



## ABSTRACT

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH HEALTH AND CHURCH GROWTH IN UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES IN THE WEST OHIO ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

By Brian A. Law

The purpose of this study was to discover the relationship between church growth and church health.

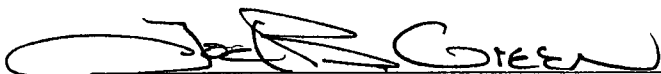
A collaborative dissertation team developed a survey tool that tested the health of the church and also discovered pertinent growth aspects in order to find the correlation between both. I limited my study to a random group of churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The findings demonstrated that more important than the relationship between church growth and church health is the positive relationship between perceived church health and individual congregant's practices of certain spiritual disciplines.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH HEALTH AND CHURCH GROWTH IN  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES IN THE WEST OHIO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

presented by  
Brian Allen Law

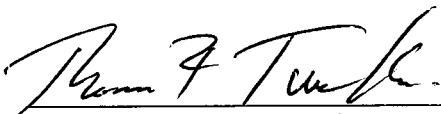
has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at  
Asbury Theological Seminary



Internal Reader

April 15, 2002

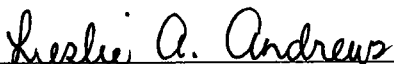
Date



Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

April 15, 2002

Date



Vice President for Academic Development  
and Distributed Learning; mentor

April 15, 2002

Date

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH HEALTH AND CHURCH GROWTH IN  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES IN THE WEST OHIO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Brian Allen Law

May 2002

© 2002

Brian Allen Law

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

List of Tables .....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter	
1. Understanding the Problem.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Formation .....	2
Context of the Study.....	4
Theological Foundations .....	5
Purpose Statement.....	7
Research Questions .....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Methodology .....	9
Population and Sample.....	9
Variables .....	9
Instrumentation .....	10
Data Collection.....	10
Delimitations and Generalizability .....	11
Overview of the Study .....	12
2. Review of Related Literature .....	13
Biblical Images of the Kingdom of God .....	13
Old Testament Basis for the Kingdom of God .....	13

New Testament Basis for the Kingdom of God.....	17
Developments of the Kingdom of God in Church History .....	20
Early Church Era (AD 100-476) .....	22
Medieval Church Era (AD 476-1500) .....	23
Reformation Era (AD 1500-1650).....	24
Modern Church Era (AD 1800-2000).....	25
The Kingdom of God and a Healthy Church.....	26
Church Growth Movement.....	30
History of the Church Growth Movement.....	30
Critics of the Church Growth Movement .....	33
Church Health Movement .....	35
Definition and History of the Church Health Movement .....	35
Christian Schwarz-Natural Church Development .....	39
Critics of the Church Health Movement.....	41
Pertinent Issues of Church Health .....	44
Beeson Health Characteristics.....	45
Engaging Worship.....	47
Introduction .....	47
Definition of Engaging Worship .....	47
Historical Overview of Engaging Worship.....	48
Theological Basis for Engaging Worship .....	50
Vertical Relationship with God in Worship.....	52
Horizontal Relationship with Others in Worship.....	54

Evidence of Engaging Worship .....	57
Transforming Discipleship .....	57
What is a Disciple?.....	57
Theological Basis for Transforming Discipleship .....	59
Images of Transformation .....	62
Evidence of Transforming Discipleship .....	63
Introduction .....	47
Summary of Other Beeson Health Characteristics .....	63
Authentic Community .....	63
Intentional Evangelism .....	66
Mobilized Laity .....	67
Passionate Spirituality .....	68
Empowering Leadership.....	69
Research Methodology.....	70
Conclusion .....	72
3. Design of the Study.....	74
Research Questions .....	74
Research Question #1 .....	74
Research Question #2.....	75
Research Question #3.....	75
Population and Sample.....	76
Instrumentation .....	76
Beeson Church Health Characteristics .....	77



Congregational Questionnaire .....	77
Pastoral Questionnaire.....	78
Validity and Reliability .....	78
Data Collection .....	78
Variables .....	79
Data Analysis .....	80
4. Findings of the Study .....	81
Profile of Subjects.....	81
Church Health Characteristics.....	83
Church Growth and Church Health.....	85
Church Health and Spiritual Disciplines .....	87
Church Health, Personal Characteristics and Church Characteristics .....	89
Summary of Significant Findings.....	93
5. Discussion.....	95
Personal, Spiritual, and Demographic Information of Participants .....	95
Overall Health of WOCUMC.....	96
Comparison between WOCUM and GAGB churches.....	97
Church Growth and Church Health.....	98
Spiritual Disciplines and Church Health .....	104
Personal and Church Demographics and Church Health.....	107
Beeson and Schwarz .....	109
Implications of the Study .....	110
Weakness of the Study .....	111

Contribution to Research Methodology .....	112
Further Studies .....	113
Personal Reflections.....	114

Appendixes

A. Congregational Questionnaire: What is Your Church’s Health Quotient? ...	116
B. Pastoral Questionnaire: Contextual Factors .....	120
C. Listing of Health Questions According to Characteristic .....	122

Works Cited .....	124
-------------------	-----

## TABLES

### Table

2.1. Characteristics of Church Health – Primary Sources .....	37
2.2. Characteristics of Church Health – Secondary Sources .....	38
3.1. Population Sample Based on Church Attendance .....	76
4.1. Spiritual Disciplines of Subjects .....	82
4.2. Church Health Characteristics.....	83
4.3. Church Health Characteristics Comparison between WOC and GAGBC.....	84
4.4. Five Year Growth Rate for West Ohio Conference.....	85
4.5. Correlation of Church Growth Measures to Church Health Measures .....	86
4.6. Relationship of the Practice of Spiritual Disciplines to Perception of Health Characteristics .....	87
4.7. Difference Between Men and Women in Perception of Church Health Characteristics.....	90
4.8. Difference Between Church Membership in Perception of Church Health Characteristics.....	91
4.9. Difference Between Small Group Participation in Perception of Church Health Characteristics .....	92

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer my deepest appreciation to

Jim Kinder, Scott McKee, and Keith Taylor (my dissertation “buddies”). We could not have done this without each other. I appreciate all of the work we have accomplished together. Thanks for all of your hard work. We make a good team.

Dr. Dale Galloway. A great teacher, mentor, and friend. Thank you for all of the many hours of teaching and training on how to be a great leader.

The congregation of the Rolling Plains United Methodist Church. I have had great joy and privilege serving as your pastor, and I look forward to many years ahead of building a healthy church together.

Dr. Leslie Andrews. Thank you for all of your work helping with statistics and mentoring me through this process. I could have not made it alone.

Barb Jaeger. You were a lifesaver. Thank you for organizing and crunching the results of the health survey. Thank you for being there and working with me even when you had many other things on your plate.

My wife, Kelly. You are my greatest supporter, encourager and friend. You are the love of my life. Thank you for hanging in there with me and helping me through this process. You have helped me to accomplish what I never thought I could do.

## CHAPTER 1

### UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

#### Background

An overwhelming majority of churches in America are either plateaued or declining in numbers says Barna, Hunter, and Wagner. The denomination of which I am a part, the United Methodist Church, has followed the norm in America. The United Methodist Church in 1968 had eleven million members. By 1995 it had dropped to 8.5 million (UM Communications 1). The decline in U.M. membership has continued to be steady throughout the past five years. From 1995 to 2000 the United Methodist Church lost 192,191 members. That loss is over 32,000 members per year. Regardless of the rate of the decline in the United Methodist Church, the church is still declining, and something needs to be done about this trend (2000 General 31).

Christian Schwarz is one of several authors (e.g. Stephen Macchia, Ken Hemphill, Robert Logan, and Rick Warren) to present a new paradigm concerning the growth of churches; that is, a church needs to be healthy first and foremost. When a church is healthy, one of the natural results of health is numerical growth. Christian Schwarz states that a church needs to have certain characteristics in order to be at its peak capacity in growth potential and health potential (Natural 12)

This notion is intriguing. As I read the research that Schwarz has done in more than one thousand churches in thirty-two countries, I realized that Schwarz and others who are studying the health of churches might have grasped something of great relevance to the church in the twenty first century.

Along with a team of three others in the Doctor of Ministry program (Beeson

Pastor Track) at Asbury Theological Seminary, we decided to form our own list of church health indicators. Being a clergy member of the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, I wondered how the Beeson Health Characteristics could make a difference in this conference.

### **Problem Formation**

The conundrum of plateaued and declining churches may be one of, if not the most, significant issue the church in America is facing today. Barna states, “The vast majority of Christian churches in America are either stagnant or declining. Relatively few of the nation’s 300,000+ Protestant congregations are increasing the number of people [in attendance] by at least 10 percent a year” (Barna 15). According to George Hunter, as many as 80 percent of churches in America today are plateaued and/or declining. By contrast, he cites that of the other 20 percent, 15 percent or more are growing by transfer and perhaps as little as 5 percent are growing by conversion. Of the experts previously cited, all discovered the problem of plateaued and declining churches is no respecter of denominations, is not localized to any particular geographical area, and is not limited to any particular size of church.

While the problem has been well documented and solutions suggested, no evidence to date indicates that the problem is receding. If anything, the issue appears to be growing worse. The question of what to do about the plateaued and declining church is indeed a significant one. These issues are significant for the communities in which the churches are located, for the churches themselves, and for the pastors who are being called to minister in these congregations. This problem is facing all denominations, especially the mainline denominations such as the United Methodist Church, of which I

am a part. The growing trend is for denominations and movements to look toward planting churches rather than transitioning churches that are dying and decaying. Maybe this is the easy way out for the church. Right now a surge of new church plants are occurring in areas of growth in America, but planting does not deal with the multitude of churches that are plateaued and declining. The transitioning of churches that are perceived to be “sick” is a very difficult task to undertake as a pastor. But as Jesus said, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). I believe there is hope for them. There is hope for the pastor who is called to such a congregation. Most importantly, there is hope for the communities in which such churches are located, those who desperately need the Gospel.

