

Who Is In Charge?

The Executive Committee of the Synod should be in charge of this plan.

How To Do It?

A. The committee should invite a capable instructor from the Seminary to set up a four day workshop for training the eighteen pastors.

B. This four day workshop will be full-time training. This means that it will be for at least eight hours a day.

C. The reason for setting only four full-time days for training pastors is that it is assumed that pastors already have a good foundation in the Word of God. They need to know how to proclaim the Gospel to non-Christians in an effective way. Four full-time days of training should be enough.

D. The resources for the training program will be: Dialog Evangelism written by W. Leroy Biesenthal; Evangelism Explosion written by D. James Kennedy, and Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow, written by C. Peter Wagner.

E. The committee should call a meeting to make the necessary decisions preparatory to inviting the eighteen pastors to be trained.

F. The committee should make personal contact with each of the pastors in order to arrange the most suitable dates for the training.

G. The committee should encourage all the pastors to attend the training workshop.

H. After the workshop is finished, the instructor should submit an evaluative report of the workshop.

A Plan for Training the Laity to Reach Out in Each Congregation

Measurable Goal

After the pastors have been trained, they will return to their congregations to start a 16 week training workshop to train their laity. The goal is based on the principle of one person training two persons at a time.

Who Is In Charge?

The pastor is in charge.

How To Do It?

A. This is a 16 week, one night per week, training workshop. An annual cycle of two workshops may be offered, one beginning in February, and one beginning in August.

B. The pastor should carefully choose two laymen who have been actively involved in evangelism and train them in the first cycle.

C. The pastor should make personal contact with the laymen in order to arrange the time for training.

D. The materials for training will be the same as those which are used for training the pastors.

E. Each workshop cycle will contain study, action, reflection, and evaluation.

(i) Study: The trainee must gain a basic knowledge of the Word of God, know how to proclaim the Gospel to non-Christians, and know how to develop a conversation to the point of delivering the message to those people.

(ii) Action: Each week of the sixteen requires some action, by the trainees. Only knowing how to do something is not enough. One must put it into practice. Each three-person team must go out to make calls every week. These calls are to be made only on non-Christians.

(iii) Reflection: After the visiting, each team meets to share their experiences, their difficulties, and to find solutions to the problems they encountered.

(iv) Evaluation: At the end of the workshop, there will be a time for evaluation in terms of how many disciples have been gained and in regard to the process that was used so that adjustments can be made in the future. For example, if it was found that there were too few people to be trained, the multiplication process can be slowed down by reducing the number of teams. If it was found that

16 weeks for one cycle was not enough, the cycle can be lengthened in order to maintain the quality of training. The time could be lengthened to 18 weeks or more or meetings could be held on two nights a week. All these should be considered to maximize effectiveness.

F. After the first 16 week training, there will be three trained evangelists, including the pastor. These three evangelists will each train two other laymen in the second 16 week cycle. At the end of the second cycle, there will be nine evangelists. After two years of training, there will be eighty-one evangelists. Actually, there might not be so many evangelists in the church, but attempts should be made to train as many as possible.

G. There will be an evaluation at the end of each cycle.

Strengthen the Teaching Function in Congregations

One of the weak points of The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod is in the area of teaching the Word of God to the people. The church does not pay close enough attention to the ongoing task of teaching the Word of God to those who have been baptized. After being baptized, teaching in many instances is stopped. That is why about 50 percent of those listed as baptized in 1979 had not been confirmed.

Just as babies must be fed milk when they are born and fed bread or other solid food when they grow up, so God's Word will keep Christians growing in the Body of Christ.

In order to carry out the task of teaching in each congregation, there must be a plan.

In addition to the pastor being able to teach, there must also be capable teachers to teach the Sunday School. One man's effort cannot accomplish everything. A plan for training laymen to be teachers is needed.

A Plan For Training Laymen to Teach
Sunday School Class

Measurable Goal

One adult and one youth will be trained one calendar year.

Who Is In Charge?

The pastor should be in charge.

How To Do It?

A. The pastor should carefully choose one adult and one youth who are already teachers of Sunday School classes and train them to have better skill in teaching their classes. Often when the Sunday School class has poor attendance, it is because the teachers cannot teach well.

B. The pastor should personally contact them and make arrangements for the schedule.

C. The pastor should prepare himself by reading some books about how to teach Sunday School. He should buy some good Sunday School materials.

D. The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod should provide and recommend good Sunday School materials to the church.

