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Abstract

A PROJECTION AND STRATEGY FOR CHURCH GROWTH USING AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT GROWTH AT THE BURGIN, KENTUCKY, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

William Fraher Abernathy

This study came about because of an inquiry by the then pastor of the Burgin, Kentucky, United Methodist Church, who approached the writer to see if he would be interested in coming to the church to do an analysis that might lead to the discovery of ways for the church to be revitalized and to grow. The pastor had come into a situation where he had found himself with a demoralized congregation. He was at a loss to know just what to do to recover from the devastating effects of the church split which had occurred some months prior to his arrival in 1984.

The writer proposed to the pastor that they go beyond his request for a one day visit and instead do a major project which would both help the church and provide the writer with the necessary laboratory for a Doctor of Ministry project. The pastor took that proposal to the church board which granted approval and pledged their cooperation. Five members of the church were asked to serve on a reflection committee to work with the writer, thereby providing him with the required local data and accurate interpretation of that data.

Given the contextual components identified in Chapter 1, research for this project was directed toward the examination and evaluation of the growth history of the Burgin church with a view toward developing a

ten-year growth goal. Church growth principles and research techniques emerging from the writings of Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, the two leading exponents of modern church growth theory, were utilized. It was the hypothesis of this project that small, relatively inactive United Methodist churches like Burgin could and would project for growth when apprised of the biblical mandates and of possibilities for achieving growth. A very basic assumption of this study was that most churches located in Kentucky should and could be growing churches.

Following the analyses of growth statistics, worker deployment, and community demographics detailed in chapters 3 through 5, the reflection committee made a projection of 100 percent growth for the next decade (beginning from a base of 49 members). Chapters 6 and 7, discussing the dynamics working for and against growth, accentuate the discovery that the church had grown in the past and conclude that it can grow again. Chapter 6 deals primarily with ecclesiastical pathologies affecting growth while Chapter 7 deals with the nature of the church, with special attention given to the marks of a church as delineated in the United Methodist Discipline. The model found there is compared to certain biblical motifs for church life and ministry.

Among the factors projected to be important to the recovery of vitality and growth for Burgin are: (1) lengthened pastoral tenure, (2) humble yet strong pastoral leadership, (3) developing charismatic modes of ministry (including small groups), (4) training and deployment of evangelistic workers, and (5) focusing on ministry to others. With these dynamics at work, the writer and the committee concluded that the Burgin congregation could do more than survive, it could flourish.

A PROJECTION AND STRATEGY FOR CHURCH GROWTH
USING AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT GROWTH AT THE
BURGIN, KENTUCKY, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by

William Fraher Abernathy

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Approved by:

Department:

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John T. Seamans
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Scores of small United Methodist churches dot the rural landscapes of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Many of these churches are pastored by bi-vocational local pastors and, not infrequently, by student pastors from nearby seminaries and colleges. One cannot help but raise questions--How well do these churches function evangelistically? And what are their prospects for sustained growth?

In this study the author takes a hard look at one of these churches. It is his hope that this project and its findings will discover some transferable concepts and procedures which can be applied in similar situations to produce church growth.

Context of the Study

The context of this study was the Burgin, Kentucky, United Methodist Church, the largest of the two churches on the Burgin Charge. Mt. Olivet, the other church on the Charge, was not included.

This project had its impetus in an informal conversation with the pastor, who evidenced a desire to have a resource person come to the church to evaluate program and activity. Shortly before his appointment to the church, many members had left because of animosities associated with his immediate predecessor. He arrived to find a demoralized congregation with worship attendance and membership drastically down.

Contextual Components

The circumstances just cited provided a situation ripe for encouragement and numerical growth. The components of decline initially identified were:

1. Itinerancy. This church has experienced short pastoral appointments, the average being two years over the past decade. With one exception, all of those pastors were seminary students. It was perhaps significant that the one pastor who remained for four years saw significant growth. Reasons for his longer appointment and the resultant growth were sought and are shared at appropriate places in the study.

2. Charge relationship. It was apparent that the other church on the Burgin Charge, the Mt. Olivet Church near Herrington Lake, had fallen on difficult times. Services were frequently being cancelled, and the congregation had dwindled to four stalwarts who met for services, more often than not, in the storage room. There had been talk about assigning Mt. Olivet to another student appointment, or even closing the church. This created some apprehension in the Burgin congregation when they saw the possibility of increased financial responsibility if separation from Mt. Olivet were to occur.

3. Parking. The church enjoys the use of a next-door house for its parsonage. Across the street is an additional building being used as a fellowship hall. This latter structure is situated on a nice corner lot with a well kept lawn. But, access is a problem. Parking is

limited to the curb in front of the sanctuary, parsonage, and fellowship hall. If accelerated growth occurs, parking problems will develop.

4. Population trends. All of the available data indicate that the town of Burgin will grow over the next decade. Demographic studies project an increase of 153 persons in the next ten years over a 1985 population of 961 (a decadal growth rate of 16 percent). The surrounding county, Mercer, is expected to grow at a 10.2 percent decadal growth rate (from 19,541 to 21,549 persons).

5. Congregational disruption. The immediate past pastor served about one year (1983-84). Justifiably or not, many members withdrew from the church over animosities associated with his ministry and have yet to return. In one year all three indicators of growth declined: worship attendance by 52 percent, Sunday School attendance by 56 percent, and membership by 20 percent. The steady increase over the four-year period immediately preceding was wiped out by this precipitous drop.

6. Nominalism. The author encountered indicators of nominalism including membership far in excess of attendance, the rupture mentioned above, difficulties encountered in trying to get members to serve in various capacities, the rapid egress from church services with no one remaining for fellowship, and attendance fluctuations apparently triggered by pastoral appointments.

7. Congregational growth cycles. This component seems to have

been heavily influenced by the factors already mentioned. Another factor is that of student appointees as pastors. Has this affected church growth? This study will attempt to address the question of student appointments coupled with short tenure as a factor in growth or non-growth.

8. Negative denominational growth climate. Over the past decade the United Methodist Church nationally has declined in membership by approximately 8 percent; Kentucky Conference membership by approximately 3 percent; and Danville District membership by about 1 percent.

Statement of the Problem

Given the contextual components indicated above, research for this project was directed toward the examination and evaluation of the growth history of the Burgin United Methodist Church with a view toward developing a ten-year growth goal. Church growth principles and research techniques emerging from the writings of Donald A McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, the two leading exponents of modern church growth theory, were used for this research.

It is the hypothesis of this project that small, relatively inactive United Methodist churches in Kentucky can and will project for growth when apprised of the biblical mandate and of the possibilities for achieving such growth.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed two basic assumptions and twelve terms used in specialized ways.

Basic Assumptions

The very basic assumption of this study was that churches located in receptive geographical areas of the United States, such as Kentucky, should be growing churches. Related to this is the assumption that God wants the church to evangelize all peoples and in the process to grow numerically. Joel P. Jenkins, Jr., has said: "Pragmatically, the church needs numerical growth. . . . The church is always only one generation away from extinction"¹

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used with these specific definitions.

Annual growth rate (AGR). AGR compares the growth of the church from one successive year to the next. It answers the important question: Exactly how much did a church grow in a particular year? AGR is expressed in percentages.

Biological growth rate. Biological growth occurs when children of members are added to the church's membership. Donald McGavran established a rule of thumb years ago which stated that "biological growth should be calculated on the basis of 25 percent per decade."²

¹ Joel P. Jenkins, Jr., "A Strategy for Church Growth Using an Analysis of Recent Growth at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church" (D.Min. diss., Drew University, 1982), p. 6.

² C. Peter Wagner, with Study Questions by Rev. John Wimber, Your Church Can Grow, rev. ed. (Ventura: Regal, 1984), p. 70.

Church growth. C. Peter Wagner defines church growth as "all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership."³ In addition, "church growth endeavors to devise strategies, develop objectives, and apply proven principles of growth to individual congregations, to denominations, and to the worldwide Body of Christ."⁴ It is "not some magic formula which can produce growth in any church at any time. It is just a collection of common sense ideas that seem to track well with biblical principles which are focused on attempting to fulfill the Great Commission more effectively than ever before."⁵

Church membership. In United Methodist churches membership includes all baptized persons who have come into membership by confession of faith or transfer and whose names have not been removed from the membership rolls by reason of death, transfer, withdrawal, or removal for cause.

Circuit. A pastoral charge of two or more churches.

Composite membership. The three categories of church membership,

³ Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 14.

⁴ Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 128.

⁵ C. Peter Wagner, Leading Your Church to Growth (Ventura: Regal, 1984), p. 43.

worship attendance, and Sunday School attendance added together and averaged for fifty-two Sundays.

Decadal growth rate (DGR). Used for determining the rates of growth across a period of more than one year, usually a decade. The growth rate for the Burgin church was examined for the ten years spanning 1975 to 1985.

Itinerancy. The itinerant system is the method of the United Methodist church by which ministers are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor. It is the accepted system of rotating ministers who are expected to accept and abide by the appointment.

Nominalism. Defined as "existing or being something in name or form only," it is, for our purposes, being a Christian in name only with the gospel making little practical difference in one's life.⁶

Pastoral charge. A community of persons over whom a pastor, appointed by a bishop, is charged with pastoral oversight.

Sunday School attendance. The attendance in all Sunday School classes taken as a whole, averaged over 52 Sundays.

Worship attendance. Attendance at the principal congregational worship service--in Burgin's case the 11 a.m. morning worship service--averaged over 52 Sundays.

⁶ Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "nominal."

Design of the Investigation

Samuel Southard has identified five types of study usually appropriate for religious inquiry: (1) review of documents, (2) sample surveys, (3) field observations, (4) area analyses, and (5) focused interviews.⁷ This study sought to incorporate these five types plus two others into the design of the investigation.

Review of Documents

Eleven annual issues of the Journal of the Kentucky Conference were reviewed for data regarding membership, worship attendance, and Sunday School attendance. Fortunately, this data had all been gathered through the copious forms annually submitted by United Methodist pastors. This data was converted to charts and graphs and distributed for committee perusal and analysis via the booklet, Growth History: A Tool for Diagnosing the Health of Your Church, published by the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth. In addition, an analysis of individual involvement in the work of the church was done--this information analyzed by the use of another Fuller Institute workbook, Worker Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Your Church's Work Force Balance. Further, community demographics were analyzed and described using yet another Fuller workbook, Community Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Your Church's Growth Potential. These three workbooks together provided an interpretive analysis of the data growing out of

⁷ Samuel Southard, Religious Inquiry: An Introduction to the Why and How (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), pp. 30ff.

the review of documents and gathered from other sources.

Sample Surveys

Two surveys, used to identify attitudes and opinions and complete the collection of data, were taken: (1) My Personal Opinion Regarding Characteristics of Our Church, and (2) an age/sex enumeration.

Field Observations

The writer became a participant observer in the life of the church, attending worship services and fellowship gatherings as often as possible during an eight-month period beginning in August 1985.

Area Analyses

The author's reflections gained from field observations found their way into the project at appropriate points. He evaluated and commented on the data gathered from documents, surveys, and interviews, often focusing on specific areas of concern.

Focused Interviews

Interviews which concentrated on specific data and opinions were held, all attempting to insure that the author understood accurately what he was discovering or hearing. The particular interview instrument used was constructed on the basis of data and observations growing out of the project and with assistance from another source available to the author. The interview form is displayed in an appendix.

Library Research

Yet another methodology, library research in books, periodicals,

and other literature of the modern church growth movement, was used. Particular attention was given to the writings of Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature.

Congregational Reflection Committee

Another aspect of this project was the opportunity to work with five individuals selected from the membership to be a reflective committee. Valuable input came from the members of this group. Four monthly meetings occurred, beginning in September 1985 and concluding with an all-day workshop in January 1986. Each of the three Fuller Institute documents mentioned above was studied by this committee. The committee, with other members of the congregation, viewed four films: And They Said It Couldn't Be Done; Sacrifice; Discover Your Spiritual Gifts; and Help! I'm Just a Layman. These films were scheduled by the author mostly for developing interest and motivation.

Chapter Titles and Divisions

The information gathered and analyzed has been organized into the following chapters.

Chapter 1 -- Introduction

This chapter, describing the planning stage, includes an introduction; and statements of the context of the study, the problem, the theoretical framework, and the design of the investigation. Basic assumptions and definitions are also included.

Chapter 2 -- Review of the Literature

Here the author reviews literature directly bearing on the modern church growth movement and this project, addressing primarily the writings of Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner.

Chapter 3 -- Growth History

The investigative phase began with the collection and interpretation of data on the growth history of the church, including membership, worship attendance, and Sunday School attendance. All were charted on a decadal basis, 1975-1985.

Chapter 4 -- Worker Analysis

This chapter focuses on how church members were deployed in the work of the church. An attempt was made to discover the focus of the church's ministry: on itself or on others?

Chapter 5 -- Community Analysis

The city of Burgin and the county of Mercer are the foci of this chapter. Recent census data aided in describing population growth history and projections for the future. These data are later related to the evangelistic mandate of the church in an effort to help the Burgin church see its place and role in the community and county.

Chapter 6 -- Principles of Church Growth Applied

This chapter signals the beginning of the generalization phase which continues through Chapter 7. C. Peter Wagner's Your Church Can Be Healthy offers six pathologies indicative of decline. These were used

in the January clinic to help reflection committee members evaluate Burgin's growth, worker, and community profiles, and to discern remedies for any perceived ecclesiastical diseases. The manual A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic, produced by the Charles E. Fuller Institute, served as the program guide. Clinic participants were asked to project growth for the church over the next decade. Discussion then followed on ways to implement that growth. This chapter interprets the events of that day and summarizes discussions and projections.

Chapter 7 -- Further Observations

Here the author offers comments and observations on the past and future of this congregation, giving special attention to the nature of the church as delineated in the Discipline of the United Methodist Church and in the Bible.

Chapter 8 -- Summary

This chapter briefly restates the problem, the research methods, the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations.

Summary

In this first chapter the author has introduced this study, stated the problem, focused on the theoretical framework, and presented the design of the investigation.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

For this project's purpose, and working within the established delimitations, some understanding is necessary of the two persons most representative of modern church growth thought, Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner. Limited note will be taken of other writers who have contributed to the modern church growth movement.

Two Major Church Growth Proponents

Since McGavran and Wagner have been selected as the main foci of this chapter, it would be advisable to identify them each in turn as their writings are discussed.

Donald A. McGavran

Donald A. McGavran, born in India in 1897 to missionary parents, was himself a third-generation missionary in India for more than thirty years under appointment with the United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples of Christ). He received the Ph.D. degree in Education from Columbia University.

Commonly considered the father of the modern church growth movement, McGavran founded the Institute of Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon, in 1960. In 1965 he moved his institute to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena and became the founding dean of Fuller's School of World Mission and Institute of

Church Growth. From that base, McGavran would continue to influence the thinking and practice of multiplied hundreds of pastors, missionaries and nationals around the world. One of his most influential actions would be to create the Church Growth Bulletin in 1964. This periodical, which continues today as Global Church Growth, has been his primary vehicle for the spread of church growth data and concepts.

McGavran's contributions to the literature of missiology began as early as 1925 with the publication of an article in World Call. Other articles would follow and continue to this day.¹

His first book through regular trade channels was Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions (1955). There he identified "bridges" as kinship groups through which movements of peoples (not isolated individuals) come to Christ. He also introduced to a wider audience his definitions of discipling and perfecting, the former having to do with conversion, the latter with growth in Christ. That same year he would, as editor, issue a reprinting and revision of J. Waskom Pickett's Christian Missions in Mid-India (1938) under the new title, Church Growth and Group Conversion. In 1958 he issued Multipling Churches in the Philippines under the aegis of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

One of his more influential books, How Churches Grow: The New Frontiers of Mission, was published in 1959. This early contribution to

¹ "Bibliography of Donald Anderson McGavran," in God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran, ed. Alan R. Tippett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 43.

the science of church growth saw success in mission in terms of numerical growth. He analyzed factors affecting the readiness of people to accept Christ, offered strategies for taking advantage of opportunities, and stated principles that encouraged growth. The early sixties saw two local studies: Church Growth in Jamaica (1962) and Church Growth in Mexico (1963). His role of editor, compiler, and contributor, continued with the publication of Church Growth and Christian Mission (1965). Church growth was viewed from four vantage points: theology, sociology, methodology, and administration; and with the added perspectives of three other writers (Robert Calvin Guy, Melvin L. Hodges, and Eugene A. Nida).

The year 1970 saw the publication of his most significant book: Understanding Church Growth. This was his magnum opus on the subject, called by Peter Wagner the "Magna Carta" of the church growth movement.² The revised edition of 1980 continues in print, serving as the definitive text for most classes on church growth. This revision broadens the application of his earlier principles to include North American churches.

A festschrift in honor of McGavran, God, Man and Church Growth, was published under the editorship of Alan R. Tippett in 1973. McGavran also collaborated with Winfield C. Arn in publishing several books, among them How to Grow a Church (1973), Ten Steps for Church Growth (1977), and Back to Basics in Church Growth (1981).

² Wagner, Your Church can Grow, p. 14.

