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Abstract

FACING THE CHALLENGE OF THE URBAN FRONTIER: CREATING EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONS IN THE CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Kendi Howells Douglas

The Christian Church has historically remained out of urban areas in the United States, and despite experiencing remarkable growth in the last decade, it has remained true to old patterns of establishing churches that are largely suburban or rural. The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: to explore the historical reasons that the Christian Church has not been more successful in planting or fostering urban congregations and to highlight three contemporary Christian Churches that are proving to be effective and which may serve as positive examples for developing an effective urban strategy or urban initiative in the future.

Chapter 1 introduces the historical, theological, and ecclesiological background of this issue as it particularly pertains to the Christian Churches' response to the growing urban areas in the United States.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship of American cities and the church in order to better understand the context as well as to compare and contrast the Christian Churches with other churches in regards to urban effectiveness.

The author demonstrates in Chapter 3 that many factors such as the prevalent frontier mentality, Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the portrayal of cities in literature, and racial issues influenced the founders of the Restoration Movement negatively in regard to urban church planting. However, a rediscovery of the original intentions of the Restoration Movement and its plea to remain faithful to New Testament principles in the context of the emerging urban reality may also help in developing a new urban church planting initiative.

Chapter 4 focuses on the current presence of the Christian Churches in the urban areas of the United States and discusses several of those efforts.

This study demonstrates, in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, through case studies, that there are urban Christian Churches that, despite the factors mentioned above, have been planted or have remained in urban areas. Chapter 8 concludes the study by noting that the three churches used in the case studies share several important

characteristics and can serve as models for the Christian Church and may also contribute to the development of a new urban church planting initiative. Suggestions are also offered for further research.

The following conclusions emerge from this study: (1) The Christian Churches have neither an historical nor current major presence in the urban areas of the United States. (2) Many factors have played a part in this reality. (3) A few Christian Churches are proving to be effective despite this reality. (4) Careful examination of three urban churches reveals several common characteristics which, along with the foundational knowledge of the history and a re-visitation to the original intentions of the Restoration Movement, could lead to the development of a more effective urban initiative.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

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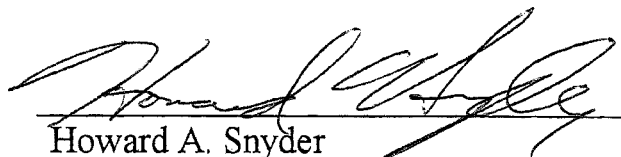
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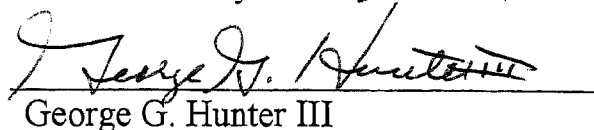
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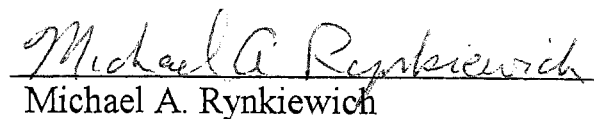
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of World Mission and Evangelism

Asbury Theological Seminary


Howard A. Snyder


George G. Hunter III


Michael A. Rynkiewich

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effective presence – living and representing shalom. You are an inspiration and I pray that you will be blessed beyond your wildest dreams. My biggest hope is that this research is helpful in inspiring more churches to do what you are doing.

CHAPTER 1.

A Frontier Movement Faces a New Challenge

To set the stage for inquiry into the historic role of the Christian Church in the cities of the United States and its current opportunities for urban mission, I relate an experience I had while working with a new urban Christian Church plant in Lansing, Michigan. This is one of three churches I used as a case study in the dissertation.

In the Spring of 2001, All Nations Christian Church, a multi-ethnic,¹ inner-city church in Lansing, MI, was getting ready to move into a new building. Many area churches were donating time and materials in order to help them complete the necessary renovations. It was during this time that I realized how much growth needed to take place in the Christian Churches regarding our general lack of understanding and support of urban churches.

The setup for each day was to work all morning. At noon different members of All Nations brought in food and music. All work

¹ As of 2000 Lansing was host to over 8,000 refugees from 30 countries (www.css-svh.org). The total population distribution according to the 2000 census shows North Lansing's Hispanic population at 17.2%, Black population at 17.8% , White population at 60.7%, and others (including a growing Sudanese and Asian population) at 4.5%. (Siles and Rochin 1998:3, U.S. Census 2000).

halted for a good hour while we had a great time of fellowship, rest, and relaxation. Then work resumed in the afternoon. As smooth as it now sounds on paper, this was a time not without difficulties. Many of the members of All Nations have spent a lifetime on the street and many have no memory of consistent employment. Some have very serious addictions.

The church leadership decided to hire about ten of their unemployed members for renovation work, and these members worked alongside church leaders and volunteering members from partnering churches who had various construction skills and experience. It was definitely unfamiliar territory for some of these partners and many struggled to make conversation. They also seemed to struggle over power and with pride.

I had brought a group of college students with me during that time for a week of community outreach, and the students were not exempt from feelings of frustration. When we got in the van after a full day's work to ride back to campus, they would grumble and gripe about the hired members of All Nations. For example, they would ask why couldn't they work faster and why some of them would have to

go outside every half-hour to smoke. And then one of them would say, “Yeah, but isn’t July cool?” Or “Yeah, but lunch was great.”

By Friday, the ride back to campus was spent energetically talking only about the lunch, the fellowship, music, and positive breakthroughs the students had made with different people and how great it was to see John, a cocaine addict who had been clean less than a month, laugh out loud for the first time all week. They discussed what a difference it makes in getting to know people and they noted the change that had occurred in each other over the week’s time. It wasn’t that people quit taking smoke breaks or that the slow movers became speedy, and it wasn’t that the students stopped noticing those things. But they had gained understanding and a sense of humor about it. The students began to understand that the task at hand, the construction, was not the most important thing for them to participate in during the week, and they began to invest in lives. They began to realize the deep theological implications of partnership. The concept of the body of Christ which they have heard so much about and memorized Scriptures about began to take form before their eyes.

The hired members of All Nations noticed the change in the students’ attitudes and by the end of the week they all had really

bonded. And I think they all began to take pride in themselves and grow in the light of the dignity that they had shed on each other.

I wish I could say that everyone who participated in the renovation project grew in their understanding of urban ministry. Sadly many of the members from area churches would not come back after one day's work, and at one point a few members from a suburban church asked to speak to me outside and expressed their frustration with various aspects of the work: the slow pace, the choice of music being played at the worksite (rap and r&b), the smell of smoke on some of the members, etc. A few of them even asked me to speak to the pastor about it, because, in their words, "It is impossible to have a partnership with a church that allows those kinds of things."

Those comments angered me. How do you help people see the big picture when they are concerned about the smell of cigarette smoke and rap music? My mind was flooded with conversations with Charles Taber, as well as with the written words of Howard Snyder and many hours spent in the classroom with both of them, discussing the difference between church work and kingdom work.

It was a teachable moment. I listened to their complaints and I took several moments and tried to explain cultural and background

differences and that the important thing was that we were building relationships and sharing. I was gentle in my approach and careful with my words. I wish I could report that I was able to break through, but the truth is, I didn't see the people who had taken me aside for the rest of the week, and I was told later that they have yet to come back to share in anything else with All Nations. I am quite sure they walked away thinking that I was a fanatic and that no one could ever be a real Christian as long as they kept smoking.

I was deeply saddened by this unwillingness to commit to brothers and sisters and the broader implications of that decision. It allowed me to see that along with the concern I have for the city and for the Christian Churches² to have a more effective ministry in the city, is the concern I have for the city to have an effective presence in the Christian Church. We need each other; it is indeed a two-way street where both can be an encouragement and an enrichment for the other. The Christian Churches need the urban community. I finally

² The Independent Churches of the Restoration Movement are what I am referring to. Depending on the geographic location these are referred to as Christian Churches or Churches of Christ. I have chosen for the sake of simplicity to refer to them as the Christian Church rather than Independent Christian Church/Churches of Christ and they are further defined on page 35.

understood what Anthony Gittins meant when he wrote about his ministry at Genesis House in Chicago, Illinois.

In a certain sense Genesis house needs the institutional church much less than the institutional church needs this community. Genesis House exists like a silent invitation to the church to become more involved in its mission. (Gittins 1993:151)

I walked back into the building, discouraged. As I returned to my post, I began hanging a drop-ceiling with a guy called “Beat” and I watched one of my students pour a cup of coffee for John, who was on the slow road to recovery, because the shaking in his hands caused him to spill if he poured it himself. I decided to rejoice in the little things like the change in my students and prayed for the future of the church’s relationship with the cities in the United States – I prayed that we would embrace them and that they would embrace us.

Effective ministry of the church in the world’s largest urban areas is considered by many missiologists and church growth strategists to be the greatest challenge the church faces in the 21st century.

Christians can no longer ignore the enormity, complexity and urgency of urbanism. The foremost agenda of the Church’s ministry and mission into the next century will need to be ministry in the city. We can no longer turn our backs on the city. (Van Engen 1994:x)

In the United States the problem of an effective mainline church presence in the urban areas is profound. Mainline churches have been moving out of the largest cities in the country steadily since World War II. For example in the 15 years following the end of World War II, 53 mainline Protestant churches moved out of the central area of Detroit, MI (Dubose 1978:19). The trend continued. In 1989, 30 additional churches were closed (Conn and Ortiz 2001:227). Detroit was not alone; this was a national phenomenon (Jones 1974:1). As of 2003 there were five mainline Protestant Churches remaining in the central Downtown Detroit area, three of which were Southern Baptist (Church Planting 2003:1). “By 1955, approximately 1,200,000 Americans were moving to the suburbs annually....the churches followed, giving primary attention to their suburban expansion” (Conn 1994:97).

Although many of the mainline churches were replaced by congregations that reflected the changes in ethnic population, most mainline denominations failed to integrate economically, ethnically, or otherwise.

While in many places the churches have been fleeing the cities, specifically in the United States, the world has become increasingly

more urban. In 1900, eight percent of the world's population lived in cities; the number as of the year 2001 was 50 percent (United Nations 2001:21). In the United States the number is even higher, at 77.21 percent (U.S. Census 2000: GCT_PH1-R:1). Rashmi Mayur, former president of the The Global Futures Network, predicted in 1985, "Ninety percent of the earth's population will likely be urbanized by the end of the next century" (Mayur 1985:28). This prediction is supported by several population agencies including The International Development Committee (Parliament Appendix 3:2003), World Resources Institute – United Nations Development Programme (1996-97), and the World Bank (2000:45).

These are startling statistics. The challenge for the church to have an effective presence in the cities of North America is growing increasingly urgent. "The U.S. population is projected to increase by 40 percent over the next 50 years. Virtually all of that growth is expected to be concentrated in urban areas" (Lowy 2002: 2). Projections worldwide point to increasingly rapid urban growth as well. "All across the world urbanization is proceeding apace, not waiting for us to decide whether the city is a legitimate place for

mission. The Lord of history is calling us to be servants of his gospel in the cities of his world” (Conn and Ortiz 2001:14).

Background of the Problem

Many factors particular to the Christian Church history seem to account for its relative lack of presence in the urban areas of the United States. Factors include the background of the founders themselves and the common frontier mentality of the 1800s when the movement was beginning. This background information will be the subject of Chapter 3. Additionally, influences in literature, especially from prominent American scholars and leaders, were an important factor as discussed further in Chapter 2 (Garrison 1931:199).

The Christian Churches have been showing growing awareness in recent years that something needs to be done about the lack of presence and/or effectiveness of our churches in the cities of the United States. There is a sense that we need a new strategy. A survey of academic catalogs of the 26 Christian Colleges within the movement indicates that nine now offer courses specifically in urban mission. A few urban church-planting efforts are underway, and more and more workshops specifically dealing with urban ministry are

being offered at the Christian Church's annual conventions (National Missionary Convention Programs from 2000-2003 all indicate this increase). Articles on urban issues increasingly are discussed in the movement's weekly papers, *The Christian Standard* and *The Lookout*. The August 24, 2003 edition of *The Christian Standard*, for example, was completely dedicated to various aspects of effective urban ministry, featuring four articles and an editorial.

Statement of the Problem

The above overview shows that a great need exists for both the discussion and development of a new paradigm, based on a historical foundation starting with where we have been, and why we have been there. This dissertation is an attempt to lay the foundation for that new paradigm. This study: (1) *explores many of the historical reasons why the Christian Church has shown little effort in planting or supporting urban congregations, and (2) studies three urban Christian Churches that do not follow this pattern but have established effective³ urban congregations, and (3) based on this research, seeks to discover ways*

³ A definition of "effective" in terms of how it is understood and used throughout the dissertation is on page 14.

that the Christian Churches as a whole can develop a faithful urban initiative today.

Christian Churches in the Urban Context:
Recovering a Sense of Mission

As already noted, the Christian Churches have not been a strong presence in the urban areas of the United States (Webb 1990:423ff). Many issues, presumably, have factored into this reality. Possible factors include: being a movement that originated in the United States and largely moved along the lines of the frontier (Allen and Hughes 1988:89ff); the lack of both the economic resources and sophistication perceived as necessary to survive in cosmopolitan areas⁴ (Garrison 1931:199); having founding fathers who had seen firsthand the “evils” of industrialization in Europe (Allen and Hughes 1988:90); being influenced by literature and ideology which portrayed cities as evil (Lee 1985:94-97); and inherited issues of racial and socio-economic homogeneity (Shelley 1995:9).

⁴ This may be true to a point; however, it is not the most convincing of arguments because similar circumstances did not hold back others such as the Baptist and Methodist churches from flourishing in urban areas (Conn 1994:39).

Despite these dynamics, the movement's core beliefs include a strong communicated commitment to unity and to remaining faithful to New Testament principles. In today's context, those core values can be fulfilled in the midst of the diversity that cities offer.

In the founding document of the Restoration Movement, *Declaration and Address*, by Thomas Campbell (Campbell 1861:x), thirteen principles for restoring the church are detailed. The vision for unity is clear throughout the document, but is best stated in Principle One which reads:

The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians. (Campbell 1861:26)

The plea for churches to strictly adhere to the New Testament is best stated in Principle Four, which reads:

Although the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the Church, and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members. (Campbell 1861:28)

The models which probably best describe the historical identity of the Christian Church is a combination of what Avery Dulles labels the “Church as Herald” and “The Church as a Community of Disciples” (Dulles 1987:76, 207). In the former model the church is formed by the Word of God and the mission of the church is to proclaim the Word, and in the later model, “Ecclesial communion is not only for mutual gratification and support but to call attention to the ongoing relationship of the Church to Christ” (Dulles 1987:206). Campbell believed strongly in strict adherence to the Word and believed that the Church on earth was to represent, as closely as possible, the kingdom that would someday come (Campbell 1861:30) and could do that best by adhering to the model set by the New Testament churches. Alexander Campbell, in a question and answer forum, talked about his ecclesiology in the *Millennial Harbinger* (Campbell 1832:351). In response to the question, “What is the church of Christ?” he wrote, “The congregation of saints on earth and in heaven.” In response to the question, “What is meant by a church of Christ?” he wrote, “An assembly of persons meeting statedly in one place; built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus himself the chief cornerstone.”

The movement was once very strong on America's frontier. The Christian Churches experienced phenomenal growth on the frontiers, especially between the years 1820 and 1857. Webb states, "The frontier settlements were expanding as the tide of settlers continued to move across the Appalachians. The Christians were aggressively evangelistic, and congregations both grew and multiplied" (Webb 1990:61). Member estimates are as high as 200,000 by 1848 (Garrett 1994:197).

The challenge then is to again be a frontier movement-- to recapture the original vision for America's new frontier: cities.⁵ Cities represent an appropriate, newly re-contextualized opportunity and challenge for Christian Churches to move beyond a history of non-urban involvement and reaffirm their historic sense of mission by a new focus on cities.

Defining Effectiveness for Urban Christian Churches

The problem of limited response to urban needs by the Christian Churches is not new. There has been a noticeable lack of

⁵ Many have described cities as "the New Frontier," including Greenway and Monsma as the title of their book indicates, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier* (2000), and as Viv Grigg points out in his *Urban Mission* article entitled, "Sorry, the Frontier Moved" (Grigg 1987:12-25).

representation by these churches in the cities of North America since the movement's beginnings. Thus there has of course also been limited response to urban needs.

This understanding helps frame my usage of the term *effective* throughout the dissertation. What is an *effective* urban church? For my purposes the term "effective" encompasses a number of things, depending on the church's particular context. For most urban contexts effective churches, according to Ron Sider, *et al.* in *Churches that Make a Difference*, maintain a holistic ministry by combining evangelism and social outreach, remaining faithful to the gospel, embracing change, experiencing authentic reconciliation, and shaping their communities to be more consistent with God's design for *shalom* (2002:40-41). Holistic churches can take many forms, but share a number of essential attributes. Sider *et al.* explain further what is meant by "holistic" in *Churches That Make a Difference*,

We could start with a definition or theological explanation. But for most people, real illumination and inspiration come from seeing principles in action. In our study of churches we were privileged to observe a variety of wonderful models. No single illustration could suffice to explain holistic ministry as a wholehearted embrace and integration of both evangelism and social ministry so that people experience spiritual renewal, socioeconomic uplift, and transformation of their social context. (Sider *et al.* 2002:325)

Churches That Make a Difference identified common characteristics of holistic churches by studying a number of Philadelphia-area congregations. The study defined “churches that make a difference” in terms of four broad areas: Holistic understanding of the church’s mission, dynamic spirituality, healthy congregational dynamics, and holistic ministry practice (2002:16-17; see the further discussion below, pages 13-19). Within these broad areas Sider, *et al.*, also are in agreement with the specific characteristics cited by many of the other authors I discuss, below.

Every city is unique; therefore not every characteristic of an effective church in Philadelphia will be necessary or appropriate in Minneapolis. But this study does identify key characteristics which can serve as part of a helpful model for the Christian Churches.

Drawing not only from Sider, *et al.*, but also from Foster and Brelsford’s *We Are The Church Together* (Foster and Brelsford 1996), Stephen Rhodes’ *Where the Nations Meet* (Rhodes 1998), Amy Sherman’s *Restorers of Hope* (Sherman 1997), and Tony Campolo’s *Revolution and Renewal* (Campolo 2000), I have identified and chosen four common characteristics of effective urban churches that

emerged out of the aforementioned books and will be the focus of this dissertation:

1. Ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity
2. Political, community and/or social ministry integrated with evangelism and discipleship.
3. Socio-economic integration and diversity
4. Willingness to take risks

First, effective urban congregations, as described in the aforementioned books, are *ethnically and culturally diverse* and are learning to deal with all of the joys and struggles that entails.

Sider, *et al.* state that holistic congregations create an environment where Christians can “work through the stages of racial reconciliation” and that one of the signs of authentic reconciliation is multicultural worship. “Such worship anticipates John’s glorious vision, ‘There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb’ (Revelation 7:9)” (2002:40).

Foster and Brelsford describe in detail three urban churches that are dedicated to embracing diversity (Foster and Brelsford 1996:115).⁶

⁶ The three churches Brelsford and Foster describe are all within the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. Cedar Grove United Methodist is on Atlanta’s southside and has a 300-member congregation made up of people from Sri Lanka and Jamaica as well as Caucasians and African Americans. Oakhurst Presbyterian is located in an older

These churches pride themselves, however, not merely on successful racial integration, but place importance on “being family” (1996:42). They use humor to break the tensions of miscommunications and misunderstandings and are in a constant process of educating, implementing, and revising elements of church life to accommodate and celebrate the differences in cultural backgrounds. Various cultural holidays are celebrated as a church, stained glass and other art reflects the ethnicity of the congregations, diverse meals are shared, and many of the churches note that a “climate of forgiveness” has permeated their church, since it is nearly impossible not to offend someone when there are many cultures represented (Foster and Brelsford 1996:42, 69, 71).

Stephen Rhodes, a United Methodist pastor in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, leads a congregation whose composition represents 32 nations. Rhodes feels strongly that a multicultural church has been God’s intention from the beginning and is a

transitional community which was mostly Caucasian until the early 1970s when it became predominantly African American. Now the community is comprised of Asian, Native American, Caucasian, and African American people. The church has about 140 members. Northwoods United Methodist is located in one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods in the United States. The congregation is comprised of 400 members representing twelve nationalities and has a Spanish-speaking service.

fulfillment of God's promise to bless the nations (Rhodes 1998:21, 35).

While it may be argued, in rare cases, that a church could perhaps be considered holistic without being multiethnic, it is my contention, based on the way the term is used and understood by these authors and therefore how it used in this dissertation, that a church is holistic to the degree it transcends the social and other forms of alienation within its context. A church is more fully and dynamically holistic if it visibly demonstrates reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines, if it in fact exists within a context of such diversity. And even if it does not exist in a diverse context, as many of the Christian Churches do not, in order to be intentionally holistic in this regard it must seek partnerships with diverse churches (Snyder 2004).

A second common characteristic of effective urban churches identified by the authors cited above is *political, community, and/or social ministry integrated with evangelism and discipleship* by the church (Sider, *et al.* 2002:16, 41; Sherman 1997:22, 108; Foster and Brelsford 1996:73, 101; Rhodes 1998:50, 139ff; Campolo 2000:64, 101, 137, 175, 205ff). "Redemptive ministry" in the context of social activism is a term repeatedly employed by these authors in describing

effective urban churches. They are churches aware of and engaged with the social and spiritual issues of their community.

Sider, *et al.* call this focus “community development ministry” and state that churches that participate in this type of ministry

...work to shape the community to be more consistent with God’s design for shalom. They help guard against paternalism and break cycles of dependency by creating opportunities for people to become self-sufficient. As a matter of stewardship, development ministries redistribute public and private resources on behalf of the most vulnerable in society. They leave a legacy of new or renewed institutions, such as schools, credit unions, and health clinics, that give community residents the opportunity to build a better future for themselves and their children. (2002:41)

Holistic communities then integrate a spiritual element in many ways,

Flowing out of the mission Jesus modeled and taught, guided by a Spirit-led vision for outreach, inspired by a passionate worship and strengthened through prayer, holistic community development integrates concerns for people’s social and spiritual well-being. Community development ministry serves as a tangible expression of the Good News the church proclaims in evangelism. (2002:41)

Community activism and evangelism are major elements of each of the Atlanta churches described by Foster and Brelsford (1996:63, 73, 71) though they take a different form in each case. In the case of the Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, the members are very active in the local school district and the minister very active in neighborhood evangelism in the traditional sense. Many of the

members hold positions on the school board, many members are at every sporting event; they are active in zoning issues and hold elections and forums in the church gymnasium (1996:54-55). At Oakhurst Presbyterian Church, the members are focused on racial reconciliation. They pride themselves in being “risk takers” for this cause and honor members each year who have been outstanding models of reconciliation in the community (Foster and Brelsford 1996:71, 73). The third church Foster and Brelsford describe, Northwoods United Methodist, is committed to what they see as New Testament principles of unity amidst diversity (1996:100).

Campolo’s book, *Revolution and Renewal*, focuses on issues of social activism by the church. Campolo describes how churches can partner with the government, hold town meetings, become politically knowledgeable, become involved in urban education systems, and prevent and deal with crime as well as follow a biblical model of going out two-by-two asking to pray with people in every house in their neighborhood (Campolo 2000:47, 78, 89, 101, 205).

Similarly Amy Sherman’s study, *Restorer’s of Hope*, is a description of churches that are dedicated to activism and church-based ministry and evangelism in poor urban areas (Sherman

1997:21). She describes both the benefits and pitfalls that can be a part of churches' collaboration with the government on social issues (1997:74) and challenges churches to "remember the biblical call to serve the poor and the exemplary heritage of evangelical church-based social ministry prior to federal welfare" (1997:21).

A third characteristic of many of these effective churches is that they are *socio-economically diverse*.

Sider, *et al.* state,

Reconciliation in holistic churches extends far beyond ethnicity to other barriers of unity, such as economic class.... Sunday at 11:00 is still the most segregated hour in America – but not in holistic congregations that embrace God's delight in the diversity of humankind. Such churches become a little picture of what heaven will be like (2002:40).

Amy Sherman concludes her study by highlighting all the positive ways that church-based ministries transform the church (1997:227). She states that in a socio-economically diverse congregation there are many blessings, including help for those at the lower end of the economic spectrum who in return help those who find themselves at the upper end. She mentions that there is a change in materialistic perspective when socio-economically diverse believers worship together. Together they send out a counter-cultural message

that the poor and the rich can work, live, and worship in harmony (1997:231).

Campolo talks about the blessings of a socio-economically diverse congregation that graciously and humbly learns to live together whether people are from a culture of poverty or of affluence; they both benefit by being community (Campolo 2000:153).

Rhodes describes the individual partnerships that have occurred in his urban congregation between the economically distant and the positive changes that have taken place as a result of those partnerships (Rhodes 1998:152).

A fourth major common characteristic of effective urban churches is the *willingness to take risks*. Rhodes discusses the fact that his congregation is made up of people who are willing to risk leaving home, willing to risk walking with God toward what cannot be seen, and willing to risk comfort, needs, wants and desires (Rhodes 1998:41). Foster and Brelsford mention risk-taking as a quality each of the three churches they studied embodied (Foster and Brelsford 1996:78), and Amy Sherman talks about the risk of becoming vulnerable to the needs of the community when relational ministry is in place (Sherman 1997:230).

The composite model derived from these books coupled with the Christian Church's original vision of restoring the church to New Testament church principles, provides the basis for the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

If the Christian Church wishes to maintain its historic commitment to New Testament principles and wants to model itself after New Testament churches, it should recognize that New Testament churches were largely urban and diverse. As Roland Allen noted, all the places where the apostle Paul established churches were centers of Roman administration, Jewish influence, Greek civilization or the world's commerce (Allen 1962:13).⁷ Rodney Stark (1997) and Wayne Meeks (1983) have each described the urban nature of the early churches and the early Christians. According to Stark,

Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity

⁷ References for particular churches in cities that illustrate Allen's point are as follows: The church in Antioch (Acts 11:19), Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:8ff), Thessalonica (Acts 17), Corinth (Acts 18), Ephesus (Acts 19, Ephesians 1:1), Philippi (Philippians 1:1), Colosse (Colossians 1:1).

provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity, and to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes Christianity offered effective nursing services. No wonder the early Christian missionaries were so warmly received (in cities like Antioch). For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a *new culture* capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable. (Stark 1997:162 – emphasis his)

Additionally, if the Christian Church is truly committed to what the gospel of reconciliation says about unity and the vitality of churches that demonstrate biblical authenticity, then the church should be working to bring visible reconciliation and healing in today's diverse and hurting urban communities. Therefore, creating diverse, holistic urban congregations in the Christian Church in the United States is not straying away from the original vision of the Christian Churches but actually returning to and reaffirming it. Stated as the intention of their book, *United By Faith*, DeYoung, *et al.* echo this,

If we claim to follow Jesus Christ and to have inherited the Gospel of our first-century church, we contend that our present day congregations should exhibit the same vision for and characteristics of those first Christian communities of faith. Therefore, we even go so far as to say that a Christian, by biblical definition, is a follower of Jesus Christ whose way of life is racial reconciliation. (DeYoung *et al* 2003:129)

Based on the original Christian Church vision and the model of effective urban congregations already outlined, the theoretical model

used in this research combines the Restoration Movement's core values of unity, representing the kingdom, and the desire to reflect and model itself after the New Testament churches, with holistic ministry, which includes integrating evangelism and social ministry. Thus evangelism, remaining faithful to the gospel, socio-economic uplift, diversity in ethnicity, willingness to take risks and transformation of social context will all be elements used to characterize effectiveness.