E. The adult and the youth should be trained separately. The adult will be trained for teaching the adult class, and the youth will be trained for teaching the youth class. The material for these classes is different.

F. One person's training should begin in February, the other should begin in August.

G. At the end of the year, the pastor should evaluate the past efforts and decide how many teachers may be trained for next year and whether they should be adults or youth.

A Plan for Teaching Those Who have been Baptized

Measurable Goal

The goal is a 10 percent increase of those who have been baptized and have not previously attended Sunday School to enroll in the Sunday School class in a given calendar year.

Who Is in Charge?

The Education Committee of each congregation is in charge of this plan.

How To Do It?

A. The committee should invite all of those who have been baptized and have not attended the Sunday School to enroll in a class.

B. The committee should also establish personal contact with such people and strive to enroll at least 10 percent of them in the class during the year. If the number of new enrollees is more than 10 percent, classes for the additional ones can be arranged in the following year.

C. The pastor should plan a month of sermons centering on how important it is for Christians to keep learning the Word of God.

D. The committee should make an announcement to all members to urge them to enroll in Sunday School.

E. Every Sunday School class should be limited to 15-20 people. This will give more opportunities to everyone in the group to enter into discussions or to ask questions.

F. Every Sunday School class should give a report to the congregation's education committee each month so that the committee can report to the church the number of people enrolled in the Sunday School. A period of at least three months for evaluation is needed. After every three months, the education committee will call a meeting to evaluate the efforts made to strengthen the teaching function of the Word of God. At the end of the year, the goal of this plan ought to be achieved.

Planning for Self Support

A basic principle of the indigenous church is that the church must be supported by its own people. This is the ultimate goal for any mission field. In the beginning stages of any mission field, support is not possible without financial help from other sources. As it grows, every mission field should eventually become a self-supporting church.

It is difficult for a church which has been almost entirely dependent upon the financial subsidy of others for thirty years to be highly motivated toward financial self-support. It is a matter of responsibility. If the church cannot see its responsibility, the church can hardly grow.

The crucial point is not whether or not The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod should stop granting financial subsidy. More important is that the members of the Hong Kong Synod are educated to the point of knowing their responsibility for supporting their own church. If The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod stopped providing subsidy while the members of the Hong Kong Synod did not know their responsibility for supporting their own church, they

would seek financial help from other denominations. The following plan for the church in Hong Kong to become self-supporting church is therefore suggested.

A Plan for The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod
to Become financially Self-supporting

Measurable Goal

All congregations are to be financially self-supporting within five years.

Who Is In Charge?

The executive committee of the Synod will be in charge of this plan.

How To Do It?

There are two main principles related to financial self-support: Finding ways to cut expenses and finding ways to increase the income. A congregation must take action in both directions and must do both at the same time.

A. Cutting expenses. There are ways for the church to cut expenses. The Executive Committee should consider them according to each individual situation and choose the right methods for cutting expenses. Two major suggestions are here offered.

(i) Try to determine what kinds of expense are wasteful and eliminate them.

(ii) Almost 50 percent of all church-wide expense in each month is for the salary of pastors. If the weekly church attendance of a congregation is under 100 people, it is suggested that the pastor

consider finding another job to supplement his income while still working as a part-time pastor until the time when the congregation is able to support the pastor's full salary.

B. Increasing the income.

(i) The Stewardship Committee of the congregation should plan ways to raise money for becoming self-supporting. Several things can be done.

(a) Study the biblical teaching of stewardship by teaching it in the Sunday School classes, Bible Classes and preaching it in the church so that all members will know that it is God's will for them to support the church.

(b) Teach the members that the church is the Body of Christ. When the congregation recognizes that all individuals in the church are part of the Body of Christ and that without their work and support the church cannot grow effectively, they will exercise the proper stewardship of time, treasure and talents and will do whatever they can to support the church.

The pastor should preach on stewardship at least twice a year, and Sunday School teachers should also teach these biblical concepts.

(c) Raise the level of the offerings of the members by urging them to become tithers, giving 10 percent of their income.

(d) Hold some activities such as dramas, music concerts and sales of things donated. This kind of activity may, in a small way, raise money for self-support. The chief benefit, however, is fellowship.

(e) Increase the membership. The Executive Committee of the congregation should be in charge of this plan. Besides the evangelistic training which was discussed as the first point, the committee should encourage all members to bring their family members, relatives and friends to the church. The goal is to increase 10 percent in the first year and to evaluate the result in order to make adjustments for the goal of the following year.