Other collaborators included Wayne Weld, for Principles of Church Growth (1974); George G. Hunter III, for Church Growth: Strategies that Work (1980); James H. Montgomery, for The Discipling of a Nation (1980); and Arthur G. Glasser, for Contemporary Theologies of Mission (1983).

McGavran's writing continues unabated into the mid-eighties. In 1984 he issued Momentous Decisions in Missions Today in which he challenged churches and mission societies to preserve the priorities of evangelization and church planting.

One of his perennial publications, which was one of the first, if not the first, "how-to" manuals on church growth research, was How to Do a Survey of Church Growth (197?).

C. Peter Wagner

Charles Peter Wagner, the other church growth writer contributing significantly to this project, was born in New York City in 1930. Educated at Rutgers University, Fuller Seminary, and Princeton University, Wagner received his Ph.D. in Religion from the University of Southern California.

Wagner's missionary career began in 1956 in Bolivia. He later served as director of the Andes Evangelical Mission, just prior to the beginning of his long-standing teaching assignment as professor of church growth at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. To his earlier interest in the missionary expansion of the church he added an interest in North American church growth.

He was to write a succession of books--among them: Latin American Theology (1969); The Protestant Movement in Bolivia (1970); with Ralph

Covell, An Extension Seminary Primer (1971); A Turned-on Church in an Uptight World (1971); Frontiers in Missionary Strategy (1972); Your Church can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church (1976); Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth (1978); What are We Missing? (1978); Your Church can be Healthy (1979); Your Spiritual Gifts can Help Your Church Grow (1979); Leading Your Church to Growth (1984); a revised edition of Your Church can Grow (1984); and Spiritual Power and Church Growth: Lessons from the Amazing Growth of Pentecostal Churches in Latin America (1986).

In Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth Wagner emphasizes the discovery, development, and use of God-given spiritual gifts. Putting together the 10 percent who have the gift of evangelism with the other 90 percent who know and are using their spiritual gifts raises significantly the potential for growth, he claims. Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow is similar in emphasis but accentuates the gifts of pastor, evangelist, and missionary.

What are We Missing?, published earlier as Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming (1973), attempts to discover the causes for the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches in Latin America. In general he accounts for their growth by concluding that Latin American churches focus externally on the needs of others rather than internally on their own needs.

In Your Church can be Healthy Wagner postulates that churches can indeed be sick. He was probably the first to develop systematically the field of church pathology. It is his contention that there is always a

direct correlation between growth in numbers and church health.

Leading Your Church to Growth discusses the roles of the pastor and other leaders in the church. Strong pastoral leadership is affirmed as a positive growth factor. Wagner appears to be addressing this book mostly to mainline denominational pastors. He reflects a maturing in some of his earlier positions; for instance, his approach to the relationship between social action (the cultural mandate) and evangelism/church growth.

In his revision of Your Church can Grow, Wagner summarizes current church growth thinking. He implies that any church reflecting the seven vital signs in a healthy, positive manner will likely grow.

One of his more controversial titles was Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimension of Church Growth in America (1979). In this work he defended the homogeneous unit principle. Another attempt to deal with biblical, theological and ethical principles can be seen in Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate (1981). Here he discusses how to obey both cultural and evangelistic mandates in the world mission of the church. As in Leading Your Church to Growth, Wagner modifies some of his earlier writings where he took stands against social ministries.

McGavran's How to do a Survey of Church Growth was noted earlier. Wagner has significantly expanded on that booklet in his joint effort with Bob Waymire entitled The Church Growth Survey Handbook (1984). This step-by-step workbook is designed to facilitate the measurement of church growth, either of individual congregations or of clusters of

churches in denominational judicatories.

Research Aids

Religious Inquiry: An Introduction to the Why and How (1976) by Samuel Southard was particularly helpful in identifying and classifying methodologies useful to this project. Southard identified five types of study considered appropriate for religious inquiry: (1) review of documents, (2) sample surveys, (3) field observations, (4) area analyses, and (5) focused interviews.

A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic: Leader's Guide (1980), produced by the Charles E. Fuller Institute, was the tool used to guide the collection of data and the communication of findings to the Burgin congregation. Clinic attendees used a participant's version of this guide. Used in conjunction with these guides was Wagner's Your Church Can be Healthy where Wagner delineates seven vital signs of a healthy church and diagnoses eight possible ecclesiastical diseases hindering growth, two of which are terminal.

Local History

The history of both the community of Burgin and the Burgin United Methodist Church was found in articles published in the Danville and Harrodsburg, Kentucky, newspapers. Sallie Bright described "200 years of Methodism" in the Kentucky Advocate Magazine (1983). Mary J. Thompson chronicled the history of Burgin in "1878 - Centennial - 1978. Burgin, Kentucky. Crossroads Settlement Became Burgin in 1878," published in the Harrodsburg Herald (1978). Maude Reeves Vanarsdall in

her article on the Burgin Christian Church (Harrodsburg Herald, 1978) made comments relevant to the question of short pastoral tenure.

Membership Trends

Warren J. Hartman offered useful data and insights in his thin volume, Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church, 1949-1975 (1976). Covering the same time period but ranging out to include many other denominations was Dean R. Hoge's and David A. Roozen's Understanding Church Growth and Decline -- 1950-1978 (1979). Methodist Dean M. Kelley joined the discussion with his interpretive analysis, Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion (1977). There he essentially said that religious groups which require disciplined membership grow; those that are lackadaisical about commitment do not.

United Methodist Proponents

Several United Methodists have become prominent in the on-going discussions of evangelization and church growth. Among them would be Ronald K. Crandall, George G. Hunter III, Lyle E. Schaller, and Richard B. Wilke.

Crandall, McCreless Associate Professor of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, focuses more on evangelism in and development of the small church, as exemplified in his book (written with L. Ray Sells), There's New Life in the Small Congregation: Why It Happens and How (1973).

George G. Hunter III, Dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of World

Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, is probably the best known United Methodist proponent of modern church growth theory and practice. He has attempted to relate McGavran's and Wagner's concepts to the continuing values of the Wesleyan movement. With McGavran he published Church Growth: Strategies that Work (1980). In this collaboration McGavran dealt more with the theoretical bases for church growth while Hunter emphasized pragmatic means of evangelism and growth. Especially helpful to small churches such as Burgin would be Hunter's emphasis on means of escaping the self-centeredness of single-cell churches. Singly he wrote The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth (1979), where he makes extensive use of McGavran's church growth model with adaptations to mainline Methodism.

The most prolific United Methodist writer on church development and growth today is Lyle E. Schaller, parish consultant with the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana. Schaller does not identify with the modern church growth movement as such, but he does share many similar concerns. To cite three of his books will substantiate that assertion: Activating the Passive Church: Diagnosis and Treatment (1981), Growing Plans: Strategies to Increase Your Church's Membership (1983), and Looking in the Mirror: Self-appraisal in the Local Church (1984).

The first of these three addresses the classification, needs, and prescriptions for recovery of churches described as complacent, lethargic, or passive. Newly arrived ministers will find particular help in activating passive churches. Growing Plans discusses in separate chapters how small, middle-sized, and large churches grow.

Schaller affirms that numerical growth and faithfulness tend to go together. Looking in the Mirror offers conceptual frameworks for church self-analysis.

Richard B. Wilke, Bishop of the Arkansas Area, has recently emerged as the outspoken advocate of evangelism and growth within the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church. And Are We Yet Alive? The Future of the United Methodist Church (1986) represents his attempt to call the United Methodist Church back to its foundations in Wesleyan theology and evangelistic passion.

Movement Critics

Harvie M. Conn edited an anthology of addresses delivered at a conference on Reformed missions and the theology of church growth held at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1975. Entitled Theological Perspectives on Church Growth, these addresses often evidence profound disagreement with the theories of McGavran and his associates. At the same time there is much appreciation for the essential elements of the movement.

Orlando E. Costas, in chapters five to seven of The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World (1974), offers pungent critiques of the movement. In chapter seven, under "The problem with Church Growth Theory," he cites five problematic areas: (1) a shallow hermeneutic, (2) a questionable theological "locus," (3) a truncated concept of mission, (4) an ambiguous concept of man and sin,

and (5) an anthropological-functionalistic syndrome.³

A proponent of a theological basis for non-growth would be Robert K. Hudnut. He argues that most churches could be two-thirds smaller and lose nothing in power. Church Growth is Not the Point (1975) gives the theological bases for his claim that church growth is indeed not the point--faithfulness to the gospel is.

Anabaptist perspectives are shared in a compilation edited by Wilbert R. Shenk, Exploring Church Growth (1983). Often critical in their commentary, contributors nevertheless affirmed the evangelistic mandate. An effort to set forth an Anabaptist perspective positively is seen in Floyd G. Bartel's A New Look at Church Growth (1979).

Recent Works and Other Writers

Contemporary works continue to appear, as can be seen in any recent catalog of the Global Church Growth Book Club. Periodicals like Winfield C. Arn's Church Growth Resource News and Donald A. McGavran's Global Church Growth continue to keep current thinking and practice before missiologists, pastors, and others.

Books by writers relatively new to the movement also continue to appear, often with slightly different perspectives; for example, Ebbie C. Smith's Balanced Church Growth: Church Growth Based on the Model of Servanthood (1984). Obviously Smith used the concept of servanthood as the organizing principle. One catalog blurb calls this

³ Orlando E. Costas, The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1974), pp. 31ff.

book "the most comprehensive introductory textbook to the movement."⁴

Another writer prominent in the movement is Winfield C. Arn, who left his post with the Evangelical Covenant Church to start the Institute for American Church Growth. Just prior to that move he had jointly written How to Grow a Church (with McGavran) which was destined to become the best-seller among American church growth books.⁵ This was a first-generation attempt to set church growth principles into the American context in an attractive (dialogical) style. Later he and McGavran worked together to make a 25-minute documentary film with the same title and content as the book. In 1977 Arn produced a 12-week curriculum in church growth entitled Let the Church Grow. This was followed by Pastor's Church Growth Handbook (1979); Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School (1980); Pastor's Church Growth Handbook, Vol. II (1982); and, with Charles Arn, The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: How Every Christian Can Be an Effective Witness Through an Enabling Church (1984).

Summary

In this chapter the author reviewed the literature related most specifically to a project like this; that is, he noted writers and works especially relevant to the analysis of local church growth. Special

⁴ Church Growth Resource Guide, New 1985 Books: Resources for Church Leaders (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, 1985), p. 15.

⁵ "American Church Growth: The Man Behind the Movement," Church Growth Resource News (Pasadena), Winter 1985, p. 1.

attention was given to two major contemporary church growth writers:

Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner.

CHAPTER 3

Growth History

In the late summer of 1985, the first two of five reflection committee meetings were held. The goal of those first meetings was simple and direct--to explain the shape of the project and to encourage participation by the five committee members drawn from the membership of the Burgin church.

In October 1985 the committee came together again, that time to focus on the growth history of the congregation, and--in effect--to begin the investigative phase of the project. With the conviction that data-gathering raises awareness and that people facing self-analysis and change need reflection time, that meeting was deliberately scheduled about three months before the all-day church growth clinic planned for January 1986.

Three concepts thought to be new to the committee were introduced at that session.¹ First, trend awareness, through the sharing of growth charts reflecting membership, worship, and Sunday School statistics. Integral to trend awareness was the use of the concept of a decade frame of reference; in this case, 1975 to 1985. The second concept, based on the first, was that of decadal growth rates (hereafter referred to as DGR) relative to the three types of statistics mentioned above and

¹ Carl F. George, How to Conduct a Diagnostic Clinic: Notetaking Guide (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1981), p. 8.

composite membership mentioned below. To measure growth rates on a decadal basis is standard practice for church growth studies. The third concept introduced was that of composite membership, a measurement of overall participation in the life of the church. The end use of all of these concepts and approaches was to make the congregation aware of factors either inhibiting or enhancing growth.

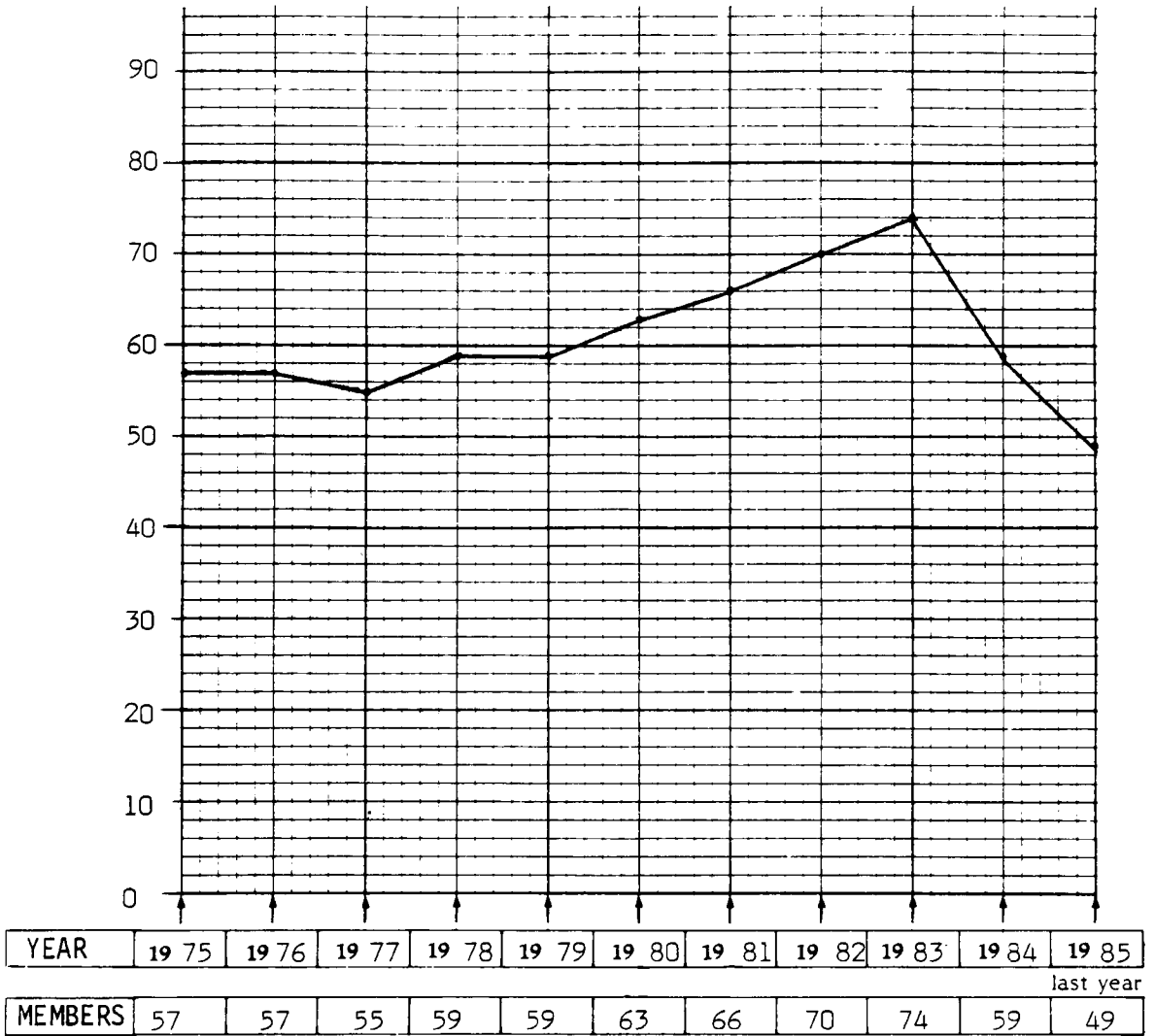
Perhaps it is necessary to define the growth being analyzed and projected; that is, expansion growth. Expansion growth "occurs when the congregation 'expands' by bringing in new members into its ranks."² Orlando Costas calls this "numerical expansion."³ Analysis of the expansion growth of this congregation will be described under four headings: (1) membership, (2) worship attendance, (3) Sunday School attendance, and (4) composite membership. The data used in these computations were taken from Kentucky Conference Journal[s] which reflect statistics reported annually on the pastor's report form.

Membership

Figure 3.1 indicates full members at the end of each year for the past decade. Membership peaked at 74 in 1983, just before a precipitous slide to 49 in 1985, reflecting two successive annual declines of 20 and 17 percent respectively, resulting in a DGR of a minus 14 percent.

² George G. Hunter III, "Motivating Local Church People for Church Growth," in Church Growth: Strategies that Work, by Donald A. McGavran and George G. Hunter III (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), p. 43.

³ Costas, p. 90.



decadal growth rate:

$$\frac{49}{\text{(ending)}} - \frac{57}{\text{(starting)}} = \frac{-8}{\text{(difference)}} \div \frac{57}{\text{(starting)}} \times 100 = \boxed{-14 \%}$$

(decadal growth rate)

Figure 3.1
Membership

Computing the DGR using the peak year 1983 produces a plus 39 percent. Further, if the growth rate for the period 1979 to 1983 was to continue through 1990, the DGR would be 74 percent! Obviously something happened in 1984 to curtail growth. On the positive side, something was happening between 1979 and 1983 which produced four years of sustained growth.