For me Christian Schwarz’ book Natural Church Development, and his concept of church health has been a revelation of sorts. I have always regarded church growth as doing the “right” programs from the most progressive church in America, but a new paradigm is on the horizon. Several universal principles are foundational to the life of a church that should be uncompromised. If these principles are followed, church health would result, and as a by-product of church health, the church would grow in numbers, not because the church is doing the right programs but because the church is seeking to be internally healthy.

Writers like Christian Schwarz, Ken Hemphill and Stephen Macchia have brought the paradigm of church health to the forefront and are on a wave of the future concerning church growth. Church health characteristics are a better measure of ministry effectiveness than simply church worship attendance. Worship attendance can fluctuate based upon the weather and location of the church. Health characteristics are more of a

universal way of looking at a church and the health of the body. To limp along using the current programs promoted at the most recent growth conference to increase attendance is no longer acceptable. If a local body of believers in a community experience a split or if a prominent leader leaves, another congregation in the community can grow because of that misfortune. This type of change is not true growth; it is just “shuffling the deck.”

To confirm that a correlation between church growth and church health exists, the Beeson Pastor team created a list of health characteristics and an instrument by which to test them through a sampling of churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

### **Context of the Study**

The West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church is one of the top ten largest conferences in the American United Methodist Church. The conference membership as of 2000 is 259,224, and the average attendance of the conference is 126,089. The West Ohio Conference (WOC) has steadily declined over the past five years. It has averaged over a 4,500 member decline since 1996. The WOC has 1,254 churches with 1,679 clergy. It spans two-thirds of the central and western sections of Ohio.

The churches in the West Ohio Conference span the spectrum of the Christian church. Churches vary theologically from fundamental and Pentecostal to those that have a more liberal slant. The churches also range from worship styles that would be considered contemporary to those that are very liturgical in nature. The West Ohio Annual Conference has churches that range in average attendance from four to 2,900. This conference is a good testing ground for the Beeson quality characteristics of church



health because of the broad range of churches represented. The West Ohio Annual Conference has participated in the Vision 2000 program in the last five years. This program challenged churches to think beyond the time in which they are ministering and vision toward the year 2000. In retrospect, some lasting changes did occur in individual churches. These churches have from a day-to-day focus of ministry to a focus that looks to the future. As a whole, Vision 2000 has not seemed to make a lasting impression on the West Ohio Conference.

### **Theological Foundations**

This study focuses on the kingdom of God and how it relates to the health of a church. Throughout the two thousand years of Church history, the kingdom of God has been related to the Church in many ways. Some of the tensions concerning the kingdom have been things such as viewing the kingdom as being present versus future, individual versus social, spirit versus matter, divine action versus human action, and gradual versus climatic.

The words, kingdom of God, do not appear in the Old Testament (OT) but the notion of a kingdom reign of God exists. The kingdom of God in was shown in the OT as the working and moving of God in human history, especially the history of the Israelites. There exist some correlations between God as king and their earthly king. Some of these include God reigning as king (Exodus 15:18, 1 Samuel. 8:7, Psalm 93:1), God sitting on a throne (1 Kings 22:19, Isaiah 6:1, Psalm 9:7), and God maintaining a kingdom (1 Chronicles 28:5, Daniel 2:44-25, Psalm 103:19). When the nation of Israel came into being, the central form of government consisted of a theocracy. The people became uneasy that they were not like other nations that had their own king. After a

lengthy debate between the people and God, a monarchy was created. Through the creation of the monarchy in the nation of Israel, the distinction between the monarchy of God and Israel became muddled. Because of the book of Daniel, a distinction is made between the two kingdoms and clearly the kingdom of God is above any human kingdom.

In the New Testament (NT) we see the word kingdom (*basileia*) occurs over one hundred times. A summary statement of Jesus' ministry is made in the Gospel of Mark 1:15 "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Jesus came to restore the proper understanding of the kingdom of God. Jesus presents the kingdom in terms of a reign of God that has broken into history now, and the kingdom also contains a future aspect that will be fully realized in the time to come. This reign calls us to live differently from the world, that includes treating people differently, having a higher standard of living, etc. Jesus ushered in the beginning of the final restoration of the creation for God's glory.

The kingdom is not to be equated with the modern church. Distinctions need to be made between the church and the kingdom. The church is finite, the kingdom is infinite (Kung 131). The church throughout the centuries has confused these two, often times equating the church with the kingdom. The church is not in opposition to the kingdom, the church proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God into the world. The church needs to have a proper understanding of the kingdom of God if it expects to make an impact in the world and be the herald of the kingdom it has been created to fulfill.

Several connections can be made between the kingdom of God and a healthy church. The kingdom of God has been initiated by God. In worship God is the initiator,

and we are the respondents. The two are engaged through worship. We could not worship apart from God's initiation. The kingdom of God is directed toward God's glory; hence, worship is also directed toward God's praise and glory. The kingdom of God also demands a different way of life for those who desire to be a part of the kingdom. Discipleship is the way the church calls people to a higher way of life-to a life that glorifies the kingdom of God and helps bring others into the kingdom. This project looks to make the connection between the coming of the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of the healthy church that God desires.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between church health and church growth in United Methodist churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference. The purpose was accomplished through correlating a set of quality health characteristics drawn from a thorough review of literature and the cooperative study of the dissertation team. This study examined the areas of health in selected churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference. It also sought to identify those health characteristics that need strengthening. Both strong characteristics and characteristics that need growth are helpful when seeking to achieve a greater sense of health.

### **Research Questions**

In order to fulfill the purposes of this study, these research questions have been identified.

1. How do churches in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC) rate on each of the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics?

2. How does the health of the surveyed churches correlate to the rate of church growth over the past five years?
3. What are the contextual factors apart from the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics that influence church growth?

### **Definition of Terms**

In this study, the principal terms are defined as follows.

*Natural Church Development (NCD)* is an approach to church growth based on the premise that God causes the growth and that all human endeavors should be focused on releasing the “divine growth automatism” by which he grows his church (Schwarz Natural 12).

*Quality Characteristics* are the aspects of a local church that can be used to diagnose the health of the church. The characteristics for the purpose of this study are empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community, functional structures, transforming discipleship, engaging worship, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity. These characteristics interact and find their balance by looking at the church through a systems approach.

*Church Growth* is the annual rate of change in the average number of persons attending the principal weekend worship service(s). This average annual attendance was calculated for the time period of 1996-2000. Other indices for growth included recorded conversions and baptisms over the same time period.

*Church Health* is defined as the balance or “harmonious interplay” of the quality characteristics. Lack of health is defined as a low presence or absence of the health

characteristics.

*Systems* are organizational patterns that congregations follow to keep in balance their purpose, structures, relationships, and spirituality.

### **Methodology**

This is an evaluative study in the descriptive mode that utilizes a researcher-designed questionnaire. After thorough research, a list of quality health characteristics was created. After further researching each characteristic, a tool in the form of a questionnaire was formulated. The tool measures the health of each church surveyed.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study was a random sample of the 1,250 churches in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. The sample consists of 270 churches in the West Ohio Conference. This survey created a picture of the health of the churches sampled. Another separate instrument was given to the pastor that collected vital information about the churches that were studied. Each church's health statistics were compared to the growth statistics to find any correlation between church growth and health.

### **Variables**

The dependent variable of this study is church growth. This was operationalized into subsets that included, average weekend worship attendance, number of conversions, and number of baptisms of the participating churches for the five-year time period of 1996-2000. The independent variable is church health. This was operationalized as the Beeson quality characteristics of a healthy church: empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community, functional structures, transforming discipleship,

engaging worship, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity.

Intervening variables of the subjects include, spiritual disciplines, personal demographics, and church demographics. Spiritual disciplines were personal devotions, family devotions, ministry involvement, prayer, sharing of faith, Bible study, and other disciplines. Personal demographics were church membership, number of years involved in their particular church, frequency of worship attendance, percentage of money given to the church, participation in a small group or ministry team, other church involvement, perception of community (i.e. growing, plateaued, declining), age, gender, marital status and number of children. Church demographics were tenure of senior pastor, age of facility, adequacy of facility size, growth of community, adequacy of staffing, and population of community.

### **Instrumentation**

A researcher-designed questionnaire was developed through an extensive literature review in correlation with other dissertation team members<sup>1</sup>. The instrument has fifty-five questions on a five-point Likert scale. Sixteen demographic questions were also given to each participant.

The project assessed the current church growth capacity of the church. A separate questionnaire consisting of six statistical questions was given to a key church leader to complete. Each church in the sample was asked to submit worship attendance numbers and numbers of baptisms and conversions over the five-year period (1996-2000).

### **Data Collection**

This study assessed the current state of church health for the West Ohio Annual

---

<sup>1</sup> This team consisted of four members from the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. This was a collaborative work that was tested in multiple areas of North America.

Conference of the United Methodist Church by using the quality characteristics as defined by this study.

A church health questionnaire was created and distributed to a sampling of the churches. Detailed instructions were given to each pastor or key lay leader regarding the administration of the survey tool. A return envelope was provided to return the surveys to the project coordinator.

This information was collected and returned to Asbury Theological Seminary. There, the data was processed and compiled. This information was used to state the perceived health of each individual church studied and the overall health of the sample group. The church health indicators were compared to the church growth statistics to determine any correlation between church health and church growth. The cabinet of the West Ohio Conference not only gave their approval for this project but helped to encourage churches to participate in the survey.

The data was collected through the use of the researcher-designed questionnaire. It was administered to the selected churches between 8 July and 2 September 2001. The questionnaire was mailed to the sampling of churches, along with a letter of explanation. They were completed, returned, and forwarded to Asbury Theological Seminary for scoring. This survey was on a volunteer basis where participants were asked to take them home and return them the next week. The completed surveys were then mailed to Asbury Theological Seminary for statistical analysis.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

The expectation of this project was that a correlation would be found between quantitative church health and quantitative church growth. Exceptions can occur, such as

extenuating circumstances or unusual problems in the life of the churches that were beyond the control of this study. Examples might be the transition to a new pastor or a church being located in a declining population area. These were controlled in the pastor's survey by asking for these extenuating circumstances.

This study can be used to either confirm or deny the correlation between church growth and church health in the life of the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The findings of this study can also be used to help other Conferences around the United States discover that the health of their local churches are just as important to observe as is the growth of the churches.