Demographic Overview of the Christian Churches

The statistical data regarding the Christian Churches in the cities of the United States is significant. As of 2000 there were 399 Christian Churches in U.S. cities with populations of 170,000 and over. The total number of U.S. churches within the movement is 5,916. Only seven percent of Christian Churches are located in the 100 most populous cities in the United States.⁸

Many factors and influences have played a part in perpetuating the rural-centeredness of the Christian Churches. The historical factors will be outlined in Chapter 3, but it is noteworthy that there

⁸ These figures are based on information from the U.S. Census Bureau 2000, *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States* (Jones, et al.:2002) and the *Christian Church Directory of the Ministry* (Noll:2000).

has never been a strong Christian Church presence in U.S. cities. For the most part this is not a case of “white flight,” but of never having been there in the first place. This leaves the church in the difficult position of attempting to shift paradigms regarding the methodology and mindset of thousands of members who have never been involved in an urban church. Thus this dilemma is very much a missiological challenge.

The Christian Churches have done a good job of planting churches near large cities or in the suburbs of large cities.⁹ These are the fastest growing churches within the Christian Church and are often looked to for answers to strategic questions. The common presumption is that when a new Christian Church is planted it will do best in a rural or suburban location, and challenging that conception is extremely difficult. Members look to these successful churches as models of how to plant churches, and the trend is perpetuated.

While this study in no way attempts to diminish the enormous impact of the large suburban churches on their context, the focus of

⁹ Primary examples are Southeast Christian Church outside of Louisville, KY which, as of January, 2004, had a membership of 20,230, and Southland Christian Church outside of Lexington, KY which, also as of January, 2004, had a membership of 10,800.

this study, for missiological reasons, is on the churches within the actual city limits of urban centers.

Some writers point out that cities are not the same as they were in the past and suggest that the suburb, edge city, or boomburb represents the new urban reality in the twenty-first century (Hensell 2001:1, Riche 1999:20, St. John 2003:501, Yost:2001). Thus, the church-planting emphasis should focus on these areas. While such ministry may be important, my primary concern is within actual city limits of urban centers. While those areas saw decline in population in the 1970s, many are again growing, as reported in a 2003 U.S. Census Bureau press release (Census 2003 table 2:10), and the Christian Church is still absent. In addition, as just previously mentioned, the Christian Churches are already well represented in suburban, edge-city, and boomburb areas.

Methodology: Historical Research and Case Study Hybrid

The research method I have employed for this dissertation, for the most part, is historical research. Some of the founding documents of the Christian Church, which I read through, have been very important to this study. In addition, Alexander Campbell published a journal from 1830 to 1861 called *The Millennial Harbinger* which

was essential to understanding the “feel” of the era and issues that were important at the time. The Historical Society of the Disciples in Nashville, Tennessee, is a valuable resource as are the archives of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ housed at Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee, which both include rare and out-of-print Restoration history source material. The yearbook for the movement *Directory of the Ministry*, and the records of the annual convention were also helpful in providing both historical and current information, as well as in identifying experts in the area of the church’s history.

Many biographies and autobiographies written during the frontier era of American history were helpful in understanding the general atmosphere and pervading ideologies of the time of the founding of the movement. The ideas of stark simplicity of the frontier life and survival “bequeathed to the pioneers a desire to boil religion back down to the basics” (Knowles 2000:50). James North makes the point that the principles of the Restoration Movement fit perfectly with the frontier culture, stating:

These people [of the frontier] were also wide open to the basics of the Restoration Movement as it harkened back to the simple gospel message and church structure of the New Testament. Ideologically, the frontier had already opted for that kind of

viewpoint in society, politics, and culture. Since the Restoration Movement presented the same idea as a religious option, many people accepted it wholeheartedly. Thus the American frontier was a ready-made field for the message of this Restoration Movement. The preachers got nods of agreement when they pointed negatively to the hierarchical structures of numerous denominations—they were the religious counterparts of the elite societies of Europe that the frontiersmen despised. The preachers got the same agreement when they called for an elimination of the legalism and restrictions that marked denominational control over the lives of church members. The frontiersmen felt the same about social regulations in general, and the words of these preachers perfectly matched their sociology. For these reasons, the Restoration Movement was able to get a running start on evangelizing the frontier. (North 1994:5)

Many maps (historical and contemporary) were consulted in tracing the pattern of churches planted and their current locations as well as maps which showed the patterns of the early settlers.

There is a vast literature on urbanization and urban issues, therefore there were limitations on what can be represented in this dissertation but I have chosen to focus, for the most part, on missiologists who through research and/or experience articulate a hope for multi-ethnic urban church initiatives.

In addition to the historical research, I also use case-study methodology. The case study data collection method was multi-modal, involving interviews, surveys, web-site documentation, writing samples, observation and participant-observation. Appendix A and

Appendix B are both the surveys and the interview guides. For the most part I used these as interview guides, done in person, taped and transcribed. In all cases (8 total) the leadership results were based on a live interview, and in all but three cases (of 13 total) the lay interview results were based on live interviews, with three being done as a survey. The observation and participant-observation notes were taken over a two-year period. In the case of North Minneapolis I spent a few weeks helping with a summer-day camp and returned on several occasions for Sunday worship or various events. I attended All Nations Christian Church for a year in addition to spending many weeks with students on various projects at the church. University Christian Church hosts a class I teach every year and allows us to spend the day with them and worship with them, in addition I have made trips there on various Sundays to observe worship and other events. The data was examined using accepted interpretational methods that were primarily inductive. The process involved coding the data and organizing it into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories (Leedy 1997:166).

While there are certainly more than three urban churches that could have served as effective case studies, these three churches were

chosen for two primary reasons: 1) Location. It was important for me to be able to spend a significant amount of time at each of these churches and in order to teach in Lansing, MI and arrange trips to each church they needed to be located in the Midwest. 2) Reputation. I knew of all three churches because of personal contacts who knew that these churches were impacting their respective communities in positive ways and who then introduced me to the churches knowing my interest in urban churches.

Delimitation

This research does not address all of the problems the Christian Church has in planting churches globally, but very specifically, the focus is on addressing the issues involved in urban church initiatives within the context of the United States.

In terms of effectiveness and how it is used and understood throughout this dissertation, I am accepting a model of effective congregations that Sider and others have used and positing that effective congregations have these characteristics and then asking whether the three case studies exhibit these characteristics, and to what degree.

Definition of Terms

Several terms are important to this study and may be defined as follows:

Urban: Urban missiologists struggle to agree on definitions of “urban.” For my purposes I am using the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of “urban area” defined as “comprising one or more central places and the adjacent densely settled surrounding territory that together have a minimum of 50,000 people.” I am not referring to Metropolitan Statistical Areas (formerly called Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) which include adjacent communities and suburbs (U.S. Census. Gov/population/aboutmetro.html).

Boomburb: The term “boomburb” was coined by the Fannie Mae Foundation in June of 2001 to describe suburban areas that have a population of 100,000 or more and have shown double-digit decadal growth since their inception. There were 53 boomburbs in the United States as of 2001. Examples include Mesa, AZ; Cape Coral, FL; and Anaheim, CA (Yost 2001).

City: “City” is defined by the U.S. 2000 Census Bureau as “The largest incorporated place with a Census 2000 population of at

least 10,000” (*Federal Register* 2000: 82236). In the United States, cities commonly exhibit the pattern pictured below (often modified by geographic features). This model is based on Ernest Burgess’ concentric-zone hypothesis, first presented in 1924 (Burgess 1924:86). While there are other, more recent hypothesis’ which are multi-centric, all of the cities used in the case-studies follow Burgess’ model.

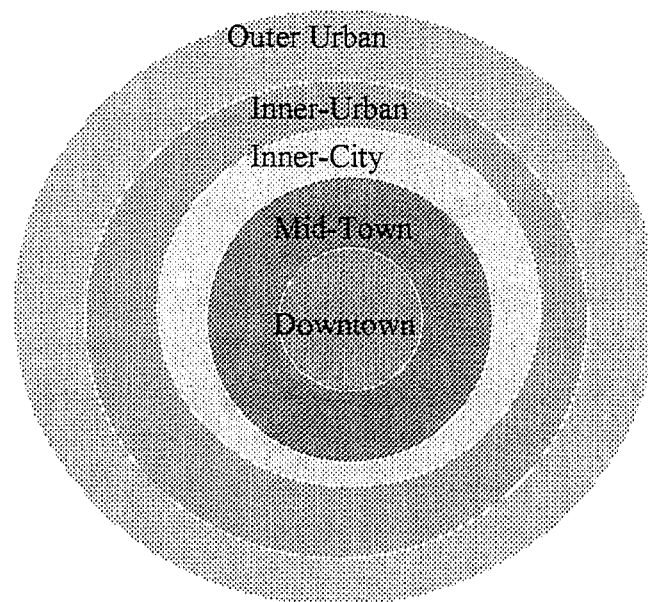


Figure 1. Burgess’ Concentric Zone Model

Ethnic: Defined as the classification or basic division of humankind on the basis of culture, language, common origins

and shared history, and/or a member of any particular nationality group that is part of the larger community (Ember and Ember 2002:119).

Gentrification: The displacement of poor residents in inner-city areas by wealthier residents and the subsequent improvement of the area which includes both renovating older properties and development of new units (Ley 1997:3).

White Flight: “White Flight” signifies the phenomenon of middle to upper-class Caucasians leaving the urban areas due to rapid influx of minority populations (Greenway and Monsma 2000:76). While there is now a similar phenomenon of “black flight” the issue seems to be more economic than racial in many cases.

Christian Church: “Christian Church” here means the Independent Churches of the Restoration Movement. Depending on the geographic location, these are known as Christian Churches or Churches of Christ. Henry Webb, a Restoration Movement historian, states that much of what distinguishes the Christian Church from the other two branches of the Restoration Movement (Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ) is its ecclesiology, which maintains that the

local congregation is the only manifestation of the church found in the New Testament and hence the only one that can be accepted (Webb 1990:423). This branch thus holds strongly to local church autonomy and has no official organization, synod or body of clergy. Current membership of the Independent Christian Churches is 1,800,000 with approximately 5,916 congregations as of January 2003.

Church of Christ: This branch of the Restoration Movement shares a very similar structure as the Christian Church, with the exception of having no annual convention. There are, as of 2003, 40 Church of Christ- supported colleges and the church has the largest membership of the three branches of the movement, with 2,000,000 and 13,000 congregations. The main thing that distinguishes the Church of Christ from the Christian Church is the use of a cappella music only in worship (Webb 1990:407).

Disciples of Christ: This branch of the Restoration Movement differs from the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in that it does not advocate autonomous church governance and does participate in regional, national, and international conventions and synods. The Disciples strongly emphasize the social dimension of the gospel, ecumenism and have as many females training for

professional clergy positions as male (Webb 1990:397). Ordained female clergy among Disciples is currently at 20 percent and rising (Klempnauer 1999:2). It is the smallest of the three branches of the Restoration Movement with a membership as of 2002 of 820,286 in 4,250 congregations.

CHAPTER 2.

Urbanization and the American Church

Tracing the history of the American church and urbanization is an essential element in discovering reasons why the Christian Churches largely remained a frontier/rural movement. In this chapter I will examine the relationship of America's cities and the church in order to better understand contextual factors which in part explain Christian Church urban methodology.

Major urbanization patterns in the United States, including the substantial migration to the suburbs following WWII, were previously alluded to. Prior to 1920 farming was the main source of income for most Americans. Much farm work was done without motorized machinery, thus requiring many hands on the farm. Bakke and Roberts note:

The refinement of farm machinery, such as the introduction of the harvester, meant that four men could do the work of fourteen. Increased mechanization in the twentieth century has meant that a smaller proportion of farm people, mainly in the South, can feed increasingly greater proportions of Americans, thus freeing a significant part of the population to seek out life in the cities. Mechanization meant that a sizeable proportion of the traditional farm work force was made unnecessary and therefore economically marginal. In 1900, 90 percent of the black population resided in the South, and

of this number close to 95 percent were rural. (Bakke and Roberts 1998:3)

The U.S. population in general was overwhelmingly rural for many years, as Table 1 indicates.

TABLE 1

Percent of Urban Population, United States, 1790-2000

Year	Percent	Year	Percent
1790	5.1	1900	39.7
1800	6.1	1910	45.7
1810	7.3	1920	51.2
1820	7.2	1930	56.2
1830	8.8	1940	56.5
1840	10.8	1950	59.0
1850	15.3	1960	69.9
1860	19.8	1970	73.5
1870	25.7	1980	73.7
1880	28.2	1990	73.9
1890	35.1	2000	77.21

Source: U.S. Census 2000

Cities in colonial America were simple in their intent: to have a small village center that could accommodate all of the area farmers for an occasional meeting, commerce, and security (Conn 1994:17). Many churches were pleased to meet those simple needs and thus the model for many years in the early history of the United States reflected this.

As America moved westward and tackled new frontiers in the nineteenth century, religion accompanied or followed close behind. As Finke and Stark note, many new sects arose, often with roots in existing denominations, and were extremely successful along the frontiers, in small towns and new farmland communities (Finke and Stark 1997:43). The frontier era will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, as it is intricately connected to the historical beginnings of the Christian Churches. As the little towns grew bigger and bigger, the "first churches" became filled with people who had started to prosper financially and who had "unrestricted access to the enchantments of the world and were severely handicapped in their capacity to serve the religious needs of the less successful" (Finke and Stark 1997:43). In the words of Cotton Mather, "Religion brought forth prosperity and the daughter destroyed the mother" (cited in Finke and Stark 1997:43). As churches prospered numerically and institutionally, they

tended to turn inward, failing to recognize the importance of mission in their own settings.

By 1800, 94 percent of Americans lived either on farms or in rural communities. Religious camp meetings began to prosper in many rural locations. The city revival meeting was the camp meeting's urban counterpart, but Finke and Stark maintain that camp meetings generally were much more effective than city revivals and were very important in establishing thousands of rural churches for denominations such as the Baptists and Methodists (Finke and Stark 1997:96). Some have contended that often revivals, while held in cities, attracted more rural than urban people. Glen Kehrein, founder of Circle Urban Ministries, comments in his chapter entitled, "A Case for Wholistic Urban Ministry" in *A Heart For The City*,

The only acceptable method [by Evangelicals in the twentieth century] of reaching the unchurched city dweller was the evangelistic crusade in the tradition of evangelists like D. L. Moody, Paul Rader, and Billy Sunday. These [crusades] had a long urban history. However the inner city residents of the 1940s, '50s and '60s were not, in large part, attracted to attend, or, worse, were discouraged by racial segregation. This left the mostly white, middle-class evangelical community without a strategy or even perhaps a motivation to reach the teeming inner cities. Simply stated, the cities of America were not seen as a mission field and, as such, were neglected. (Fuder 1999:59)

Conn and Ortiz note regarding Dwight Moody's campaigns:

His audiences were essentially middle-class, rural born Americans who had recently come to the city to make their fortunes; they believed that he spoke God's truth in extolling hard work and free enterprise. But he was not a spokesman for those who were becoming discouraged or disillusioned with the success myth; nor did he reach the foreign-born or Catholic poor who made up so large a proportion of the labor class. (Conn and Ortiz 2001:55)

The Move from Rural to Urban America

With the mechanization of agriculture, much more land could be tilled and cared for by one person. With urban industrialization, people began to migrate to the cities for work, and millions more migrated to America from other countries. Conn and Ortiz refer to this as "The Third Great Wave: The Industrial City" (2001:48). They note that transportation technology expanded to meet demands, and the cities, increasingly serviced by the railroads, exploded in growth. "In the one hundred years between 1790 and 1890, the total U.S. population grew sixteen-fold, but urban population increased 139 times" (Conn and Ortiz 2001:50).

The "first churches" and city churches generally grew. Many "first churches" began to feel comfortable in their prominent downtown positions, since the downtown areas of the country were the hub of activity and economic flurry at this time. Jones and Wilson

document the role of the “first churches” in *What’s Ahead for Old*

First Church (1974):

In some places First Church was also used for community concerts because it had the only auditorium large enough to hold them. A counseling ministry has also been a tradition at Old First.... The traditional role of Old First can be described by the terms *quality, prestige, and leadership*. Quality was found in the church program, in worship services, and in the facilities. Prestige came from being associated with a large, strong institution, some of whose members held important positions in the community. Such an institution is looked to for leadership in both denominational and civic affairs. (Jones and Wilson 1974:3-4, emphasis theirs)

Economic boom times generally did not last, and America suffered depressions in 1873 and 1893. With the great labor strife in 1877 conditions worsened. In the cities water and sewer systems were not able to handle the overcrowded conditions. In many urban neighborhoods, poverty was immense, exacerbated by air and water pollution. Norris Magnuson comments,

During the decades following the Civil War the United States rapidly shifted from rural and agricultural social and economic order to urban-industrial status. Other factors, like the increasing tide of city-bound immigration from southern and eastern Europe, intensified the poverty and attendant miseries spawned by this transition. A small but increasing number of American Protestants responded to the plight of the urban poor with what came to be known as the social gospel, and Roman Catholicism, generally closer to immigrant and laboring classes similarly adjusted its emphasis. (Magnuson 1977:1)

The impact of these conditions then eventually led to the formation of many Christian agencies which focused on the devastating conditions and the unequal distribution of the nation's wealth. Sydney Ahlstrom describes four such types of agencies:

There were four very diverse but yet distinctly innovative forms of urban concern that became important during the postwar period though they all had earlier origins. The best known of these is the Social Gospel movement. The other three are more clearly related to problems of evangelism.

Least heralded were the slum-oriented efforts of the Salvation Army, its offshoot, the Volunteers of America, and a diverse group of rescue missions, many of which were founded by Holiness and Pentecostal sects. Far more extraordinary in their special adaptation to city needs were the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations. (Ahlstrom 1972:742)

Many books outlining these problems began to make their way into the hands of Protestant readers, and church leaders sought solutions. *Our Country*, written by Josiah Strong in 1885, was one of many books which alerted Christians to their responsibilities to the social problems and conditions (Brauer 1971:776).

Christian leaders concerned with these issues began to organize and to publish their ideas and convictions. Donald Gorrell writes,

Beneath the ebb and flow of these tides of political and spiritual unrest ran an undercurrent that provided stability and continuity for social Christianity during this period. The long evolution of social-gospel thought provided ballast during unsettling

storms, and its presence became evident in new statements of basic concepts by leaders of the movement. (Gorrell 1988:124)

Rise of the Social Gospel

This activism gave birth to the Social Gospel movement which served to renew city churches' interest and participation in dealing with the crisis at hand. Robert Handy (1966:10) states that the Social Gospel movement, though complex and dynamic, can be summarized in these points:

- A conviction that the social principles of the historical Jesus could serve as reliable guides for both the individual and social life of any age.
- Central to Christ's teachings was a stress on the immanence of God, the goodness and worth of human beings, and the coming of the kingdom of God on earth.
- At the very heart of the gospel was the message of the kingdom, and the church was seen as having the key to the kingdom.
- Through the efforts of people of good will the kingdom of God would soon become a reality, bringing with it social harmony and eliminating social injustices.

The background and impact of the Social Gospel movement are important to this study because in many ways it marked the division of liberal Christianity (stereotyped as being involved in city work) and conservative Christianity (stereotyped as not being involved in cities although many were) that to some extent exists still today. This seems to have been and continues to be one of the deterring factors as to why the Christian Churches have not been active in urban church planting. (This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.) According to Ahlstrom, “The Social Gospel must be understood as a transitory phase of Christian social thought. It was a submovement within religious liberalism, with a certain view of man [sic] and history governing its rationale” (Ahlstrom 1972:786).

The Social Gospel movement came to public attention about 1890 with the founding of several journals and periodicals which called the churches to social action. In fact the term “Social Gospel” comes from the title of one such publication, the periodical *The Social Gospel* which was begun by the Christian Commonwealth Colony in 1897. Prior to that some Christians concerned with social issues were called Christian Socialists or referred to as members of the Social Christianity Movement (Brauer 1971:777).

A strong emphasis on preaching and publications and encouragement to participate in social and political causes, as well as emphasis on “lay” involvement and leadership, were stressed emphatically in all the publications. According to Brauer, "The chief channel of the Social Gospel to the laity was the Social Gospel novel" (Brauer 1971:776). Novels such as *If Christ Came to Chicago* by William Stead (1894) and *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon (1899) (which sold over twenty-five million copies) became best-sellers (Brauer 1971:776).

By the early 1900s the influence of the Social Gospel Movement was evident in all major U.S. denominations. Kenneth Bailey in his study of twentieth century Protestantism wrote,

Hence between the turn of the century and World War I, the Protestant groups underwent significant changes in programs and outlook. Absorbed at the turn of the century in evangelism and little mindful of social needs beyond blue laws and prohibition, the churches emerged during the next fifteen years as advocates of social justice, proclaiming the Christian obligation to fashion Christ's kingdom on earth. (Bailey 1964:42)

The Social Gospel movement developed effective interdenominational agencies, the most influential of which was the Federal Council of Churches, organized in 1908. Two of the most prominent and influential leaders were Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-

1918) and Washington Gladden (1836-1918) whose names would become inextricably tied with the Social Gospel movement.

Walter Rauschenbusch

Rauschenbusch was a pastor of an American Baptist church in the "Hell's Kitchen" area of New York City before becoming a professor at Rochester (New York) Theological Seminary in 1897. It was his parish experience that brought him face to face with problems of poverty. He began to read and search for answers in the life and teaching of Christ and in contemporary works that dealt with religion and social crisis (White and Hopkins 1976:36, Brauer 1971:692).

In 1892, Rauschenbusch joined with several other Baptist ministers who shared his concerns in founding the Brotherhood of the Kingdom. The group met weekly, eventually expanding the invitation to include men and women from other denominations. The Brotherhood held a week-long conference every summer for 20 years where they would "examine the confrontations of their time through prayer, meditation and the sharp competition of ideas" (White and Hopkins 1976:36). The Brotherhood adopted a statement read at their first meeting which detailed their aims:

1. Every member shall by personal life exemplify obedience to the ethics of Jesus.

2. Every member shall propagate the thoughts of Jesus to the limits of his or her ability, in private conversation, by correspondence, and through pulpit, platform and press.
3. Every member shall lay special stress on the social aims of Christianity, and shall endeavor to make Christ's teaching concerning wealth operative in the church.
4. On the other hand, each member shall take pains to keep in contact with the common people, and to infuse the religious spirit into the efforts for social amelioration.
5. The members shall seek to strengthen the bond of Brotherhood by frequent meetings for prayer and discussion, by correspondence, exchange of articles written, etc.
6. Regular reports shall be made of the work done by members, in such manner as the Executive Committee may appoint.
7. The members shall seek to procure for one another opportunities for public propaganda.
8. If necessary, they shall give their support to one another in the public defense of the truth, and shall jealously guard the freedom of discussion for any man who is impelled by love the truth to utter his thoughts. (White and Hopkins 1976:73)

By 1906, Rauschenbusch had published the first of many successful books, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. His books stressed the Kingdom of God as Christianity's goal, and he combined his social analysis, theological progressivism and Biblical piety in a style that suited the progressive era of the early twentieth century (Brauer 1971:692).

Rauschenbusch supported the Federal Council of Churches which called for protection for the nation's workers, both physically and economically, and fought for the implementation of child-labor laws and the abolition of sweatshops (Brauer 1971:694).

Washington Gladden

Washington Gladden graduated from Williams College, Massachusetts, in 1859 and became a licensed Congregational minister. He took his first congregation in Brooklyn, New York. After a nervous breakdown caused him to give up his pastorate, he became a religious editor for a newspaper. This piqued his interest in socialism and Christianity, as these were the hot topics being addressed and covered by the paper. Soon he was asked to speak on the topic of labor and he eventually published, *Working People and their Employers* (1876), the first of many books and articles written throughout his lifetime (Handy 1966:23).

In 1882 Gladden became the minister of the First Congregational Church in Columbus, Ohio. Here he began to witness more than ever the difference between employer and employee. From the pulpit he addressed controversial social topics and guided and influenced "a nationwide generation of clergymen and sympathetic laity toward a special concern for social problems and new social scientific approaches to these problems," leading to his being known as the "father of the social gospel movement" (Phillips 1996:18, 61).

Mainline churches began to change and become concerned with the social issues on their own home front, in part due to the influence of the Social Gospel movement. The impact is summarized quite nicely by White and Hopkins:

The acceptance of the social gospel movement spelled the transformation of American Protestantism. Always more than a traditional religious movement the social gospel stepped outside of the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America. Its impact continued long after its demise. Emerging with renewed vigor in the turbulent 60's as one of the not always recognized roots of the variegated social justice movement, extensions of the social gospel can be seen today among groups hitherto associated with different histories and orientations. (White and Hopkins 1976:xi)

The call for renewal, or for the restoration of the way things were assumed to be intended to be in the early church, as evidenced in the thought and writing of the leaders of the Social Gospel movement, opened the eyes of many. Compassionate Christians involved in the Social Gospel movement chose to believe that emphasis only on the future aspect of kingdom of God fell short of its full understanding, responsibility and glory and worked within their churches to change that. One of the first documents drafted by the “Brotherhood of the Kingdom” stated:

The Spirit of God is moving men in our generation toward a better understanding of the idea of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Obeying the thought of our Master, and trusting in the

power and guidance of the Spirit, we form ourselves into a Brotherhood of the Kingdom, in order to re-establish this idea in the thought of the church, and to assist in its practical realization in the world. (White and Hopkins 1976:73)

The history of the Social Gospel movement is important to this study for several reasons. It is instructive to see what Christians concerned with urban issues did to change the conditions and future of cities. The impact of the movement is still felt today, as it is credited with having contributed in part to the civil rights movement, the development of the World Council of Churches, antiwar movements, and Evangelicals for Social Action. “Though a minority movement, the Social Gospel was very influential. It has been called America’s leading contribution to Christian thought” (Brauer 1971:777). It is important to know what the conservative or fundamentalist reaction to this movement was in order to understand some of the apparent hesitation that the Christian Churches have today in participating in alleviating some of the negative social issues which affect the city.

From the City to the Suburbs: 1945-2000

Following World War II the suburbs grew rapidly as thousands of veterans returned from war and a series of technological advances in transportation enabled urban dwellers to commute longer distances

than what was previously practical. This in turn influenced the Federal Housing Administration to make mass housing outside of the cities affordable as never before. The National Defense Highways Act of 1950 ensured easy access to jobs and shopping in the city and homes in the suburbs (Bakke 1986:29). Conn and Ortiz note the exodus from city to suburb:

Repelled by urban growth and decay associated with industrialization, the wealthy upper classes were the first to follow the ideology “we keep to ourselves” out to the commuting suburbs. By the beginning of the twentieth century, with the expansion of public transportation, those with white-collar positions could begin to follow the trolley tracks through urban fragmentation to the suburban dream. With the help of Henry Ford and the private automobile, the working classes would eventually follow also. (Conn and Ortiz 2001:70)

Initially city churches did not feel much of an impact, as members who had moved to the new suburbs continued to drive to church. However, as Robert Fishman observes, “It did not take long for suburbia to reshape the whole modern metropolis. Suburbia succeeded too well. It became what even the greatest advocates of suburban growth never desired –a new form of city” (Fishman 1987:xi). The shopping mall was introduced and many businesses, including banks, gas stations, hospitals and restaurants moved to suburban locations in order to enjoy the steady stream of business.

People now could live in affordable housing outside of the city and could do all of their shopping, banking, fueling and everything else they needed to do without entering the city at all, except for big sporting and cultural events.

