

**A MODEL FOR CHURCH PLANTING**  
**IN**  
**THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE**

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## ABSTRACT

### A MODEL FOR CHURCH PLANTING IN THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE OF CANADA

This thesis arises out of fourteen years of pastoral experience as a church planter. I entered into the Doctor of Ministry program with a desire to learn the reasons for the failings I observed in my own churches and the similar struggles I was hearing about from other church planters. There are those who argue that growth is not a measure of church health. This is easy to say when your church has 300 members, multiple ministries and is managing its' budget. But when you have 50 members and must decide between paying your pastors' salary and the rent on your facility, growth is critical. Thus this thesis is about growth in the context of planting new churches and the dynamics that will sustain growth in the long term.

My journey to the proposal for this thesis began with the reading of a contemporary church planters' book entitled *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren. Warren had succeeded dramatically as a church planter. However one contemporary success story was not compelling enough for me since so many have come and gone over the years as the latest fad. It was during the preparation of a paper on John Wesley that I began to note remarkable similarities between Wesley and Warren in both philosophy and methodology. A model began to take shape in my mind. I felt that if this model was a correct or possibly even the correct one that it would be confirmed by studying the book of Acts, the greatest church planting manual in the history of the Church. Thus this thesis begins with a historical study of the book of Acts with a view to discovering biblical church planting principles. A similar study follows on Wesley in chapter three and then Warren in chapter four. Our goal was to discover the presence of a model for church planting that is consistently applied in three distinct historical and cultural contexts.

With this model in mind we turned to the Canadian sociological climate in chapter five with a view to discovering if Canada was a receptive church planting context. We follow in chapter six with an analysis of the usefulness of the best available church planting manuals.

Chapter seven is a statistical analysis of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada from 1981 to 1995. Statistics on giving, missions, membership, professions of faith, Sunday School attendance, and mid-week ministries were gathered in order to calculate national averages and establish a baseline for comparison. The numbers for all churches that were planted during that time were compared with this baseline and then our model was used to discover whether growth patterns correlated.

Chapter eight presents the results of a survey given to C&MA pastors who had planted churches from 1981 to 1995. Our church planting model is incorporated into the survey with a view to discovering their attitudes towards it and if what they did as church planters reflects their commitment to it.

By combining the insights from chapters two through eight we are able to draw conclusions that sustain our proposal. I trust that those who read this will profit as much as I have and will surpass me as church planters.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

#### *The Statement of The Problem*

This research project is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of church planting strategies within the context of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and to discover and recommend an appropriate church planting model to Alliance pastors.

*The first subproblem.* The first subproblem is to identify a successful church planting model that is based on biblical principles, historical precedent, and is consistent with contemporary realities.

*The second subproblem.* The second subproblem is to gather and analyze data on church planting from the Alliance National office archives and to develop a research tool that can be used to gather appropriate data from pastors and missionaries who have church planting experience in Canada with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

*The third subproblem.* The third subproblem is to recommend a model for church planting in the C & MA in Canada that incorporates a biblical-historical philosophy and the conclusions that arise from the research data.

#### *The Delimitations*

The research will focus initially on a study of church planting principles and practices in the New Testament with particular reference to the Acts of the Apostles. A study of the history of the founding of the Methodist church as a successful historical model will ensue. The Methodist church has been chosen because of the founders' determination not to found a church. Wesley was a committed member of the Church of England until the day he died. Despite his efforts to prevent the formation of a new church the Wesleyan church came into



being. An examination of Methodist practises should thus yield useful church planting insights. This will be followed by an examination of a successful contemporary church planting model - the Saddleback church, founded and pastored by Dr. Rick Warren. Warren began the Saddleback church as a church planting exercise with a view to testing his insights and theories. He succeeded dramatically and now pastors a church with an average attendance of ten thousand. The principles he developed in a contemporary context are important for the purpose of comparison with those we will derive from our historical models.

An analysis of sociological factors in the Canadian church context will be undertaken with a view to understanding attitudes toward evangelism among church leaders and receptivity to evangelism-focused church planting strategies.

Statistical data gathered by the Christian and Missionary Alliance National office will be analyzed with a view to discovering the failure and growth rates of Alliance churches planted since 1980.

Research will proceed to the gathering of data from pastors and missionaries with church planting experience in Canada in the period from 1980 to 1995 using a survey tool that identifies problems, discovers commonly used principles that lead to success and recommends strategic approaches to church planting. This period is significant because 1980 was the year the Canadian Alliance gained autonomy from the U.S. Alliance and began to gather its own statistics and set its own goals. Of particular interest to our study will be the goal the Canadian Alliance set in 1980 to double the number of churches by 1990.

Reference will be made to church planting manuals and contemporary Canadian sociological studies in order to evaluate the applicability of proposed church planting models

to the Canadian context.

Research will then attempt to incorporate principles derived from biblical, historical, and contemporary models and the research data into a church planting model for recommended use in the C & MA in Canada.

### *The Definition of Terms*

*Church planting.* For purposes of this research, church planting will be defined by the processes and practices employed by the C & MA in Canada. In the Alliance a 'church plant' is a new church placed where no Alliance church has been before. Typically the planting process is initiated by denominational leadership who determine if timing, conditions, and spiritual factors are appropriate for action to be undertaken. A pastor will then be appointed and ongoing support provided until the new plant becomes self-sufficient. In the C & MA the planting of churches is not restricted to just one model. Some of the models used historically along with other models for possible consideration within our definition include:

1. *District Initiated* - The C & MA in Canada is regionally divided into six districts, each charged with the supervision of churches in the region. The administrative leadership of each district has, among its many tasks, the responsibility for planting churches. According to this model a church plant is initiated and directed by the leadership of the District office.

2. *Mother-Daughter* - This model generally involves the cooperation and supervisory support of the District office leadership but normally occurs on the initiative of a large church with the desire to start a new church with a core group of its own members and designated leadership. The "mother" church traditionally supports the "daughter" church with material, financial and advisory support until a reasonable level of self-sufficiency is achieved.

**3. *Joint Project*** - This is a variation of the Mother-Daughter model with the variation being that the "mother" consists of the combined involvement of several churches.

**4. *Outreach Event*** - In this model a core group which is the basis for forming a church is created through some special project of evangelism.

**5. *Tentmaking*** - In this model a church planter is placed in a target area on the initiative of the District office leadership. The planter will be committed to working twenty or more hours per week with the goal of planting an Alliance church while engaged in secular employment.

**6. *Adoption*** - In this model an independent fellowship or church group that is already in existence desires a C & MA identity and requests association. The District office leadership responds by initiating a process that may culminate in constitutional membership in the C & MA.<sup>1</sup>

***Christian and Missionary Alliance*** - This study will focus on the C&MA in Canada which became autonomous from its US parent in 1980. As a national church in Canada the Alliance considers itself to be a part of the larger evangelical community. Evangelicals hold to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice and who look to the message of salvation in Christ alone as the centerpiece of their proclamation to the world. The Alliance began in 1879 with two distinctive emphases: worldwide missions and living life in the fulness of Christ. This is reflected in the Mission Statement for the Alliance in Canada:

***The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada is committed to world evangelization, stressing the fulness of Christ in personal experience, building the***

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<sup>1</sup> Bucek, Gordon. **Church Planting Models**(Central Canadian District, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Burlington, 1990).

*Church and preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth.<sup>2</sup>*

Today more than 86,000 Canadians worship in nearly 400 Alliance churches. Approximately one third of these churches serve new Canadians, Francophone and First Nations people. From 1980 to 1995 the Canadian Alliance grew 130% mainly through an aggressive program of church planting. This period and the church planting practices of the C&MA will be a significant part of the focus of this thesis.

*Evangelism* - Throughout the text the use of the term evangelism will refer to the proclamation of the gospel message calling for repentance and faith in Christ as the only source of pardon and eternal life. Any activity that proclaims Christ that directly or indirectly might lead to conversion can be deemed to be evangelistic under the definition used in this text. This would include activities ranging from direct gospel proclamation to church food banks. This definition sees the only limitation as imagination rooted in a desire to present Christ.

*The Great Commission* - This refers specifically to Matthew 28: 19-20 but has reference to Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8. The writer understands this text to be the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples to bring the gospel message to the world through direct proclamation consistent with His own example during His roughly three years of public ministry. The term "make disciples" has been understood by some in modern times to refer only or mainly to the process of incorporation of new converts into the church. This is a distinction that Jesus and the disciples would not have recognized that is based on a division between conversion and discipleship that is descriptive of the twentieth century mind-set.

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<sup>2</sup>Christian and Missionary Alliance. Church Membership Resource(Toronto: Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1996) 50.

The term “make disciples” describes an integrated process that begins with evangelism and continues with incorporation into church life and discipleship training. Jesus was, in effect, saying to the disciples, ‘I want more like you.’ Fundamental to this is our understanding that, having been taught in the rabbinic model, the disciples modelled themselves on their Master, Jesus who said, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God...’(Luke 4:43). Thus all disciples were to be cast in the same mould. Inherent in this form of discipleship was evangelism, the proclamation of the gospel even as it was to Jesus. Also inherent was training. The original disciples were trained by Jesus. His command to make more disciples clearly meant that they must train their converts, ‘teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’ In order for this to happen there must be an organization through which teaching can functionally happen. Thus communities arose that, at first, were no more than house gatherings of believers but which ultimately became organized churches. Thus we see in the term, “make disciples” the seeds of a three part integrated model that includes evangelism, community and discipleship training. Whenever we refer to the Great Commission it will be with this model as the basis for understanding the context.

*Church* - Church is defined as any gathering of believers for the purpose of evangelism, worship and edification. However, we will encounter those in this study who hold to different understandings of church. The Apostles in Acts had no clear apprehension of church and had no clear intention of beginning one. They depended on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and reacted to the practical necessities of daily events in creating the recognizable structures of church life. The events of Acts 6 which led to the creation of the order of deacons is an example of this reactive style of ministry. Nevertheless we will refer to the early Acts fellow-

ship as a church particularly with reference to church planting methodology. We acknowledge that the Apostolic leadership would not have understood this designation even as we use it to describe what they were doing. Similarly, John Wesley, would have agreed with the above definition of church but he believed the Anglican church to fulfil his understanding of the true church. Indeed he described it as the best of all the churches in the world. Nevertheless his class meetings fulfilled the definition of church gatherings in every way. But Wesley took great pains to avoid calling his Methodist organization a church. We suspect he knew the truth but did not wish to acknowledge it. We do affirm that he did not want to form a church organization that would supplant or become an alternative to the Anglican church. It is this intention that will form the basis of our use of the term church in the Wesleyan context.

*House or Cell Group* - This term will be used very loosely throughout the text. It means something different to almost everyone who reads it. It refers to gatherings in homes where believers meet for worship, fellowship and teaching or for one or more of the preceding. The disciples taught from house to house in Acts. Large numbers must have made house gatherings a necessity in Acts. Studies have shown that small groups are a more efficient way to teach and promote fellowship. Thus they have become a popular means of discipleship in many modern churches. We will embrace a broad definition as we use this term in the text. This is consistent with the church planting model we will be studying which includes evangelism, community building and lay training. House groups can be used to fulfil one or all of these objectives. Often a cell group is begun with a training objective in mind but a side benefit is community building and occasionally evangelistic outreach occurs. Most, if not all, church cell groups will accomplish at least one of these purposes. Those that do fall within our

definition whenever we use this term.

### *Assumptions*

*The first assumption.* The first assumption is that an examination of the proposed Biblical, historical and contemporary models will uncover common and consistent principles of ministry that will assist in developing a coherent model for church planting.

*The second assumption.* The second assumption is that data gathered from the Alliance National archives and from C & MA pastors and missionaries with church planting experience in Canada will identify significant problems in both process and outcome in the church planting endeavour from 1980-1996.

*The third assumption.* The third assumption is that research data derived from the experience of the survey group will produce conclusions that are consistent with or supplementary to the model derived from the biblical, historical and contemporary research.

*The fourth assumption.* The fourth assumption is that research into current literature on church planting outside of the Alliance constituency will assist in the research process and in the formation of a church planting model applicable to the Alliance context in Canada.

### **The Theory of Ministry**

Goals set by the General Assembly of the C & MA in 1980 were designed to double the constituency of the denomination within 10 years. In 1990, with this objective achieved, the Assembly committed itself to doubling once again by the year 2000. An aggressive program of church planting is partially responsible for this success. Each District set church planting goals consistent with this objective. The Eastern and Central Canadian District, which consisted of 110 churches at that time, committed to planting 40 churches in the ten year per-

iod from 1990 to 2000. As of 1996 30 churches were planted.

Despite the apparent success there are some troubling trends associated with new Alliance adherents and church plants that raise questions about church growth strategies employed by the Alliance leadership. A 1988 statistical analysis of membership in the C & MA compared with other denominations in Canada showed that only 36% of Sunday morning service attenders in Alliance churches have become members. This compares with figures of 91% in Pentecostal churches and 73% in churches of the Canadian Baptist Federation in Canada.

**Figure 1**

**COMPARISON OF SEVERAL DENOMINATIONS IN CANADA: PERCENTAGE OF AVERAGE SUNDAY MORNING ATTENDANCE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH**

(1988 STATISTICS)<sup>3</sup>

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Percentage of Attenders Who Are Members</b>
<b>Christian &amp; Missionary Alliance</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Canadian Baptist Federation</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Canadian Convention of Southern Bap.</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Mennonite Brethren</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada</b>	<b>91</b>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. introduction.



An examination of statistical data gathered and analysed for the purposes of this thesis on 170 C&MA churches planted from 1980 to 1995 shows low rates of conversion growth, stalled growth curves and failure to become economically self-sufficient. A significant number of the churches remain in existence but many appear to have plateaued growth curves. Unfortunately these churches appear to reflect a success story in church planting when the numbers of churches are tallied. The totals do not necessarily reflect the reality. Our desire is to present a clearer picture and to suggest a church planting model that may qualitatively improve Alliance results.

This study proposes to identify a biblical and historic standard for planting churches to be applied in the context of the C & MA in Canada with a view to producing church growth that is, by this standard, healthy and viable. Through examination of the proposed biblical, historical and contemporary models and analysis of the research data garnered from Alliance archives, statistical comparison, and surveys of Alliance church planters we will suggest as a basis for study a model for church planting based on three principle components with a view to confirming or denying its validity in the contexts we will examine. This model is an integrated one. Simplistic approaches to any aspect of church ministry tend to neglect equally vital components of church life that are often interdependent. To say that small group discipling is the answer to church growth begs the question, "What are you teaching the disciple?" As we understand the dynamic of Matthew 28:19,20 Jesus saw disciple making as the reproduction of His life and ministry. In differing contexts with different people the practical outworking of discipling differed but the fundamental principles remain constant. Evangelism, community and training were all part of the whole, an integrated whole where like

a triangle it loses its identity if one or more sides is missing. Matthew 28:19,20 presents an integrated model for planting churches that does not provide explicit methodology but delineates the necessary components of whatever model is used. It could be argued that the Great Commission is not a mandate for church planting. We would respond that it is a program for church planting - that it can be done in no other way, since the disciples produced churches as a necessary result of their obedience to it.

We cannot in our approach to this thesis discover more than the broad principles of the church planting enterprise. Models will differ according to cultural and social context. But we believe that the teaching of Jesus had an intentionality that is not accidental in the development of the church, indeed, that there is a discernible pattern He wanted His disciples to follow. We expect to show that there are those who have discovered and successfully followed this pattern in church planting. We will also evaluate the contemporary Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada for this pattern. The thesis we will examine is that an integrated model of evangelism, community building, and disciple training is the biblical foundation of church planting, a model proven by historical and contemporary experience. We will study Acts, John Wesley, a contemporary church plant and the sociological discoveries of R.W.Bibby with the intention of discovering if their experience validates or disproves this thesis. Added to this will be an analysis of relevant statistical data from the Alliance national office and of a survey of Alliance pastors who have planted churches in the last fifteen years. It is our hope that a pattern that supports our thesis will be seen from Acts to the modern Alliance.

## THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The development of a biblical model for church planting will arise from a study of the primary sources in the Scriptures with the aid of the resource commentaries. Our focus on the Book of the Acts of the Apostles leads us naturally to the two exhaustive works by F.F. Bruce, The Book of Acts in the New International Commentary series on the New Testament and the companion study on the Greek text, The Acts of The Apostles. Evangelism in The Early Church by Michael Green will also be a useful resource text, as will A.B. Bruce's The Training of The Twelve. It appears that very little direct work on the specific subject of church planting in the New Testament has been done. This may reflect insufficient data in the text from which to draw explicit teaching. It will be our contention that there is a pattern in the ministry of the apostles that is not explicitly taught and could very well have not been expressed by them. The absence of explicit teaching does not keep us from drawing definitive principles. Much of the development of the early church came through modelling. We must let the model speak about what the disciples actually did where we do not have explicit statements of church planting consistent with modern expectations of pedagogy. This will become a guiding principle in our study of Acts. Other sources will be accessed for church planting principles but it is expected that they will provide only brief allusions and references in the context of other subjects.

Fundamental to developing the proposed model will be the original writings of John Wesley as found in the fourteen volume Works<sup>4</sup> and other extant sources. Rupert Davies has written extensively on Wesley, including A History of the Methodist Church in Britain in partnership

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<sup>4</sup> John Wesley. The Works of John Wesley Vol.1-14. Thomas Jackson, ed.,(New York: B. Warren & T. Mason, 1835).

with Gordon Rupp. Critical to our study will be an understanding of Wesley's ecclesiology as evidenced in his preaching. Kenneth Collins has recently written A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology. Wesley's preaching is a basis for the model we will develop, since what he preached was a vital component of his success as a church planter. Collins examines the sermons of Wesley in order to reconstruct his doctrinal positions through extensively collated citations. An entire chapter is devoted to Wesley's 'Doctrine of the Church'<sup>5</sup>, a valuable source for our understanding of Wesley's ecclesiology. Without a sound ecclesiology, built on biblical principles, the prospect for a successful church planting outcome is diminished. The actual structure of individual church plants will differ according to context and need but the central philosophical core should be consistent with the core values of our thesis. Others who enhance our understanding of Wesley as a model include Thomas C. Oden<sup>6</sup>, whose examination of Outler's essays on Wesley give us a clearer picture of Wesley's theological heritage. Burtner and Chiles perform a service similar to that of Collins in their Compend. We are able in our research to identify topics and select specific quotes from Wesley. One of the principles in our model is expected to be Wesley's passion for the Bible as a basis for preaching and ministry. Listed under this subject in Burtner and Chiles we find the following quote, "My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things,

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology(Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993) 83-104.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, eds. Essays of Albert Outler: The Wesleyan Theological Heritage(Grand Rapids: Zon-dervan Publishing House, 1991).

both great and small."<sup>7</sup>

Useful evaluations of Wesley's preaching ministry are derived from Dargan and Paul Scott Wilson. We will also refer to Fant and Pinson and the recently published Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching produced by Willimon and Lischer. "Wesley's style of preaching is typified by his own characterization, 'plain truth for plain people'."<sup>8</sup> Through these sources we will build a profile of the preaching of John Wesley, generally acknowledged as one of the primary reasons for Wesley's success as the founder of Methodism. Maldwyn Edwards<sup>9</sup> identifies three reasons for the rapid and startling advance of Methodism, 1)the preaching of John Wesley; 2)the organizational skills of John Wesley; and 3)the social conscience of John Wesley. Using this profile we expect to build a profile of Wesley as a church planter.

A basic principle of our proposed model that arises out of Wesley is a purpose-driven methodology. Wesley's passion for soul winning drove his ministry. "Church or no church we must save souls."<sup>10</sup> Rick Warren and Carl F.George<sup>11</sup> have recently focused attention on the principle of purpose-driven ministry. Warren develops his theme in the context of planting

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<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles. A Compend of Wesley's Theology(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 20.

<sup>8</sup> William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer. Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 501.

<sup>9</sup> Maldwyn Edwards, 'John Wesley', A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain, Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, eds. (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 61.

<sup>10</sup> John Bishop. Methodist Worship In Relation To Free Church Worship(Princeton: Scholars Study Press, 1975), 67.

<sup>11</sup> Carl F. George, Prepare Your Church for the Future(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

the Saddleback church which he pastors. George focuses on the meta-church principle. Both are convinced that churches that grow and thrive have an explicit ministry focus. "A focused life and a focused church will have far greater impact than unfocused ones."<sup>12</sup> Our belief is that the purpose that drove Wesley to success as a church planter was his passion for evangelism.

There is an abundance of resource material in the area of church planting. The bulk of it comes out of the Fuller Institute of Evangelism with Robert E. Logan as the primary author. The most useful of Logan's works is the Church Planting Workbook<sup>13</sup>. Its primary value lies in its list of topical areas of concern in church planting. Because most of the material is designed for the American church setting its value in Canada as a guide for ministry is less obvious. However, Logan's subject list of concerns will provide a useful guide in developing a survey tool for C & MA church planters. James Nichol's Antioch Blueprints is specifically directed at the Canadian context. He acknowledges... 'a void in Canada of documented church planting and experience.'<sup>14</sup> Two C & MA sources are useful despite their American origins. King's The Church Planters Training Manual<sup>15</sup> has a self-explanatory title. Like Logan he

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<sup>12</sup> Rick Warren. The Purpose-Driven Church(Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 89.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Logan and Jeff Rast, Church Planter's Workbook(Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> James Nikkel. Antioch Blueprints: A Manual of Church-Planting Information and Church Growth Strategies(Winnipeg: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Churches and Kindred Press, 1987), preface.

<sup>15</sup> Fred G. King, The Church Planter's Training Manual(Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 1992)

provides a helpful list of topics that should be considered. The failure of nearly all the 'manuals' is most successfully addressed by Elmer Towns in Getting A Church Started. Towns is the only writer who attempts to lay a theological foundation for church planting. The presumption that church planting for the sake of growth as an end in itself is questionable, is a key issue in our thesis. Out of the church planter's theological foundation will come the principles that determine both his strategy and outcome. We hope to arrive at a complete model that incorporates a solid biblical foundation that defines the strategies employed.

The National archives of the Christian and Missionary Alliance contain a complete statistical record of church starts and closures from 1981 to 1995. Other data on motions and minutes of General conference and District Assembly meetings are fully available. These resources will be researched and cited extensively.

Survey design and interview methodology will be based on material gleaned from Jossey-Bass published resources, particularly Survey Research Methods<sup>16</sup> by J. Floyd Fowler, and How To Conduct Surveys<sup>17</sup> by Fink and Kosecoff.

In order to more accurately understand the Canadian context of ministry we will spend significant research time in the writings and research of R.W. Bibby. Issues of Canadian concern are raised in There's Got To Be More<sup>18</sup> and Unknown Gods<sup>19</sup>. VanderVennen's

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<sup>16</sup> Floyd J. Fowler, Survey Research Methods(Newbury Park: Sage, 1993)

<sup>17</sup> Arlene Fink and Jaqueline Kosecoff, How To Conduct Surveys(Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1985)

<sup>18</sup> Reginald W. Bibby, There's Got To Be More(Winnepeg: Wood Lake Books, 1995)

<sup>19</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, Unknown Gods(Toronto: Stoddart, 1993)

**Church and Canadian Culture<sup>20</sup> will contribute to the dialogue in the hope that our church planting model will take into account the appropriate cultural concerns of the Canadian context. Bibby, in particular, provides useful insight into Canadian attitudes toward church and Christian faith. The insights of these writers will assist us to develop a model that is sensitive to the unique sociological identifiers of the Canadian context.**

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<sup>20</sup> Robert VanderVennen, ed., Church and Canadian Culture(Lanham: University Press of America, 1991)



## CHAPTER TWO

### CHURCH PLANTING IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

**One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and duty of every church member.<sup>1</sup>**

**If a definitive model for church planting could be found it would surely be that of the early church, particularly as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The very business of the Church was the planting of churches. We do not mean to say that the Apostles were intentional in terms of a planned methodology but that they responded to the developing church with structures that, of necessity, became churches. This was a natural byproduct of the impetus to evangelize and make disciples. This is one of the key principles of our thesis. The apostles did not intend to plant churches and could never have proposed a method to do so. They intended to evangelize. They intended to make disciples. The local church that resulted arose as a means to facilitate evangelism and discipleship. Our thesis links successful church planting to the priority of evangelism and discipleship. Christ's command in Matthew 28: 19,20 to 'go and make disciples of all nations' was the driving force behind the creation and establishment of new churches. Thus it could be rightly argued, Where are the explicitly taught church planting principles in Acts? Indeed there are none, but this is the genius of the 'method'. They succeeded because they focussed on the Great Commission. It will be argued**

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 274.

that the reversal of priorities in favour of planting a church as a base for future ministry rather than as a result of ministry is hurting the contemporary church planting enterprise.

We acknowledge the risk of reducing divine initiative to finding and using the right principles. Our approach is simply descriptive of what happened in and through the apostolic ministry that led to the formation of churches. It does however acknowledge the sovereign hand of God and the intentionality of Jesus in the training process. By definition the 'disciples' were imitators of Jesus who ministered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit on a day to day basis. The disciples did not have a master plan for church planting but were very much dependent on the guidance of God in shaping the structures that arose out of the necessity of ministry. We have already referred to the formation of the deacons in response to a crisis in Acts Six. Many of the structures of the church must have arisen in like manner. It is likely that the disciples had no idea that what was growing around them would shape the organization of the church for two thousand years. Similarly, they had no formal idea of planting churches in other communities. We will argue that they simply obeyed the fundamental demands of the Great Commission and then under the sovereign guidance of God responded to the structural necessities of dealing with a new community of believers eager to grow in the grace of God and share their common faith. Our approach will be to simply describe what they did with the understanding that God was guiding them. Instead of confining their methods to their unique context we see this as validating them. We look only for principles always acknowledging that their application may vary in differing contexts.

Our method of approaching Acts will be to move from the beginning chapter by chapter with the intent of discovering church planting principles. We understand that the

early church leaders can teach us mainly by modelling. Thus we will be discovering much by inference. However the text does support significant solid conclusions.

What we cannot document but would be at our peril to ignore is the intentionality of the Lord Jesus Christ in training and preparing the Twelve for this very time. He could never have told the specifics of what lay ahead. Indeed they resisted any explanation of future events that did not agree with their preconceived expectations. Therefore much of His preparation for the Acts era must have been through modelling. The disciples must have asked themselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" The answer was just as often, "What did Jesus do?" A.B. Bruce chronicles 'The Training of The Twelve' with the implied understanding that the training period culminated in the receiving of the Great Commission.

The errand on which Jesus sends His Apostles is to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name, and to make a peaceful conquest of the world to God by the word of reconciliation through His death.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' own words in Matthew 28:20 imply an unbroken chain of evangelists, '...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'. What He envisioned was that the Twelve would reproduce the lessons of their three year training in the lives of the disciples they made, who would, in turn, pass on the 'training of the Twelve' to their converts. Thus, not only conversion was in view but a reproductive discipling process that preserved Christ's teachings and methods. As we proceed through Acts we will turn back to the Gospels, particularly citations of the Great Commission, and occasionally to the Epistles where we will find confirmation of church planting practice that will have survived the early era.

John Stott's book Christian Mission In The Modern World is subtitled 'What the

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<sup>2</sup> A.B. Bruce, The Training of The Twelve(Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971) 535.

church should be doing now'. Four of the five chapters directly relate to the subject of evangelism, the implication being that the Church has failed in its duty to evangelize the world for Christ.

(Referring)..to the millions of non-Christian people in the world: It is the church's duty to see that this longstanding reproach is completely removed. Its plan of work, to be adequate, must provide for the evangelisation of the whole of this multitude.<sup>3</sup>

Green concurs:

Unless there is a transformation of contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelism is something which is seen as incumbent on every baptized Christian, and is backed up by a quality of living which outshines the best that unbelief can muster, we are unlikely to make much headway through techniques of evangelism.<sup>4</sup>

That the early disciples in Acts planted churches is a matter of record. That they evangelized is also indisputable. Green devotes 280 pages to Evangelism In The Early Church. What is often neglected, or, at best, taken for granted, is the direct connection between evangelism and church planting. Indeed an examination of the Acts of the Apostles will lead us to conclude that the early disciples knew no other method but evangelism to plant churches.

Our intent in this examination of Acts is to establish evangelism as a fundamental, non-negotiable component of the church planting process. Further benefit will be derived from the discovery of other church planting principles in the Acts record.

The central role of evangelism in Acts must not be down-played as relevant only to this

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<sup>3</sup> John R.W. Stott, Christian Mission In The Modern World(Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1975) 36.

<sup>4</sup> Green, Evangelism. 275.

initial, exciting period of the new Church. If we conclude that churches were only being planted because of the new message and revelation of the gospel, this would imply that the mission of the Church has somehow changed in modern times. This then excuses us from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ calling us to 'go and make disciples'. If Acts is not normative for the Church in the 1990's, then it should be excised from our bibles or left to the study of historians. By normative we do not mean the uncritical adoption of specific practices but the adoption of fundamental principles. If the Acts church, in practice, gave first priority to evangelism, so should we. If they placed great importance on community necessitating frequent gatherings and a high level of commitment and accountability, so should we. If they laboured hard to make disciples who would take up the mission as their own, so should we. The structures that facilitate these principles will change but they themselves should remain as normative.

The book of Acts, like the gospels, was written with a strong sense of the sacredness of the concrete facts which it narrates,....<sup>5</sup>

Indeed the Acts of the Apostles is as normative for the Church as the Gospels. Acts is, in fact, the culmination of the Gospels.

The implication of Luke's words(see Luke 24:44ff) is that his second volume will be an account of the things which Jesus *continued* to do and teach after His ascension - by His Spirit in His followers. The expression "to do and to teach" well sums up the twofold subject-matter of the canonical Gospels: it consists of *The Work and Words of Jesus*(to quote the title of a recent presentation of this subject-matter).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, The Ministry and Message of Paul(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 13.

<sup>6</sup> F.F. Bruce, The Book of The Acts(NICOT)(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 32.

Jesus trained the twelve apostles over a three year period with the inauguration and building of the Church in mind. They were to carry on His work. He was the model. The goal of the disciple is to become as much like his master as he can. In terms of principles and methodology the twelve learned everything they knew about ministry from Jesus.

From the evangelistic records it appears that Jesus began at a very early period of His ministry to gather round Him a company of disciples with a view to the preparation of an agency for carrying on the work of the divine kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

The twelve, their disciples, and later Paul went on to plant many churches in their lifetimes. What is important to our study are two fundamental premises: 1)what Jesus taught His disciples is still applicable today and, 2)evangelism was the driving force behind New Testament church planting. All the training of the Twelve was summed up in Matthew 28:19,20.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.<sup>8</sup>

The Lucan version is recorded in Acts 1:8:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.<sup>9</sup>

Thus we are introduced to Acts with a clear understanding of the mandate of the soon-to-be-

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<sup>7</sup> A.B. Bruce, Training,12.

<sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, The Holy Bible(NIV)(New York: International Bible Society, 1978)

<sup>9</sup> Acts 1:8

born Church. The spread of the gospel and the making of new disciples is to be the primary business of the Church. Church planting was to be the byproduct in that conserving the fruit of evangelism caused the Apostles to ask the questions that produced church structure and practice.

Acts 1:8 is a link in a chain that extends back to Abraham by virtue of its allusion to the blessing for "all the nations". Abraham's covenant is referred to four times in the New Testament. Luke speaks of it in 1:72ff and in Acts 7:8. It is a good news covenant.

The covenant with Abraham is not thought of as one of bondage but one characterized by God's "visiting" and "redeeming" His people raising up "a horn of salvation" for them and "showing mercy".<sup>10</sup>

Zechariah's song of praise is a 'good news' response. As Jesus commissions His disciples in Matthew 28:19 and 20 He sends them out as messengers of good news. Gundry and others have understood the 'go' to communicate a more specific intent - 'as you are going'. He notes that Luke uses the same wording.

The presence of the same combination in Luke 24:47 suggests either Matthean influence on Luke or dominical tradition or both.<sup>11</sup>

The implications of continuity would certainly be implied in Acts 1:8. This message that is rooted in Abraham is a sacred trust now passed on to the disciples and to the new Church. It is the gospel message that the Church is to be built on. The interest of the disciples in the 'times or dates'(Acts 1:7) provides a revealing insight into the perpetual temptation the

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<sup>10</sup> Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 93.

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary On His Literary And Theological Art(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 595.

Church faces to move away from the gospel mandate. Eschatology remains as a diversion in the 1990's. Jesus quickly redirected the disciples back to their true calling, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority".(Acts 1:7) Perhaps He needs to extend a similar rebuke to His modern disciples.

What existed in Acts 1:12-26 was a small church. We do not mean this definitively and certainly not in the minds of the disciples. But Jesus would have done certain things and acted in habitual ways as He gathered with His disciples over the years. The rabbinic model of instruction had a high expectation of imitation and surely the Eleven would have done all they could to imitate their Master. The eleven remaining apostles led a group of 120. The presence of the apostles and the choosing of Matthias to complete their number underlines the importance of trained leaders in the church planting process.

Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He(Jesus) attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in the training of the twelve. In the intercessory prayer, He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, to a focus on evangelism, we add a second church planting principle - the need for appropriately trained leadership. Matthias was chosen by lot but he was a candidate on the basis of being 'one who (had) been with (the apostles) the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among (them)'(Acts 1:21). We know from Luke Ten that other disciples were undergoing the same training as the Twelve who made up the inner circle. Jesus appointed 'seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place He was about to go'(Luke 10:1). These disciples engaged the in ministry of gospel proclamation and

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<sup>12</sup> A.B. Bruce, Training,13.



miracle-working. They reported their success with great joy to the Lord(Luke 10:17). From this precedent we can draw that others were being trained along with the Twelve. When we come to Acts One the disciples make a point of limiting the candidates for the company of the Twelve. It is clear that they desired a man who had been taught and trained as they had been by Jesus. That they themselves made a point of this restriction is the best evidence we can muster apart from the very definite implications of the training of the Twelve . Jesus obviously placed a high premium on training and it would be inconsistent for the disciples to hold a different view. They would have followed the pattern of their Master. The same criterion is certainly not applicable in the modern church era. However the principle of being qualified for the mission that is ahead can be retained. Jesus spent three years preparing His disciples for the specific task He had in mind. Thus, if we are intent on calling<sup>g</sup> men to a ministry of church planting we must insure that they are well-prepared for the task. Training in techniques and strategies and preparation for potential problems is essential. Jesus spent a night in prayer before selecting potential candidates for training and then spent three years in a night and day training process. With the implications of the great commission text as our basis we feel safe in affirming that Jesus methods are normative for the modern church. If we are to be true followers of Jesus we must do as He did.