### **Overview of the Study**

In Chapter 2, selected literature and research pertinent to this study are reviewed. A biblical view of the kingdom of God and its relation to the church are examined. A brief history of the church growth movement is presented. Contemporary writings on church health and systems theory are examined. The Beeson quality characteristics of church health as identified by the Beeson Pastor team are presented, and the critiques of other research regarding church health are explored.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed explanation regarding the design of the project, the research methods, and the methods of data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 reports major findings of the study and practical applications that flow out of these findings. It also offers suggestions for further inquiry.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In order to best cover the relationship between church health and church growth in the life of selected churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC), several issues need to be covered in the literature.

The literature review focuses on the theological understanding of the church as community and its relationship to church health in light of the kingdom of God. Other reviews will focus on the church growth movement and its relation to the church health movement. One particular church health scholar will be examined in detail. Christian Schwarz's Natural Church Development with its eight quality characteristics has proven to be foundational in the church health movement. This study then focuses on the two particular health characteristics of engaging worship and transforming discipleship. Finally, this study gives a summation of the work of the other members of the collaborative team, who have reviewed six additional health characteristics: empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, mobilized laity, intentional evangelism, authentic community, and effective structure.

#### **Biblical Images of the Kingdom of God**

The Bible is filled with evidence that God designed a kingdom into which all people are invited to be active participants. This section gives evidence of God's initiation of the kingdom and evidence of the invitation to be a part of the kingdom.

#### **Old Testament Basis for the Kingdom of God**

One must begin in the Old Testament (OT) to see what is said about the kingdom. Susan Pigott says the kingdom of God is a difficult concept with which to deal because

the word “kingdom of God (*Elohim*)” does not occur in the Old Testament, and “kingdom of Yahweh” only appears twice (1 Chronicles 28:5; 2 Chronicles 13:8) (5). Some commentators reviewed have been hesitant to view the “kingdom of God” as an Old Testament concept. Dale Patrick asserts that the “kingdom of God” is merely a theological construct developed by interpreters and imposed on the OT from the outside (67). John Bright in the Kingdom of God does not believe that the lack of the exact words “kingdom of God” leads to absence of the concept in the OT (18).

The term “kingdom of God” may be absent from the OT, but many terms denote the presence of a divine kingdom. Yahweh is referred to as king at least 43 times in the OT (Psalm 10:16, Isaiah 6:5, Jeremiah 8:18) (Pigott 6). God reigns as king (Exodus 15:18, 1 Samuel 8:7, Psalm 93:1), he rules (Judges 8:23, 2 Chronicles. 20:6, Ezekiel 20:33), sits on a throne (1 Kings 22:19, Isaiah 6:1, Psalm 9:7), maintains a kingdom (1 Chronicles 28:5, Daniel 2:44-45, Psalm 103:19), surrounded by a divine council/army (Joshua 5:13-15, Nehemiah 9:6, Isaiah 10:26), and he controls human kingdoms (1 Samuel 15:28, 1 Kings 11:24, Daniel 4:17) (Pigott 6). Though the exact words, “kingdom of God” may be missing from the OT, these images support the concept of a kingdom in the OT.

G. R. Beasley-Murray says, “In the Old Testament, the ultimate purpose of the future coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord is the establishment of the Kingdom of God” (17).

The nation of Israel, since its earliest times, has looked at God as a king. The term *melek*, “king”, is basic to Semitic thinking. Since all Semitic peoples thought of their gods as kings, this has some bearing on the thought of the Israelite people. The

significance of *melek* in the minds of the nation of Israel was shaped by the nomadic experience of the people in the wilderness. God led them through unknown areas, protected them from enemies, and led them to good pastures (Beasley-Murray 18). The exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, and the wanderings in the wilderness gave the Israelite people much greater understanding of God and his kingdom. The connection for the Israelites came when God intervened for the people. “From the events at Sinai onward, the tribes were a group on the march under Yahweh” (19). The people were on their way to a new land and a new future that was totally in the hands of God. The beginnings of the concept of the kingdom of God are wrapped up in the presence and interventions by God on behalf of his people. These events gave Israel understanding that their nation had been founded “though a succession of acts of God for their salvation” (19).

When one looks at the nature of the existence in the kingdom of God in the Old Testament, three features arise.

1. *The universality of the rule of Yahweh* (Beasley-Murray 19). The prophets stress Israel’s whole-hearted allegiance to the Lord (Isaiah 26:1-15; 28:5ff.; 33:5ff.; Ezekiel 11:17ff.; 20:33ff.; Zechariah 8:1-8). The turning of all nations toward the kingdom of God is important in the Old Testament. Sometimes this idea is combined with pictures of the submission of the nations to Israel as well as Yahweh (Amos 9:11ff.; Micah 4:13; 7:8-17; Isaiah 49:22-26; 60:4-16). Many other passages talk about the inclusion of the nations in the salvation of the kingdom (Isaiah 25:6-7, 45:21-22, 51:4-5, 52:10-11; 56:3-4; Zechariah 8:20-21; 14:9).

2. *The righteousness of the kingdom* (Beasley-Murray 20). This is referenced in

many ways. Sometimes in the descriptions of how the righteousness of the Messiah that overflows to the people (Isaiah 11:3-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6). Sometimes in the action of the Lord cleansing and renewing the people (Isaiah 1:25-26; 4:3-4; 32:15-16; Jeremiah 31:31-32; Ezekiel 36:25-26; 37:23-24; Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

3. *The peace of the kingdom* (Beasley-Murray 20). This includes the absence of war and peace in the animal kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-3; 9:5-6; Isaiah 11:6-7; 35:9). This peace of the kingdom extends to the life of man in his relations with God and others. “Peace is an all-embracing synonym for salvation” (Beasley-Murray 20). (Isaiah 12, 21:17-24, 33:17ff.; 41:21-22; Zephaniah 3:14-20).

The goal of all of history is the revelation and the universal acceptance of the kingship of the Lord, the victory of righteousness, and the establishment of peace and salvation in the world.

The prophecies and understanding of the Messiah in the Old Testament and how he fits into the kingdom is that he is the “representative of Yahweh in his kingdom, in whom Yahweh is present and through whom he acts” (Beasley-Murray 22). When prophetic messages refer to the Messiah in the Old Testament, they mainly refer to the conquering of the evil powers in the world, the submission of the nations to God, and the establishment of the new order of Yahweh (22). The task of the rule of the kingdom has been given to the Messiah. He will be the instrument of God’s rule in the kingdom. Hence, the Messiah is the form of the appearance of the Lord. “There could never have been a stage in Israel’s history when the kingdom of God was looked for apart from the coming of Yahweh” (24).

## New Testament Basis for the Kingdom of God

As I address the kingdom of God in light of the New Testament (NT), the word used for kingdom in Greek is *basileia*. The words “kingdom of God” appear about a hundred times in the synoptic gospels. James Brooks says *basileia* expresses two concepts: (1) rule, reign, authority, sovereignty, kingship, and (2) realm, domain, territory, kingdom over which authority is exercised (21).

From the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus states, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). This statement by Jesus is possibly a summary statement made by Mark on the entire mission of Jesus’ ministry. This statement affects all of the synoptic tradition from Jesus himself through Mark and the sayings of source Q up to the writings of Matthew and Luke (Kung 71). Jesus seems to be reorienting the people to the fact of the Old Testament that God was present with you through the time of the exodus and beyond, and God is now present with you on earth in a bodily form. The Messiah has come to establish his reign (Beasley-Murray 25).

The proclamation of salvation and the saving actions of Jesus prove that in Jesus, eschatological salvation has already begun (Kung 86). In Mark 9:1 Jesus says, “Some of those who are standing here will not die until they see the kingdom of God come with power.” Jesus himself is the great sign of the kingdom (Luke 12:54-56; Mark 13:28). His coming and work are the signs that the kingdom of God has come. For Jesus the hour of decision is now, and according to how people accept or reject him, they are marked for an eschatological judgment by God (Mark 8:38; Matthew 19:28).

Through the study of the Old Testament and the gospels, a clear message is

presented that the kingdom has always been a part of the world, but it has come near in the person of Jesus. In Mark 14:25 Jesus makes it very clear that the kingdom has a future aspect to it. Jesus associates the kingdom with the messianic banquet at the end of the age.

Lincoln Hurst indicates that a common misunderstanding of the kingdom in the New Testament has to do with the distinction between the kingdom as a “reign” rather than a “rule” (Green 210). Hurst cautions us against taking literally Jesus’ invitation to enter the kingdom of God because no realm exists into which his followers can literally enter. Few would believe that Jesus invited men and women to enter into the kingship of God, to share in his sovereignty with him. What Jesus invites us into is an entry into that sphere of territory where God’s kingly rule would be operating over them (Green 210).

Another common misunderstanding of the kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels is to ask whether the kingdom is present or future. Jesus’ teaching does not lead us to go one way or the other. “To Jesus the kingdom is past, present, and future” (Green 210). Both elements are present in the Synoptics. This idea of the kingdom would imply that humanity does not wait for the kingdom to “come”, because the kingdom is already here, waiting for our acceptance and acknowledgement of its existence. The kingdom also elicits a response from a person as to whether or not he/she will accept the rule of God and live in that rule. The present aspects outweigh the future in relation to Jesus’ ethical pronouncements. The future aspects of the kingdom are easy to find in the Synoptics such as Mark 9:47 and 14:25, which talk about eternal life in the kingdom. In Luke 22:18 Jesus says, “I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

As we shall see, the overall tone of Jesus' message was that the kingdom has already in a substantial part come on earth. Hurst proposes eight possible ways to understand the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus. I will address four of them.

1. *The kingdom is present as the fulfillment of prophecy.* The Old Testament treatment of the kingdom addresses this issue in part. In the Synoptics, Mark 1:15 says, "The time has come, the kingdom of God has drawn near, repent and believe the gospel." Mark could have said "the time is coming, the kingdom is drawing near." Something evidently has happened in order for Jesus to speak that way about the kingdom.

2. *The kingdom is present as a divine power breaking in upon the kingdom of Satan and overthrowing his power in the world.* This point is made in Jesus' response to the claim that he drives out demons by the authority of Beelzebub in Luke 11:20 and Matthew 12:28. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, the kingdom of God has come upon you." An interesting thing about this passage is no condition exists of belief that causes the inbreaking of the kingdom (Green 212).