It didn't take long for churches to follow the trend. According to Harvie Conn,

By the middle of the 1920s more than 15 million persons were residing in the fringe neighborhoods of the city. Slowed down by a depression and a world war, the great push continued after 1945. By 1955, approximately 1,200,000 Americans were moving to the suburbs annually. And scholars were predicting that 85 percent of city growth during the 1960s and 1970s would be suburban. The churches followed, giving primary attention to their suburban expansion. The amount spent on new churches [i.e., church buildings] rose steadily, the bulk of it concentrated on the suburbs. Between 1946 and 1960, money spent on church building moved from \$76 million to \$1 billion, 16 million. (Conn 1994:97)

The "First Churches" that chose to remain in the city, which for so long had held prominent positions downtown, were unprepared for the demographic transformation that occurred as thousands of African Americans arrived (especially in northern cities) seeking economic opportunity during what historians call the Second Great Migration (Thompson 1998:3). Heather Thompson states: "Clearly the Second Great Migration had completely upset the social and political

status quo of the urban North and, as a result, cities like Detroit were racially polarized and crisis-ridden” (1998:3).

Members of the churches were moving in large numbers out to the suburbs, often leaving behind large homes. During the ten-year period 1950-1960 central city populations in the largest 25 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas increased by 3 percent while the suburban populations increased by well over 60 percent (Bickford 2002:1). As people moved out of the city their houses in the older neighborhoods depreciated and were often divided into apartments and multiple dwelling units, which meant a lower level of income was needed to live downtown. This in turn attracted more immigrants, transients, students and other people of lower economic levels, many of whom were black (Bickford 2002:1). The churches continued to lose members, and while some did open their doors to their new black and Hispanic neighbors, many did not. Between 1960 and 1973 seven out of ten “First Churches” reported losing significant amounts of members, and many closed completely (Jones 1974:1).

According to Bakke and Roberts, intense racial discrimination and consistent racial clashes and conflicts in Northern cities affected city churches immensely.

Wave after wave of blacks migrated to the North in an attempt to escape the harsh reality of oppression. In most cities the relations between the newcomers and the native whites were fraught with conflicts. The whites' reaction in most cases was that of either outright hostility or mild suspicion, followed by a move on their part to the suburbs. (Bakke and Roberts 1998:33)

And so the "white elephant" syndrome (the abandonment of the large, often white, "First Churches" in downtown areas for new church buildings in the suburbs) and "white flight" occurred in thousands of cities across the country (Bakke and Roberts 1998:47).

According to Bakke and Roberts,

Old Firsts have now come upon hard times. Their once thriving memberships became depleted when countless members chased the "American Dream" to the outer fringes of the suburbs. The large magnificent edifices, so imposing in their grandeur in an earlier time, now appear forlorn as row upon row of empty pews give mute testimony to faded glory.... (Bakke and Roberts 1998:16)

Bickford notes two theories regarding the white flight phenomenon. The first is the "pull" hypothesis which asserts that the combination of affordable housing and highway and mall development in the suburbs created an "intrinsic lure" which pulled thousands of households out from the cities to the amenities of the suburbs. The second is the "push" theory which suggests that changing social conditions in the central cities due to an influx of minorities served as a catalyst for white people to move to the suburbs

to “achieve a more homogeneous lifestyle” (Bickford 2002:2). It is probably reasonable to assert that both theories apply, depending to some extent on each context and individual. Whether it was pull or push, millions left the cities, increasingly attributing negative characteristics to cities (Bakke and Roberts 1998:33).

While this exodus during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was not the first period in which people attributed negative factors to the city (as we will see in the next section), this period did exacerbate the negative stereotype of the city and of the people who dwelled there. Pollution, costly property, overcrowded dwellings, fear of crime and many other factors seemed to cement, for many churches, the decision to flee. Suburban Americans became more and more individualistic and private (Bellah 1996:26).

The design of the new neighborhoods in many suburban areas reflects that sense of individualism. Many homes do not have porches on the front of them, but rather decks on the back, overlooking fenced-in back yards. The streets in the suburbs are generally wider than city streets and there are often no sidewalks. Rarely are there small stores within walking distance. The entire design is based on the automobile. In a report of the ABC Evening News entitled "A

New Urbanism," a reporter interviewed several people from various suburban neighborhoods across America and asked them about their happiness and overall sense of community. The outcome was very negative. People reported feeling isolated and were tired of driving everywhere for every little thing they needed. A team of architects took this information and have now begun to design new neighborhoods, still in the suburbs but with a design similar to that of many urban areas-- houses with front porches, narrower streets, sidewalks, numerous street lights, small community grocery stores and mini-downtown areas within walking distance from homes. The idea is apparently spreading; many of the new urban suburbs are beginning to take this form (ABC Evening News July 21, 1999).

Jane Jacobs noted in 1961, that the social uses of sidewalks are extremely important for fostering a sense of community (Jacobs 1961: 55). She states,

Most of it [the interaction on sidewalks] is ostensibly utterly trivial but the sum is not trivial at all. The sum of such casual, public contact as a local level – most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon him by anyone – is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need. (Jacobs 1961: 56)

While this desire to borrow from the past and from the city in order to perhaps ameliorate a sense of individualism and cultivate a richer sense of community is encouraging, yet it is not the norm for most Americans, who still remain highly individualistic.

Many significant sociological, economic and psychological changes took place in the cities as the period of white flight occurred:

Sociological Changes

In the various stages of this progression, the rapid growth of the cities brought increased crime, poverty, and other problems associated with over-population. The growth of suburbia resulted in thousands of abandoned buildings in downtown areas all over the United States. Many resources once available within walking distance moved miles away to the edge of town. In many urban neighborhoods, the sense of community changed forever. People left in cities harbored feelings of resentment towards those who moved out and took with them banks, fair-priced grocery stores, hospitals, and churches (Hadaway 1982:373). “The city becomes the land of those left behind – the poor, the under-employed, the ethnic outsider. The conditions they inherit are economic decline, physical decay and social disintegration” (Conn and Ortiz 2001:70).

Economic Changes

Along with the sociological changes came quite real economic changes. With the shift towards the suburbs, new superhighways were built to accommodate the commute, and soon many city businesses relocated all along the highways. Rutgers University History Professor Robert Fishman noted, “These new cities [suburbia] contain along the superhighways all the specialized functions of a great metropolis--industry, shopping malls, hospitals, universities, cultural centers, and parks” (Fishman 1987:7). These developments eventually left millions of unskilled people struggling economically, miles away from their jobs or the possibility of future employment.

Psychological Changes

The psychological impacts of the shift from a rural paradigm to an urban and then suburban one are significant. DuBose speculates that the psychological effect on the inhabitants of America’s cities was profound as people watched businesses, families and churches board up buildings in what was previously a thriving community and flee (DuBose 1978:19). In some places immigrants and refugees are pouring into cities where they often have little help in acclimating to their new home. Gentrification and disinvestment are also important

economic issues that have been a cause of psychological pain as well. Often revitalization in the form of substantial re-investment in the end means displacement of current residents (Wetzel 2000:2). As rental property is purchased and torn down and upscale living units or commercial property replace it, the tenants of the low-cost housing are often left homeless with negative psychological as well as economic consequences (Christensen 1988:35).

The Current Situation in America: From Suburbs to Boomburbs

A new type of suburb called “boomburb” emerged in the late 20th century (for a definition see page 28). Most of the 53 boomburbs, according to the Fannie Mae Foundation, are found in the Southwest United States, and half of that total are found in California (Lang 2002:1).

Boomburbs develop along the highways that string cities to traditional suburbs and are comprised of office complexes, enclosed as well as strip malls, and multiple subdivisions of large lot, single family homes (Lang 2002:2). The mayors of many of these boomburbs would like their communities to develop into sustainable cities that do not rely on the biggest city in the area to provide employment for its residents. The irony is that many of the residents

of boomburbs moved out of the city for space and a better quality of life that does not involve fighting traffic and waiting in lines, but because of the rapid growth of boomburbs many traffic and overpopulation-type problems have occurred (Nasser 2001:2).

Another irony is that if people are moving out because of changes in ethnic makeup of their urban neighborhoods, they will be disappointed to find out that the new boomburbs are highly ethnically diverse. According to Dave Gatton, boomburbs are more diverse ethnically and socio-economically than smaller suburbs. He cites Tempe, Arizona, and Anaheim and Riverside, California as examples (Gatton 2001:1). Other examples according to the FannieMae foundation include Hialeah, Florida a boomburb of Miami, which has a foreign-born population of 70.4 percent, Santa Ana, California which has a foreign-born population of 50.9 percent, and Anaheim, California which has a foreign-born population of 28.4 percent (Lang and Simmons 2001:8).

Another current urban reality affecting boomburbs is that serious crimes of rape and murder rose “sharply” (12.4 percent) in 2002 in suburbs while decreasing 14.7 percent generally in cities

across the United States, according to an FBI report given to the Associated Press (Associated Press 2003:1).

Every one of the 53 U.S. boomburbs hosts churches from nearly every major mainline denomination. Despite the fact that the boomburbs are comprised of people culturally and socio-economically diverse who live next to each other and work together, the churches located there do not tend to be multiethnic but rather homogeneous churches for different ethnic groups are typical, according to Jon Bonne (2002:4). This church monoculturalism raises key issues of racism, ethnicity and the “homogeneous unit principle” in church planting, especially as these relate to and are perpetuated by urban churches.

Racism and the U.S. Church

How widespread is racism today in the North American church? Steps have been taken by U.S. churches in recent decades towards racial reconciliation. In 1995 the entire Southern Baptist Convention repented of its "sin of racism" (Tapia 1997:54). The Promise Keeper movement, comprised of thousands of men from many denominational backgrounds from across the country, has always included the promise of racial reconciliation, and made it the

movement's priority in 1996 (Tapia 1997:54). Surely these must be seen as positive signs.

Yet these encouraging steps are merely a drop in the bucket given the pervasiveness of racism within Protestant churches. The comment has often been made that the Sunday 11:00 A.M. hour is still the most segregated time in America (Perkins 1995:149). Numerous minority church burnings in the South, the exclusion of minority representation in some ecclesiastic organizations, and inadequate funding for new churches in ethnic minority areas within some denominations all point to the same conclusion: Decades after the civil rights movement in the United States, we still have a race problem in the country and in our churches. Moses Flomo comments,

Churches have universally come to condemn racism as an abominable sin contrary to the will of God who created the peoples of the earth to live as one universal family. However, despite its universal condemnation by civil rights organizations and religious institutions, racism remains an entrenched part of the global socio-political landscape.

Not only have violent expressions of racism surfaced and resurfaced in our "global village" they have grown more sophisticated, subtle and dangerous in recent years. What is worse, most individuals, international organizations and corporations that make elaborate plans to combat racism and its effects usually act contrary to such plans by subtly supporting racism, consciously or unconsciously. (Flomo 1996:9)

How is it that a country ostensibly founded on principles of freedom and equality is ironically and inextricably connected to racial aggression and oppression? A review of white-black racism in American church history illuminates the tensions and struggles associated with racism in urban churches today.

The first British settlers of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 were devoted to the Church of England. The colony grew rapidly and became more successful economically. The settlers initiated programs to evangelize the Indians and "Christianize the Negroes" (Beals 1997:2). How then can it be said that "The United States of America was established as a white society, founded upon the near genocide of another race and then the enslavement of yet another" (Wallis 1992:8)?

The larger story was fueled by the relentless pursuit of economic success that overwhelmed whatever "good intentions" early colonizers had. In colonists' pursuit of economic success, the slave trade soon played a key role. American religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom comments on this issue, "Nowhere in Christendom was Negro slavery more heavily institutionalized, nowhere was the disparity between ideals and actuality so stark, nowhere were the

churches more deeply implicated. Few subjects, if any, are so fundamental to American religious history” (Ahlstrom 1972:649). White colonists built the country on the backs of the slaves, making huge profits in the process. “Whatever godly purpose was at first pursued, became secondary to material goals,” notes Beals. “The drive for political power and economic gain soon confirmed the uprightness of slavery to reach those desired ends” (Beals 1997:3).

Beals argues that almost all the colonial churches (and not just those in the South), soon became soiled by slavery including Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists and Lutherans. Lone exceptions were the Mennonites and Amish (Beals 1997:4). It should be noted however that Methodist John Wesley was profoundly against slavery from the beginning and by 1743 had written a prohibition against the “buying and selling the bodies and souls of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them” into the Methodist Discipline (Dayton 1976:74). Prior to this some American Methodists had become slave owners. With time however American Methodists joined the ranks of the Amish and Mennonites (the Quakers joined as well) in prohibiting slaveholding and eventually worked toward

abolishing slavery, as we will see. Yet many Methodists, especially in the South, ignored the ban on slave-holding. Many churches advocated religious instruction for slaves, but only a few pursued emancipation of the slaves or the end of the system.

In 1775 a Quaker, Anthony Benezet, formed the first antislavery society (in America). Wesley joined and, by 1784, agreed to expel any slave- holding members from Methodist membership (Ahlstrom 1972:650, Beals 1997:9). Despite these initiatives many Methodists and Quakers continued to own slaves (Ahlstrom 1972:650, 661).

In 1829 the noted abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison published a Baptist temperance journal labeling slavery as "a sinful violation of the rights of mankind" (Beals 1997:44). Benjamin Lundy, a Quaker, met up with Garrison and so significantly influenced his antislavery stance that by 1831 Garrison had begun publishing his views in his journal *The Liberator* (Ahlstrom 1972:651, Brauer 1971:352). By 1833, after serving time in jail for libel, Garrison, demanding abolition immediately, wrote,

I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject [of slavery] I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation.... I am in earnest – I will not equivocate

– I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – AND I *WILL BE HEARD*. (Quoted in Ahlstrom 1972:651)

Linked to this “impulse” (Ahlstrom 1972:652) were Charles Finney and the Oberlin College students and faculty who in 1835 founded the Oberlin Anti-Slavery Society. The two hundred members pledged to work for “emancipation of the whole colored race” (Dayton 1976:41).

American evangelicals played a large part in the process that eventually won freedom for the slaves in the United States, yet the whole experience of slavery left an unfortunate legacy of racism that has not fully been overcome in our churches.

Although slavery was eventually abolished, segregation of blacks continued until the 1960s officially throughout the South, and informally elsewhere in many areas. Martin Luther King commented in 1963,

I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows. (King 1963:94)

The legacy of racism still affects Protestant congregations in U.S. urban areas. While many of the underlying beliefs that originally served as an attempt for some to justify enslaving other human beings do not largely still function within churches (such as racist interpretations of Scripture, the misunderstanding of white supremacy as God's will), theological interpretations of Scripture which perpetuate racism still widely exist (Emerson and Smith 2000:170).

Ahlstrom wrote,

The rationale to promote slavery claimed substance in five points: 1) Africans could be enslaved because they were under Noah's curse upon his son Ham, 2) Israel, God's Chosen people had slaves, 3) Jesus Christ did not forbid slavery, 4) slavery was merely the lowest level in a divinely approved social order, 5) the enslavement of Africans actually improved their lives, by giving them access to the gospel. (Ahlstrom 1972:91)

These extreme views were not, nor are they currently, widely believed. However, a recent study by Michael Emerson, a sociology professor at Rice University, and Christian Smith, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina, shows that theological interpretations perpetuate racial issues in the church and society today.

They state,

Our examination of a variety of data and consideration of a variety of levels of social influence suggest that many race issues that white evangelicals want to see solved are generated in part by the way they themselves do religion, interpret their

world, and live their own lives. These factors range from the way evangelicals and others organize into internally similar congregations, and the segregation and inequality such congregations help produce; to theologically rooted evangelical cultural tools, which tend to (1) minimize and individualize the race problem, (2) assign blame to blacks themselves for racial inequality, (3) obscure inequality as part of racial division, and (4) suggest unidimensional solutions to racial division. (Emerson and Smith 2000:170)

Related to these types of underlying beliefs is the myth of "separate but equal" which was challenged by the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties. Effective urban congregations see through the "separate but equal" justification for racially separate churches, working instead for inclusion and reconciliation. Working out racial reconciliation is a difficult, long and painful process. Mere integration does not equal reconciliation, as Perkins and Rice point out in *More than Equals*. This book, a joint effort by Spencer Perkins (late son of activist John Perkins) and Chris Rice discusses in detail what it entails for a church to truly address racism. Until the deeper issues are addressed, integration will only bring about conflict and more misunderstanding. The church, with God's help and divine guidance *can* change hearts and lead the way to full reconciliation. "The seeds of racism are planted in the human spirit, therefore since

churches deal with the human spirit, churches must be the place where racism is dealt with,” notes Davies (1998:58).

Theological Justification for Racial Reconciliation in Urban Churches

The most important theological justification for urban churches to strive for racial equality and harmony is in the Scriptures.

The basic biblical argument can be summarized as follows.

Ephesians 2:15 emphasizes the centrality of the cross of Christ. "It is through the cross that Gentiles are now able to become full citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. It is through the cross that God ends the hostility between Jew and Gentile by reconciling both groups to himself, thereby creating one new humanity" (Okholm 1997:35).

Harvie Conn (In the Foreword of *One New People*, by Manuel Ortiz) points out that in Acts 15:14, 19-20 two great biblical principles create tension behind the struggle to live out truth and justice and compassion as members of one body: the call to live out the unity we already possess in Christ and the celebration of that cultural diversity constantly leavened by the gospel. "The church gathered at Jerusalem affirmed both principles, made visible in the work of God among the Gentiles. We belong together, they affirmed. And in that unity our cultural differences coexist" (Ortiz 1996:11).

These passages, as well as many others (e.g., Galatians 3:28) clearly undercut the idea of the superiority of one specific group of people over another within the church. This basic theological affirmation undermines the entire framework of racism.

While some might maintain that the gospel was addressing a world quite different from ours, implying that verses such as these are not relevant to contemporary racial problems, history shows that racism was evident in the first-century world, as it is today. Greeks considered non-Greeks to be barbarians; Jews regarded non-Jews as idolatrous pagans. Paul's continual focus on reconciliation is ample evidence that racist attitudes were prevalent.

Even more important than the example of the early church and of Paul's writings is the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman (John 4), and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25) clarify his disregard of a person's social or ethnic status. Wallis summarizes,

In scriptural and biblical terms racism is a perverse sin that cuts to the core of the gospel message. Put simply, racism negates the reason for which Christ died -- the reconciling work of the cross. It denies the purpose of the church; to bring together, in Christ, those who have been divided from one another, particularly in the early church's case, Jew and Gentile -- a division based on race. (Wallis 1992:10)

Stereotypes of the City in Literature

Much of the voluminous historical literature on cities portrays the negative aspects of city life. Negative images and portrayals have influenced attitudes toward the city. Protestantism, including the Christian Churches, have imbibed these negative views. Harvie Conn states,

Criticism of the city is as old as Juvenal. Writing in the second century A.D., he denounced Rome as a hotbed of corruption. "What can I do in Rome?" he asked. "I have never learnt to die." Urban pathologists underlined these kinds of sentiments and began using terms like "decay," "sprawling," "centerless" to describe the urban movement. Theodore Dreiser looked at Chicago's streetcar network and saw a "parasite Gold Thread" linking the neighborhoods and draining the pockets of its citizens. Lewis Mumford, a later historian of cities, idealized the walled city of the medieval world and spoke of America's metropolitan areas as stretching "over the countryside in an amorphous blob". (Conn 1994:15-16)

Interpretation of Biblical Literature

Biblical literature has been interpreted to correspond with both criticisms of and support for the city and urban life. Regarding the nature of cities in the New Testament period, historical geographer and scholar Daniel Sperber generalizes:

Roman period cities in the Land of Israel were both pagan in spirit and population. The Hellenistic-Roman ethnic background of the urban pagans may have been somewhat questionable, and the residents of those cities may have

basically derived from Semitic stock, but the “official” religious milieu was certainly Hellenistic-Roman. Thus most of the religious structures in these cities were pagan temples. (Sperber 1998:190)

In the "Kingdom of God and the City of Man," (Conn 1992)

Harvie Conn surveys some of the most important Christian thinkers, writers and movements which have contributed historically to the understanding of the relationship of church, kingdom and city. Conn elaborates three main stages or categories: Cosmopolis, Theopolis and Megalopolis.

In the first section, "The Church in the Cosmopolis," Conn outlines how the city and church were related in the Greco-Roman world. Hellenization brought the "First Urban Wave" associated with urbanization under Alexander. The city itself became divinized. In dealing effectively with the city under Roman rule, the church had to “dedivinize” it in order to make any impact. This it did.

Conn makes no effort here, however, to explain how the early Christians were able to make a strong impact in first-century cities. Rodney Stark notes the chaotic and crowded nature of cities, and how Christians ministered to people stricken by plagues, helped decrease infant mortality, increased the status of women, and engaged in other

activities that made a huge impact on the urban masses (Stark 1997:129ff) .

Conn says the second phase, "Theopolis" was ushered in by Constantine's acceptance of Christianity. Conn discusses the views of Augustine particularly the conception which encompassed at least two models of the city and church relationship: Christ of the city and Christ transforming the city. Conn argues that, this double model produces a tension for urban mission that still stands strong today. Benjamin Tonna states this tension regarding participation in city structures as follows: "Should we join the group that currently has power in hopes to change them? Or do we join the opposing force?" (Tonna 1978:155).

Describing what he calls the "Second Urban Wave" beginning late in the twelfth century, Conn believes that Aquinas sowed the seeds of secularization by relying heavier on reason than Scripture for answers to the urban dilemma. Then he discusses the role of the monasteries. In this section he describes the medieval monastery as a new kind of polis (Conn 1992:16).

In the "The Collapse of the Theopolis," Conn discusses the emerging ideology of capitalism and the "Reformation Interlude," in

which is found a new social ethic. Within the Reformation there were three notable models for the city, Conn says: Luther's, the Anabaptists and Calvin's. Luther saw the city and Christ in paradox. Seeing the city as "cracked and madly askew, a kingdom of wrath and severity" (Conn 1992:22), Anabaptism felt the church should withdraw completely from the city, according to Conn, while Calvin saw the church transforming the city.

In "The Church in the Megalopolis" Conn argues that the nature of Christian mission to the megalopolis is marked by confusion over the nature of secularization, misperceiving it as a neutral force or, even worse, attributing positive aspects to it. Here Conn rightly corrects Harvey Cox's usage and definition of secularization (Cox 1966), which stated that secularization is the process of moving from the religious to the nonreligious (Conn 1992:28). George Hunter in *How to Reach Secular People* agrees with Conn, noting, "Some warn that secularization has erased moral consciousness, so that secular people are simply immoral, but in fact secular people participate in many moral struggles and make an unprecedented number of moral choices" (Hunter 1992:43).

It is here that Conn identifies what he calls the Third Urban Wave – Capitalism (13th-18th centuries), and here as well that Conn sees the “redivinization” of the city (Conn·1992:30). He cites evangelical attempts at urban mission, but in the end states that evangelicals “did not fully acknowledge the processes of industrialization and modernization as secular voluntarism” (Conn 1992:34-35).

Concluding with a new dimension of the megalopolis, but not a separate epoch or categorization, Conn mentions the “Church in the Global Village” which “vastly complicated the city-church dialogue” (Conn 1992:43). The world is growing increasingly urban at an increasingly rapid rate, and the church is not keeping up. Rather it is in fact perpetuating the problems of modernization and secularization at times in the way it is involved or uninvolved in mission.

The concluding argument Conn makes regarding the churches’ acceptance of secularization is partly right; it is one of the contributing factors to the confusion surrounding an urban theology. It is not, however the only factor. As the Missional Church project has stated,

The answer to the crisis of the North American church will not be found at the level of method and problem solving. We share

the conviction that the problem is much more deeply rooted. It has to do with who we are and what we are for. The real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological. (Guder 1998:3)

DuBose echoes this: "The heart of the problem is theological. The church has not seen itself as servant, as a community of faith.... there is revealed a fundamental theological void" (DuBose 1978:146).

Sociologist Pitirim Sorokin sums up the attitude he finds expressed in the biblical Scriptures as "more sympathetic to the pastoral life than to agriculture, and especially urban life" (Sorokin 1930:11). He suggests that the Bible pictures cities as sources of sinfulness and depravity (Genesis 18), places of refuge for criminals (Numbers 35), and places whose streets are morally dangerous (Proverbs 7) (Sorokin 1930:12).

Jacques Ellul, the French sociologist and theologian, saw the city as representing human technological society and the epitome of human rebellion against God in *The Meaning of the City* (Ellul 1974:50ff). From the outset, according to Ellul, the city embodied humanity's rebellion towards God. The earliest references to the city in Genesis (4:17) are negative, associating forever the building of a city with the murderer, Cain.

The city is a direct consequence of Cain's murderous act and his refusal to accept God's protection. Cain has built a city. For God's Eden he substitutes his own, for the goal given to his life by God he substitutes a goal chosen by himself – just as he substituted his own security for God's. (Ellul 1974:51)

Ellul traces a dialectic between negative and positive images of the city and in the end concludes that God, in spite of what humanity has made the city to be, will use the city as a means of grace (Ellul 1974: 183ff). Others, however much in the minority, like Harvey Cox in *The Secular City* (1966) emphasize only the positive aspects of the city, based on their interpretation of biblical literature. Ellul draws attention to those passages that refer to the biblical cities as “cities of refuge, mercy and justice,” as in Joshua 20 and Isaiah 60:14 (Cox 1966:261).

Relatively few authors treat the city in a biblically balanced way. Robert Linthicum tries to hold the good and bad potential of cities in tension. He states, “Every city includes both elements. Every city has both Babylon and Jerusalem in it, for every city is the battleground between the god of Babylon and the God of Jerusalem for domination and control” (1988:25). He writes,

...what a difference it would make if we could begin viewing our city, not through the eyes that saw only its dirt and deprivation, but through eyes that could recognize the handiwork of the creator. God created the city even as he created mountains and hills and trees and brooks.... In the city

God has used the creativity of human beings to carve and shape and mold! (1988:32).

Francis DuBose states similarly, “the city holds the greatest potential for enrichment and destruction of life” (DuBose 1978:109). Ray Bakke, one of the best-known urban missiologists and executive director of International Urban Associates and former professor of Global Urban Mission at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, is realistic when looking at the biblical cities. He was profoundly affected by an article by Stephen Rose written in 1966 entitled, “Why Evangelicals Can’t Survive the City” (Rose 1966:17), the premise of which was that the Bible is a very rural book about a very rural God who favored agrarians. Bakke sums up the article this way,

God makes gardens and His favorite people are shepherds and vine growers, and least favorite folk are urban dwellers. Consider David, God’s favorite. As long as he stayed on the farm, played with sheep and wrote songs, he was okay. When he moved into Jerusalem, he got all messed up in politics. The lesson: Stay away from Jerusalem. Stay away from Chicago. This author [Rose] observed that conservative Christians who devour scripture as God’s inerrant word swallow this antiurban bias. Without knowing it, their values are skewed in an anticity direction. To walk with God eventually requires a departure from the city. (Bakke 1997:22)

In *The Urban Christian*, Bakke sees the potential for both good and evil in cities and more importantly, the opportunities for ministry that the city held then for people like Paul, and thus for us today.

Paul, an urban evangelist followed the contours of the urbanized Roman Empire, and the congregations to whom he wrote had many problems in common with our churches today. The urban conditions of Corinth and Chicago overlap. The early church was lucky to have Paul, an urban man from Tarsus, bicultural and bilingual. (Bakke 1987:80)

In addition to the biblical literature and interpretation, there has been other influential literature regarding perceptions of the city throughout time which we will look at in the next several sections.