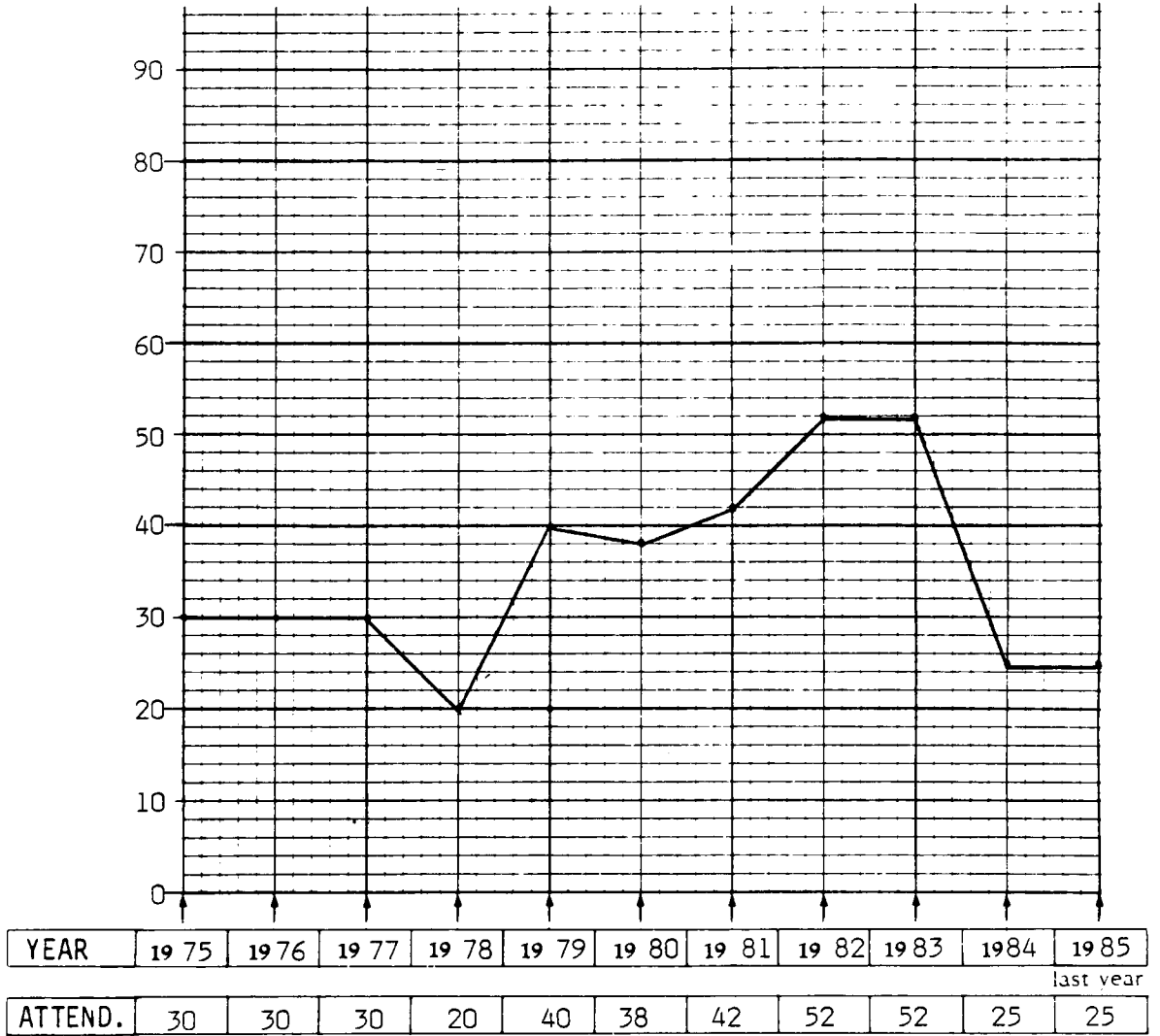
Worship Attendance

Figure 3.2 illustrates that worship attendance followed much the same pattern as membership, indicating as it does a DGR decline of 17 percent. Conversely, for eight years through 1983, worship attendance had grown by a DGR of 102 percent, but dropped by 52 percent (from 52 to 25) in 1984! Again, between 1980 and 1983 growth occurred.

A decline of about ten persons did occur in worship attendance in 1978. Sunday School attendance showed a similar decline for those same years, that is, from 22 to 15. Rather dramatic recovery occurred the next year with worship attendance rising to forty. This would suggest a statistical fluke, possibly in counting. A whole string of even numbers between 1975 and 1979 suggests that only estimates were being made.

Sunday School Attendance

Figure 3.3 illustrates Sunday School average attendance. The DGR was an even zero. Through the peak year 1983 the DGR was up by 176 percent! The precipitous drop from an average of 34 in 1983 to 15 (-56 percent) in 1984 demands an explanation. And, again, growth occurred in the four years spanning 1979 to 1983.



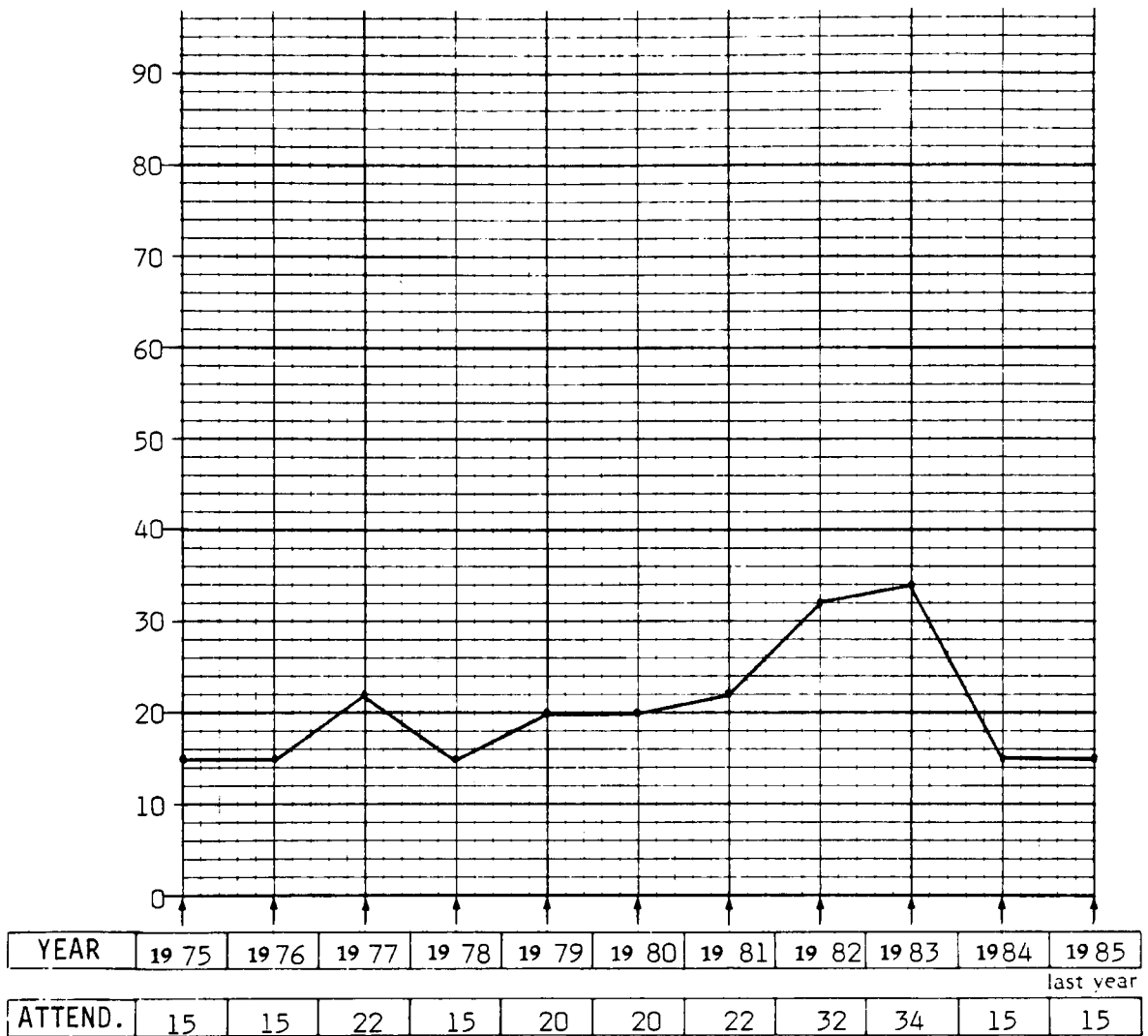
decadal growth rate:

$$\frac{25}{\text{(ending)}} \div \frac{30}{\text{(starting)}} = \frac{-5}{\text{(difference)}} \div \frac{30}{\text{(starting)}} \times 100 = \boxed{-17 \%}$$

(decadal)
(growth rate)

Figure 3.2

Worship Attendance



decadal growth rate:

$$\frac{15}{\text{(ending)}} - \frac{15}{\text{(starting)}} = \frac{0}{\text{(difference)}} \div \frac{15}{\text{(starting)}} \times 100 = \boxed{0 \%}$$

(decadal growth rate)

Figure 3.3
Sunday School Attendance

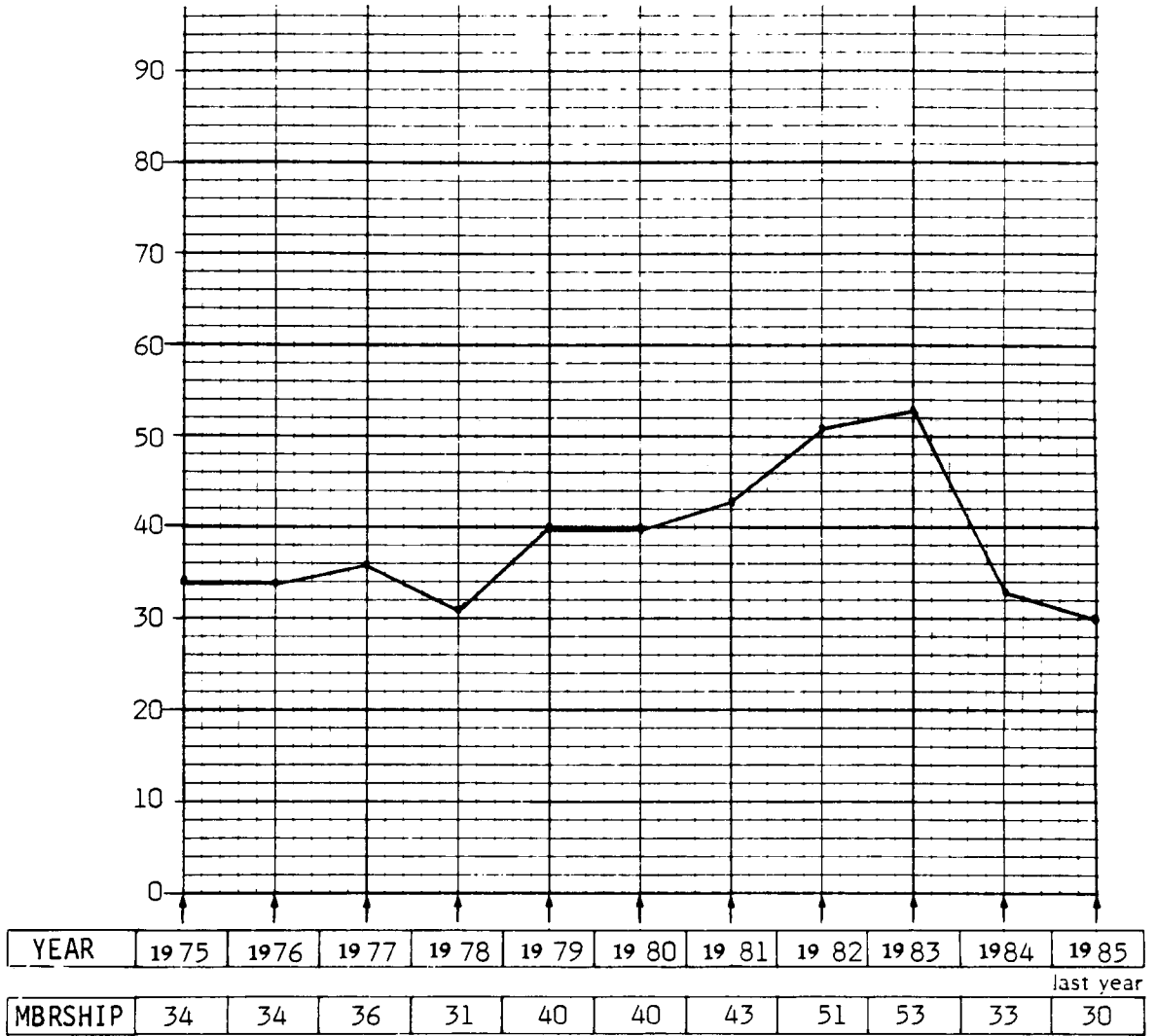
Composite Membership

Figure 3.4 graphs composite membership, the average of the three categories reported above. The composite membership formula is useful in averaging out the excessive highs and lows over a decade in any one or more of the three categories. It results in a more accurate participation measurement, as it helps reduce the effects of inaccurate and inflated statistics.⁴ Figure 3.4 reflects basically the same pattern as the preceding graphs, indicating as it does that the Burgin church has suffered a 12 percent composite decline over the past decade. Ignoring the possibly aberrant dip in 1978, there remains the dramatic 38 percent drop in 1984. The DGR for the eight year period ending in 1983 was a plus 73 percent. This positive growth rate came at the end of the four year period noted in all the previous discussions.

Observations

What observations were made by the committee on these data? First, it appears that the church had begun a recovery around 1977. The appointment of pastor Paul Fryman in 1979 signalled the beginning of a four-year growth period noted several times previously. It was also to be the longest tenure of any pastor in recent years. In analyzing Fryman's ministry with its attendant growth, committee members spoke always in positive commendatory terms. Yet, when asked to cite specific activities or programs, they could not go beyond citing good sermons and

⁴ Bob Waymire and C. Peter Wagner, The Church Growth Survey Handbook, 3d rev. ed. (Milpitas, CA: Global Church Growth, 1984), p. 7.



decadal growth rate:

$$\frac{30}{\text{(ending)}} \div \frac{34}{\text{(starting)}} = \frac{-4}{\text{(difference)}} \div \frac{34}{\text{(starting)}} \times 100 = \boxed{-12 \%}$$

(decadal growth rate)

Figure 3.4

Composite Membership

worship services. It seems that Fryman's personality and character made the difference. He was variously described as selfless, as an all-around strong person, likable, diplomatic, and close to God. These qualities seemed to endear him to the people, and they responded by faithfully supporting the services of the church. In 1981 the church was recognized for reporting the highest number of confessions of faith for churches under one hundred in membership in the Kentucky Conference (see Table 3.1). Evangelism was taking place but apparently through the efforts of Fryman. During those years he also had the assistance of a youth worker from the church who would eventually answer the call to preach, then leave the church for educational pursuits. As a team they had an appeal to both adults and youth which produced growth.

Actually, the end to decline had begun under an earlier pastor who was on the Charge for three years (1975-1978). Perhaps it could be said that it was also under a longer appointment that growth began. The 1978 decline noted earlier in Sunday School and worship attendance might well be attributed to statistical errors (as suggested earlier), but then again it might be attributed to disaffection with the next appointee. In any case, he was there but one year, the year immediately preceding Paul Fryman's appointment, so no permanent damage was done to the emerging growth.

The horrendous decline of 1984 was certainly not welcomed! What could have been continued growth and development in the life of the congregation upon the new appointment in 1983 was to eventuate in an exodus of members and adherents. That exodus appears to have been

Table 3.1

How the Burgin Church Grew

CONF YEAR	MEM BEG	PF	TR F UM	TR F OD	REM	TR TO UM	TR TO OD	DE	MEM END	PASTOR
85	59				10				49	Cupp
84	74				5	8	3		59	Marrs/Cupp
83	70	1	5			2			74	Fryman/Marrs
82	66	3	2					1	70	Fryman
81	63	5		1			1	2	66	Fryman
80	59	3	1	1				1	63	Fryman
79	59								59	Evans/Fryman
78	55	4							59	Price/Evans
77	57		1	1		2		2	55	Price
76	57								57	Price
75	61		1			5			57	Cosby/Price

Key:

- CONF YEAR - Conference Year (Jan - Dec)
 MEM BEG - Membership at beginning of CONF YEAR
 PF - Professions of Faith
 TR F UM - Transfers from United Methodist churches
 TR F OD - Transfers from other denominations
 REM - Removals by Charge Conference action
 TR TO UM - Transfers to United Methodist churches
 TR TO OD - Transfers to other denominations
 DE - Deceased
 MEM END - Membership at end of CONF YEAR
 PASTOR - The pastors named are the ones having ownership of the statistics reported for that year

directly related to the new pastor. The reasons given all seem to be personality related. It was a sad repeat of the all too familiar pattern of a pastor and congregation not coming together in a unity of purpose and mission because of personality conflicts. It appears the pastor tried to move too soon, too fast. In any case, decline occurred, with many members (including his supporters) withdrawing to membership in other churches and in some instances to inactivity and non-involvement in any church. One has to wonder why they did not just endure, given the short tenure of Burgin's pastors. Perhaps they remembered Paul Fryman's four years and felt the new man would be there as long, but with continuing animosity. Some indeed did grow tired of the bickering and moved on to other congregations.