In order to give natural occasions for the members to invite their family members, relatives and friends to come to church, the committee could hold activities such as picnics, movie nights, and special dinners. These activities attract people easily and naturally. Such activities may be held once every three months. When the membership increases, the amount of offerings will increase

Congregations which follow this plan and select the right methods to implement the plans, will have a better chance to become self-supporting.

Establishing A New Liturgy Appropriate to Chinese Culture

The question of whether the traditional western liturgy has lost its function in worship is an on-going debate in Hong Kong. There are those who feel that the liturgy translated from English from The Lutheran Hymnal, pages 5 and 15, is no longer useful. The musical setting sounds strange to Chinese people because most of the traditional liturgical music was written for another culture. This kind of music is very different from Chinese music and is not in harmony with their daily lives. Fortunately, the hymns that

are used are not so much different from Chinese music. In general, however, Chinese music and Chinese liturgical forms should be developed for worship. This is in keeping with the principles of the homogeneous unit and the indigenous church.

Most Protestant churches in Hong Kong do not use western traditional liturgies in worship. Their service orders are very simple and without chanting. The 16th century western chants sound strange to the Chinese ear. If a liturgical form cannot provide for celebration in worship, no matter if it is traditional or non-traditional, it should be replaced by one which fits the people's culture and does not turn people away from the church. Higher church attendance will result from more appealing services and music. For Hong Kong, it must be a liturgy which relates to the Chinese.

Suggested Congregational Orders of Worship

A liturgy based on Chinese Culture and music may follow this order:

- (1) The order of the morning service (without communion)
 - (A) Hymn
 - (B) Invocation
 - (C) Confession of Sins
 - (D) Absolution
 - (E) Prayer
 - (F) Hymn
 - (G) Epistle reading
 - (H) Apostles' Creed
 - (I) Gospel Reading
 - (J) Hymn
 - (K) Sermon

- (L) Offering
- (M) Announcement
- (N) Prayer
- (O) Benediction
- (P) Hymn

(2) The order of the Holy Communion

- (A) Hymn
- (B) Invocation
- (C) Confession of Sins
- (D) Absolution
- (E) Prayer
- (F) Hymn
- (G) Epistle Reading
- (H) Nicene Creed
- (I) Gospel Reading
- (J) Hymn
- (K) Sermon
- (L) Offering
- (M) Announcement
- (N) Words of Institution (Lord's Supper)
- (O) Distribution
- (P) Prayer
- (Q) Benediction
- (R) Hymn

Establishing Small Groups

Small groups, as Larry Richards defines them, are "eight or twelve believers gathered to minister to each other, to grow in their sensed love and unity, and to encourage one another to full commitment to Christ."¹

Such groups can meet people's individual needs more effectively than large groups. Most growing churches have discovered the power of small groups and have adopted the small group method as one of their strategies for multiplying and nurturing believers.

Every congregation should plan for the development of small groups and establish such groups as part of their strategy for church growth. Here is a plan for establishing small groups in the congregation.

Measureable Goal

Congregations which do not have small Bible study groups will begin them during the specified year.

Who Is In Charge?

If there is to be one small group initially, the pastor will be in charge. If there are to be more than two or three small groups, the Education Committee should assist the pastor.

How To Do It?

A. The pastor must first personally contact those who are actively serving the church to encourage their anticipation in the small group.

B. Small group Bible study will be held on one night a week at a suitable time for the group.

¹C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow (Glendale: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1976), p. 108.

C. The content of the Bible class will be prayers, reading, sharing, and assignments for work to do at home.

(i) Opening Prayer. For the first five weeks, the pastor should lead the opening and closing prayers. Afterwards, the pastor should arrange for the participants to lead the prayers. The pastor should inform people at least one week in advance so that they may prepare for the prayer. By the end of a year, the group members will probably be experienced enough in leading in prayer that the pastor can ask someone to pray without previous preparation or arrangement.

(ii) Reading. The purpose of the Bible class is to learn the Word of God. It must therefore involve Bible readings. One person may read or the group may read together. Members should be encouraged to read loudly, to speak clearly, and to read with proper emphasis because this is good training for them to read the Bible in worship services or public devotions.