Ancient and Classic Literature

Many ancient Greek and Roman writings reflect a pervasive fear of large cities and portray pastoral life as much more virtuous. Many stories tell of the mythical origins of cities and have no doubt negatively influenced perceptions of urban life. Carol Dougherty discusses these issues in ancient literature in her book, *The Poetics of Colonization*. Dougherty notes that many stories regarding the origins of ancient cities involve being exiled for murder, a questionable marriage, marking the place where a nymph was raped by a god, or the founding of a cult (Dougherty 1993:25-27). “It is said that Orestes once took possession of Orestias – when in exile for the murder of his

mother – and left the country bearing his name; it is also said that he founded a city and called it Argos Oresticum” (Strab 7.7.8:31 in Dougherty 1993:25-27).

Plato wrote, regarding spectators of city poets and musicians,

They ignorantly affirmed that music had no truth... consequently came the freedom of disobedience to rulers; and then the attempt to escape the control and the exhortation of the father, mother, elders, and when near the end the control of the laws also. And at the very end is the contempt of oaths and pledges, and no regard at all for the gods, and thus they lead an evil life, and there is no cessation of ills. (Plato in Jowett 1944:679)

Sociologist Pitirim Sorokin states, “Practically all Roman writers testify to the better health and vitality of the rural population compared with the urban. This is supported by all great writers of Greece as well.” (Sorokin 1930:43). The Roman poet Juvenal complained that there was “no place in the city for an honest man, Rome is run by the ill-bred and produces ulcers and insomnia and subjects the unfortunate resident to larcenous landlords and brash burglars” (Juvenal 1983:89).

Chinese writings reflect not only fear of the cities during this same time period (300 BC -1500 AD), but also revulsion. The city is depicted as a place of vast corruption, while the countryside is seen as a place of simple virtue and the good life (Lee 1921:33, Fischer

1984:13). According to Chinese literature, the inventor of agriculture was Shunung (in 2737 BC) whose name means “divine farmer.” Shunung ruled well and the people were fed, and as a rule the subsequent emperors of China were to be expert farmers (Lee 1921:33). This pro-agrarian stance with its negative view of the city is “deeply embedded in traditional Chinese culture, which consistently emphasizes the rural over the urban. Configurations of the city as darkness and death abound in Chinese literature” (Zhang 1996:11).

Early Modern European Perspectives

Western writers since the Renaissance often have expressed a negative general viewpoint toward the city and associated virtues with pastoral settings. Dickens, who has been called “a leading witness to the Victorian city” (Schwarzbach 1979:2), often wrote about the atrocities in London during his lifetime. In *Little Dorrit* he describes the city:

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, herking, tolling as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility

furnish relief to overworked people. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to bathe but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his sixth, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it – or the worst according to the probabilities. (Dickens 1914:30)

And further:

Mr. Arthur Clennam took up his hat and buttoned his coat and walked out. In the country the rain would have developed a thousand fresh scents, and every drop would have had its bright association with some beautiful form of growth or life. In the city, it developed only foul stale smells and was a sickly, lukewarm, dirt-stained, wretched addition, to the gutters. (Dickens 1914:32)

Nostalgia for the country became a very common thread throughout literature during the growth of industrialization. Festa-McCormick notes,

The country more and more stood for integrity and wholesomeness, where urban centers appeared as forces of evil and corruption. Dickens's *Bleak House* is a good example of this double image, in which the serenity of nature in village life is contrasted to the suffocating air of London. (Festa-McCormick 1979:11)

Rousseau, the influential 18th-century French philosopher, continually emphasized the greater nobility and virtue of rural men (Fischer 1984:13), and often made reference to the atrocities of urban areas. Rousseau wrote:

Men are devoured by our towns. In a few generations the race dies out or becomes degenerate; it needs renewal, and it is always renewed from the country. Send your children to renew themselves, so to speak, send them to regain in the open fields the strength lost in the foul air of our crowded cities. (Rousseau 1972:26)

Rousseau referred to cities as “the source of perdition of mankind, a source of physical and moral degeneration, suckers that bleed the nation and the school of vices and contempt.” He wrote, “It is the rural world which teaches us to love and to serve mankind; while in cities they learn but to scorn it” (Rousseau 1972:8).

Early American Influences

A number of American thinkers, leaders and writers have strongly influenced public perceptions of the city. Thomas Jefferson's thought and contribution to the current American mindset regarding the city, which was negative, is summarized by Dyrness, “His ideals have grounded American ideals in rural sunshine and hard work it was as if work in the fresh air was itself a kind of religious activity that could purge sin, which now more and more was identified with the city” (Dyrness 1989:34).

Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne were all reacting to the utilitarian individualism that seemed to be increasingly permeating the urban areas of America in the nineteenth century. They advocated

getting out of the city to clear one's head, to think, and to contemplate. They sent the message that the virtuous must flee the city to truly live. Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived..." (Thoreau 1854:172).

Similarly Hawthorne wrote:

On the other hand here come whole tribes of people whose physical lives are but a deteriorated variety of life, and themselves a meaner species of mankind; so sad an effect has been wrought by the tainted breath of cities, scanty and unwholesome food, destructive modes of labor, and the lack of those moral supports that might partially have counteracted such bad influences. (Hawthorne 1937:1083)

Emerson in his essay *Nature* echoed:

These facts may suggest the advantage which the country life possesses for a powerful mind, over the artificial and curtailed life of cities. We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence. The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appealing changes, year after year, without design and without heed, shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. (Emerson 1836:16)

These literary, political and philosophical influences throughout history have profoundly affected not only individual perception of the city, but whole political parties, educational facilities, businesses,

churches, denominations, and perhaps a large percentage of people everywhere. For many influential writers “The city scene was backdrop for frightening experiences, personal defeat, icy intellectualism, heartless commercialism, miserable poverty, crime and sin, smoke and noise, dusk and loneliness” (White and White 1977:37). Especially disconcerting from a missiological perspective, however, is that this negative perception of the city continues to affect the Christian Church’s decision to plant churches in cities to this day.

The next chapter examines the current situation of the Christian Churches in regard to urban mission.

CHAPTER 3.

History of the Christian Churches in Urban America

To understand the history of the Christian Churches in urban areas of the United States, it is important first to understand the history of the movement in general. This chapter surveys the movement's beginnings, founders, and the time period in which it began to grow in order to provide necessary background.

Beginnings and Founders

The story of what is known as the Restoration Movement (The Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and Disciples of Christ) is one of merging and subsequent divisions which began on the frontier of early America.

Thomas Campbell, an Irishman and member of the Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterians¹ was born in 1763. He was

¹ The History of the Old Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian Church is also, as the name implies, one of division. The first division was over the right of a congregation to choose their own minister. Those who wanted to deny that right were called the Seceders or Secession Church. Then the second split among the Seceders came when there was a debate about whether oath taking should be required, rendering the Burghers and Anti-Burghers and the final division was over power of civil magistrates thus rendering Old and New Lights (Dowling 1964:35).

educated at the University of Glasgow in the areas of medicine and ministry because he desired to help the poor members of his future congregation who might not be able to afford medical attention when they needed it (Dowling 1964:34). He was married and had several children and in 1798 began a pastorate and an educational academy.

Not far from his church was a congregation of Scottish Congregationalists who held services on Sunday evenings. Campbell reportedly often visited this congregation, seeking a respite from the many divisions and strife of his own denomination (Webb 1990:70).

Soon he became ill and his doctor prescribed a long rest and in fact, as was common in those days, a sea voyage was recommended.

Alexander Campbell, Thomas's oldest son, then eighteen, volunteered to look after the academy if Thomas would take a trip to the United States and report back to him. Alexander had hopes of taking the rest of the family and joining his father following a good report.

Upon arrival in America, Thomas was received by the Anti-Burger synod and assigned a presbytery and preaching circuit in Western Pennsylvania. He found a prevalent air of disunity among the little settlements on what was then (1808) the American frontier, and began preaching about unity and inviting all believers present at the

services he held to participate in the Lord's Supper. This, and perhaps some jealousy on the part of a few of the area preachers due to Campbell's almost instant popularity (Webb 1990:75) caused charges to be drawn up against Thomas which eventually led to his formal withdrawal from the presbytery in 1808. Thomas however still had many friends and supporters in the area (Washington, Pennsylvania) and they began to meet and hold regular worship and preaching services with no thought of organizing a separate denomination.

About the same time in Kentucky, Barton W. Stone had been preaching similar messages of unity and found himself leading a group of Christians with striking similarities to Campbell's group (Garrett 1994:71). Stone was born in Port Tobacco, Maryland, in 1772 and grew up a frontiersman. He was poor but had a passion for reading and was allowed to attend college even though he could not pay because the schoolmaster at Guilford College, North Carolina, saw great potential in him (Garrett 1994:72). He began studying law but was drawn to theology and was soon converted by a Calvinist preacher. He had many problems accepting all of the teachings of Calvinism and broke from his theological studies many times. At one

point he became very ill and went away to rest in Washington, Georgia, for a year, teaching in an academy while there.

Eventually Stone regained his passion to preach. He returned to Guilford, finished school and was licensed to preach and began ministering in the southern part of North Carolina (Garrett 1994:72). Stone grew very uncomfortable preaching there and so he traveled to a place where no one would know him, to start over. He found himself in Bourbon County, Kentucky, and accepted two charges, one in Concord and one at Cane Ridge. After two very successful years, in terms of numerical growth, Barton Stone was ordained by the Transylvania Presbytery.

In 1801 at the Cane Ridge church Stone decided to have an ecumenical revival focusing on unity. He invited Presbyterian as well as Baptist and Methodist preachers (Garrett 1994:74). The plans for the revival were publicized for more than a month. While reported numbers of attendees vary,² at least 10,000 people attended over a three-day period, "From the Governor of the State to prostitutes,

²Numbers vary from 10,000 to as many as 30,000 (Boles 1996:64, Woodbridge 1979:43, Murch 1962:29, Garrett 1994:74).

blacks as well as whites, the blackleg and the robber as well as the devout worshipper” (Garrett 1994:74).

As was common in frontier religious meetings of the day, many eccentricities were a part of the revival. Some attendees participated in a “falling exercise” in which a person, apparently overtaken by the message or singing, would “fall like a log on the floor, earth or mud, and appear as dead” (Stone 1847:40), and then rise and speak about God to everyone around (Knowles 2000:65). In addition there were also many attestations of people participating in “jerking,” “running,” “dancing,” “singing,” and “barking exercises” (Webb 1990:54).

Many conversions occurred and recommitments were made at Cane Ridge. A sense of unity permeated the meeting, though many were offended by the ecstaticism. Hearings were called by the Ohio Presbytery to discuss doctrinal issues. This hearing led to the withdrawal of five Presbyterian preachers from the synod, including Stone. The men wanted the freedom to interpret the Scriptures for themselves and wanted to constantly work for and preach unity. However it is interesting to note that by 1811 all but Stone had either joined the Shakers or had rejoined the Presbyterians (Garrett 1994:74).

Stone kept preaching. In 1804 he had a few hundred members in fifteen congregations.

In 1823, Stone met Thomas Campbell's son, Alexander, who had joined his father in Pennsylvania and had been successfully planting churches in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio, and was now exploring Kentucky and Tennessee. Stone and Campbell recognized their commitment to unity and the restoration ideal and were quick to consider each other colleagues and to unite their ministries (Allen and Hughes 1988:108).

When the two officially joined forces in 1832 (Webb 1990:161) both were in agreement in many areas that are significant for this study. Among them: 1) a desire for unity among the followers of Jesus Christ as the necessary condition for accomplishing his purposes, 2) an aversion to creeds and theological systems as divisive, desiring to ground faith in the "pure word of God," 3) a dislike of ecclesiastical structures above the congregational level, and 4) an evangelistic spirit that sought the conversion of every person to "simple evangelical Christianity" (Webb 1990:162).

The movement experienced very rapid growth in the small towns, rural areas and villages along the American frontier. By 1840

it is estimated that there were 40,000 members in this new movement, then called the Disciples of Christ, and by 1850 that number had nearly tripled, to 118,000, which at that time made it the seventh largest religious body in the United States (Walker 1935:45, Garrison 1931:200, Mead 1963:107) and the largest indigenous religious body in the United States then (and still today).³

The Splitting of the Disciples

Many factors led to the splitting of the Disciples of Christ into three separate factions during the years 1906 to 1946: the Disciples of Christ, the Church of Christ and the Independent Christian Church/Church of Christ. Slavery, the organization of missionary societies, the use of musical instruments in worship, and theological liberalism were all major contributing tensions which led to the fractures. The issues of liberalism and slavery are of particular importance for my research however because both of these issues shed some light on why the Disciples of Christ have had such a high

³ See Bradley, *et al.* 1992:1, Degroot 1963:134, and Garrison 1931:xii.

percentage of urban churches and why the independent churches have not.⁴

Near the end of the nineteenth century, theological liberalism was closely associated with modernism. The rise of biblical criticism was countered by a forceful apologetic for the divine authority and infallibility of the Bible. By 1906, the first split within the movement occurred when a group of the more literalistic adherents disagreed with the larger body over the use of instruments in worship, which they saw as unbiblical. This group withdrew in 1906 from the Disciples and called themselves the Church of Christ.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Disciples were becoming more and more divided over various issues -- especially liberalism, open membership, and official denominational organization. Some argued that "reception of the pious unimmersed as members" was acceptable, while others held that immersion was to be required of all church members (Dowling 1964:107). The date of the second split is not exact, as it was a gradual process, over the years between 1919 and 1946 as moderate Disciples withdrew their churches from the Disciples of Christ yearbook to "protest the liberal restructure that

⁴ Current statistics will be looked at in the next chapter.

formalized the Disciples into a denomination with an ecclesiastical headquarters in Indianapolis” (Knowles 2000:355). The moderates chose to be called the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and remain without a headquarters or hierarchy.

These three main divisions of the Restoration Movement remain to this day. The most liberal of the three branches, the Disciples, have continued to voice social concerns as they did when the movement was united. These concerns were often divisive at worst, and minimally acted upon, at best. As early as 1858, Isaac Errett, then the secretary for the American Christian Missionary Society (a Disciples organization) stated, “With scarcely an exception, we are very weak in the great centers of wealth and power” (Harrell 1975:71).

An organized campaign to promote urban evangelism was begun by the Disciples in 1893. The General Christian Missionary Society named a committee on city evangelism (Harrell 1975:77), but these societies were only supported by the more liberal constituency (who later broke and are today still called the Disciples of Christ). The moderate and conservative members wanted no part in the way in which urban evangelism (or for that matter, mission societies) was

carried out, as they doubted whether or not a “New Testament people could utilize an organization beyond the local church to enable them to do missionary work” (Webb 1990:230). The more conservative sectors also continually linked theological evolution (liberalism) with the growing urban influence in the church.

Barraged by appeals for funds for city evangelization, one conservative wrote: “We have had plaintive appeals for missionary money in order to reach the great centers. And it seems to be pretty well settled in certain circles that unless we can establish ourselves in the cities, we will never amount to much as a church.” While the “best classes”, he concluded, might have lived in cities in New Testament times, that was no longer the case and the church could better spend its effort in the country. Moderate papers were frequently charged with showing favoritism to city churches: “The moderate rendering of the great commission,” wrote a disgruntled rural Disciple, “appears to be go into the large cities and preach the Gospel, or go where the people will pay a good salary and entertain the preacher in good style.” Conservatives perceptively linked the theological changes in the moderate church to the emergence of urban Disciples religion. “The reason why city churches gape for flutes, horns and organs,” wrote a conservative preacher, “is because the opera, the theater, and the sangerfest have educated them to it”. (Harrell 1975:83-84)

The sociological origins of the theological divisions are traced in an article written in 1889:

As time advanced such of those churches as assembled in large towns and cities gradually became proud, or at least, sufficiently worldly-minded to desire popularity, and in order to attain that unscriptural end they adopted certain popular arrangements such as a hired pastor, the church choir, instrumental music, man-made societies to advance the gospel,

and human devices to raise money....In so doing they divided the brotherhood of disciples. (Sommer 1889:599)

This history frames the context and the time period of the Christian Churches/Disciples split. However, the conditions of American urban society around the time that the Christian Churches were spreading and growing are also significant. All these issues, as well as the following discussion of the frontierism phenomena help in understanding the context out of which the Christian Churches arose and illuminate some of the issues involved in the current situation that they find themselves in.

Frontierism

In *The Churching of America 1776-1990*, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1997) trace the movement of religion westward across America's frontier, noting that many sects which emerged were very successful in the rural areas, on the frontier and in small towns. They note that as towns grew bigger there was more competition for people's attention and argue that the simplicity offered by these upstart sects was not as appealing as the people now had "unrestricted access to the enchantments of the world" (Finke and Stark 1997:43).

Finke and Stark accurately described the experience of the Disciples of Christ. The movement was born during the very height of the Second Great Awakening or Great Revival of the West and indeed followed along frontier lines, establishing churches in small, rural communities (Garrison 1931:199). In referring to the Disciples, Henry Shaw described

...a new American religious movement as it developed on the Ohio frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is primarily, however, the story of a plain people, seeking a practical faith to match American ideals of democracy, freedom, and independence; a faith to provide a common ground on which they believed all Christians could unite. (Shaw 1952: flyleaf as quoted in Knowles 2000:2)

Disciples on the Frontier

Many Christian Church historians have studied in depth the reasoning behind the Disciples' rural presence and have reached various conclusions. Garrison suggests that the atrocities of the European industrial revolution, experienced first-hand by the Campbells, is what turned them against establishing themselves in larger cities. In reference to Glasgow, Edinburgh, and especially London, all of which the Campbells had experienced, Garrison writes, "The streets began to fill with garbage as the cities became increasingly overpopulated" (Garrison 1931:199). Many others have

related the atrocities of urban life in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, including Dickens, Mayhew, Charles Booth, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and the artist Gustave Doré. Summing up well this period in Europe, Scharzbach writes:

Transport, education, sanitation, food distribution, religious institutions, government, housing – all of these collapsed under the pressure of numbers. In the slums of the city whole families would inhabit single rooms; have access to an indifferent water supply, which meant perhaps as little as two hours of filthy river water from a public standpipe one or two days a week, be forced to use a public privy, which might have drainage through the inhabited cellars of adjoining houses, sharing it with dozens or even hundreds of other families; and be exposed, especially after 1830, to the scourge of several recurrent epidemic and endemic diseases, including cholera, typhus, typhoid, influenza and tuberculosis. But even more profound than this, the experience of the city was one of profound dislocation, of being cut off, physically and psychologically, from one's roots and one's community.

Whatever its faults or virtues, the country had its accepted values, codes of behavior, and rules and rewards; it had given people a way of life successfully adapted to its conditions and contingencies. The modern city had no way of life, at least yet E.J. Hobsbawm writes "the city destroyed society". The new dwellers in cities were completely unequipped by anything in their previous experience not only to survive the town but even to understand it. It was becoming an environment seemingly devoid of meaning, and actually devoid of any cultural traditions or institutions which could assist them in making adjustment to it. And whatever way of life had been successful in the past for city dwellers was itself made obsolete by changing conditions.

The immediate consequences of such extreme dislocation, as one can well imagine, are profound and profoundly crippling. It is, I believe, by no means inappropriate to compare the experience of entering a life in the nineteenth

century city in Europe to that of the inmates of concentration camps in Germany or communist prisoner-of-war camps in Korea. The effects on the personality are similar. The events surrounding the experience are perceived as arbitrary and meaningless. In addition one's own sense of identity is shattered, and the sense of self becomes uncertain. (Schwarzbach 1979:10-11)

In addition, significant changes were taking place within cities.

The symbolism of the cities was changing as the smokestacks from the factories were replacing the steeples from the churches. The Industrial Revolution and rising capitalism turned "six of the deadly sins into cardinal virtues" (Mumford 1961:346) and the church declined as the focal institution of society. It was out of this context, and these conditions that the Campbells set out for a new life in America.

Garrison contends that one of the reasons the movement shied away from cities in America was because the Disciples were an independent movement indigenous to the United States and had no central governing synod. It had no financial support from constituencies in the more urbanized East, as many churches did (Garrison 1931:199). Thus the Disciples lacked both the financial and cultural resources necessary for developing churches in the city. It was essentially a non-urban, frontier movement.

Log cabins gave place to frame and brick buildings, buckskin to broadcloth, and the frontier mind to the temper and mood of a more sophisticated society. Born on the frontier, they had only frontier materials out of which to develop the instruments of advancement, and this they did with laudable energy and notable success, but subject to the limitations imposed by their origin. If they fell behind in the cities, they were at home in the county-seat towns. (Garrison 1931:199-200)

Oliver Whitley, another Christian Church scholar, echoes this sentiment. “[The Christian Church/Disciples] were born on the frontier. A group which comes into being under such conditions never entirely outgrows its heritage. Without seeing them as growing up in a frontier context it is impossible to understand them either adequately or correctly” (Whitley 1959:35).

Scotch-Irish immigrants comprised about 7 percent of the total U.S. population in the days of the frontier (Bailey, Kennedy and Cohen 1998:83), and they were mostly Presbyterian. An interesting note regarding the settling patterns of the Scotch-Irish, from whom the Campbells and many of the early Disciples traced their heritage,⁵ is that they tended to “push into the back country” (Bailey 1998:63), keeping their distance from the English, Irish and Germans by whom they were often disliked. This is perhaps another reason the

⁵ A significant number of early Disciples were from this population as the Stone-Campbell Movement began as a restoration within the confines of the Presbyterian Church (Knowles 2000:59).

Campbells and the early Disciples steered clear of the cities and larger settlements. Bailey states:

The Scotch-Irish were not Irish at all but turbulent Scots Lowlanders. Over a period of many decades, they had been first transplanted to Northern Ireland, where they had not prospered. The Irish Catholics already there, hating Scottish Presbyterianism, resented the intruders and still do. The economic life of the Scotch Irish was severely hampered, especially when the English Government placed burdensome restrictions on their production of linens and woolens. Early in the 1700s tens of thousands of embittered Scotch-Irish finally pulled up stakes and came to America, chiefly to tolerant and deep-soiled Pennsylvania. Finding the best acres already taken by Germans and Quakers, they pushed onto the frontier. There many of them illegally and defiantly squatted on the unoccupied lands and quarreled with both Indian and white owners. The Scotch-Irish proved to be superb frontiersman. It was said, somewhat unfairly, that the Scotch-Irish kept the Sabbath and all else they could get their hands on. Pugnacious, lawless and individualistic – they cherished no love for the British government that uprooted them. (Bailey 1998:64)

Alexander Campbell's own writing gives evidence of an anti-urban view. Campbell was comfortable only in the backwoods and felt that primitive New Testament Christianity and its restoration did not fit in with the lifestyle of those in the city. In 1830 he wrote,

When pressed by some of the influential Baptists in the cities of New York and Philadelphia in 1816 to settle in one of those cities, I declined the friendly offers and kind persuasions ...alleging that I could not take the charge of any church in those cities, because I did not think they would submit to the government of Jesus Christ, or to the primitive order of things....and rather than produce divisions among them, or

adopt the order of things then fashionable in the city, I would live and die in the backwoods. (Campbell 1830:307)

R. Edwin Groover, another Christian Church historian, cites the influence of Common Sense philosophy taught at the University of Glasgow, and the Restoration Movement's emphasis on simplicity in worship, in church building structure,⁶ ornamentation, and call for a

⁶ Groover highlights the adjectives Alexander pejoratively employed in various publications for the churches in the cities of United States, calling attention to their "lofty steeples" "ponderous bells," lofty pulpits," "fine velvet" (Campbell 1834:8), fashionable columns, galleries and pulpits, gorgeous cushions for downy doctors" (Campbell 1825:244). He also calls attention to a piece that Campbell published in 1824 called "Third Epistle of Peter," subtitled "A Looking Glass for Clergy," in which clergy privilege is ridiculed as well as titles, vestments and high clergy salaries. The section on church buildings reads:

Let the houses in which you preach be called churches, and let them be built in manner of great ornament without, and adorned with much cost within; with rich pillars and paints, and with fine altars and pedestals, and urns of precious stones, and cloths with velvet of scarlet, and vessels of silver. And let there be rooms for the changing of clothes, and places for the precious metals and mitres. And let the houses be divided into seats for the congregation, and let every man know his own seat; and let the first seats in front of the altar be for the rich that pay by thousands; and the next for the poorer who pay by hundreds; and the last for those that pay by tens. And let the poor man sit behind the door. And let the seats be garnished with cushionings and crimson cloth, and with fine velvet; for if the houses of players and vain people who deal in idle sayings and shows of mockery, be rich and gorgeous, how much more so should be the houses that are dedicated to him "that is meek and holy of spirit" (Campbell 1825:244-245).

simple life as reasons the Campbells remained outside of cities and “warned their readers to avoid extensive contact with those corrupting places” (Groover 1999:3).

Alexander Campbell was harsh in his criticism of cities. In 1845 he responded to the news that there had been several disastrous fires in several United States’ cities in the following way,

The judgment of fire is upon this land.... These are most undoubtedly the judgments of the Lord.... Cities generally are the great radiating centers of crime. They are fountains of iniquity.... Their tendencies are to corruption. Hence their history is the history of the perfection of human infamy. Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh and Babylon are but prototypes of their doom and destiny. If then the indignation of heaven slumbered not, but if He made an example of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, setting them forth as suffering the punishment of eternal fire, can we imagine that our national transgressions and the crimes perpetuated in our cities, churches and corporations shall escape the frown and curse of the righteous judge of all the earth? It is impossible. (Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger* 1845:422)

Frontier Mentality

A certain mentality was shaped by those who helped America expand westward -- one that that was rugged, willing to take risks, brave, and that revered nature and hard work. Literature from this period is filled with references to the wilderness along the frontier and

the value of hard work and acquiring land. Many times hard work and especially working the land was associated with pure living.

Garrison and DeGroot describe the frontiersman as one who “cherished simplicity and practiced direct action, suspicious of experts, round about procedures, and complicated systems imposed by authority or hallowed tradition. He was addicted to shortcuts” (Garrison and DeGroot 1948:79).

The simplicity of the frontier was the perfect setting for the Restorationist plea of the Disciples, as James North notes:

[Frontier] people were also wide open to the basics of the Restoration Movement as it harkened back to the simple gospel message and church structure of the New Testament. Ideologically, the frontier had already opted for that kind of viewpoint in society, politics, and culture. Since the Restoration Movement presented the same idea as a religious option, many people accepted it wholeheartedly. Thus the American frontier was a ready-made field for the message of the Restoration movement. The preachers got nods of agreement when they pointed negatively to the hierarchical structures of numerous denominations—they were religious counterparts of the elite societies of Europe that the frontiersman despised. The preachers got the same agreement when they called for an elimination of the legalism and restrictions that marked denominational control over the lives of the church members. The frontiersman felt the same way about social regulations in general, and the words of these preachers perfectly matched their sociology. For these reasons, the Restoration Movement was able to get a running start on evangelizing the frontier. (North 1994:5)

The Issue of Slavery

An examination of the history of the movement and particularly of the ideologies of the founders suggests that racial attitudes could also have been, and remain, a deterring factor from a focus on cities. Slavery was at its peak during the church's early years. At one time both Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone owned slaves and supported the institution of slavery, but both later came to publicly oppose slavery (Webb 1990:191, Garrison and Degroot 1948:331). Campbell wrote in 1845, "The relation of master and slave is no where condemned in the Holy Scriptures as morally wrong; and that, in certain cases, and under certain regulations, it is even now altogether lawful and right," and "I would not presume to say that it was in every case, or in any case, abstractly, a moral evil; and consequently, to be instantly abandoned" (Campbell 1845:257, 258).

Later, as recorded in his memoirs, he is much more adamant about emancipation:

Slavery, that largest and blackest blot upon our national escutcheon, that many-headed monster, that Pandora's box, that bitter root, that blighting and blasting curse under which so fair and so large a portion of our beloved country groans-that deadly Upas, whose breath pollutes and poisons everything within its influence – is now evoking the attention of this ancient and venerable commonwealth in a manner as

unexpected as it is irresistible and cheering to every philanthropist-- to everyone who has a heart to feel, a tear to shed over human wretchedness, or a tongue to speak for degraded humanity.... (Richardson 1868:2:367).