The Sunday School had been growing until recently. Obviously the 1984 fracas affected Sunday School growth (see Table 3.2). Other reasons cited for decline were: (1) lack of training, (2) lack of preparation by teachers, (3) lack of facilities (until recently), and (4) lack of organization. Adult class attendance has been down for at least two of the above reasons but also due to the ageing of the congregation. Older adults, forced to choose between Sunday School and worship, have opted for worship. It was the erroneous impression of the committee that children's classes had not fluctuated that much. (Table 3.2 indicates the losses that were incurred). One other observation was that the pastor is never present for Sunday School. He is in ministry to the Mt. Olivet church during the Sunday School hour at Burgin. Committee members did not perceive this to be a weakness, perhaps

Table 3.2
Burgin's Sunday School Growth History

	SS LDR	CD	YT	AD	TOT ENR	AVG ATT	PASTOR
85	5	6	4	5 =	20	15	Cupp
84	5	6	4	5 =	20	15	Marrs/Cupp
83	8	14	10	15 =	47	34	Fryman/Marrs
82	8	16	6	15 =	45	32	Fryman
81	8	15	2	12 =	37	22	Fryman
80	8	15	2	12 =	37	20	Fryman
79	8	15	2	12 =	37	20	Evans/Fryman
78	8	6	4	7 =	25	15	Price/Evans
77	11	25	3	10 =	49	22	Price
76	8	6	4	7 =	25	15	Price
75	8	6	4	7 =	25	15	Cosby/Price

Key:

SS LDR - S.S. leaders
 CD - Children up to and including 6th grade
 YT - Youth
 AD - Adults
 TOT ENR - Total enrollment
 AVG ATT - Average attendance
 PASTOR - Pastors named have ownership of that year's statistics

because they have never known what it is to have a pastor actively involved in Sunday School, either as a teacher or trainer of teachers. Apparently little teacher training has been done locally, and teachers do not perceive their need for such.

Conclusion

The Burgin congregation was growing, but tragically, the momentum was lost in 1984. It must again be observed that in the eight year growth period prior to that decline the composite DGR was about 73 percent. A 73 percent DGR, when laid against the rule-of-thumb scale developed by movement theorists, at best indicates a little better than "fair growth" (see Table 3.3). Nevertheless, growth did occur, well beyond the 25 percent growth which many church growth experts feel merely keeps up with biological growth.⁵ During the growth years under Paul Fryman the composite membership DGR was 93 percent, an improvement over the 73 percent noted above (and approaching "good growth" on the scale).

Two questions emerge as this section concludes: (1) How has short pastoral tenure affected growth? and (2) Is the congregation's response to new pastoral appointees a sign of nominalism? In other words, the key to this church's growth or non-growth appears to have been the pastor, rather than some cause intrinsic to the nature of the church. Does not this observation point up the need to recover the roles of (1) biblical principles for church life, (2) the Holy Spirit's work, and

⁵ Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, p. 70.

Table 3.3
Growth Rate Scale

25 percent per decade	--	poor growth
50 percent per decade	--	fair growth
100 percent per decade	--	good growth
200 percent per decade	--	excellent growth
300 percent per decade	--	outstanding growth
500 percent per decade	--	incredible growth

Source: C. Peter Wagner, "Church Growth Research: The Paradigm and its Application" in Understanding Church Growth and Decline, eds. Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (New York: Pilgrim, 1979), p. 275.

(3) lay ministry--all in the on-going life of the congregation?

Recovery in these areas could lead to an incorporated membership loyal to Christ and His church as well as to the pastor. These needs also reinforce the role of humble yet strong pastoral leadership. Such leadership could (with longer tenure) equip the members along the lines just mentioned.

CHAPTER 4

Worker Analysis

The fourth of five reflection committee meetings was held approximately one month after the Growth History presentation and about two months prior to the all-day church growth clinic planned for January 1986. This session was designed to examine how the church's lay workforce is being utilized and the need for gift employment and outreach.

One major new concept was introduced, that of classes of leaders; five such classes having been identified by Donald A. McGavran:

Class One leaders are those who serve the existing church. They're Sunday School teachers, deacons, elders, choir members, ushers, ladies who arrange flowers, and those who phone or visit members who are sick--that great army of able Christians who contribute time so liberally and to such good effect in our churches.

Class Two leaders are volunteer workers who head out away from the church. They actively reach out to others in the community who need Christ.

Class Three leaders are leaders of small [house] churches.

Class Four leaders are the paid, professional leaders of large well-established congregations.

Class Five leaders travel from one country to another, know two or three languages, and are part of the world church.¹

¹ Donald A. McGavran and Win C. Arn, How to Grow a Church (Glendale: Regal, 1973), pp. 89-92.

For our purposes we are interested only in classes one (I) and two (II). Simply put: "Class I is volunteer leaders headed inward. Class II is volunteer leaders headed outward."² It is possible for one person to be both. For instance, the Sunday School teacher in the classroom is Class I, but as that same teacher does personal evangelism, he or she becomes a Class II leader.³ McGavran and Arn maintain that if a church wants to grow, its goal should be an equal number of Class I's and II's.⁴

The Questions Discussed

This third session attempted to discern answers to five questions under five steps: (1) What kind of work is being done in our church? (2) Who is the recipient (or target) of this work? (3) What types of workers do this work? (4) What is the worker balance of our church? and (5) Where do we go from here?⁵

Step One: What kind of work is being done in our church? The committee discovered that nine activities are directed toward the church: (1) teaching Sunday School, (2) keeping Sunday School

² Delos Miles, Church Growth, a Mighty River (Nashville: Broadman, 1981), p. 54.

³ McGavran and Arn, p. 95.

⁴ McGavran and Arn, p. 95.

⁵ These questions are taken verbatim from Worker Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Your Church's Work Force Balance (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, 1981), p. 2.

records, (3) superintending Sunday School, (4) planning Sunday School programs, (5) choir rehearsal and singing, (6) children's work, (7) Wednesday night prayer meeting for women, (8) monthly all-church fellowship dinners, and (9) United Methodist Women. Only one activity was specifically directed toward the unchurched: benevolent and social work, and that by only one person.⁶

Step Two: Who is the recipient (or target) of this work? Of the ten activities mentioned above, one was noted as specifically targeted toward the unchurched. One of the other nine had a dual focus on both the church and unchurched, that is, children's work. It becomes evident from these facts that the Burgin church's volunteer workforce is focused on itself. This discovery led one committee member to ask: "Are there other things we should be doing?" and "Are we simply Sunday-only Christians?"⁷ These two questions gave indication that some awareness of the self-centeredness of this congregation was beginning to dawn on at least one participant.

Step Three: What types of workers do this work? Under this step the two classes were explicitly identified. The committee found that twenty-two people giving about twenty-four cumulative hours weekly made up the Class I workforce.⁸ One person was reaching out as a Class II,

⁶ Worker Analysis, p. 3.

⁷ Comments made in November 1985 meeting of reflection committee.

⁸ Worker Analysis, p. 4.

but only in a social way such as visitation to the sick, benevolent care, and similar activities. It does not appear that any evangelistic outreach is occurring.⁹

Step Four: What is the worker balance of our church? Of all Class II workers, at least half should be engaged in evangelism. Ideally, at least ten percent of the total membership should be exercising the gift of evangelism.¹⁰ This is not in any sense true of this congregation. Further, of the church's total volunteer workforce of twenty-three persons, 96 percent are Class I, 4 percent Class II, violating another set of guidelines which calls for 80 percent of the workforce in Class I and 20 percent in Class II.¹¹ Rather than a minimum of 5 persons in Class II, this church has 1 person.¹²

Analyzing this imbalance brought forth several comments and observations.¹³ One was that members are simply not motivated, either to be the best possible Class I workers or to be involved in outreach. Members appear to be mostly concerned for what the church can do for them, not what they can do for others. More are concerned for vocation

⁹ Worker Analysis, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ronald K. Crandall and L. Ray Sells, There's New Life in the Small Congregation: Why It Happens and How (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1983), p. 74.

¹¹ Worker Analysis, p. 9.

¹² Worker Analysis, p. 7.

¹³ Comments and observations cited in this and the next paragraph came from the November 1985 meeting of the reflection committee.

than for the church's ministry. The writer is again forced to conclude that nominalism seems to be a significant factor in the Burgin church.

In addition, Methodists are scarce in the Burgin area, leading to a minority complex. This, coupled with the exodus of members which occurred in 1984-85, has led to low self-esteem and a hesitancy to recruit for the Lord and the Church.

Step Five: Where do we go from here? Committee members struggled over this question. Among the responses given were: (1) give more emphasis to church family life, (2) work on attitudinal changes, (3) develop a corps of "greeters," (4) show more honest love within the church, (5) stop taking each other for granted, (6) minister at a deeper level, i.e., do not just entertain, (7) develop in-depth youth activities, and (8) develop more obvious male roles, for example, through creation of a United Methodist Men's unit, or deployment of a male adult class teacher.¹⁴

In addressing the lack of evangelistic outreach, the observation came that many viewed evangelism as the pastor's job. Some saw a need for education relative to members' roles and gift employment. Others admitted that they were not witnessing because of insecurity about their own faith. A lack of skill was suggested as an additional reason for failure to evangelize. Some feared that more harm than good would result from witnessing because of these limitations.

¹⁴ These eight responses and those in the next paragraph were shared in the November 1985 reflection committee meeting.

Conclusion

Worker imbalance is an obvious weakness in the Burgin church. Not only are there no evangelistic workers, but many of those classified as Class I workers feel inadequate and ill-equipped for their jobs. It appears to the author that the underlying problem is nominalism, or to use Wagner's phrase, "arrested spiritual development."¹⁵ He cites this as possibly "the most prevalent growth-obstructing disease in American churches."¹⁶ Wagner suggests that "in some cases, arrested spiritual development is caused by a low percentage of church members who have been born anew by the power of God."¹⁷ Is this the case at Burgin, or is it more a case of lukewarm Christians? or both?

Wagner goes on to list eight conditions contributing to spiritual development. The absence of one or more can lead to arrested spiritual development. These are: (1) a well-articulated philosophy of ministry, (2) long-term pastoral care, (3) emphasis on knowledge of the Bible, (4) emphasis on personal piety and spiritual formation, (5) utilization of spiritual gifts, (6) use of small-group fellowship structures, (7) quality worship, and (8) world vision.¹⁸ The Burgin congregation would appear, on the basis of the growth history, worker analysis, and committee members' observations, to fall short in many of these areas.

¹⁵ Wagner, Healthy, p. 101.

¹⁶ Wagner, Healthy, p. 101.

¹⁷ Wagner, Healthy, p. 102.

¹⁸ Wagner, Healthy, pp. 104-110.

CHAPTER 5

Community Analysis

The fifth of five reflection committee meetings was held approximately one month after the Worker Analysis presentation and about one month prior to the all-day church growth clinic scheduled for January 1986. This session was designed to help the committee identify receptive peoples, those unchurched near neighbors nearby geographically and alike culturally.¹ The Community Analysis booklet facilitated the process by suggesting four steps designed to: (1) "define the scope of [the] community," (2) "discern the significant and distinct groups of people in [the] community," (3) "discover the percentage of unchurched people in [the] community," and (4) "analyze the population trends in [the] community."²

Step One: Defining the Community

A community must be defined in terms of area and population. Three factors are involved in making these definitions: (1) history and setting, (2) distances involved, and (3) natural boundaries.³

¹ Community Analysis: A Tool for Diagnosing Your Church's Growth Potential (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, 1981), p. 2.

² Community Analysis, p. 2.

³ Community Analysis, p. 3.

Factor One: History and Setting

Burgin, located four miles east of Harrodsburg, seven miles north of Danville, and five miles west of Herrington Lake, was a strategic crossing point in frontier days between Fort Harrod, Bowman's Fort, and about six or eight other forts in Mercer County.⁴ In 1878 the town was officially constituted and named after Temple Burgin, "who with his wife Sophia deeded for the sum of \$1 land to the Cincinnati Southern Railway for the railway right-of-way."⁵

About sixteen years later, in 1894, the Methodist Episcopal Church South (as the church was first known) was formed by members coming from the Mt. Moriah church near what is now Herrington Lake. During its first year, under Pastor A. P. Jones, the church received 102 new members!⁶ Under the second pastor, C. M. Humphrey, the church experienced a "seven-week revival resulting in the salvation and sanctification of quite a number, even from other churches."⁷ Through 1984 forty-three pastors have served the church (an average tenure of two years). In the early years Bryantsville and Mt. Olivet were on the Charge, but Bryantsville was eventually reassigned, leaving only

⁴ Mrs. George W. (Maude Reeves) Vanarsdall, "History of Burgin Christian Church," The Harrodsburg (Kentucky) Herald, August 1978, sec. C, p. 6.

⁵ Mary J. Thompson, "1878 - Centennial - 1978," The Harrodsburg (Kentucky) Herald, August 1978, sec. B, p. 1.

⁶ Mrs. H. P. Johnson, "History of Burgin Methodist Church," The Harrodsburg (Kentucky) Herald, August 1978, sec. C, p. 9.

⁷ Johnson, p. 9.

Mt. Olivet linked with Burgin.

Four other churches serve the Burgin community, the oldest being Shawnee Run Baptist (1788); others include Burgin Christian (1830), Little Mt. Zion Baptist (1889), and Burgin Baptist (1890).

Mercer County, generally described as rural, has a population almost evenly divided between rural and urban; that is, rural: 10,738 persons (56.5 percent); and urban: 8,273 persons (43.5 percent).⁸ The town of Burgin with its population in 1985 of 961 is second only to Harrodsburg, the county seat, with 7,265 persons.

Factor Two: Distances Involved

It was suggested in Community Analysis that a church in a rural setting should include all persons within a fifteen-mile radius as its circle of responsibility; nine miles was suggested for a suburban area.⁹ The committee rejected both of these guidelines in that both would extend the church's responsibility well beyond Harrodsburg (four miles away) and Danville (seven miles away), and in both instances county lines would be crossed. It was initially determined that a four-mile radius which would touch but not overlap Harrodsburg and Boyle Counties would be a natural geographical boundary, with the Boyle County line forming the southern boundary and Herrington Lake the eastern boundary. Figure 5.1 illustrates these boundaries.

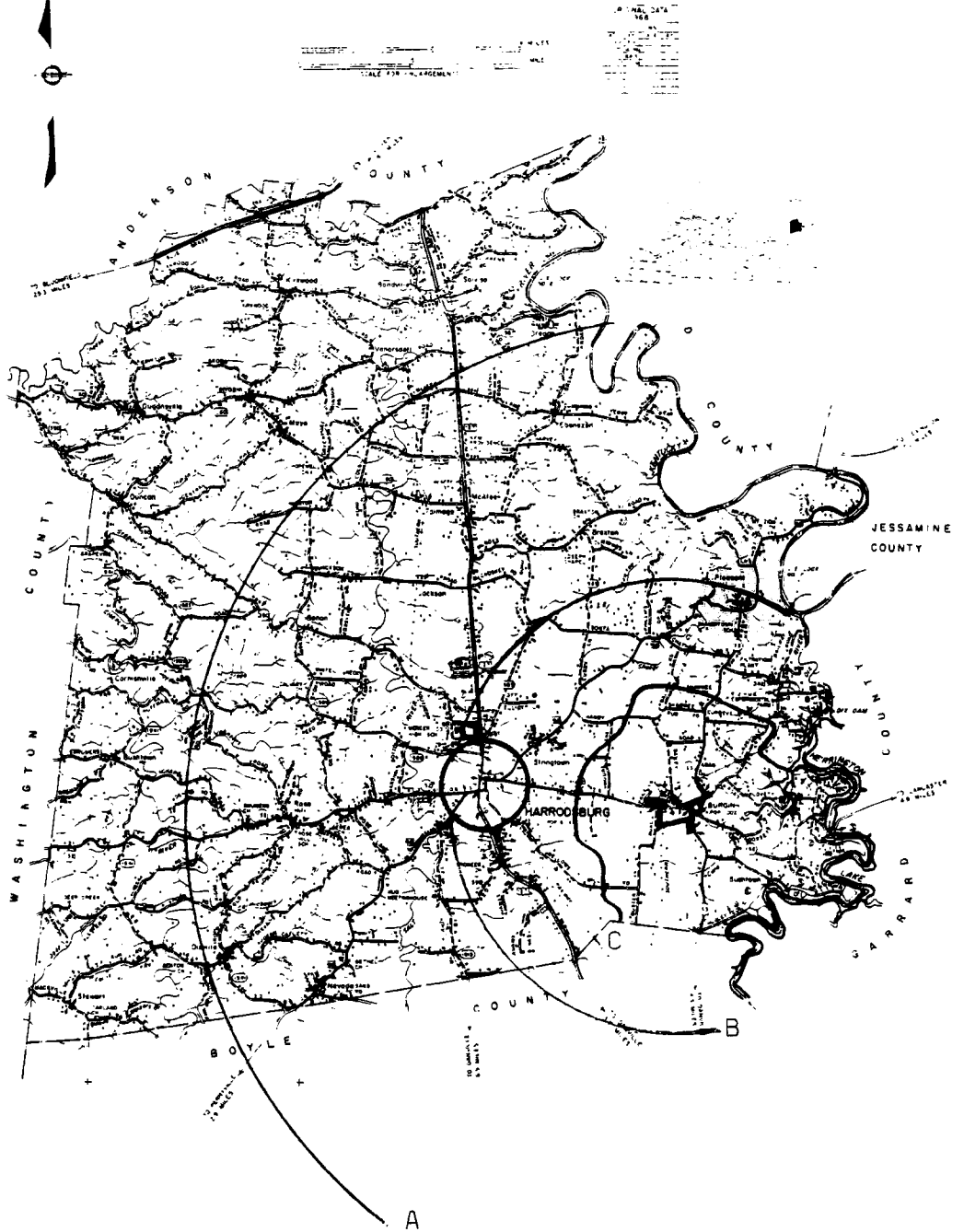
⁸ Ten Facts: Mercer County, Kentucky ([Dayton: General Council on Ministries, 198?]), unpaginated.