(iii) Sharing. Sharing is a kind of communication. This point of the communication is to tell fellow Christians what the Bible message means in daily experiences. Knowledge of the Bible is not enough; the Bible message must be related to daily life. People need to know that Jesus is not far away from them, but that he is always with them in their daily lives. Once they start to share the message with one another, they will learn from one another and their faith will become stronger. If someone in the group does not understand something in the Bible, it will be easy to discuss the matter and to seek answers from the pastor or from someone else in the group. Small groups should be limited to between eight and twelve people. Small

size gives more opportunities to everyone to share their problems, views, happiness and sadness.

(iv) Home Assignments. Home work is planned in order to encourage the learners to study the Bible in their homes daily. Not many Christians study the Bible privately at home. They should be trained to read the Bible daily and to memorize some Bible passages.

D. At the end of the first year, the pastor should choose one or two people from the class to be teachers of the Bible class in the following year. The Bible class serves not only as a place for people to learn but also as a place for them to be trained to become teachers.

Discipling the Whole Family As a Unit

Church growth emphasizes winning the whole family to believe in Christ because there is a higher potential future loss when only individual members of the family are won. This applies especially to children who become Christians without the permission of their parents. The point is not that we should not try to win individuals. If the entire family does not believe, it is still better to win one person than not to win any. Yet it is most desirable that a whole family believes in Jesus Christ.

Since there is a great accent on the authority of the parents in most Chinese families, it is better to first win the parents. It is easier for the children to follow their parents than for the parents to follow their children. Here again, if the parents don't believe, it is better to win one of their children than not to win anyone.

In support of the intention to win entire families, good records should be kept on each member of the congregation and his or her family

members. Such records will make it easy to know whose whole family has been won and whose family has not been won completely.

Whenever a new member joins the church, the congregation should be conscious of the goal of winning his or her whole family, the relatives, and the friends, until the whole community in one place becomes Christian.

Planting Churches

Planting churches is one of the vital signs which indicate that the church is growing. This does not happen naturally. It must be planned for and worked for. Planting churches is every congregations's contribution toward the growth of the church. They can plant churches within their own community or in foreign countries. As soon as a daughter church has been fully established, that daughter church is no longer to be called a daughter church. It is a church which has the same duty to plant other churches so that the Gospel reaches to every corner of the world.

Since most of the churches in Hong Kong are not self-supporting churches, they cannot support mission stations by their own strength. In this case, the Hong Kong Synod should be in charge of the present task of planting churches. Although the Hong Kong Synod had seven mission stations in 1979, more could be established. The following is a plan for the Hong Kong Synod to plant more churches.

A Plan for The Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod to Plant Churches

Measurable Goal

Five house churches will be established every year.

Who Is In Charge?

The Evangelism Committee of the Hong Kong Synod is in charge.

How to Do It?

A. The Evangelism Committee should encourage all churches to establish house churches, with the goal of five house churches to be established each year.

B. The term "house church" is used to describe a few families which live in the same area who meet together for Bible class or worship in one of their homes with the hope that several house churches will eventually merge and begin a new congregation.

C. There are Advantages to the house church approach.

(i) Financial resources are not needed to establish a house church because the meeting place is the home of a member and all the basic necessities are there. There is no need to pay rent or to buy furniture.

(ii) It is more natural for non-Christians to join a house church than a church meeting in a church building because he or she will feel more at home.

(iii) Because the number of people in a house church is small, there are more opportunities for interpersonal communication. Also it is easier for people to see their responsibility to support the house church.

D. The pastor of the church should take the responsibility of supervising the sharing of the Word of God with the members of the house church.

E. The Evangelism Committee of the Synod should recommend the suitable places to start new churches and encourage the merging of house churches into congregations.

F. The Evangelism Committee should evaluate the results each year in order to make adjustments for the next year.

Teaching Church Growth Theory To The Church

Since church growth theory is a new subject in Hong Kong and since it can provide a better chance for the church to grow, the church should be taught church growth principles. The church will then be able to recognize its weaknesses and know how to plan for its growth.

Since the pastor and leaders of congregations play an important role in the matter of church growth, two plans are suggested, one for pastors and one for lay leaders.

A Plan For Teaching Church Growth Theory to Pastors

Measurable Goal

All eighteen pastors of the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod should be trained in the first year.

Who Is In Charge?

The Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Synod should be in charge of this plan.

How to do it?

A. The Executive Committee should invite a qualified person to plan and to teach a four day conference on church growth theory to train all eighteen pastors.

B. The Executive Committee should officially invite all pastors to come for training.

C. The material for this training course will be Let The Church Grow published by the Institute for American Church Growth. The material is intended to be used in a 12-week workshop. For the purposes here, the material may be adapted to a four day conference.