In 1825, Stone organized a chapter of the American Colonialization Society, which advocated not abolition of slavery but the sending of freed slaves “back” to Liberia (Garrett 1994:335). Of course most slaves were born in the United States and had never been to Liberia. This society was opposed by abolitionists as a racist attempt to clear America of black people, once they were free.

Campbell’s views of slavery have been criticized because they seemed to be influenced by their effect on the unity of the church. Campbell, after freeing his slaves,⁷ became very outspoken about the atrocity of the institution of slavery. But when he saw that this might split the movement, he backed off and took a more moderate view.

⁷ The exact date Campbell freed his slaves is not known and apparently happened over a period of time. In his own words he states (in 1845) regarding the issue,

Many years since, I advised the emancipation of a number of slaves that would have come to me by inheritance, and who, consequently, were set free from slavery. Since that time I have emancipated several, that were bought indeed for life, with the intention to manumit at a proper time, as well as others bought with my money for a term of years, advising the owners to sell them for a reasonable term. So that I have set free from slavery every human being that came in any way under my influence or was my property (Campbell 1845:259).

When the threat of division had passed he went back to his stance that slavery was wrong (Lunger 1954:193).

Theological Issues

Many theological issues arise in dealing with the problem of low representation of Christian Churches in America's cities. Addressing the issue of racism and white flight, DuBose, a Baptist, states that the heart of the issue across denominational lines is theological. "The church has not seen itself as servant, as a community of faith. When a church consciously shuts out anybody because of racial identity or social values, it reveals a fundamental theological void" (DuBose 1978:146). Echoing that is the voice of Mark Shelley, a member of the Christian Church and former professor of Lincoln Christian Seminary, who states that the unwillingness to assess the mindset that cultivates separateness of class and race is theologically troubling and indicates selfishness. "God has placed in His church all he needs to reach the city, if only the church would be willing to let him take it. In a word, this will result in the essential attitude necessary for success in urban ministry: selflessness" (Shelley 1995:10). Robert Fife, a leader in the Christian Churches and former professor and former director of UCLA-based Westwood Christian

Foundation,⁸ reflects on the response of some churches to ethnic changes in the cities in which they were located:

Other once influential congregations became islands whose remaining members commuted in on freeways to keep the doors open, but open to whom? Many congregations were unable to answer "Open to all" for that would have meant reforming themselves in such fashion that people of all cultures could feel at home. In consequence the Lord has taken away the candles of those congregations as He did Laodicaea. They died amidst mission fields white unto harvest. (Fife 1971:29-30)

The Homogeneous Unit "Principle" and the Urban Church

Another theological issue related to the previous one also pertains to the methodology that the majority of Christian Churches employ for new church planting. The Christian Churches have had a natural affinity towards Donald McGavran and the Church Growth School, due in part to McGavran's roots in the Disciples of Christ. Many church planters however have adopted not McGavran's own principles, but what was recently termed by Sonny Tucker in the *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* (Tucker 2003:28) "American Popular Church Growth." This issue of the journal was dedicated to assessing the Church Growth Movement. Tucker states:

⁸ This Program offers credit through UCLA for early Christian history.

Some in the Popular church growth stream work within the Church Growth Movement parameters but are atheological. Many writers in this stream delineate no solid or detailed theological base. The vast majority of leaders in this stream are evangelical, but theology is relegated to an inferior place of prominence over pragmatism and methods that seem to work. Yet this pop church growth stream departs from McGavran church growth thinking in several ways. First they are atheological. The reason for this may be that a basic evangelical theology is assumed or it may be deemed too divisive. This opens the door for shallow methodologies and gimmicks. McGavran was never atheological; his biblical theology led to his methodology. Second, many in this stream are weak in evangelism and strong on transfer growth and drawing a crowd. Many in this stream practice “pre-evangelism” rather than complete evangelism/church growth process. (Tucker 2003:28-29)

McGavran’s own words regarding homogeneous units are:

"People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers" (McGavran 1970:163). However, many in the Christian church have taken this out of context and do not see racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic segregation or separation in churches as particularly troubling. For them numbers and growth should concern us more, and ethnically diverse churches generally do not tend to grow as fast as homogeneous ones. This homogeneous unit approach has had the support of many evangelicals for over twenty years, but it has often been misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misapplied and has called forth serious criticisms as well. Dubose writes,

To accent divisions that separate people is wrong. It is foreign to what we see in the New Testament. There was no "our kind of people"; we don't advocate what someone likes to do, but what one must do. All growth must be in balance with all other aspects of Christian teaching and practice. (Dubose 1978:126)

In defense of the intentions of the "principle," Peter Wagner states that because love accepts people as they are there should be no requirement for people to cross ethnic or cultural barriers. This principle is built into the gospel, he argues. Further, he states it is unloving to require unchurched people to adopt the behavior patterns or the language or socioeconomics of those in the church to become a Christian (Wagner 1978:13). Regarding this George Hunter asks,

Do we Christians seem to require people to become like us? Let's ask the American peoples of non-Anglo races and cultures. For years we have heard the most segregated hour of the week is eleven to twelve on Sunday morning; we repented and made the achievement of integrated congregations the de facto priority in my denomination and many others. We were unable to achieve it. Why? The way the objective was often phrased gives us a clue: We wanted African Americans and others "to join our churches." Ethnic minority people visited "our churches" in those years, but they seldom came back and almost never joined. We seemed to be requiring them to become culturally Anglo, "like us." They resisted their "ethnocide," i.e., the elimination of their culture by being absorbed into ours. (Hunter 1996:63)

As will be noted in a later chapter, one of the things that has come out of the case studies is that an effective church must be a living, dynamic entity capable of change and flexible enough to allow

those of different ethnic and socio-economic groups to feel that there are no barriers for them to cross. Significant differences undeniably exist; yet the churches I have studied have chosen to embrace and celebrate these differences. Perpetuating the popular understanding (or misunderstanding) of the homogeneous unit approach and allowing it to determine church planting methodology sends a message that we as a church are not willing to do the hard, intentional work of getting along with diverse people.

Wagner states, "Homogeneous unit churches show the world that we respect and love people enough to insist that they have their own church" (Wagner 1978:18). Others would respond that diverse churches show the world that we respect and love them enough to work hard to all be together in one place at one time.

The idea of "mosaic" was very prevalent in Donald McGavran's work, (McGavran 1970:406, 1984:252), yet McGavran seemed to understand "mosaic" as little pieces with distinct boundaries, which should be respected in a way that we do not expect people belonging to a particular piece to cross. He stated at the 1974 Lausanne Conference on World Evangelism, "The first task among the two billion yet to be evangelized is an evangelism designed to multiply

churches in each new piece of the magnificent mosaic" (Wagner 1979:21). There is no emphasis here on the fact that the church established in one piece of the mosaic can be accommodating when engaging a different piece of the mosaic (though McGavran did advocate racial and ethnic reconciliation as part of the "perfecting" process). McGavran didn't actually see the *church* as a mosaic; he saw the *world* as a mosaic, with a different church in each piece. "The world's population is a mosaic and each piece has a separate life of its own that seems strange and often unlovely to men and women of other pieces" (McGavran 1970:163). In his book *Understanding Church Growth* (1970 ed.) he states matter-of-factly, "In short, enormous numbers of men and women belong to pieces of the mosaic from which very few have become Christians. They will not be evangelized by their neighbors" (McGavran 1970:46). And yet in the time since this book was written many urban church congregations have intentionally reached out and embraced cultural and economic diversity while allowing people to remain in their own culture, and they have grown (Sherman 1997, Campolo 2000, Foster and Brelsford 1996, Sider, *et al.* 2002). These are what McGavran calls "conglomerate congregations" which "from the beginning bring men

and women of many different ethnic, linguistic, and educational backgrounds into one new family of God” (McGavran 1990:261). McGavran states that these churches are a significant option only in areas that are “true social melting pots”, of which many cities in North America would currently qualify.

Various scholars, including Lesslie Newbigin, René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, C. Douglas McConnell and many who are working on the missional church project, have made significant criticisms of the homogeneous unit approach. These arguments are important to this study if the Christian Churches are to take steps in being more effective in urban areas in the U.S.

Lesslie Newbigin did not totally disagree with McGavran's premise that the church should not expect a younger church or unchurched group to adopt the ways of another in order to be Christian. But Newbigin parts ways with McGavran on the emphasis on numerical growth and theological and ecumenical implications of the homogeneous unit approach (Newbigin 1978:151, Hunsberger 1998:190). Newbigin felt an emphasis on numerical growth too easily leads to a "conquistador" approach that becomes "self-aggrandizement" (Hunsberger 1998:190). Newbigin argued

theologically against the idea that once a person is converted, then the racial problems will in time succumb to Christ's will. This view is "ethically irresponsible," he felt; "the church must be up front and always speak to the best of its ability about what obedience to Christ will involve" (Newbigin 1978:141-142).

Newbigin as well as many on the missional church project, have argued that it is difficult for a homogeneous church to represent the reign of God and function as a sign and instrument of the rule of God, which judges and seeks to restore all things (Newbigin 1978:141, Hunsberger 1998:191, Guder 1998:100).

Ecumenically speaking, Newbigin's critique is that the homogeneous unit approach produces churches that are much too isolated. Newbigin felt that it is possible to have a unity which is harmonious with the purpose of God without negating the diversities of culture. He illustrated this from an example from his own work in South India, observing eighteen years after leaving,

I did not find that they had become uniform: on the contrary I found a rich variety of styles in worship and practice. What I found were congregations less concerned about their own affairs and more ready to think in terms of God's will for the life of the city as a whole, less like competing clubs for each trying to enlarge itself and a little more recognizable as a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom. (Newbigin 1989:193)

René Padilla attended the 1974 Lausanne Conference on World Evangelism when he heard McGavran speak of the “homogeneous unit principle.” Padilla’s arguments against the homogeneous unit principle can be summarized in five statements:

1. The New Testament provides no indication that the apostolic church had a missionary strategy based on the premise that church planting would be more effective if carried on within each separate homogeneous unit and was therefore to be conducted along racial or social lines.
2. The breaking down of barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely a result of it. Conversion was a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their identity in Christ rather than in race, social status, or sex.
3. The church not only grew but it grew across cultural barriers.
4. Each local congregation was to manifest both the unity and diversity of the body of Christ.
5. The apostles in no way advocated that a person would have to give up their culture and join another in order to be Christian (Padilla 1975:125-126).

Samuel Escobar was also a participant at Lausanne and echoed much of what Padilla stated. However, he added his own concerns, which centered around racial reconciliation and the church's responsibility.

The Christian church might be the only place where the miracle of encounter, acceptance and coexistence can happen because

the redemptive power of Christ acts. To perpetuate segregation for the sake of numerical growth, arguing that segregated churches grow faster, is for me yielding to the sinfulness of society, refusing to show a new and unique way of life. This would be an example of reducing the Gospel to make it more palatable. Such “numerical growth” might not be the numerical growth of the church of Jesus Christ. (Escobar 1975:323)

In a study exploring homogeneous churches C. Douglas

McConnell notes that contrary to the Church Growth belief,

homogeneous churches did not move toward racial reconciliation as they matured and states further, “Homogeneous relationships do not provide a context in which people can deal with their traditional prejudice and racism. To transform our natural prejudice, we must engage in inter-ethnic relationships” (McConnell 1997:400).

Within this extended debate, the Christian Churches have not sufficiently fleshed out their views in their various contexts.

Generally they have used McGavran’s principles, or perhaps the American Popular Church Growth principles (which differ as we have seen from McGavran’s original theory), as a justification for monocultural churches. This was never the intention of McGavran or of the Church Growth School.

When the Christian Churches separated from the Disciples officially around 1927, they were comprised overwhelmingly of

Anglo American members. Both of the other branches of the movement (Christian Churches and Churches of Christ) had significantly higher percentages of African American members (Smith . 1998:38). Seventy-five years later, the United States continues to grow increasingly multicultural, yet the Christian Church has remained largely homogeneous. As of 2000 there were 138 ethnic minority churches of the 5,916 total United States Christian Churches (ANUKAN 1999-2000:v). This is a small percentage and it does not indicate integration on any level. Our homogeneous churches do not reflect the progression toward reconciliation of races, fostering interracial relationships or culturally diverse worship experiences as expected by Church Growth advocates. Wagner wrote with regard to homogeneous unit churches,

McGavran's purpose in advocating the homogeneous unit principle is consistently that of bringing non-Christians into the Christian movement. An underlying assumption of the principle has always been that once people become Christians and are growing in their application of biblical ethical principles to their daily lives, they will lose their inclinations toward racism and prejudice. (Wagner 1979:32-33)

A few Christian Church scholars have speculated about possible reasons for the church's original homogeneity and the fact that it is still largely homogeneous, especially since "Christian Evangelism"

was one of the four main emphases of the first North American Christian Convention in 1927 (Webb 1990:319). Regarding the original reasons for homogeneity, Rondal Smith, president of Pioneer Bible Translators states,

Several reasons for the ethnic homogeneity of the Independent Christian Churches exist. First the earlier Stone-Campbell Movement before its triune division began with Anglo European American context and had its greatest expansion within that group, therefore, its identity within that group. What can be observed then in the growth of the Stone-Campbell Movement is the operation of the homogeneous unit principle at work, as identified by Donald McGavran in his church growth studies. In a sense however the Independent Christian Churches became even more homogeneously Anglo European American at the time of separation from the Disciples. Their geographic contexts were mainly rural regions in North America where ethnic homogeneity tended to be greater. This was due to the fact that most of the urban churches and institutions remained in the Disciple stream. Thus the Independents were concentrated in the essentially rural, Mid-Western areas. That meant then that the greater heterogeneous ethnic mix of North Americans at that time was not at their doorstep. (Smith 1998:42)

But the makeup of the frontier was not exclusively Anglo, and the new American cities were home to many ethnic groups as they are today. Deborah Brunsman points out that the Christian Churches have remained overwhelmingly homogeneous in part due to the fact that the majority of non-Anglos live in cities, while for many reasons the Christian Churches have remained largely rural. She agrees with

Mark Shelley who, as noted earlier, stated that the Christian Churches may not be guilty of overt racism but are guilty of not addressing an inherited structure of opportunity or of apathy. Brunzman is a bit more direct:

Exclusiveness is a negative attitude which accompanies fear and contributes to prejudice. If Anglo-American Christians do nothing to reach out to non-Anglos, it displays prejudice just as boldly as publicly making ethnic slurs in a church meeting would. A passive exclusiveness fails to demonstrate the love of Christ to other ethnic neighbors and reinforces the barriers of prejudice which exist in many American communities. (Brunzman 1991:103)

This chapter summarizes the main theological, methodological, ideological and historical dynamics that have largely impacted the Christian Churches in the United States regarding urban mission and their low representation of effective urban churches. Learnings from the case studies presented in this dissertation may assist Christian Churches to more effectively take on the challenge of the urban frontier.

CHAPTER 4.

The Current Presence of the Christian Churches In The Urban Areas of the United States

By 1900 the Disciples had become the fifth largest religious body in the United States, with a membership of 1,120,000. As America's frontier was "tamed" (the government officially declaring the end of the frontier in 1890) and the focus and influx of population became almost entirely urban, the moderate and conservative sectors of the Disciples remained largely outside of urban areas. Garrison and Degroot note that "Statistics for 1890 show that while other leading denominations had 15 to 50 percent of their people in cities, this American movement was only a little over 6 percent urban." They also note that in the forty-five years from 1900 to 1945, 19,756,552 immigrants arrived in the United States and the Disciples had "virtually no contacts with these or their first-generation descendants" (1948:411). They continue by stating, "Immigrants have tended to settle in urban areas and the Disciples have never been quite able to overcome their initial aversion to cities" (1948:411).

Mark Shelley comments on this pattern in *Urban Mission*,

Two hundred years ago, the Restoration Movement was on the cutting edge of American religion. We were the fastest

growing religious group in the country. That “cutting edge” was the western frontier – the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. At the end of the twentieth century the frontier has moved. People are finding their way into the cities. Unfortunately, it appears that the Christian Church isn’t. (Shelley 1995:7)

Originally, as already stated, the Disciples mainly chose to remain along the frontier partly because of fear of theological liberalism and partly because of the simplicity of the frontier and the Restoration plea to remain as true to New Testament Christianity as possible. The fact that the New Testament church was itself largely urban and multi-cultural apparently was unrecognized. Ironically today the majority of the Christian Churches no longer reflect the simplicity of the frontier churches, except that they largely remain outside of cities. Complex architectural structures, beautiful inside and out with multiple staffs and programs, and sophisticated technologically enhanced worship services characterize many of these churches today. Suburban, edge city, technoburb or boomburb congregations are filled with people who work in the city. Many churches that are in the city offer a simpler form of church life that is more similar to the New Testament order of things than are many of the Christian Churches in rural and suburban areas. The storefront church with folding chairs, no lawn to upkeep, no altar, no steeple or

pews is often similar to the frontier church of 150 years ago. The complex administration of daily events alone at some of the larger suburban churches requires hundreds of full and part-time staff members.

If the sophisticated city dweller who caused trepidation for Alexander Campbell 150 years ago has moved to the suburbs, what is keeping the Christian Churches out of the city now? There are perhaps, as have been discussed, still a number of remaining factors: the inherited anti-urban bias of the founders, the emphasis today on large/mega-churches as models, our connection with the mega-church movement/Willow Creek Association,¹ and the difficulty of embracing socio-economic and racial diversity. Mark Shelley states that the Christian Church suffers from “middle-class mindset” where

¹ In the summer of 2003 Gene Apple and Mike Breaux (former ministers of two Christian Church megachurches) took prominent leadership positions at Willow Creek. Lambert states, Christian Church leaders are showing signs of a growing indifference to the historic meanings of the movement, particularly among some of the larger more influential churches. Other churches, in the manner of the Willow Creek megachurch in suburban Chicago, are removing all traditional Christian symbols from their sanctuaries, so that seekers in the service who have been turned off to Christianity, will not be offended before they hear the message. This includes, in some cases, even relocating the Lord’s Table at the back of the sanctuary, in the foyer, or even in a side room, from whence the elements are served after a brief prayer (Lambert 1995:75).

we have an “inherited structure of opportunity” and that we “unwittingly fail to recognize that other people, particularly those different from ourselves have not had the built-in advantages that we enjoy” and that this mindset “in its ‘least harmful’ form is apathy and in its more overt form rises up as racism, elitism and active opposition to the spiritual and physical needs of the truly disadvantaged” (Shelley 1995:9).

In *United by Faith*, DeYoung, et al., put forth a plea to re-examine the churches of the New Testament in order to understand their unity in spite of much racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity. For all of the effort put forth by the Christian Churches regarding unity this is a very helpful aspect to examine; the unity that the New Testament churches experienced was a “result of the miracle of reconciliation – a conversion from their ethnocentrism to the intention, practice and vision of Jesus” (DeYoung, et al. 2003:37).

In 2003 the Christian Churches had approximately 5,916 congregations in the United States, with approximately 1,800,000 members. As mentioned in the introduction, there were 399 Christian Churches in cities with populations of 170,000 or more; thus only seven percent of Christian Churches were located in the 100 most

populated cities in the United States. There are 229 Christian Churches located in the 444 United States mid-range cities (50,000-170,000) which is 13.5 percent. In the 739 small cities of 25,000-50,000 there were 275 Christian Churches; thus 16.2 percent of the total Christian Churches in the United States were located in small cities. This means that 63.3 percent of the Christian Churches were in rural areas or cities with a 2000 U.S census population of less than 25,000.

Recent research produced by the Glenmary Research Center indicates that the Independent Christian Church was the fastest growing U.S. denomination in the 1990s (Jones *et al.* 2002:544). However, following its old pattern regarding where these new congregations have been planted, 37 (69 percent) of the new Christian Churches that emerged in the year 2000 were planted in cities with populations less than 25,000, nine (16 percent) were in cities of 25,000-50,000 and in cities of 50,000 or more there were only seven new churches planted (13 percent) (ANUKAN 1999-2000:v).

True to form, these statistics show for the three main branches of the Restoration movement that the more “liberal” the branch is considered to be, the more urban presence it has: the Disciples (the

most liberal branch) have 10 percent more urban churches than the Independent Christian Churches, despite having fewer members, and the Churches of Christ (the most conservative branch) has 10 percent less urban churches than the Christian Churches despite having the most members of any branch (Jones, *et al.* 2002:517-518).

Current Efforts

Because of the nature of the Christian Church and its desire to adhere as much as possible to the model of New Testament church structure, there is still no governing board or official hierarchy. While this allows for churches to make decisions based on their context and has many other benefits, there are problems inherent in such a model as well. One difficulty is discussion and implementation of any changes on a corporate level. Brad Pickens in his Ph.D. dissertation (University of Glasgow) argues that there are structures that serve as unofficial power structures within the movement that are perhaps extremely influential. He writes,

The direction of the Movement is guided by an informal power structure (that most within the Movement are not aware of or would deny existed) that consists of three parts: 1) Bible colleges, which almost all ministers within the movement have attended; 2) prominent churches, whose prominence is determined by the size of the congregation, the minister, innovative amelioration of secular culture, budget, buildings,

and ministries, and; 3) the vast, amorphous segment of American culture known as “evangelicalism.” (Pickens 2003:2)

And yet, palpable at Envision 2003 (The annual National Missionary Convention of the Christian Churches), perhaps because of these unofficial influences, was an atmosphere that was conducive to this lack of effective representation in the cities of the United States. Several workshops dealt with racial reconciliation and ministry in the city. A meeting of college professors and other concerned leaders within the movement was held to discuss the possibility of drafting a formal apology to the African American community to be presented at an upcoming annual North American Christian Convention (held every July).² Also, more mission organizations and church-planting associations³ that are intentionally focusing their efforts on the cities in the United States were represented.

² The North American Christian Convention, begun in 1928, has become one of the largest religious gatherings in America with a four-day mass meeting of over 60,000 registrants attending meetings, preaching/worship sessions, workshops, forums, banquets and special teen assemblies. Lambert states, “Virtually every agency serving the churches and every theological slant in both pulpit and classroom put their differences aside for a few days to make a national statement” (Lambert 1995:70).

³ There are over 70 evangelistic or church-planting associations within the Christian Churches in the United States. Each association uniquely reflects its own methods, theology and geography; however

Some agencies currently have intentions of planting urban churches, but they embody the same pattern the Christian Churches have maintained for so long; churches on the edge of big cities or in the suburbs of big cities. Some of the more prominent associations are The Go Ye Chapel Mission, Stadia, and the Chicago District Evangelistic Association. In addition two major Christian Church urban efforts were undertaken in the 1990s through the North American Christian Convention and Lincoln Christian College and Seminary which have now been abandoned due mostly to lack of financial resources to sustain them.

Go Ye Chapel Mission

The Go Ye Chapel Mission was organized in 1945 by Elmer Kile in New York City in an effort to plant Christian Churches throughout the New York metropolitan area. Kile began to notice a trend however which changed his focus somewhat and is an important factor to mention in this study. The trend or phenomenon, documented years later by writers such as Joel Garreau (*Edge Cities*, 1991) and John Vaughan (*Megachurches and America's Cities*, 1993) was that the traditional understanding of the city was changing. The edge

they come together for a convention which is largely influenced by Church Growth methodology.

cities were experiencing incredible growth and, as Byron Lambert states, “The Independent Christian Churches were catching on to what was happening and thoroughly steeped in church growth principles. The rapidly multiplying evangelistic associations have learned, like Kile, to throw nets where the fish are” (Lambert 1995:69). The Go Ye Chapel Mission then focused, not on the inner-most zones of the city but on the outer rings. They had planted 16 churches in such areas at the time of Kile’s death in 1968. By 2003 there were 40 churches planted all-together throughout the entire New York City area; only three of which were actually in New York City (www.gycm.org).

Over the past 10 years this organization has continued to use Church Growth methods to plant churches in the New York area. They have planted four Spanish-speaking churches with memberships comprised almost entirely of Hispanic immigrants, and two Portuguese speaking congregations with almost exclusively Brazilian memberships (Phegly 2001:4) and have started what they call “Project UNIDO.”⁴ Project UNIDO is a Hispanic church planting partnership with three primary goals: 1) to plant a large multi-staff Hispanic

⁴ Ironically, “unido” is the Spanish word meaning *united*. Perhaps “separado” (*separate*) would have actually been a more appropriate term!

church in the New York Metropolitan area, 2) to use this dynamic congregation to begin a Bible Institute, and 3) to equip Hispanic leaders and ministers to plant churches across the United States . (Phegley 2001:4). In addition, the Go Ye Chapel sponsors a church planting conference which has over the past few years invited speakers almost exclusively representing America's megachurches, including Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church and Lee Strobel of Willow Creek Community Church. At the conference an award is given to the most outstanding church planter of the year,⁵ called the Donald McGavran award⁶ (Schneiders 2000:8).

In researching over thirteen years of this organization's publications, I found only one article (Foulke 1995:6) which discussed planting multi-ethnic urban churches. The Empire State Evangelizing Association (hereafter ESEA) was responsible for a church plant in

⁵ Overwhelmingly in the Go Ye Chapel newsletter, *Visionary*, between the years 1990 and 2003 what determined "outstanding" was the size of the church planted. There was no mention of anyone winning this award for planting an effective or holistic church. A typical description echoes this one for Dr. Alan Ahlgrim, presented in 1992, "Alan's dynamic leadership of Doublevision and the Rocky Mountain Christian Church in Longmont Colorado, a church God called him to plant in the early 1980s, that is now running in excess of 800, make him a most fitting recipient" (Schneiders 1993:8).

⁶ McGavran himself was honored at this conference on July 12, 1990 (Schneiders 1990:4).

Binghamton, New York, which was the subject of the article. Foulke writes,

ESEA has stepped out in faith to break the mold by planting a multi-ethnic, multi-staff church! The ESEA believes this plant is in response to the call of God to march back into America's cities to model and re-establish truth, hope and righteousness through Jesus Christ. Thousands of Asians and other immigrants pour into America through New York State, as if God were bringing the nations to us through our own front door! Therefore, a primary goal of this church will be to become a center for international outreach. Driven by a philosophy of ministry which places people's need for Jesus ahead of traditional forms and methods this church will focus on reaching lost people with the gospel. Services may be in English as well as translated into Vietnamese. Offering some non-typical programming like English classes for non-English speaking adults, basic living skills for new immigrants, computer literacy and the like will reflect not only a holistic approach to ministry, but it will demonstrate that God is a God of real life. Musical styles will certainly reflect more than one narrow taste and people of all ages will be welcomed with accepting arms of love in Jesus' name. (Foulke 1995:6)

Chicago District Evangelistic Association

Lambert mentions that the Chicago District Evangelistic Association (the first Independent Christian Church planting agency, started in 1922), illustrates church growth, mass/tele-marketing techniques in its church planting endeavors (Lambert 1995:69). Many of the churches planted by this organization are in the outer rings of the city where their techniques are more effective. Shelley notes, however,

In many cities, door-to-door calling doesn't work – you can't get past the security doors of apartments to get to the real door! A recent urban telemarketing campaign resulted in almost a third of the initial responses answered by machine or in a language other than English. Direct mail is problematic. My neighborhood's [North Chicago] post office made the morning news with the revelation that 60,000 pieces of mail had been sitting in the building undelivered. Entire bags of bulk mail had been recovered from area trash cans and dumpsters. Clearly the tried and true methods which have worked so well in suburbia fall short of their potential for the city. New and innovative methods for reaching urban dwellers need to be developed and pioneered. (Shelley 1997:2)

The public relations director of the Chicago District Evangelistic Association notes that in inner city areas populated by ethnic minorities there is work being done, but the efforts fall sadly behind the population curve in those places (Lambert 1995:75).