3. *The kingdom is a way of life which demands total obedience to God and complete self-sacrifice.* This idea appears in Matthew 5:26-33, Mark 8:34-37, and Mark 10:17-23. Following Jesus in these passages is equated with entering the kingdom. For those who want to become disciples of Jesus need to enter the service of the kingdom, and only those who are prepared to undergo great sacrifice are fit for the kingdom (Green 213). Jesus talks at length about ethical issues that are connected to the kingdom (Matthew 5-7). Being a part of the kingdom is not an easy task.

4. *The kingdom is present not only as a challenge to individuals but as a challenge to the nation.* Luke 12:32 says, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to

give you the kingdom.” One could easily miss the national scope of this saying if one was unaware of the Old Testament picture of the nation as a flock and the king as a shepherd. One text is Ezekiel 34:15-27 where the shepherds of Israel are abandoning the flock, and God answers, “I will be shepherd of my flock, I will make them lie down, I will seek the lost, I will bring back the strayed.” When Jesus talks to his disciples in shepherd language, national overtones are present.

As evidenced from the references in the Synoptics, the kingdom of God contains a comprehensive scope. The kingdom, as the rule of God, not only takes place now, but will culminate in the days to follow. The kingdom of God is not something humans can accomplish through effort, nor is it a place we can look at and say, “There is the kingdom of God.” The kingdom is the rule of God in the world. It is the attempt of God to redeem the world before the final judgment takes place and the kingdom of God is fully revealed. “There are so many references in the Synoptic Gospels to both the present and future aspects of God’s reign that both must be embraced in any theology that is truly biblical” (Brooks 35). As we stand in between the kingdom coming and not yet realized, our task is to proclaim the approaching reign of God and urge and challenge people to make a decision for God.

### **Developments of the Kingdom of God in Church History**

The doctrine of the kingdom of God has been a hotly debated topic throughout the history of the Church. Jerald Brauer observes, The kingdom of God is one of the most fruitful yet controversial concepts in Christian theology. It has been employed to uphold the status quo, and it has been a revolutionary ideal used to break social forms and customs (197).



Howard Snyder, in his book Models of the Kingdom has identified six points of tension within the biblical texts that address the kingdom of God. These tensions are

1. *Present versus future*. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15) but also that we should pray for God’s kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10);

2. *Individual versus communal*. Jesus said the kingdom is like hidden treasure an individual person might find (Matthew 13:44), but he also said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32). He talked about being born again in order to see the kingdom (John 3:3) but also described it as a feast to be shared;

3. *Spirit versus matter*. Paul said, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50), and Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Jesus associated himself with the healing and liberation of the Jubilee (Luke 4:18-21), while Revelation talks of a kingdom in which God’s people will “reign on earth” (Revelation 5:10);

4. *Gradual versus climactic*. Jesus said the kingdom is like grain that grows gradually in a field (Mark 4:26-28), but he also said its coming would be like a midnight cry at the arrival of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-6);

5. *Divine action versus human action*. The kingdom of God is like a returning king who settles accounts (Luke 19:11-17). God rules and reigns (Psalm 99:1-2). The kingdom is also something we must seek (Matthew 6:33), and Christians can be fellow workers for the kingdom of God (Colossians 4:11);

6. *The Church’s relation to the kingdom*. This is the tension between seeing the church and the kingdom as interrelated or distinctly different. Jesus said to Peter, “I will

give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19). He also spoke of the kingdom as future and said that not all those who worshiped him, but only those who did God’s will, would enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21) (16-18).

Snyder raises the varying poles with which the church has wrestled for two thousand years. I will use Stephen Stookey’s model to divide the history of the church and identify how each era reacted to these poles.

### **Early Church Era (AD 100-476)**

Benedict Viviano identifies four dominant models of the kingdom in the early Church era. These are (1) The kingdom of God as future hope, (2) the kingdom of God as inner/spiritual experience, (3) the kingdom of God as the church, and (4) the kingdom of God as Christian state (30-56).

Irenaeus preferred the term kingdom of heaven and provided the most extensive discussion of the Kingdom. Stookey states, “Irenaeus’ future kingdom model held to an earthly millennial kingdom initiated with the return of Christ. At the end of this millennial period the faithful would enter the kingdom of heaven” (40). For Irenaeus, the kingdom of heaven, while possibly operative in the present, is primarily an anticipated future event, a time of restoration and renewal (Stookey 40).

The Alexandrian school looked at the kingdom of God and viewed it as a spiritual reality. Clement of Alexandria viewed the kingdom of God as future and heavenly, but he added a moral interest to the idea of the kingdom. He connected entrance into the kingdom with present moral and spiritual qualities (Fergusen 198). Origen of Alexandria attempted to synthesize the present and future kingdom models by emphasizing God’s reign in the heart. He had a simple reduction of kingdom thought: Christ is the kingdom;

therefore, the kingdom is present wherever Christ is found (Ferguson 198).

Constantine's conversion to Christianity in AD 312 and his efforts to make Christianity the central religion of the Roman empire caused Christians to reevaluate their understanding of the kingdom of God. Eusebius linked the kingdom of God with the emerging Christian empire of the Constantinian era. Eusebius' reference was very clear—the earthly manifestation of the kingdom had come with Constantine's reign (Ferguson 46-47). This creates problems because of the temporal nature of governments. After the Roman Empire collapsed, Western Christianity had to begin to look for another model to describe the kingdom.

Augustine rejected Eusebius' identification of the Roman empire with the kingdom of God. Augustine believed that the city of God had a temporal state (the institutional Church) and an eternal state (the heavenly Jerusalem). He believed the Church was now the kingdom of Christ. This idea grew from his interpretation of Revelation 20 as the first resurrection of Christ. He then saw the millennial reign as being symbolic of the Church's history (Snyder 70-71).

### **Medieval Church Era (AD 476-1500)**

We see the four models of the early Church's view of the kingdom reappearing in the medieval Church but with some revisions. Because of Charlemagne's recovery of the west from the ravages of barbarian invasions, he reasserted the concept of the kingdom of God as a Christian state (Viviano 47-48). Medieval Catholicism interpreted the kingdom of God as a church-governed society. They took Augustine's doctrine and molded it into a defense of the institutional Church's authority in matters of both civil and religious.

This model of the kingdom continued to dominate Roman Catholic doctrine well into the

twentieth century (Snyder 70-71).

The Renaissance with its humanistic emphasis created a renewed interest in individual spiritual development. Because of this emphasis the kingdom of God was viewed as an inner spiritual-mystical reality that was accompanied by an increase of inner devotion (Stookey 45-46). Meister Eckhart, a German Dominican mystic, argued for an inner spiritual-mystical kingdom. The idea that Jesus asserted was the closer the kingdom of God came to a person, the nearer God was near to the one who called on him with a sincere heart (Viviano 77-78).

### **Reformation Era (AD 1500-1650)**

The reformers did not treat the kingdom of God as a major theme, but the radical reformers did emphasize a visible, present kingdom emphasis (Snyder 46-52). Because the reformers rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, they saw the expression of the kingdom as reigning in the hearts of the believer or a “spiritual reign” of Christ. The reformers did not expect a visible manifestation of the kingdom of God until the return of Christ (Stookey 46).

One of Martin Luther’s elements concerning the kingdom of God was his teaching that there are two kingdoms. This became one of Luther’s basic keys for interpreting and applying the Christian faith to his time (Viviano 88). Snyder states that Luther placed primary emphasis on the kingdom as an inner spiritual experience (46). Luther refused to identify the Church as the present realization of the kingdom. In Luther’s treatise, “On secular authority, and how far one owes obedience to it” he says,

Here we must divide the children of Adam and all men into two parts, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, and the second to the kingdom of the world. Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all true believers in Christ, and are subject to Christ. For Christ is the King and Lord in the kingdom of God. The

gospel should also be called a gospel of the kingdom of God, because it teaches, governs and maintains the kingdom of God. All who are not Christians belong to the kingdom of the world and are subject to the law (Pelikan 88-92).

Both the church and state were important to Luther because each was initiated by God, but neither one should be equated with a visible kingdom in the present (Viviano 88-89).

The Anabaptists viewed the kingdom as a counterculture system. They believed the present, visible kingdom was to arrive through “the Pauline mission method rather than by the slaying of the ‘godless’ and violent revolution” (Littell 133). They affirmed the present reign of Christ in the life of the born again and the future hope of the kingdom to come in eschatological dimensions (Estep 238).

### **Modern Church Era (AD 1800-2000)**

People began to search for a way to view the kingdom that would lead individual Christians outside the doors of the Church. They looked for a model where Christians would become transformers of society. The kingdom comes to fruition through the leveling of society through Christian morals and ethics (Snyder 101-102).

Stookey states,

The Enlightenment provided a renewed interest in attempts to rediscover the essential qualities of Jesus’ earthly ministry, which led to a reexamination of his kingdom teachings. The emphases on morality and optimistic progression of humanity led to an equation of the kingdom of God with societal redemption. (50)

Albrecht Ritschl saw the kingdom of God as being established by men and women motivated by God’s love toward corporate ethical actions. The kingdom is represented by the Christian community affecting the moral and ethical organization of humanity (Snyder 104-106). Ritschl helped to bring to the forefront the social gospel movement.

The dispensational movement has helped to view the kingdom of God as a future event. William Cox says dispensationalism ties the doctrine of the kingdom of God to an extremely literal hermeneutic, a dispensational classification of history, the future coming of Christ, and the Church's rapture, the focus is future oriented. This system of thinking raises doubts as to the kingdom's present existence and runs the risk of elevating anticipated millennial kingdom above Christ's death (30-37). In opposition to the dispensational view, C.H. Dodd has argued that the kingdom of God is an already accomplished historical event that was found in the life and ministry of Jesus (43-49). The dispensational view was fulfilled by Jesus' proclamation in Mark 1:15 that "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." History, according to Dodd, became the "vehicle of the eternal" (197).