D. After the pastors have been trained, they should return to their congregations to train their laity.

A Plan for Teaching Church Growth Theory
to Congregational Lay Leaders

Measurable Goal

The majority of lay leaders in each congregation will be trained during one year.

Who Is In Charge?

The pastor is in charge.

How to do it?

A. The pastor who has been trained in church growth theory will use the material with which he was trained, Let The Church Grow, in a 12-week workshop for training the leaders of his church.

B. This workshop may be conducted on one night a week or during the Sunday morning Bible class.

C. The pastor will personally contact leaders who are actively serving the church and arrange for a suitable time for the training.

D. At the end of the workshop, the pastor should evaluate the results and make a plan for the following year.

Training more Chinese to Teach in the Seminary

In order to bring in a large harvest, there must be more laborers working in the field. The principle of homogeneous units and of the indigenous church suggest that more Chinese should be trained to become teachers in the seminary. This is preferable to having instructors from other countries. Foreign instructors must overcome significant language barriers. Not all of them succeed, and the result is that the quality of their teaching is low. Seminary students will learn more easily under national teachers. More nationals may be attracted to study to become professional church workers if mastery of a foreign language, usually English, is not required in order to understand the instructor.

The following is a plan for training more Chinese people to teach in the seminary.

Measurable Goal

Send one Chinese pastor overseas each year for training to be an instructor in the Concordia Seminary.

Who Is In Charge?

The Executive Committee should be in charge of this plan.

How To Do It?

A. The Executive Committee will contact the seminary faculty to determine in which subject areas future instructors will be needed. The most appropriate individuals can then be selected for training.

B. Only qualified pastors are to be sent for advanced training. The Executive Committee needs the assistance of the faculty of the seminary in suggesting which individuals are the most qualified to go.

C. After the Executive Committee receives recommendations from the faculty of the seminary, it should personally contact those recommended to determine whether they are willing to be trained.

D. There should be communication with the Board for Mission, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to see whether that board can provide financial support for this training plan.

E. Those who are sent for training should agree with the Synod that after they have received training, they will teach in Concordia Seminary full-time for at least ten years.

F. At the end of each year, the Executive Committee should report the results of the plan to the general conference of the Hong Kong Synod.

Planning for a Mission in China

Since mainland China has become more and more open to Christianity in recent years, Hong Kong has become an important place for possibly sending missionaries there. The homogeneous unit principle indicates that Chinese will be able to reach Chinese people better than non-Chinese. This is not meant to suggest that other countries should not send their missionaries to China. All efforts to save people's souls are needed, no matter if they are the efforts of Chinese or of non-Chinese missionaries. If a choice must be made as to which people will be trained and supported as missionaries to China, the Chinese are preferred. Planning for mission outreach in China is needed and the ultimate goal is the winning of the whole community of China.

There are difficulties involved in planning for a mission in China. For example: (1) We don't know whether there will be an opportunity to have a mission in China. (2) It is not known when there might be such an opportunity.

Although there are difficulties, preparation may begin so that future opportunities may be seized. The following is a suggested plan for preparing to establish work in China.

Measurable goal

Establish a China Mission Association in 1981.

Who Is In Charge?

The Evangelism Committee of the Hong Kong Synod should encourage the formation of the China Mission Association.

How To Do It?

A. The Evangelism Committee will send letters and personally contact all pastors and leaders to invite them to attend a seminar discussing the importance of preparing for establishment of a mission in China.

B. At the seminar, the Evangelism Committee will invite each person to participate in organizing the China Mission Association.

C. After collecting these forms, the evangelism committee will know how many people are going to join the China Mission Association. The ones interested in joining will then meet to elect the officers of the association.

D. The purposes of this association are:

(i) To encourage the study of the Mandarin dialect. Mandarin is the dialect of China. Hong Kong Chinese speak mainly Cantonese.

(ii) To study the simplified system of writing the Chinese language which is used in The People's Republic of China.

(iii) To study the geography of China, the customs of the people and the differences between Christianity and Communism so that people will have a background for proclaiming the Gospel in the most acceptable way.

(iv) To adopt strategies for the day when it may be possible to go into The People's Republic of China to start the mission and to recruit potential missionaries for training at the seminary.

(v) To develop devotional material for the house churches in China.

E. This association should meet six times per year and should report to the Evangelism Committee at the end of each year.

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