⁹ Community Analysis, p. 5.

GENERAL HIGHWAY MAP
MERCER COUNTY
KENTUCKY

PREPARED BY THE
KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
DIVISION OF PLANNING
IN COOPERATION WITH THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

50



Key:

- A - 9 mile radius
- B - 4 mile radius
- C - School district boundary

Figure 5.1

Circles of Responsibility

Factor Three: Natural Borders

In the course of discussion, attention was drawn to the fact that the town of Burgin maintains its own independent school district (Figure 5.1 also indicates the boundaries of that district). Since the community already identifies naturally and psychologically with the school district, it was felt by the committee that the most natural boundaries for the church's responsibility would be school district lines. School authorities have estimated that approximately 3,000 persons reside in the district.¹⁰

Step Two: People Groups

Mercer County reflects a culture which is predominantly Caucasian. According to census data, 4.4 percent of county residents are Black; 0.6 percent are Hispanic. The Burgin school district reflects this overwhelmingly Anglo culture (95 percent). The committee felt that the Burgin community could be described in the main as white English-speaking American, and that the church's primary responsibility is to that group.

Step Three: The Unchurched

According to research done by the Glenmary Research Center, Mercer

¹⁰ This estimate originated with Burgin Independent School District officials.

County is 78 percent churched, 22 percent unchurched.¹¹ On a data sheet supplied by the United Methodist General Council on Ministries, an additional 5.8 percent was estimated to belong to non-reporting groups, leaving a net unchurched population of 16.1 percent (Table 5.1).

When the unchurched percentage of 16.1 was multiplied against the population of Burgin and the school district, the following numbers of unchurched persons resulted: Burgin, 155; school district, 483 (the Burgin total is included in the latter figure).

One has only to compare Mercer's percentage of churched (83.8) against the national average (58.9) to see that Mercer County is a heavily churched county.¹² Mercer reports the sixteenth highest percentage of churched peoples of all Kentucky counties where the range is from Washington's 105.1 percent to Elliott's 4.6 percent.¹³ With the exception of Jessamine, Mercer is set within a context of counties with relatively high percentages of churched peoples, with only one (Washington) higher (Table 5.2).

One factor for which no hard data exists is the number of nominal Christians within the 15,946 reported adherents. The Christianity Today-Gallup Poll suggested that only about 34 percent of all

¹¹ Bernard Quinn et al., Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1980: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported by 111 Church Bodies (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1982), p. 126.

¹² Extrapolated from Ten Facts, unpaginated.

¹³ Quinn, pp. 120-129.

Table 5.1
Church Membership Reported in 1980

Southern Baptist Convention	9,539
Christian Churches (Disciples)	1,433
United Methodist	1,180
Christian Church & Churches of Christ	853
Roman Catholic	450
Churches of Christ	293
Cumberland Presbyterian	285
United Presbyterian Church (USA)	195
Presbyterian Church, US	194
Church of God (Cleveland)	191
Episcopal	152
Assemblies of God	73
Estimated Other	<u>1,108</u>
TOTAL CHURCHED (83.8%)	15,946
TOTAL UNCHURCHED (16.1%)	3,065
COUNTY POPULATION (1980)	19,011

Source: Ten Facts, unpaginated.

Table 5.2
 Churched Peoples by Counties

Anderson County	68.7%
Boyle County	75.7%
Garrard County	59.8%
Jessamine County	33.6%
Washington County	105.1%
Woodford County	63.8%

Source: Bernard Quinn et al., Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1980: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported by 111 Church Bodies (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1982), pp. 120-129.

Americans have had a life-changing religious experience.¹⁴ If this percentage is anywhere near correct, it would indicate that Mercer County has about 6,464 true Christians. This percentage--applied against the Burgin population--would indicate 327 true Christians; and against the school district population, 1,020 true believers. These calculations immediately suggest that within the school district (which includes Burgin) there are possibly 1,980 people who are either pagan, or at best, nominally Christian. In the city limits alone possibly 634 people are prospects for a vital relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

Step Four: The Community's Future

Burgin is projected to grow by about 16 percent between 1985 and 1995, an increase of 153 persons (from 961 to 1,114).¹⁵ Mercer County is expected to grow by a slightly lower percentage (10.2 percent), or from 19,541 to 21,549 persons.¹⁶

¹⁴ "The Christianity Today-Gallup Poll: An Overview," Christianity Today, 21 December 1979, p. 14; "The Religious Personality of the Populace: A Nation that Believes Rightly But--," Christianity Today, 21 December 1979, p. 16.

¹⁵ Population Studies Program, Urban Studies Center, College of Urban and Public Affairs, "Detailed Table: 1980 Census Counts, 1982 Estimates and Projections, 1985-1995, for State, Counties, and Incorporated Places," Kentucky Demographics: Population Projections for Kentucky Cities, 1985-1995, no. 10 (19 February 1985), p. 15.

¹⁶ Population Studies Program, Urban Studies Center, College of Urban and Public Affairs, "Kentucky Population Projection Series: Table 2, Population Projections for Kentucky and Counties," How Many Kentuckians: Population Forecasts, 1980-2020. 1986 ed. (Louisville: University of Louisville, 1986), p. 3.

Merely to keep in step with the projected population growths would require the Burgin church to add eight net new members over the next decade. Table 5.3 indicates various DGRs with the net membership increases projected and totaled (including the base figure of 49).

For perspective, one must remember that the unchurched alone in the school district number 483. Add to that number some of the persons included in the 1,980 mentioned earlier and one realized that these growth rates are not impossible.

Conclusion

What is a reasonable growth expectation for this congregation? Certainly it must not be less than the community's projected growth rate of 16 percent. Nor should it merely be at a rate nearer to the biological growth rate (25 percent). Surely the Burgin church must grow at a 50 percent rate or higher to survive and flourish. Can this happen? Lyle Schaller believes it can: "It is assumed that the smaller the congregation, the greater the changes that will result from the successful implementation of a church growth strategy."¹⁷ Chapter 6 will begin to answer these questions with its report on growth projections and strategies adopted by congregational representatives at the church growth clinic held in January 1986.

¹⁷ Lyle E. Schaller, Growing Plans: Strategies to Increase Your Church's Membership (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 162.

Table 5.3
Burgin Church Growth Possibilities

DGR	NET GAIN	TOTAL MEMBERS
16%	8	57
25%	12	61
50%	25	74
100%	49	98
200%	98	147
300%	147	196
500%	245	294

CHAPTER 6

Principles of Church Growth Applied

In the church growth clinic held in January 1986, six steps were identified in the process of enabling the congregational reflection group to plan growth for the church. Those were: (1) trend assessment, (2) goal definition, (3) diagnosis of present condition, (4) goals and action plans, (5) implementation of plans, and (6) evaluation of results.¹ Steps one and two dealt with felt needs; steps three and four with deciding what to do; and steps five and six with doing it.²

The discernment of felt needs (steps one and two) was carried out by the use of the Growth History workbook plus teaching on the Great Commission and other church growth related biblical texts. Deciding what to do (steps three and four) was discovered and projected through the use of the other two workbooks, Worker Analysis and Community Analysis; through discussion of pathologies common to non-growing churches; and through growth goal setting. The doing it phase (steps five and six) occurred following the January clinic by continuing to meet as a congregational growth committee. Evaluation was an on-going aspect of the subsequent discussions.

¹ Carl F. George, How to Conduct a Diagnostic Clinic: Note-taking Outline (Pasadena: Fuller Evangelistic Association, 1981), p. 4.

² George, p. 4.2.

Since discussion occurred earlier regarding trend assessments (Chapters 3, 4, and 5), this chapter will be devoted primarily to steps three and four, diagnosis and goal-setting. But first, the writer will report on the biblical foundations for the incorporation of disciples into church life shared as background for the presentations on diagnosis.

Foundations for Making Disciples

Taking the Great Commission and the early church's experiences as recorded in Acts as a norm, Jesus' followers were commanded to go and make disciples of all nations, with those disciples most often defined by church growth movement writers as churched followers of Christ.³

D 1 would mean the turning of a non-Christian society for the first time to Christ. D 2 would mean the turning of any individual from non-faith in Christ and his incorporation in a church. D 3 would mean teaching an existing Christian as much of the truths of the Bible as possible.⁴

The writer promoted the concept of identifiable and countable persons who embrace Christ as Savior and become folded members of a local church (McGavran's D 2 disciples). Jesus' commission certainly included possibilities beyond the D 2 category, but D 2 disciples loomed large in his thinking.

³ See George G. Hunter III, The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), pp. 23-25; Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 74.

⁴ McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, p. 170.

In Acts frequent references occur to conversion growth which relates converts to the local church, offering, as they do, further support for a D 2 focus. For instance, Acts 2:47: "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."⁵ This comment refers to disciples coming into the church subsequent to the three thousand won earlier at Pentecost. No indication exists of a backing-off from evangelism because of this heavy influx of new Christians. Those already Christians appeared to accept responsibility for folding young believers into the church (Acts 2:42). Acts 4:4 and 6:7 give further indication that new disciples continued to come in, and in great numbers. These multiplying disciples required more and more churches (congregations, not buildings) where they could be folded and trained. And this happened, for Acts 9:31 speaks of churches multiplying in number.

Surely it can be seen in this brief sketch that the early church's experiences included the enfolding of new converts into local congregations. No one apparently held a conception of evangelistic ministry which did not provide for public association with Christian assemblies through baptism and weekly celebrations of the Lord's supper. This is reminiscent of John Wesley's calling of awakened sinners into small groups where they might subsequently be led to justification and

⁵ The Bible. This and all other quotations from the Bible are taken from The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

incorporation into the local Methodist society.⁶

Diagnosis Applied

The above biblical mandates for growth were shared with the congregational growth committee and others in a Sunday morning sermon. Later, in the clinic, the encouraging insight that the Burgin church had been growing was added; for, ignoring the disastrous years 1984 and 1985, DGR's would have been:

Membership	+39%
Worship attendance	+102%
Sunday School attendance	+176%
Composite membership	+73%

The 1980-84 membership growth rate sustained for a decade would have produced a DGR of 74 percent! Obviously, growth potential exists, with receptive peoples in the Burgin community. But, by the rule-of-thumb mentioned in Chapter 3, even the growth charted above is only fair to good growth, but it was growth. Most recently, growth has been non-existent.

What is happening to minimize growth? That was why clinic

⁶ For a fascinating and pioneering interpretation of Wesley's practice of folding potential converts into the life of the church, see George G. Hunter III's unpublished monograph, Wesley's Approach to Evangelism and Church Growth, presented to the Seventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, Keble College, Oxford, England, July 26-August 5, 1982. See also his "Rediscovering Wesley, the Church Growth Strategist," Global Church Growth XXIII, no. 1 (1986): 3-5, 8.

participants were introduced to the pathologies of church growth; in other words, additional reasons were sought for non- or only fair to good growth.

Eight pathologies, or ecclesiastical diseases, common to non-growing churches have been identified by Wagner in Your Church Can Be Healthy. They are: (1) Ethnikitis, (2) Old Age, (3) People-Blindness, (4) Hyper-Cooperativism, (5) Koinonitis, (6) Sociological Strangulation, (7) St. John's Syndrome, and (8) Arrested Spiritual Development.⁷ Six of these were presented to clinic participants who were asked to profile the church's health as each was described (See Appendix A for rating form). These composite rankings placed St. John's Syndrome, Koinonitis, and Old Age, first, second, and third respectively; and well ahead of the next pathology, People-Blindness. Ethnikitis and Sociological Strangulation were a distant fifth and sixth. Table 6.1 exhibits these rankings.

Two pathologies, Hyper-Cooperativism and Arrested Spiritual Development, were omitted from the participants' manuals for unstated reasons. The writer did make a presentation on Arrested Spiritual Development but was unable to have the participants score this particular malady. In any case, St. John's Syndrome includes many of the symptoms common to Arrested Spiritual Development. Hyper-Cooperativism was just as well left out, as it does not in any sense describe a problem peculiar to this congregation. The following

⁷ Wagner, Healthy, pp. 29-120.

Table 6.1
Health Profile Composite Result

Ranking	Pathology	Total Points
1st	St. John's Syndrome	20
2nd	Koinonitis	18
3rd	Old Age	17
4th	People-Blindness	14
5th	Ethnikitis	6
6th	Sociological Strangulation	0

discussion will address each pathology in order as ranked by clinic participants.

St. John's Syndrome

This ecclesiastical disease is named after the Apostle John, who identified the pathology of second generation Christians professing a Christianity of form but not of power.⁸ The underlying syndrome is nominalism, thus its kinship to Arrested Spiritual Development.⁹

As Wagner says,

When Christians become Christians in name only, when they feel that their faith is only routine, when church involvement is largely going through the motions, and when belonging to church is a family tradition and a social nicety, St. John's Syndrome is likely at work.¹⁰

In the terms of Rev. 2:4, the church has left its first love.

Wagner sees this as a losing of one's love for lost people, that is, a loss of evangelistic motivation and passion.¹¹ Members of the committee agreed that evangelistic zeal is not a distinguishing mark of the Burgin congregation. All acknowledged, too, that an influx of new converts into the church would go a long way towards curing this disease.

⁸ A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic: Leader's Guide, 2d ed. (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1980), p. 15.3.

⁹ Wagner, Healthy, p. 116.

¹⁰ Wagner, Healthy, p. 112.

¹¹ Wagner, Healthy, p. 117.

Koinonitis

Koinonia is the biblical term for fellowship. Acts 2:42 described the early church as fellowshipping from house to house. Christians, having a common spiritual heritage, fellowship with each other (I John 1:7). But there can be too much of a good thing! In Wagner's words, Christians can become "spiritual navel-gazers."¹² Koinonitis is "people 'turned into' themselves. It is koinonia overdone."¹³ One evident symptom of koinonitis is "when a majority of the focus of the church is on members but not on people of the community."¹⁴

There were many verbal comments supporting this high ranking, participants acknowledging--as they did--the inwardness of the focus at the Burgin church. Outreach was and is virtually non-existent (see Chapter 4, "Worker Analysis"). The church is seen as a single-cell congregation; and as research indicates, single-cell churches have difficulty growing.¹⁵ Carl S. Dudley cites the real reason for single-cell churches not growing:

The basic obstacle to growth lies in the satisfactions of the present church membership. . . . The small church is

¹² Wagner, Healthy, p. 77.

¹³ Leader's Guide, p. 14.3.

¹⁴ Leader's Guide, p. 14.3.

¹⁵ George G. Hunter III, "Helping the 'Small Church' Grow," in Church Growth: Strategies that Work, by Donald A. McGavran and George G. Hunter III (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 86-87.

already the right size for everyone to know, or know about, everyone else. . . . The small church cannot grow in membership size without giving up its most precious appeal, its intimacy.¹⁶

It was acknowledged by clinic participants that the Burgin church's inward orientation did not so much have to be replaced as it had to be "expanded in outward motion toward the community."¹⁷ They agreed with the Manual's contention that evangelism is needed to keep the church's inward and outward foci in balance.¹⁸

Old Age

This disease, caught by a church located in a disappearing community, does not characterize the Burgin church as the disease is defined, for the city of Burgin is stable and growing (16 percent growth anticipated over the next decade). Nevertheless, some concern was expressed over the absence of males in the age brackets of 15 to 20 and 25 to 45; and of females in brackets 25 to 55 (Figure 6.1). In certain age brackets either males or females are predominant, again contributing to an imbalance and the potential of loss due to marriages to members of other churches or to the unchurched. Clinic participants agreed that the church, age-wise, would be facing greater dangers to its survival sometime in the next two decades. They saw ominous trends which, if not stopped, could contribute to the eventual demise of the church.

¹⁶ Carl S. Dudley, Making the Small Church Effective (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), p. 49.

¹⁷ Leader's Guide, p. 15.1.

¹⁸ Leader's Guide, p. 15.1.