The 'upper room' experience provides a compelling perspective on the charismatic question and biblical priorities. What did the experience mean and how did the disciples understand its importance. David Watson points to three emphases in the teaching of Paul from I Corinthians Twelve.

First, he outlines the necessary spiritual growth into unity and maturity that the whole body must make together. Second, he describes the variety of gifts that

God has given to enable this united body to make its growth. And third, he reminds his readers of the supreme authority of the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

The themes of Corinthians, particularly conflict over the charismatic gifts and disunity can lead the reader away from Paul's overriding concern for a church that is unified and operating in the gifts of the Spirit. Paul knows that a healthy church will be an evangelistically effective church. Acts Two like Corinthians is most often turned to for its account of the workings of the Holy Spirit. Peter's sermon and "Pentecost" resulted in the addition of three thousand to the initial group of 120 in one day. We are primarily concerned with the resulting church that was 'planted' in Jerusalem remembering the disciples' unvarying focus on evangelism. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit must have been a powerful experience for each individual. It would have been easy to focus on the experience. Instead it became the occasion for an evangelistic sermon and a tremendous spiritual harvest. One suspects that the modern Church might, in similar circumstances have called the curious into the Upper Room in an attempt to reproduce the Pentecost experience and then build a church as a monument to it. This critical moment in the history of the Church speaks loudly to us of divine priority and apostolic obedience. The coming of the Spirit moves the 'Church' immediately to evangelism. We affirm once again that the Church must hold to a focus on evangelism especially if it desires to plant churches.

We turn our focus to Acts Two for a model of church unity that is clearly connected to effective evangelism consistent with Watson's observations on the Corinthian church.

They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the

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<sup>13</sup> David Watson, I Believe In The Church(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 99.

breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to everyone as they had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.<sup>14</sup>

What is described in this passage is the visible expression of the unity of the Church. Any church that is planted must surely be an outward representation of the unity of Christ's Church.

(The) Church - and by this I mean as always the local church *and* the universal Church, the local community *and* the community as a whole - is really and positively *one* Church, one people of God, one body of Christ, one spiritual creation. The whole New Testament message bears witness to this.<sup>15</sup>

Kung argues, and rightly so, that the Church is one independently of whatever man does; '....it depends finally not on itself but on the unity of God'.<sup>16</sup> But we remember the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21 '...that all of them may be one'. Jesus knew full well that the Church was going to be one in the sense that Kung expresses. His prayer therefore reflects His concern for the Church's visible expression of that unity, a unity clearly breached, for example, in the case of the Corinthian church. It is true that the Church is one but there remains a responsibility for every local church to express that oneness. We affirm consequently that a biblically valid church plant must be based on this unity and express it in practice. Acts 2:42-47 is a valid

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<sup>14</sup> Acts 2:42-47(NIV)

<sup>15</sup> Hans Kung, The Church(Garden City NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1976) 351-2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 353.

biblical expression of a united church. In practice all of its expressions of unity may not be realistically applicable in a different time and culture, but we can learn from the principles in this passage.

Modern scholarship affirms some of these principles. Carl George identifies needs that modern churches will have to meet if they want to succeed in our contemporary culture. One of these is the desire for a personal touch. Apparently despite our technological advancement in computers, VCRs and the like, people still want personal contact. For each new wave of technological change, people seek a compensatory human touch. George believes that a great opportunity exists for churches that respond to this trend.

I believe that opportunities for interpersonal exchange such as small caring groups, are needed more than ever.<sup>17</sup>

Another of George's felt needs is that the church be a group of people who cares. George cites the largest church in Christendom (in Seoul, Korea) where every tenth member is officially commissioned as a caregiver. The link between these factors and growing healthy churches is, apparently, being rediscovered. Acts 2: 42-47 prominently features these two 'felt needs'. What we see is a church that is a caring supportive family. The key phrase is 'they devoted themselves'. The translation of the Greek verb used by Luke is: '*to persist in adherence to a thing, to remain constantly | in a place*'.<sup>18</sup> This 'devotion' was to the 'fellowship' among the four things cited by Luke. Many theologians affirm that the members of the Church need each other for the process of growth and discipleship to take place. Whatever our differences, we

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<sup>17</sup> Carl George, Preparing Your Church For The Future(Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992) 15.

<sup>18</sup> , The Analytical Greek Lexicon(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) 350.

all need one another and we belong to one another.<sup>19</sup> This is also the clear teaching of I Corinthians Twelve. To be consistent in principle with the Acts Two church the goal of the church planter must be to build a family atmosphere. Sunday services alone would be inadequate to achieve this if Acts Two practice is our guide. Acts 2:46 tells us that they met every day. As this is impractical in the modern church the church planter faces the challenge of building a fellowship that does not depend solely on Lord's Day services. Warren,<sup>20</sup> George and others suggest that this can only be done through small groups that meet on days other than Sunday. The pastor can only provide the 'personal touch' to a limited number of the church membership in visitation and pastoral care situations. The dynamics of group ministry care are in many ways comparable to the quality of pastoral care while having the advantage of being consistently available. The formality of Sunday service provides little opportunity to build the quality of fellowship described in Acts Two. Critical to the church planter is the observation that Acts 2:42 and 2:47 appear to have a causal connection.

Within the community there was a spirit of rejoicing and generosity; outside, they enjoyed great popular good-will. They ascribed all glory to God, and their numbers were constantly increased as more and more believers in Jesus were added by Him to the faithful remnant.<sup>21</sup>

J. Glyn Owen describes the mission of the Church as three-fold: worship, edification and evangelism.

The commission given to the Church by its Lord has a three-pronged thrust.

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<sup>19</sup> Watson, I Believe... 99.

<sup>20</sup> Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995)

<sup>21</sup> F.F. Bruce, Acts. 81.

Its primary direction is God-ward as Christians exalt the Lord and offer themselves to Him in worship. The second thrust is its saint-ward ministry of edifying the Body of Christ. Thirdly, the Church has been charged with an outward, world ward task of penetrating a society which knows not the true God.<sup>22</sup>

Fundamental to this is Owen's belief that the three arms of this mission are linked, even interdependent.

The church that has not learned to worship God can neither edify the saints within its borders nor evangelize the lost outside the fold.<sup>23</sup>

Primacy is given to worship but this does not lessen in any way the mandate given to the Church to evangelize.

(Evangelism)...is a mandate to ALL THE CHURCH. It is commonly agreed that it may have had special reference to the Eleven, but it was to the Eleven as *representative* of the whole Church. That is how they understood it and that is how it was implemented in the Apostolic era portrayal in the book of Acts.<sup>24</sup>

Thus we see in Acts 2:42-47 not just an idealized expression of church life in a unique setting but a representation of what a healthy normal church ought to be. The three elements of worship, edification and evangelism are apparent. The very first church plant is a prototype for subsequent church plants and the church planter should not rest until the full expression of the three-fold mandate is in evidence in a new work.

Worship is the easiest of the three to achieve since nearly every new church is formed around the Sunday worship service. However, not all new church plants extend themselves

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<sup>22</sup> J. Glyn Owen, The Church's Mission: A Series of Three Sermons(Toronto: Knox Presbyterian Church, 1977) 20.

<sup>23</sup> Owen, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Owen, 24.

beyond Sunday fellowship and worship. Acts Two, at least in principle, informs us that we need to go beyond Sunday in order to properly edify the members of a congregation and to be effective as an evangelistic witness.

Still fewer church plants have a significant evangelistic outreach. Of 171 churches planted in the Christian and Missionary Alliance from 1980 to 1995, few had statistics indicating an effective outreach ministry leading to significant growth. In some of these, as the church prospered, evangelism waned. This may reflect an incomplete understanding of the biblical church planting mandate. The belief that the existence of a Sunday morning worship service constitutes a church may be an error that the executive leadership of denominations needs to address.

The Jerusalem church continued to grow. A powerful sense of mission drove the new church. This should not be underestimated as the reason for much of its vitality. Indeed, a church without a purpose is in danger. Its purpose is its very reason for existing. They existed to propagate the gospel message - to win others to Christ and, in effect, plant new churches. This is the story of the book of Acts. Warren and George have written recently on the concept of purpose driven ministry. Warren focuses on planting and growing a new church. George is concerned with small groups. But both are saying essentially the same thing.

Every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens. It may be unspoken. It may be unknown to many. Most likely it's never been officially voted on. But it is there, influencing every aspect of the church's life.<sup>25</sup>

Warren identifies some of those driving forces as variously, tradition, personality, finances,

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<sup>25</sup> Warren, 77.

programs, buildings, events, and seekers. But in many cases these are controlling churches by default. In others there is no clear purpose at all for the church's existence.

**What is needed today are churches that are driven by purpose instead of by other forces.<sup>26</sup>**

To do this Warren suggests that we need to look at everything the church does through the lens of the New Testament. Our study of Acts has revealed to us a Church model that includes worship, edification, and evangelism. But we also must affirm that evangelism drove the Acts church and that the other components of discipling and community were byproducts. To relegate them to byproducts does not mean they are of secondary importance. They are the foundation of the mission and the means by which it is sustained and passed on. Our model is both integrated and interdependent. Like a stool with three legs if one leg is removed the stool can no longer do what it is made for. Evangelism comes first in this model as a logical necessity. If the disciples had not proclaimed the gospel, there would have been no converts and as a consequence no gatherings for worship and no training in discipleship. It is in this sense that evangelism drove the Acts church. We thus argue that this is the reasonable, if not logical, pattern for church planting and indeed the biblical one.

The healing of the beggar in Acts Three became an occasion for evangelism. A natural response to the miraculous is to focus on the miracle. Typically in Acts as in chapters two and three miracles are immediately appropriated as opportunities to preach the gospel. Peter preached and the number which was one hundred and twenty in Acts One, and three thousand in Acts Two increases to five thousand. The excitement of adding to the Church through

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 80.



evangelism was never superseded by the excitement of the miracle. The members of the new Church loved to see people come to Christ. This was their mission - their purpose and they would not be moved from it.

This determination is tested in Acts Four by the arrest of Peter and John. Even then Peter does not miss an opportunity to preach(vv.29-32). The response of the church to the demand that preaching cease is a prayer meeting that culminates in a second Pentecost experience. The substance of their prayer is a request for boldness in evangelism(4:23-31). The pressure not to evangelize is still a factor in the church planting process. The Sanhedrin were offended by a message that condemned them. The gospel message still has that effect and the church planter seeking a non-offensive public image for a new work may be tempted to compromise or even withhold the gospel. Little may he realize that he could be taking the heart out of his new church. By removing the evangelism arm of the three-fold mandate given by Jesus to the Church, the effect is the removal of the Church's purpose for existence in the world. And the task of recruiting people to an organization without a clearly defined purpose is a challenge. Failure consists not only of new church plants that close down but of those that never really get off the ground, remaining small and dependent on denominational support.

Bellah and Roof<sup>27</sup> tell us that 'boomers' and 'busters' are willing to commit themselves to organizations that have a highly developed sense of mission. Indeed they seek opportunities for that sort of commitment, frequently complaining that churches fail to address this desire, that churches are boring places where nothing ever happens. Church planters who recognize

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<sup>27</sup> Robert N. Bellah, Habits of the Heart(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Wade Clark Roof, A Generation of Seekers(San Francisco: Harper, 1993)

this will not compromise the gospel mandate.

A feature of the Jerusalem church tragically illustrated by Ananias and Sapphira was a high level of accountability. From the passage in 4:32-37 it seems that believers were highly committed to one another even to the extent of selling their property to assist the needy members of the church. When Ananias and Sapphira conspired to defile this unique bond in the Christian community the response was swift and sure. We do well to remember that it was not Peter who was responsible for their deaths but the Holy Spirit. Their obvious sin was that they 'lied to the Holy Spirit'(5:3), but the context of this event is 4:32. 'All the believers were one in heart and mind'. Again the link between successful evangelism and the community life of the church is made by Luke. Acts 4:33 declares '...with great power the apostles continued to testify'. The repeated references to oneness and fellowship in the new Christian community testifies to the critical importance of community life in growth of the Church.

True unity is founded in love. Therefore it is essential that the members of a church develop a strong love for each other.<sup>28</sup>

It would be dubious to assume that the kind of loving unity described in Acts can be nurtured and developed in the roughly two hours that believers spend in church on Sunday morning. The circumstances of the Jerusalem church forged an interdependent community. Conversion meant exclusion from Synagogue life and consequently one's family and livelihood. The new believers needed each other and essentially bonded into a new family. Believers in contemporary churches rarely face similar pressures and thus have an underdeveloped sense of the need for community. Yet if evangelism and thus church growth are critically linked to

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<sup>28</sup> Watson, I Believe... 99.

the quality of church community, as Acts teaches by example and affirmation, then the church planter will need to be pro-active in developing it.

As it is not possible to be equally committed to every Christian, the practicalities of this must first be worked out in local areas or small groups.<sup>29</sup>

Geographically based small or house cell groups are a practical solution with a solid biblical precedent. The Jerusalem church lacked what modern Christians consider essential to having a 'real' church. They had no building. Instead they would 'meet together in Solomon's Colonnade'(5:12) or in the 'temple courts'(5:42). We also discover that the apostles 'taught and proclaimed Christ from 'house to house'(5:42). The practical difficulties of serving the Lord's Supper to or holding a prayer meeting with five thousand church members are obvious. It is most likely that the believers gathered in centrally based homes for fellowship, prayer, teaching and the breaking of bread. These groupings would have been the main structural component of the new church especially as public meetings became more risky. Thus the Jerusalem church would have consisted of satellite home groups. This model has a great deal to recommend it, especially to the church planter who will similarly not have the luxury of a church building. Much is made of buildings. Winston Churchill is reputed to have said, 'We shape our buildings, and then they shape us'. Perhaps a new church should be shaped by the community life of its people rather than a building. The model of home cell groups that are not dependent on buildings and programs is more consistent with the biblical witness. This is not to suggest that new churches should forego the traditional service but that the church planting pastor prioritize house groups where he can nurture the community life of the new

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<sup>29</sup> Watson, I Believe... 100.

church. The character of the new church that arises in a public format will be a product of the community that formed it. The reversal of priorities that so often arises is the formation of the structures and programs of church ministry which the church planter tries to fill with people. Would it not be more appropriate for the church planter to foster community and then let the structures of the new church arise out of the needs and desires of the community?

A church that has evangelism as its number one ministry priority will base every organizational decision on that priority. Acts Six recounts the appointment of the seven deacons. The apostles had a powerful and effective ministry of evangelism that was being restricted by administrative constraints.

Acts tells us how they found themselves choked by administration, and deliberately delegated this work so they could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.<sup>30</sup>

This reflects the priority of the church planter. The calling to plant a church can get confused with the building and the church's administrative structures. The apostles recognized the danger of getting bogged down in administration. The greatest danger was and is that one loses sight of the work of evangelism. The apostolic experience in Acts Six is a warning to every worker in a pioneering situation. We see the consequent response to the apostolic affirmation of the priority of evangelism.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.<sup>31</sup>

What the apostles saw as a result of their decision was church growth. There is nothing more

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<sup>30</sup> Watson, I Believe.... 166.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 6:7(NIV)

critical in the church planting endeavour than growth.

**Considering the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church, I believe that the definition of fruitfulness for a local church must include, growth by the conversion of unbelievers.<sup>32</sup>**

**Could it be that the neglect of evangelism or making it a low priority has stunted the growth of many new church plants? The evidence suggests that church planters may not be making good decisions in the initial stages of ministry and are producing churches that, by biblical standards, are unhealthy.**

**Church growth is the natural result of church health. Church health can only occur when our message is biblical and our mission is balanced.<sup>33</sup>**

**Church plants, by definition, must grow. Growth is the greatest issue that church planters wrestle with. The apostles, by example, point the way by making evangelism a priority and by not being diverted from it. Grow by conversion. We note that though the deacons were appointed to administrate they did not consider themselves excused from the responsibility to evangelize. Stephen is immediately arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for preaching the gospel(6:8-15). The division between clergy and laity can have dangerous consequences. We have seen that the early church grew because of evangelism. But we must remember that the greater part of the evangelistic endeavour was carried out by lay-people.**

**Christianity was from its inception a lay movement, and so it continued for a remarkably long time. In a sense, the apostles inevitably became "professionals". But as early as Acts 8 we find that it is not the apostles but the "amateur" missionaries, the men evicted from Jerusalem as a result of the persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom, who took the gospel with**

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<sup>32</sup> Warren, Purpose. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 49.

them wherever they went.<sup>34</sup>

It is therefore incumbent on the church planter to see that the members of the church share not only the mission of the church but also the ministry. In other words they must be actively involved in the evangelistic endeavour. Green says that lay involvement is not only appropriate but that it makes the hearer more receptive to the gospel message. Referring to the scattered Jerusalem church he says:

They were evangelists, just as much as any apostle was. This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls. They went everywhere gossiping the gospel; they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently, they were taken seriously, and the movement spread.<sup>35</sup>

Practically speaking, the church planter can multiply the labour force addressing the problem of growth. This can be done by encouraging active lay involvement in the very earliest stages of a new church.

The stoning of Stephen was the impetus that led to the persecution and resultant scattering of the church 'throughout Judea and Samaria'. T.W. Manson has advanced the position that, in the sovereignty of God, this needed to happen to the Jerusalem church.

Stephen's manifesto, while primarily an attack on the unbelieving Jews, brought with it as a real, though enduring consequence, the shattering of the complacency of the original Jerusalem church.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Green, Evangelism, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>36</sup> T.W. Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews(London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951) 37.

**Manson believes that the Jerusalem church was passively waiting for the return of Jesus and that the Hebrew majority were disinclined to accept the gospel mandate to go beyond Israel to the world. Thus the event of Stephen's death was instrumental in breaking an impasse in the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Indeed Philip almost immediately plants a church in Samaria(8:4-8). When the new work was confirmed as legitimate by Peter and John(8:14-17) they return to Jerusalem 'preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages'.**

**An important principle to be gleaned from this is how easily misplaced doctrinal positions can divert the Church from its God-given task and the mandate of Acts 1:8 - even the normally glamorized and idealized church of Acts. Manson identifies a theological misunderstanding rooted in tradition as the instrument of deception.**

**Israel has been tempted to identify its salvation with historical and earthly securities and fixtures, and Stephen cannot but see the same danger in the attitude of the "Hebrew" brethren in the Church.<sup>37</sup>**

**The modern church might similarly be accused of identifying successful church planting with buildings, services, and programs, at the expense of evangelistic outreach. The temptation to cling to the visible is not limited to the "Hebrews". This incident, which cost the new Church a terrible time of persecution, once again affirms the priority God places on evangelism.**

**On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem....<sup>38</sup>**

**By analogy, the failure to follow biblical principles in church planting could be very costly. Surely God is as concerned about the Great Commission now as He was two thousand years**

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<sup>37</sup> Manson, Hebrews. 35.

<sup>38</sup> Acts 8:1(NIV)

ago.

Acts Nine records the conversion of, perhaps, the greatest church planter in the history of the Church. An emphasis on how Paul received his apostolic mission is recorded in Galatians.

In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul is at pains to deny in the most unqualified terms that he received his apostolic commission from any man, or even through any man; he received it, he asserts, immediately from Christ(Gal.1:1,11ff.)<sup>39</sup>

It was important to Paul to affirm that he received his mission directly from Jesus. That he was a duly authorized apostle was at issue, as was, by implication, the purity and validity of his message. That he received it without mediation gives his ministry authenticity. We point this out in order to emphasize Paul's methods and practices as significant to the would-be church planter. That he was chosen and directly commissioned by Christ and that he became the greatest church planter is a connection we cannot fail to note. Paul evangelized but considered the mission incomplete until a church was established. The link between evangelism and church planting in Paul's ministry is a compelling argument for the reconsideration of much that goes by the name of church planting in modern times. We shall look at this in our examination of Acts 11.

The 'go' of Matthew 28:19 informs the attitude and action of the church planter. Peter needed to be convinced of this in Acts Ten. God insisted that he go to Cornelius. Peter was not thinking of planting a church. His sole concern was the gospel. What we need to see is that the primacy of the gospel and the willingness to proclaim it without reservation produced church plants. The household of Cornelius would undoubtedly have become a house church

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<sup>39</sup> F.F. Bruce, Acts. 200.



and a base for continuing outreach and growth. The Jew-Gentile barrier of uncleanness was broken down once and for all by Peter's obedience. He had challenged tradition and was taken to task for it(11:1-2ff) and could only justify what he had done on the basis of following the word of the Lord. This should be the testimony of every church planter - first, not to be bound by tradition, and second, to do only what God Says. The command to 'go' is in conflict with the, now traditional, 'build it and they will come' strategy of modern church planting. Services are set up in an appropriate location and then advertised. The pastor then waits to see who will show up. Instead of 'going' he finds himself 'waiting'. Peter was waiting and God had to get him going in the right direction, one he would never have gone in otherwise.

The church in Antioch(Acts 11:19-30) is consistent with the pattern we have been describing as normative. In verse 20 we see the church begin because of the initiative of lay believers sharing the gospel, resulting in conversions. The results were gratifying.

**The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.<sup>40</sup>**

This is followed by the discipling process. Barnabas and Saul spent one year teaching the new converts. The command to go is obeyed as is the command to make disciples who are taught the things that Christ taught the disciples. This is the mission of the church planter in the book of Acts.

In passing, we note in Acts 12:12 the existence of a house prayer meeting. We have affirmed that house groupings were the most likely pattern of fellowship in the Acts church. It would not be inappropriate to suggest that these house 'cell' groups were a vital part of the

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<sup>40</sup> Acts 11:21(NIV)

life of the new Jerusalem church.

In Acts Thirteen Barnabas and Saul are commissioned by the leaders of the church at Antioch as missionaries. Specifically they are instructed by God to release Barnabas and Saul 'for the work to which I have called them'.(13:2) It is unlikely that Saul knew more than that he was called to preach to the Gentiles (cf.9:15). This was a mission trip that would clarify the words of the Lord at Damascus. Saul, soon to be Paul, would discover his gift for planting and maturing churches. On the surface he understood that he was to be an evangelist to the Gentiles. With that knowledge it would have been easy for him to preach, win converts and immediately leave to harvest other fields. But Paul confirms the link between evangelism and planting churches by his example. In Derbe(14:21-25) we see a classic Pauline mission. After winning converts in the cities of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch during their itinerant mission Paul and Barnabas returned to establish each of the churches by:

....strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.  
"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.  
Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church....<sup>41</sup>

There are two principles that can be derived from the ministry of Paul. First, he was called to the ministry of planting churches. It is important, therefore, to ascertain not only that potential church planters are trained but that they are called by God to carry out that ministry.

A...conviction which was unmistakably clear to Paul was that he had been appointed by Jesus Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles, delivering to them the message of a crucified and risen Lord and bringing them into the unity of one body in Christ.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Acts 14:22,23(NIV)

<sup>42</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, The Ministry and Message of Paul(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 36.

The second principle is the link between evangelism and planting churches. The mission given to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20 has apparently been passed on to Paul with his full understanding. He is to 'go', 'make disciples' and 'teach'. To plant churches without evangelizing, or to evangelize without planting churches would have been inconsistent with the command of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. It is consistently clear throughout the book of the Acts that this is how the Church understood its functional purpose. The notion that the outworking of Christ's word can somehow be divided and carried out in isolation is foreign to the New Testament record.

That Paul had a consistent plan is in evidence from the first missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome.

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish Synagogue.<sup>43</sup>

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.<sup>44</sup>

Similar examples are found in Acts 18:4; 19:8; and 28:17.

Here the typical pattern of the Pauline mission was established: an initial proclamation to Jews and Gentile adherents to Judaism, whether full proselytes or more loosely associated, and then, being refused further audience in the synagogue, a direct ministry among Gentiles.<sup>45</sup>

Paul followed this pattern although he did not absolutely bind himself to it as in the case of Ephesus(Acts 19) where he first dealt with the disciples who knew only 'John's baptism'(vs.3).

*Then* he went to the Synagogue(vs.8). Paul declared that he was willing to accommodate

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<sup>43</sup> Acts 14:1(NIV)

<sup>44</sup> Acts 17:2(NIV)

<sup>45</sup> Longenecker, Ministry. 44.

himself to people and situation for the sake of the gospel.

**For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law - though not being myself under the law - that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ - that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. 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 blessings.<sup>46</sup>**

From Paul's example we learn the necessity of a plan that can be flexibly adapted to context. We also see a danger in the kind of denominational 'franchising' that occurs in some church planting endeavours. Paul would not compromise on the essentials of the gospel but his church plants were clearly a product of their birthplace. Thus a Jewish dominated congregation might have had worship practices consistent with the Jerusalem temple or the synagogue. Correspondingly, a Gentile congregation would know little of Judaism and worship observing only the restrictions of the Jerusalem Council decree(Acts 15). Paul was not only comfortable with this but he insisted on it in his ministry. Church planters who insist on denominational distinctives and who have in mind a pre-conceived result may be limiting their effectiveness, particularly in the matter of conversions. Paul adapted himself fully to the context he ministered in that he might succeed. In Athens he went to the Areopagus. In Philippi he went to the river to preach to Lydia and the women gathered there(Acts 16:13). He understood the 'go' of Matthew 28:19-20 to mean that he was to go to the people where they were. Normally church plants are begun by initiating Sunday worship services in a fixed location and asking people to 'come'. This is not a New Testament practice and it would not be acceptable to Paul.

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<sup>46</sup> I Corinthians 9:19-23(NIV)

Paul's pattern is three-fold: 1)have a plan; 2)make it and yourself flexible; 3)go where the people are.

By the time we arrive at Acts 20 Paul's church planting ministry is coming to a close. There remain only a few observations that can advance our understanding of this ministry. In Acts Eighteen we note the literal 'tentmaking' ministry of Paul. The extent to which he practised this is ambiguous in the New Testament. Nonetheless it needs to be cited as a precedent for church planters, particularly where large denominational endowments are not available.

...(B)ecause he was a tentmaker as (Acquila and Priscilla) were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.<sup>47</sup>

When Silas and Timothy arrived, likely carrying an offering for Paul from Philippi, he 'devoted himself exclusively to preaching..'. The pattern of church planting may parallel this example. Where money is lacking a church planter may have to work at a secular job and minister in his free time. As he builds up the work money may become available that releases him to work full time in the ministry. Ideally one would hope to give full time attention to a new work but it is not always possible. Paul proves this by his own example. Nonetheless he established a solid work in Corinth that endured. Therefore the 'tentmaking' church planter can succeed.

Paul's insistence that evangelism does not lose its central place is underlined in chapters nineteen and twenty.

This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the

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<sup>47</sup> Acts 18:3,4(NIV)

province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.<sup>48</sup>

However I consider my life worth nothing to me; if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.<sup>49</sup>

It could be argued that the 'task' of church planting ceases to be evangelistic once a new church is successfully in place. Evangelism might be regarded only as a tool for getting a church started. Continually we have been reminded in Acts that church planting is evangelism and that with the reception of the gospel comes a responsibility to carry on the Great Commission. For Paul the task was unfinished as long as he lived. This is true for the Church.

When a church forgets its purpose, it has a difficult time deciding what's important.<sup>50</sup>

Have churches in general and church planters in particular forgotten the reason for the existence of the Church? Christ's call to go and make disciples is still in force and evangelism still has its central place in the mission of the Church.

### CONCLUSION

The manifesto for church planting is Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission. This fixes firmly the principle that the church planters call is to evangelize and make disciples. From the application of this in Acts we see a strong, if not total, lay involvement and acceptance of the Great Commission mandate. Fundamental to the church planting enterprise is a strong sense of purpose, of mission. There can be no greater mission than the Great Commission, nor

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<sup>48</sup> Acts 19:10(NIV)

<sup>49</sup> Acts 20:24(NIV)

<sup>50</sup> Warren, Purpose. 88.

does the Bible speak of any other mission.

From the Acts record we see a Biblical application of church planting. A sense of community that resembles a family is evident and the presence of the community atmosphere is directly linked to bearing fruit in evangelism. If the church planter sees the mission as evangelism a vital component of success must be the nurturing and development of a community that bears some resemblance to the one described in Acts 2:42ff.

In terms of planning, the church planter might be wise to forego the traditional model that favours services, programs, and structures as a priority in favour of a focus on evangelism and small group fellowships. The two highest values in Acts are evangelism and community. The evident success of the new church and the recording of it in Scripture suggests that the example and model is, at least in principle, normative for the Church. In summary, our review of church planting in Acts recommends these principles.

1.The church planter's mandate is to build through evangelism and to insure the perpetuation of the mission by modelling the priority of evangelism.

2.The church planter must build a united, loving community that embraces both accountability and commitment.

3.The church planter should foster lay involvement in the mission through training, teaching and modelling.

We reiterate that these principles are interdependent, that is, that they depend on one another for health and success. The evangelistic mission in Acts produced both the new community and the need for discipling and training. These, in turn, sustained the ongoing mission which completed and then renewed the cycle. It is this dynamic cycle that is the engine of church

**planting. Thus the above list is not a menu to choose from but an organic unity that will not survive dissection. It is not just the components we recommend in this thesis but the interactive process and interdependence that makes them function effectively.**



## CHAPTER THREE

### CHURCH PLANTING IN THE MINISTRY OF WESLEY

Wesley was not content with the proclamation of the gospel. He followed it by binding his converts into an organization admirably calculated to keep alive the good impulses aroused by the preaching.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Cameron captures the essential ingredients of the Methodist success story in this one statement. He acknowledges that the foundation of the Methodist movement was the preaching of John Wesley but that it ultimately survived and prospered because of the organization that he created. Admittedly Wesley's purpose was to see that the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls was sustained. His well-documented resistance to the foundation of a church apart from the Church of England is unquestioned.

It was only well on in the eighties that he reluctantly allowed a few of the societies to hold meetings at the hours of church services. Certainly he was adamant in his determination to keep them from becoming churches themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of his intention Wesley founded a movement that ultimately became a church. Indeed, despite his desire expressed in his own words, 'I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England and that none who regard my judgment will ever separate from it.'<sup>3</sup>...

...(H)e so organized the Methodists that everyone knew that sooner or later their links with the Church of England would be broken.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Cameron. Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective(Vol.1)(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>3</sup> John Wesley. Works Vol.13.Thomas Jackson, ed.,(Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 272.

<sup>4</sup> John Bishop, Methodist Worship(Princeton: Scholars Studies Press, 1992), 67.

His avowed opposition to the Methodist societies becoming churches and that they ultimately did become a denomination may hold some instruction for those whose purpose it is to plant churches. If Wesley created an organizational structure that, despite his own resistance, became a church, could modern church planters profit from the organizational principles Wesley used? Could they learn from his preaching methodology appropriate preaching strategies that would lead to success in church planting? Could they also learn from his theological motivation? It is the intention of this chapter to discover and elucidate church planting principles and strategies within the early Methodist movement associated with the person, preaching and organizational gifts of John Wesley.

Maldwyn Edwards<sup>5</sup> raises the question of the reasons for the rapid and startling advance of Methodism. He identifies three: 1) the preaching of John Wesley, 2) the organizational skills of John Wesley, and 3) the social conscience of John Wesley. Indeed he regards Wesley's preaching as the primary reason for success, a message that spoke of God's love, a religious democratic ethic and of social holiness. It was this message that caused the people to hear him gladly.<sup>6</sup> Wesley's power of organization was unparalleled, especially when we remember that he succeeded in a situation with neither tradition nor precedent. Wesley was always ready to improvise as the situation demanded.<sup>7</sup> Through his mobility and his adaptability he built an organization that literally had to recognize that it was a church despite Wesley's efforts to the

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<sup>5</sup> Maldwyn Edwards, 'John Wesley' History of The Methodist in Great Britain, Rupert Davies & Gordon Rupp eds.(London: Epworth Press, 1965), 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards. History, 63.

contrary.

**John Wesley believed the Bible knew nothing of solitary religion, and that the only true holiness is social holiness.<sup>8</sup>**

**Wesley was driven by twin passions, the salvation of souls and the transformation of society as a consequence of faith practically lived. One of the driving features of band meetings was the demand for good works based on social accountability. This inculcated in the movement a purpose-driven dynamic that gave the meetings meaning beyond the personal benefits of salvation.**

**Edwards three reasons will be examined in more detail with a view to discovering church planting principles that might likewise favourably affect the church planting enterprise in the 1990's.**

### **THE PREACHING OF JOHN WESLEY**

**The sermons of John Wesley '...became a cornerstone for the Methodist movement.'<sup>9</sup>**

**Wesley clearly understood that preaching played a vital, if not the vital, role in determining the character and substance of any church.**

**For though Wesley realized that members of the body of Christ can and do exist even where unscriptural doctrines are proclaimed, he remained unwilling to cut the cord completely between the preaching of the Word of God, and the suitability of the church on the other.<sup>10</sup>**

**Preaching was clearly a defining basis for the Methodist societies. Wesley's lifelong loyalty to**

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, A Concise History of Preaching(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 130.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology(Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 91.

the Anglican Church as 'nearer the scriptural plan than any other in Europe,' did not prevent him from criticizing the quality of preaching that existed in it. In Wesley's judgment, many of his contemporary clerics neither lived according to, nor properly preached the gospel.<sup>11</sup> This caused him to see the critical place of preaching in successfully sustaining the societies. It could be argued that Wesley's time and thus his methods are long since past and are therefore no longer relevant. Hull<sup>12</sup> and Kerstan<sup>13</sup> both argue that the issue is not preaching itself but relevant preaching. The key role of preaching in any evangelistic venture has remained unchallenged for centuries. Those, like Wesley, who were considered preaching giants in their time ...'addressed different urgencies; they aimed at different targets; but they grappled with problems defined by different contexts. In order to be relevant, their message had to be not timeless, but timely!' <sup>14</sup> It would be foolish to study the sermons of John Wesley and slavishly preach in the same style addressing the same issues.