Stadia

Stadia is a new church-planting association started in 1998, primarily focusing on church plants in the southwest region of United States, but with plans for other areas as well. Stadia is gaining a lot of attention at conventions and in the movement's weekly papers. While relatively new, and for all of the attention surrounding it, Stadia seems fairly typical of the traditional Christian Church mode of church planting, and employs no new innovative theories or strategies. Their mission statement reads:

Our Mission:

[Stadia] exists to find, train, deploy, and support church multiplication leaders. These leaders will build regional networks of planters, multiplying churches, and support personnel who will build a church multiplication movement that is sustainable and reproducible.

Our Goal:

5,500 new, vibrant Christian Churches by 2025

Our Strategy:

We believe this will be done most effectively through a church multiplication movement that stresses each church giving birth to multiple daughter and granddaughter churches through local and regional leadership teams. (www.stadia.cc, see Appendix C for Core Values)

The newsletter lists its upcoming 13 church plants. Not one large city is listed, and no mention is made of any intentional multi-ethnic, or socio-economically diverse churches. This “cutting edge” association is business as usual for the Christian Churches.

Task Force for Urban Ministry

The formation of the Task Force for Urban Ministry by the "group of 120" (basically the North American Christian Convention executive committee) began in 1992. The idea behind the Task Force was to promote urban issues and urban ministry among the Christian Churches via workshops, conventions and publications, but because of

lack of “support by the movement” (Shelley 2003) the task force fizzled out in 1998.

Chicago Center for Urban Mission of Lincoln Christian College/Seminary

Another attempt at intentional urban focus for the Christian Church was the Chicago Center for Urban Mission through Lincoln Christian Seminary. Mark Shelley was the designer and founder of that center, which housed an interactive graduate program in urban mission. Students of the program had to

- 1) live in the city for two years and practice “incarnational ministry”
- 2) work a paying job in the community—to learn the city from inside out
- 3) be mentored by experienced urban ministers and church planters selected by the Center and
- 4) attend seminar classes one day a week, where professors and other students form a think tank for evaluating their ministries. Students also must begin to learn a second language. Finally for their thesis project students must actually help plant a church or begin a new outreach ministry which supports evangelism and church planting. (Shelley 1997:3)

CCUM also has had a somewhat rocky history, including a proposal (which was rejected) for other Christian Colleges (Cincinnati and Emmanuel) to partner in this venture. CCUM was started in 1995, after two years of planning, by the relocation of seminary resources and faculty to the Uptown community in Chicago to begin pioneering a training model for urban church planting. Shelley notes,

Chicago is in many ways a parable of the Restoration Movement's impact on cities. While there are over 500 Christian Churches in Illinois (population 12,000,000) only 6 of those churches are within the city limits of Chicago (population 4,000,000). A church/population ratio of 1 to 500,000 makes Chicago, and other U.S. world-class cities, a compelling mission field. (Shelley 1997:2)

In 2000, the Chicago Center closed due to lack of funding.

Mark Shelley in a phone interview stated, "Lincoln decided it had other financial priorities, and let this die, namely building a new 10 million dollar gym and student center which meant it could not afford the \$300,000 a year cost of the urban program any longer." No other Christian college or seminary has tried anything like this, although several schools have participated in and offered credit through the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) and several offer classes and seminars in urban training.

The Current Landscape Poses a Dilemma

Despite the positive feeling expressed at its conventions toward urban multi-ethnic churches, the Christian Church in fact continues to concentrate on suburban homogeneous churches. How this will change is difficult to fathom. Robert Fife suggested that it will change only when our concept of the city changes. He states,

The answer is through the restoration of New Testament Christianity in which the early church saw the city for what it is: A great missionary field and strategic center of culture, from which the waves of the future emanate. (Fife 1999:29)

In the meantime there are pockets of people within the Christian Churches who are trying to be faithful to the cities and to kingdom ministry there. They struggle against “invisible power structures,” as well as financially and in a number of other ways. They are intentionally either planting effective urban churches or have committed to remaining in the city and working to become effective. Three of their stories are the focus of the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 5.

Case Study: North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship, Minneapolis, Minnesota

“We don’t mess around with misunderstandings that are racially based; we deal with them head on,” a leader at the North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship responded in a survey (Appendix A). “We are intentional about working out our differences and understanding where each person is coming from. Everyone, regardless of skin color brings something of value to the church. If we let race divide us, we miss out.”

Covering an entire wall in the multi-purpose room at the church is a very colorful painting of many people representing all walks of life with their hands raised. Above the people, in Spanish and English, are the words found in Ephesians 2:14,16 “For he [Jesus Christ] is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility....and in this one body he has reconciled us to God through the cross”; a theme and mission statement this body of believers, in one of the toughest neighborhoods in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area, takes seriously.

NORTH MINNEAPOLIS CHRISTIAN CHURCH MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

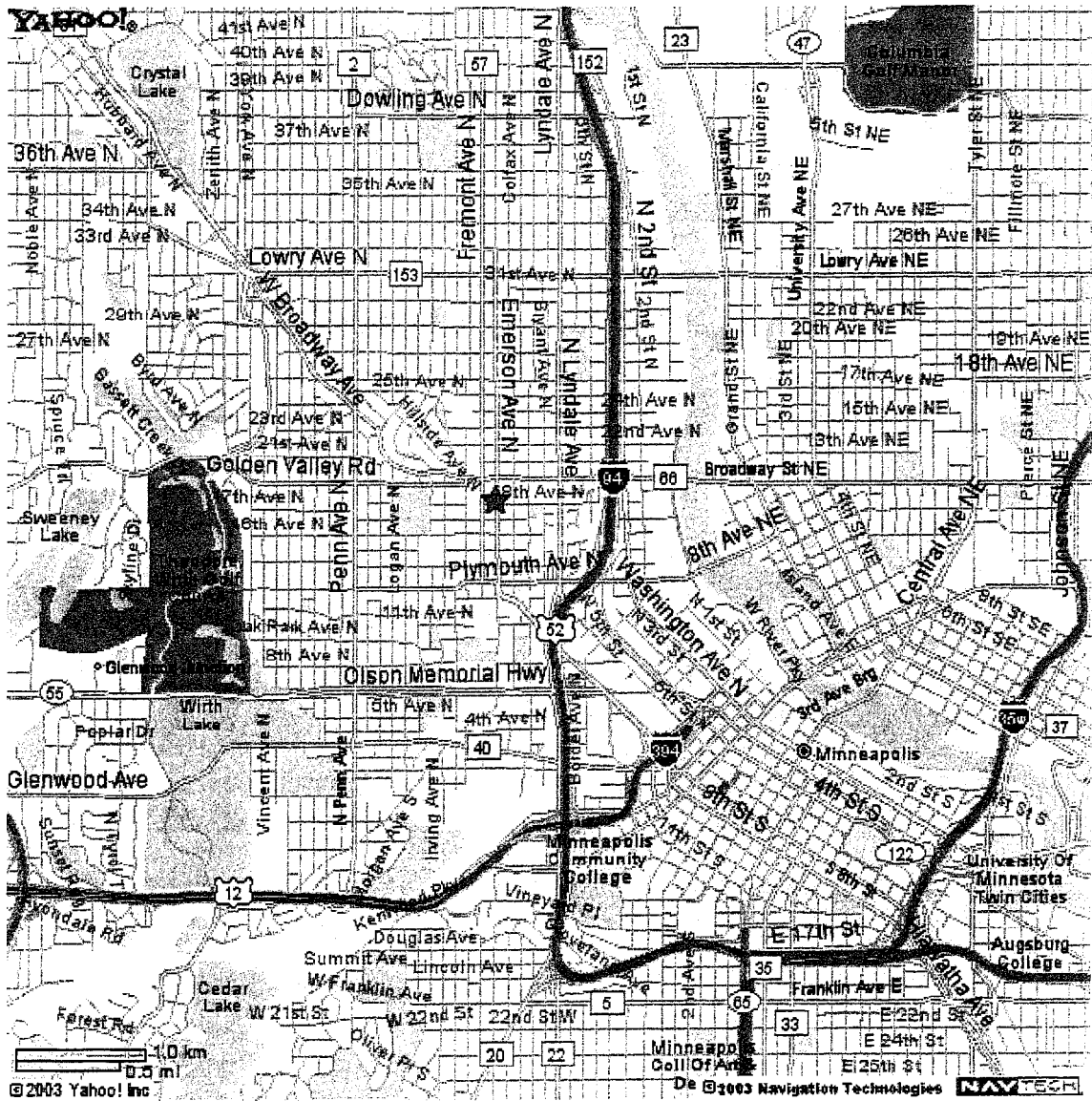


Figure 2. North Minneapolis Christian Church, facility located at 1714 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minnesota, indicated by star.

North Minneapolis is comprised of several racial groups. As of 2000, 15 percent of the population of this area were white, 58.4 percent black, 14.5 percent Asian, 9 percent Hispanic, 5 percent multi-racial, 6 percent other (This includes a growing Somali population) and 1 percent American Indian (United Way 2003). Thirty-eight percent of the people in this area live below the poverty level and the average per capita income is \$9,600 (United Way 2003). North Minneapolis has the second highest concentration of poverty and crime in Minneapolis. There is only one other Christian Church within the entire city limits of Minneapolis; Southeast Christian Church, located near the University of Minnesota about 15 miles south of NMCF.

It was to North Minneapolis that Marque Jensen felt God leading him 12 years ago. Jensen grew up on a farm in Iowa and while listening to a guest speaker at Minnesota Bible College in the mid-1980s, he became aware of the urgent need of ministry in the cities in the U.S. In 1987, he took a youth ministry position in Southeast Minneapolis and supplemented his income as a substitute teacher at North Minneapolis High School. He felt at home there, and

soon he and his wife and three boys bought a home in North Minneapolis. He began a neighborhood Bible club and began working with the Hospitality House, a boys' and girls' club offering sports, tutoring, camps, etc., that was already well established in the area. There he met Nathan Orr, who was working full-time at Hospitality House and soon the two men decided to partner in planting a church in the neighborhood.

Orr and his family are black; Jensen and his family are white, and they hoped from the beginning that they would find someone to join their leadership who reflected the Hispanic and Asian populations of the neighborhood as well.

The church began with a few families and met in the local Y.M.C.A. until enough support was raised through a (Christian Church) church planting association and a few supporting churches to purchase a building. In the beginning 95 percent of their budget was supported by other churches and church planting organizations. As of January 2004, 20 percent of their budget is from outside support.

From the beginning what the group described as an “incarnational model” of ministry was a key concept for the church. Jensen defines this as, “Living, walking, talking, playing in the

community, knocking on doors with an invitation to a kid's program or a meal, a lot of listening, through this we were able to prove our trustworthiness and gain support, because people saw our commitment to and our relationship with other people of color and various backgrounds."¹

The church now consists of about 60 people: 50 percent white, 30 percent black, 10 percent Latino, 10 percent Hmong. Jensen writes:

Our church sees a core piece of our calling [being] to live out a demonstration of the kingdom of God. Our motto is to speak and do the works of Jesus. We are called to the ministry of reconciliation first for people to be reconciled to God and then to each other. Since all sin is an act that violates our relationships to God or to others the church needs to demonstrate what God's will and desire is. We need to be a model of how, even though sin divides us, the power of Christ unites us. Racial and cultural fear, isolation and bigotry are evidences of sin and therefore we need to live and practice the Gospel to create the caring, united community Jesus prayed for. This is why we have worked to develop a diverse ministry team, worship style, leadership and programs. Many of the issues of hopelessness felt in the city are tied to racial and cultural prejudices, hatred and the barriers they create. We talk a lot about race, culture and reconciliation. We encourage people to talk openly about concerns, offenses and forgiveness.

¹ All quotations from church leaders and members came from the interviews and/or surveys conducted as part of the dissertation research.

The church continues to be holistic in its approach, trying to meet physical, social, environmental and spiritual needs of their community and members. According to several members I interviewed some of the perceived/felt needs of the community are: affordable housing, good jobs, community development, poverty, unity, reconciliation and freedom from bondage. In order to address those needs the church has been and is currently involved in: youth development, camps, housing improvement projects, prayer ministry to homes, English classes, teaching and living out reconciliation.

To those ends the leadership is committed. They are pleased, for the most part, with the ways in which the church is involved in their community and more specifically involved in individual lives. Nearly every survey mentioned that the transformation that is taking place through North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship occurs through personal relationships. One member wrote, "Our church is very involved in community revitalization, but instead of being programmed or structured it has been more individual in nature."

Other strengths noted by members and leadership included: being aware of where God was working and working with God there,

being flexible, making easy transitions, and genuinely caring about each other.

Yet there remain problems and frustrations and the members and leadership are displeased with certain aspects of their church. The issue of organization was an apparent problem that was voiced in interviews and through surveys. Jensen admits his own gifts in leadership are more along the lines of casting a vision and generating enthusiasm and support, and knows he is less gifted in working out the details of that vision. Many also mentioned a lack of resources and mentioned they worry a lot about finances specifically.

In addition, most surveys indicated lack of support from other Christian Churches and from the Christian Church in general. Several members had never read a publication from the Christian Churches, had never heard of the Christian Church conventions and did not know they had “partnerships” with Christian Churches in the state. According to Jensen, “We don’t attend or encourage attendance of the conventions as there are many other events I/we feel better speak to our issues/needs and are often better quality and closer. When we have gone I felt out of touch and overlooked.” When asked if he felt

there was an anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches he replied, “Yes. Institutionally, culturally and personally.”

North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship as an Effective Urban Church

Based on the working definition of “effective” for this dissertation, North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship exhibits in varying degrees all of the characteristics noted in Chapter One.

1. Holistic Understanding of Mission

Interview results show that the people of NMCF understand that they exist in their community as Christians to introduce people to Christ, and that the way in which they do that encompasses both evangelism (in the traditional sense of proclaiming the Word) and social ministry. Several members have experienced transformation in their own lives, some of them coming to NMCF with addictions, some were unemployed with no marketable skills, and many had dysfunctional family issues. Many report witnessing transformation in others’ lives in their community as well. One of 16 core values² that is set before the church states this commitment as follows,

² See Appendix E for a listing of all 16 core values.

We Value the Kingdom of God – We aim to establish a Kingdom presence in our community as we demonstrate that Spirit's powerful presence. Ministering in the Spirit's gifts we desire to see God bring emotional, spiritual and physical healing as well as other signs of his presence (Core Values 2003:8).

Specifically the church is very focused on youth in the neighborhood, besides the housing improvements, food distribution, an intervention ministry (which is resource for the community to utilize if there is a domestic situation that gets violent), prayer ministry to homes in the neighborhood and other outreach endeavors previously mentioned. They find the hope of real and lasting transformation in the city's youth and pour most of their time and resources into cultivating that by offering attractive youth functions, sports facilities and concerts. Talking with the youth specifically about transformation has been one of the most rewarding aspects of this research. Many of the youth told me of their involvement in gangs, drugs, theft, vandalism and sex and that through various ministries, outreach, prayer and personal attention and relationships at NMCF they had experienced new life. The youth group is large for a church of 60, with a usual core group attendance of 15-20 kids, and they are very committed to evangelism and outreach evidenced both by the time they volunteer in their own community in various

ministries and also by the annual short term mission trip to Mexico that the majority of the youth participate in.

2. Dynamic Spirituality

An impressive number of NMCF members can tell you that this church exists to “do the works and speak the words of Jesus.” In addition pastor Nate Orr states, “As his body in our community we are committed to following Him through obedience to His word. We do not consider ourselves to be the only Christians, but we desire to be Christians only.” And from the church’s core values,

We value the pursuit of God. We are hungry to know God’s presence, hear His voice and follow hard after him. We value Christlikeness. We desire that Jesus’ love, mercy, grace, truth, purity, power and integrity shine through all that we do. We value being Spirit-led. We honor Jesus as our head; the Holy Spirit as our Counselor. We seek to respond to the Holy Spirit in life and ministry. (Core Values 2003:3-4)

3. Healthy Congregational Dynamics

One of the core values of the church is remaining culturally relevant. In their words,

We value being culture current. In as much as we do not compromise the truth of the gospel, or focus on vainly following trends, we desire to communicate and live the gospel in ways that are of popular style. This should be displayed in worship music form as well as how we speak, act, and dress. (Core Values 2003:7)

This means constant change, and the people of NMCF are adept at change. Several members listed their ability to accept change as the congregation's greatest strength. According to one member, "We are constantly working to develop and train diverse ministry teams, changing our worship style to meet the people's needs in the community and cater programs to those changing needs."

Jensen and Orr have been outstanding models of change agency from the beginning of this ministry which has affected the congregations healthy attitude regarding change. According to Ronald Lippitt, *et al.*, in *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, the role of the change agent who works in communities lies in helping the group locate the common cause of its difficulties, to identify and bring forward the indigenous leadership, and to use both its strength and its weaknesses in the mobilization of power (Lippitt 1958:27). Both Jensen and Orr have worked at making this the case in their setting. Jensen states,

I am well aware of the struggle against powers and I know that there are enemies of this ministry, but I also know that God sometimes works through my enemies so I try to rely on God's wisdom and plan for peace, not my own. I remain hopeful. This is the hope that lingers even when I worry about bills or whether I am being a good enough father, or about safety, but God has shown Himself in this area again and again (Jensen 2003).

Jensen has stated that he is continually amazed at how God works and often states, “Hope from God bursts our circle of experience wide open, and it promises us ‘what eye hath not seen and what has not entered the heart of man’” (Jensen 2003).

4. Holistic Ministry Practice

Jensen perceived after living in North Minneapolis a short time that there was a problem, in fact many problems as previously mentioned, revolving around the concept of reconciliation. He and Orr knew this would be a primary focus of their ministry. As they began to build relationships with the people of the community they listened and began helping people come to terms with reconciliation in innovative ways.

In doing so they were following an adaptive rather than adoptive model of change agency. Marshal Sashkin designated these classifications in which adaptive is developed within the context as one becomes aware of needs versus an adoptive model that is an attempt to sell or convince from the outside (Ford 1976:175). Orr and Jensen made arrangements to establish regular worship services at the YMCA with the goal of demonstrating to the people in the neighborhood the values of the Kingdom of God with the motto that

they have kept to this day, “To speak the words and do the works of Jesus.” They felt called to a ministry of reconciliation and felt “since all sin is an act that violates our relationships to God or to others, this church needs to demonstrate what God’s will and desire is. We felt we needed to be a model of how, even though sin divides us, the power of Christ unites us.”

Reconciliation has remained an area of strength for the NMCF community. Their intentionality in this area is mentioned by every person who filled out a survey and in casual conversations with members as a regular part of conversation. As a church they have taken African American Heritage trips to Selma, Montgomery and Tuskegee, visiting the civil rights memorial and walking side by side: black, white, Asian and Hispanic, over the Edmond Petus Bridge. Jensen and all of the leaders preach and teach reconciliation continually. In a sermon on a Sunday during Black History Month while I visited NMCF, Jensen explained to his congregation,

If we are truly parts of the body of Christ, or even just parts of the same society and world, then Your history is part of My History, if you are part of me. I Corinthians 12:24b-27 tells us that the body is not complete without the whole, and when one part suffers all parts suffer, and when one part rejoices, all parts rejoice. European Americans are and will continue to be incomplete, we cannot and will not become what God desires

without the contribution of African Americans, native Americans, Hispanic and Asian Americans (Jensen 2002:2).

“Twelve years ago it shocked this neighborhood that a black family and a white family were partnering in ministry together. As we added Hispanic and Asian leadership we have been able to make a very strong statement to this community and they have begun to respond,” says Jensen. Another member states, “We are known as the place in the community where kids are always welcome, where they will be taken care of, where they will learn respect, where their needs will be met and they will have fun.” A goal of the church is to have a positive impact on all aspects of the community. The many ways that is achieved continues to change as members become more involved in the local school and political systems.

A Positive Example in Spite of Broader Isolation

NMCF was chosen for this case study because it is a positive example of an effective urban church plant among the Christian Churches. I was curious however to find out if, despite their effectiveness, whether or not they had experienced any negativity from the Christian Church as a movement, or if they felt they were supported and encouraged.

In *Diffusion of Innovations*, Everett Rogers states that a successful change agent is client, rather than agency, oriented (Rogers 1995:369). Jensen has followed that model from the outset, but felt frustration early on, as the ministry of NMCF was initially sponsored by the Minnesota Christian Evangelizing Association, a church planting agency of the Christian Churches. While Jensen appreciated their initial enthusiasm and financial support he often felt isolated by their lack of understanding about his particular ministry. He therefore focused his efforts and attention on what the people in his neighborhood expressed as their most important issues, whether the Association felt they were important or not. The Association used a fairly standardized model that was not tailored for church plants in an urban context. Knowing that he was not receiving the kind of encouragement and support necessary to sustain the work, he began looking at other resources. He found what he was looking for in the Christian Community Development Association founded by John Perkins and Wayne Gordon and based in Chicago. The church now is able to make up half of its budget from offerings, and the other half comes from other churches and individuals who support the church as a mission. These ties and partnerships with other Christian Churches

in the Minneapolis area that remain are now really only due to Jensen's personal friendships and past contacts.

As reported in surveys both the leadership and the membership of this church feel isolated and unsupported from the Christian Churches. The leadership feels that the Movement's historic pleas for unity and the restoration of the New Testament church are important in their urban context because, as one leader stated, "It is an awesome and effective model because the city is very much a place where you focus on essentials and must work together – overlooking non-essentials." But they feel little understanding or support from the Movement in the urban context. In response to the question, "Do you feel that the mega-churches in the movement have anything to offer your church?" One leader wrote, "Do they want to? I don't believe they really want to because their models they follow do not work cleanly in the city [i.e. are not effective]. They could do a lot but it would mean changing their whole view of the Kingdom. I am not bitter but I don't believe there is much desire to make long-term involvements." Another leader wrote in response to the question, "Have you perceived resistance from the Christian Churches as a church in the city?", "We have felt very misunderstood, there could be

so much more sending and receiving from a relationship/partnership with us, we could use so much help in leadership training that is urban specific and financial and community development, and there are many things we could offer them.”

A Concluding Glimpse of the Ministry at NMCF

As I was getting ready to end a week spent with the people of NMCF, a fourteen-year-old boy approached me who had been a personal challenge to me all week. There were classes and other activities that he had disrupted. He had been rude on several occasions and been reprimanded, lovingly but sternly, by other members of the church.

In the middle of the week I had a talk with him about what was going on with his behavior. He acted embarrassed and didn't talk to me much after that. He approached me as I was leaving with a huge grin on his face and with something in his hand for me. It was a note that said that he was glad I had come and that he never had a white mom before. He explained that at the church he had several church moms, Hispanic and black; but I was the first white mom he had. He apologized for having a bad week – his dad had been arrested again, and he was in his own words “probably acting out” (a phrase he had

no doubt heard from his church moms before!). But he said, “The cool thing about this place is that even when I have had a bad week – they keep setting me straight – they keep loving me like I had a good week, until I do.”

Based on evidence collected through interviews, observations of both the church and larger community, surveys, and testimony of community leaders who are not members at NMCF, one may conclude that NMCF is an effective urban Christian Church. Jensen believes they are successful because people in this North Minneapolis neighborhood who previously felt as though no one cared about them, now know that God loves them, that Jensen and Orr love them, and the changes that result from that kind of knowledge are continually transforming lives.

CHAPTER 6.

Case Study: University Christian Church, Cincinnati

University Christian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio is an example of the power of relocation and home ownership in establishing healthy urban ministries. Over the past few years, 13 families have purchased homes in our ministry area, and these families serve as the spiritual and leadership core of our congregation. They are sacrificing notions of “suburban success” and God is using their lives to transform the lives of urban dwellers in uptown Cincinnati. (Jackson 2003:7)

Troy Jackson, the senior minister at University Christian Church (UCC) in Cincinnati, is convinced that by releasing the church to God and the community, transformation is inevitable. Located in a neighborhood that is 50 percent white, 40 percent black, 7 percent Asian Indian and 3 percent Chinese, the church has embraced and appreciates its rich cultural diversity. Added to this is the socio-economic diversity of being near a large university, the University of Cincinnati (See map on the following page). The members do not look at embracing diversity as a task or a problem to solve but they feel blessed for getting to have a foretaste of the Kingdom. Several members cited Revelation 7:9 and spoke of having such a great opportunity to experience “every tribe and every nation” all around them, all the time. Overwhelmingly the answer to the question, “What is your congregation’s greatest strength?” was “diversity.”

MAP OF DOWNTOWN CINCINNATI, OHIO

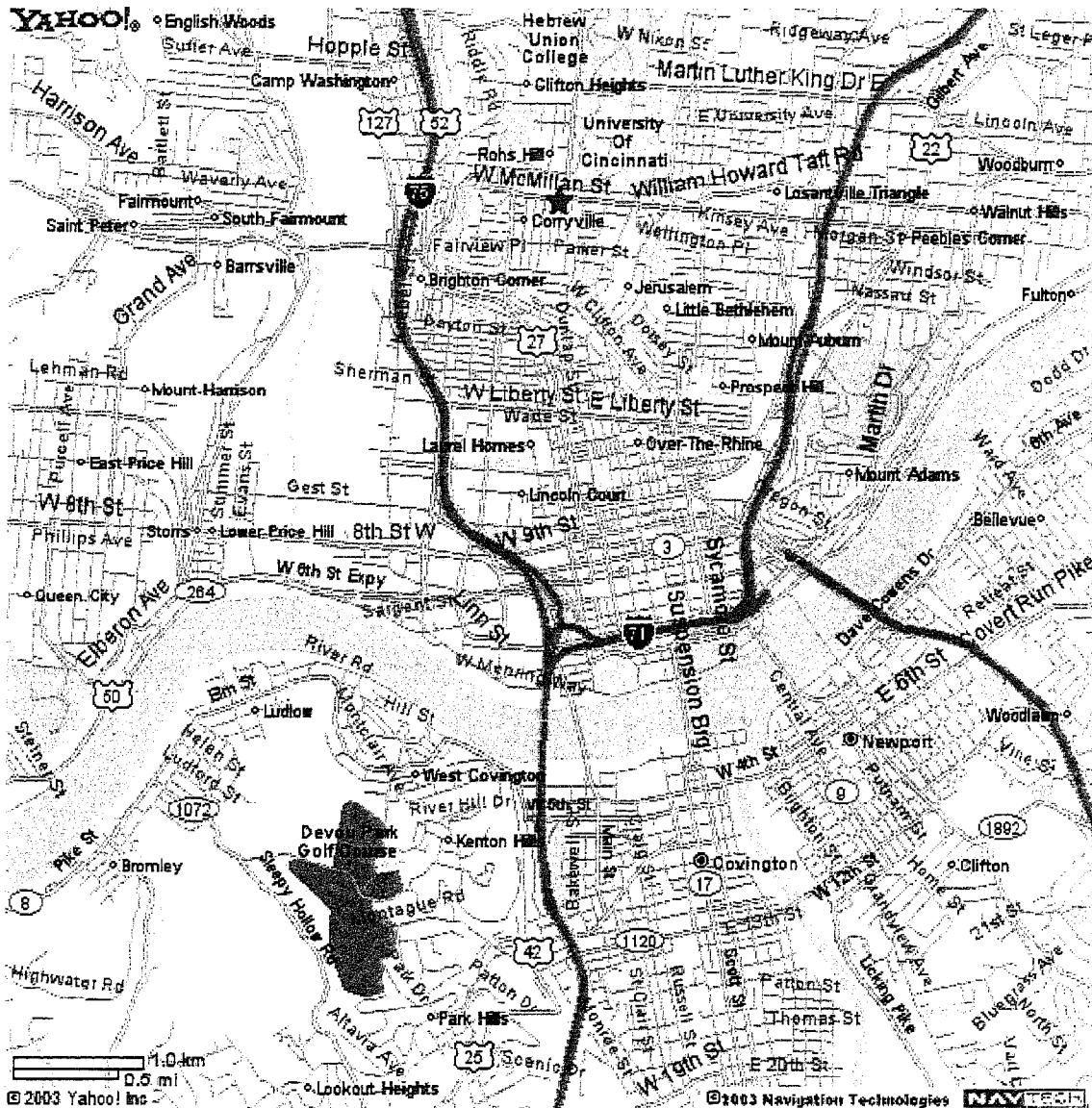


Figure 3. University Christian Church, facility located at 245

West McMillan, Cincinnati, Ohio, indicated by star.