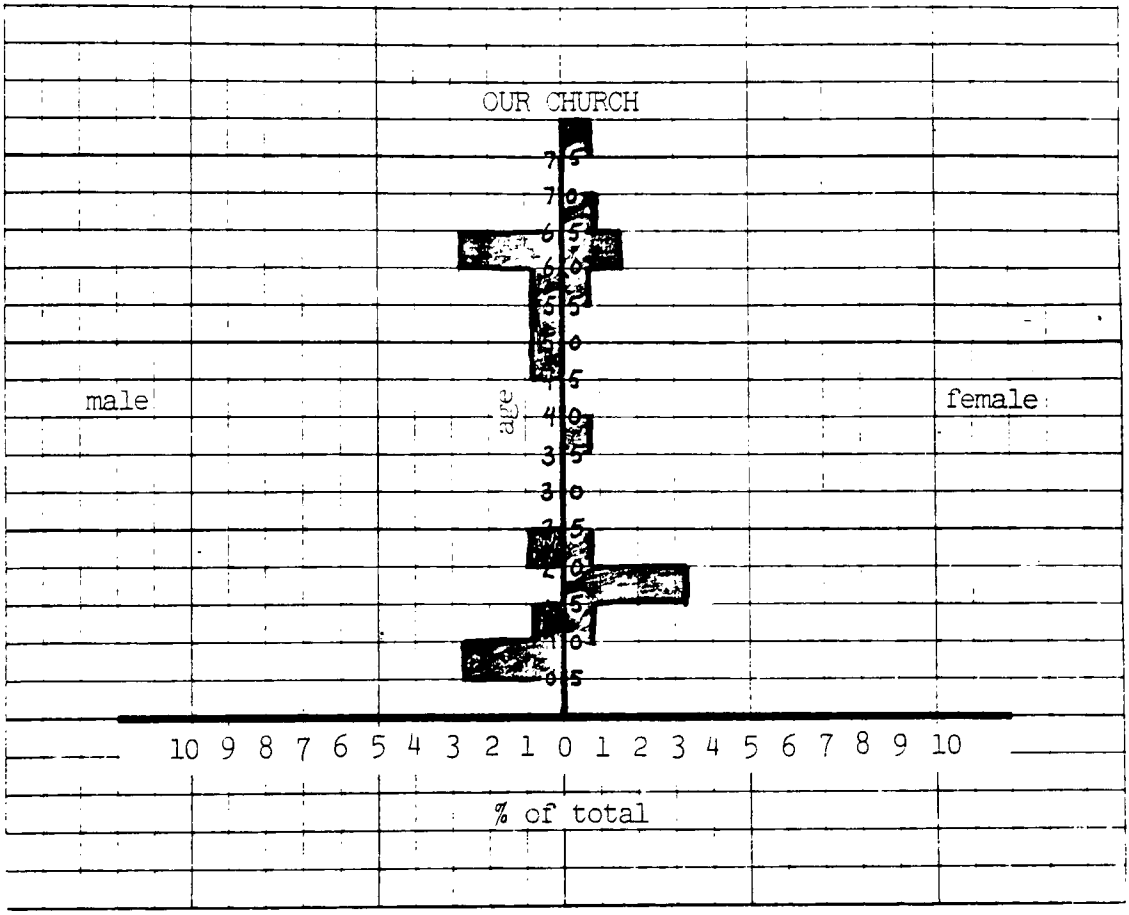


Figure 6.1
Age and Sex as Percentages

People-Blindness

Wagner defines people-blindness as "the malady which prevents us from seeing the important cultural differences that exist between groups of people living in geographical proximity to one another--differences which tend to create barriers to the acceptance of our message."¹⁹ For instance, the Burgin church would be unsuccessful in trying to reach and meld together grooms and horse farm owners. This illness was lower in the ranking as there was probably some acknowledging of the reality that the church will be successful in reaching mostly middle-class residents with little or no success at either end of the class spectrum. This being the case, participants saw no real problem with this syndrome.

Ethnikitis

Wagner describes this disease as a terminal illness, calling it "undoubtedly the most ruthless killer of churches in America today."²⁰ Briefly defined, it "is the disease caught by an unchanging church in a changing community."²¹ This is not really a problem in Burgin as ethnic peoples are not moving into the vicinity of the church; indeed the church is surrounded by a stable neighborhood of people who are quite homogeneous.

¹⁹ Wagner, Healthy, p. 101.

²⁰ Wagner, Healthy, p. 29.

²¹ Leader's Guide, p. 12.1.

Sociological Strangulation

No overcrowding of the church's facilities is presently occurring; such could occur if the church were to grow significantly. This particular pathology was recognized for its potential bearing on church growth but was not perceived or discussed as something needing immediate attention.

Arrested Spiritual Development

Arrested Spiritual Development is an internal growth problem which has to do with quality of spiritual life. Wagner suggests this as possibly the most growth-obstructing disease in American churches.²² He cites two possible causes: a low regeneration level and/or a low level of spiritual nurture.²³ Factors contributing to positive spiritual development were listed in Chapter 4. The writer will comment additionally on factors two and eight from that list and discuss the effects of their absence in producing Arrested Spiritual Development.

Factor Two: The lack of extended and/or in-depth pastoral care. Short pastorates are more often than not debilitating to the spiritual life of a congregation. Lyle Schaller states that "there is overwhelmingly persuasive evidence that from a long-term congregational perspective, the most productive years of a pastorate seldom begin

²² Wagner, Healthy, pp. 102-104.

²³ For an extended discussion of these seven factors see Wagner, Healthy, pp. 104-111.

[emphasis his] before the fourth or fifth or sixth year of a minister's tenure in that congregation."²⁴ He states elsewhere that "short pastorates and numerical growth tend to be incompatible."²⁵ It should be remembered that the average pastoral tenure at the Burgin church has been two years. Without exception, members of the committee believed that short pastoral tenure "did not help" the congregation's growth pattern. All recalled the growth that occurred in the early 80's when one pastor stayed for four years, although all agreed that other factors were at work as well.

Factor Eight: A lack of world vision. Jim Righter, editor of the Virginia Advocate, quotes Jim Logan of Wesley Theological Seminary as saying that many "local congregations have ceased to define themselves in terms of participation in the united mission of the church and have come more and more to see themselves as the object of the church's mission."²⁶ One evidence of this factor at work in the Burgin church was the congregation's response to the Kentucky Conference's new church planting effort. In spite of a significant cut-back in apportionments placed on the church, the Administrative Board refused to commit significant funds to this effort (\$2,160 over three years were

²⁴ Lyle E. Schaller, Assimilating New Members, ed. Lyle E. Schaller, Creative Leadership Series (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), p. 53.

²⁵ Schaller, Growing Plans, p. 163.

²⁶ Jim Righter, "Who has the Mission?" Editorial, Virginia Advocate, 11 October 1984, unpaginated.

requested; a one-time gift of \$100 was made). In the face of these two factors, the writer must conclude that Arrested Spiritual Development joins the other two leading pathologies, St. John's Syndrome and Koinonitis, as the prevailing pathologies of this congregation.

Jim Logan's comment cited above looms as the definitive comment on the life and ministry of the Burgin congregation. Is there any hope that this congregation can refocus its attention on "others"? Is there any hope for the kind of renewal and growth which will bring new vitality? The following discussion on goal setting may begin to offer an answer to these questions.

Projecting for Growth

With a backdrop of the entire five months of discussions and presentations, clinic participants were asked to project a growth goal for the next decade. They were reminded of the specific analyses provided by the use of the three workbooks: Growth History, Worker Analysis, and Community Analysis; and the study of the various pathologies. They were also apprised of the philosophy behind a faith projection for growth:

1. Faithfulness to the Lord required making disciples of every nation.
2. Faith pleases God.
3. Faith projections are realistic goals based on facts.
4. Faith projections are a team effort set by those who will fulfill them.

5. Through prayer, we seek God's will as to our projections and receive His power to see them fulfilled.²⁷

Waymire clarified the motivation behind faith projections:

This [faith goal setting] is not to be confused with the "numbers game," with institutional survival, with personal ego trips, with "scalp hunting," or with anything attributed to base motives. It is a pure desire to obey Jesus' Great Commission to "make disciples of all [*italics his*] peoples" (Matt. 28:19-20).²⁸

Decadal Growth Rate Established

A decadal projections chart (Table 6.2) was then presented to show growth at two rates, given a current size of 50, one more than Burgin's 49. Clinic materials had suggested a minimum DGR goal of 25 percent; and a good goal of 100 percent.²⁹ Participants were asked to project a net decadal percentage growth target rate. The results were:

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Projected Rate</u>
One	50 percent
Two	100 percent
Three	100 percent
Four	100 percent
Five	100 percent
Six	100 percent

The person projecting the 50 percent rate held out for that projection but evidenced willingness to give the 100 percent projection a try; therefore the group agreed to the larger DGR goal. With the most recent membership report standing at 49 persons, it was decided to work

²⁷ Leader's Guide, p. 26.1.

²⁸ Waymire and Wagner, Church Growth Survey Handbook, p. 31.

²⁹ A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic: Participant's Manual, 2d ed. (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1979), p. 27.

Table 6.2
Decadal Projections

Number Members Now	Projected % net growth	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	Total new members
		yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	yr.	
50	25% Total Members	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	59	61	63	13
	*New Members	+4	+5	+5	+5	+5	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6	= 52
	100% Total Members	54	58	62	66	71	76	81	87	93	100	50
	*New Members	8	8	8	8	10	10	10	12	12	14	= 100

* A 7 percent attrition factor is built into the total of new members needed yearly to maintain basic net growth rate.

Source: A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic: Participant's Manual, 2d ed. (Pasadena: Charles E. Fuller Institute, 1979), p. 27.

with the projection given for 50 members on the Decadal Projections chart. That led to a 10-year goal of 100 persons (net membership) including a first year goal of 8 new members. It was estimated that growing at 100 percent per decade (requiring 100 new members) would net about 50 new members, leaving a net membership in ten years of about 100. Clinic participants made a significant commitment: they agreed that these goals must involve going after new people. It would not be enough just to reclaim some of those who had left the church. They evidently saw the need to bring new life into the church.

Monitoring the Projections

Participants were urged to monitor decadal growth. This, it was felt, could be easily done through the reporting done annually to the Kentucky Conference and to the Charge Conference.

Supporting Goals and Activities

One obvious result of numerical growth will be the influx of new people. Participants were encouraged toward openness to new faces and ideas; that is, toward a receptivity to those whom God would send to the church. They were reminded of the possibility of failure but also the high probability of success--if they follow through on the concepts, projections, and strategies coming out of the clinic.

The Arrested Spiritual Development syndrome must be addressed. One way is through the development of evangelistic and spiritual formation group structures where the genius of warm-hearted, evangelistically oriented Wesleyanism can be recovered. Through these groups spiritually

and socially relevant ministries of outreach through normal friendship and kinship networks could be exploited. George Hunter maintains that

most people in a community never know what a congregation has to offer or that it wants to share it, unless people from the congregation leave the church and enter the neighborhood to engage others in caring friendship and meaningful conversation and so open up the faith and life of the congregation as a live option to undisciplined people.³⁰

Activities such as these, and others to be mentioned later, are going to be necessary if the full benefit of the growth study is to be received.

Conclusion

There remains a nagging worry--is it too late for this church? Another concern is the possibly overbearing weight of institutionalism. Have structure and connectionalism become the raison d'etre and perhaps the bane of this church's existence? The next chapter will attempt to answer these life-or-death questions.

³⁰ George G. Hunter III, Contagious Congregation, p. 20.

CHAPTER 7

Further Observations

United Methodist churches like Burgin are facing a crisis, for some researchers are questioning the long-term survivability of the denomination and even suggesting the possibility that it could go out of existence sometime in the next fifty to seventy-five years.¹ During the decade 1969-1978 United Methodist membership declined by 11 percent (1,217,977 members less), and the decline continues with 1985 registering the sharpest decline in eight years.² During that same period, membership in the Burgin church declined by 25 percent (16 members). Fortunately, 1977 marked the beginning of a six-year period of growth, producing a DGR of 65 percent, but more recent events have negated those gains.³ A church which had a full membership of 74 in 1983 reported 49 in 1985; composite membership dropped from 53 to 30.

What must happen to bring long-term vitality to the Burgin congregation which would include recovery from the two prevailing pathologies: St. John's Syndrome and Koinonitis, and--related to the

¹ Robert L. Wilson, Shaping the Congregation, ed. Ezra Earl Jones, Into Our Third Century Series, Vol. 5 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), p. 15.

² Wilson, Shaping, p. 14; Douglas F. Cannon, "UMC '85 Member Loss Sharpest in Eight Years," United Methodist Review, 8 August 1986, p. 5.

³ See Chapter 3: "Growth History."

former--Arrested Spiritual Development? What can be done to escape the negative denominational growth climate: Can anything be done? Or is it too late? One clinic participant would not affirm that the Burgin church has a future; others were more sanguine, hoping and believing for better days. All affirmed a faith goal (Chapter 6), but is that enough? Additional insights for answering these questions can be gained from the previously unreported results of a questionnaire, interviews, and an analysis of church structure and connectionalism.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was entitled My Personal Opinion Regarding Characteristics of Our Church.⁴ Twenty questions were given, all requiring affirmative answers to indicate a vital, growing congregation. Distressingly, only three were answered "Yes" (Questions 3, 8, and 9); two reflected ambiguity (Questions 13 and 17); and fifteen received decisively "No" answers; the latter reflecting a congregation with a very negative self-image about growth practices and possibilities.

Personal Interviews

Personal interviews produced a somewhat more positive image.⁵ All but one of the five interviewees appeared hopeful for the future of the church. All felt that the church growth study had been helpful and would encourage growth. Some had even been emboldened since the

⁴ See Appendix B.

⁵ For interview guide see Appendix C.

workshop to share a witness for Christ with neighbors and acquaintances. One participant is planning to involve friends in a small-group Bible study. Two new couples have started attending the church, both there because of the pastor and a member who reached out to meet a need or show a loving interest.

One factor which seemed to loom large in the thinking of all who were queried was the matter of short pastoral tenure. As noted earlier, the average has been two years. All recalled the encouraging period of growth under a recent pastor who was at the church for four years. They agreed that an appointee who would come with a strong possibility of staying four or more years could turn the congregation once again toward an upward growth pattern. Interestingly, only one objected to student appointees; the main objection was to the brevity of the appointments. The itinerancy, a distinctive of the reform movement initiated by Wesley, may well have been the "best system of starting churches, deploying pastors, reaching the lost, and attacking social ills in nineteenth century America," but short tenure, which seems still to be a mark of itinerancy, has to be questioned in relation to established churches like Burgin.⁶ Interestingly, no one registered any disaffection with the United Methodist Church at the national or General Conference level.

⁶ Norman E. Dewires and Ezra Earl Jones, "Foreword," in Shaping the Congregation, by Robert L. Wilson, p. 11.

Church Structure and Connectionalism

What about Burgin's local organizational structure? Is it conducive to the kind of renewal needed? Can a small struggling United Methodist church really experience renewal and growth, given the ecclesiastical demands and structures of the denomination? The author will address this question by looking at the local church model delineated in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 1984.⁷ The model found there will be compared to certain biblical motifs/models for church life. Conclusions will be drawn which will either affirm or deny the possibility of renewal and growth in the Burgin United Methodist congregation given the parameters of connectionalism and local church structure mandated by the Discipline.

The United Methodist Model

One resource for this discussion, in addition to the Discipline, is a pamphlet prepared by the United Methodist Division of the Ordained Ministry, Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Entitled The Nature and Function of the Church, its basis is the 1980 Discipline. The conclusions of that pamphlet will be updated in terms of the 1984 Discipline.

That pamphlet noted fourteen things United Methodist churches should be; fifteen things United Methodist churches should do; and leadership structures mandated for achieving those goals. The author

⁷ Hereafter referred to simply as the Discipline.

has added one item to each list.⁸

I. The nature of the church, or what United Methodists should be as congregations and as Christians.

1. The church is to be "under the Lordship of Christ."⁹
2. The church is to be "a connectional society of persons who have professed their faith in Christ."¹⁰
3. The church is to be the body of Christ "bound in sacred covenant."¹¹
4. The church is to be "a servant of Christ on mission in the local and worldwide community."¹²
5. The church is to be "rooted in the liberating message of Jesus Christ that recognized every person, woman or man, as a full and equal part of God's human family."¹³

⁸ Headings I, II, and III and subdivisions are adapted from the aforementioned pamphlet, The Nature and Function of the Church (Nashville: The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Division of the Ordained Ministry, n.d.), unpaginated.

⁹ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 1984. (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1984), p. 110.

¹⁰ Discipline, p. 110.

¹¹ Discipline, p. 114.

¹² Discipline, p. 115.

¹³ Discipline, p. 613.

6. The church is to be "under the discipline of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

7. The church is to be "a community of true believers."¹⁵

8. The church is to be "the redeemed and redeeming fellowship."¹⁶

9. The church is to be "a pilgrim people."¹⁷

10. The church is to be "a connectional society."¹⁸

11. The church is to be "an inherent part of the Church Universal which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."¹⁹

12. The church is to be inclusive of "all persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, or economic condition."²⁰

13. The church is to be "the people of God . . . made visible in the world who must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvinced."²¹

¹⁴ Discipline, p. 110.

¹⁵ Discipline, p. 110.

¹⁶ Discipline, p. 19.

¹⁷ Discipline, p. 85.

¹⁸ Discipline, p. 110.

¹⁹ Discipline, p. 111.

²⁰ Discipline, p. 113.

²¹ Discipline, p. 107.