Nevertheless, it is equally clear that there is a link between Wesley's emphasis on the ministry of preaching and the strength and vitality of the Methodist movement. Thus the role of preaching in church planting cannot be ignored. For Wesley success or failure hinges on preaching. What then can we learn from the preaching of Wesley that will assist in today's

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>12</sup> William E. Hull, 'The Contemporary World and The Preaching Task', Handbook of Contemporary Preaching. Michael Dudied ed. (Nashville: Broadman) 571-583.

<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Kerstan, 'Divine Words in Human Vessels', McMaster Journal of Theology. Vol.3, No.2, Spring 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Hull, *ibid.* 571.

church planting efforts?

**For Wesley...the struggle was...with a God-denying world, a world that did not believe. To this world a radical challenge must be issued through proclamation of the gospel by Christian preaching and action.**<sup>15</sup>

**It appears that Wesley faced a world much like our own in terms of unbelief. His answer was a vigorous proclamation of the gospel. Kerstan cites a disturbing modern trend, identified by John Stott and W.E. Sangster, toward a loss of confidence in the gospel in modern preachers.**

**...(O)ften preachers themselves are to blame for much of the disrespect the listeners have toward preaching because they themselves have experienced 'the loss of confidence in the gospel'.**<sup>16</sup>

**The romantic notion that somehow past generations were more receptive to the gospel may be responsible for this decline in gospel confidence. Wesley's experience historically invalidates that belief. He faced a culture which ...'came into existence during the Enlightenment...(and that)...carried a modern sensibility.'**<sup>17</sup> He succeeded with preaching that was emphatically gospel focussed and driven. Could it be that our modern shift away from preaching as evangelism has impacted our churches negatively? One might respond that the preaching of gospel sermons during Sunday worship is inappropriate. Indeed the worship services of Wesley's band meetings focussed on holiness preaching. Nonetheless, it is apparent that what gave the Wesleyan movement its dynamism was its mission-driven focus on evangelism. A sense of mission and purpose was the lifeblood of the Methodists and their

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<sup>15</sup> **Thomas A. Langford, Practical Divinity: Theology In The Wesleyan Tradition(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 21.**

<sup>16</sup> **Kerstan, ibid. 124.**

<sup>17</sup> **Langford, ibid. 21.**

mission was the greatest of all missions: the Great Commission. It is our contention that planting churches solely for the purpose of expanding denominational influence is an insufficient motivational basis for success. Warren <sup>18</sup> speaks to this critical issue citing a clear sense of mission as the basis for the success of the Saddleback Church.

**A focussed life and a focussed church will have far greater impact than unfocused ones. Like a laser beam, the more focussed your church becomes, the more impact it will have on society.** <sup>19</sup>

It was Wesley's focus on evangelism that drove Methodism. Wesley, as a persistently practical theologian, sought to hold the dimensions of 'faith alone' and holy living together. <sup>20</sup> This is Wesley's most significant contribution to Christian thought. Through Methodist preaching he resolved the Reformation tendency to polarize "faith alone" and "holy living". By emphasizing the need to 'work out your salvation' Wesley tied the evangelistic enterprise to growth in personal holiness. Holiness was eminently practical. It had to be lived out. Holiness preaching in the '90's tends to emphasize the mystical dimension of holiness, that is, the primacy of experience as a barometer of holiness. Wesley could not comprehend holiness that was not actively expressed in socially transforming way as in the mission of evangelism. This, I believe, is what accounts for the dramatic growth and perpetuation of the Methodist movement. As a principle for preaching in the context of church planting we can observe from Wesley that he had a passion for evangelism, and for insuring the spiritual growth of his converts and that they, in turn, would live holy lives that would impact their culture. He

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<sup>18</sup> Rick Warren, The Purpose-Driven Church(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>20</sup> Langford, Practical, 21.

practically resolved the second two passions through the classes he organized. But the primacy of evangelism as the machine that drove the Methodist movement cannot be denied. It was the source of many of its class members but also the visible expression of a mission to bring scriptural holiness to England. A strong case can be made for the belief that holiness was Wesley's primary concern. We do not argue his priorities but choose to focus on his method. The existence of the classes can not be isolated from evangelism. The social activism of Methodists can not be isolated from the classes. These three elements are causally related. It is this dynamic that is the essence of our thesis. In the New Testament we point to the primacy of evangelism. Here we can make a clear case for the same primacy while acknowledging Wesley's passion for holiness. It is how he achieved his passion that concerns us and there is abundant evidence that his methods are the same as those we identified in Acts.

What kind of preacher is most effective? There is something beyond preaching content that must be addressed. Broadus declares that ...'no man can repeatedly make others feel deeply who does not feel deeply himself....'<sup>21</sup> Wesley had a burning passion, particularly in his desire to see souls saved. Through his preaching and example that same passion characterized the people he reached. Must there therefore be an evangelist with a passion for lost souls at the heart of every church plant, one who like Wesley declares, "Church or no church we must save souls"<sup>22</sup>? This is an interesting question that deserves consideration on

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<sup>21</sup> John A. Broadus, Lectures On The History Of Preaching (New York: Sheldon & Co. 1876), 223.

<sup>22</sup> Bishop, op cit., 67.

the part of denominational leaders seeking to identify church planters. It is our belief that church planting as an end in itself is an insufficient motivation. The genius of Wesley is that his passion for souls ultimately made it necessary to formulate societies for conserving the fruits of evangelism. The necessity of churches followed. Wesley's resistance to creating a church is only a more compelling argument for considering his approach if one does want to plant a church. In making evangelism his primary goal, Wesley achieved, by default, the successful creation of churches.

Wesley's preaching style is equally instructive. Dargan describes it as 'eminently characteristic of the man, ...in thought, it was rich, logical, clear, and strong....'<sup>23</sup> According to Outler 'Wesley laid his Oxford scholarship aside in order to reach out in plain speech for plain people, with no fancy airs'<sup>24</sup>. In modern terms we would describe Wesley as 'seeker-sensitive'. In a time when the highly ornamental style of French oratory with its 'pretty, elegant sentences' from preachers like Bourdaloue, Wesley declared 'give me the plain,...style'<sup>25</sup>. Wesley took his preaching to the people, not just in terms of his physical presence but also in presenting his message with clarity and simplicity. In every sense of the word Wesley lived the principle: go where the people are. Thus he travelled over 100,000 miles on horseback in order to preach. He preached habitually at 5AM in order to accomo-

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<sup>23</sup> Edwin C. Dargan, A History Of Preaching Vol.2(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 323.

<sup>24</sup> Albert C. Outler, The Wesleyan Theological Heritage Thomas C.Oden & L.R.Langdon eds.(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 13.

<sup>25</sup> John Wesley, Sermons On Several Occasions Vol.2(New York: Carlton & Porter, 1788), iv.



date the working schedules of the people he preached to. He preached a message that the average working man could hear and understand. This stands in contrast to the 'build it and they will come' philosophy that so often drives modern church planting endeavours. Wesley went to the people with neither the expectation nor the demand that they come to him.

Finally, Wesley's preaching was, by design, intensely biblical.

**My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small."** <sup>26</sup>

Wilson <sup>27</sup> in analysing 132 of Wesley's sermons described them as exposition of normally a single text with frequent citations of other single texts as he developed doctrine with a view to application. Wesley's passion for the Bible is further revealed in the quote:

**I have thought, I am a creature of the day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air.... I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge for me.** <sup>28</sup>

Those who heard him in the Methodist movement were infected with the same passion. Preaching was the primary focus of every meeting. This speaks, by implication to the biblical principle of reproduction which declares that we reproduce 'after our own kind'. Wesley was 'seeker-sensitive' in terms of making his preaching style simple and plain, but he never aban-

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<sup>26</sup> John Wesley, 'The Bible', A Compend of Wesley's Theology R.W. Burton & R.E. Chiles, eds.(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 20.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, Concise., 133.

<sup>28</sup> John Wesley, The Works Of John Wesley A.M. Vol.1(New York: B. Warren & T. Mason, 1835), xix.

doned the Bible as his text. Those who followed him did likewise. Does this raise questions about modern 'seeker-sensitive' preaching which waters down the Word of God to broad principles in order not to offend the sensibilities of the pagan mind-set. If the preacher does not have an unqualified passion for the Bible, it stands to reason that his converts (whatever it is they are being converted to?) will fail to have it as well. Thus in terms of method and style we conclude that Wesley succeeded as a church planter because his preaching was evangelistic; purpose-driven by scriptural holiness; accessible both in content and availability; and unapologetically biblical. We remember that Wesley had no intention of forming churches. It is this that commends him to us. By focussing on evangelism and biblical holiness Wesley produced churches. We believe that if we set the right priorities the church planting endeavour will have a better chance of success.

The primary vehicle for promoting scriptural holiness was the class. Our modern equivalent would be the cell or house group. We understand this to be a vehicle for Christian growth, spiritual development and training. This is the parallel in our model to Wesley. We are looking for the three-fold model with a recognizably interactive dynamic between evangelism, community and training. Often the class or cell group plays a dual role as a community builder and ministry training vehicle. In the modern era there are few church leaders who match Wesley in organizational genius. The Methodist classes were unique in their time and remain as a model to every small group leader today.

#### **ORGANIZATION AND ECCLESIOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY**

Collins<sup>29</sup> describes Wesley's ecclesiology with such terms as 'controversial' and 'complex'.

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<sup>29</sup> Collins, Faithful, 83.

This is attributed to 'the fact that Wesley's thought(on ecclesiology) emerged in the context of a burgeoning revival which was, at times, at odds with its parent church'<sup>30</sup>. In other words Wesley responded and reacted to the necessities created by the results of his ministry. We have pointed out that Wesley had a serious concern with the deficiencies of the Church of England. The structure of the Methodist society was a response to these deficiencies. This response reveals principles Wesley saw as vital to conserving his work. Though he would have fought the definition of these principles as ecclesiological, they are nonetheless church-fostering principles which we see as applicable to successful church planting.

Wesley had an unshakeable commitment to the Church of England. He was an ordained Anglican priest and an Oxonian, he served his church as one of its missionaries; he revered Cranmer's homilies...; he cherished the polity and sacramental life of this communion as revealed in The Book of Common Prayer.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, he held to a higher calling defined by biblical fidelity. In Wesley's own words, 'a Methodist is one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible'<sup>32</sup>. Thus Wesley organized the Societies with a biblical model undergirding his methodology. In addressing unbiblical deficiencies in the Anglican Church he developed a biblical ecclesiology for the Societies. It is to this that we must attribute his success in founding an organization that became a church. Three identifying principles emerge from his ecclesiology in his statement of intent.

...(T)he church is a body of people united in order: first, to save each his own

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>32</sup> Edwards, History., 44.

soul, then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards,...to save all men from present and future misery.<sup>33</sup>

It is here we see the seeds of the comprehensive model we identified in Acts. First there is the evangelistic imperative of saving souls. Then disciple-making naturally moves to helping converts to grow in their faith to maturity. This necessitates the setting up of organizational structures that make this possible. Wesley developed and refined the classes to meet this need. The third element is the training and development of ministry gifts that will contribute to the evangelistic enterprise, thus completing the cycle. From this basic outline Wesley created an organization that was 'functional, goal-oriented(teleological), and frankly evangelical.'<sup>34</sup> By functional we mean once again that necessity was the mother of invention. Because the Church of England failed to support the work of sustaining the awakening Wesley responded to an 'absolute necessity', fearing that unnumbered souls would perish unless he created a viable instrument for ministry. Because of this he first tolerated and ultimately encouraged lay preaching.

Taking the offensive, and in a pragmatic mood, he urged his detractors to consider the ultimate goal of ecclesiastical order.... 'Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, he queried. 'Order then,' he continued,'is so far valuable as it answers these ends, and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth.'<sup>35</sup>

Thus Wesley holds high the principle of biblical functionality. It must be biblically based and it must work to achieve a biblical end, in this case, soul-winning and discipling. The principle

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<sup>33</sup> Collins, Faithful, 86.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>35</sup> Collins. 103.

of goal orientation has already been referred to in our treatment of Wesley's preaching. Here it is affirmed again.

**The Wesleyan accent, as Outler points out, is the insistence that the church is (best defined in action), in her witness and mission, rather than by her form of polity.<sup>1136</sup>**

The societies had to have a purpose for existence that became a focus for action. The purpose was two-fold. Though apparently different in focus the two purposes were ultimately conjoined. They were: 1) to promote scriptural holiness across Britain, and 2) to evangelize and win the lost. For Wesley they existed for the encouragement and development of holiness but he always had as his ultimate concern the evangelization of England. He recognized, however, that for the mission to succeed, its labourers must work toward and uphold a high standard of scriptural holiness. To him this was biblical functionality. It is important to understand that Wesley did not separate conversion and a holy lifestyle. When we say that he wanted to promote holiness we must realize that for Wesley evangelism and conversion were a natural and inseparable part of this endeavour. The societies were goal and purpose oriented in their reason for existence and in how they functioned. They facilitated an overall process that led to evangelism and social impact as a part of a continuous cycle. The genius of Wesley's organizational construct is that he reacted to a new ministry situation in a context without precedent and created a structure that was biblical and functional. The classes appear to be a distinct piece in the Methodist organization but they were actually a part of a larger vision that drove them forward. We conclude from this that cell or house groups should not exist without a purpose greater than themselves. Wesley would have rejected the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

notion that the holiness promoted in the classes would go no further than the interaction of the members. For him holiness had no value if it did not impact the world around the church for Jesus Christ. This is simply an earlier version of purpose-driven ministry. About the Methodist classes, bands and select societies Colin Williams says:

**Wesley's view of holiness was woven into his ecclesiology. He believed that the gathering together of believers into small voluntary societies for mutual discipline and Christian growth was essential to the Church's life. He insisted that there must be some form of small group fellowship.<sup>37</sup>**

We see then that Wesley's understanding of holiness was inextricably linked with his ecclesiology. He very much anticipates the small group movement that is influencing modern churches. In principle there is little need to convince modern pastors of the need for small groups. However we may need to see beyond the structure to look more closely at Wesley's ecclesiological basis for small groups. For him these groups existed to promote holiness, a holiness that Wesley understood must be lived out practically and actively in evangelism and social influence. These groups existed for ministry. Thus everything about their structure and content was designed to produce active disciples.

**He emphasized the social character of religion by means of corporate spiritual life which found expression in the class-meetings, band-meetings, and other organizations which he introduced.<sup>38</sup>**

Wesley saw the Society meetings as supplemental to church worship and thus initially resisted any sacramental ministry. Nonetheless, the Society as a whole met on Sunday for what was called a 'preaching service'. The sacraments were not observed because it was assumed that

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<sup>37</sup> Colin Williams, John Wesley's Theology Today(New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 150, 151.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop, Methodist Worship., 66.

worshippers would take part in services at their local parish. This 'supplemental' concept is important and must not be passed over. Wesley distinguished the Society and the local parish in terms of ministry purpose. In other words the society did not exist to create a church. It existed, as already stated, for evangelism and the promotion of holiness. In terms of church planting we contend that Wesley succeeded precisely because he did not intend to plant a church. He was forced to acknowledge the existence of a church as a consequence of the ministry that developed.

At the same time he so organized the Methodists that everyone knew that sooner or later their links with the Church of England would be broken.<sup>39</sup>

Though not by design Wesley may have uncovered critical church planting principles that we can profit from. Assuming that one begins a church plant with a small core group following Wesley's model, it would be necessary for that group to have a clear ministry focus apart from the purpose of planting a church. In other words, a church should arise out of the necessities of ministry rather than ministry arising out of the need to plant a church. It may also be necessary for the members of a core group to retain their membership in their place of worship to sustain the distinction that the small group has a unique ministry focus. Wesley's model of growth in personal holiness with a view to evangelistic and social action appears to be a proven model of success.

The elements of class-meetings and band-meetings were scripture reading and exposition, prayer and personal testimony, and accountability. Members were subject to examination of their spiritual state and group advice and discipline. The theological emphasis

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 67.

on holiness of heart and life was the subject of all exposition and preaching. The structure of the Society itself is not as critical as what drove it to ultimately become a church.

The rapid growth of the movement rather caught (Wesley) by surprise. As a consequence, the formative period of Methodist organization was filled with expedients, some of which proved their worth and were retained, others of which did not and were discarded.<sup>40</sup>

For this reason we will not belabour the particulars of the Methodist structure and polity. Our greatest profit is in recognizing the underlying principle of successful small group dynamics that lead to the development of a church.

We look finally in this context on Wesley as an organizer. "A ...major reason for the spread of Methodism was Wesley's power of organization."<sup>41</sup> Apart from the influence of the Moravians, Methodism began without formal traditions. Wesley had a gift for improvising as the situation demanded. The opportunity called forth the man.<sup>42</sup> But there was more than a gift for organization behind his success. Wesley had vision and a conviction that there were bottom line essentials that could not be compromised. Vision and conviction dictated rather than organizational structure.

It is from full conviction of this that we have (1) preached abroad, (2) prayed extempore, (3) formed Societies, and (4) permitted preachers who were not episcopally ordained. And were we pushed on this side, were there no alternative allowed, we should judge it our bounden duty rather wholly to separate from the Church than to give up any of these points. Therefore, if we cannot stop a separation without stopping lay preachers, the case is clear - we

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<sup>40</sup> Cameron, Methodism., 35.

<sup>41</sup> Edwards, History., 62.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 63.



cannot stop at all...<sup>43</sup>

Though Wesley responded creatively as an organizer he had a clear vision of what must happen through the Societies. The structures were incidental inasmuch as they served the ministry goal. It would appear then that more than a gift for organization is necessary for a successful church planting experience. Those who view church plants as franchises with pre-defined organizational limits may be violating a fundamental principle of success. The Acts experience is really mirrored in Methodism. Nowhere in Acts do we find explicit teaching on ecclesiology or the planting of churches. But we see churches planted and come into fuller development. What happened with Wesley was that structures were created in response to need and those that worked remained. The Acts church leaders must have worked in a very similar manner, what one might describe as 'flying by the seat of your pants'. Certainly we retain a healthy respect for the sovereignty of God and biblical fidelity, but at the same time practicality and functionality that recognizes new contexts and new needs is an invaluable church planting attitude. We would therefore recommend that church planters hold very loosely to pre-determined denominational and organizational structures. Stay flexible enough to respond creatively. Wesley had a unique genius, an ability to create new structures to meet new needs. Time proved the wisdom of his works.

#### THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF JOHN WESLEY

We shall look only briefly at the issue of Wesley's social conscience. There are a number

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<sup>43</sup> John Wesley, 'The Church' A Compend of Wesley's Theology. 256.

of controversial aspects that do not contribute to our study. Halevy<sup>44</sup> put forth the argument that the Methodist revolution forestalled a revolution in England comparable to the French revolution, suggesting that revolutionary fervour was channelled into religious fervour. In this he anticipated Marx's argument that 'religion is the opiate of the people.' Halevy almost completely discounts divine sovereignty and the work of the Holy Spirit in producing a social revolution through the Wesleyan revival.

England was entering into the Industrial Revolution during the eighteenth century, a revolution that transplanted people in multitudes from farms to cities. Many could not find work and there was a wide gap between rich and poor. Wesley preached and urged great compassion for the poor.

His journal carried notation after notation insisting that his societies were made up of both rich and poor. He pled their cause and laboured to help them escape the grips of poverty.<sup>45</sup>

He spoke out against slavery and alcohol, and was a pioneer in the area of popular public education. The theological underpinning for his social conscience was his understanding of Christianity as a social religion. Thus as he preached for the new birth and personal conversion, it was always with the understanding that believers were to impact on and transform the world around them. In modern times we have emphasized the personal side of conversion and the benefits deriving to the believer. Our modern concern reveals a tension between personal and social religion. In his discourse on the Sermon on the Mount Wesley sees the

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<sup>44</sup> Elie Halevy, The Birth of Methodism in England(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

<sup>45</sup> Clyde E. Fant Jr. and William M. Pinson Jr. eds. Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching Vol.III(Waco: Word Books, 1971), 7.

tension as being between solitary and social religion. For Wesley believers need to be in the world as salt and light but also as a necessity for their own growth.

Christians are not to love the world, nevertheless there is a real sense in which they need the world.<sup>46</sup>

Thus Wesley preached a close connection between the inward and outward manifestations of faith. This points to the significance of the message we preach in determining the outcome of any evangelistic enterprise. Wesley believed that inward religion is necessarily manifested in outward religion, in public life.<sup>47</sup> One wonders how true this is when we see how little impact North American Christianity has on the culture it exists in. Wesley is credited with a social revolution that may have prevented a violent civil revolution in England. The difference appears to have been the strong message of social responsibility that Wesley preached and taught and insisted be lived out in the Societies.

We do not need to examine the specifics of his message as long as we understand that what Wesley preached was relevant to the culture he lived in. He applied the gospel to his world. Thus, if the gospel, of necessity, is to have social impact, it behooves the preacher to discern what impact it should have on the culture he finds himself in. The issues were different in Wesley's day but the principle remains and it is left to us to find contemporary issues of social conscience to address. Wesley expected and fostered a consciousness of impact on the world beyond the confines of the local. As in evangelism there was a sense of mission on social issues although Wesley would have seen this simply as another form of evangelism. Thus the gospel

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<sup>46</sup> Collins, Faithful, 178.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 178.

was not just to go to the world. It was to change the world. Wesley's social conscience was simply another manifestation of mission. In the context of planting churches one cannot ignore the absolute necessity of a sense of mission and if one is going to be biblical there is no other mission that supercedes taking the gospel to the world with the intent of making a transforming impact. This was one dynamic that drove the Methodist movement contributing to Wesley's unintentioned success as a church planter.

### CONCLUSION

No one would challenge the effectiveness of Wesley. At his death there were 70,000 Methodists in England alone, shepherded by 550 itinerant preachers, most of whom Wesley himself had called out and trained. Shortly after his death the Methodist movement succumbed to the inevitable and became an official church. It is a given that Wesley laboured hard in the ministry but that he also benefited from ministering in an atmosphere of revival. This does raise the inevitable challenge to adopting the principles we have derived from our examination. That is, how much do we attribute Wesley's success to the atmosphere of revival and the manifest working of the Holy Spirit? This question recognizes that there was an extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented, outpouring of the Holy Spirit that made Wesley into the right man at the right time. Implicit, however, in this question is the suggestion that the Holy Spirit is not presently working in the Church and that one can only minister successfully in extraordinary times of renewal. If that be true it would be logical to forgo all ministry until the Spirit sees fit to send revival again. Indeed these principles describe what the Holy Spirit was doing in Wesley's day and must therefore be consistent, insomuch as any human instrument can be, with the divine character. Those who want to plant churches can learn

a great deal from them. In their broadest terms we see that a successful church plant is not one that is initiated as an end in itself. It comes into being as a function of missionary purpose, or more explicitly, as a by-product of mission. It is our contention that without a mission beyond the simple goal of church planting it is unlikely that there will be a successful outcome. Wesley succeeded precisely because he didn't focus on church planting. He focussed on evangelism.

It is yielding to apostolic zeal and witness for the sake of those who have not yet heard and heeded the gospel. James Logan writes, "A recovery of the so-called Wesleyan logic that gives priority to apostolic witness over institutional formation and structure would bring into scrutiny every structure of the church." The apostolic task of the congregation and its leaders is to ask, "Are our structures and priorities 'bent outward' in mission in our setting, or are they 'bent inward' in self-maintenance and institutional preservation?"<sup>48</sup>

This is a question that church planters must ask. Wesley's answer is 'bend outward' and institutional formation will take care of itself.

Wesley's contribution to our model recognizes:

1. That our three-fold model of evangelism, community building through small groups, and training for ministry is really a single functioning organic whole with each part dependent on and sustained by the others. Wesley evangelized. The classes conserved the fruit. The classes served the goal of continuing the evangelistic enterprise by training in holiness and ministry development. This led to more evangelism which started the cycle again.

2. Wesley's passion to transform England with the gospel drove the three elements of the above model from beginning to end. Translating this to any other context we strongly

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<sup>48</sup> Daniel C. Benedict and Craig Kenneth Miller, Contemporary Worship for the 21st Century: Worship or Evangelism?(Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1995), 47.

**affirm the need for a biblical purpose that will drive the church planting enterprise. For the above model to work as intended the purpose must be a common one. Again we prescribe the Great Commission.**

**3. Wesley let biblical principle drive him forward. He let go of structures and organizations that did not facilitate what God was doing. Church planters would do well to imitate his practical and functional organizational skills. This may mean departure from standard denominational structures in church planting situations.**

## CHAPTER 4

### A CONTEMPORARY CHURCH PLANTING MODEL

**The main reason many new churches fail is because they are started with uneducated enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup>**

**We have thus far examined church planting in the context of the New Testament church and in the England that John Wesley knew. A contemporary example of successful church planting rounds out our historical analysis. We expect to discover principles common to all three settings that are biblically valid and accessible to every church planter. Our approach to Warren's ministry will combine the approach of a case study and a review of his book The Purpose Driven Church. We will not ignore criticism but our objective is to find evidence that Warren has employed the model we have been studying in Acts and in Methodism.**

**Warren's statement above reflects a concern that failure in church planting has more to do with ignorance than commitment.**

**You must begin to look at everything your church does through the lens of ...New Testament purposes....<sup>2</sup>**

**Essentially he is concerned that the church planting endeavour has lost its biblical mandate and that it is driven by growth alone.**

**Warren is the pastor of the Saddleback Valley Community Church, recognized as 'the fastest-growing church in the history of America', averaging attendance of 10,000 weekly. W.A. Criswell declared that Saddleback 'has grown without compromising the mission or**

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 80.

doctrine of a New Testament church'.<sup>3</sup> Warren's thesis is that healthy churches will grow and that a significant part of biblical health is a church driven by biblical purpose.

**Church growth is the result of church health. Church health can only occur when our message is biblical and our mission is balanced.<sup>4</sup>**

He began Saddleback as a church plant with the determination to build on biblical purposes.

He believed that every church is purpose driven - but not every church is driven by the right purpose.

**Every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens. It may be unspoken. It may be unknown to many. Most likely it's never been officially voted on. But it is there, influencing every aspect of the church's life.<sup>5</sup>**

If growth does not occur in a church it may be a reflection of the possibility that the 'purpose' of the church is either unbiblical or unbalanced. As we hear Warren speak we must keep reminding ourselves that he speaks mainly of church plants at the very beginning of the church life cycle which are reasonably expected to grow as a function of their very existence as newborn churches.

**If my kids don't grow, something has gone terribly wrong. Lack of growth usually indicates an unhealthy situation, possibly a disease.<sup>6</sup>**

Thus, for Warren, the issue is not actually growth but health, with the understanding that health will produce growth. It is natural for the church as a living organism to grow if it is

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 16.



healthy. With this in mind Warren began the Saddleback enterprise with a thorough search of the New Testament for principles, patterns and procedures. He views the New Testament as the 'greatest church-growth book ever written'.<sup>7</sup>

Through study and ministry experience Warren concluded that two New Testament statements summarize what the Church is to be and to do, both from the mouth of Jesus: the Great Commandment(Matthew 22:37-40) and, the Great Commission(Matthew 28:19-20)

**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.... Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.<sup>8</sup>**

**Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.<sup>9</sup>**

We immediately recognize that Warren has identified the two of the key elements of church planting success in our study of Acts. We concluded that the Acts church was built on and driven by the Great Commission and that an essential part of this mission was a loving and united, family fellowship identifiable in every local church plant. Thus Warren began with the understanding that the church needed to be a missionary church and that in doing this, it would also 'be' a Great Commandment church. Warren did not see these as separate issues but as dependent on each other. In the Acts 4:32,33 passage we reviewed in Chapter Two we identified the connection between the loving fellowship of the church and the successful proclamation of the gospel. This is reflected in the Saddleback church mission statement.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 22:37-40, NIV.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:19-20, NIV.

**A Great Commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a Great Church.<sup>10</sup>**

**For him this was and is a health issue for church planting. Success in the Great Commission is a primary health indicator.**

**A church's health is measured by its sending capacity, not its seating capacity.<sup>11</sup>**

**In order to define this more clearly Warren determined to forsake the normal church planting procedure which encourages believers from other churches to become involved in a new work.**

**Transfer growth was deemed an inappropriate church planting methodology.**

**...I determined to begin with unbelievers rather than with a core of committed Christians. This was not the way all the books on church starting said to do it, but I felt certain it was what God was calling us to do. Our focus would be limited to reaching the unchurched for Christ....<sup>12</sup>**

**As evidence of Saddleback's commitment to the Great Commission Warren reports that in the churches' first fifteen years seven thousand people gave their lives to Christ through their evangelism efforts.**

**In building on these two foundational Scriptures, Saddleback Church discovered five purposes for the Church:**

- 1. Love the Lord with all your heart.**
- 2. Love your neighbour as yourself.**
- 3. Go and make disciples.**
- 4. Baptize them.**

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<sup>10</sup> Warren, 103.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 39.

**5. Teach them to obey.<sup>13</sup>**

**Each purpose statement is based on or directly quotes a critical line of one of the two passages. Number five is further acknowledgment of fundamental church planting activities pointed to in Acts and the founding of Methodism. In Matthew and Acts we see the Twelve commissioned not just to win converts but to teach and train them so that the ministry might be reproduced and the chain of 'going into all the world' might remain unbroken. Wesley somehow recognized this as well. Because of the class origins of his converts and his unconventional methods of evangelism he was forced to employ the Methodist classes where converts were taught and ultimately trained to assume ministry and leadership roles in the unfolding Methodist church. Warren too recognizes that if the church ceases to evangelize it ceases to have purpose. Without converts entering the classes with the ultimate goal of being trained to contribute to the fulfilment of the Great Commission the classes cease to have any real meaning. Inexorably linked to their existence is a commitment to continue the work of evangelism by making disciples who live out the demands of the gospel both through direct proclamation and the influence of a holy lifestyle.**

**Thus Saddleback Church members are committed to grow the church by conversion and must be committed to the Great Commission. The Saddleback membership commitment involves the signing of a written covenant to that end. Two examples of covenant commitment are full participation in a Saddleback cell group and to training that will lead to participation in one of the outreach ministries of the church. Ministries range from direct evangelism to a soup kitchen and a pregnancy crisis centre as examples of a broad list of possibilities.**

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 103-106.

**If you do not fulfil the membership covenant, you are dropped from our membership.<sup>14</sup>**

**Otherwise by Warren's reckoning the church becomes unfruitful regardless of all the other ministry activity that may be in place.**

**Considering the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church, I believe that the definition of faithfulness for a local church must include growth by the conversion of unbelievers.<sup>15</sup>**

**Methods are negotiable. Warren identifies six myths about church planting, one of which is that there is one secret key to church growth. There is more than one way to grow a church.<sup>16</sup>**

**How you evaluate the success of what you have done, however, is by evangelism that leads to conversion and the integration, teaching and training of new believers. This is non-negotiable.**

**Any method which does not contribute to this result, according to Warren is expendable.**

**I contend that when a church continues to use methods that no longer work, it is being unfaithful to Christ.<sup>17</sup>**

**Vance Havner used to say, "A church can be straight as a gun barrel doctrinally and just as empty spiritually." We must be willing to say, with unreserved commitment to our Lord and Saviour, "We'll do whatever it takes to reach people for Christ."<sup>18</sup>**

**Warren is not rigid on process but on outcome. These are words that Wesley might have used.**

**He too was concerned with functionality. On the issue of lay preachers Wesley responded to**

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, .

the challenge of the Church of England that if given the choice of making them stop to satisfy those who insisted on ordination then he would chose to let them continue. Why? Because the method was working and he could see no other way of getting the gospel out as effectively. Warren is really saying the same thing. If it is a choice between bowing at the altar of tradition and the gospel there really is no choice. Wesley offended his contemporaries. No doubt Warren has done likewise. Again we must remind ourselves to keep our reaction within the context of birthing new churches. In terms of the three church planting principles we are examining in historical context we are seeing the priority of evangelism. This does not mean that evangelism is most important but that it logically comes first. Conversion must precede discipleship and worship gatherings. From a purpose standpoint we define our purpose as fulfilling the Great Commission. If this logically begins with evangelism and mandates teaching and discipleship, it follows that gathering for instruction and community building structures which will be described as church will result. The purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission defines the process and churches should be the outcome. This happened in Acts and we saw the same result under the leadership of Wesley.

Warren sees church planting failures not as a reflection of the method of the church planter but of his purpose. Purpose will define process and ultimately, outcome. Thus every church planter must begin with the fundamental question of what his purpose is.

What is needed today are churches that are driven by purpose instead of by other forces. This book is written to offer a new paradigm, the purpose-driven church, as a biblical and healthy alternative to traditional ways that churches have organized and operated.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 80.

It is clear that Warren agrees with both the apostle Paul and John Wesley in that there can only be one purpose. We quoted First Corinthians 9:19-23 in Chapter Two in which Paul declared, "I do it all for the sake of the gospel. Chapter Three affirmed that Wesley succeeded precisely because he wasn't focussed on church planting but on evangelism. Joshua Logan took the position that Wesley's purpose and its priority was revolutionary.

**A recovery of the so-called Wesleyan logic that gives priority to apostolic witness over institutional formation and structure would bring into scrutiny every structure of the church.<sup>20</sup>**

This is precisely what Warren's message is, that in planting churches there has been a loss of biblical purpose, specifically evangelistic purpose. The purposes which have been substituted have led to what are, by biblical standards, unhealthy outcomes. He affirms that every church is driven by some purpose. Is it, however, the right purpose? The difficulty of becoming a biblical, purpose-driven church is illustrated by a survey undertaken by Win Arn asking the question, "Why does the church exist?"

**Of the church members surveyed, 89 per cent said, "The church's purpose is to take care of my family's and my needs." ...Of the pastors surveyed 90 per cent said the purpose of the church was to win the world and 10 per cent said it was to care for the needs of the members.<sup>21</sup>**

It would seem that the church leader who 'gives priority to apostolic witness' has an uphill battle before him. However it is also true that a leader who fails to lead with a clear purpose will have difficulty motivating people. Morale and mission always go together.<sup>22</sup> Citing

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 47

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 86.