### **The Kingdom of God and a Healthy Church**

When Pilate questioned Jesus after his arrest, Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (John 18:33). Jesus responded by saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Just as God does not rule only in one sphere of reality, so the kingdom does not exist in only one reality. God is transcendent as well as his kingdom. Jesus was not referring to a different place, rather a different realm of thinking. This was God's way of thinking, but to rather than a worldly perspective. Jesus was king, and he had a kingdom, but it was not the kingdom people had in mind. "The purpose for which Jesus' kingdom would exist was to create a citizenship of love not a welfare state" (Saucier 86). What Jesus intended for the kingdom then does not match what we have created the kingdom to be now.

As stated previously, the history of the Church has equated the Church with the

kingdom of God. As has been discovered by modern exegetes like Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, Remarus, and D. F. Strauss, it is impossible to talk about the Church being “God’s kingdom on earth” or the “present form of the kingdom of God,” or the “forerunner of the kingdom of God.” To suggest that the Church builds the kingdom of God or even works for its realization would also be erroneous. The Church itself is told to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Kung 130). “Ekklesia embraces sinners and righteous, basileia is the kingdom of the righteousness, of the saints. Ekklesia grows from below, it can be organized. Basileia comes from above...an incalculable event...in short it is definitely the work of God” (Kung 131).

An important point to understand is the Church is not in opposition to the kingdom. A connection exists between the two. The community of believers we call the Church comes from preaching the kingdom of God. The Church is not the kingdom of God but it directs its attention toward the kingdom of God, and it proclaims the kingdom to the world.

Hans Kung gives five perspectives of the preaching of the reign of God through Jesus that were stated earlier. These five perspectives have become imperatives in the Church.

(1) Jesus preached that the kingdom is a decisive, future, final event at the end of time. If the Church preaches this, some inevitable consequences occur (Kung 136). The Church cannot make itself the focal point of the message. The task of the Church is to point the world to God and the coming reign of his kingdom. The Church must also realize that the ultimate goal is not in itself, but the goal is in the coming kingdom of God.

(2) Jesus preached that the kingdom is an all-powerful act of God himself. If the Church preaches this, inevitable consequences occur (Kung 137). The Church must not try to create the kingdom of God by itself. God creates the kingdom for the Church. The Church can only testify to the kingdom. This option takes a load off of the Church. If the final victory of the kingdom has been achieved apart from the works of the Church, it can focus on changing the world and proclaiming the coming of the kingdom.

(3) The Church must preach the kingdom as a realm in which we live and exist on a day to day basis. The Church must avoid at all costs presenting itself as the only place where God exists. The kingdom stands above the Church as the ultimate place where God reigns. The Church needs to take the role of a servant in relation to the kingdom. The strength of the Church lies in the cross of Christ.

(4) The Church must preach the kingdom of God as a saving event for sinners (Kung 139). The Church must have a passion for the lost people in the world and it should not devote itself to preaching doom and gloom and inducing fear in the hearts of unbelievers. Not that these messages should be avoided, but the Church must preach the good news of the gospel. The Church needs to be a healing, forgiving entity in the world.

(5) The kingdom of God calls for a radical decision for God. In turn, the Church must make a similar demand, which leads to consequences for the Church (Kung 141). The Church must be confronted with a decision between God and his reign or the reign of the world, it must not be distracted from a radical decision for god. It seems as if the Church has lost or misplaced great parts of its kingdom mentality (Saucier 93). The Church needs to rediscover what the kingdom really means in the life of the body of believers. The kingdom needs to be that hidden reality that comes out in our actions and



attitudes toward other people.

C. Rene Padilla says, “The mission of the church can only be understood in light of the kingdom of God” (16). Because of the Messiah, the King over the kingdom of God, his kingdom has come to be a reality. The Church is the community that has come into existence because of his kingly power (17). Because of that fact, the Church should never be equated with the kingdom. G. E. Ladd says,

If the dynamic concept of the Kingdom is correct, it is never to be identified with the church. In the biblical idiom, the kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God’s rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it. The church is the community of the kingdom but never the kingdom itself. The kingdom is the rule of God, the church is a society of men and women. (111)

William Henn says, “The church is subordinate to the kingdom so far as she is an instrument of its realization. It serves the kingdom and helps to bring it about by her proclamation and action” (128).

The kingdom of God has continued to be a present reality through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Padilla 17). The Church came into existence because of the Holy Spirit and it is the body of Christ and where a new era is to operate through Jesus Christ. Because the Church likens itself to a body with Jesus as the head, it exists not primarily as an organization but an organism whose members are united by the actions of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought the Church into existence and remains dependant upon the Spirit for its very existence in the world. Padilla explains “The Church is not the kingdom of God, but it is the concrete result of the kingdom” (17). Lesslie Newbigin states the Church should look like:

The community which has begun to taste the reality of the kingdom which alone can provide the hermeneutic of the message. Without the hermeneutic of such a living community, the message of the kingdom can

only become an ideology and a programme; it will not be a gospel. (19)

Because the kingdom has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ, the mission of the Church cannot be properly understood apart from the presence of the kingdom. The mission of the Church should be an extension of the mission of Jesus-the manifestation of the kingdom of God, through proclamation as well as social service and action (Padilla 18). To speak of the kingdom means to speak the universal message of the gospel-centered on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ whom God sent to be the “Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). The proclamation of the kingdom of God “is not merely the proclamation of an objective fact concerning which men and women should be informed: it is simultaneously a proclamation of an objective fact and a call to faith” (18). Henn says, “The kingdom itself can be adequately understood only in light of the fact that the Church is its germ and beginning, the instrument chosen by Christ to be the special means for spreading his reign throughout the world” (146).

### **Church Growth Movement**

Lyle Schaller said, “the most influential development of the 1970s was the emergence of the church growth movement” (qtd. in McGavran and Hunter 7). Donald McGavran is looked at as the father of this movement. Over the past thirty to forty years, we have seen a shift in the way congregations “do” church. This movement has had many proponents but it has also had its share of critics. I will take a look at the history of the church growth movement that will include the theology of the movement. I will then talk about the critics of the church growth movement.

### **History of the Church Growth Movement**

Donald McGavran does not claim to be the “father” of church growth, but he

owes his interest in church growth to a great Methodist bishop, Jarrell Waskom Pickett (McGavran and Hunter 14). In 1955 McGavran published his first book on church growth, and in 1965 he moved to the Fuller School of Theology and began the school of world missions. In 1970 McGavran published his third church growth book entitled Understanding Church Growth. This book is still the foundational book for the church growth movement. Simply stated, the church growth movement seeks to remove the barriers or obstacles that inhibit growth (16). McGavran views church growth in four areas: internal growth (depth), expansion growth (conversions), extension growth (missions), and bridging growth (cross cultural evangelism) (43). George Hunter sees the church growth movement's goal as "making disciples" (McGavran, Church 25).

McGavran says "Church growth has always been characteristic of healthy churches and basic to the power of the Christian movement" (McGavran and Hunter 14). He sees church growth as dependant upon the action of the Holy Spirit and the message that God does not want any to perish (2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16). The church growth movement's foundation has a theological base based on the fact that men and women without Jesus Christ are doomed to spend a Christless eternity, and for that reason, God wants lost people to be found.

In 1971 McGavran and C. Peter Wagner were teaching a course on church growth with Win Arn in attendance, and he was able to see the vision of churches throughout America benefiting from what he was hearing. Through the work of people like Arn, Wagner, and McGavran, thousands of churches are operating on the revolutionary principle that "a healthy church grows" (McGavran and Hunter 23). Physical growth is not everything, but a father would be concerned if his sixteen year old daughter had not

grown since she was eight. As McGavran says,

Healthy, normal churches grow. They feed on God's word, worship and obey the Head of the church, practice their Christian faith, and are deeply concerned about the pagans inhabiting their neighborhoods. Not only are they concerned, but they are doing something about it. (McGavran and Hunter 23)

George Hunter suggests a dozen distinctives of the church growth approach.

These are:

1. the objective of evangelization is to make disciples
2. statistics and graphs are taken seriously in analyzing present and past situations in the church
3. goal setting is indispensable
4. no one method of evangelism will work, indigenous forms of evangelism is imperative
5. the social sciences are used to develop a strategy
6. the utilization of practical research to gain the facts for developing evangelism techniques
7. tests evangelistic principles and discovers new ones
8. people are receptive to the gospel
9. new church planting is advocated
10. a world wide data base of church growth research is available to predicate theory and strategy
11. a high doctrine of the church is held, people need the church
12. the growth of Christ's church is the will of God. (McGavran and Hunter 25-26)

Church growth is not a gimmick; it is being faithful to God's will for the Church and his call to evangelize the world. Wagner asks the question, "Why focus on church growth?" (Strategies 35). He responds by saying, "If we concentrate on church growth we get to the heart of the great commission" (Strategies 35).

One of the key foundations of the church growth movement consists of "finding the bridges of God." One way of expressing this concept is by saying,

The faith spreads most naturally and contagiously along the lines of the social network of living Christians, especially new Christians. Receptive undisciplined men and women usually receive the Possibility when the invitation is extended to them from credible Christian friends, relatives, neighbors, and fellow workers from within their social web. (McGavran

and Hunter 30)

This principle plays itself out in the NT when Andrew discovers that Jesus is the promised Messiah. He turns spontaneously to his brother Simon with the good news (John 1:41). In Mark 5:19 when Jesus liberates the demon-possessed man in chains, he tells him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

### **Critics of the Church Growth Movement**

The major criticism of the church growth movement has been the perceived focus on pure numbers and sociological principles. This movement has often been viewed as a scientific way to address a spiritual problem. Schwarz says it is like using human efforts to produce spiritual results (Natural 6). The greatest danger in over emphasizing methods or marketing is that success may be viewed as human rather than divine (Hemphill 26). Hemphill expresses concern about maturation growth, the deepening of relationships, and the transformation of culture (26). “Church growth is not the result of any program or plan. Church growth is the by-product of a right relationship with the Lord of the church” (10). He believes the church growth movement only deals with the symptoms rather than the illness of the Church.

Clearly from the foundational literature of church growth, the founding fathers of church growth did not intend this movement to be purely a numbers/programs game. C. Peter Wagner takes on the challenge of the critics by stating, “If strategy planning quenches the Holy Spirit, I want nothing of it. God’s work, I believe, must be done in God’s way. However, I do not see this matter as an either-or but as a both-and situation” (Strategies 18). The church growth movement could easily slide into a purely

technocratic, laundry list of things to do in order for the Church to grow.