14. The church is to be a "community of growing Christians."²²

15. The church is to be "a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society."²³

II. The functions of the church, or what United Methodists should do as congregations and as Christians. Here the church is encouraged to provide seven ministries for the congregation that will nurture and equip it.

1. The church is to preach the Word of God.²⁴

2. The church is to administer the sacraments.²⁵

3. The church is to be a community of worshipping Christians "that demonstrates a common life of gratitude and devotion, witness and service, celebration and discipleship."²⁶

4. The church is to nurture and evangelize its members and the surrounding area, becoming thereby a center for the upbuilding of the Christian community.²⁷

²² Discipline, p. 460.

²³ Discipline, p. 110.

²⁴ Discipline, p. 110.

²⁵ Discipline, p. 110.

²⁶ Discipline, p. 106.

²⁷ Discipline, pp. 106, 111.

5. The church is to encourage the stewardship of life, time, abilities, and material possessions.²⁸

6. The church is to "shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members."²⁹

7. The church is to provide disciplined groups as an expected part of personal mission involvement.³⁰

The church is also encouraged to provide nine actions that represent mission involvement in and for the world.

8. The church is to encounter the world primarily at the local level, ministering to the needs of persons in the community where the church is located.³¹

9. The church is to reach out to the global community, seeking the redemption of the world.³²

10. The church is to seek to win people to a profession or a renewal of faith in Jesus Christ.³³

²⁸ Discipline, p. 148.

²⁹ Discipline, p. 114.

³⁰ Discipline, p. 115.

³¹ Discipline, p. 110.

³² Discipline, p. 111.

³³ Discipline, p. 110.

11. The church is to show a concern for social justice, calling its members to a "studied dialogue of faith and practice."³⁴

12. The church is to "engage in the struggle for justice and reconciliation . . . [seeking] to reveal the love of God for men, women, and children of all ethnic, racial, cultural, and national backgrounds and to demonstrate the healing of the gospel with those who suffer."³⁵

13. The church is to "minister wherever Christ would have [it] serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free."³⁶

14. The church is to pursue the intellectual life as an integral element in the Christian faith.³⁷

15. The church is to participate in the shaping of values and Christian life style.³⁸

16. The church is to relate to other living faith communities.³⁹

³⁴ Discipline, p. 86.

³⁵ Discipline, p. 106.

³⁶ Discipline, p. 107.

³⁷ Discipline, p. 531.

³⁸ Discipline, p. 531.

³⁹ Discipline, p. 605.

III. Structures and leadership for the church. These grow out of its nature and function and are outlined in Paragraphs 252-267 of the Discipline.⁴⁰ This structure includes ten work areas coordinated by a Council on Ministries. Four of these provide ministries for being in mission [emphasis theirs] with and for the world.⁴¹

1. Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.
2. Church and Society.
3. Evangelism.
4. Missions.

Six provide ministries for nurturing and equipping [emphasis theirs] the members of the congregation.⁴²

5. Education.
6. Higher Education and Campus Ministry.
7. Religion and Race.
8. Stewardship.
9. Worship.
10. Status and Role of Women.

There are four person-centered councils: children, youth, adults, and family. Four committees serve, meeting infrequently to provide the

⁴⁰ This section also draws heavily from three documents: The Nature and Function of the Church; Guidelines for Leadership in the Local Church, 1985-88: Administrative Board (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984) pp. 4-8; and Guidelines for Leadership in the Local Church, 1985-88: Administrative Council (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), pp. 5-8.

⁴¹ Nature, unpaginated.

⁴² Nature, unpaginated.

practical maintenance [emphasis theirs] needs of the congregation: finance, trustees, staff-parish relations, and nominations and personnel.

The 1984 General Conference made alternate provision for smaller churches (200 members or less) such as the Burgin congregation. This alternate form, called the Administrative Council, combines the responsibilities of the Administrative Board and the Council on Ministries. Program responsibilities are carried out by chairpersons of nurture and membership care, outreach, and a coordinator of age-level and family ministries. The work area chairperson of nurture and membership care combines previously named work areas of education, higher education and campus ministry, worship, stewardship, and evangelism. The work area chairperson of outreach combines previously named work areas of Christian unity and interreligious concerns, church and society, missions, religion and race, status and role of women, health and welfare ministries, and evangelism. The coordinator of age-level and family ministries combines the work of the four councils: children, youth, adults, and family. This suggested model, which is Burgin's, is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

In summarizing, it appears that the mandated structure for the Burgin United Methodist church should contribute to the Burgin church's mission, nurture, and maintenance, and thus to its growth.⁴³ But how well does this structure relate to biblical motifs for the church? To

⁴³ Nature, unpaginated.

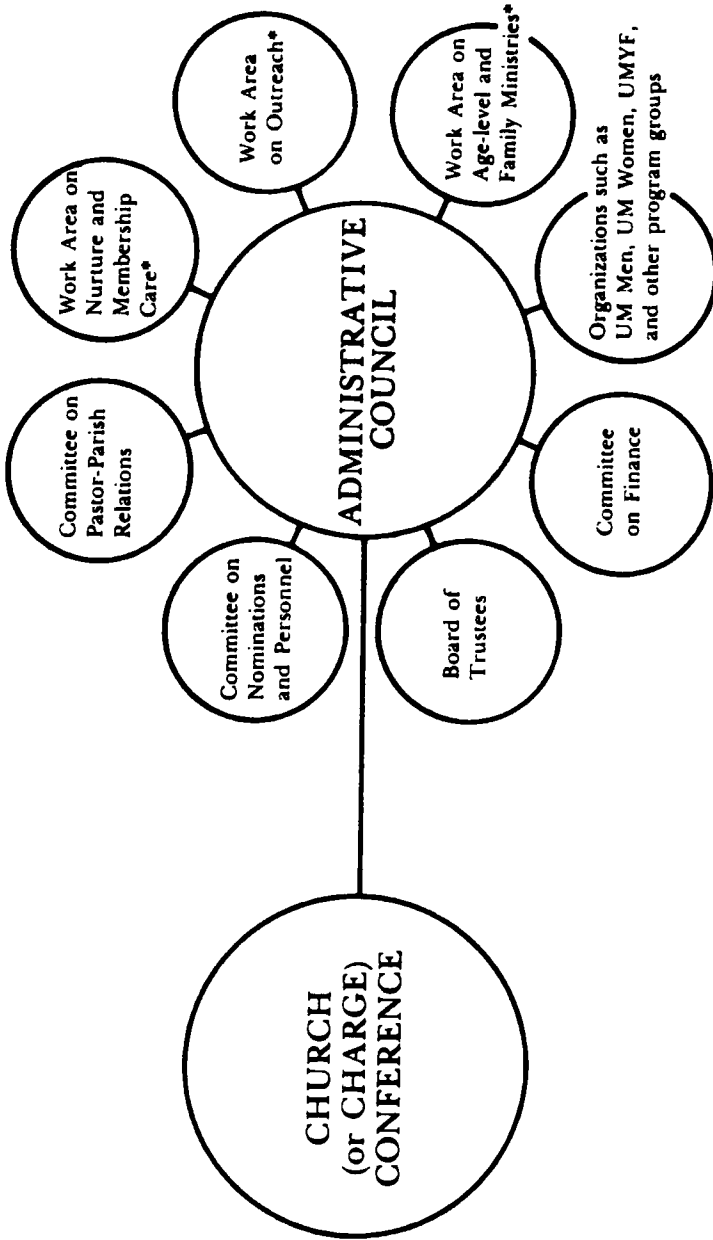


Figure 7.1

Administrative Council

Source: Guidelines for Leadership in the Local Church: 1985-1988. Administrative Council (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), p. 6.

answer that question, a brief look at the biblical model is necessary.

The Biblical Model

Biblical motifs (hereafter referred to as the biblical model) suggest that the church exists for the kingdom, with its purpose to glorify God.⁴⁴ Three essential functions contribute to furthering that glory: worship, community, and witness.⁴⁵ Worship focuses upward, community focuses inward, witness focuses outward, each in turn relating to the other. Worship finds expression in instruction, celebration, and repentance. Community finds expression in discipline, use of gifts, and spiritual fruit (sanctification). Witness finds expression in evangelism (including missions), service, and prophecy.⁴⁶ These relationships are illustrated in Figure 7.2.

The church which fits this model is primarily a charismatic organism rather than an institution or organization (more will be said about this). It is a sacramental community characterized by celebration, joy, and mystery. It is a covenant community characterized by commitment, discipline, and boundaries. It is a servant community modeled after the example of Christ who was himself an incarnational model.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Howard A. Snyder, Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1983), p. 75.

⁴⁵ Snyder, Liberating, p. 76.

⁴⁶ Snyder, Liberating, p. 82.

⁴⁷ Snyder, Liberating, pp. 74-93.

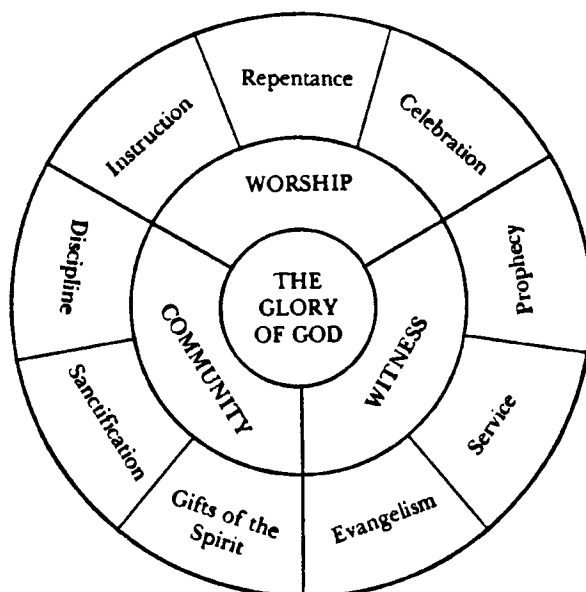


Figure 7.2

The Ecological/Biblical Model

Source: Howard A. Snyder, Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church & Kingdom (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1983), p. 82.

The Burgin United Methodist Model and the Biblical Model Compared

The initial reaction of the writer is to say that the Burgin model certainly incorporates most of the features found in the biblical model. Table 7.1 attempts to relate the earlier described nature and functions of the United Methodist model (and thus the Burgin church) to the nature and functions of the biblical model.

An analysis of the findings in that chart seems to confirm the impression that the Burgin model makes provision for the functions called for by the biblical model, although the biblical model does not explicitly provide a place for maintenance functions.

A comparative study as illustrated in Table 7.1 can--in the words of Howard Snyder--"be strategically useful," for, as he says:

In addition to being a tool for understanding church life, it [the biblical model, called by Snyder the ecological model] is helpful in diagnosing the condition of a church and in handling the question of church structure.

Problems in a church frequently trace to an imbalance in the ecology of worship, community and witness. Viewing the church as a living organism, we may say that the church often exhibits some sickness, some pathology, which needs correcting so that the fellowship can have a balanced and healthy life [emphasis mine]. The need, therefore, is to diagnose the problem and correct it.⁴⁸

For instance, one could make a diagnosis by taking a look at witness. Snyder suggests that weaknesses in this area produce an ingrown and self-centered church, e.g. Burgin. There will be little

⁴⁸ Snyder, Liberating, pp. 91-92.

Table 7.1

Biblical Model and United Methodist Model Compared

Biblical Model	United Methodist Model
Purpose of the Church	
To glorify God	I.1, 2, 4-6
Functions of Churches	
Worship:	
Instruction	I.5-6, 14; II.1, 3-5, 14-15; III.4-5.
Repentance	I.6, 13-14; II.10.
Celebration	I.5, 8, 14; II.2-3, 6; III.1, 8.
Witness:	
Evangelism	I.2, 4, 15; II.9-10, 12, 16; III.3-4.
Service	II.6, 8, 12-13; III.2.
Prophecy	I.5; II.11-12, 16; III.2, 6, 9.
Community:	
Discipline	I.3, 6-8, 10; II.5, 7, 15.
Sanctification	I.7, 9, 12, 14; III.7.
Gifts of the Spirit	I.4, 6, 10, 12-14; II.5, 7, 13.

Key:

Numbers such as I.1, etc., indicate areas of the outline beginning on Page 80 of this dissertation.

growth or impact on the world by such a church.⁴⁹ James Righter, editor of the Virginia Advocate, reflecting on the malaise of United Methodist churches in general, proposed the following for the recovery of witness at the local level.

First, eliminate all but essential church meetings devoted to local and denominational mission service projects. Second, postpone all building repairs and improvements for one year so the money can be put into one [emphasis his] local mission project that will make a difference in people's lives. Third, instead of talking about evangelism, teach each person how to reach out to someone they know who is unchurched with a living word and deed that will make a difference in their lives. Finally, to trust the power, the presence, the leading of the Holy Spirit, to give us what to say and to do when confronted by the needs of the world God loves.⁵⁰

But before stating any major conclusions about the comparisons being drawn, an extension of the biblical model must be considered, that is, more must be said about the charismatic-organic model which sees the church first and foremost as a spiritual organism and only secondarily as an institution.⁵¹

The Charismatic-Organic Model

Born in grace and kept alive by the Holy Spirit, the church is a charismatic community.⁵² Snyder calls Wesley's view of ministry

⁴⁹ Snyder, Liberating, p. 92.

⁵⁰ Righter, "Who has the Mission?," p. 2.

⁵¹ Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley and Patterns of Church Renewal (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1980), pp. 131-132.

⁵² Howard A. Snyder, The Problem of Wine Skins: Church Structure in a Technological Age (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1975), p. 157.

charismatic since Wesley saw all ministry springing from the Holy Spirit's work in the church.⁵³ The charismatic-organic model is marked by community, interpersonal relationships, mutuality and interdependence, and a high degree of spontaneity.⁵⁴ Biblical images for the church support this, e.g., vine, flock, family, and household.⁵⁵ Structuring Burgin on the basis of the charismatic-organic model would be to structure on the basis of "discerned tasks and discovered spiritual gifts."⁵⁶

In contrast, note must be taken of the characterizations of the institutional model. Again quoting Snyder, institutionalized churches "attempt vainly to minister through ever improved and expanding programs, training and techniques."⁵⁷ This model is based on hierarchy, delegation of authority, impersonal relationships, formality and pre-packaged sure-fire programs.⁵⁸ Those readers with a close relationship to the United Methodist Church will recognize the preponderance of the institutional model in the life of many local United Methodist churches, including Burgin. Yet, in many United Methodist churches evidences of a

⁵³ Snyder, Radical Wesley, p. 94.

⁵⁴ Howard A. Snyder, The Community of the King (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1977), p. 67.

⁵⁵ Snyder, Community, p. 67.

⁵⁶ Snyder, Community, p. 157.

⁵⁷ Snyder, Community, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Snyder, Community, p. 67.

biblical/charismatic model appear, giving witness to God at work among His people. God's people are here and there being touched by His Spirit and exhibiting thereby biblical modes of being and acting.

Observations

Reflecting on the model presented in the Discipline leads the writer to conclude that in theory the Burgin United Methodist Church should and could exhibit biblical/charismatic-organic modes in its life and ministry. Appropriate theories--workable structures--biblical foundations--are all in place, but power is missing in practice. Bishop Richard B. Wilke expresses it this way: "We are mobilized like an army ready for battle. But we are marching backwards."⁵⁹ With the Burgin church possessing many if not most of the features of the model indicated in the Discipline, what are the additional ingredients needed to bring power, spiritual renewal, and growth to the congregation?

Howard Snyder is again helpful, for he cites guidelines for structuring the church's work which could lead to renewal and recovery of mission.⁶⁰ First, there is a pressing need for leadership based on the exercise of spiritual gifts, and not by clergy only, but by laypersons as well. The entire life of the church, he claims, should be

⁵⁹ Richard B. Wilke, And Are We Yet Alive? The Future of The United Methodist Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), p. 58.

⁶⁰ Snyder, Problem, pp. 162f.

based on the "Christ who awakens spiritual gifts in each member of the community."⁶¹

Second, life and ministry should be built on viable small-group structures. Snyder claims that virtually every major movement of spiritual renewal has been accompanied by a return to small groups.⁶² Here indeed was the Wesleyan movement's early genius--the meetings of bands and classes where spiritual directors fashioned people into the kinds of Christians God intended them to be. Would it be too much to claim that it is here--at the point of the recovery of small groups--that the Burgin church will be able to escape an overbearing institutional mode? These groups, according to David L. Watson, become a means of grace to the whole body of believers in a given ecclesiastical community.⁶³ A logical place to start would be in the strengthening of the small groups in the Sunday School where training of teachers and restructuring (to perhaps include new classes) could make for significant change in the morale and spiritual level of the Burgin membership. Another form for groups to take would be in prayer-cells focused on personal renewal and corporate revival. These cells would

⁶¹ Snyder, Problem, p. 163.

⁶² Snyder, Problem, p. 164.

⁶³ David Lowes Watson, Accountable Discipleship. Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation: Understanding John Wesley's 'Class Meetings' and Using Their Principles in Small Covenant Groups for Supporting Our Discipleship Today (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984), p. 95.

have the effect of giving the Holy Spirit His rightful place for ministry and mission.