**Proverbs 28:18(KJV), "Where there is no vision the people perish", Warren gives his purpose driven translation, "where there is no vision, people leave for another parish".<sup>23</sup> This speaks to the church planter's fundamental problem. How will he succeed in getting people to gather around him in the church planting enterprise? Is the purpose of planting a church, in itself, sufficient to attract people who will work for a successful outcome? It may well be but the next question that must be asked is, "What will drive the church after a successful outcome?" We have pointed out Warren's contention that purpose defines process and process defines outcome. Can a church that is built on a narrowly defined objective move successfully beyond it to new objectives and goals? To clarify, purpose is self-defining. This means, for example, that purpose will define the kind of people the church planter will attract. An attempt to redefine purpose down the road may mean the loss of church members who committed on the basis of another reason. That is why Warren, with the concurrence of the apostle Paul and Wesley, insists that evangelism must be the driving purpose from the start.**

**Further, clarity of purpose has benefit in forestalling future problems. The church planter must remember that he is, in effect, designing the genetic code of the church that will be. Genetic scientists work with clearly defined objectives in a precise manner. They know exactly what they want to achieve. A church planter should too. A clear purpose not only defines what we do, it defines what we don't do.<sup>24</sup> The church planter has limited material and labour resources. The question of how he will spend what he has is critical. Time also may be limited. Subsidies are usually temporary and occasionally conditional. Therefore he does not**

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 87.

have the luxury of wasting energy trying to find out how to plant a church in the assigned community. Seeker sensitive strategies are often based on learning the context of ministry and developing strategies that are appropriate. Warren believes that this is a misdirected approach.

The church should be *seeker sensitive* but it must not be seeker driven.<sup>25</sup>

Again we return to a biblically driven purpose. Essentially Warren is saying that the church planter cannot go wrong if his purpose is undeniably biblical. The 'process' may be contemporary as opposed to traditional but the outcome is evaluated on the basis of biblical purpose.

How does a church evaluate itself? Not by comparing itself to other churches, but by asking, "Are we doing what God intends for us to do?" and "How well are we doing it?"<sup>26</sup>

Warren recommends a study of scripture that has as its guiding framework the following:

Look at Christ's ministry on earth.

Look at the images and names of the Church.

Look at the example of New Testament churches.

Look at the commands of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

In our study of Acts we endeavoured to do this. As a contemporary model for successful church planting it is remarkable how precisely Warren affirms the principles arising from Acts. Specifically he affirms the centrality of the Great Commission and the necessity of the Great

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 97.



Commandment in organic linkage. One cannot function without the other. Warren's contribution to the church planting debate is his belief that the contemporary church has forgotten New Testament church planting principles. Critical to this is the understanding that one cannot, for example, choose to emphasize being a Great Commandment church at the expense of the Great Commission. In this model a healthy church is an integrated model. Church health is a balance of necessary components. Church health can only occur when our message is biblical and our mission is balanced.<sup>28</sup> Can a church plant survive if it is 'half-biblical'? Can a church focus solely on community and disregard evangelism? Our Acts study affirmed that the success of either is dependent on the other. Warren agrees. The mission of the church includes, indeed emphasizes, evangelism and building a community of love.

Warren is not at all averse to organization and structure. Indeed he is an admirer of John Wesley.

John Wesley's name is still recognized by millions of Christians. Why is this? Wesley was an itinerant preacher just like Whitefield, engaging in large outdoor evangelistic meetings. But Wesley was also an organizer. He created an organizational structure to fulfill his purpose that far outlasted his lifetime. The organization is called the Methodist Church.<sup>29</sup>

Like Wesley, Warren made the keystone of his church building program the small group. Also, like Wesley, Warren used these small groups as the main vehicle for maturing and training believers.

As the church we are called not only to reach people, but also to teach them. After someone has made a decision for Christ, he or she must be discipled. It is

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 121.

**the church's responsibility to develop people to spiritual maturity.<sup>30</sup>**

**Taking into account differing levels of commitment and principles in Jesus' ministry, Warren has developed a program of small groups that moves people systematically by training and nurture into positions of leadership and ministry responsibility. Warren reports that a majority of the full-time staff in his church began as lay-persons in the basic entry level of Saddleback's small group ministry. This certainly suggests a highly effective program. Warren attributes this to a solid foundational purpose.**

**The foundation determines both the size and the strength of the building. A church built on an inadequate or faulty foundation will never reach the height God intends for it to reach.<sup>31</sup>**

## **CONCLUSION**

**The specific details of the Saddleback story could provide manifold lessons in the practical aspects of planting churches, but our objective has been to glean principles rather than engage in minute analysis. Warren does not intend to deny the validity of churches that have ministry emphases consistent with their unique journey and place in a changing life cycle. He is focussing solely on the issue of starting new churches. He could be criticized for sounding as though he sees many other churches as unbiblical. His concern is that many new churches are started in an unbiblical manner and The Purpose Driven Church is his answer to that need and not a polemic against churches that do not conform to the Saddleback model. Surprisingly every attempt to discover published responses to Warren has proven unfruitful. Either this**

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 86.

means that critics are largely in agreement with him or that the popular nature of his book has garnered little scholarly interest. We believe it is necessary to illustrate a contemporary church planting story that is describable and relevant to our historical studies. The risk of this is the fleeting nature of so many of today's success stories. Success should normally stand the test of time. That Warren has authored a notable contemporary church planting success is undeniable. The question of achieving New Testament success in the nineties troubles every clergyman. Warren has succeeded in confirming three key elements discovered as common to successful church planting in the Book of Acts and in the ministry of John Wesley.

1. A commitment to fulfil the Great Commission as the primary driving force in church ministry.

2. A commitment to fostering community through the structure of small house or cell groups.

3. A commitment to discipling and training new believers with a view to reproducing leaders and evangelists.

The value in focussing on Warren, Wesley and Acts is the distance in time that separates them and the complete lack of cultural similarity. Three separate success stories with three common elements that are inextricably linked to what has been achieved provide a compelling argument for imitation on the part of the modern church planter.

There is evidence to suggest that where the contemporary church has gone astray is in its waning commitment to evangelism. Warren, Wesley and the apostle Paul would, on the basis this study surely agree that if you remove evangelism all else in the church loses meaning and therefore purpose.

**If you want to build a healthy, strong, and growing church you must spend time laying a solid foundation. This is done by clarifying in the minds of everyone exactly why the church exists and what it is supposed to do.<sup>32</sup>**

**The survey we quoted by Win Arn suggests that there is a lot of confusion about this question especially since pastors and lay people hold opposite viewpoints.**

**In principle people believe in evangelism. In practice few participate in it. In our next chapter we will look at the Canadian church commitment to evangelism and whether it hinders or facilitates the church planter.**

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 86.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CANADIAN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

We are beginning to identify common elements in the church planting process. Three that appear in our historical studies are: 1) evangelism, 2) small group fellowships, and 3) lay training. Should a church planter desire to begin a church that incorporates this model it is our belief that 2) and 3) would be a matter of planning, structure and execution in implementation, simply because they involve working with those *already in the church* who have some level of commitment. Evangelism, however, focuses on people outside the church who have no commitment and likely no interest at all. It is the most difficult part of the church planting exercise and yet, the most critically important. The book of Acts, Wesley and Warren all present the three elements in an integrated model. The elements incorporate into the church newly evangelized believers who are moving up a learning curve that trains them for ministry and the winning of new believers who begin the cycle over again. Evangelism is the engine that runs the model. We have affirmed that this is a biblical model proven in history and by contemporary successful application. All this leads to our focus in this chapter on the role of evangelism, particularly in Canada. Since our research will review church planting in a Canadian denomination, it is appropriate to look at the sociological picture in Canada and the attitude of evangelical leaders toward evangelism. Our research is expected to reveal that evangelism has declined as a motivation for the church planting endeavour in the C&MA in Canada. Is this a matter of leadership? One would expect that plans and emphases come from the top down. Why might this have happened?

The majority of [Christians] believe they cannot be successful in sharing their

faith. - The Barna Group<sup>1</sup>

The most significant word in this citation is the word 'believe'. The adage that perception is what creates our reality is instructive in understanding the church's struggle to develop workable strategies that mobilize people for evangelism. Spader<sup>2</sup> likens our efforts to a 'spiritual deer hunting season'. We function on a seasonal basis, typically the week of evangelistic meetings or the fall outreach thrust. Evangelistic activity has become a special endeavour, perhaps for a special season but not standard operating procedure.<sup>3</sup> But even more disturbing is the evidence that in many evangelical churches no plans for evangelistic outreach even exist. R.W. Bibby's EvangelTrends analyses congregational evangelism in practice. Surveys indicate that there is a strong subjective commitment to evangelism. But Bibby concludes that there is a gap between belief and practice.

-Although almost 80% of leaders say their churches are trying to be evangelistic, just over 65% indicate that their churches actually have a plan for evangelism in place.

-Of the 60% of congregations with evangelism plans, only about three-quarters actually have built those plans into their budgets; this means that only about 45% of the leaders' congregations have plans plus money in place.<sup>4</sup>

The survey also indicates that satisfaction with plans in place is not high.

Overall, what all this adds up to is that only about 40% of Canada's most evangelistically-minded leaders feel that their own congregations have

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<sup>1</sup>Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, Growing a Healthy Church(Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 151-2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>4</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, EvangelTrends(Waterloo: Vision 2000 Canada, 1995), 17.

evangelistic programs that they regard as satisfactory.<sup>5</sup>

What accounts for the gap between belief and practice? Some would suggest that the spiritual climate in Canada is cold - that there is a declining receptivity to the gospel message. Others, like Spader, would suggest that a comprehensive and workable corporate strategy is needed and that leaders and lay-people simply lack training.

In reflecting on the decade 1985-95 Peter C. Newman<sup>6</sup> notes the declining attendance at places of worship and the 'melting away of mainstream churches as a source of comfort and exultation.'<sup>7</sup> It would be easy to conclude that this reflects declining faith in God but Newman cites a 1993 Environics poll showing that 83% of Canadians still believed in some form of deity. Newman concludes that the problem lies with the churches, not with the spiritual climate of the country.

As the mainstream religions lost their spiritual content, so too did they lose influence as one of the nation's animating influences.<sup>8</sup>

Bibby's research consistently affirms the observation that interest in spirituality is not in decline. Indeed it has persisted at consistently high levels.

Everyone's research, including mine, comes up with a consistent finding: over the years a rich market for supernatural and spiritual matters has persisted in Canada. The news is not that God is alive. God has always been alive. The news is that interest and intrigue persist, in spite of the problems of organized religion. The result may well be a very sizeable, ongoing spiritual vacuum because...the

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<sup>5</sup>Bibby. Evangel, 18.

<sup>6</sup>Peter C. Newman, The Canadian Revolution: From Deference To Defiance(Toronto: Viking, 1995), 19-33.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 21.

key religious firms are failing.<sup>9</sup>

Spader may be correct in suggesting that the problem lies with methodology, however the EvangelTrends survey may indicate that though the leaders believe evangelism ought to be done, they may not be acting on this belief because they believe the spiritual climate to be non-receptive. Apocalypticism is certainly a factor, especially as we approach the end of the second millennium. Further research on attitudes of leaders regarding the prospective success of evangelistic efforts needs to be done.

This chapter intends to suggest one indication that leadership may be a part of the reason for the churches failure to be more aggressive in continuing spiritually receptive times. Is it possible that their belief that they cannot be successful has kept evangelical church leaders from providing aggressive evangelistic programming and leadership?

Bibby describes the Christian and Missionary Alliance as one of the 'noteworthy variations' in the EvangelTrends analysis.

Alliance... leaders seem to be somewhat more inclined than others to have plans and budgets in place with which they are at least fairly satisfied.<sup>10</sup>

Is this satisfaction based on growth through evangelism or is another process at work? Spader observes in Growing A Healthy Church:

Although many churches .... are growing, most are not. And the growth that is occurring is all too often a mere 'shuffling of the saints' rather than true conversion growth. The average church in America is seeing less than a 3 percent conversion growth rate. To be healthy church growth experts say we need to be

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<sup>9</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, Unknown Gods(Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 137.

<sup>10</sup>Reginald W. Bibby, EvangelTrends, 18.



seeing 10 percent growth per year.<sup>11</sup>

A majority of the EvangelTrends respondents gave a clear understanding that the most useful methods for reaching outsiders 'are those that have a strong relational base.<sup>12</sup> Clearly then the key to evangelism lies in mobilizing the lay people in congregations to reach out and contact a spiritually hungry generation or to devise approaches that will facilitate personal contact.

Alliance leaders have recently been suggesting that support for evangelism and missions is declining, that more funds are being directed to local church ministries as evidence of a more self-centered, narcissistic Christianity. Dr. Arnold Cook, President of the C&MA in Canada expressed this concern upon his election.

In 13 years...the number of Alliance missionaries from Canada has almost doubled. Yet I would be less than honest if I did not confess to a growing concern for what is called "historical drift" within our denomination.<sup>13</sup>

Many church leaders believe that the churches' failure in being aggressively evangelistic is the result of a more worldly and selfish lay membership. Leith Anderson says, "As the culture changes, the church changes."<sup>14</sup> Have we as leaders come to believe that as spiritual fervour is declining outside the church, it is also declining inside the church? Much of Bibby's research has served to disprove the notion of decline in spiritual interest outside the church. Perhaps some work needs to be done to disprove the belief that there is concurrent decline of interest

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<sup>11</sup>Spader., Growing. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Bibby, EvangelTrends., 19.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold Cook, 'What Is Our Future?' Alliance Life(Colorado Springs: The Christian and Missionary Alliance, Volume 128, Number 9, April 28, 1993), 6.

<sup>14</sup>Leith Anderson, Dying For Change(Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1990), 43.

in gospel outreach within the Canadian church. One set of statistics I will introduce later in this chapter will bring into question negative assumptions about lay commitment to evangelism in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Have denominational leaders believed the bad news about our culture, applied it to their churches and thus been derailed from providing appropriate evangelistic leadership in these times? There is evidence that this is the case.

### THE 'SECULARIZATION' ARGUMENT

If perception is affecting how church leaders act, one of the perceptions that seems to persist is the growing secularization of our culture and the consequent impact on the church. Instead of believing that the 'gates of hell will not prevail against the church' there is a belief that advancing secularization is simply a 'sign of the end' and that apparent resistance to the message of the church is inevitable, even a fulfilment of prophetic Scripture. Thus an attitude of resignation inhibits a pro-active response to changes in culture. The founder of sociology, Auguste Comte, formalized the idea that the secularization of society meant the inevitable demise of religion. More modern proponents of the secularization thesis argue for institutional, organizational and personal conformity to the secular world and a 'secularization of consciousness' as a natural evolutionary development.<sup>15</sup> Bibby affirms, "that religion is not disappearing - it's just that its dominant forms and expressions are constantly being replaced by new organization and content."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>R.W. Bibby, "Secularization and Change," in Sociology of Religion, ed. W.E. Hewitt(Toronto: Butterworth's, 1993), 66-7.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 65.

The inevitability of change evokes many responses. One is the apocalypticism that leads to paralysis. Another is an attempt to recover the past - 'the good old days' which Solomon wisely warned us never really existed. Bellah's<sup>17</sup> call for a renewal of American civil religion is an example, apparently embraced by many Christian leaders who believe Canada and the U.S. were founded and operated on Christian principles. Essentially Bellah imputes meaning to political and historical events by placing them within a religious framework.<sup>18</sup> Bellah observes the secularization of American culture and the growing influence of individualism and prescribes the pursuit of a 'moral order' based on civil religion that will transform and renew. The obvious flaw in his reasoning is that of an idealized past which can be returned to. Another which is more difficult to disprove is the religious paradigm that he draws on. Nonetheless, many church leaders have apparently bought into one of these two secularization responses. Apocalypticism breeds inaction while attempts to renew civil religion change the agenda from evangelism to political activism. Bibby agrees that "things have definitely been changing."<sup>19</sup> The issue is rightly understanding change. He proposes 'fragmentation' as an analysis of religious change, particularly in Canada, and proposes some constructive responses that church leaders can profitably engage in. It is the misinterpretation of change that has led to false ideas and practices in churches. What we believe inevitably controls what we do.

### THE BOOMER MYTHOLOGY

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<sup>17</sup>Robert N. Bellah, Habits of The Heart(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>18</sup>Robert Blumstock, "Canadian Civil Religion," in Sociology of Religion, ed. W.E. Hewitt(Toronto: Butterworth's, 1993), 175.

<sup>19</sup>Bibby, Sociology. 80.

What 'swings' is not the receptivity to the things that religion has been about, but the extent to which specific religions and religious groups succeed in responding to that ongoing interest in mystery and meaning.<sup>20</sup>

Lasch<sup>21</sup> is the most noted sociologist chronicling the narcissism of our culture, even devoting a chapter of his book to 'the narcissistic personality of our time'. No profile in the demographic pantheon more epitomizes the negative aspects of this cultural analysis than that of the 'Baby Boomer'. Hence studies have been undertaken and how-to books have been written telling church leaders how best to reach this large and disproportionately influential segment of our population. A fundamental presumption of narcissism or selfishness underlies most of these prescriptions and so strategies for reaching them are developed accordingly. However if this assumption of self-centredness is incorrect, we may just be programming the church for failure. Wade Roof questions the narcissistic thesis in A Generation of Seekers. He describes 'the maturing self' of Boomers, recognizing a 'movement in the direction of greater balance of commitment to self and to others'.<sup>22</sup> In fact he sees the Boomer attitude as a potential antidote to the negative influence of individualism in North American culture. "...Many Boomers today recognize that preoccupation with self can be a dead-end path".<sup>23</sup> Boomers do struggle with commitment to the institutional church but this arises more from suspicion of institutions than from self-centeredness. In fact Roof says:

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<sup>20</sup>Bibby. Sociology, 73.

<sup>21</sup>Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism(New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1978), 31-51.

<sup>22</sup>Wade Roof, A Generation of Seekers(San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 133.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 135.

**The self-centeredness theme has been over-played; many boomers would like to commit themselves to something they can believe in.<sup>24</sup>**

**The tragic result of this assumption of self-centeredness is two-fold. Church leaders have structured outreach programs and rebuilt churches on "seeker-sensitive" models that presume a consumerism based on self-interest. Yet, if Roof is to be believed Boomers are actually more likely to respond to the challenge of service. A second consequence is that leaders have begun to treat those already in the church as representative of the 'culture of narcissism'. Leith Anderson<sup>25</sup> describes at length Boomer attributes which seem to support this analysis but he reminds us that 'it(reaching Boomers) may not take theological bending as much as sociological bending'.<sup>26</sup>**

**Of further significance is the differences that exist in the Canadian context. Lasch bases his conclusions on the single profile of the 'boomer'. Michael Adams<sup>27</sup> identifies Twelve Social Values Tribes in Canada. There are three main ones: Elders, Boomers and Gen Xers. But each of these is divided into subgroups that may have widely varying positions on cultural, social, and theological issues. The highest percentage group identified among the Boomers were the 'Disengaged Darwinists', a group that is highly conservative on matters political, social, and economic. This hardly fits the typical profile that is discussed or written about in church outreach strategies. Adams believes that we are in a time when it is dangerous to put people**

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<sup>24</sup>**Roof. Generation. 184.**

<sup>25</sup>**Anderson., 82.**

<sup>26</sup>**Ibid., 96.**

<sup>27</sup> **Michael Adams, Sex In The Snow(Toronto: Viking Penguin, 1997), 203-217.**

into boxes that define who they are. This is especially true in Canada.

**However, if there is anything quintessentially "Canadian" about our culture, it is precisely the declining influence of demographic characteristics in determining our world views and opportunities.<sup>28</sup>**

In other words, the demands of the Gospel are not to be compromised as we work through the necessary and natural process of change and we should be cautious in adapting the gospel to demographic perceptions that are more legend than fact. A presumption of self-centeredness, for example, can be self-defeating especially if the gospel message is compromised.

#### **CYCLE OR CYNICISM?**

H. Richard Niebuhr<sup>29</sup> developed the concept of a church-sect cycle. The cycle describes the development of sects that arise because of concern for a return to biblical ideals, which ultimately become as formalized as the denominations they break away from. The sect(now church) then becomes fertile ground for the birth of a new sect or it dies. The Christian and Missionary Alliance began in a manner typical of this cycle, its founder, A.B. Simpson separating from the Presbyterian denomination to form the Alliance. A variation of the church-sect theory has currency among Alliance leaders in the '90's. Because the Alliance has recently passed its centennial there is concern in light of the trends described in this paper that the denomination has lost touch with its roots. The Alliance Canadian president stated:

**Revival is a hard sell in Alliance churches. We see ourselves as a breakaway movement. Simpson broke rank with his denomination, which resisted renewal. Now we struggle with bowing at the altar of our own theology. We would like to legislate revival at our district conferences and assemblies. The motion would**

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<sup>28</sup> Adams, Sex. 21.

<sup>29</sup>H.Richard Niebuhr, The Ministry In Historical Perspective(San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1956).

carry easily but nothing would happen.<sup>30</sup>

Has the Alliance peaked and is it now edging toward the downside of the Niebuhr cycle? Statistically it is difficult to support such an assessment. In fact during the period Newman describes as a 'Canadian Revolution' (1985-1995), in which Canadians are said to have broken en masse from traditional institutions including the church, the Alliance experienced an 85% growth rate(see Fig.1). Despite this there is a growing emphasis on the need for renewal expressed in denominational publications.

It is my vision to see a revived church in Canada. It must start with personal revival in the lives of our leaders, beginning with me. It must spread to our local churches. But I want to see it become an awakening that will shake Canada.<sup>31</sup>

One wonders if perception is the problem. Instead of seeing opportunity, have we been persuaded by an inundation of negative social and cultural voices that the church is a declining organization charged with a hopeless task?

#### V. THE C & M A (1984-1994)

What I have described are some essentially negative responses to a changing culture suggesting that leaders need to make appropriate adaptive changes while remaining aggressively evangelistic. Bill Easum answers:

It is not the substance of the gospel that needs to be changed, but rather how the gospel is to be packaged and proclaimed.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cook, Future. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Cook, 7.

<sup>32</sup>R.W. Bibby, Connecting Churches And Canadians(Winnipeg: Wood Lake Books, 1995), 122.

C & MA Churches	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	% Inc
Gross Church Inc	40,341,301	44,591,509	46,559,458	50,884,377	54,175,044	61,555,521	61,661,299	65,113,205	66,683,393	71,165,485	74,02,086	85.4%
Global Adv. Fund % of GCI	4,103,764 10.2%	4,641,749 10.4%	5,048,947 10.8%	5,481,204 10.9%	5,911,380 10.1%	6,237,678 10.1%	6,236,411 10.1%	6,500,790 10.0%	6,853,406 10.3%	6,823,493 9.6%	7,481,021 10.0%	82.3%
Canadian Ministry % of GCI	1,989,280 4.9%	1,968,550 4.4%	2,057,839 4.4%	2,173,644 4.3%	2,483,769 4.6%	2,832,497 4.6%	2,464,473 4.0%	2,605,515 4.0%	2,464,911 3.7%	2,506,153 3.5%	2,454,363 3.3%	23.4%
Designated Specials % of GCI	580,736 1.4%	758,248 1.7%	753,107 1.6%	806,958 1.6%	696,660 1.3%	658,607 1.1%	514,995 0.8%	595,525 0.9%	517,409 0.8%	564,624 0.8%	591,391 0.8%	1.8%
Non-Alliance Missions % of GCI	1,144,573 2.8%	1,155,060 2.6%	1,262,720 2.7%	1,329,083 2.6%	1,728,091 3.2%	1,839,531 3.0%	2,005,034 3.3%	1,979,251 3.0%	2,185,559 3.3%	1,982,520 2.8%	2,433,813 3.3%	112.6%
Sunday AM Atten.	43,652	45,870	47,426	48,767	50,604	53,064	56,205	59,116	60,980	62,747	64,365	47.5%

Figure 1

**Gross Church Inc** is the total annual offering income of all Alliance churches in Canada.

**Global Advance Fund** is the total annual offering of all Alliance churches in Canada for Alliance missions.

**Canadian Ministry** is the total annual offering of all Alliance churches for Canadian church extension.

**Designated Specials** is the total annual offering of all Alliance churches for special missions projects.

**Non-C&MA Missions** is the total annual offering of all Alliance churches to other mission organizations.

Data gathered from Annual Statistical Report(Willowdale: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1984-1994).



**Figure One is a statistical summary of Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada giving from 1984 to 1994. This was a time which has been characteristically described as being spiritually in decline. What we see, however, is a success story that reveals undiminished commitment to gospel proclamation. From 1984 to 1994 the C & M A experienced an 85% growth rate. The Global Advance Fund which supports evangelism and missions grew at a roughly equal rate of 82.3%. What is remarkable is the indication that new members are committing to the missions program rapidly. One would expect a delay in commitment to new principles and structures. One of the common assumptions of this period is that local churches are directing more of their funds to local church ministries. This is based on the belief that members are more self-centered and demanding, and that the churches are responding to a new consumerism. This belief should be reflected in the Global Advance Fund as a percentage of GCI(Gross Church Income)(See Figure 1). Yet Figure 1 reveals that the percent remains fairly constant from 1984 to 1994 at approximately 10%. How does one explain the growth in membership and the consistent growth in missions giving in light of the trends we have described; secularization, the impact of the Boomers, and cyclical decline? Clearly the story that the statistics tells is not consistent with the negativity bred by the cultural trends we have described. Certainly churches are being impacted by these trends. C & M A membership statistics reveal how the times are changing. (See Figure 2). When compared with other denominations in Canada, it is apparent that Sunday morning attendance in C & MA churches far exceed the official membership rolls. The Baptists range from 73 to 81% while the Alliance is at 36%. The Pentecostals are nearly three times more committed to membership at 91%. During this ten-year period of rapid growth it appears that the Alliance has not integrated new adherents into**

**Figure 2**

**COMPARISON OF SEVERAL DENOMINATIONS IN CANADA: PERCENTAGE OF AVERAGE SUNDAY MORNING ATTENDANCE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH**

(1988 STATISTICS)<sup>33</sup>

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Percentage of Attendance Who Are Members</b>
<b>Christian &amp; Missionary Alliance</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Canadian Baptist Federation</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Canadian Convention of Southern Bap.</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Mennonite Brethren</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada</b>	<b>91</b>

membership. This is, in fact, something that one would expect in light of how sociologists understand our present culture. Leith Anderson describes two significant generational differences that are now impacting churches: a lack of institutional loyalty and non-affiliation.

The older generation can't understand their adult children's lack of institutional loyalty. And the younger generation can't comprehend their parents devotion that will settle for lesser quality out of blind loyalty.<sup>34</sup>

What we see in the Alliance statistics is that new adherents are committed to the mission of the

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<sup>33</sup> National Church Education Committee, Church Membership Resources(Willowdale: Christian & Missionary Alliance, 1995), introduction.

<sup>34</sup>Anderson, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 82.

**Alliance but are withholding their commitment to the institution. This is a significant cultural shift documented by Bibby and others. People remain committed to spiritual life and spiritual principles but retain a distrust of institutions. We should be cautious about interpreting rejection of the church as an institution as rejection of the Gospel itself. The Alliance appears to have been singularly affected by this trend because it coincided with a period of unprecedented growth that outstripped peer denominations. Others will be affected and should see a correlation between growth in Sunday AM attendance and a total percentage decline in membership if the sociologists are correct.**

### **CONCLUSION**

**A major problem religious groups face is their constituents tendency to support major cultural shifts.<sup>35</sup>**

**Given this reality it is important that church leaders accurately understand the shifts taking place in our culture. One very significant shift that affects churches is a growing resistance to institutions. The mistake that can be made is to understand a rejection of the church as an institution as a rejection of the message of the church and the spiritual values it represents.**

**The available research indicates that large numbers of Canadians - well beyond 20 to 25% who regularly attend the nation's churches - are in need of God, self, society themes that historically have been associated with religion.<sup>36</sup>**

**Bibby's<sup>37</sup> research overwhelmingly affirms that there has been no decline in spiritual interest in recent years. It is our contention that perception is the problem. Bibby has done much to**

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<sup>35</sup>R.W. Bibby, Unknown Gods., 194.

<sup>36</sup>R.W. Bibby, Connecting Churches And Canadians., 8.

<sup>37</sup>R.W. Bibby, Fragmented Gods(Toronto: Stoddart, 1987).

**dispel misperception regarding the spiritual climate in Canada. Misperception within the church is a danger too. Leaders are misreading the commitment of their own church constituency if the C & M A experience is an early warning.. While reflecting the cultural shift in institutional commitment, the Alliance constituency remains solidly committed to outreach and missionary work. That commitment has remained constant over the last ten years.**

**Why do so many of the Consultation on Evangelism leaders say they are committed to evangelism and yet fail to have plans and money in place to do it? Could it be that the answer lies in their perception that there is a lack of commitment to evangelism among their church members? That church planters and denominational leaders understand the cultural shifts of our time is essential. We see that Canadians are not committed to institutions as they were in the past. We also see that confidence in the gospel among Christians has not declined and that the climate of receptivity to spiritual things among Canadians is as high as it has ever been. This affirm ours contention that the church planter should focus on evangelism. The message is his greatest asset and he must resist the natural inclination to focus on the building of the visible institution. Indeed the consistent economic support of C&MA constituents for mission and outreach efforts suggests that church planting will be best sustained if it has a high outreach profile.**

**Church planting that is biblically rooted and historically proven can prosper despite the purported secularism, cynicism, and narcissism of our times .**

## CHAPTER SIX

### A REVIEW OF CHURCH PLANTING MANUALS

Church planting is a philosophy of outreach that is gathering momentum in the nineties. The Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Canada in particular, appears to be riding the crest of a wave that is growing in size and impact. Dr. Paul F. Bubna, president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance(U.S.) describes his vision for the future.

**Church planting is our hallmark. As a cross-cultural missionary movement, the Alliance has made evangelism and church planting its specialty, though we do whatever else needs to be done to facilitate the task. Here in this country we have set ambitious numerical goals encouraging each congregation to plant a new church. This is the most effective way to do evangelism. *Our Mission Statement calls for us to plant a particular kind of church - a Great Commission church.*<sup>1</sup>**

Bubna presented these remarks to the General Council of the C&MA(U.S.) in 1997. In Canada a church growth convention was scheduled for October 1997 with the specific objective of challenging delegates to plant 15,000 new churches in Canada by the year 2025.

According to Murray Moerman of the Richmond-based Church Planting Canada, "The proposed goal and national gathering represent a historic event in cooperative planning for the discipling of Canada. For the first time in the history of missions in Canada the [wider church community] will be galvanized around a common measurable goal for discipling the nation. Church planting is broadly viewed by missiologists as the most effective means of evangelism at our disposal," he says.<sup>2</sup>

The emergence of a focus on church planting has created the need for tools and knowledge to facilitate the process. A particular response to this need has been the church planting manual.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Paul F. Bubna, "Pursuing the Vision...Removing the Obstacles", Alliance Life(Colorado Springs: The Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1997 Vol.132, Number 13, July 16) 8-13.

<sup>2</sup> Murray Moerman, "Church Planters Aiming For Lofty Goals", Christian Week(Winnipeg: Vol 132, Number 9, August 5, 1997) 3.

Robert Logan has authored one entitled Church Planter's Workbook out of his own experience as a church planter. Logan recalls, '...I didn't know what I was doing! So I quickly obtained all the church planting resources that I could lay my hands on'.<sup>3</sup> Logan recounts that the tools he found were either inadequate or useless in the ministry situation he was in. There were virtually no practical tools to help the church planter through the maze of new church development.<sup>4</sup>

In the twenty years since Logan's discovery the situation has improved significantly. Logan in particular, has authored many church planting resources and others have followed suit. The intent of this chapter is to review a selection of church planting manuals in light of the key principles garnered from chapters one through three. The manuals are a reflection of the growing emphasis on church planting and it is our desire to discover if this current renewal of interest in church planting is consistent with the historical model we have described. We will review Logan because he is considered to be a primary resource person on the subject of church planting in the nineties. In order to facilitate our desire to focus on the Christian and Missionary Alliance and specifically on Canada we will review two manuals approved by the Alliance(U.S.) and a manual written by a Canadian for use in Canada. The two U.S. manuals are The Church Planter's Training Manual by Fred G. King and Getting a Church Started by Elmer Towns. The Canadian manual is Antioch Blueprints by James Nikkel. One matter of growing interest in church planting is the identification and selection of church planters. We

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Logan and Jeff Rast, Church Planter's Workbook (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1995) introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, introduction.

will therefore review How To Select Church Planters by Charles Ridley. The presence or absence of the church planting 'essentials' we have discovered will form the basis of our evaluation. It is expected that the 'experts' will conform to biblical principles and be consistent with historical practice.

A fundamental question that must be raised at this point is the place of a clearly stated biblical philosophy of ministry. We have examined three distinct periods in church history and have discovered some common principles of ministry that, according to their implementers, have a biblical basis. The apostles and early church leaders would certainly have worked hard to build the Church in a way consistent with the teachings of Christ. Likewise Wesley, a self-confessed 'bible-bigot', built the Wesleyan church on a biblical foundation. Warren declared that the cornerstones of the Saddleback church were the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. As each of these implemented their understanding of the biblical mandate we discovered that all were committed to evangelism, building community, and discipleship training. The specific application of practice differed in each setting according to culture. Nonetheless, their basis for ministry and the planting of churches was not in doubt.

We review these ideas because of a subjective observation connected with the current church planting movement and some of the manuals. Church planting may, in some cases, become an end in itself - a means of growth. A manual can become merely a technical tool for reproducing Brand X denomination churches. Numbers of churches planted does not necessarily mean that one is planting churches in a biblical manner that are biblically valid. One of the assumptions of our proposed model for church planting is not that there be more churches planted but that there be more 'biblical' churches planted. By biblical we assume

that, in principle, there are biblical prescriptions for church planting that are not negotiable. If the church planter disregards these, then he is not planting a church that conforms to the design of God. We must affirm that the Bible does not prescribe a 'cookie-cutter' approach to church planting. Biblical principle is shaped by culture, demographics and even denominational emphases. Our thesis model is based on biblical principle identified in three very different contexts. The different shapes that we saw simply serve to confirm the universality of the model. We are affirming that a biblical church planting model includes: evangelism, community building strategies, leadership training and discipleship.