The church is involved in the community in a number of unique ways, including a fair trade coffee shop ministry¹ but primarily in relocation,² the key aspect, according to Jackson. He states,

One of the plagues of urban ministry and mission has been paternalism. Those relocating must always remember that the congregation and community are under God's control. The church must be led by God not suburban saviors. Additionally those relocating must come primarily to learn and to serve, not to lead and to direct. God has uniquely gifted and resourced the people in America's urban neighborhoods to serve and reach their communities. (Jackson 2003:8)

The members agree: their involvement in the community has changed them and the community. One member wrote,

I work near here, I go to church here and I live here. I feel great getting my coffee at a fair-trade coffee house that is a ministry of UCC which also supports local artists (Rohs Street Café), I support local business and help out with the Chinese and African congregations that also meet in our building – this is my community and I am so happy to belong to a church that doesn't dissect life into little segments – this is all of our experience – we live here and love this community with all we've got.

¹ See Appendix D for a description of this ministry.

² The definition of "relocation" I am using here comes from John Perkins. He states, "Relocation is committed people living in communities of need. The importance of our physical presence in these communities cannot be overstated. Some say relocation is just a matter of the heart, but aren't we glad Jesus didn't think so?" (Perkins 1995:33). UCC considers anything within a one mile radius of the church building their community, and encourages members to buy homes and businesses within that parameter.

In the spring of 2002 I took a group of 40 students (an Introduction to Ministries class) from Great Lakes Christian College in Lansing, MI to University Christian Church as part of an annual tour of diverse churches. They were less than impressed by the facilities at UCC. They almost all noted the chipping paint and leaking ceiling. They said it smelled like mold, that the neighborhood felt unsafe and the building was cold.

As the service began I watched them forget their discomforts. They enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and rich worship music flavored by the many cultures represented and the smell of ethnic food and coffee soon overpowered any initial moldy smell. After the service we were invited to the coffee house, heard a great band and some poetry reading, talked with many members of the church and community and looked at paintings and sculptures done by local artists. The students heard all about relocation and reinvestment. In just a few hours the fear dissipated and these same complaining students were energized by what they were experiencing from this community.³

³ The next day, as part of this same trip, we traveled to the Christian Churches' second largest church. It smelled good, was clean, was safe, and had no leaks or chipped paint, in fact they had just built a multi-million dollar facility and had more people involved in helping

University Christian Church as an Effective Urban Church

The many ways in which this church is effective, as discussed in the next few sections, is encouraging. University is a fifteen-year-old congregation that has a clear understanding of its mission in its context. Its mission statement reads:

UCC's mission is taken from the apostle John's vision, as recorded in the book of Revelation, chapter 7. In short, it boils down to 5 things:

- Bringing people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- Living the Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Racial Kingdom of God
- Drying the Tears of the Broken
- Walking in Holiness
- Worshipping God with Passion and Authenticity

How do we accomplish this? We believe in a concept called "Shared Ministry." Shared Ministry is based on the concept that a church is a body and every person in that church has been put there by God and has a purpose. Each person has a unique gift and personality and style. We know that God wants to use every person to carry out his will here on earth, and at UCC we don't want to cramp God's style. So, our goal is to help you find out how God can use you, teaching you how to listen to God, setting you free to live for and serve God (www.universitychristianchurch.net).

park cars on Sunday than UCC has members.... and the students were more impressed with UCC!

They are clear about their core values and many people surveyed and interviewed were able to list most or all of them. The core values of UCC are as follows:

We believe in the centrality of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who came to earth in the flesh of humanity, paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross, was raised back to life and ascended up to heaven. He now sits at God's right hand and intercedes for his church on earth. We believe that Christ will soon return and judge the living and the dead.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the world and lives within those who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. We believe that, through God's grace, forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life are available to those who trust Christ as Lord and Savior.

We believe that the Bible is the authoritative word of God and provides clear knowledge of salvation for humanity through Jesus Christ. We also believe that the Bible gives clear expectations for how a Christian should live (www.universitychristianchurch.net).

In addition, it is notable that every person who filled out a survey and whom I have personally talked with both formally (interviewed) or informally used the phrase, "multi-racial, multi-ethnic Kingdom of God" when referring to what they hope to represent and embrace.

1. Holistic Understanding of Church's Mission

UCC takes their context seriously. They think about their

mission in relation specifically to their neighborhood and city.

Because of its location near a major university, many in this congregation indicated that they feel that they have been presented with unique opportunities for ministry.

The church seems to be very aware of the importance of reconciliation, as many mentioned this on surveys and in interviews, and they strive to practice reconciliation among their own church and in the community. Socio-economic issues seem to be taken as seriously as racial reconciliation. There is a real concern for economically distressed people and those for whom capitalism doesn't work.

The church has many ministries that not only help alleviate the symptoms of financial distress but help alleviate it systematically. The ethos of the coffee house is a great example of this. Because of the racial strife in Cincinnati in the last few years and following the death of Nathaniel Jones,⁴ the church is focusing on racial and ethnic issues and making the topic of reconciliation a priority. John Perkins preached in February, 2004 and what UCC calls a "Journey Development Course" was taught on the topic of "Confronting Race

⁴ Rioting followed the death of Cincinnati resident, Nathaniel Jones, December 7, 2003. Jones died after a violent struggle with local police officers November 30, 2003.

and Ethnicity” during the spring of 2004. Every member was encouraged to read Perkins’s book, *Let Justice Roll Down*, and to join in a discussion group before he spoke there in February.

The church further demonstrates a holistic understanding of their mission not only by addressing social and physical needs of their community but by addressing spiritual needs as well. Several members noted that their greatest joy was seeing people come to know Christ and the difference that made in people’s lives. UCC has many people who attend who are completely new to church and who have no foundational knowledge of the Bible or basic Christianity. The church offers many classes on fundamentals as well as discipleship training opportunities.

2. Dynamic Spirituality

In terms of spirituality UCC emphasizes accountability and community life and they work hard at fostering healthy and dynamic, and spiritually uplifting community. UCC is a church of about 150 members who are very serious about using small groups as a means of fellowship, intimacy, spiritual growth, ministry and education for its current members and as a safe place of entry for visitors. There are two kinds of small groups: Net Groups and Journey Groups. In both cases each group is a small gathering of people who come together

weekly to grow spiritually, develop meaningful healthy relationships, and experience genuine Christian community. Both are places where people can share life experiences and support one another in their day to day lives.

The main difference is that Net Groups have a specific ministry focus. And a Journey Group is a place to connect with other people while you are in the process of figuring out where you want to contribute. Net Groups are teams of four or more people who share a common concern and passion for ministry. They meet together much like Journey Groups, but they also focus on a specific area of ministry i.e.: International Students, The Community, Kids Ministry, Hughes Highschool, etc. Net Groups meet weekly September through May, and help make our vision of being Living Water a reality in uptown Cincinnati (www.universitychristianchurch.net).

There are ten small groups at UCC: seven Journey Groups and three Net Groups (The Net Groups are evangelistic in nature and will be discussed in another section). The Journey Groups either focus on a unique aspect of the Christian life, or discuss a particular book. In January 2004 the various topics covered by the Journey Groups included: Marriage and Family, Hebrews, Jesus' "I am" statements, Spiritual Gifts, and the book, *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Many of the members mentioned the important role that small groups have played in their spiritual development.

3. Healthy Congregational Dynamics

One of the dynamics of a healthy congregation is the ability to embrace change. This seems to be a given at UCC and was strongly affirmed, both in interviews and surveys. The university setting, young leadership and diversity of the congregation, worship styles, ministry and outreach, small groups and neighborhood all add up to a constantly changing environment, which is both expected and handled well by the congregation. The only thing that was mentioned that would even reflect a struggle or frustration with change was an occasional reference to the building renovations. It has been somewhat of an inconvenience trying to make use of available space while the renovations took place this summer and fall.

Another healthy aspect of the church is the fact that they have reduced their reliance on outside financial support from 90 percent 15 years ago to 10 percent. As of February, 2004 the church is 90 percent self-supporting.

4. Holistic Ministry Practice

UCC concentrates on the whole person: body, mind, and spirit as well as the whole community and whole world and is involved in various local ministries that reflect this priority. As mentioned, there are three small Net Groups that meet weekly to discuss or do ministry

together. These operate in the following areas: campus ministry, coffee house ministry and international student ministry. In addition there is church-wide participation in other ministries including: . organization and maintaining a food/clothes pantry, support of international students' families, mentoring, coaching and tutoring in the local high school, and offering free English classes.

Another aspect of holistic ministry is transformation which incorporates economic, spiritual, physical, environmental and community uplift. The members of UCC pride themselves specifically in the area of community involvement and transformation. Many members mentioned the coffeehouse and feel that not only is it a great place to meet people and have an opportunity to share Christ but that it has helped transform their community economically, spiritually and ethically. The serious commitment of so many members to relocate within a mile of the church building is also indicative of their commitment to shaping their community. Jackson speaks often of the power of the message that is sent to the community when families choose to relocate. And business owners whose photo shops, drug stores and hair salons are located near the church's coffee shop noted in conversations that they are impressed with the church's commitment to the community – especially noting

that the coffee house is not-for-profit, that many members live nearby and are involved in the lives of local artists and try to support anything positive that is being done in that part of town.

Cincinnati has been ravaged by racial strife and economic hardship over the years and in a time when many have packed up and fled to the suburbs, the members of UCC have packed up and moved right in to the heart of the city.

A Positive Example in Spite of Broader Homogeneity

As mentioned, UCC feels privileged to be experiencing Kingdom life. Due to the presence of God which they feel in part through the richness in diversity. Consequently they feel sorry for homogeneous churches that are not enjoying this foretaste! When asked questions regarding feeling isolated by the Restoration Churches, megachurches, or suburban churches, the responses indicated that in their view larger, all-white, all socio-economically similar churches are missing something important, and that they have little-to-nothing to add to life at UCC unless they are willing to relocate and become part of the community. There was no reported or observed resentment for a disproportionate amount of money spent on suburban churches, versus the meager amount of money spent on the

renovations that are occurring at UCC. One member wrote that they didn't expect much involvement from suburban churches.

They are of a different breed because of their demographics and socio-economic status. We cannot have the expectation or goal to become a yuppie boom church because we do not live in a yuppie boom area. They should not expect that of us by trying to get us to use models that are not appropriate for our setting either. We must live and grow within our context and not try to implant the suburban church within this area. In order to be purposeful in ministry a church must understand who they are able to reach, and our audience is not particularly white middle-class families.

When asked if they felt an anti-urban bias existed within the Christian Churches, one member stated, "I don't believe such a bias is intentional. However, I do feel that an anti-urban bias exists. Many churches, although well-intending, are ignorant of the needs and the people groups within urban areas. Ignorance can easily manifest itself as fear – causing bias."

A Concluding Glimpse of the Ministry at UCC

Jackson's enthusiasm for his city and church is contagious. He wrote recently,

Now is the time for an urban church planting movement! We cannot afford to delay any longer. The risks and challenges are great. The financial commitment necessary is extensive. Without God's involvement, the task is insurmountable. Yet the potential global impact is so significant that we cannot afford not to take the risk, meet the challenge, and invest the dollars. We have no choice but to live the adventure of life in

areas where we are forced to depend upon God's power. The church cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the city any longer. We are here for such a time as this (Jackson 2003:8)!

According to the criteria used in this study based on interview evidence, survey results and observation, UCC is an effective urban church and serves as a great model for the Christian Churches. Their intentionality in regard to community, relocation and reconciliation is evident and seems to continually energize this congregation. It is fitting that Perkins is an invited guest speaker of this congregation which seems to be living out so many of his ideas. For example, Perkins has written,

We must abandon the twentieth century marketing strategy incorporated by evangelicalism that church growth can only happen in homogeneous settings. We are not called to make disciples just for the sake of numbers. We are to make disciples who understand the reconciling aspect of the gospel and who can go into all the world. True disciples are to help in the healing of others now, healing the racism, prejudices and hurt by reflecting God's kingdom on earth (Perkins 1995:22).

The areas for improvement, according to results of surveys and interviews are in the areas of communication and administration. One member reported some difficulty with the maturity level of such a young leadership team (all of the leaders are in their 20s and 30s) but, stated that because of the emphasis on teams, community and accountability they felt confident maturation would take place.

UCC has seen slight numerical growth over the last 15 years, starting with about 50 people and growing to their current membership of 150, but more importantly to them are the positive contributions they have made in the community and in individual lives over the last 15 years.

CHAPTER 7.

Case Study: All Nations Christian Church, Lansing, Michigan

“Sister, come in here out of the rain and give me that baby.

Praise Jesus for the rain, but get that baby out of it right now.”

I was greeted at the door at All Nations Christian Church in this manner in the summer of 2000 by a woman in a black and white polka dot dress, matching shoes, purse, handkerchief, jewelry and umbrella. Sister Gates took my son out of my arms and kissed him. Then she kissed my husband, and then she kissed me. We would be greeted by her in a similar fashion every time we walked through the doors of All Nations.

We were escorted into the sanctuary where we were greeted by loud music and cheerful people from seemingly every walk of life. A large, and very gregarious Puerto Rican man dressed in a casual cabana shirt, Pastor Tico Berroa, was the next person to greet us. He invited us to meet the other pastor, Art Foster. Foster, an African American, was wearing a bright purple suit and greeted us with a thick Louisiana accent. When he found out my husband was from Tennessee he immediately invited us to stay after church for a catfish fry. (He said his friends call him the “Catfish King.”)

The entire first encounter with this church was overwhelmingly warm and inviting. Children were involved in the service and the worship team was comprised of many ages and at least five ethnicities. The music and art reflected the diversity of the congregation of 125 and the overall mood was festive.

Overview

Planted in 1999, All Nations Christian Church was the vision of pastors Art Foster and Tico Berroa, who met while students (non-traditional students; Foster is in his 50s and Berroa late 30s) at Great Lakes Christian College, in Lansing, Michigan (see map on the following page). Connecting in class over issues such as reconciliation and other social concerns, the two became friends and began to cast a vision for a church which focused on these concerns.

While Lansing (whose configuration largely follows Burgess' concentric zone model) has four Christian Churches within the city limits, none of them is located within the four innermost areas and none of them is multi-ethnic. All Nations set out to intentionally locate themselves in the innercity and to be intentionally multi-ethnic.

Lansing, as mentioned in Chapter One, has a large Hispanic and African American population as well as growing Sudanese and Asian

populations (Siles and Rochin 1998:3). Lansing's inner city is undergoing significant changes in its revenue conditions and in its social and economic conditions. According to Siles, "It is a confluence of cultures, histories, and different groups who sometimes differ in needs, but share a common space for community relations" (Siles and Rochin 1998:2).

Foster and Berroa have very different backgrounds and styles. Foster has been a chaplain at the General Motors Corporation in Lansing for over 20 years. Originally from Louisiana, he grew up in poverty, picking cotton as the son of a sharecropper, and actually fled in the middle of the night to escape that life. He has lived on the streets in Detroit and eventually found himself in a shelter in Lansing many years ago where he was introduced to Jesus Christ. Since then, Foster has been on a mission to tell people who think they have no future that they are wrong.

Berroa came to Great Lakes Christian College for ministry training thinking that he would be going back to Puerto Rico, or possibly even to Cuba to preach. He never thought he would end up doing cross-cultural ministry in a multi-ethnic church in Lansing, MI.

The other people in leadership at All Nations included Ryan and Rebekeh Gilroy (recent Great Lakes Christian College graduates) who, both in their early twenties, are in charge of youth and the day care. Michael Ball serves as the music pastor. In addition to these paid leadership positions the church have been blessed with permanent volunteers in areas of youth, recreation and children's departments.

Twenty-five percent of All Nation's budget comes from outside support. The church has been blessed by multiple partnerships with nine other churches and is heavily supported by New Churches of Christ Evangelism, an evangelistic/church planting association. This partnership has been very helpful in acquiring a building and implementing a Christian day-care. But as described at the beginning of this dissertation the partnerships are not without their frustrations, communication problems and negative instances. Most members of All Nations as well as the leadership feel supported by their partners but also feel expectations are too high or just not appropriate for their context. In addition they feel that overall there is insufficient knowledge about the various ethnic groups or their backgrounds and that this causes bias or at least misunderstanding.

MAP OF DOWNTOWN LANSING, MICHIGAN

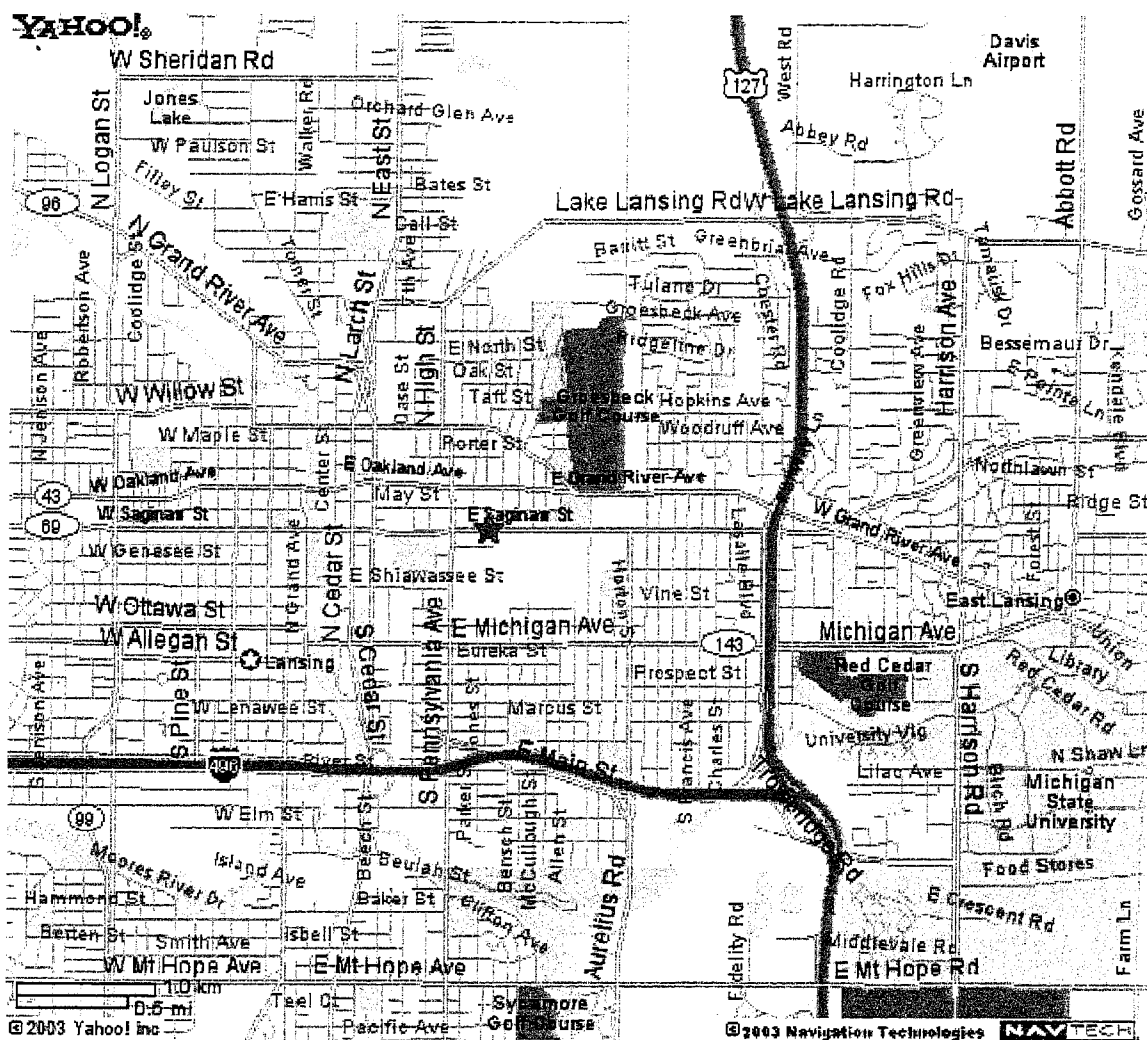


Figure 4. Location of All Nations Christian Church (black star),
Lansing, Michigan

Indicators of Effectiveness

Despite this, All Nations is an effective urban church as is demonstrated by their excellence in the following areas.

1. Holistic Understanding of Mission

The members and leadership of ANCC pay attention to a motto that hangs on the wall in the large foyer as people enter the church: “The cross is both vertical and horizontal. God has extended His grace to us; we must extend grace to others.” The church does not distinguish between offering grace by means of a cup of cold water or by baptizing someone into the faith; they simply see it all as part of their biblical assignment.

The Mission Statement¹ for All Nations is, “Taking the Gospel to every ethnic group and preparing God’s people for works of Christian Service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Matthew 28:19 and Ephesians 4:12).” Ryan Gilroy (Youth Minister) states that while he was pleased with the overall mission statement for All Nations, he felt the youth department needed one of their own which

¹ The term “vision statement” is used intending to convey the big picture or concept. The term “mission statement” flows directly from the vision statement. It is the implementation of the vision and it outlines what must happen to realize the vision.

fit in with the overall statement, but that set it apart as well. The youth department's Mission Statement is, "To serve the children and youth of All Nations Christian Church. Teaching them the love of our Lord Jesus Christ in very practical ways. Helping to meet their needs physically, emotionally and spiritually."

In the next few years the youth department hopes to have a youth center open 24 hours a day offering a safe place for kids to hang out, do their homework, and receive food and clothes and Christian mentoring.

In addition, the church has become very active in helping the thousands of Cuban refugees who relocate in Lansing acclimate to the Lansing area. The church has partnered with the government agency that facilitates the relocation, getting the names and addresses of the new residents. Berroa is fluent in Spanish and is a very welcomed person when he arrives at their homes with a gift basket from All Nations and the ability to translate important official documents. In some cases these documents are the paperwork that allows them to stay in the United States.

2. Dynamic Spirituality

In addition to printing their core values (Appendix E) on almost everything that has the church's name on it (flyers, business cards, posters, bulletins and newsletters), All Nations regularly publishes their vision statement as well. The members are committed to working together in order to represent and meet the unique needs of the diverse congregation in their worship services and discipleship training classes.² They know the importance of allowing people of every culture to express themselves in manners that are appropriate and meaningful to them in order for people to grow spiritually. Depending on who is leading the worship services at the church, various styles will be used reflecting the diversity of the congregation.

3. Healthy Congregational Dynamics

All Nations is a strong advocate for recovery ministries and helps people who have addiction problems, have been or are being

² In regards to this commitment the vision statement reads:

We reach out to teach individuals to become committed to Jesus Christ and the Bible alone.

We reach out so that we gather each Sunday to honor God in a manner that is pleasing to him and us.

We reach out so that we can give all individuals created in the image of God an opportunity to hear the Good News of our Lord and Savior, and have the same joy, peace and salvation through the blood of Lamb.

abused or who are trying to adjust to life after being imprisoned; basically anyone who is trying to turn their lives around. They host two such ministries (Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous) in their building and have trained counselors who serve in various capacities in the church including helping people find the right support group or recovery ministry. They feel that one of the best ways to aid recovery is to serve and the church is very willing to put anyone to work!

For the most part the congregation has been very encouraged by the dramatic positive changes in members that they have invested in, though there have been relapses. In one case physical property was stolen from the church and upon investigation it was discovered at a lay leader's house; some of it had been sold for drug money. The church helped the person get back into a rehabilitation program and he is still a member of this church. The church takes such challenges in stride. One member commented, "Things never get boring here, and you never know what is going to happen from week to week. God seems to have equipped us to thrive in that kind of environment."

In addition, the congregation is constantly changing as new refugees arrive every month, the youth bring in friends and school

contacts, and different members are trained to step into leadership roles.

Many members and leaders mentioned that the biggest problem they have is in the area of family dysfunction within the church. Many families have been broken due to various factors: divorce, abuse, addictions, poverty and separation due to hostile political climates. (The church, as mentioned, has several Cuban refugees, but also Sudanese and Ethiopians as well.) One thing the Gilroys are trying to do in their areas of ministry within the church is help facilitate family reconciliation. They are a young couple, but they try to bring in older more experienced couples to help lead small groups on family related issues.

4. Holistic Ministry Practice

All Nations has a holistic approach to ministry which includes participation in a food and clothing distribution area as well as a prison ministry and a daycare, and they offer help in job placement and life skill development. The annual Vacation Bible School is evangelistic in its approach. Most of it is held outside so that people in the neighborhood can see what is going on and know that it is safe and fun. The youth group loves to take 20 oz. bottles of pop and wrap All

Nations flyers around them and distribute these throughout their neighborhood, inviting everyone to come to their church.³

What drives their holistic ministry practices is their commitment to their vision statement. They strive to,

... reach out to the Latinos, Asians, African Americans, Anglos and any other ethnic groups with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Revelation 7:9 “There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.” We reach out to the inner-city individuals who need the hope of Jesus Christ. We reach out to individuals of every socio-economic level for Christ. We reach out so that we teach children and the youth of our community about Jesus and guide them to walk in the ways of God.

All Nations’ church building is a huge facility on a main thoroughfare in North Lansing (formerly the American Cancer Society building) that has room to house an office complex, a large lobby and sanctuary, day care and a youth multi-purpose room. Several students from Great Lakes Christian College (five miles away) volunteer every week to help Gilroy get the multi-purpose area ready for 24-hour-a-day access for the neighborhood kids. The church

³ On several of my visits to ANCC various members of the youth group have shared with me anecdotal experiences from this form of outreach. It was the youth group’s idea and they designed the flyers and are in charge of acquiring the soda. They are very proud of this effort!

seems to be ready for this change and looks forward to offering this to their community.

Foster (who is bi-vocational and works 20 hours a week at General Motors and 20 hours a week at All Nations) takes his role as chaplain at General Motors very seriously. He sees this as a great opportunity to minister to people who are burned out and tired of working in a factory, who oftentimes see no light at the end of the tunnel. They turn to the chaplain usually as a last resort, and quite often as they are experiencing some form of depression. Foster says he has the pleasure of introducing sad, lonely and hopeless people to the One who can turn their sorrow into joy, their mourning into dancing and their pain to healing. He also has the opportunity to invite people to All Nations. He has experienced firsthand the personal transforming power of Christ and does not hold back from sharing his experiences with people who are struggling.

Pastor Berroa has the pleasure of approaching people new to this country and showing them that they are not alone and inviting them to All Nations where they can have a support base, a new America family. He says it changes their lives. The church has

enjoyed significant growth over the past 5 years, increasing from 25 people to its current membership of 125.

The Gilroys take a group of inner-city youth to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan every summer for hiking, camping and swimming. For many of these youth it is their first time out of the city. They come back to their neighborhood changed and excited and they bring their friends to church.