Some have criticized the church growth movement for not having a strong enough theological foundation. It has been called “atheological” or “thin on exegetical material” (Wagner, Strategies 36). Wagner’s response would be what Donald McGavran has always affirmed: “God wants His lost sheep found and brought into the fold.” This is a strong theological assumption held by all advocates of church growth (Strategies 36).

Wagner gives a list of theological non-negotiables for the church growth movement. These are (1) the glory of God is the chief end of humans; (2) Jesus Christ is Lord; (3) The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the kingdom of God; (4) The scriptures are the only normative authority for believers; (5) Sin, salvation and eternal death are eschatological realities; (6) God wills all to be saved from sin and eternal death; and, (7) God has given his people a responsibility for saving souls, and the Holy Spirit works through them to accomplish the task (Strategies 39-40). Jesus said in Matthew 18:14, “It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

The church growth movement has been around for over 40 years. Its strategies and programs have affected thousands of churches around the world. Many people’s lives have been changed because of this movement. One disturbing notion remains: the Church is still in a state of decline. George Barna states that relatively few of the 360,000 churches in the United States grow by 10 percent a year (User Friendly 15). George Hunter also states that 80 percent of evangelical churches in America are plateaued and/or declining (Interview). Of the remaining churches, only 1 percent is growing by conversions. Critics of the church growth movement are quick to state that

the movement has been good but has not had overwhelming success.

### **Church Health Movement**

For the past two decades in Christian history, a movement has arisen as a result of the church growth movement. A deluge of approaches, seminars, books, and surveys has attempted to look at the Church in a holistic way. I will take a look at some of the predominate authors in the arena of church health and then describe the Beeson Health Indicator list that this project is used. This dissertation attempts to find if there is a correlation between church health and church growth in the life of a church, and in my case in the life of the WOCUMC.

#### **Definition and History of the Church Health Movement**

The first question that needs to be asked when talking about the church health movement is, “What is health?” Roy King says some church leaders limit the health of their church to attendance or giving. These factors are great indicators but not the only ones in diagnosing the health of a church. He asks, “Are only people over six foot healthy? Are Michael Jordan and Cindy Crawford the ‘norms’ against which all men and women must measure their health?” (1).

Peter Steinke believes that in order to address the question of health in a congregation, one needs to have a picture of what health means. Steinke says, “Health is wholeness. Health means all the parts are working together to maintain balance. All parts are interacting to function as a whole” (vii). Health is a continuous process, an ongoing interplay of multiple forces and conditions (vii). “To talk about a healthy congregation is to talk about a congregation from an organic perspective” (viii). Only living systems can be looked at as healthy or sick, injured or healed.

The mark of an organism is balance among the different systems. When the balance fails, the organism gets sick and, without treatment, eventually dies. When a church functions as a system or a whole, consideration of the interactions of the different parts of the system must be taken into account. Church health characteristics cannot stand on their own, there must be interaction to have a healthy system. Steinke says that healthy congregations are also purposeful organisms (26). A healthy church has clear direction and vision for what God is calling it to do. A church needs to be responsible for the health of the congregation by allowing individuals to be stewards of the whole. A connection exists between the health of the church and the people in the church (81). Elmer Towns and Warren Byrd believe the most basic common denominator in a healthy church is being God-centered. When one looks at church health as being outside a God-centered reality, balance does not occur (4).

Rick Warren views church growth is a natural by-product of church health. Church health is discovered when a balance occurs between the biblical message and the five biblical purposes of the church (49). Warren defines these purposes as worship, ministry, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism.

Healthy churches focus not on growth goals, but on the quality characteristics of health. Many church leaders have developed their lists of quality characteristics. Others offer their ideas of essential characteristics (See Table 2.1).



**TABLE 2.1**  
**Characteristics of Church Health – Primary Sources**

<b>Hemphill</b>	<b>Macchia</b>	<b>Schwarz</b>	<b>Wagner</b>	<b>Leadership Network</b>	<b>Beeson Characteristics</b>
Servant Leaders	Servant-Leadership Development	Gift-Oriented Ministry	A Well Mobilized Laity	Lay Mobilization	Mobilized Laity
Christ-Exalting Worship	God-Exalting Worship	Inspiring Worship Service			Engaging Worship
Passion for the Lost	Outward Focus	Need-Oriented Evangelism	Effective Evangelistic methods	Responsible Evangelism	Intentional Evangelism
Kingdom Family Relationships	Loving and Caring Relationships	Loving Relationships	Meeting Members' needs	Authentic Community	Authentic Community
Maturation of Believers	Learning and Growing in Community	Holistic Small Groups	A Common Homogeneous Denominator		Transforming Discipleship
God-Connecting Prayer	Spiritual Disciplines	Passionate Spirituality			Passionate Spirituality
God-Sized Vision	Wise Administration and Accountability	Empowering Leadership	A Positive Pastor	Effective Leadership	Empowering Leadership
Supernatural Power	God's Empowering Presence				
	Stewardship and Generosity		Celebration, Congregation and Cell		
	Networking with the Body of Christ	Functional Structures	Biblical Priorities	Cultural Connectedness	Functional Structures

**TABLE 2.2**  
**Characteristics of Church Health – Secondary Sources**

<b>Eclov</b>	<b>Spader &amp; Mayes</b>	<b>Anderson</b>	<b>Singletary</b>	<b>Galloway</b>	<b>Beeson Characteristics</b>
Holiness in Dealing with Sin	Atmosphere of Love	Glorifying God	Strong Emphasis on Prayer	Clear Cut Vision	Mobilized Laity
Endurance, “Over-comers”	Relational Ministry	Producing Disciples	Obvious Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Passion for the Lost	Engaging Worship
Confront Evil and Heresy	Communicate Christ Clearly	Exercising Spiritual Gifts	Biblical Balance	Shared Ministry Together	Intentional Evangelism
Exclusive Love for God	Good Health Image	Reproducing Through Evangelism	Individual and Organic Reproduction	Empowering Leadership	Authentic Community
Corporate Growth Ministry	Prayer	Incorporating Newcomers	High Level of Lay Mobilization	Fervent Spirituality	Transforming Discipleship
Love for One Another	Communicate the Word	Open to Change	Qualitative and Quantitative Growth	Flexible and Functional Structures	Passionate Spirituality
		Trusting God	Healthy Body Life	Celebrative Worship	Empowering Leadership
		Looking Good on the Outside		Connecting Small Groups	Functional Structures
				Seeker Friendly Evangelism	
				Loving Relationships	

## Christian Schwarz-Natural Church Development

German researcher Christian Schwarz has been an instrumental scholar linking the issues of church health and growth in the life of the Church. He has identified what he believes are universally applicable principles that release the “biotic potential” of the Church. These principles are extensions of the natural created order. He names them as (1) interdependence, (2) multiplication, (3) energy transformation, (4) multi-usage, (5) symbiosis, and (6) functionality (Natural 64-77).

Schwarz created what is called the *Natural Church Development Survey*. Through this survey, he has studied over one thousand churches in thirty-two countries. Schwarz defines health in his book Natural Church Development as being a harmonious interplay of eight characteristics: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

In each country studied, Schwarz did a norm of the values obtained from the survey to a median of fifty (Natural 38). Churches that were declining were below fifty, while growing churches scored above fifty in the eight characteristics. Schwarz designed a tool to empirically measure the health of a church through the eight quality characteristics and their interplay with each other. Schwarz’s research contends that a church cannot thrive without all eight characteristics (Natural 38).

Schwarz discovered a phenomenon in his study that he named the “65 hypothesis.” This hypothesis says that when all eight quality characteristics scored 65 or higher, the probability that the church is growing is 99.4 percent. Schwarz states, “This is one of the few church growth principles for which we have yet to find a single

exception anywhere in the world” (Natural 40).

Schwarz sees the theology of church health as coming out of a bipolar ecclesiology. He makes the distinction between the church as an “organization” and as an “organism.” He sets forth the bipolar principle as “essential for a theological understanding of church growth; and it is definitely the theological key for understanding what natural church development is all about” (Paradigm 15).

The nature of the church consists of two elements: a dynamic pole (organism) and a static pole (organization). Schwarz would say that both of these elements are needed for proper church development and both are present in the NT concept of *ekklesia* (Paradigm 16). The dynamic pole is seen in the NT when the church is described in biological terms. For example, when Paul talks about “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12), he is talking about a living, moving, breathing organism called the church. The static element is found in places where the church is described in terms of architectural and technical metaphors and emphasizes the church building (Paradigm 16). Paul talks about himself as a “skilled master builder” who “laid the foundation” which others are “building” (1 Corinthians 3:10). The dynamic and static pole are both present in the NT and are not in competition with each other but complementary to each other. For example in 1 Peter 2:4-8, believers are referred to as “living” (organic metaphor) “stones” (technical metaphor). In Ephesians 4:12 “the body of Christ” (organic metaphor) may be “built up” (technical metaphor).

When Schwarz talks about the relationship between these two poles, he realizes that the “development of the church as an organism inevitably leads to the creation of institutions, but the aim of these institutions is to be useful in stimulating the

development of the church as an organism” (Paradigm 20). So in essence, a reciprocal relationship takes place between the poles. The dynamic pole produces the static pole, and the static pole stimulates the dynamic pole. The church has let the static and dynamic poles to go out of balance. When the church goes to the left, it moves towards a dualistic subjectivism, which is anti-institutionalism. Schwarz defines this pole as the “spiritualistic paradigm” (22). When the church goes toward the right, it heads towards a monistic objectivism, which deduces its very existence from the institution. Schwarz calls this pole the “institutionalistic paradigm” (22). Schwarz contends for six biotic principles of a healthy church. These are: interdependence, multiplication, energy transformation, multi-usage, symbiosis, and functionality (Natural 66-77).

### **Critics of the Church Health Movement**

Criticism of the church health movement has arisen in general, but more criticism has been waged against Christian Schwarz and his method than others. For this reason, the Beeson Health Characteristics have been formulated. Daniel Simpson has reviewed Schwarz’s material and believes him to come across as “somewhat arrogant” (58).