Logan's manuals tend to be of a more technical nature. His initial church planting experience in 1977 convinced him that there was a need for 'practical tools'. He received some help from the Charles E. Fuller Institute and successfully planted a church in Alta Loma, California that grew to 1200 in eight years. The resulting manual was entitled the Church Planting Workbook.

**The Church Planting Workbook is designed to help the church starting pastor apply the principles of church growth to the process of new church development.<sup>5</sup>**

This statement reveals a presumption of familiarity with the principles of church growth. This presumption is reflected in the manual presentation. A review of all of Logan's books and resource materials reveals that he is indeed philosophically committed to the essentials common to our three church planting settings. The difficulty is that it takes some work and prior knowledge of what one is looking for to discover them. Logan focusses on the technical aspects

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<sup>5</sup> Logan, introduction.



of church planting and largely assumes an understanding of and commitment to a sound philosophy of church growth.

An adjunct to this particular manual is Starting A Church That Keeps On Growing<sup>6</sup> in which Logan lists ten principles for growth and reproduction.<sup>7</sup> Number three is 'a clear philosophy of ministry'. It is only with some work that a clear philosophy of ministry of ministry can be gleaned from these two documents. Indeed the temptation might be to use the worksheets alone to resolve the technical and practical matters that church planters encounter. Presentation of resource material in this manner raises the potential risk for church planting to become an end in itself without regard for the character of what is planted. We believe that contemporary church planters need a heavy emphasis on philosophy of ministry in the context of appropriating tools for the process. In the case of this manual there are 131 pages of worksheets out of a total 168 in the manual. The emphasis on the technical aspects of ministry is almost overwhelming, especially for the church planter who is not just asking, "How do I do it?" but "What am I trying to do?"

We can, however, discern Logan's ministry philosophy if we look closely, and not surprisingly we discover some familiar principles. Logan believes that the foundation of church planting must be evangelism and that it is essential for the church planter to be committed to personal evangelism.

In new church evangelism, first gear, of phase I is the Catalyst Phase wherein the church planter is directly involved in personal evangelism. The goal here is

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<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Logan and Jeff Rast, Starting A Church That Keeps On Growing(Pasadena: Fuller Evangelistic Association, 1986)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 3.

to win a nucleus of people to Christ and generate momentum in, and a model for ongoing evangelism.<sup>8</sup>

He sees that success is not just the gathering of a core group of believers but of a group of believers trained and committed to a program of ongoing evangelism.

In the phase(after the formation of a core group), the church planter equips and mobilizes the people in the nucleus to evangelize their networks of family, friends, and associates.<sup>9</sup>

This is consistent with the understanding we draw from Matthew 28:19,20 in the context of its Acts application, and also with how Wesley and Warren applied it. We identify a proclamation focussed on making disciples who are in turn 'taught' the teachings of Jesus with a view to making them effective witnesses for the Kingdom of God. Logan is fully committed to this interpretation.

The key verb in the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28 is to "make disciples". Christ follows up this mandate with two clauses which define what this discipleship is all about. The first clause: the sacramental command to baptize the new converts. The second clause is absolutely essential to the process of making disciples; namely, new believers must be taught to obey all the commands of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

Logan has developed a list of essential principles for a growing reproducing church. One of these principles is 'a Great Commission orientation'. In fact Logan calls on the church planter to have 'Great Commission eyes'.

Healthy churches are aware of the tremendous opportunities for reaching people. The growing and reproducing church has Great Commission "eyes" for the world which sees the fields of unchurched people ripe for the harvest and focuses

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<sup>8</sup> Logan, Church Planter's Workbook. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 29.

to obey Christ's command "to make disciples of all nations."<sup>11</sup>

In the conclusion of Chapter Four we identified three key elements common to successful church planting in Acts, and the ministries of John Wesley and Rick Warren:

1. A commitment to fulfil the Great Commission as the primary driving force in ministry.
2. A commitment to fostering community through house or cell groups.
3. A commitment to discipling and training new believers with a view to reproducing leaders and evangelists.

Logan's ten principles for growth and reproduction are the clearest depiction of his philosophy of church planting and growth. Indeed in elaborating on number ten Logan defines healthy churches in the same manner that Warren does. Both link health to a commitment to the Great Commission. A review of Logan's principles reveals a fundamental commitment to our three key elements.

1. Visioning faith and prayer.
2. Effective pastoral leadership.
3. Clear philosophy of ministry.
4. Celebrative worship.
5. Expanding network of cell groups.
6. Mobilization according to gifts.
7. Effective outreach.
8. Leadership development.
9. Multiplication of churches.
10. Great Commission orientation.<sup>12</sup>

Principles five through ten have direct connection to our three key elements. Seven,

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<sup>11</sup> Logan, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Logan, 3.

nine, and ten relate to element one. Five is element two and six and eight represent element three. Principles one through three are essentially about the quality and effectiveness of leadership. This is not directly addressed in our historical study. However, it is an issue of significance that is gaining a lot of attention in current church planting circles. We intend to address the issue of leadership in our review of the work of Charles Ridley.

Thus the core of Logan's church planting philosophy is consistent with historical and biblical precedents. The weakness of his manual is a failure to effectively communicate his philosophy before he presents his strategy. Indeed, the above ten principles are found only in the back of the Workbook as an addendum to the main text. With some work on the part of the church planter Logan's manual could be very useful. There is a sound basis for his strategies but a failure to grasp that basis might lead to frustration in the exercise of planting a church.

We turn next to The Church Planter's Training Manual<sup>13</sup> by Fred G. King, a Christian and Missionary Alliance document approved for use in the United States and Canada. King, like Logan, appears to presume an understanding of the philosophy that underlies church planting. His manual is 145 pages of technical instructions and sample documents. Chapter One is entitled 'The Theology of Church Planting'. Unfortunately King spends nine pages of this chapter on the qualifications of a church planter and two on the title subject. His philosophy does speak of the reproduction of the church.

When we confess that the Church is the Body of Christ we are in fact saying that the Church is a living organism. As a living organism she is not exempt from the

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<sup>13</sup> Fred G. King, The Church Planter's Training Manual(Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 1992)

**principle of life which necessitates growth, nourishment and reproduction.<sup>14</sup>**

**King focuses on the reproduction of churches as the mission of the church and hence the church planter. That is the essence of his two page theology of church planting. It would be very easy to draw the conclusion that the multiplication of churches automatically is a fulfilment of the Great Commission mandate. Unfortunately, as many church planters know, it is possible to establish a new church without any conversion growth based instead on transfer growth. The statistics can show a new church but fail to reveal that little has been done to fulfil the Great Commission. This is a weakness in King's manual, one which is also evident in many others. Starting a church is only a part of the church planter's task according to our historic models. In the process he must build a church that has Great Commission 'eyes' and Great Commission commitment. A closer look at King reveals that he does appear to understand this but he does little to address it. Only at page 95 of a 146 page manual does he talk about outreach in the context of listing five ministry priorities for the pastor who wants to see his church grow. Priority number three is 'Targeting the Unchurched'. King speaks of the need for compassion for the lost and says that the pastor has to be a model for the people of his church in outreach. He suggests that the pastor become a police chaplain and then gives four and a half pages of guidelines for carrying it out. The concept of reaching the lost takes less than one page in the whole manual, a lack of emphasis that would, by our model, appear to be a serious deficiency. In terms of our number one essential - a commitment to fulfil the Great Commission, we would have to score King's manual as inadequate.**

**This is further demonstrated in relation to the second element which refers to the**

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<sup>14</sup> King, 5.

founding of house or cell groups. In Wesley, Warren and certainly Acts, the core of house groups was new believers who were there to build their relationship with the church community and to be discipled. In Chapter Three, 'How To Plant A Church', King discusses 'Forming The Initial Core Group'. He clearly favours 'the parent-church method'.

**A parent or mother church is an established church which is led of God to plant a daughter church in its community or neighbouring town.<sup>15</sup>**

**Usually a group of committed believers from the parent church will either temporarily, or in some cases permanently, go as the founding church group, and thus provide the new work with mature Christians who know their spiritual gifts and are eager to be a part of the mission team.<sup>16</sup>**

In all fairness King states his expectations that the new church will be an evangelistic church. Rick Warren declared that this can neither be assumed nor expected since he is convinced that the church will become the product of those who founded it. If they are not committed to the Great Commission there is no reason to believe that those who subsequently join the church will be either. Hence Warren determined to begin the Saddleback church with new believers only and let inquirers know that transfer growth was unwelcome unless there was an unconditional commitment to work to fulfil the mission of the church. Thus the issue with King is the basis for his belief that a newly planted church will naturally be evangelistic. If, for example, the statistics of the parent church indicate a low annual conversion rate, is it likely that a daughter church will do better, especially with the pressures of forming a new organization? King sees the core founding group as a means to an end - planting churches. He apparently does not see the vital role of the core in shaping the identity of the new church. Our three historical settings

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<sup>15</sup> King, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 21.

reflect the belief that such groups are absolutely vital to the success of a church. King refers to this group only in passing. As in his treatment of evangelism it gets only one page.

King goes on to discuss 'The District-Initiated Church'<sup>17</sup> primarily focussing on methods of advertising that seek out 'former members of the denominational churches'<sup>18</sup>, 'Christians looking for a church'<sup>19</sup> and 'independent churches...weary of standing alone'<sup>20</sup>. Thirteen other methods of starting a church are discussed, all fundamentally driven by producing a result but with little indication of how process impacts on result. It is clear that King's priority is to plant churches without any practical concern for the quality of those churches - that they might be biblical in practice.

Nowhere in King's manual is there anything that has reference to discipling, training and developing leadership. It is possible this is because King expects the founding group to come from a parent church or transfer growth and thus not to be in need of discipling.

That two of our essential elements are given such minimal treatment and the third none at all puts King's manual at variance with significant biblical and historical precedent. Indeed this manual was written by King to be used by U.S. Alliance churches in fulfilling the objective of the Vision '94 plan. The motto of this program is '1000 More by '94', referring to the num-

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<sup>17</sup> King, 25.

<sup>18</sup> King, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 27.

ber of new churches to be planted. A manual<sup>21</sup> was designed to indoctrinate leaders at every level with the scriptural basis for multiplying churches and with methods for fulfilling Vision '94. Every church was encouraged to adopt the objective of parenting a new church. The manual pays some attention to principles, a great deal to planning and very little to process. It is the disregard for process that is troubling. We contend that how churches are planted ultimately defines what the church becomes and that there is nothing magic in planting a church that determines everything will work to produce a biblical result. King lists the objectives for an Alliance church that participates in 'Vision 94:

1. To cultivate a dynamic evangelistic mind-set in you as pastors and leaders so you may see your ministry as reaching the entire community for Jesus Christ and your church as a base for planting other churches with an outward focus on evangelism.
2. To develop a dynamic church planting lifestyle in your Alliance church so that the church sees itself as a base from which to start new churches.
3. To aggressively evangelize communities and disciple believers in your church to be Spirit-filled, maturing, reproducing believers.<sup>22</sup>

These are excellent objectives consistent with the Great Commission. However, sixteen pages later King lists thirteen ways a church can start a daughter congregation. They range from 'loaning or giving people', to 'inviting an ethnic church to begin in your facility'.<sup>23</sup> One is hard pressed to find one church planting method that is explicitly evangelistic on the list. As already stated, if the purpose or goal is not reflected in the process then the result will likely be flawed.

The question of whether or not Vision '94 reached its goal is really not relevant. If

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<sup>21</sup> Fred G. King, Vision '94(Nyack: Division of Church Ministries, The Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1989)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, T-3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, T-19-21.



Vision '94 reported that two thousand churches have been planted but none of them had a strong evangelistic program, discipleship training and mutually committed group dynamics, then by the historical standards we have recognized it would be an utter failure.

A thorough reading of King's manuals would show that he is passionately committed to winning souls. His weakness is that he presumes the presence of an Alliance church in a community automatically implies an active evangelistic presence. This weakness is reflected in the preparation of the manuals.

We next consider Getting A Church Started<sup>24</sup> by Elmer Towns. Towns subtitles this manual 'A student manual for the theological foundation and practical techniques of planting a church'. He provides an excellent discussion of practical techniques but his particular strength is the theological foundation for church planting. This manual is approved for use by Alliance church planters even though Towns is a Baptist and the Church Growth Institute he is associated with is sponsored by the Liberty Baptist church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Often church growth techniques have a denominational reference. Towns has produced a manual that could be widely embraced by many denominations because of its focus on a solid biblical foundation for planting churches. More than one-third of the chapters are given to the subject 'Biblical Foundation For Church Planting'.

Towns is deeply concerned that church planting not become a matter of methodology at the expense of a solid biblical result.

Too often church planting is considered only in terms of techniques. This limited view thinks only of getting the church planter at a needy place with the right

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<sup>24</sup> Elmer Towns, Getting A Church Started(Lynchburg: Church Growth Institute, 1985)

techniques, with enough money and the church will evolve. The man of God must properly apply the Great Commission which involves soul winning and church planting. Next, the man of God must understand the biblical nature of the church, or he will fail in his efforts to plant one.<sup>25</sup>

Our first historical element, a commitment to fulfil the Great Commission, is Elmer Towns number one emphasis. He describes the Great Commission as the biblical basis for church planting. He begins with an analysis of Matthew 28:19,20 that indicates its very essence is the planting of multiplying churches. The commands to 'disciple', 'baptize', 'teach' and 'go' carry within themselves the understanding that church planting is a multiplying process. The church planter is to make disciples who will in turn make other disciples. Failure occurs when only addition takes place instead of multiplication. Town sees church planting as a comprehensive process and would consider adding churches that do not make evangelizing disciples to be unbiblical.

From the day God said to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth," multiplication has been the secret of the growth of the human race, until this geometric progression has reached the staggering proportions of a population explosion. Christians will lose the race to tell the world of Christ unless we are converted from our dedication to mere addition which slowly increases an organization, and begin diligently to apply to the living Church the principle of multiplication, so characteristic of the growth of a living organism.<sup>26</sup>

Town's model is the early church account in Acts where he concludes that the church existed to win souls and to evangelize. He believes that many churches today have lost touch with the biblical model in favour of a model that emphasizes edification.

Most of them maintain that edification is the primary aim or controlling purpose of the church. They deny that soul-winning or evangelism is its over-riding

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<sup>25</sup> Towns, Started. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 14.

aim.<sup>27</sup>

He sees the process of obeying the Great Commission culminating in the planting of a New Testament church. 'New Testament' church is critical. Such a church exists for evangelism, receiving the torch of evangelism to be passed on to others. Thus, Town sees planting churches as a comprehensive process with a specific biblical result in mind. He is explicit about this in a manner that we do not see in Logan and King. Thus in terms of our first essential church planting element Town must be highly recommended.

With regard to our third essential element, training and discipling to produce leaders and evangelists, this principle is implied in the model that Town recommends. He sees the Matthew 28 Great Commission mandate as impossible to fulfil apart from 'teaching them to observe'. Winning converts only initiates the process that leads to trained disciples who will, in turn, repeat the cycle of 'disciple', 'baptize' and 'teach'. Indeed this describes precisely what church planting is. Disciples are the lifeblood. They drive the process of planting churches by becoming the outreach component. It is essential therefore that they be trained and taught. The concept not only describes what the church does, or, at least ought to be doing, but it describes what the church is.

**Multiplication of new congregations of believers then, is the normal and expected output of a healthy body.<sup>28</sup>**

It is in the area of methodology and technique that Towns is less helpful. Where King and Logan provide practical resources, Town is more likely to define principles. He devotes

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<sup>27</sup> Towns, Started. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 14.

### **Chapter Three to the nature of the Church.**

**A church is an assembly of baptized believers in whom Christ dwells, under the discipline of the Word of God, organized for evangelism, education, fellowship, and worship; administering the ordinances and reflecting the spiritual gifts.<sup>29</sup>**

**This is an excellent definition but Town reflects very little on the specific processes and practices that produce the model church. We believe our second historical element, the presence of cell or house groups, to be critical to the success of the overall model. We recall in Acts the link between blessing in evangelism and the unity and fellowship of the community. Town makes no reference to this. Perhaps, like Logan, he assumes it. Following this manual at face value, one might found a church that meets only for worship services and Sunday School. Our model would indicate that such a church would be unlikely to succeed as a Great Commission church. Warren says we must build community. Acts teaches this by example. Wesley was forced to build community because his converts were not welcome in the Anglican church and he was not able to disciple them within the Church of England's traditional structures. Without realizing or even intending to he produced a Great Commission church that was a model of multiplication. His 'classes' were an integral part of his success. Though Towns clearly understands the model that history presents to us, he may not recognize the critical nature of the second element.**

**This is further illustrated in Section II where he describes six methods of church planting. They are:**

**...the mother-church concept, whereby one congregation breaks off part of its members and sends them to another section of town, ....**

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<sup>29</sup> Towns, 22.

**...establishing a mission Sunday School, ....**

**A Bible study group....**

**...planting through the local association, ....**

**...planting new congregations through church splits.**

**...the pioneer church planter going into an area to plant a New Testament church.<sup>30</sup>**

**The first five methods will all work under some circumstances<sup>31</sup> according to Towns, but it is the sixth method that he recommends. Why? Because 'the founding of new churches depends upon the church planter'<sup>32</sup>. Certainly Towns is right in saying this but we would contend that the accuracy of his statement is dependent on whether or not the church planter understands and implements a sound biblical model. Of the manuals we have reviewed thus far Towns appears to most accurately apprehend the historical model, but he would add a fourth essential - 'a church planter (who) knows the spiritual dynamics that are necessary to plant a church...'<sup>33</sup>. We will at the close of our review of manuals discuss this issue particularly with reference to the work of Ridley. In doing so we will come back to the three chapters Towns dedicates to the profile of a church planter.**

**We have no hesitation in concluding that Towns is strong in philosophy, that he understands the overall process, but that he is weak in prescribing practices that will produce**

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<sup>30</sup> Towns, Started. 67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 103.

the model he envisions - a multiplying church. We therefore recommend this mainly for the sound church planting philosophy that is presented.

The manual Antioch Blueprints by James Nikkel is a Canadian based tool generated by the Board of Evangelism of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite churches. The significance of the designation 'Antioch' derives from a Mennonite Centennial project called the Antioch Plan.

The Antioch Plan by the Board of Evangelism encourages each church, school, and conference to plan for some special growth related involvement during the Centennial year of 1988, that would reflect the visions and activity of the Antioch church in Acts, hence the designation, Antioch Plan.<sup>34</sup>

Nikkel has fifteen years of church planting experience in varied settings and has designed this manual as a church planting manual. It was designated for use by all the existing churches in the Mennonite conference.

Most of the materials related to church planting programs apply equally to churches who are concerned about reaching out into their community. Many of the principles of growth for a new church can bring health and growth to a church that finds itself in a plateau position.<sup>35</sup>

That Nikkel's model is derived from the Antioch church is an encouragement to enthusiastically approach his text. A model suggests a comprehensive process that we wait for Nikkel to elaborate on. Unfortunately we soon discover that there is only one reference to the Antioch church in the chapters subsequent to his introduction. What follows is analysis of the Antioch ministry. It is found in the Foundations chapter, specifically under 'What kind of church does

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<sup>34</sup> James Nikkel, Antioch Blueprints(Winnipeg: Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches & Kindred Press, 1987) preface.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, preface.

the bible depict?'

**From the Antioch Gentile church we see...**

**The Church in Mission and Expansion**

**It was a church in witness  
a church in mission  
a church in proclamation  
a church in penetration  
a church in heterogeneity  
a church in assimilation  
a church in social action  
a church in conference network  
a church in leadership<sup>36</sup>**

**Nikkel even refers to this as the 'Antioch Expansion Model'. What these various descriptions mean and how they are derived is nowhere to be found and no subsequent reference to Antioch is to be found. There is, admittedly a thoroughgoing scriptural philosophy of church planting laid down in the Foundation chapter. Unfortunately Nikkel does not succeed in linking philosophy to process. Instead the manual focuses on trouble-shooting and anticipating potential problems that might arise for church planters. Typical is the section on getting a pastoral license, applying for a charitable tax number and incorporation. These are important matters, however most of the manual focuses on these kinds of administrative issues and the church planter is in danger of losing sight of the true purpose of planting a church in favour of running a well-oiled administrative machine.**

**Nikkel does begin with a basis consistent with our historical model. He provides nine basic assumptions for church planting. All of these are derived from the command to fulfil the Great Commission. Typical of the list are these three:**

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<sup>36</sup> Nikkel, Foundations-5.

**1. Church planting is God's program for this world; it is His predetermined method of propagating and nurturing the faith worldwide.**

**7. Church planting best fulfils the Great Commission. It holistically and systematically implements the mandate of preaching, teaching, evangelizing and baptizing.**

**8. Church planting is the biblically preferred method of doing evangelism. Paul clearly models this priority of establishing churches from place to place.<sup>37</sup>**

**Then in his 'Church planter's Statement of Faith' he includes as his second statement:**

**2. Great Commission - We must believe that the great commission assignment as given by the resurrected Lord is a mandate and charter for aggressive church planting around the world.<sup>38</sup>**

**Nikkel, like all of our other manual presenters believes that church planting is the way to fulfil the Great Commission. We see this as a confirmation of what we have asserted - that our first essential of church planting is an essential. All the manuals are in agreement. We have only presented a selection but a selection that is indeed representative. The difficulty that arises in nearly all is the inability to link the mandate to a process that produces multiplying churches. Some manuals are designed to add churches but not necessarily churches that will continue to fulfil the Great Commission. This is the challenge and why we believe in the critical nature of the other two essentials in our historical model. Neither of these two principles are even hinted at in Nikkel. There are no outreach methods and no plans to conserve the fruit of outreach through cell groups or discipleship training. Nikkel creates the framework of a church without telling us how to fill it and how to ensure that it is healthy and will remain healthy. It is, in effect, a 'build it and they will come' approach that assumes the ones who 'come' will automatically carry on the mandate.**

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<sup>37</sup> Nikkel, Foundations-1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Foundations-1.



**Nikkel's strength is his solid linking of church planting with the Great Commission.**

**This is a message that needs to be reaffirmed in the Canadian church context.**

**We turn finally in this chapter to the profile of a church planter. Each manual attempts to describe the necessary abilities and characteristics of a church planter who succeeds. There are differences which naturally relate to the manual writer's understanding of the desired church outcome. What we will be looking for once again is profile designation that relates to our historical model.**

**One of the fastest growing areas in church planting resource development is church planter assessment strategies. The leader in this field is Charles R. Ridley, although Robert Logan is rapidly catching up in developing his own assessment program. Ridley departs from the norm in setting apart men and women as church planters by focussing rigidly on behaviour as opposed to subjective assessments in interviews. Ridley believes that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.**

**I have assisted in selecting church planters who have had careers in business, education, and other fields as well as in various areas of ministry. At the same time, I have found some candidates with identical or similar backgrounds to be unsuitable. To emphasize once again, selection decisions should be based upon a candidates standing in relevant dimensions.<sup>39</sup>**

**This is because the success of the enterprise depends on a good selection process. Ridley has identified thirteen criteria or qualities of a church planter that are essential, the result of a job analysis study undertaken in 1984 bolstered by subsequent field testing.**

- 1. Visionizing Capacity**
- 2. Intrinsic Motivation**

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<sup>39</sup> Charles R. Ridley, How To Select Church Planters (Pasadena: Fuller Evangelistic Association, 1988) 27.

3. Creating ownership of ministry.
4. Relating to the Unchurched.
5. Spousal Cooperation.
6. Relationship Building.
7. Commitment to Church Growth.
8. Responsiveness to the Community.
9. Utilizes Giftedness of Others.
10. Flexibility and Adaptability.
11. Building Group Cohesiveness.
12. Resilience.
13. Exercising of Faith.<sup>40</sup>

They are further affirmed by the criteria which Logan has developed which are identical, with two additions of his own. These criteria appear on the lists of other church planter evaluation systems but none place as critical an emphasis on the selection process.

The selection of church planters is an awesome responsibility. This task should not be approached in an irresponsible manner. To accomplish the goal of choosing the best possible candidates, we need to draw upon state-of-the-art selection procedures.<sup>41</sup>

The thirteen criteria would likely be acceptable to many, but the difficulty is identifying a process that effectively evaluates the candidates strength or weakness in each area. Ridley has developed a question and interview procedure that is designed to elicit the candidates' past behaviour in each area only. For example the candidate would not be asked about their philosophical commitment to evangelism but to describe instances where they have actually done evangelism. He or she is evaluated only on their actual behaviour in the areas of criteria. Assessors are trained in question design techniques to be used over a two to four hour interview. The process culminates in a written report which uses a list of evaluative measures of assessing

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<sup>40</sup> Ridley, Select. 27-8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 2.

strengths and weaknesses. An overall assessment is arrived at with measures in each of the thirteen essential areas.

Ridley's approach is very stringent. His rationale demands it. The identification of those who show excellence in leadership is needed for the church to fulfil the Great Commission.

Successful organizations are guided by strong and gifted leaders. The church is no exception. Christ commissioned Christians to make disciples of all people (Matthew 28). Perhaps, the lack of appropriately placed leaders is one of the greatest limiting factors to fulfilling the Great Commission. Making more and better disciples is achieved by selecting the right leaders to plant more churches.<sup>42</sup>

Seven of Ridley's thirteen criteria relate directly to our three historical essentials. He affirms the central role of fulfilling the Great Commission, building community and training disciples. The significance of this approach is that it mitigates the tendency to make the church planter the 'star' of the church planting enterprise. The role is critical but it only succeeds by building a ministry that eventually makes the planter dispensable. Ridley's 'qualities' present a church planter who builds a team that is trained to carry on the ministry of building the church. Thus planters must 'create ownership of ministry', utilize the giftedness of others' and 'build group cohesiveness'<sup>43</sup>. We see the training element and community building illustrated here. Ridley would accept the importance of the calling of the church planter but, he is far more interested in demonstrated behaviour that affirms the calling. Other manuals focus more on calling than on behaviour.

Logan's list of 'Twelve Critical Qualities'<sup>44</sup> are essentially the same as Ridley's. The

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<sup>42</sup> Ridley, Select. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>44</sup> Logan, Workbook. 149-51.

differences are not significant. We can therefore draw the same conclusion in terms of emphasis. Logan does add a supplemental a list of five skills, 'which are necessary to plant a church effectively'<sup>45</sup>. At the top of the list are two of our historic essentials.

1. **Evangelism**. The planter must...

- be able to present the gospel clearly
- be able to lead people to Christ
- model "Friendship" or "Way of Life" evangelism
- be able to seek and develop relationships with new contacts
- be able to systematically follow-up new converts individually and collectively

2. **Discipleship/Training** The church planter must...

- encourage symbolic representation of conversion experience
- give appropriate, relevant biblical counsel
- be able to develop new converts one-on-one
- be able to effectively lead small group bible studies
- employ a clear and direct teaching style
- help others discover and use their gifts
- discern leadership abilities in others
- train leaders in leadership and biblical understanding
- challenge and motivate leaders
- develop a system of accountability<sup>46</sup>

Ridley and Logan both affirm the central place of the historic essentials in their manual with regard to the selection of church planters. These two are considered at the forefront of research and practice in church planting and therefore present solid evidence of the validity of the model we are developing.

Fred King, as already indicated, places a very significant emphasis on the role of the church planter. His chapter 'The Theology of Church Planting' spends two pages on theology

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<sup>45</sup> Logan, 156.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 156.

and seven on the call and qualities of the church planter. The next chapter is fully taken up with 'The Church Planter's Personal Life. Of interest to our study is his list of necessary qualities of a church planter<sup>47</sup>. Of the sixteen on King's list we draw on those that relate to our historic essentials.

4. Thoroughly trained in church planting, church growth and evangelism.
6. A history of soul winning is essential.
14. He will be involved in one or more evangelistic outreaches to the unchurched community.
15. He will train and disciple his people.
16. He will lead his church in parenting other churches.<sup>48</sup>

We see here both evidence of commitment to the Great Commission and an expectation that the church planter will reproduce that commitment in people through modelling and training. Most of the rest of the lists we have and will examine refer to the necessary character and spiritual qualities of the church planter such as prayer life, vision and leadership abilities. Even though our essentials represent normally one-third of the lists, we affirm that there is little evidence of any other church planting philosophies.

Elmer Towns believes that 'the founding of new churches depends upon the church planter'<sup>49</sup>. Unless he or she understands a sound biblical philosophy of church planting they cannot succeed. So Towns is strong on philosophy and principle in his manual while others place a greater emphasis on practice and strategy in their profiles. Towns speaks only in the broadest terms about the role of the church planter. He is committed to a biblical profile that

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<sup>47</sup> King, 10.

<sup>48</sup> King, 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Towns, 67.

is essentially 'the role of a church planter, what he must become'<sup>50</sup>. For Towns this leads to the biblical qualifications of a pastor. However, he must also have the gift of church planting.

**The spiritual gift that comes closest to planting a church is the evangelist.<sup>51</sup>**

Town says that the New Testament evangelist bore little resemblance to the modern day city-wide evangelism crusader. He sees the New Testament evangelist as a church planter.

**In listing the offices(gifts) in the church, the evangelist stands between the apostle and the pastor (Eph.4:11). This implies that the evangelist is sent forth by the first group and prepares the way for the second group. He is sent by the apostles and prophets (those who established the church by writing revelation) and he prepares the way for the pastor who shepherds the flock. Therefore, it appears the evangelist uses his gifts to plant churches.<sup>52</sup>**

He also understands that this gift implies the training and discipling of converts.

**The gift of evangelism would include a great spiritual burden for lost people, the ability to get them saved (by personal evangelism or pulpit evangelism), and the desire to disciple them into maturity.<sup>53</sup>**

With Ridley, Towns is interested in a demonstrated history of behaviour that reflects the presence of essential gifts.

**Therefore, if a man has not been fruitful in winning people to Christ, it is questionable if he has the gift to plant a church.<sup>54</sup>**

What we see repeatedly in the profiles of church planters in these manuals is the assumption, if not emphasis, on evangelism as the fundamental essential in the profile of the successful church

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<sup>50</sup> Towns, 29.

<sup>51</sup> Towns, 29.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 31.

planter. Indeed church planting is consistently understood as an expression of the Great Commission. In Towns' case it is the way to carry out the Great Commission. Most have used Matthew 28:19,20 and expounded on 'disciple', 'baptize', and 'teach', in a way that sees church planting as a process starting with conversion leading to mature discipleship and a repetition of the cycle, thereby multiplying churches.

Nikkel spends the least amount of time on a church planter profile, only one page, in his extensive manual. He has eight essential characteristics. It is interesting that the 'Antioch' image he uses is so little reflected in his planter profile. The dynamic, evangelistically-driven member of the Antioch church is hard to find. In terms of priority Nikkel starts with character traits. His very last essential is a fairly ineffectual expression of evangelistic enterprise.

#### **8. Community Related**

The church planter's major focus needs to be on the community. He must move among the masses, participate in projects, penetrate barriers, and share the gospel freely. Contact with new people in their context of life must be his constant objective.<sup>55</sup>

Nikkel has indicated a Great Commission basis for church planting as his foundation for the 'Antioch Blueprint' manual. Unfortunately he underestimates the role of leadership in making his 'blueprint' a reality. This is a significant weakness in his manual since nearly all of the others place a strong emphasis on the quality of leadership.

All of the manuals express a common commitment to the three historic essentials varying only in emphasis and implementation. We have seen this in both their philosophy and understanding of the leadership role, generally affirming the models presented in Acts, the Wesleyan church and the contemporary success of the Saddleback church. At the core is Mat-

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<sup>55</sup> Nikkel, Leadership-4.

thew 28:19-20 and a commitment to church planting as a multiplying process. The criticism that could be made of much church planting is that it is merely addition reflecting the absence of a discipling process that leads to multiplication. This underlines our belief that a commitment to plant churches alone is insufficient. The inclusion of all three essentials that we have discovered provides the most likely scenario for success. We have reviewed leadership because we believe that the leader who understands the comprehensive process of church planting is most likely to succeed. Certainly the practical outworking of this philosophy will vary according to context but the basics must be there. This review has shown that the experts generally concur. We expect that research data reviewed in subsequent chapters will further confirm this.