The pastors have been called on many times since their acquisition of their building to make statements in the paper as voices representing the Black community, the poor, the Sudanese and Cubans and inner-city youth. They have become known in Lansing as the church where anyone can go and get themselves turned around.

All Nations thus has a leadership team that is very sensitive to issues of poverty, race relations, education, community transformation and the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Now with a congregation of 125 people, the church reflects both the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of its neighborhood. Fifty-two percent of the congregation is Black, 30 percent White, 15 percent Latino, 3 percent other (including Asian and Sudanese).

A Positive Example Despite Varying Ideas About Leadership

All Nations, as mentioned, is supported financially by many Michigan Christian Churches and New Churches of Christ Evangelism. Interestingly though, Foster mentions that many churches did not want to partner in order to help start All Nations, but have come on board in the last year or so after a building was purchased and the congregation began to grow. As detailed in the opening remarks of this dissertation, there have been issues between the church and their partners because of differences in ideas of how things should be done. Foster stated in the survey,

While we appreciate so much the financial support of our partners, they have to trust us to know our context better than they do. What works in the suburbs flops in the city. Area leaders want us to attend conventions and training seminars that do not pertain to our situation at all. Success is measured differently in the city, and many well-meaning pastors did not sign on to partner with us until they could be relatively certain we were going to grow – which to them means we would be successful.

Several members agree, stating that most difficulties within the church happen because of difference of opinion as to how best to minister to the people in their neighborhood. Much of this misunderstanding comes from supporters or partners who don't know

the neighborhood or the strengths of the church well enough to make those kinds of judgments.

The leaders feel pressure to look at models of churches that the church planting agencies and supporting churches feel are important, (such as Saddleback Church) but are less relevant for their context. One supporting church gave All Nations a lot of material from Saddleback and thought All Nations could use it as is in their inner-city context. The leaders at All Nations were grateful for the donation but said they spent hours trying to translate the material into their context and it changed so significantly in the process that it was of little value by the time they were done. They felt pressured to do something with it so as not to strain relations with the donor.

A Concluding Glimpse of All Nations Christian Church

Pastor Berroa stated in an interview his amazement that the church has grown to 125 members. He said it felt like God was really blessing their efforts in Lansing and that he (Berroa) was prepared for much slower growth. Ryan Gilroy added that not only was he also amazed at the growth but was really pleased with the transformation of many of the kids in the youth group at All Nations. Gilroy states,

That is success to me in a nutshell; a kid who used to have no direction now looking to God for guidance. I have had the joy of seeing that happen again and again since I started ministering here at All Nations. I consider it a privilege to be a part of that.

CHAPTER 8.

Restoration Principles and a New Urban Initiative

What emerged out of this study is that through revisiting founding documents of the movement in an urban context, the Christian Churches are presented with the opportunity to be more faithful to the principles of the Restoration plea (simplicity and unity) than the current church planting methodology utilized by the Christian Churches. Although an important foundational issue of the Restoration Movement is to restore the dynamic of New Testament churches it picked up, as has been demonstrated an anti-urban bias from its cultural context which is not reflected in the New Testament.

This knowledge could lead to embracing a new, more authentic and biblically sound initiative for future urban church plants among the Christian Churches. This research has documented the challenges and difficulties of urban ministry today. But it has also documented three important examples of city ministry, and noted that these ministries are inadequately supported by the church at large. The Christian Churches have been using the same model of church planting for all contexts, expecting the same results everywhere, but this model fails to address urban realities. The Christian Churches

advocate contextual theology for other countries but seem unaware of our own cultural context, or at least unwilling to address it with a workable theology.

The Christian Churches have had little presence in the urban areas of the United States, concentrating their efforts on other areas where churches grow more rapidly and easily. The church has concentrated its money, time, and attention on those agencies and organizations which perpetuate the planting of homogeneous churches outside of the largest cities in the country.

Despite this general picture, a few Christian churches are making a difference in the cities of the United States. These churches have embraced a model of church life and ministry that reaffirms and recovers the Christian Church New Testament restoration heritage -- a community model. This involves, among other things, commitment to the often slow process of transforming one life in a hurting community at a time. In the next section I will discuss four key points that arose as I compared these three churches. Finally, in light of the data collected, I will propose a new paradigm of urban church planting for the Christian Churches.

Major Conclusions from the Case Studies

A few common themes arose as I worked through the data collected from these three churches: 1) all three churches voiced that their greatest strength was diversity, 2) all three churches experienced a lack of understanding and/or support from the Christian Churches at large, 3) each church felt as though an anti-urban bias does exist within the Christian Church, and 4) they all indicated that despite the anti-urban bias and other misunderstandings the original pleas of the Restoration Movement could play an important role in establishing a new urban church planting initiative among the Christian Churches.

In addition to these four key points I will also compare how each church understands and displays characteristics of effectiveness: 1) a holistic understanding of the church's mission, 2) a dynamic spirituality, 3) healthy congregational dynamics, and 4) a holistic ministry practice.

Greatest Strength is Diversity

A pattern that emerged from the case studies is that each church found its greatest strength in its diversity, ethnic and socio-economic. Connected to this strength is another pattern in which leaders and members of the case study churches mentioned feeling pressure from

partners who did not understand the uniqueness of ministry in an urban context, however they did not feel resentment toward suburban churches that were homogeneous racially or socio-economically because they felt that was appropriate for their particular suburban context. While many indicated “feeling sorry” for suburban churches for missing out on the joys of diversity, they seemed to understand well the importance of context; understanding that it is important to reach one’s community with an effective strategy that is different according to context.

Lack of Understanding

A perennial issue in urban ministry is the sense of being misunderstood by well-intentioned partners in ministry. This was a key issue for the three churches I studied. In response to question 18 (regarding partnerships) on the lay survey (Appendix B) and question 13 (regarding encountering resistance by the Christian Churches) on the leadership survey (Appendix A), all of the answers except two (two lay interviewees left this question blank) indicated that they had encountered resistance and felt misunderstood by churches that had partnered with them and by the Christian Church at large. Specifically, several mention feeling “patronized” or “controlled.”

This raises an issue in regards to identifying and addressing the problems of the current paradigm, and in making strides towards a new urban church planting paradigm.

Anti-Urban Bias Exists

Perhaps the most troubling issue that arose out of this study was that there was a perceived anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches. Those who indicated that this was an issue were asked where they believed this bias stemmed from, and few could clearly articulate the source. Combining evidence from the surveys and interviews with a study of the statistics and history of the Christian Churches in planting urban churches does suggest that this is a key factor in the movement. Identifying that this bias does indeed exist is the first step in resolving the issue, and resolving it will be necessary in order for a new paradigm to emerge.

Original Pleas of the Restoration Movement Important in Urban Churches

Many of the people interviewed were not familiar enough with the principles of the Restoration Movement to comment on this issue. However, all of the leaders felt that one of the great ironies they had discovered was feeling pressure from the Christian Church at large to do ministry in a way that reflected a suburban context, while they felt

that their efforts were more in line with the original intentions of the Restoration Movement. They felt that many of the churches they were pressured to model should themselves be called to that form of ministry!

All of the urban leaders interviewed mentioned simplicity and unity and focusing on the essentials of Christianity as key elements of urban ministry. These elements could be a very important factor in turning around an anti-urban bias within the Christian Churches.

Comparison of the Case Studies in Terms of Characteristics of Effectiveness

Although each church was very different in approach, leadership, strengths, weaknesses and in other ways, all three displayed characteristics of effectiveness: 1) having a holistic understanding of the Church's mission, 2) having a dynamic spirituality, 3) maintaining healthy congregational dynamics, and 4) demonstrating a holistic ministry practice.

While all three churches displayed each characteristic, each church particularly exemplified one specific characteristic more than the others.

All Nations Christian Church's strength is in having a holistic understanding of their mission as reported in chapter seven. They are committed to having every ethnic group in Lansing represented in their church. Their mission is in their name and a part of all that they do and is an important element in terms of their effectiveness.

North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship is most effective in characteristic number three (maintaining healthy congregational dynamics), specifically in terms of reconciliation within their church and community. The efforts that Jensen has taken in personally understanding African American heritage have been translated to the congregation and are evidenced in efforts such as a church-wide trip to Alabama in an attempt to better understand historical events pertaining to segregation.

University Christian's strength is characteristic number four (demonstrating a holistic ministry practice). Their unique coffeehouse ministry and emphasis on relocation demonstrate their commitment to holistic ministry practice.

While all three churches have characteristics as effectiveness within a given universal framework, each church is distinctive in its particular strengths, weaknesses, and approach to urban ministry.

These churches function as effective models because they demonstrate the concepts of urban Restoration ministry, not because of their methodologies, which are as different as the cities in which they exist.

Critique of the Three Cases Study Churches

As the strengths of each of these churches varied so did their weaknesses and I believe a study of this kind can be helpful in noting these areas (which were ascertained through observation and reported in the surveys and interviews) because it is possible for the churches to learn from each other.

An area that was mentioned as a weakness in each church was in regards to organizational skills. It is obvious that the leadership in all the churches are gifted in the area of vision and casting that vision for their congregations, and perhaps it could be noted that many who show strength in that area of giftedness lack in the area of organizational skills, or desire to put forth effort into what is involved in the day-to-day maintenance of a congregation. All of the leaders mentioned a lack of reliable, trained, efficient administrative help that could offset this weakness in their leadership style. Additionally each church showed unique weaknesses that deserve reflection.

NMCF feels hindered by lack of resources, especially financial though they do not foster or cultivate relationships with their financial and ministry partners. While I understand the frustration that they reported of the pressure and misunderstanding they experience with these partners they have taken the stance that they will then cut the ties of these partnerships, yet they need the resources. At times it seemed hypocritical to state that the suburban churches are unwilling to do the hard racial reconciliation work that NMCF is undertaking, and at the same time NMCF is unwilling to do the hard work of reconciliation that needs to take place between suburban and urban churches.

UCC, as mentioned has a very young leadership team and this was met with some criticism reported during the interviews. Another criticism, which actually may be to UCC's credit depending on one's perspective, was not reported by any member or leader but observed by my students on two different occasions visiting UCC and that is, for some it may be difficult to fit in to UCC if the small group structure was not something they were willing to really throw themselves into. The groups are so emphasized that it seems anyone who is not willing to participate is perpetually left out in the main

gathering on Sunday. The small groups is where the information, business and announcements of the church are discussed as well as the requests for prayer and praises. The Sunday service feels as though a pre-worship service meeting has taken place, and if you are visiting and didn't participate in a mid-week small group you feel as though you have missed out. This may in fact be very good for a church that stresses community as UCC does, however my students after visiting UCC noted feelings of "being lost", "feeling like an outsider" and "not getting the joke."

ANCC, also as mentioned has some work to do in the areas of their leadership demonstrating strong familial reconciliation and healthy families if they are striving to promote that among their members as they state in their core values. The Gilroys are really too young in many members eyes to be the sole strong role model in that regard. Additionally there have been a few power issues observed in my time spent at ANCC among the leadership. The difference in leadership style between an African American and a Puerto Rican is vast and added to the mix a very young Caucasian youth minister and scores of volunteers of various ethnic groups and the opportunity for frustration is ever present. Sometimes these issues are worked out

openly, honestly and promptly and other times they are swept under the rug and seem to perpetually cause difficulty.

Communication with other urban churches would be a recommendation I would offer to all three churches. While they all mentioned partnerships with suburban churches none of them have formal partnerships with other urban churches. Partnership seems to be understood largely in financial terms, but all three of the churches, if in communication with each other could help in areas of weakness as they all excelled in different areas they all had weaknesses in different areas.

Toward a New Initiative

A new urban initiative will probably emerge in the same way that support emerged for All Nations. Once the church got off the ground with very little financial backing and it began to gain momentum and area churches began to be confident that the little inner-city church was going to make it, these churches then began to provide resources, allowing All Nations to flourish and grow in its context. The same thing could happen on a church-wide scale. An important test, however, will be whether the people who are giving financially can understand that they do not control how ministry is

done. Foster and Berroa are prepared to work only part-time at All Nations. That is the choice they and others in similar circumstances may have to make to maintain ministerial freedom and contextual integrity. An effective paradigm will come from the urban churches that are resourced by suburban churches who allow them to minister freely in their context and to be supported in doing that. This is a key element that needs to be understood by churches that partner with urban churches. Suburban churches need to learn how to encourage the urban churches to minister effectively in an urban context and not pressure them or expect them to work with a suburban model. The Christian Churches need to build on their heritage and allow each urban initiative to govern itself in appropriate ways for its context.

Often the question has been, “How do we get people interested in the ministry in urban areas of the United States?” Yet in fact there are hundreds of Christian people are interested and willing to work in the city, and do so in various para-church organizations represented at the Christian Church conventions. The principal issue is support for local congregations, not interest. The focus needs to be on creating an awareness of the challenges and opportunities of urban ministry among the large majority of Christian Church members who

are outside of the city. They need to learn to apply the same principles to urban initiatives that the church applies in other mission endeavors: allowing the missionary freedom, while fully supporting him or her financially.

Characteristics of the New Initiative

The Restoration Movement principles which stressed toleration in matters of opinion, unity, simplicity and working along the frontier are important to revisit in the context of effective urban church planting. Bringing these issues to the forefront today may very well help leaders of the Christian Churches to realize that urban initiative is a call back to who we really are, and that we may be especially adept at working in the context of the cities because of this heritage.

A new urban paradigm for the Christian Churches would not mean that the models that are working well in suburban areas would have to cease. They would just have to cease being seen as the only model that is worthwhile. An effective urban paradigm must affirm kingdom values of multi-ethnic, socio-economically diverse congregations that are slowly transforming lives and communities.

We should start highlighting at our conventions the voices of this paradigm -- the Marque Jensens, the Troy Jacksons and the Art

Fosters. The Christian Colleges need to take their responsibility seriously and commit financially to initiatives such as Lincoln's Chicago effort. The *Christian Standard* and other publications need to continually place these issues in front of members. The increased number of workshops pertaining to urban ministry at church-wide conventions and an increase in urban curriculum in the Christian Colleges suggest that a momentum has been generated. The time is now ripe for launching this initiative.

Examining the historical issues involved in the Christian Churches current relative absence from the cities in the United States may be an important first step in continuing the momentum. This study is in part a critical look at the founders of this movement and the subsequent issues involved in the continued pattern of ineffectiveness. Effective examples such as All Nations Christian Church, North Minneapolis Christian Fellowship and University Christian Church may serve as models for the Christian Churches as they develop effective urban strategies.

A small article in the May 25, 2003 edition of the *Christian Standard* came to mind continually as I finished this research. It was an editorial entitled "Wide Open Spaces" in which the author, Paul

Williams, talks about his love of the country and the Christian Churches' rural/suburban preferences. Williams then tells of his job change mid-life and his subsequent move to New York City. He says he woke up one day in New York, concerned.

We don't have enough churches in America's cities. As the country migrated west, Christian churches joined in, planting new congregations in every hollow along the way. But for whatever reason, we bypassed the major cities. Granted, from the Midwest to the West we have learned to grow large churches in the burgeoning suburbs. But the cities themselves? In the language of New York, "Fuhgetaboutit!"

Didn't the first-century church strategically target major urban areas? Wasn't that one of the keys to the explosive growth of Christianity? Weren't the cities the centers of influence? Aren't they still? The things you read in news magazines and watch on television were edited in major cities. The clothes you wear were probably designed there. The textbooks your children read were printed in major cities. What was true in the Roman Empire is still true today. As the city goes, so goes the nation (Williams 2003:16).

This study has uncovered the "for whatever reason" and laid some groundwork for getting about the task of planting effective urban churches.

Suggested Areas for Further Research

Throughout this study a number of issues were raised that deserve further research. These include:

1. A comparison between the Christian Churches and other indigenous, frontier movements in regards to current effective urban presence.

2. How other denominations have utilized urban church-planting agencies.

3. An evaluation regarding the effectiveness of the Christian Church's college's urban initiatives and programs.

4. Studies of urban-suburban partnerships in various traditions.

Information regarding these areas could help inform the new initiative in significant ways.

Response to an Inherited Structure of Opportunity

As mentioned, Shelley comments that the Christian Churches are guilty of an "inherited structure of opportunity" that has blinded them, perhaps to the real issues involved in developing a new urban initiative. One of these issues is just in dealing honestly with the past.

Marque Jensen tells the story of the day things really began to change for his church in terms of taking racial reconciliation seriously. It was as members of his church; black, white and brown walked hand in hand over the Edmond Petus Bridge, and visited the sites of the church bombings in Birmingham. He states that his

teenage boys are now leading workshops on racial reconciliation at the state's teen convention and telling the story of three little girls who were killed in one of those bombings. They know that because they have been entrusted with this knowledge they are responsible for it and are committed to teaching youth who could easily perpetuate the "inherited structure of opportunity" as the future leaders of the Christian Churches but that they are responsible to know that truth and to work toward justice and reconciliation and that turning a deaf ear or blind eye to history will never help the church accomplish its task.

It is my hope and prayer that through this study, this walk through some painful pages of history, addressing issues within a heritage that has struggled to be consistent in adhering to restoration ideals that I can help the Christian Churches acknowledge and take responsibility for our lack of an effective presence in the cities of the United States and help initiate a new initiative or effective urban church plants consistent with biblical models.

Appendix A – Leadership Interview Guide for Urban Church Case Studies

1. How long has your church been at this location?
2. How long have you been ministering with this church?
3. What is the current membership of this church?
4. How far away do you live from the church?
5. What was the largest and smallest membership of this church?
6. What is the ethnic breakdown of this congregation?
7. If this was a recent church plant why was it planted here?
8. What ethnic groups make up the population of this neighborhood. What would you estimate as a percentage for each?
9. Have there been changes in the ethnic make up of this neighborhood?
10. Are there any other churches in this neighborhood?
11. Have any churches left this neighborhood in the last 20 years?
12. Are you supported financially or otherwise by other churches?
13. Have you perceived resistance from the Christian Churches for having a church in the city?
14. Have you been encouraged by the Christian Churches for having a church in the city?
15. What do you perceive as the greatest needs of your congregation?
16. What can the Christian Churches do differently to be more effective in cities?
17. What has been your biggest struggle as a leader of an urban church?

18. What has been your greatest joy?
19. How does your church handle racial/ethnicity clashes?
20. What do most of the clashes tend to be in regards to?
21. How involved is your church in community revitalization?
22. What is your congregation's greatest strength?
23. What is their greatest weakness?
24. Do you attend the North American Christian Convention or The National Missionary Convention (Envision)? If yes, how often? If no, why not?
25. What is your reaction to these conventions in light of your ministry?
26. Do you receive any of the denominations publications? Why or why not?
27. Do you have partnerships with other congregations or Christian organizations?
28. Are you familiar with the Christian Churches founders (Campbell and Stone) and their vision of the church?
29. If so, how do you think their pleas for unity and the restoration of the New Testament church play out in context of the city?
30. Do you believe there is an anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches?
31. Are you in contact with any of the denomination's mega-churches?
32. Do you feel that the mega-churches have anything to offer your church?

Appendix A – Leadership Interview Guide for Urban Church Case Studies

1. How long has your church been at this location?
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7. If this was a recent church plant why was it planted here?
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What would you estimate as a percentage for each?
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15. What do you perceive as the greatest needs of your congregation?
16. What can the Christian Churches do differently to be more effective in cities?
17. What has been your biggest struggle as a leader of an urban church?

18. What has been your greatest joy?
19. How does your church handle racial/ethnicity clashes?
20. What do most of the clashes tend to be in regards to?
21. How involved is your church in community revitalization?
22. What is your congregation's greatest strength?
23. What is their greatest weakness?
24. Do you attend the North American Christian Convention or The National Missionary Convention (Envision)? If yes, how often? If no, why not?
25. What is your reaction to these conventions in light of your ministry?
26. Do you receive any of the denominations publications? Why or why not?
27. Do you have partnerships with other congregations or Christian organizations?
28. Are you familiar with the Christian Churches founders (Campbell and Stone) and their vision of the church?
29. If so, how do you think their pleas for unity and the restoration of the New Testament church play out in context of the city?
30. Do you believe there is an anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches?
31. Are you in contact with any of the denomination's mega-churches?
32. Do you feel that the mega-churches have anything to offer your church?

Appendix B – Lay Interview Guide and Survey¹ for Urban Church
Case Studies

1. How long have you been attending this church?
2. Do you live near the church?
3. What ethnic groups make up the population of this neighborhood.
What would you estimate as a percentage for each?
4. Do you think the membership of this church reflects the ethnic make-up of this neighborhood?
5. How long has your church been at this location?
6. Have there been changes in the ethnic make up of this neighborhood?
7. Are there any other churches in this neighborhood?
8. What do you perceive as the greatest needs of this neighborhood?
9. What can or does this church currently do to minister to those needs?
10. What has been your biggest frustration and greatest joy as a member?
11. How does your church handle racial/ethnicity clashes?
12. What do most of the clashes tend to be in regards to?
13. How involved is your church in community revitalization?
14. What is your congregation's greatest strength?
15. What is their greatest weakness?

¹ In all but three cases this was used as an interview guide. In three instances this was filled out as a survey.

16. Do you attend the North American Christian Convention or National Missionary Convention (Envision)? If no, why not? If yes, how often?
17. Do you have partnerships with other congregations or Christian organizations?
18. If yes, do you view these partnerships as positive? Why or why not?
19. Are you familiar with the Christian Churches founders (Campbell and Stone) and their vision for the church?
20. If so, how do you think their pleas for unity and the restoration of the New Testament church play out in context of the city?
21. Do you believe there is an anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches?
22. Are you in contact with any of the denomination's mega-churches?
23. Do you feel that the mega-churches have anything to offer your church?

Appendix C Transcription Samples of Interview Results

I have taken a sampling of answers from each of the cases study churches to report here in order to provide more of the qualitative evidence for the various conclusions drawn in the dissertation.

From the Leadership Interviews:

Question 13. Have you perceived resistance from the Christian Churches for having a church in the city?

Yes. Many wondered and did not keep their wondering quiet, regarding whether or not we could sustain the ministry once it was planted. We received very little support to start this work.

Maybe not outright resistance but definitely very misunderstood.

No not resistance. Patronization? Yes. Have we encountered ignorance about our context? Yes. Have we had to prove ourselves? Yes. And have we been misunderstood? Yes.

Question 17. What has been your biggest struggle as a leader of an urban church?

Having to work 2 jobs – not being able to just focus on the church but worrying about money, both for the church and for my family, questioning whether or not I am being a bad father for not providing more for my family.

My biggest struggle as a leader has been leading people to understand that urban ministry has very different needs than suburban and specifically helping our partners see that while we want their help and we want to help them they must understand these differences.

Not enough time in the day to get everything done.

Question 16. What can the Christian Churches do differently to be more effective in cities?

Adopt a church, long-term. Mutual give and take. Send and receive in both directions. Help with leadership training that is specific to urban context. Financial and community development input.

They can be intentionally trying to reach out to every ethnic group in their own surrounding areas and understand what we are dealing with and going through.

Open their eyes to the world that is urban.

Question 30. Do you believe there is an anti-urban bias among the Christian Churches?

I wouldn't say it that strongly. I would say they are largely unaware of the need to be reaching into the cities.

Yes, not formally but institutionally, culturally and personally.

Yes. And the scariest part of that is they don't know it and don't want to hear about it. What underlies this bias – that's what we must address – what is under that? Racism? Is that what we are afraid to find in our closets? It is time to be honest, address it, kill it and move on.

From the Lay Interviews and Surveys:

Question 17. Do you have partnerships with other congregations or Christian organizations?

It seems like on paper we have these partners, yet I am here almost every time the doors are open and I have yet to actually meet any one of these so-called partners.

I believe we are affiliated with the Christian Churches.

Yes, well I think so.

Question 14. What is your congregations' greatest strength?

Unity in diversity.

Diversity, ethnic and financial.

We are proud of our rich ethnic diversity and amazed at how we get along!

Appendix D

At Stadia we uphold the following values:

- To take the best possible care of church planters
- To develop church planters who become everything God wants them to be
- To provide support systems such as coaches and mentors for every planter
- To encourage risk and innovation
- To encourage every church to give birth to daughter and granddaughter churches
- To impress churches that we must multiply or perish
- To assure that every thing we do is reproducible
- To function in cooperation with each other and in God's way

Vision and Values: On the Horizon

We do not claim to be prophets, but we have laid these projects and plans before the Lord.

By 2010:

1. We believe we will start 132+ churches.
2. We believe we can develop a non-Anglo church planting movement that will place ethnic churches in many communities.
3. We will develop a church-planter training system to provide the planters to fill the need.
4. We hope to see two or more church plants in every state of the U. S. and Canada each year (www.stadia.cc).

APPENDIX E ROHS STREET CAFÉ MISSION STATEMENT

The ministry is explained clearly on the website and is so unique that I felt using their own explanation was best.

On the surface we are a local coffeehouse that serves some of the best drinks in Cincinnati. But beyond our traditional, handcrafted drinks we are much more. Clifton Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods are some of the most diverse in the city of Cincinnati. We have people from every culture, religion, economic status, and political view living closely together in this area. Yet there are few places where everyone can come together to share their stories, their music, their art, or their views in a setting of openness and respect. In this way we will be a gathering place that is rooted in love and serves as a hub for the community. We do not intend to directly compete for a market share with the current coffeehouses in our neighborhood. Our direction is quite different. We believe that great coffee along with diverse music and excellent atmosphere are ways of bringing people together into a community of reconciliation and unity.

Rohs Street Cafe features local and national musicians every weekend. Plus, we are open every day of the week serving 100% *Fair-Trade and organic coffees, teas, and chocolate*. All profits by our coffee supplier, Pura Vida Coffee are used in Costa Rica to fund children's programs. And all of our profits will be returned to our community in order to better serve people's needs. *Also* check out the stories behind **our tea and chocolate products** at Choice Organic Teas and Dagoba Organic Chocolate (www.rohsstreetcafe.com)

An explanation of the fair trade concept is found on the church's coffee house website, included here:

The Fair Trade Movement (a revolution in coffee). The average coffee grower in Latin America, Africa, and Asia makes \$.30-\$.60 per pound of coffee but needs \$1.26 per pound to sustain his family. Nearly 12,500 children are believed to be working

as child slave labor in West African cocoa fields. It is reported that children as young as 6 work in large coffee plantations in order to help their family earn only \$3/day. Guatemala, one of the world's largest coffee exporters, has a poverty rate of 80%. Can we ignore this human crisis? How can we help? Through a growing movement called Fair Trade, coffee, tea and cocoa farmers are receiving fair wages and basic human rights protection. When you buy fair trade you are not only helping farmers receive a living wage but are also enabling their children to go to school and encouraging their community's economic growth. By being the first and only cafe in Cincinnati that offers only fair trade coffees, teas and chocolate, Rohs Street Café is challenging other café's and stores to see the need and respond themselves. We also challenge you, the consumer, to be active in this campaign and buy only fair trade (www.rohsstreetcafe.com).

APPENDIX F
CORE VALUES OF ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God who died for our sins and arose from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-8).

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God – “A lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (I Timothy 3:16, Psalm 119:105).

We believe that every individual from every ethnic group has worth as a creation of God, but “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

We believe that forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life are available to those who trust and believe Christ is Savior and Lord (John 3:16).

We believe that it is through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We believe that those accepting Christ should repent of sin, confess their faith and be obedient to baptism into Him (Romans 10: 9-10 and Acts 2:38).

We believe that Jesus Christ will one day return to earth and take his own with Him to His eternal home in heaven where He will reign forever as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We believe that the church is the body of Christ on earth and exists to save the lost and edify the saved (Ephesians 4:1-6).

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