Simpson believes Schwarz attacks the church growth movement when he says

Natural Church Development means bidding farewell to superficial pragmatism, to simplistic cause-and-effect logic, to a fixation with quantity, to manipulative marketing methods, and to questionable “can do” attitudes. It means leaving behind human-made prescriptions for success and moving on to growth principles which are given by God himself to all of his creation. (Natural 14)

Simpson sees Schwarz to be attacking the church growth movement on the one hand then taking the term church growth and using it for his own purposes. He says, “To Schwarz, church growth is a desirable thing. But it must be his kind of church growth rather than that of the Church Growth movement” (59).

Many critics have looked at Schwarz's material and have said that his concepts hit at the heart of the church growth movement. He attributes his ideas to no one, even though many of his theories can be found in the past forty years of church growth material. Simpson goes so far as to say, "If church leaders embrace *Natural Church Development*, they've adopted the heart of Donald McGavran's church growth thinking" (62).

John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley go so far as to say that "This book (Natural Church Development) is fatally flawed by the pseudo-scientific way the material is presented" (83). Ellas and Yeakley said Schwarz did not provide enough detail for other researchers to replicate his study and see if they find the same results (83). They stated that if Schwarz were going to write in non-technical language, then he should have at least footnoted the essential scientific components of statistical significance, correlation coefficients, reliability measures, and construct validity. The reviewers also say that Schwarz is missing the correlation coefficients. Schwarz claims to have found a "strong positive correlation" or a "strong negative correlation," but he never states how strong (85). They believe this study cannot be called a "correlational study" (86). Ellas and Yeakley point out that Schwarz's approach naively ignores national, contextual, and institutional, and such local contextual factors as staffing, facilities, finances, size, and barriers. One conclusion drawn indicates the lack of true scientific evidence. Because of this concern, Schwarz's eight characteristics cannot be termed "universal principles" (91).

A complete assessment of church health must include both the internal and external variables that affect the congregation. Peter Wagner presents five sets of factors

that influence the growth and decline of churches:

1. National contextual factors: These are factors relating to national trends in population, attitudes, values and social values.
2. National institutional factors: These include denominational theological stance, polity, and priorities.
3. Local contextual factors: This includes social trends in the community and neighborhoods surrounding the church.
4. Local institutional factors: These factors exist within the community of the local church.
5. Spiritual factors: This deals with the relationship between human effort and God's actions. (Healthy 12)

In most of the studies of church health, these and other contextual factors have largely been ignored. These factors can have a direct effect on the growth and health of a congregation.

Another criticism of Schwarz has to do with looking holistically at church health. As Ronald Richardson suggests that church is comprised of six systems (28-29). This includes such issues as the spiritual disciplines of the subjects, and other contextual factors in the church. These issues need to be addressed in order to gain a better picture of the condition of the subjects and local church.

Gary McIntosh sees the church health movement as growing out of the church growth movement (1). He gives the definition of church growth as "that science which investigates the planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19-20)" (1). McIntosh makes note of the word "health" in the definition of church growth and states church growth has always been interested in church health. He also sees a tie between health and growth in the use of survey research and statistics for analysis of church health (1). McIntosh believes we should not focus on health because of the tie to our therapeutic society. He sees church

growth as being the better term to use because it takes an outward focused look at making disciples rather than an inward focused look at the health of the church (1). McIntosh does not deny that churches need to be healthy, but that should not be the emphasis. Making disciples is the church's number one priority. He says that Schwarz is the "Mr. Church Growth of Germany," and McIntosh is disappointed that Schwarz has chosen to distance himself from the church growth movement (2).

Church health seems to be a subset or offspring of the church growth movement. Some have said that church growth focuses on quantity of people, while church health focuses on the quality of the churches themselves. Many discussions between these two camps have occurred to try to come to grips with this accusation. One person said,

Church health is a discipline that was born out of church growth, but church health is quite distinct...Among these distinctions is that whereas church growth was influenced by the tenets of modernism, church health has developed in the postmodern culture. (Crossbow 1)

The church growth movement taught church leaders to understand church development as a science. Church leaders were looked at as engineers or scientists. Church health now offers a new understanding of the task: the church leader as an artisan (2).

### **Pertinent Issues of Church Health**

This study is intended to find any relationship between church health and church growth in WOCUMC churches. The questions that are asked about churches need to be changed from "How do we increase attendance?" or "How do we increase giving?" to "How do we increase the quality of each health characteristic?" Rick Warren states, "The key issue for the church in the twenty-first century is health, not growth" (qtd. in Miller 23). Size is not an indicator of health (Towns and Byrd 6). By and large, smaller churches are healthier than larger ones (Schwarz, "Strong" 53).



The issue is that everything healthy will grow. This growth takes place not only in numbers. Church health needs to be viewed as associated with the effectiveness of the church. Is the church fulfilling its purpose (Townes and Byrd 2; Steinke 26)? A healthy congregation will know who they are and what they are doing for the Lord (Steinke 30). At this point a sense of coherence will occur.

A healthy organization will have the ability to reproduce. A healthy church will plant other churches (Miller 24). Healthy churches also are making and growing better disciples (Schwarz, Natural 20; McIntosh 1). In order to attain this goal, a balance must be maintained among the quality characteristics of the organization (Crossbow 2; Schwarz Natural 39). Quality characteristics need to be measurable. A number of survey tools are on the market to measure the health of a congregation. The focus of the church health movement is on quality, not quantity. This focus leads to the creation of the Beeson Health Characteristics.

### **Beeson Health Characteristics**

Because of the critiques of the church health movement in general and the critiques of Christian Schwarz's survey and universal principles, a group of four from the Beeson Pastor Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary decided to make a break with Schwarz. Through our research, we believe a closer link exists between church growth and church health. This group consists of Scott McKee, Jim Kinder, Keith Taylor, and myself, Brian Law. We have had an opportunity to visit and study the largest churches in the world. Through our visits and review of the literature, we have created our own list of health characteristics, and we have constructed our own tool that will measure the health of a church and correlate it to the growth of the church in

order to see if health affects growth or not. The characteristics that we have formulated are: (1) Empowering leadership, (2) Passionate spirituality, (3) Authentic community, (4) Functional structures, (5) Transforming discipleship, (6) Engaging worship, (7) Intentional evangelism, and (8) Mobilized laity.

For the purpose of this study, I will do a full report on two of the Beeson quality characteristics, engaging worship and transforming discipleship. Following my report, I will provide a summation of the other characteristics that were developed by the other team members.

As we were formulating this list, we realized that many lists contained the same items. The nouns in each characteristic represent ministries that exist in nearly every church (Schwarz, Natural 78). Through a group effort, we delimited which nouns would be used in our health characteristics. Then each team member took two of the nouns and through a review of the literature and study of theology came up with a corresponding adjective to better define and describe each ministry noun.

Through our research and fixing of our list of health characteristics, we discovered our characteristics have a correlation to Rick Warren’s five purposes for the church. These purposes correspond with our characteristics in this way:

<b>Rick Warren</b>		<b>Beeson</b>
Worship	-----	Engaging Worship
Ministry	-----	Mobilized Laity
Evangelism	-----	Intentional Evangelism
Fellowship	-----	Authentic Community
Discipleship	-----	Transformational Discipleship

The other three Beeson Health Characteristics – empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, and functional structures – are covered in The Purpose Driven

**Church.** We view them as overarching categories that function in all areas of the church. Empowering leadership is evident as Rick Warren's model of leadership. Passionate spirituality can be identified with Warren's idea of "riding the spiritual wave" (14). Functional structures are found in the development of the ministries of Saddleback Community Church around the five biblical purposes (119).

### **Engaging Worship**

**Introduction.** The church has fallen down on the responsibility of helping bring people into the presence of God through worship. The church has failed to allow its worship style to remain fluid and minister to people. Sally Morgenthaler says, "We are producing a generation of spectators, religious onlookers lacking, in many cases, any memory of a true encounter with God" (17). George Barna found an alarming discrepancy between people's understanding of worship and how the Bible speaks about worship. When he asked church attendees to define the meaning of worship, he learned that 36 percent provided a reasonable assessment of what worship means, 25 percent provided answers that were too generic to evaluate, and 39 percent offered explanations that were clearly erroneous. Barna's conclusions were that "a substantial portion of the worship population-perhaps even a majority of it-appears to be unclear about what it is they venture to the church to accomplish each weekend" (Barna 102).

**Definition of engaging worship.** The definition of engaging, according to Webster's Dictionary is, "to bind, to do something, to take part: participate" (232). Engaging worship requires participation. Robert Webber suggests that "Worship is never something done to us or for us, but always by us" (84). This kind of worship results in a connection between the worshipers and the one being worshiped.

When the church looks at worship, it should see more than a production. We should allow the “supernatural God of Scripture to show up and to interact with people in the pews” (Morganthaler 23). If worship services do not help people meet God and allow people to participate in a worship relationship with God, the essence of worship has been removed. “Effective worship should inspire more worship not less” (22).

Twenty-first century people are very spiritual. The church does not have to convince such persons of God’s existence. In fact, most people want to do more than just intellectually investigate the claims of Christ. They want to meet the Christ in us and Christ himself in our services (Morganthaler 59). People are not looking for intellectual truth; they want experiential truth, a supernatural experience and relationship with a powerful, living God. The question then becomes, can the church stand up to the test? The people sitting in the pews are not inhibiting supernatural contact with God. Often times the leader stands behind the microphone holding people back from worshiping and engaging God.

**Historical Overview of Engaging Worship.** When the church talks about worship, it basically addresses this issue through the outward and visible forms by which Christians worship (White 29). This approach looks at the whole phenomenon of Christian worship and what actually happens in worship when Christians gather.

Christian worship has always been an interesting mix of constancy and diversity. Christian worship is practiced in nearly every country in the world and it has nearly twenty centuries of history. There exists in the world a huge diversity of forms to express worship. Certain givens exist in Christian worship that are capable of being adapted to a variety of cultural circumstances, but we have to also realize the diversity of over two

thousand years of history.