**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**CHURCH PLANTING IN THE CHRISTIAN AND**  
**MISSIONARY ALLIANCE(1980-95)**

**In 1980 The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada became autonomous from its American parent body after sharing a cooperative relationship that had lasted ninety-three years.**

**Canadian and American Alliance leaders sometimes differed in church matters, and the time came when Canadians thought it better to direct the work in their own country according to their own perceived needs and convictions, and let the Americans do the same in theirs.<sup>56</sup>**

**An important aspect of our study is the preservation of the Canadian context. Prior to 1980 relaxed attitudes between the two countries enabled pastors and District leaders to serve on either side of the border with few restrictions. In effect this meant for Canada a disproportionate American influence and little opportunity to derive goals that reflected the Canadian identity. 1980 opened the way to a Canadian Alliance with Canadian goals.**

**Nationalizing the Canadian Alliance had the desired effect on growth. Between 1980 and 1985, the churches gained nearly 4000 members and adherents a year, a 42 percent jump from 38,000 to 56,768. In the same period, churches increased 18 percent, from 241 to 287.<sup>57</sup>**

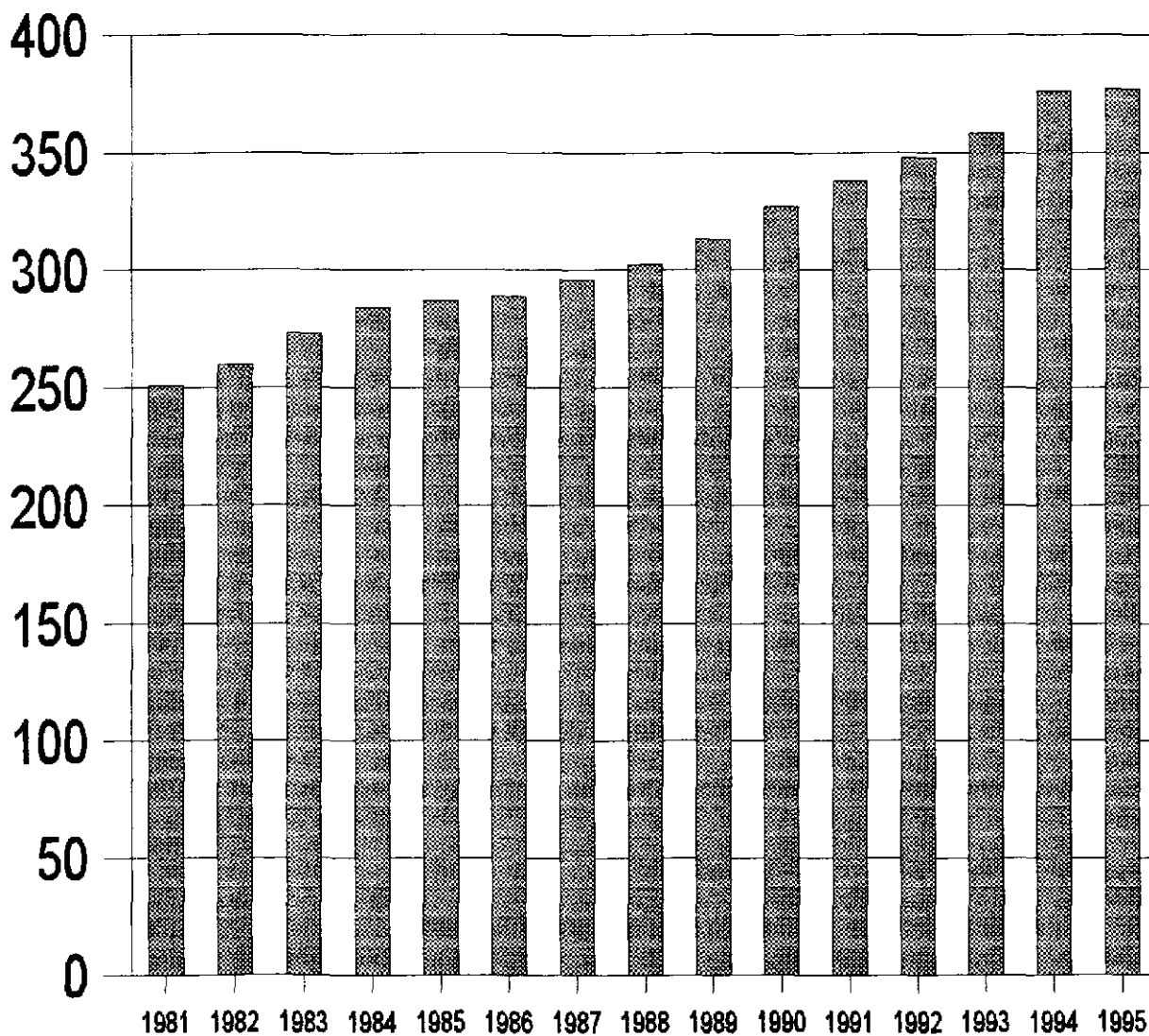
**This pattern continued in the years that followed. By 1995 the Alliance had grown to 377 churches. (see Figure One) a gain of over 95 percent. Similarly the inclusive membership went from 38,000 to 87,534, an increase of 130 percent(see Figure Two). This is dramatic and impressive growth that can not be simply accounted for by nationalism. The values that drove**

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<sup>56</sup> Robert L. Niklaus, Sawin, John S., Stoesz, Samuel J. All For Jesus(Camp Hill, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1986), 246.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 246.

# C&MA Churches(81-95)



**FIGURE ONE**

**\* Based on figures reported to Biennial General Assemblies 1981-95**

this kind of church growth were rooted in the American Alliance and can be traced back to the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, A.B. Simpson and passed down to the present day leadership of the denomination. Similarly Alliance missionaries have played a role in impacting the home churches and leaders and, in a way, they have returned Simpson's original passion for world evangelization to the place of its origin.

Leaders with overseas experience and principles such as evangelism-in-depth, church growth, theological education by extension and key city projects began to impact on the sending churches in North America. The awareness grew that the Alliance should be producing the same kind of evangelism-minded, self-propagating churches at home that it was planting overseas.<sup>58</sup>

In other words missionary thinking - evangelism, has been the basis that has driven church planting in the Alliance in the United States and Canada. Simpson founded the Alliance with evangelism as its main imperative.

In 1887, the year the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance were formed, Simpson stressed that the Alliance was, above all, committed to evangelism.<sup>59</sup>

Though the Alliance at its birth existed primarily for world evangelization through missions, Simpson realized that the lifeline of missions was a growing, evangelistic church at home.

In Simpson's view the Church as a whole also has a responsibility to evangelize, because it is a people called out by God for service. The Church provides the individual with the institutional support necessary for evangelization. It has received Christ's power through the Spirit and is equipped for this service.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>59</sup> T.V. Thomas and Ken Draper, 'A.B. Simpson And World Evangelization', The Birth of A Vision. David F. Hartzfield and Charles Nienkirchen Eds.(Regina: Buena Book Services, 1986), 198-218.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 201.

For Simpson, home missions and foreign missions were part of the same work. This evangelistic imperative is one, if not, the highest of values that drives the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Simpson repeatedly stressed that the responsibility for spreading the Gospel did not belong exclusively to full-time Christian workers, but to every Christian. Implied in this is the fundamental importance of the local church as a model for the mission field and in its supportive role.

Only with the support of flourishing local churches, like the one at Antioch in New Testament times, could Alliance missions hope to succeed.<sup>61</sup>

Robert Logan, speaking with reference to church planting, asserts that ‘systems must be developed that can easily be replicated at another time or location.’<sup>62</sup> Logan compares the work of George Whitefield and John Wesley. As preachers they were equals and both brought many thousands to faith on Christ. There is one important difference in their ministries.

Today the entire Wesleyan movement has its roots in the work of John Wesley. We read about George Whitefield in the history books. The difference? Wesley’s emphasis on “societies” or cell groups and structural systems that could duplicate themselves in another time or in another place.<sup>63</sup>

This principle was asserted in our previous chapter on Wesley. A good model for church planting should have historical support at least in principle. The church planting enterprise is a costly and difficult one, especially if there is no clear apprehension of a potentially success-

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas and Draper, ‘A.B. Simpson’, 207.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin W. Mannoia, Church Planting: The Next Generation(Indianapolis: Light & Life Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 43.

ful model. Kevin Mannoia reports that one district in his denomination had only a 34 percent success rate in church planting.

In that same district the failed attempts represented over \$550,000, years of time and energy and 11 careers.<sup>64</sup>

Mannoia, Ridley and others are currently involved in developing a systematic approach to church planting. Ridley's Planter Assessment System(PAS) referred to in the last chapter is one of the components in this approach. Before he started Mannoia spoke of this sought for model as:

....a group of as-yet-unknown variables that we hoped would somehow come together in just the right amounts and at just the right time to form a successful venture.<sup>65</sup>

The model we have put forward and examined in varying contexts in this study is acknowledged to be only a part of a broader church planting strategy. We have isolated certain identifiable components found in three historical contexts that are in common and, on the surface, appear to be critical to the success achieved in planting churches. We must emphasize that these are not the only factors that affect the church planting endeavour. Ridley developed the Planter Assessment System because of his belief that the right church planting person significantly increased the prospects of success. Mannoia declared that a 34 percent success rate moved to 90 percent with the use of PAS. We believe that we can see a comparable rate of success where there is concrete evidence of emphasis on the three ministry principles we have been analysing. Indeed our review of the Ridley's PAS in chapter six showed that our three factor were pro-

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<sup>64</sup> Mannoia, Church Planting, 67.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 13.

minently featured in his thirteen behavioural evaluators. We contend that the emphasis of these three ministry principles in the early stages of church planting will significantly increase the prospects of establishment and long-term survival. In chapter four we summarized the lessons of the Acts record, the Wesleyan revival and the contemporary success of the Saddleback church into three essentials:

1. A commitment to fulfil the Great Commission as the primary driving force in ministry.
2. A commitment to fostering community through the structure of small house or cell groups.
3. A commitment to discipling and training new believers with a view to reproducing leaders and evangelists.

In order to assess the impact of these factors on the success of church planting in the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada this study examines eighty-four churches planted between 1980 and 1995. Data gathered from the Christian and Missionary Alliance Reports and Minutes of the Biennial General Assemblies<sup>66</sup> during these years revealed that 171

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<sup>66</sup> Second Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1982 and Biennial Report for 1980-81 (Vancouver: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1982)

Third Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1984 and Biennial Report for 1982-83 (Hamilton: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1984)

Fourth Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1986 and Biennial Report for 1984-85 (Edmonton: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1986)

Fifth Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1988 and Biennial Report for 1986-87 (Saskatoon: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1988)

Sixth Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in

churches were planted. Half of these were ethnic churches with the integration of recent immigrants as a significant component in their growth pattern. Because the immigration factor was difficult to separate from the factors we wanted to analyse in new church plants ethnic churches were eliminated from our study sample. This left eighty-five churches broadly spread across Canada ranging in age from three to fifteen years for statistical analysis.

Initially a broad range of statistics was gathered for each of these churches relating to the three factors we want to analyse and to the need to get a broad picture for each church - to see the statistical picture in relational contexts. A chart( see Figure Three) was used to display the data. Abbreviated terms are explained at the bottom of the chart. A sample(see Figure Four) shows a data summary which is given in whole numbers. The figures under Ttl Giv(Total Offering Income) and Miss Ttl(Total Giving To Missions) are, for example, whole dollar figures.

The objective of gathering these statistics was to illustrate data that relates to our study factors. What categories would reflect a church's commitment to evangelism? Though others may be indirectly involved, the ones that directly reflect this commitment from a statistical

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**Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1990 and Biennial Reports for 1988-89(Quebec City: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1990)**

**Seventh Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in**

**Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1992 and Biennial Reports for 1990-91 (Abbotsford: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1992)**

**Eighth Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in**

**Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1994 and Biennial Reports for 1992-93 (Toronto: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1994)**

**Ninth Biennial Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in**

**Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1996 and Biennial Reports for 1994-95 (Regina: The Christian and Missionary in Canada: 1996)**

CHURCH \_\_\_\_\_ CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Yr	Ttl. Mem.	Incl Mem	Salv	Bapt	AM Att	Mid Wk	Home BS	SS Att	Ttl Giv	Miss Ttl	Mem Las		

**Yr. - Year**  
**Ttl. Mem. - Total Membership**  
**Incl. Mem. - Inclusive Membership**  
**Salv. - Professions of Faith**  
**Bapt. - Baptisms**  
**AM Att. - Attendance Sunday Worship**

**Mid Wk. - Attendance Midweek Ministries**  
**Home BS - Attendance Home Bible Studies\***  
**SS Att - Sunday School Attendance**  
**Ttl Giv - Total Offering Income**  
**Miss Ttl. - Total Giving to Missions**  
**Mem Las - Total Membership Last Year**

\*Until 1990 Home Bible Studies were listed as a separate statistical category. In 1990 these statistics were combined with the Midweek data to form one category. Data gathering has been adjusted to reflect this change.

FIGURE THREE



**CHURCH Aldergrove CODE 1020**

Yr	Ttl. Mem.	Incl Mem	Salv	Bapt	AM Att	Mid Wk	Home BS	SS Att	Ttl Giv	Miss Ttl	Mem Las		
1981													
1982													
1983													
1984													
1985													
1986													
1987													
1988	56	166	7	7	160		0	94	81669	8505	-		
1989	60	180	18	34	180		0	138	179210	32288	56		
1990	67	252	7	6	185	25		154	192284	33666	60		
1991	72	296	2	10	220	10		140	219189	63087	67		
1992	67	235	0	3	168	12		122	190827	67713	72		
1993	84	344	15	9	210	84		114	234490	49755	67		
1994	76	341	8	5	204	80		141	266284	54521	84		
1995	73	213	18	4	184	70		131	191366	26787	76		

**Yr. - Year**  
**Ttl. Mem. - Total Membership**  
**Incl. Mem - Inclusive Membership**  
**Salv. - Professions of Faith**  
**Bapt. - Baptisms**  
**AM Att. - Sunday Worship Attendance**  
**Mid Wk. - Attendance Midweek Ministries**  
**Home BS - Attendance Home Bible Studies**  
**SS Att. - Sunday School Attendance**  
**Ttl. Giv. - Total Offering Income**  
**Miss Ttl. - Total Giving to Missions**  
**Mem Las - Total Membership Last Year**

\* Until 1990 Home Bible Studies were listed as a separate statistical category. In 1990 these statistics were combined with the Midweek data to form one category. Data gathering has been adjusted to reflect this change.

**FIGURE FOUR**

NATIONAL AVERAGES(ALL C&MA CHURCHES

YEAR	GCI/MIS	IM/SALV	IM/SS	IM/MW	INCMEM	CHUR.NO
1981	15.2	9.5	78.3	7.6	44549	251
1982	14.9	9.9	75.6	9.9	47212(6%)	260
1983	15.6	8.6	73.3	10.8	49567(5%)	273
1984	16.5	7.9	71.4	10	53992 (8.9%)	284
1985	16.4	7	70	9.9	56768 (5.1%)	287
1986	17.2	6	68.3	9.5	59733 (5.2%)	289
1987	16.8	6.1	81.9	10.1	63277 (5.9%)	296
1988	16.6	7.1	64.2	10.1	64845 (2.5%)	302
1989	15.8	6.4	59.9	9.9	70663(9%)	313
1990	15	6.3	45.7	13.9	74296 (5.1%)	327
1991	13.9	6.5	47.3	14.6	75696 (1.9%)	338
1992	14	6.4	44.3	16.9	80681 (6.6%)	348
1993	13.9	6	43.2	17	84086 (4.2%)	358
1994	12.7	6.5	37.3	18.5	86330 (2.7%)	376
1995	14.9	6.5	36.2	18.5	87534 (2%)	377
PERCENT	AV.15.3	AV.7.1	AV.59.8	AV.12.5	AV. 5%	

CALCULATIONS BASED ON ANNUAL STATISTICS RECORDED BY C&MA NATIONAL OFFICE. TERMS: GCI-GROSS INCOME TOTAL OF ALL CHURCHES, MIS-TOTAL OF GLOBAL ADVANCE GIVING AND CANADIAN MINISTRIES(BOTH ARE MISSIONS FUNDS, IM=INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP TOTAL OF ALL CHURCHES, SALV-TOTAL PROFESSIONS OF FAITH REPORTED BY ALL CHURCHES, SS-TOTAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, MW-TOTAL MIDWEEK ATTENDANCE

FIGURE FIVE

viewpoint are Salv(Professions of Faith) and Miss Ttl(Total Giving to Missions). Consistently high or low numbers of professions of faith should be a reasonable indicator of evangelistic fervour. In isolation, a conclusion like this might be problematic. To assist the assessment process statistical national averages for all Alliance churches across Canada were calculated under each category. Thus we have a fifteen year data base for each statistical marker. Churches that are above, below or equal to national averages can be fairly and reasonably analysed.

The Alliance in Canada uses a comparison between total annual church income and missions income as an evaluator of local church commitment to missions. The missions income figure as a percentage of total church income describes this statistically. From 1981 to 1985 the national average Gross Church Income/Missions Income(GCI/MIS) was 15.3%.(see Figure Five). Hence we have gathered these figures for our church plants with a view to evaluating their performance in this area. Data for individual churches as well as combined averages for all Canadian Alliance churches during the same time frame will be described. That the Alliance regards this statistic as an important marker of commitment to evangelism is illustrated by an excerpt from the 1996 missions report to General Assembly.

From a macro perspective, progress is most encouraging. Whereas almost one-half of the world remained *unevangelized* at the turn of this century(96 years ago), today that figure has dropped to less than 20 %. At the current rate of progress the world could conceivably be completely evangelized by AD2030. More impressive is the fact that this kind of progress is being accomplished by the church of Jesus Christ on earth in spite of the fact that she directs less than 2% of her personal income to Christian causes and she sends only 2% of her entire missionary force as foreign missionaries to the "World A countries:(non-Christian and unevangelized) of our world. As should be expected in missionary denomination, the members and friends of the C&MA in Canada contribute proportionately more to world evangelization than is true of other groups on

average. In recent years we have distributed our finances and personnel as follows:

**Statistics on Canadian Alliance Giving for Ministries at Home and Abroad**

Year	Total Church Income	Total to GAF	% to GAF
1993	71,165,485	6,823,493	9.6
1994	74,802,086	7,481,021	10.0
1995	81,515,793	8,472,997	10.4

67

A high level of commitment to evangelism exists in Alliance churches, a commitment that is both expected and cultivated in newly planted churches.

**CANADIAN GROWTH**

As of December 31, 1991, there were 336 churches in Canada, a net gain of 9 over 1990, and a gain of 34 since *PLAN 2000* was launched in 1988. Membership has reached 27,923, and inclusive membership is 76,119. This means an average church in Canada has a membership of 83 plus 143 adherents giving a total of 226 inclusive members. We are pleased to report the largest number of conversions at 4,854, and baptisms at 2340 in our history. These figures average out at 14 conversions, and 7 baptisms per church. The average Alliance church in Canada has 175 in worship Sunday morning, and gives \$21,072 to Alliance missions.<sup>68</sup>

Conversions and giving to missions figure prominently in this Canadian Alliance growth success

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<sup>67</sup> **.Ninth Biennial General Assembly of The Christian And Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of The General Assembly 1996 and Biennial Report for 1994-95(Regina: The Christian and Missionary Alliance In Canada, 1996), 7.**

<sup>68</sup> **Seventh Biennial General Assembly of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada: Reports and Minutes of the General Assembly 1992 and Biennial Report for 1990-91(Abbotsford: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1992), 5.**

profile. This affirms our decision to evaluate the missions giving and conversions data markers for church plants. We have varied in one aspect in reporting missions giving. In calculating the percentile figures, the Alliance uses only giving to the Global Advance Fund as a missions giving indicator. This fund relates specifically to Alliance missions overseas. Those who plant Alliance churches are aware that the direction of missions funds to one designated ministry requires time and education. New Alliance people may have a history of giving to individual missionaries and para-church works. Giving to non-Alliance ministries must certainly be regarded as indicative of commitment to evangelism. The Alliance also has a Canadian Ministries Fund out of which funds are taken for church planting in Canada. A decision was therefore made that, for the purposes of this study, all giving to missions: Global Advance Fund, Non-Alliance and Canadian Ministries Fund, would be totalled and derived as a percentage of individual Gross Church Income. Thus, where variation between National figures as reported by the Christian and Missionary Alliance and those in this study occur it is for the purposes of this study and does not reflect inaccurate data gathering.

The second column in Figure Five lists the second evangelism indicator. IM/SALV describes the number of professions of faith(SALV) as percentage of the total inclusive membership(IM). Thus the 1981 figure tells us that the total number of professions of faith was 9.5% of the total inclusive membership shown in the second last column(44,459). These figures are national, annual averages and are used as a basis of comparison for the performance of new church plants. Naturally the percentages for them are calculated in an identical manner.

The best indicator in the statistics the Alliance gathers that reflects a commitment to discipleship and training is the Sunday School total attendance. The focus of most Christian

Education in the majority of Alliance churches is the traditional Sunday School format. There has historically been a very high level of involvement. Figure Five under IM/SS(Sunday School attendance as a percentage of Total Inclusive Membership) shows a 78.3% figure in 1981 with a declining curve over the next fifteen years to 36.2% in 1995. That there was concern over the Christian Education trend was reflected in a 1992 report to General Assembly entitled 'An Equipping Culture'. The report is directed to post-secondary education for Christians but the critical role of the local church is emphasized.

The primary responsibility for equipping the laity should be lodged with the local church.

The local church is seen to be the best context in which individuals discover their giftedness for ministry and the call of God vocationally. More must be done to guide individuals in this quest.<sup>69</sup>

The Alliance affirms in its Christian Education philosophy that the objective is to 'equip' for service as well as educate. This report, which was written by an Education Commission, formalized a call to all Alliance churches to implement a strategic approach to Christian Education.

It is the call for an equipping culture to pervade the educational strategies and the corporate character of the Alliance in Canada.<sup>70</sup>

We acknowledge, as the declining growth indicates(See Figure Six) that there has been a drop in Sunday School involvement in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. This has been documented in nearly every denomination since 1980 and is likely reflective of change in the way in which Christian Education is being done. For example, note on Figure Six the parallel

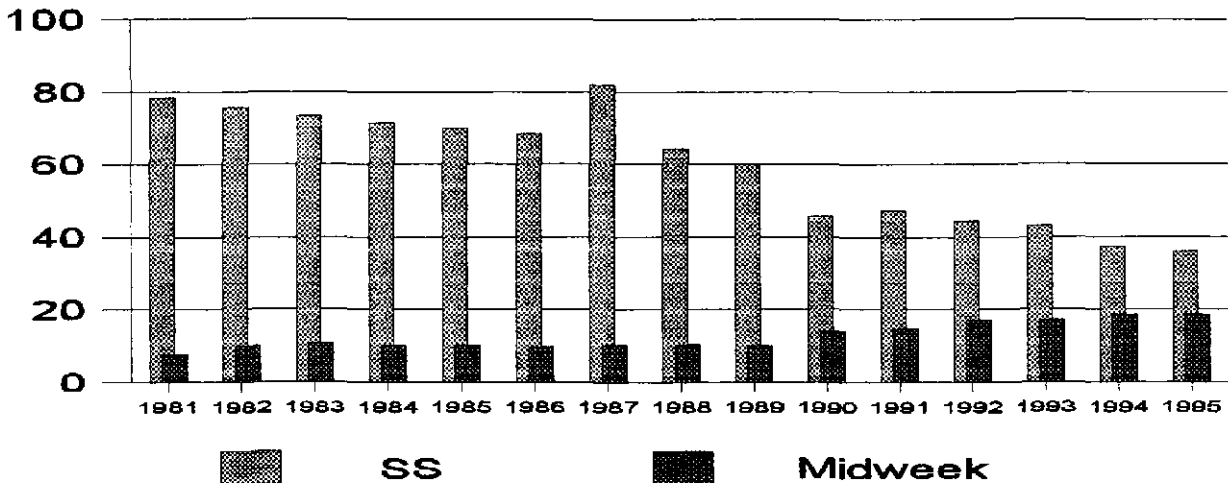
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<sup>69</sup> Assembly 1992, Biennial Report. 85.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 85.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL/MIDWEEK GROWTH COMPARISON 81-95

FIGURE SIX



increase in involvement in midweek ministries. The left axis represents the percentage of the Sunday AM attendance that participates in Sunday School and Midweek activities. As Sunday School declines we see a corresponding rise in Midweek participation. This is likely an indicator of greater involvement in house groups for the purposes of nurture and training as an alternative to the traditional Sunday School format. Indeed, prior to 1990 the Alliance kept separate categories for midweek and home Bible study attendance. These figures were combined in 1990 because the midweek service had, in many cases, been supplanted by home study groups. While we can safely say that there is a measure of Christian Education taking place during midweek activities there are still no measurable statistics to describe what is taking place. This is because cell groups are performing a multitude of functions and they often are

quite different depending on the setting. We will therefore look at them with reference to their role in nurture and community building. Because Sunday School has a well understood role we will use the relevant attendance data as a percentage of inclusive membership as an indicator of commitment to training and discipleship.

Peter Wagner analyses the social dynamics of a church under three headings: Celebration, Congregation, and cell.<sup>71</sup> Celebration is the gathering of believers for corporate worship. Congregation is where people know each other's name. Cell is the small group whose purpose is to provide training and accountability. Robert Logan declares that every church must contain all three categories of social relationships if it is to be healthy and to grow.<sup>72</sup> One principle we derive from this is that Sunday services alone are an inadequate basis for building and strengthening the fibre of a congregation. Our historical study notes that in each successful situation the leadership nurtured and developed congregational ministries beyond Lord's Day observances. For this reason we have used midweek service statistics as an indicator of commitment to foster community through small group fellowship. We acknowledge the validity of the concerns that might be expressed about the differing purposes of midweek events even across the Alliance constituency. But we are simply recognizing the inherent assumption in midweek activities that Sunday alone is inadequate to fulfil the church's discipling mandate.

**When we confess that the Church is the Body of Christ we are in fact saying that the Church is a living organism. As a living organism she is not exempt from the principle of life which necessitates growth, nourishment,**

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<sup>71</sup> Robert E. Logan, Church Planting Workbook(Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1985), 72.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 73.



reproduction.<sup>73</sup>

How do we evaluate success? There are those who will argue that growth or lack of it does not always indicate that a church is having a successful ministry. Certainly the life-cycle theories of Niebuhr and others suggests that describing a successful church is not a simplistic pursuit. We have, however, in this study a clearer group to analyze. We are evaluating new churches at the youngest stage of development and growth is a reasonable, if not necessary, expectation. We remember also that many other views of success are based on subjective evaluators that are often difficult to measure. For the purposes of our study we can only look at the manifest relationship between success, survival and growth. Mannoia documents a 35 percent church planting success rate in his denomination prior to the implementation of a strategic approach. Obviously the failure rate of 65 percent was a motivating drive behind new approaches. Survival as a success evaluator is easier to accept than growth. Nevertheless if the majority of your peers are growing and you are not it certainly leads one to consider that there is a problem. In Figure Five we see that the Alliance in Canada experienced an average growth of five percent from 1981 to 1995. We have used this figure as a baseline for evaluating the relative success of our study group. The growth rate of each church has been calculated and then compared. The rest of the base figures in Figure Five provide a useful reference point in analysing performance of the churches with reference to our study factors. Churches above and below the national rates will be assessed. It is expected that churches with high performance rates in every category will do better in terms of growth and survival than those with low or

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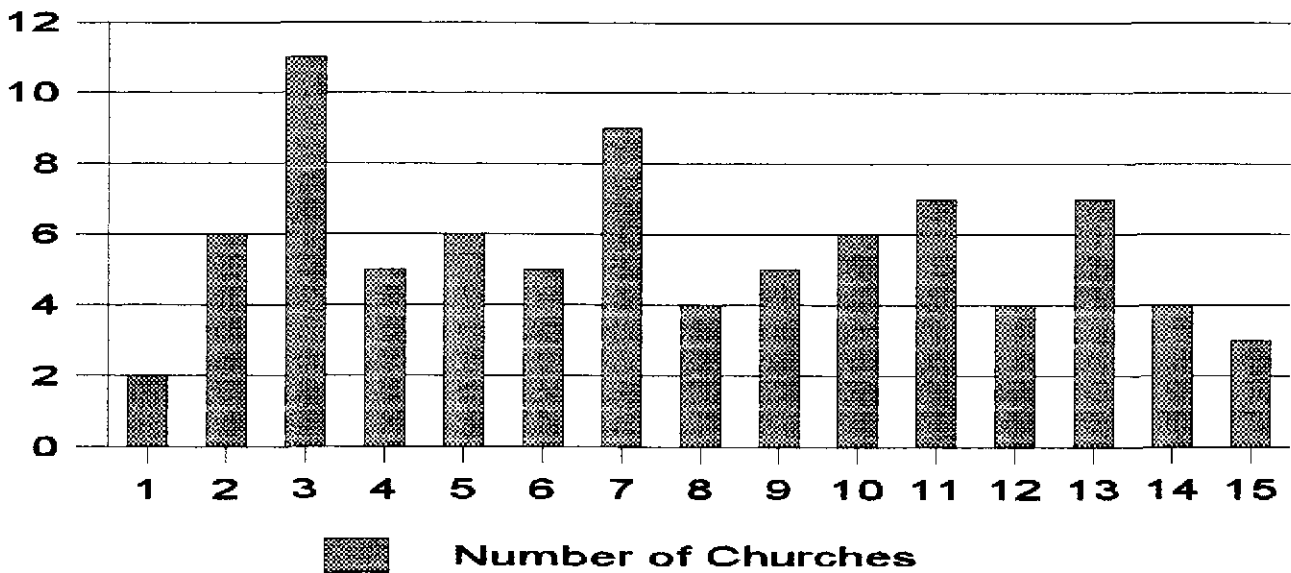
<sup>73</sup> Fred G. King, The Church Planter's Training Manual(Camp Hill, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1992), 5.

lower rates. Indeed there should be an incremental rate of success as performance improves.

Our sample group of 84 churches range in age from one to fifteen (see Figure Seven)

### CHURCH PLANTS/AGE GROUPING 84 CHURCHES(1981-95)

FIGURE SEVEN



The gathering of statistics for each church was done with a view to establishing trends. The difficulty of analysing trends and causal effects with younger churches became evident early on and a base minimum of four years of existence was decided upon as a criteria for evaluation. This eliminated twenty churches from the sample group, sixteen of which were new churches planted in 1993 or later and four that closed after a life of one to three years. Of the original sample group of eighty-four churches a total of fourteen closed including eight of our remaining sample of sixty-four. This is an eighty-three percent success rate, an identical rate to that reported by the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec in roughly the same period(1980-

97)<sup>74</sup> with sixty-four church plants. With the high rate of survival of Alliance churches the remaining measure of success, rate of growth, will take on greater significance in our study.

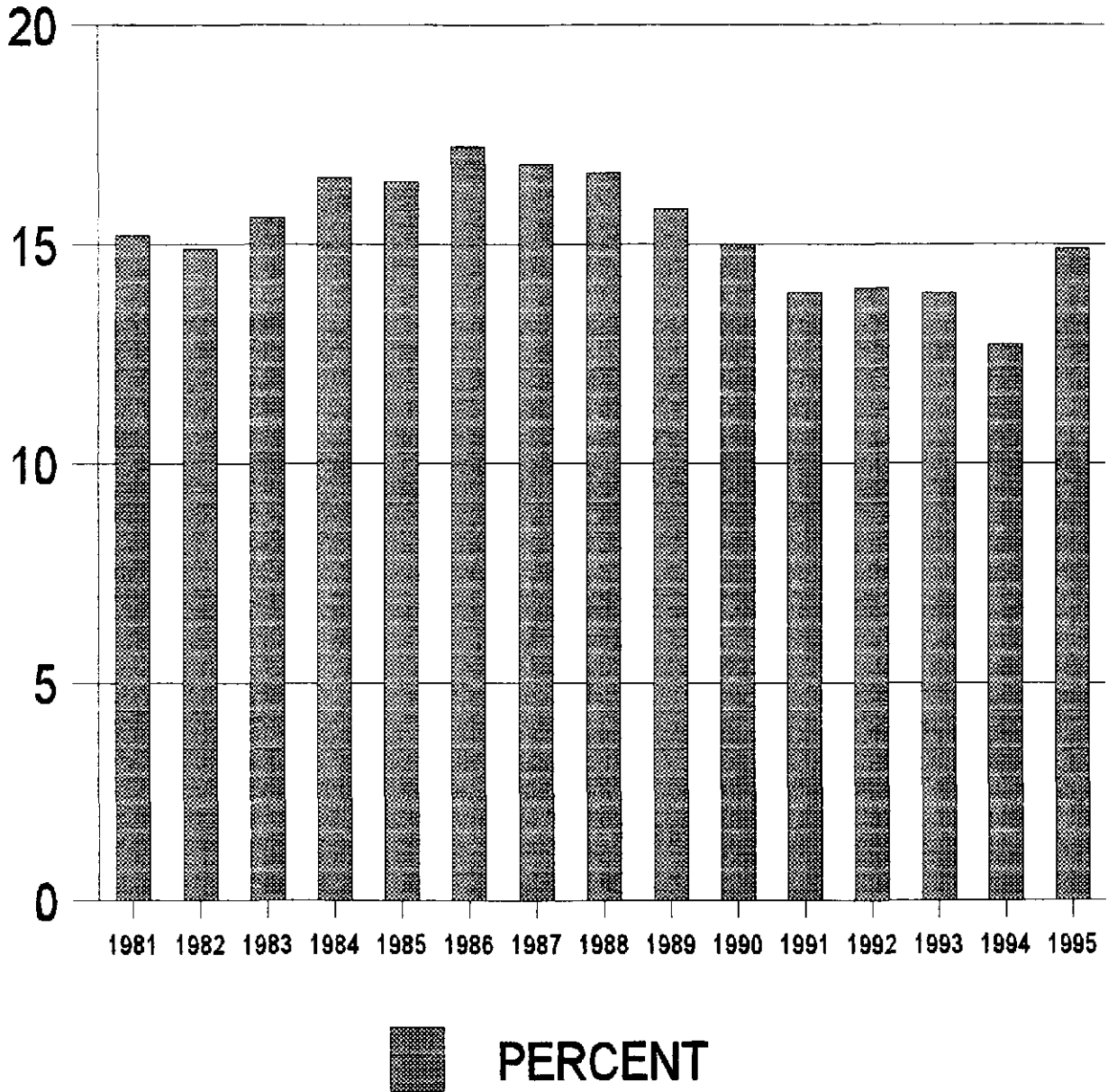
Our baseline of comparison is the figures in the five columns in Figure Five.(See also Figures 8-11). Church statistics within one percent of or exceeding national averages are counted as showing strength in the relevant category. Those with strength in more categories should have a higher growth rate if our thesis is correct. Those with lower growth rates should have demonstrable weakness in the categories. Figure Twelve illustrates a composite Church(4690) with a Gross Church Income/Missions Giving(GCI/Mis) ratio of 14.8 percent which is within .5 percent of the national standard. The *Inclusive Membership/Professions of Faith(IM/SALV)* ratio is 8.6 percent and thus also over the national standard of 7.1 percent. The standards are exceeded in every category. We therefore categorize 4690 as four for four by meeting or exceeding the national standard in each of the four evaluator categories. We will use this designation where it applies to our sample group and four other groupings to describe our study results: three for four, two for four, one for four and zero for four. Each designation will be correlated with the growth rate calculation in column five(INC MEM). A designation of four for four should correlate with a high growth rate and zero for four with a low growth rate if our thesis is correct. As expected there is a high growth rate of fifteen percent in our Composite(4690) indicating a potential correlation. Consideration of other growth factors will be undertaken where the data warrants it.