Third, the Christians at Burgin must see themselves as members of a community, rather than solely as members of an organization.⁶⁴

Structures like councils and commissions are legitimate but must be viewed as relative and limited and certainly not deserving of primary focus.⁶⁵ Bishop Wilke affirms the need for this perspective:

In the United Methodist Church, it can no longer be serving on the finance committee, being a trustee, or fixing chicken for the bazaar supper. Those duties are important, but we now need Christian people who can speak the languages of the people. We need on-fire-faithful who will teach and make disciples, lead family life discussions in their homes, guide studies on peace in their church school classes, and invite young adults into their livingrooms for fellowship. We need people who will minister to the elderly in the nursing homes, read to the blind, visit the jails, and help kids get off drugs. We need the laity to hear confessions, offer prayers of forgiveness, and lead Bible studies. We have fires of passion to extinguish. God needs people who burn with his love to help put them out.⁶⁶

There must also be a recovery of the emphases of Wesleyan scriptural Christianity. An immediate action to get that recovery underway would be the restoration of Wesleyan oriented literature to its rightful place in the Sunday School curriculum.

Another avenue for corporate spiritual formation at Burgin would be a return to biblical exposition, to exegetical preaching as over against topical preaching. It would be in effect a return to Wesley's practice

⁶⁴ Snyder, Problem, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Snyder, Problem, p. 165.

⁶⁶ Wilke, p. 118.

of exposition in the evening meetings of the societies. The absence of biblical exposition is, the author believes, one of the outstanding weaknesses in the Methodist connection. A diet of expository preaching by a pastor who remains with the Burgin congregation for at least four years could usher in an upsurge of spiritual growth and power not heretofore seen in the church.

Related to this return to biblical exposition is the need for humble yet strong pastoral leadership. The United Methodist model discussed above is a workable model based on biblical theory, but it remains a truism that churches do not grow by committee or commission! Pastoral leadership is needed and necessary (this is possibly an argument against student pastors and is certainly one against short pastorates). Peter Wagner calls for pastors who exercise both faith and leadership,⁶⁷ and who are equippers, defining the latter as "a leader who actively sets goals for a congregation according to the will of God, obtains goal ownership from the people, and sees that each church member is properly motivated and equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing the goals."⁶⁸

Conclusion

What, then, is the author's prognosis? It is that the Burgin church will escape the pathologies common to it and so many United Methodist

⁶⁷ C. Peter Wagner, Leading Your Church to Growth (Venture: Regal, 1984), p. 104.

⁶⁸ Wagner, Leading Your Church to Growth, p. 79.

churches only to the degree that it recovers the heart-beat of an organism as over against the stagnation and pedanticism of mere institutionalism. A heart-warming at the center along with strong pastoral leadership could lead to a corporate Aldersgate experience which would have its effect locally and to the ends of the earth. Growth goals would be met, people would come to Christ, loyalty to Christ and His Kingdom would become paramount in the life of the congregation, and the thrusts of the Discipline would be fleshed out in the life of the church.

CHAPTER 8

Summary

The Burgin United Methodist Church is typical of many Kentucky Conference churches serving rural or small town environments in that it reflects congregational growth which has plateaued--if not declined--in recent decades. At best, growth and decline have followed cycles often reflecting no permanent gains in membership and attendance at worship services and Sunday School.

The Problem Restated

The research for this project was directed toward the discovery and analysis of the growth history of the church with a view toward developing a ten-year growth goal. The writings of Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner were the principal resources defining the parameters of the evaluations which occurred.

It was the hypothesis of this project that small, relatively inactive United Methodist churches in the Kentucky Conference can and will project for growth when the necessary catalyst is present, whether that be the pastor, an informed layperson, or an outside consultant.

A fundamental and related question which kept reoccurring throughout the project was, Does the Burgin church have a future? Other questions raised during the clinic dealt specifically with the condition and environment of the church. Among them were:

1. What biblical motifs and mandates define the mission of the church?
2. What are the pathologies (ecclesiastical diseases) recognizable in this church, and how can they be counteracted?
3. What faith-projection for growth can be made and embraced by all?

The Method Reiterated

Types of research usually appropriate for religious inquiry were utilized. Samuel Southard identified five such types, all of which were employed to a greater or lesser degree. In addition, two other types were used: (1) library research and (2) original and local input from an Administrative Board-appointed congregational reflection committee.

The Findings Stated

Through the use of instruments prepared by the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth and through the Participant's Manual, clinic participants were able to capture for analysis the data vital to an understanding of the history of Burgin's growth. Findings in five areas were especially important to the project.

Findings Related to Growth

Full membership exhibited a DGR of minus 14 percent (-14%); Sunday worship attendance declined by a minus 17 percent (-17%); and Sunday School attendance plateaued (zero growth/decline). These three together produced a composite membership DGR of minus 12 percent (-12%). Tragically, these declines were all in a decade which registered steady

growth from 1978 through 1983. But even the growth seen over those five years can at best be categorized as only "fair" to "good" growth. It appears that the key to growth or non-growth was most often the pastor; lay activity did not have much to do with any growth that was registered.

Findings Related to Worker Involvement

The observation offered in the last sentence of the previous paragraph is borne out in the results obtained from the worker analysis. There are no truly evangelistic workers (Class II) in this church; there are some "inviters." Many of the Class I workers feel inadequate and ill-equipped for their jobs.

Findings Related to Community Analysis

An estimated 480 persons have no church relationship in the Burgin school district. Of the 3,000 persons in the School District, perhaps only about 34 percent are vitally related to Jesus Christ. This percentage leaves 1,980 persons in the school district who are prospects for a vital relationship with God. Obviously, there is a pool of prospects from which the Burgin church might draw in an evangelistic outreach.

It was also determined that the town of Burgin is projected to grow by about 16 percent over the next decade. Given that growth--and the pool of prospects already in place--one has to conclude that the church has every reason to expect and plan for growth.

Findings Related to Pathologies

Eight pathologies, or ecclesiastical diseases common to non-growing churches, have been identified by C. Peter Wagner. In the clinic participants' profiling of the Burgin church's health, three stood out: St. John's Syndrome, Koinonitis, and Old Age. Arrested Spiritual Development was also felt to be a significant factor. Ways of counteracting these pathologies were shared during the clinic and were highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7.

Findings Related to Goal-Setting

A faith goal projection was made during the last session of the clinic, with participants agreeing to go with a 100 percent growth goal. Participants felt they must set a challenge goal since, in the opinion of church growth specialists, 25 percent represents only a keeping up with the biological growth rate; and 50 percent represents only "fair" growth.

Conclusion

The obvious conclusion is that the Burgin church is at a crucial juncture in its history, with the paramount question being one of survival. With lengthened pastoral tenure, the development of a charismatic-organic mode of existence and ministry, and with the deployment of a cadre of trained evangelistic workers, this church can do more than survive, it can grow and flourish. But without long-term pastoral care and significant change in focus, the Burgin congregation

will at best remain in a maintenance/survival mode; at worst, it will die.

Recommendations for Further Research

Others researchers in other places and at other times might well want to pursue the following questions:

1. What bearing does brief pastoral tenure have on church growth in Kentucky Conference churches?
2. How is growth affected by student appointments?
3. What models for attacking the Arrested Spiritual Development syndrome have been effective in United Methodist churches?

Summary

This dissertation-project has been summarized in this chapter. Here the author has briefly restated the problem, delineated research methodology, declared findings, drawn conclusions, and made recommendations for further research.

Appendix A

Health Profile Questionnaire

Let's begin this session with a health profile questionnaire designed to help you evaluate your church's health. Rate your church on a scale of 1 to 9 for each of these statements by circling the appropriate number. ("1" means "I think this statement is very true of our church," and "9" means "I think this statement is very untrue of our church.") As you complete each section, add up the circled numbers and place their sum in the blank marked "Total."

This is
very true
of our
church.

This is
very untrue
of our
church.

I. Ethnikitls

1. Most of the people who attend our church are very representative of the Immediate community.

1 2 [^]3 4 5 6 [^]7 8 9

2. Our church responds to the social needs of the Immediate community.

1 2 [^]3 [^]4 5 6 7 [^]8 9

3. The community in which our church is located hasn't changed significantly within the last 10 years.

[^]1 [^]2 [^]3 [^]4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Our evangelistic efforts are very effective in the area immediately surrounding our church.

1 2 3 [^]4 [^]5 [^]6 [^]7 8 9

5. Many of the people from the Immediate area attend our church regularly.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 [^]8 [^]9

6. Very few of our members have moved farther away from the church in the last 10 to 15 years.

[^]1 [^]2 [^]3 [^]4 5 6 7 [^]8 9

Total 139

This is
very true
of our
church.

This is
very untrue
of our
church.

II. Old Age

- 1. Many new people are moving into the community in which our church is located. 1 2 3̂ 4 5̂ 6̂ 7 8̂ 9̂
- 2. The children of our long-time members have continued to live in our community. 1 2 3 4 5̂ 6̂ 7̂ 8̂ 9
- 3. When homes go up for sale in this community, they sell quickly. 1 2 3̂ 4 5 6̂ 7 8̂ 9̂
- 4. Several new businesses have opened in our neighborhood in the last couple of years. 1 2 3̂ 4 5̂ 6̂ 7 8 9̂
- 5. Our people spend more time planning for future ministry than they do wishing for the return of the "good old days." 1 2 3̂ 4̂ 5 6 7 8̂ 9
- 6. Our church's community is not experiencing a decline in population. 1̂ 2̂ 3 4̂ 5 6 7 8̂ 9

Total 164

III. People Blindness

- 1. Our members feel that a church should be composed primarily of people from the same racial, ethnic and economic background. 1̂ 2̂ 3̂ 4 5 6̂ 7 8 9
- 2. Our church designs different programs to accommodate different kinds of people. 1 2 3 4 5̂ 6 7̂ 8̂ 9̂
- 3. We strive to present the Gospel in many different ways, because we believe that people are very different. 1 2 3̂ 4̂ 5̂ 6̂ 7 8̂ 9
- 4. Our church believes that some evangelistic methods are more effective than are others in a given segment of the population. 1 2 3̂ 4̂ 5̂ 6̂ 7 8 9

This Is
very true
of our
church.

This Is
very untrue
of our
church.

5. We are evangelistically selective and do not attempt to win people from all groups in the community into the same fellowship.
6. We have a good understanding of the expressed needs of the people in our community and are relating the Gospel to those needs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 2 [^] 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 7 [^] 8 [^] 9

Total 151

IV. Koinonitis

1. Very few of the families in our church are related directly or by marriage.
2. Members have a strong desire to add new people to the church.
3. We have a significant and increasing number of small groups in our church.
4. Visitors are regularly attending small group meetings within our church.
5. Our church has a number of special programs designed to help new people feel welcome.
6. After the morning worship service, most of our members seek out new people and guests to make them feel welcome.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 2 [^] 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 2 [^] 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 7 [^] 8 [^] 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 7 [^] 8 [^] 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 7 [^] 8 [^] 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
[^]
[^] 2 [^] 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Total 170

This is
very true
of our
church.

This is
very untrue
of our
church.

V. St. John's Syndrome

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Most members of our congregation have a significant number of non-Christian friends. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 2. Most people in our congregation have been Christians for less than 10 years. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 3. It is easy for our church members to warmly receive Christians who differ with them theologically. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 4. Our church manifests "evangelistic zeal." | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 5. There is a genuine desire for our church to grow through reaching the unchurched. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 6. Our church manifests a sense of expectancy. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| | Total <u>171</u> |

VI. Sociological Strangulation

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. It is usually easy to find a convenient parking space at our church, even if you arrive just before the worship service. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 2. It is always possible to get a good seat in our sanctuary, even if you come a little late. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 3. Our church's hallways are seldom crowded after a meeting or worship service. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 4. Seating during our worship service is usually very comfortable, with lots of room to "spread out." | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |

		This is very true of our church.										This is very untrue of our church.
5.	Our parking lot is never full.	^	^									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
6.	If our people brought guests with them to church, they would have no difficulty finding seats together.	^	^									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
		Total										<u>56</u>

* * * * *

After completing all six sections of your health profile score, list on the blanks below the titles of the sections, in order of highest to lowest score.

	Disease	Score
Highest	1. <u>IV, V, V, II, IV (St. John's Syndrome)</u>	171
	2. <u>V, III, II, III, V (Koinonitis)</u>	170
	3. <u>II, IV, III, IV, II (Old Age)</u>	164
	4. <u>III, II, IV, V, I (People Blindness)</u>	151
	5. <u>I, I, I, I, III (Ethnikitis)</u>	139
Lowest	6. <u>VI, VI, VI, VI, VI (Soc. Strangulation)</u>	56

Appendix B

MY PERSONAL OPINION REGARDING CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR CHURCH

This type of questionnaire is called a "forced choice" test, which means that your options are limited to black and white extremes with no gray areas in between. So, if you feel that neither a Yes nor a No exactly describes your church, please check the one you feel is closest to an accurate description. This is also a "forced time" test. You should not take a great deal of time to ponder the answers. Your first intuitive feeling is the most likely to be correct. Do not sign your name.

YES NO (Please check one or the other to indicate your opinion; do not leave any unanswered.)

- 1 4 1. Do most of our church leaders believe that being faithful to the Gospel means seeking to grow, and that winning new people to Christ is among their most important tasks?
- 2 3 2. Does our pastor keep in continuous touch with our membership statistics, constantly look for new ways of improving skills in evangelism, give a large amount of time to promoting church growth and lead laypersons in this work by showing them how as well as by telling them how?
- 5 3. Do the members of our church have positive attitudes toward their church?
- 5 4. Do members of our church constantly reach out to nonmembers in a warm, friendly, accepting manner, promoting opportunities for one-to-one and small group contacts with present members?
- 1 4 5. Do our Church School teachers see the task of attracting new attenders as an important part of their teaching responsibility?
- 1 4 6. Does our church have a large number of regularly meeting small groups or classes designed to meet a wide variety of interests?
- 5 7. Does our church form one or two new interest groups or classes each year, designed to meet a wide variety of interests?

- | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> | |
|------------|------------|--|
| <u>5</u> | <u> </u> | 8. Does our church quickly involve all new members in some responsibility in the church? |
| <u>4</u> | <u>1</u> | 9. Does our church quickly involve all new members in at least one class or interest group within the church? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 10. Does our church have a systematic organization that helps members make a large number of face-to-face contacts each week with nonmembers who they are trying to influence toward the church? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 11. Does our pastor make a large number of face-to-face contacts each week with nonmembers for the purpose of trying to influence them toward the church? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 12. Does our church have a systematic method of obtaining large numbers of names and addresses of nonchurch members, especially relatives, friends, and acquaintances of present members? |
| <u>3</u> | <u>2</u> | 13. Does our church involve the total membership in setting annual evangelism goals? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 14. Does our church spend at least \$_____ each year on radio, newspaper, or TV advertising? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 15. Does our church take the spiritual needs of those outside the church as seriously as the spiritual needs of those inside the church? |
| <u>1</u> | <u>4</u> | 16. Does the Christian Education program in our church try to equip members for evangelistic outreach as much as it tries to meet their personal, psychological, social, and spiritual needs? |
| <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | 17. Do we expect our pastor to expend as much leadership energy in helping members do evangelism as in helping troubled, bereaved, and ill members? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 18. Is our church as well organized to serve singles, youth, senior citizens, and other special groups as it is to serve families and couples? |
| <u> </u> | <u>5</u> | 19. Is programmatic success in our church measured as much by how well we do in evangelism as by how well we serve the membership? |

YES NO

1 4 20. Does our church give as much emphasis to long-range goals for the next ten years as to short-range planning for the next two months?

Source: Herb Miller, Blueprints for Evangelism & Church Growth: Additional Resources Packet ([Lubbock: NET Press, 1985]), pp. 7-9.

Appendix C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTION
COMMITTEE MEMBERSContextual Factors Interview

Contextual factors refer to the environment (or context) in which our church finds itself. They include sociological, anthropological, populational and other factors. In most cases contextual factors are beyond the control of the church or denomination.

I. National contextual factors. These factors may include the U.S. government's attitude toward Christianity, wars, migrations, trade patterns, economic or political conditions, etc.

Q: How have any or all of these affected Burgin's growth?

II. Local contextual factors. These factors refer to the town of Burgin, your neighborhood, the school district, or even the county. They include racial make-up, changing neighborhoods, industrialization, population growth and decline locally, etc.

Q: How have these affected the Burgin church's growth patterns?

Institutional Factors Interview

Institutional factors refer to denominational and local church factors, especially within the United Methodist Church.

III. National institutional factors. General Conference, Jurisdictional, and Kentucky Conference factors such as decisions, resolutions, policies, and activities affecting priorities, emphases and/or actions.

Q: How have these affected Burgin's growth patterns?

IV. Local institutional factors. These factors refer to situations within our local church that help or hinder growth. Included would be the motivation of pastor and people for growth, evangelistic methodology, small group dynamics, Sunday School and youth activities, openness to newcomers, facilities, spiritual level of the people, student appointees, itinerancy, and so forth.

Q: How have any or all of these affected Burgin's growth?

Source: Bob Waymire and C. Peter Wagner, The Church Growth Survey Handbook, 3d ed. rev. (Milpitas, CA: Global Church Growth, 1984), pp. 23-24.

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