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<sup>74</sup> Ken Bellous, Church Planting(Etobicoke: Division of Shared Mission, BCOQ, 1998), 2-4.

**GROSS CHURCH INCOME/MISSIONS GIVING**

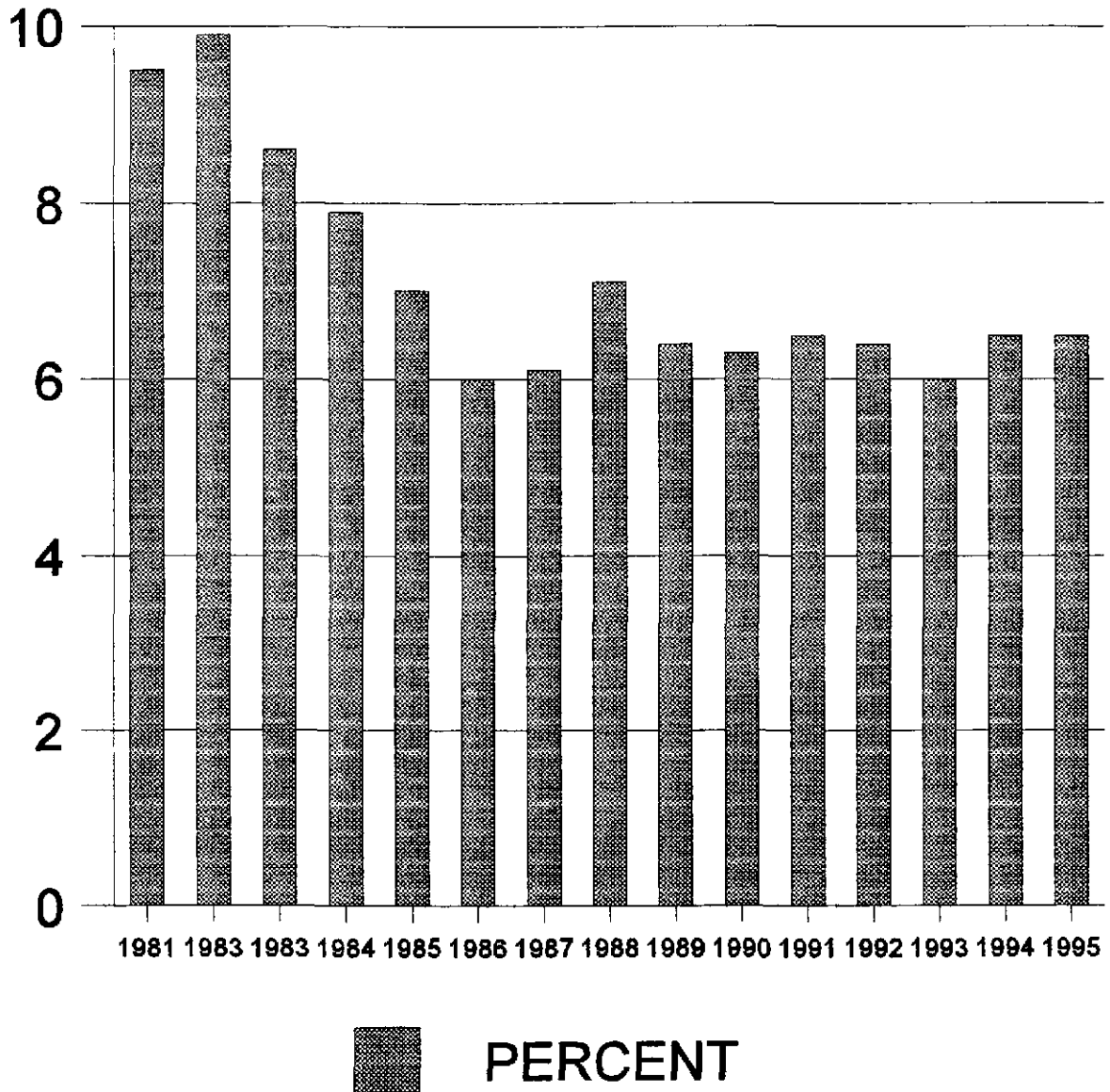
**COLUMN ONE (FIGURE FIVE) - GCI/MIS**



**FIGURE EIGHT**

**INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP/PROFESSIONS OF FAITH**

**COLUMN TWO(FIGURE FIVE) - INC MEM/SALV**



**FIGURE NINE**

# INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP/SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## COLUMN THREE(FIGURE FIVE - IM/SS)

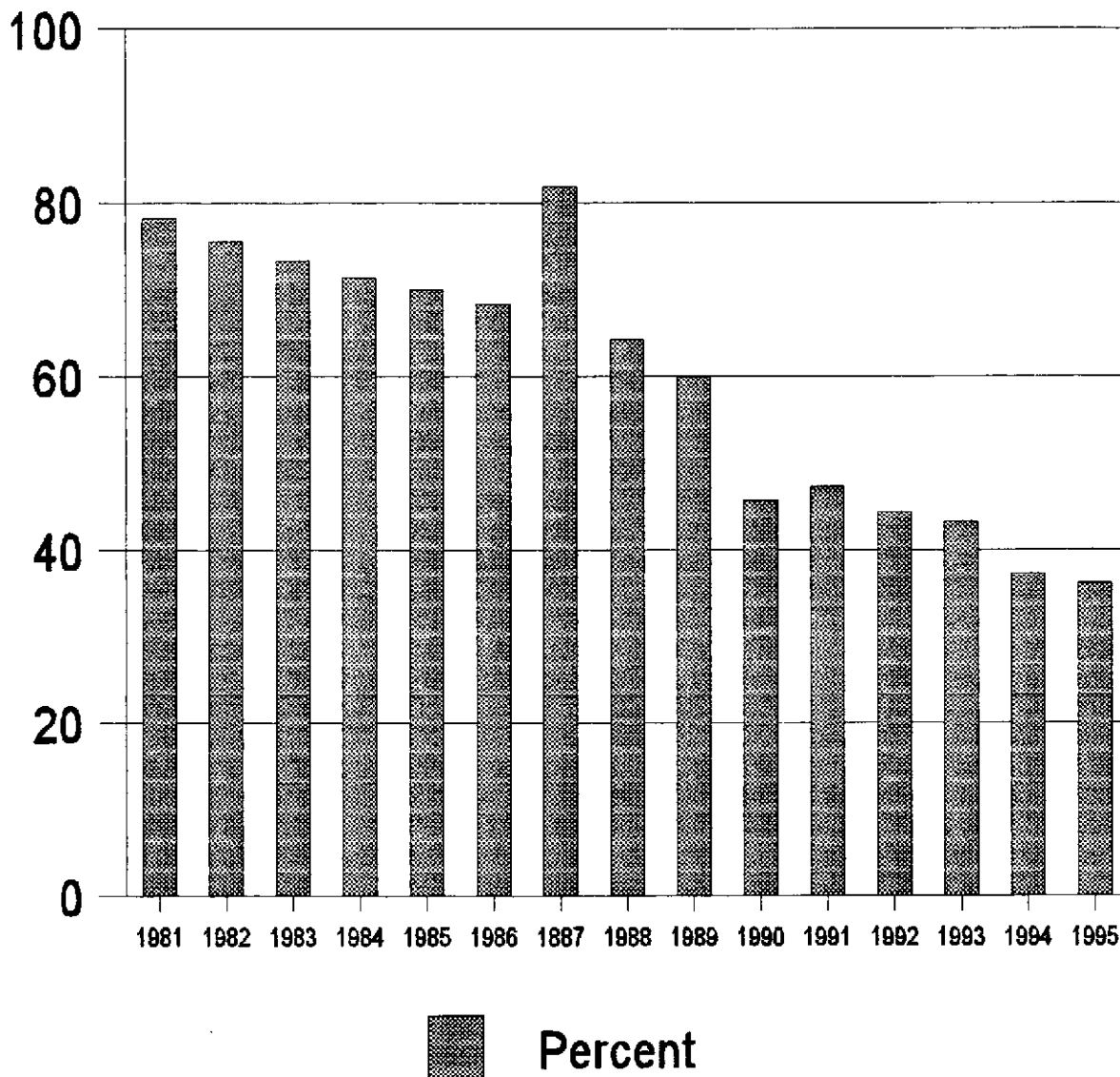
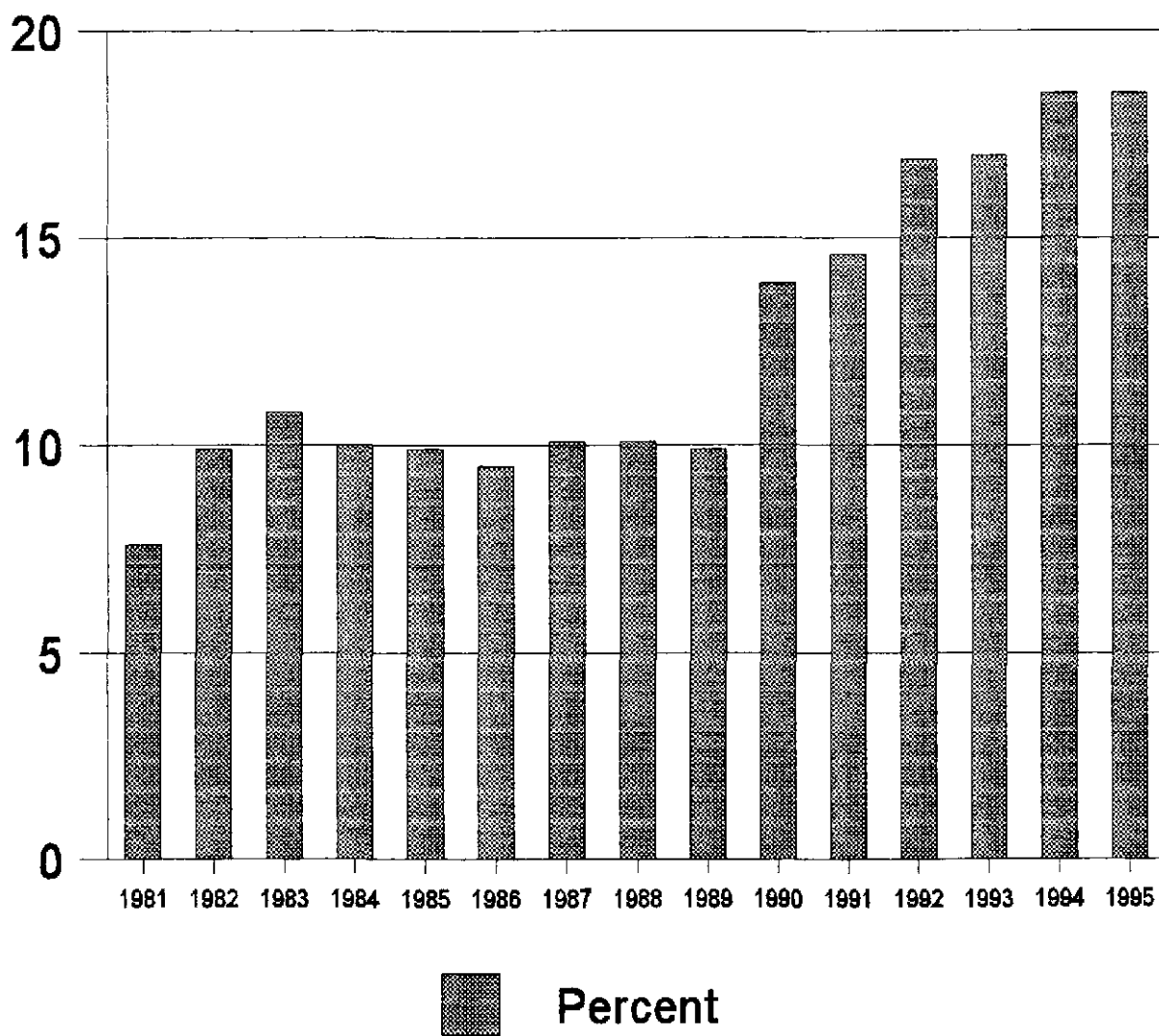


FIGURE TEN

# INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP/MIDWEEK ATTENDANCE

## COLUMN FOUR(FIGURE FIVE) - IM/MW



**FIGURE ELEVEN**

**PERFORMANCE RATINGS CHURCH 4690**

**FOUR FOR FOUR/HIGH GROWTH RATE**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>GCI/MIS</b>	<b>IM/SALV</b>	<b>IM/SS</b>	<b>IM/MW</b>	<b>INC MEM</b>
1981					
1982					
1983					
1984					
1985					
1986					
1987					
1988					
1989	.09	0	100	34	70
1990	16.1	6	74.6	22.4	80(+14.3)
1991	20.8	29.3	53.5	5.1	108(+35)
1992	22.2	12.6	40.8	5.8	109(+0)
1993	13.8	6.8	47	6	149(+36.7)
1994	16.8	2.6	66.7	10.3	162(+8.7)
1995	-	2.7	67.6	8.1	154(-4.9)
<b>PERCENT</b>	<b>AV. 14.8</b>	<b>AV. 8.6</b>	<b>AV. 64.3</b>	<b>AV. 13.1</b>	<b>AV. 15</b>

Calculations based on annual statistics recorded by C&MA national office. Terms: GCI = Gross Church Income; MIS = Total of all giving to Missions; IM = Inclusive Membership; SALV = Total professions of faith; SS = Total Sunday School Attendance; MW = Total Midweek Attendance.

**FIGURE TWELVE**



**In contrast Church 2620(see Figure Thirteen) shows strength in one of four categories and records a negative growth rate of -31 percent and closes after six years. These are the simple cases which tend to prove the theory we are addressing. An analysis of the eight church closures in our reduced sample group illustrates that statistics always need to be looked at more closely before a conclusion is made. Church 2870(see Figure Fourteen) is below the national averages in all four categories and yet had a positive growth rate of 13.3 percent. What is striking is that the church closed in 1992 with a peak inclusive membership of 186. This suggests that extraordinary factors must have been at work in this church's history which have distorted the statistical history we see before us. A similar picture emerges from church 1690.**

**A distorted picture is also seen in churches with erratic growth curves or early strength in the categories and then decline. High percentages in isolation may produce a positive average that fails to show years of negative performance. Church 4787 reported a 22.6 percent growth rate but strength in only one of the four categories. This appears to bring the thesis into question. However we note that the growth rate during the last four years was erratic: 1990 - 0 percent; 1991 - +77.1percent; 1992 - 3.2 percent; 1993 -6.7 percent. Clearly the single 1991 figure has inflated the final average of 22.6 percent giving an inaccurate picture of the growth pattern. Church 1540, in like manner, has very high numbers in the four categories in its early years. Yet in the final four years before closing the church dropped well below national averages. When all reported numbers are averaged out the church appears to be strong in three of four categories. Its closure labels it as a failure, a result that undermines our thesis if we fail to examine the data more closely. Our four other church closures fall generally into the patterns described by the first four and we found nothing in them that raises any serious con-**

## PERFORMANCE RATINGS CHURCH 2620

### ONE FOR FOUR/CHURCH CLOSURE

YEAR	GCI/MIS	IM/SALV	IM/SS	IM/MW	INC MEM
1981					
1982	7.8	0	81.3	25	32
1983*	-	-	-	-	-
1984	2.7	0	84.6	23.1	26(-18.8%)
1985	8.9	0	38.7	19.4	31(+19.2%)
1986	6.3	0	38.5	19.2	26(-16.1%)
1987	2.8	0	0	36.4	22(-15.4%)
1988		<b>CLOSED</b>			
1989					
1990					
1991					
1992					
1993					
1994					
1995					
<b>PERCENT</b>	<b>AV. 5.7</b>	<b>AV. 0</b>	<b>AV. 48.6</b>	<b>AV. 24.6</b>	<b>AV. -31%</b>

Calculations based on annual statistics recorded by C&MA national office. Terms: GCI = Gross Church Income; MIS = Total giving to Missions; IM = Inclusive Membership; Salv = Professions of Faith; SS = Sunday School Attendance; MW = Midweek Attendance

\*1983 figures not reported

**FIGURE THIRTEEN**

**PERFORMANCE RATING CHURCH 2870**

**POSITIVE GROWTH/CHURCH CLOSURE**

YEAR	GCI/MIS	IM/SALV	IM/SS	IM/MW	INC MEM
1981					
1982	6.9	3.4	0	20.7	58
1983	12.2	2.4	121.4	13.1	84(+44.8%)
1984	14.5	4.5	67	8	88(+4.8%)
1985	11.5	1	46.9	4.2	96(+9.1%)
1986	8	1.1	40.4	6.4	94(-2.1%)
1987	17.9	10	30.9	8.2	110(+17%)
1988	11.3	9.7	33	5.8	103(-6.4%)
1989	6.4	4.6	26.2	4.6	130(+26.2)
1990	7	2.7	16.5	5.3	152(+16.9)
1991	4.1	3.2	11.3	3.8	186(+22.4)
1992	2.9	3.2	12.4	3.8	186(+0%)
1993	<b>CLOSED</b>	<b>AUGUST</b>	1993		
1994					
1995					
<b>PERCENT</b>	<b>AV. 9.3</b>	<b>AV. 4.2</b>	<b>AV. 36.9</b>	<b>AV. 7.6</b>	<b>AV. 13.3</b>

Calculations based on annual statistics recorded by C&MA national office. Terms: GCI = Gross Church Income; MIS = Total giving to Missions; IM = Inclusive Membership; SALV = Total professions of faith; SS = Sunday School Attendance; MW = Midweek Attendance

**FIGURE FOURTEEN**

-cern about our thesis.

Approximately ten churches of the remaining sample group have statistical anomalies. Church 1235(see Figure Fifteen), as an example, dropped from an inclusive membership of eighty in 1992 to seventeen in 1993. The numbers in the categories were well above national averages in two areas and strong in a third prior to 1993. This radical drop in inclusive membership may have come because of a schism but it nevertheless skews the numbers in 1994 and 1995. It is, for example, easier to have an eighty percent attendance in Sunday School when your total inclusive membership is twenty-five than when it is one hundred and ten. Closures and these kinds of distortions account for nineteen of the churches in our sample group of sixty-four. The remaining churches have been categorized into three groups by their performance in the essential areas. Those strong in four of and three of four categories have been combined. They total sixteen. Those strong in two of four total fourteen and those strong in one of four total fifteen. The growth rates of each church in each group were then recorded and the groupings were totalled and averaged. A clear pattern emerged.

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Number of Churches</b>	<b>Average Growth rate</b>
<b>Four and Three of Four</b>	<b>Sixteen</b>	<b>21.4%</b>
<b>Two of Four</b>	<b>Fourteen</b>	<b>19.9%</b>
<b>One of Four</b>	<b>Fifteen</b>	<b>18.9%</b>

As expected a higher rate of growth is evidenced as the churches' commitment to the core essentials increases. This sustains our thesis. It must be acknowledged that there is a remarkable average rate of growth even in our third and lowest grouping. To a certain extent

**PERFORMANCE RATING CHURCH 1235**

**TWO OF FOUR/NEGATIVE GROWTH**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>GCI/MIS</b>	<b>IM/SALV</b>	<b>IM/SS</b>	<b>IM/MW</b>	<b>INC MEM</b>
1981					
1982					
1983					
1984					
1985					
1986					
1987					
1988					
1989					
1990	.07	18	47.3	5.2	133
1991	4.2	17.3	63.6	21.8	110(-17.3)
1992	.07	12.5	27.5	16.3	80(-27.2%)
1993	0	41	0	0	17(-78.8%)
1994	2.7	8	80	20	25(+47%)
1995	0	0	78.5	43	14(-44%)
<b>PERCENT</b>	<b>AV. .9</b>	<b>AV. 12.1</b>	<b>AV. 37.1</b>	<b>AV. 13.3</b>	<b>AV. -17%</b>

Calculations based on annual statistics recorded by C%MA national office. Terms: GCI = Gross Church Income; MIS = Total giving to Missions; IM = Inclusive Membership; SALV = Total professions of faith; SS = Sunday School Attendance; MW = Midweek Attendance

**FIGURE FIFTEEN**

**this reflects how we have approached the data. By choosing performance within one percent of national baselines we can not show the many churches in both the second and third groupings that were just below the national average. This reflects both strength and commitment to the three essentials in our study and the result is exceptional growth and survival rates in the majority of Alliance church plants. The 2.5% range in our three groupings reveals a broad commitment to evangelism, Christian Education, and building community and that there is a demonstrable link between growth and these specific emphases. With the national growth rate at five percent this reflects well on the Alliance church planting program. We conclude then that the data sustains the thesis we have put forward.**

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SURVEY ANALYSIS**

**In December of 1997 a survey designed to elicit the attitudes, training and philosophy of experienced church planters in the Christian and Missionary Alliance was distributed by mail. The sample group directly correlated with the churches targeted in our previous statistical analysis of church plants from 1980 to 1995. In other words, these are the men who planted the churches in question. In some cases the original church planter could not be identified. District Superintendents were asked to identify men they considered to be effective church planters and who, in some cases might be supplementary to the designated group. The final list totalled ninety. Surveys were mailed on December 6, 1997. The initial response was forty-five or 50%. A supplementary mailing produced ten more responses for a total of fifty-five or 61%. By any standard this has to be considered an exceptional response, perhaps reflecting a degree of interest or concern that should be noted in evaluating questionnaire responses.**

**The questionnaire consists of thirty-nine questions. Our primary concern was to discover the church planting philosophies of the sample group and if there is significant indication of the essentials we recommend in our model: evangelism, cell groups and lay training. There is sufficient data gathered in the survey to evaluate the respondents success as a church planter and the perceived causes for success or failure. We should be able to see relevant correlations.**

**The survey includes some questions that do not bear directly on our study. These are designed to gather statistical information relevant to the development of a church planting model currently being developed by C&MA leadership. Other questions are placed through-**

out the survey to make it more 'user-friendly' for the respondent. Questions 23 and 30, for example, provide little in the way of hard data but give the respondent an opportunity for personal reflection or to 'sound off'. Our method will be to present the questions in order listing the responses in a statistical manner and then attempt to analyse the results. At the conclusion of the thirty-nine questions we will identify significant correlations and draw conclusions.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

1. You have been identified as a church planter by your District leadership. List the church or churches you have planted identifying denomination and location.

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There were fifty-five responses. Thirty-seven or 66% had planted one church. Twelve had planted two churches, three planted three churches, two planted four churches, and one, five churches. It is assumed that a gifted and called church planter would have multiple experiences, if not successes in planting churches. We see here that two out of three have only one church planting experience. This could mean that the Christian and Missionary Alliance does not have an effective selection mechanism for identifying gifted church planters or that church planters are not being encouraged to continue planting churches.

2. What education or training did you have when you planted your first church? How long? Where? What degrees?



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Responses indicate that Alliance church planters are well educated. Twenty-one of fifty-five or 39% had masters level training(usually the Master of Divinity) when they planted their first church. Thirty or 55% had Bachelor's degrees. Only four had no post-graduate training. These tended to be older men who began their ministry when fewer opportunities were available and training requirements were less strict. We note that education does not show a clear correlation with multiple church plants. Two of the untrained respondents were multiple church planters. Nine of thirty Bachelors level respondents planted multiple churches. Four of seventeen Masters level respondents planted more than one church. Indeed, if there is a correlation, it is that education may reduce effectiveness. Education and multiple church plants correlate as follows: Untrained-50%; Bachelors-43%; Masters-24%. Undoubtedly there are other factors. The older respondents, for example, tend to have less training and more years in ministry which gives them more opportunity for church planting experiences.

3. Did you have any courses or training in church planting prior to planting your first church?(circle one) yes no If so, describe. \_\_\_\_\_

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70% of respondents report that they had no courses or training in church planting prior to planting their first church. Of those who answered yes, eight cited a course at Bible school

five cited Fuller courses or seminars on church growth, two, an unidentified seminar and one a manual on church planting. It is instructive that none report their District office as a source of training, suggesting that advance training is an area that needs to be addressed. We also discovered that 78% of those who planted multiple churches had no courses or training prior to planting their first church.

4. Have you had any courses or training in church planting ever? (circle one) yes no

Describe. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

63.6% got some training after starting a church. Most often cited sources were: 1. District provided 2. Fuller Church Growth Seminar 3. Bible School/Seminary Course. 36.4% have no training at all as of responding to this questionnaire.

5. Did you have any courses or training in evangelism prior to planting your first church?(circle one) yes no If so describe. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

85% report courses or training in evangelism prior to planting their first church. Most often cited training was Evangelism Explosion. Others include Campus Crusade, Evangelism Alive, Friendship Evangelism and Bible School courses on evangelism. This strong response could reflect a high priority concern with evangelism and a recognition of the need for training in this area of ministry.

6. Have you had any courses or training in evangelism ever? (circle one) yes no

Describe. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**This question seeks to discover if the church planting experience has had an impact on the approach to evangelism training and increased the sense of need for it. Indeed we discover that 94.5% of respondents now report courses or training in evangelism. To put this in perspective only three of those surveyed answered no to this question.**

**7. Did you have any courses or training in starting and leading cell or small group ministries prior to planting your first church?(circle one) yes no If so, describe.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**67% answered yes and 33% no. Training contexts and courses reported were: Navigators, Serendipity, Meta Church and Bible School. This is still a remarkable response in a pre-church plant scenario. That two out of three church planters see this as an important emphasis reinforces the position that this thesis has taken on this ministry in a healthy church plant.**

**8. Have you had any courses or training in small group ministry ever?(circle one) yes no If so, describe.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The numbers remain approximately the same(64% yes and 36% no) perhaps indicating**

that those who do not see cell groups as a vital part of planting a church find this view unchallenged by their experience. The benefits of cell groups are subjectively evaluated and take longer to impact a church. They might not be missed by church planters with short-term views and 'bottom-line' evaluators.

9. What age were you when you planted your first church? \_\_\_\_

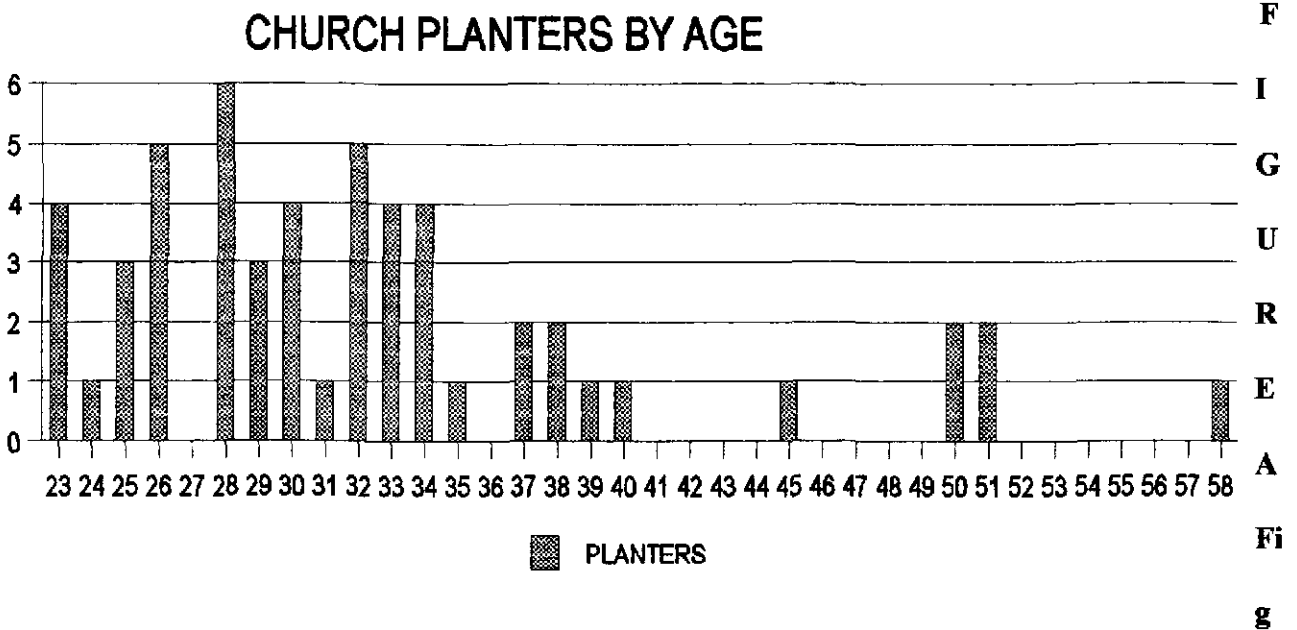


Figure A illustrates the ages of the respondents when they planted their first church. The median age of our survey group was 32.5. Three groupings emerge: 1) over 40 - 6(11%), 2) 31-40 - 21(40%), 3) 23-30 - 26(49)%. Stepping back we see that 51% are over 30 and 49% under 30. The youngest was 23 and the oldest 58. There was only one church planter in the 41-49 age group and only 6 over 40. This means that 89% are 40 and under.

10. Was this church planting experience your first? \_\_\_\_\_ second? \_\_\_\_\_ third? \_\_\_\_\_ fourth? \_\_\_\_\_ or? \_\_\_\_\_ pastorate?

The intent of this question is to determine if the respondent's first church plant was his first experience as a pastor. 68.5% reported that their first church experience was as a church planter. When coupled with the statistics in question three (70% had no prior church planting training) it appears that the Alliance is sending not only untrained, but inexperienced men into very demanding ministry situations. The remainder report as follows: second experience-16.7%; third experience-3.7%; fourth experience-7.4%; sixth experience-1.9%; tenth experience-1.8%.

11. What was the size of the community where your first church planting experience occurred?(approx. pop.) \_\_\_\_\_

The results were grouped wherever possible into manageable ranges:

- 1)under 1000 - 4
- 2)1000-5000 - 20
- 3)5000-22000 - 18
- 4)40000-100000 - 6
- 5)400000-700000 - 4
- 6)5,000,000 - 1

The data shows that 45% of first churches were planted in communities of 5,000 or less. If this is by design it suggests that leaders are not planning with a view to giving church plants the best opportunity for success. Further we discover that 79% of first churches were in communities of 22,000 or less. This labels the Alliance as a small market level denomination.

Only 9% started in communities of 400, 000 or more. Could it be that the Alliance is unwilling to compete in the larger markets?

12. How was your church plant initiated?(circle one)

- 1)District initiated core group - 41.5%
- 2)Daughtered by another church - 30.8%
- 3)A special outreach event - 7.7%
- 4)Other(please specify) - 20%

The other methods reported were: self-initiated core group(8), church split(3), restarting a church plant(1), developed from a preaching post(1).

13. Did you have a clear understanding of the process involved in planting a church?(circle one)

1)yes 2)no

65.5% report no and 34.5% yes.

14. Did you have adequate support from the District in:

- 1)material resources(circle one) yes no
  - 2)practical know-how(circle one) yes no
  - 3)resolution of problems(circle one) yes no
  - 4)church planting procedures(circle one) yes no
- 1) 72.7% yes 27.3% no
- 2) 41.5% yes 58.5% no
- 3) 58.8% yes 41.2% no
- 4) 41.5% yes 58.5% no

The majority report satisfaction with the support of the District in material resources

and problem solving. However a majority see deficiencies in providing practical know-how and church planting procedures. 32.7%(one in three) answered yes in every category indicating a completely positive experience with the District. 20%(one in five) answered no in every category indicating an overall negative experience with the District.

15. What more could the District have done to support you?(list in order)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

Responses were grouped with the total sample and categorized. Thus they represent the sample as a whole rather than individuals within that context. The following groupings developed:

**22 responses** - more training, more guidelines in church planting procedures both before and ongoing in the church planting process.

**8 responses** - suggesting access to a church planting mentor.

**7 responses** - asking for more involvement on the part of the District Superintendent in an accountability relationship with specific tasks and objectives.

**6 responses** - asking for more encouragement from the District leadership.

**4 responses** - expressing that District financial support was inadequate and that pressure to get off subsidy was counter-productive.

**7 responses** - were fully satisfied with District support. They could do no more.

**1 response** - was fully dissatisfied with District support.

We note again the concern with the how of church planting as a strong response. The first two response groups reflect this. They account for 50% of the total answers given.

16. Are you satisfied with the methodology used by the District in planting your church?(Circle one) 1)yes 2)no Explain.

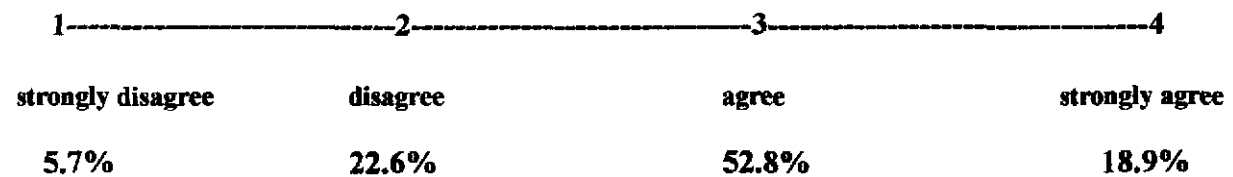
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5 answered yes and 42% no. Comments arising from a no response include: the District selected the wrong location(eg.too small, inappropriate motive), no clear methodology or strategy was evident, the District was uninvolved after startup, District-initiated core group method faulty, not enough practical support, not enough training.

17. Evangelism was a significant factor in the planting and early growth(1-5 yrs) of the church I planted.(Circle)



The total on the disagree end of the scale is 28.3%. The agrees total 71.7%. This question reflects what happened more than what the respondents believe. Those on the disagree side may have found that through circumstances surrounding the way their church was planted that they were unable to have an evangelism emphasis. The high agree response is encouraging in that it suggests that Alliance church plants have a significant evangelism component and are



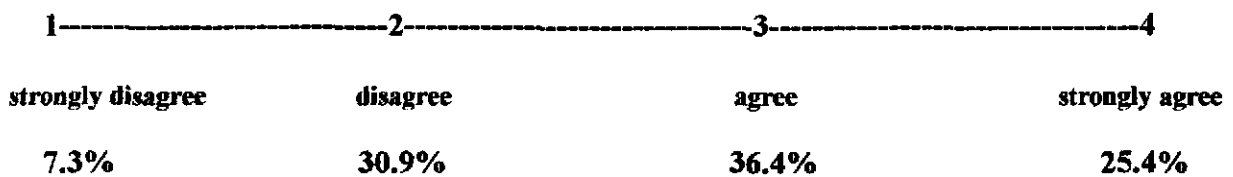
not relying on transfer growth.

**18. Small group fellowships(cell groups) were a significant factor in the planting and early growth(1-5 yrs) of the church I planted.(Circle)**



The total of the disagree responses is 25.9%. The agrees are 74%. The proportions are very similar to the evangelism numbers. Of significance is the high percentage of strongly agree responses. Nearly one in three have indicated that cell groups were very highly featured in their church plants. Three out of four indicate that they were a factor in the early planting and growth of their church.

**19. The training of laymen to assist in pastoral and church ministries was a significant factor in the planting and early growth(1-5 yrs) of the church I planted.(Circle)**



The disagree total is 38.2% and the agree total is 61.8%. In comparison with questions 17 and 18 there is some slippage in proportional commitment to training lay people. It is possible that there is a greater commitment of time and energy involved in training, time that is not always easy to find in the early stages of a church plant. Nonetheless, there is enough evidence from this data to conclude that this ministry was very important in their church planting experiences.

**20. Do you consider the church you planted to be a success?**

**1)yes 2)no**

**84.9% answered yes and 15.1% no. A few respondents asked for a definition of success.**

**The intent of the question is to discover what the church planter thinks. This assumes that there will be different definitions of success according to the individual. What matters is if the planter feels that he has succeeded. This gives another perspective to his answers in the questionnaire. The large yes percentage is remarkable and it puts the C&MA church planting enterprise in a favourable light.**

**21. List in order of significance the three dynamics which, in your estimation made the church a success?**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_**
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_**
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_**

**There were 117 responses, many of which were duplicated. Sometimes the words of a response were different but the intent was clear and the analyst undertook to group responses. This means that the specific wording of the respondents is not always reflected. The best effort has been made to convey intent wherever possible. Responses grouped in the following categories which are listed in numerical order:**

- 1. Leadership - 29 responses**
- 2. Community Building(small groups) - 28 responses**
- 3. Prayer/Depending On God - 19 responses**
- 4. Evangelism - 16 responses**

- 5. **Worship Service Content - 12 responses**
- 6. **Community Penetration - 8 responses**
- 7. **Lay Training/Discipleship - 7 responses**
- 8. **District Support - 7 responses**
- 9. **Mother Church Support - 3 responses**
- 10. **Community Need - 2 responses**
- 11. **Donated Property For Building - 2 responses**

**117 total responses**

An important perspective on this list is that each respondent will have given three responses. Indeed some wrote in more. What this means, for example, is that we do not see the individuals responses in order of priority. A respondent may have given one, three and eleven as his three answers. Therefore this list reflects the emphases of the group as a whole. One thing that is reflected is a significant number of responses showing the importance of the three emphases of our thesis - 43.6% of the total responses and two of the top four categories. Leadership as the number one response represents 24.8% of the total.

22. List in order of significance the three dynamics which in your estimation led to or threatened to lead to failure.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**1. People Conflict - 35.6%**

**-Most frequently cited is the core group gathered by the District as a**

**source of conflict.**

**2. Leadership Inadequacy - 30.3%**

**-Lack of training and gifting for church planting was the most frequent response.**

**3. Inadequate Support Systems - 13.6%**

**-Financial stress was the number one response.**

**4. Location/Facility Problems - 6.1%**

**-Respondents typically cited a poor choice of community on the part of the District.**

**5. Failure To Train Lay People - 4.5%**

**-Respondents believed that they should have begun training early and laid a better foundation.**

**6. Lack Of Vision - 3.8%**

**-No one clarified what was meant by this.**

**7. Lack Of Evangelism - 3%**

**8. Lack Of Prayer - 3%**

**Response categories 1-4 could be characterized as factors mostly beyond the control of the respondents as church planters. Church planters are typically plunked down in the middle of a core group already gathered by the District. We have already seen in previous questions that nearly all of the training for church planters comes after they begin their first church. Support systems include District subsidies for new churches and logistical and strategic input. All of this is District dependent. Invariably new church locations are chosen by the District.**

It is hoped that data gathered from this research can help Districts to deal with some of these concerns. The last four categories 5-8, though cited, deliver a positive evaluation of the work of Alliance church planters. The 3% number for evangelism implies that for the vast majority of church planters there is no concern with a lack of evangelism. The other three, lay training, vision and prayer have similar percentages. It appears that the real concerns are administrative rather than with content. What this may suggest is that church planters have a good idea about what a new church should be and do but that they lack a clear model from the District along with a strategy for implementation.

23. Did your training impact on your success or failure as a church planter? (Circle one) 1)yes  
2)no

How? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

69% responded yes, 20% no and 11% wrote in that they didn't know. Not all wrote answers in the How? section. Less than half elaborated. Of these the following were cited:

1. Past And Life Experiences - 42.3%
2. Bible School Training - 30.7%
3. Church Planter Training - 26.9%

We see that church planting training is not as significant as one would expect but it must be remembered that 70% had no training before their first church plant and that for 68.5% church planting was their first church ministry experience. In this light the number one

response makes sense. It appears that for a majority of church planters life experience had to be heavily relied on. Ministry training is still significant if you combine two and three. The total is 57.6%.

24. Do you feel that your District office had a clearly defined vision and ministry strategy appropriate to the planting of churches?(circle one) 1)yes 2)no

44.4% answered yes and 55.6% answered no. This is consistent with the large number of church planters who began with no training in church planting and no church experience. This would not tend to foster a perception that the District knew what it was doing.

25. Do you feel that you needed more guidance from the District office? (circle one)

1) yes 2) no

37% answered yes and 63% answered no. This would seem strange unless it reflects a lack of confidence in the District's ability to give useful guidance. The question 23 response might be consistent with this conclusion.

26. Would you prefer:(circle one)

1)more accountability to the District? -24.5%

2)less accountability? -1.9%

3)accountability is adequate as it is. -73.6%

This could indicate an attitude of independence or be further evidence for a lack of confidence associated with District involvement.

27. If you were to plant a church today would you initiate services and basic programs:(circle one) 1)as soon as possible 2)delay until(fill in the reason)\_\_\_\_\_

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The intent of this question is to address the basic assumption of church planting in the C&MA that public services are a priority and should be started as soon as possible. Philosophically this points the church away from building community by emphasizing public ministry. Practically it bypasses evangelism because it depends on transfer growth. And it leaves little time for training as the majority of the church plant's energy is consumed in maintaining the public service. Not surprisingly a majority expressed that they would delay if given another opportunity.

**69.2% would delay the initiation of services and basic programs.**

**69.4% - in order to build the core group**

**19.4% - in order to develop and train leadership**

**8.3% - initiate programs only as needed**

**2.8% - take time to build a good foundation**

**30.8% would start services and programs as soon as possible.**

**68.8% - gave no reason**

**18.8% - believe that programs draw and keep people**

**12.5% - believe it is important to build relationships quickly**

**28. Rate the following components in the establishment of a church plant according to their importance. Use the numbered scale. 1-vital 2-essential 3-very important 4-important 5-mildly important 6-not essential 7-unimportant 8-not essential 9-irrelevant (you may use ratings more than once).**

**evangelism \_\_\_\_\_ youth ministry \_\_\_\_\_ lay training \_\_\_\_\_**

Sunday School \_\_\_\_\_ cell groups \_\_\_\_\_ nursery \_\_\_\_\_  
organized services \_\_\_\_\_ facility \_\_\_\_\_ church office \_\_\_\_\_  
district leadership \_\_\_\_\_ location \_\_\_\_\_ trained church planter \_\_\_\_\_

With the potential for over five hundred responses there is a significant challenge in managing the data in a way that communicates what the respondents are saying. Obviously the higher numerical ratings are of interest as an indication of ministry priority for church planters. With this in mind it was determined that the number of responses in the 1-3 ratings would be used as a basis of comparison in twelve categories. It was discovered during the survey analysis that ratings #6 and 8 were the same.(‘not essential). This was a typing error which had no significant impact on the results especially since our analysis will be limited to the top three ratings. The following analysis resulted.

<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Number Of Top Three Responses</u>
1. Evangelism	94%
2. Lay Training	82%
3. Cell Groups	75%
4. Nursery	67%
5. Organized Services	66%
6. District Leadership Support	65%
7. Trained Church Planter	61%
8. Location	54%
9. Sunday School	47%



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10. Facility	45%
11. Youth Ministry	38%
12. Church Office	25%

The top three percentage rating means that 94% of the responses in the evangelism category were either 1, 2, or 3. Evangelism's number one place held in the overall total, as 44.4% of the number 1 hits went to evangelism. The most significant aspect of the above response is that the top three ratings went to the three church planting essentials under study in this thesis, confirming that they are a high priority in the thinking of Alliance church planters.

29. If you could start over what would you do differently?(check one or more)

1)emphasize evangelism\_\_\_\_

2)emphasize small groups\_\_\_\_

3)emphasize training lay people\_\_\_\_

4)get more church planting training\_\_\_\_

5)not use the District methodology\_\_\_\_

6)other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

There were 114 total responses. There was not any decisive grouping except that 66 or 57.8% of the responses encompassed the three core values of our church planting model.

1)emphasize evangelism	- 15.8%
2)emphasize small groups	- 21%
3)emphasize training lay people	- 21%
4)get more church planting training	- 19.3%

-180-

5)not use the District methodology - 2.6%

6)other - 20.2%

**23 other responses break down**

**-screen/better prepare core group - 8**

**-go slower, delay services, programs - 7**

**-more emphasis on prayer - 4**

**-more emphasis on contemporary worship - 2**

**-more funding support from District - 1**

**-a clear indication of calling - 1**

**30. Did you consider yourself to be gifted and called as a church planter when you began this church?(circle) 1) yes 2) no**

**Did your viewpoint change? How and why? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**73% of those surveyed did not consider themselves to be gifted and called as a church planter when they began their first church. Of all of the respondents the self-assessment of 69% did not change as a result of their church planting experience. In only 7 cases did a no response change to a yes. This means that 58.2% of all respondents did not believe they were gifted and**

called to church planting and they were confirmed in this belief by their experience. This statistic suggests that the selection process is significantly flawed.

**31. Do you believe that church planting candidates should be screened for appropriate gifts?**

**(circle) 1) yes 2) no**

In light of the response in question 30, the overwhelming emphasis in this question is not surprising.

1. yes - 96%

2. no - 4%

**32. A recent C&MA study of church planters led to this profile of personality characteristics most critical for predicting success in the role of a church planter. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 for each characteristic (1 represents weakness and 10 strength).**

1)Abstract thinking\_\_\_\_

2)Venturesome, bold\_\_\_\_

3)Self-sufficiency\_\_\_\_

4)Self-discipline, perseverance\_\_\_\_

5)Emotional stability\_\_\_\_

6)Being assertive\_\_\_\_

7)Consistent moral values\_\_\_\_

8)Diplomacy\_\_\_\_

9)Self-esteem\_\_\_\_

In order to facilitate our understanding of the responses in a manner that can be

broadly grasped we have grouped them in three categories:

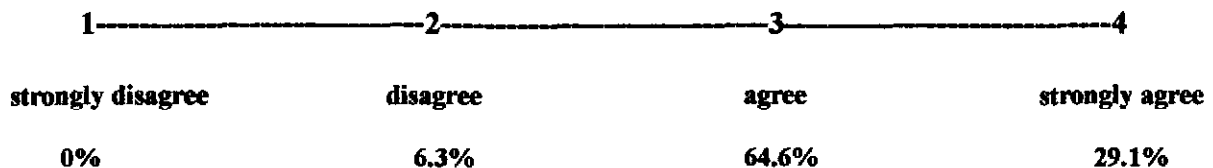
**Overall High Ratings - Predominantly 7-10 ratings but may include 1 or 2 low evaluations. 85.7% of the responses fell into this grouping.**

**Overall Low Ratings - Predominantly 1-5 ratings but may include 1 or 2 high ratings. 2% of the responses fell into this grouping.**

**Mixed Ratings - Ratings in both high and low in generally equal distribution. 12.3% of the responses fell into this grouping.**

If this profile of a church planter is accurate, it suggests that the responses in question 30 where a majority felt they were not church planters reflect an incorrect self-image. It may also suggest that there is a lack of positive reinforcement from denominational leadership and/or local churches. Survey responses cite the many difficulties of being a church planter. The surfeit of negative experiences may have the effect of warping a planter's perspective on his gift and calling. This concern might well be reflected in denominational care for, and training of, church planters.

**33. The above profile accurately reflects characteristics in a church planter that are most likely to lead to success.**



**93.7% either agree or strongly agree that the above profile accurately reflects characteristics in a church planter. One possible conclusion to draw from questions 30, 32, and 33 is that self-assessment is not a reliable determination of gifts and calling.**

**34. Write in the space below any characteristics or qualifications you believe may be missing from the above.**

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**There were 111 total responses with 31 different profile items which could be either supplementary to the profile or exclusive. It appears that there is very little agreement. The largest response was repeated just 15 times or 13.5% of the total. Only 19 of the 31 different responses were duplicated, many only 2 or 3 times. The summary is as follows:**

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>1. Love for people/People skills</b> | <b>-15 responses</b> |
| <b>2. Dependence upon God/Prayer</b>    | <b>-14</b>           |
| <b>3. No addition to profile</b>        | <b>-10</b>           |
| <b>4. Vision/Visionary</b>              | <b>- 9</b>           |
| <b>5. Gift of faith</b>                 | <b>- 7</b>           |
| <b>6. Able to teach/Preach</b>          | <b>- 7</b>           |
| <b>7. Calling of God</b>                | <b>- 5</b>           |
| <b>8. Patience</b>                      | <b>- 4</b>           |
| <b>9. Gift of administration</b>        | <b>- 4</b>           |
| <b>10. Team player</b>                  | <b>- 3</b>           |
| <b>11. Supportive spouse</b>            | <b>- 3</b>           |
| <b>12. Humility</b>                     | <b>- 3</b>           |
| <b>13. Respect for authority</b>        | <b>- 3</b>           |

<b>14. Positive attitude</b>	<b>- 2</b>
<b>15. Integrity</b>	<b>- 2</b>
<b>16. Adaptability</b>	<b>- 2</b>
<b>17. Sense of humour</b>	<b>- 2</b>
<b>18. Hospitable</b>	<b>- 2</b>
<b>19. Wisdom</b>	<b>- 2</b>

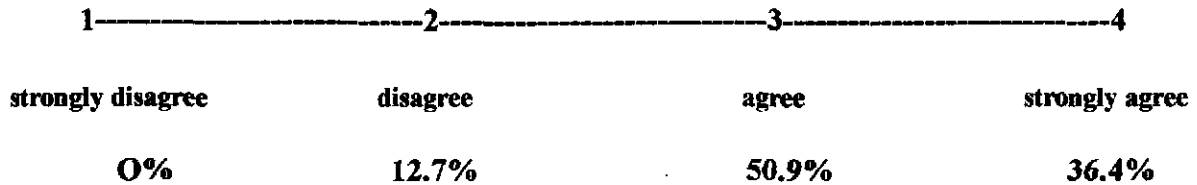
**20. Single responses:**

- Love for the Bible**
- Sacrifice**
- Correct doctrine**
- Dedication**
- Hard worker**
- Spiritual maturity**
- Gift of evangelism**
- Entrepreneurial**
- Teachable**
- Filled with Holy Spirit**
- Spiritually gifted**
- Public relations skills**

**The multiplicity of additions and lack of consistent agreement must be seen in the context of a 97.3% general acceptance of the profile. Most responses reflect valid concerns and profiles are not meant to set limits but to define basic starting requirements that will increase the**

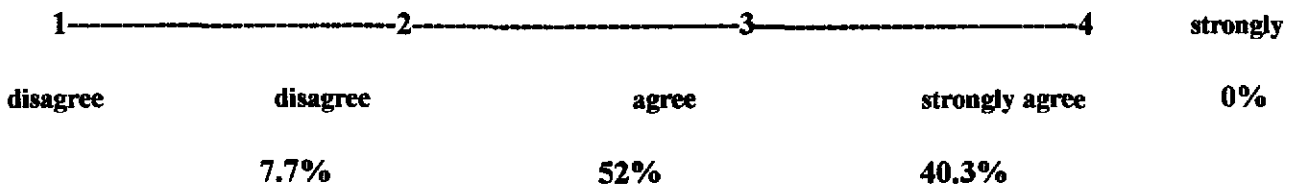
likelihood of success.

35. A church will grow if it is a healthy church.(circle one)



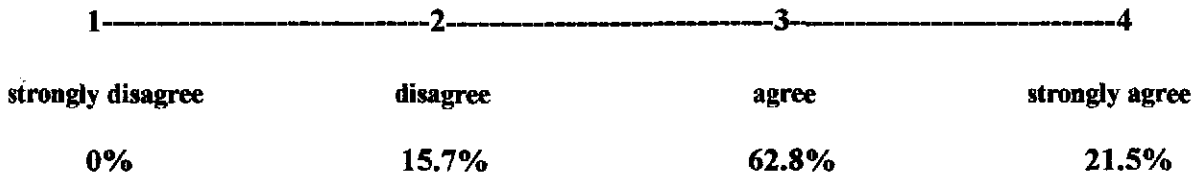
Four of the fifty-five respondents asked for a definition of growth. The assumption was that the wording would convey numerical growth as the intention especially in the context of a survey on church planting where numerical growth is a primary concern. It appears that most of the respondents understood the question this way and responded appropriately. Those who raised the issue appeared to be making the point that there was a question the survey was not addressing. They answered the survey as intended nonetheless. The point of the question is to discover whether growth is a strong expectation among church planters. The 50.9% agree figure within the structure of a graduated scale reveals a qualified affirmation. This likely reflects some of the belief that other kinds of growth are just as important. On the other hand a total of 87.3% express commitment to growth as an expectation given a healthy church.

36. A healthy church has a productive evangelism ministry. (circle one)



In roughly the same proportional response as question 35 there is a 92.3% commitment to evangelism as an indicator of a healthy church.

**37. A healthy church has a growing cell group ministry. (circle one)**



**84.3% are committed to cell group ministry as an indicator of church health.**

**38. A healthy church trains lay persons who assume responsibility for church ministries.(circle One)**



**100% believe training of lay people for ministry is an indicator of a healthy church. 62% strongly agree.**

**39. Write below any comments you may have on the church planting ministry of the C & MA and/or your personal experience of church planting.**

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**Most respondents wrote a great deal in the space provided and it would be impossible to present all the responses in this format. Instead an attempt has been made to present one representative statement from each questionnaire avoiding duplication wherever possible. Responses are listed alphabetically by name, not by any category so the church planters may speak for themselves. Using this criteria thirty separate quotes follow. Nine of the fifty-five questionnaires had no response to # 39. Sixteen gave responses that were unusable because they were too long, too complicated or did not relate to church planting. Overall a lot of good material was not included for space reasons. The following are direct quotes which are numbered in order to indicate where they begin and end.**

**1. "An individual needs to believe unquestionably that he's "called" to where he is so that in the tough times he perseveres, in the difficult times he hangs in there."**

**2. "This survey has overlooked the role of the pastor's wife and family. In my case, my wife, and later, my children have been very involved in the ministry. This is crucial if we are to have unity and harmony in the home and in the church."**

**3. "My greatest concern is when new Alliance churches are started with Christian**

people unhappy with their present church situations."

4. "Is the goal a recognizable church organization in a building with C&MA on its door or is the goal a living organic witness to Jesus Christ that is culturally attuned and has a specific strategy for reaching lost people with Christ's redeeming love?"

5. "My personal view is we do not plant churches in the C&MA. We place churches in communities that grow by transfer growth."

6. "The C&MA have to recognize their church planters as being important in the same way they see their missionaries."

7. "It is much easier to be a church planter when you belong to a dynamic denomination - which the Alliance is. The Holy Spirit rests on a moving body!"

8. "District leadership must be careful to recognize that lay leaders in new plants are often immature. New works attract a higher ratio of hurting people. And it takes time for some of the genuine character to emerge for what it is."

9. "You cannot take method 'A' and expectations engendered in Toronto and transfer them to the Maritimes."

10. "In our new push to define and direct church planting we must be cautious to not overlook that God's ways are not our ways. Let's not overlook those who do not fit the profile."

11. "With a little more vision, risk-taking and financial support on the part of the District, I believe the church would have grown faster and would be farther along than it presently is."

12. "I feel that it is vital for the C&MA to continue to use the resources God has

provided for planting more churches."

13. "There is no one model of church planter or method of church planting."

14. "I appreciate the strong emphasis our denomination has on church planting."

15. "I firmly believe that we should be developing individuals who have a desire for church planting ministry by initiating a church planting Internship through CBC/CTS. Discipling/Mentoring/ Training young church planters is of great interest to me."

16. "The model used here - an adolescent church plant with the mother church providing the people, the pastor, and startup funds (down payment on a building) is the most effective model to plant churches in urban settings."

17. "If we do it again, I would spend 6-12 months meeting with a core group and building a leadership team before going public. I would focus on a cell group ministry instead of hoping to attract people to Sunday morning services."

18. "We also need a greater intentionality about church planting and greater District office/local church cooperation in doing so. I would suggest the joint development of a five year plan for church planting in each city/area/whatever which the local church and District are each committed to much like the joint mission/church plans which happen on the mission field."

19. "Humanly speaking church planters can be summarized in two words! 'Hard Work'. This task requires a person with 'single-minded determination'.

20. "I believe it's very helpful if the pastor/new church can be given enough startup funds to hire one or two key people(part time) in areas where the pastor is weak .... whether it be administration, music, small groups, children or youth ministries."

21. **"I believe the District needs to be clear about their goals, patient in expectation, and in full support and confidence in their church planters. I believe the core group must be clear what it means to be an Alliance church."**

22. **"I do not think the District offices can adequately give effective leadership to this area, not because they are unqualified, rather, the job is too massive. There are pastors and lay people that could give good district leadership under the authority of the DS."**

23. **"I believe that the #1 issue in planting a church is not giftedness or training, but prayer. We have lost our focus and to some extent our effectiveness."**

24. **"Less churches planted with more resources - we're spread too thin. A mentor to come alongside the church planter. Regular contact by the District to facilitate support and to help the spouse of the church planter deal with the stress of the ministry."**

25. **"Basic people skills are very important. The characteristics of the pastor is very important for the success of the project."**

26. **"Glad to see the vision of the C&MA to plant churches and glad to be a part of it."**

27. **"I appreciate our DS's progressive approach to all the ministries of the district including church planting!"**

28. **"It seems wise to do all the necessary preparatory work before starting. Goals, research, strategy, and trained personnel with adequate resources."**

29. **"The church planter has to be a person who is prepared to model everything he does. The church takes on the characteristics of the planting pastor. I still see the C&MA sending people in to plant churches who do not fit the profile. I believe it is unfair to the couple who are sent in."**

30. **"In my 8 years as a pastor I think the District is getting better/wiser all the time. We have great District support and our Regional Director set-up gives us good access to advice/encouragement."**

## **CONCLUSION**

**A review of the total survey reveals a great deal of data that does not relate directly to the specific concern of this thesis. Indeed we have seeded just fourteen questions into the survey that are related. A secondary purpose has been to gather data for the C&MA to assist them in developing church planting procedures. However, we believe that this has been the most effective methodology for gathering thesis information. A broader survey has masked our specific intent and enabled us to avoid betraying any bias. This is a basis for confidence in the survey results.**

**Our three core values of evangelism, community building, and lay training consistently score high with respondents. Questions 5, 6, 17, and 28 capulize the responses to evangelism as a priority. Prior to church planting 85% of respondents had received evangelism training. This increased to 94.5% after beginning a church. This represents the highest commitment to training in one specific area in all of the survey responses including church planting training. 71.7% of respondents indicate that evangelism was a significant factor in the planting and early growth of their churches. 94% ranked evangelism as very important to vital in the establishment of a church. Indeed this was the number one response to question 28. These questions specifically targeted attitudes and practice with regards to evangelism and there is a clear result confirming its priority in the minds of active church planters.**

**Questions 7, 8, 18, 27, and 28 address the respondent's attitudes to community building**

activities characterized by cell or growth groups. 94.5% had training in starting or leading small or cell group ministries prior to planting their first church. Despite the fact that nearly all had previous training 67% got additional training in this area after starting a church. This certainly reflects the fact that respondents regard this ministry as very important to the success of a new church plant. This is confirmed by question 18 responses. 74%(including a high 'strongly agree' component) declare that cell groups were a significant factor in the planting and early growth of their church plants. Question 27 gave no indication of an expected response yet a majority of respondents shared a concern with building a stronger community before initiating services. Fully 69.4% declared that they would delay in order to develop a strong core group. Our historical studies show that building community is a key component in churches that grow and become established. Our church planting group shows an awareness of this and express some frustration that the system sometimes works against them in fulfilling this vital ministry. We find that cell groups rank high in responses to question 28. 75% of responses ranked cell groups as very important to vital in the establishment of a church plant. This gave cell groups the number three ranking among the twelve options. Again we conclude that our historical studies are being verified in the context of church planting in the C&MA from 1980 to 1995.

Questions 19, 27, 28, and 38 address the respondents attitudes to training lay people. 61.8%(with a high 'strongly agree' component) agree that the training of laymen was a significant factor in the planting and early growth of the church they planted. If we understand this response as behavioural, the subsequent reactions to question 38 are very revealing. 100% believe training of lay people is an indicator of a healthy church. 62% 'strongly agree' with

the statement that affirms this. It appears that for those who did not have a lay training component in the first five years of their church plant, that they were deeply impressed with the need and the significance of its absence. Those who incorporated it into their ministries seem to have been confirmed in their belief in this ministry. This 100% response is the strongest affirmation of any ministry mentioned in the entire survey. Further, lay training has the number two ranking after evangelism in question 28 with 82% of responses having a top three rating. Indeed, it should by now be apparent that our three core values are ranked 1, 2, and 3 - evangelism(94%), lay training(82%), and cell groups(75%). We believe this is the strongest possible affirmation of our thesis contention. In fact 57.8% of those given the opportunity to start over indicate that they would emphasize one or more of these three values. It appears that experience, negative or otherwise, leads church planters to hold and confirm them.

The survey results confirm our contention. Our historical analysis reveals that at the core of growing movements where churches are being planted and established we find evangelism, small group ministries that build community and the training of lay people for ministry roles. We see this to be true in the contemporary church planting ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It is evident in the attitudes and ministry philosophy of a majority of Alliance church planters. We do see some tension in the application and implementation, suggesting that ministry structures have not always facilitated the desire to work out these values. The concern, reflected in other questions such as 24 and 27, tells us of the importance of these values in the minds of our respondents. If they did not matter then it would be appropriate to affirm the C&MA church planting system especially one that plants

171 churches during a fifteen year period. It is also remarkable that so many seem to have come to very similar conclusions about what values to emphasize when we remember that 70% had no church planting training prior to planting their first church. Obviously ministry experience is the crucible that shapes and forms our ministry philosophy and our survey group has given a resounding affirmation of our model and thus of the thesis.

**\*NOTE:** Some readers may be concerned with the absence of inclusive language in chapter eight. The writer has endeavoured to be sensitive to this throughout the previous chapters. However, the reality of the C&MA is that women are not candidates for ordination and therefore not qualified for appointment as church planters. Thus all survey subjects were men. Indeed there are those who might have found inclusive language in the survey questions offensive. This might have skewed the responses. This does not reflect the attitudes of all Alliance workers but the subject of inclusiveness is one of sensitivity. Therefore the writer was constrained to structure the research in a way that reflected the denominational ethos.



## CONCLUSION

**A recent study reports that in general about 85 percent of the local churches in Canada and the United States have either plateaued or are declining. The Christian and Missionary Alliance is doing better than that, but over 50 percent of our churches are in a similar state.**

**It is not merely the fact that there is no numerical growth(sometimes a town or community is merely shrinking in size), but reports indicate that in most of these churches people are not coming to saving faith in Christ or being baptized.<sup>75</sup>**

**This is, perhaps, the fundamental concern of our thesis. Our model has three components, bearing in mind that they have been affirmed from Acts through to our contemporary statistical analysis of the Alliance in Canada. They are: cell groups, lay training and evangelism. It is our observation that this is a dynamic interlinked model driven by evangelism. Jesus was primarily an evangelist who trained His disciples to carry on the mission of evangelism. The Great Commission carried within it the seeds of training their disciples to take up the mission. Whenever we see church growth begin to flat-line or plateau we discover as Paul Bubna did that those churches have stopped evangelizing. The integration of this model is based on the reality that the other components derive their *raison d'etre* from evangelism. This may be disturbing to some who would ask the question, 'Is evangelism the sole purpose of the church?' The answer is, of course, no. But the caveat is that without evangelism the church ceases to be the church. Evangelism drives us to make disciples and surely we are called to make disciples who are like Jesus in ministry and character. We must ask ourselves, 'What was Jesus like and what did He do?' Our unqualified answer is that He was passionate about spreading the Good News. If we train lay people, what do we train them for? Again we consider the biblical precedent and**

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<sup>75</sup> Paul F. Bubna, "Pursuing The Vision...Removing The Obstacles," Alliance Life, 132, no.13(July 16, 1997): 9.

turn to the New Testament model of the training of the Twelve. We acknowledge that there is a degree of simplification here, but fundamentally, in spite of the broader range of ministries in *today's contemporary church*, we must affirm that if the basics of the Great Commission cease to be a fundamental driving force in any local church, then that church ceases to be a biblical church.

From a church planting standpoint it is sometimes helpful to look at the initiating phase as the sowing of seeds of the church that will be. In other words a genetic basis is being laid down that is critically determinative. Genes, as a rule, can't be altered except with great difficulty. This means that care must be taken to get it right in the start up phase. Our study has discovered three essential genetic components that the church planter must focus on. He must see that his church is driven by evangelism. He must nurture converts and disciples in small groups. He must train lay people to continue the mission of outreach and evangelism. The other aspects of church life such as worship are not relegated to secondary status by this emphasis. Instead we discover that they are actually driven by the dynamo of these three essentials.

Our statistical analysis of the Alliance in Canada showed a direct correlation between these essentials and church growth. Survey responses provided further confirmation. The historical models and ultimately the scriptures themselves affirm their centrality. Those who would argue that growth can become an idol to church leaders are justified in declaring that there are other measures of success. But we still must return to our obligation to Jesus Christ to carry out the Great Commission. This is not about defining success by growth but about

**a Church that is obeying the Lord in the most fundamental way that defines her existence.**

**This mosaic of contrasts creates a sickly universal church, too lame and blind to be an effective agent of redemption for its master. Carnal zeal dilutes incredible blessing. Passive indifference dulls gloriously changed lives. Noble purposes faint into actionless words. Smug satisfaction blocks the prayer that would release heaven's powers. Little wonder that the majority of this continent's churches are in non-growth modes unable to keep pace with the population.<sup>76</sup>**

**The model we are recommending will be most successfully implemented at the church planting stage since, in most cases, it would involve a total lifestyle change in established churches. But Robert Coleman's classic The Master Plan of Evangelism declares that it is the church's responsibility to train those who will evangelize and disciple those who are won. There is no vehicle other than the church for making this happen.**

**There is no use to pray for the world. What good would it do? God already loves them and has given His Son to save them. No, there is no use to pray vaguely for the world. The world is lost and blind in sin. The only hope for the world is for men to go to them with the Gospel of Salvation, and having won them to the Saviour, not to leave them, but to work with them faithfully, patiently, painstakingly, until they become fruitful Christians savouring the world about them with the Redeemer's love.<sup>77</sup>**

**This model is at the core of Christ's command to go into all the world and make disciples. Rick Warren declared that every church is driven by some purpose. Frequently churches are unaware of what drives them. But certainly every church desires to be driven by an authentic purpose. There can be no purpose more authentic than the Great Commission. Our model is built on the Great Commission and apart from all of our study and analysis this is what fun-**

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<sup>76</sup> Carl F. George, Prepare Your Church For The Future(Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 219.

<sup>77</sup> Robert E. Coleman, The Master Plan of Evangelism(Westwood, NJ.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 109.

damentally recommends it. In conclusion we describe it once again.

1. **Evangelism**. This element must have the highest priority creating a lifestyle mindset for the whole church.

2. **Small Groups**. These exist for nurture, following up and discipling new converts.

3. **Lay Training**. Lay people are trained for everything from leading nurture groups to personal evangelism.

These three elements are integrated and connected in a perpetuating cycle. Evangelists win converts who are nurtured and trained in small groups who then contribute to the overall mission of the church to win new converts who repeat the cycle. This was the genius of Jesus, rediscovered by Wesley and evident wherever dynamic churches are growing and prospering. Churches are a by-product of this model. Initially, the early church leaders had no concept of the local church. They focussed on the Great Commission and then began to organize churches because they had to. Wesley had a very similar experience. He openly declared that he did not want to plant churches and thus focussed on evangelism and discipling converts in the Methodist classes. Ultimately churches became necessary. The error of so much of modern church planting is not in intention but in emphasis. Church planters should not be sent out to plant churches but to evangelize, disciple converts and foster community. Local church structures should develop as a consequence and should only become an emphasis when the need can not be ignored. Inherent in this model is that what you emphasize in the beginning controls what you become in the long term. Conversely, if you do not focus on the components of this model at the early church planting stage, it is very difficult to introduce them at a later date.

This study has really sought to confirm a biblical model rather than introduce a new concept

of ministry. It presumes that biblical truth has been lost in a sea of theories about church growth, many focussed on growth as a measure of success. This has been one of the most misleading ideas church planters have had to deal with. Growth can be 'a mile wide and an inch deep'. Numerical statistics can be meaningless. They do not always reflect the maturity of the disciples in one's church or the depth of love in your fellowship, or, for that matter, whether your converts have really been converted. The only valid growth is biblical growth that is measured by real conversion, real discipleship and real commitment to the *Great Commission* and the *Great Command*. Any church planting and thus, church growth model must lay aside numerical growth as a value in favour of these biblical values. We believe that numerical growth will result naturally if there is a balanced emphasis on evangelism, nurturing fellowships and discipleship training in a dynamic and interdependent relationship.

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