James White, in his book Introduction to Christian Worship, says that the most noticeable instance of constancy in Christian worship is the persistent dominance of four basic structures of worship, plus a loosely-defined collection of rites of passage (29). These constants include (1) the understanding and use of time as a means of communication so that it shapes and organizes the other structures; (2) the structures of worship centered in orderly daily instruction and praise known as liturgy; (3) the services of initiation, which mark the actions of the making of a Christian; (4) the most widespread structure is the Lord's supper or Eucharist. (5) rites of passages that mark transitions in a person's or community's life experience such as marriage, ordination, or burial (30).

Worship is not only constant, but it is also spontaneous. Spontaneous worship is where worship ebbs and flows according to how the Spirit moves, and it is not subject to printed rituals. In the Pentecostal movement as well in many black churches, spontaneous exclamations are a vital part of worship. "Quaker worship is spontaneity itself, though it exemplifies the need for a self-disciplined freedom for spontaneity to bear its best fruit" (White 30). Spontaneity is not just turning people loose for individual speaking or introspection. It is using the different gifts of various people for the benefit of the whole community. Paul's chapter on spontaneous worship immediately is followed by the chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13), and it aims at one purpose: building up the church (1 Corinthians 14:26). The gifts given to Christians were meant to be shared in community, not kept in isolation (31).

Just because there is an absence of service books or bulletins does not ensure

spontaneity. In many congregations, the repetition has firmly established a structure and it has little variation or room for surprise. There must exist a healthy balance between worship formulas and the unwritten and unplanned elements that only spontaneity can provide (White 31). At this point engaging worship plays an important role in the twenty-first century church. Engaging worship, at its best, can strike that balance needed between God-honoring planning of worship and an air of expectation that the Spirit will move in the worship service. The Church cannot simply ignore two thousand years of tradition, nor can it afford to ignore the new working of God in the world and the Church.

**Theological basis for engaging worship.** The Septuagint, (LXX) uses the term for various words of worship meaning “to bow,” “to kiss,” “to serve,” or “to worship.” Most of the instances relate to veneration of the God of Israel or of false gods (Bromiley 948) The concept of worship in the NT is often translated from the Greek *proskuneo*, which is used only in relation to a divine object (948). God issued his command to the Hebrews in Exodus 20:3-5 not to worship any other gods or idols because “no injury to God compares with the denial of his uniqueness and the transfer to another of the recognition due to him” (Elwell 1192). Stuart suggests that, for the most part, *proskuneo* in the NT suggests spontaneity, usually as someone responds to Jesus, without special concern for place or location (213).

The English word for worship literally means “to attribute worth” to someone or something. This English term is just a small part of the consistency of biblical worship. Worship is the response of the created to the Creator (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 7; Hoon 26; Martin 12; Underhill 28). Every aspect of worship should be set in the context of response, which would include the whole of salvation history. God has offered his

love to us from the time of creation through the sending of Christ. Our motivation for worship is aimed at giving praise and adoration for the greatness of the Creator. True worship is union with God, which is the purpose of worship (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 11). Morgenthaler says,

Worship is simply the expression of our love for God, which Jesus said, should involve all our heart, mind and physical strength (Mark 12:30). Worship is not a one way street, it involves a two-way communication between believers and God. Worship provides opportunities for God and God's people to express their love for each other. (48)

Acts 13:2 says, "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting..." is translated from the Greek *leitourgeo*. This word leaves no doubt that the people must be participants, not merely spectators. *Leitourgeo* also conveys the sense of the priesthood of all believers and their work together before the throne of God and in his presence through the power of the Holy Spirit (Davies 222). As was found in the discussion of the kingdom of God, a connection exists between engaging worship and the kingdom. God initiated the kingdom, and we respond to the invitation to the kingdom. So God initiates worship, and we respond to God's initiation.

One of the most explicit NT statements on worship occurs in John 4:19-24 in the context of Jesus' talking with the woman at the well. This passage gives an opportunity to look at the specific disagreement on where worship should take place in the first century. The woman begins by talking about the place of worship. "Our fathers worshiped [*proskuneo*] on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship [*proskuneo*]." Jesus responds, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship [*proskuneo*] the Father." Jesus is saying that worship is not limited to a location no matter how holy the

site (Stuart 215). Scholarly opinion is rather unanimous at this point. Brown indicates that Jesus is speaking of the eschatological replacement of temporal institutions like the temple since Jesus himself replaces the temple (180). Carson states that true worshipers cannot be identified by attachment to a particular shrine (225). Schnackenburg says that call goes out for a new type of worship with the place for offering worship being unimportant (435). And F. F. Bruce notes that the important question here is not where people worship but how they worship. “Worship is not about places, no matter how sacred or respected those place may be” (Stuart 216). The NT consistently avoids connecting worship with a particular place other than the place where Jesus happens to be (216).

**Vertical relationship with God in worship.** Jesus talks about a time “when the true worshipers [*proskunetes*] will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship [*proskuneo*] him must worship [*proskuneo*] in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23) “Worship happens when one participates in the life of the Spirit and accepts the truth found in Christ” (Stuart 217). A person worships God by entering into God’s presence and establishing a relationship with him. This is not done by physical acts or physical places. “We worship God by participating in the life that is spiritually defined by living in the truth” (218).

In John 4 the issue of the vertical relationship with God in worship is accentuated. At the core of worshipping God in spirit and truth is contained in the words Jesus quotes from the Torah concerning the greatest commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” (Matt. 22:37) The Great Commandment speaks of worship as not “traditional” or “contemporary” but as a



relationship. Our relationship is with God and other persons.

We have been created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), and we are relational beings so our relationship with God is similar to our relationships with other humans.

When we examine our relationship to other humans there are four basic elements:

*nearness*—spending time in that person's presence; *knowledge*—getting to know that other

person; *vulnerability*—risking rejection and allowing ourselves to be known; and,

*interaction*—participating in an open dialogue of words and deeds (Morganthaler 96).

These four elements are basic in our worship of God and involve an engagement with

God. A person must put forth the effort to get to know God in a more intimate way.

James 4:8 is clear: "Come near to God and he will come near to you."

Worship needs to be approached as a relationship. Worshiping the Lord in spirit involves the highest part of a human being, his/her spirit. "Jesus took the concrete aspect of worship and lifted it up into the sphere of spirit and truth which now controls it"

(Bromiley 949). This act does not spiritualize worship, but opens the possibility to

worship at all times and in all places. As Jesus told the woman at the well, the place of

worship does not matter, the style of worship does not matter. What does matter is a

connection between the worshiper's spirit and God's spirit. As the Scottish New

Testament scholar William Barclay wrote,

A man's spirit is the highest part, ... the part which lasts when the physical part ... has vanished. ... It is the spirit of a man which is the source and origin of his highest dreams and thoughts and ideals and desires. The true, genuine worship is when man, through his spirit, attains to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible. (161)

We respond to God's initiation in worship. This vertical relationship becomes enhanced when we are engaged with God in worship. The personhood that God created must be engaged with the Creator of the universe, not merely go through the motions in worship

Worship does not stop at worshiping in the spirit. Jesus said we must worship in spirit and truth. To worship God in truth is to realize what is contained in the truth of the gospel. The woman at the well became engaged with the truth of Jesus' identity. Jesus revealed to her that he was the Messiah. To worship in truth is to worship in the name of Jesus. Donald Hustad says, "Christian worship must be conducted in the name of Jesus. This is why we pray to God the Father 'in Jesus' name'; or 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'" (38).

If the church wants worship to make a difference in people's lives, it must contain interactive opportunities. "Worship that is interactive, both vertically and horizontally, is biblical worship" (Morganthaler 123). Interactive worship not only provides pathways of contact with a holy and loving God but avenues of nurturing, uplifting relationships with those who are called in God's name.

**Horizontal relationship with others in worship.** Along with understanding ourselves as the people of God, the body of Christ, worship must also help develop a community of social relationships. Worship should be more than just a vertical relationship to God; it should draw us closer to one another as fellow worshipers. If people go into a worship service of total strangers, worship will not be as free and expressive as it could be if they sensed the warmth, acceptance, and support of a family group.

This area has been left relatively unexplored when thinking about corporate worship. The majority of worship is to be directed toward God in thankfulness and adoration for what God has done. The element of building relationships between other worshipers cannot be ignored. Society is quickly becoming more and more anonymous because of e-mail, the Internet, and long work hours. Because we have been made for relationships with other people, the more and more anonymous our lives become, the more dehumanized we become.

George Barna has observed visitors to churches and has asked the question, “What do visitors see when they come to your church?” He says,

Can they sense the concern for the people, and the dedication to providing significant solutions to deeply felt needs? If your church exudes an aura of concern and demonstrates the desire and ability to respond in meaningful ways to people’s hurts and struggles, you’ll probably see a first time visitor become a repeat attender (Never 34).

Bob Sorge looks at this horizontal aspect in his book, Exploring Worship. He sees six ways worshipers interrelate to one another in worship (113-19). First, worship enhances a sense of unity within the body. Psalm 133 talks about how the Lord is pleased when the body lives in unity. First John 4:20 says, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” We cannot have a vibrant, dynamic, personal relationship with God and be at odds with our brother and/or sister. Second, worship gives us an opportunity to minister to one another. The best time to engage one another spiritually is in the context of the worship service. “Worship is the context in which the true fellowship of Christ’s body is realized and where those who participate can find real healing” (Webber 18). Our proof of loving God is loving our neighbor.

Webber states, good worship “involves both what we bring to worship and what worship brings to us” (76). Worship connects the gospel to the needs of the people. Worship leaders and designers must have a sense of where their people are and what struggles they have so the worship can address those struggles.

Thirdly, interrelated worship occurs by teaching and reinforcing spiritual truth. Paul said, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Robert Webber believes worship tells and acts out the living, dying, and rising of Christ. It celebrates Christ’s victory over evil, the certain doom of Satan, and the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. “Worship represents Jesus Christ through re-presentation” (39). Fourth, worship provides believers with an opportunity to profess their faith before others. If a person confesses the name of Jesus in the worship service, such an action will increase his boldness to share his faith with others. The fifth point is to declare the glories of God before unbelievers. Unbelievers should see believers not only enjoying worship but engaging with God and their fellow worshippers. Psalm 108:3 declares, “I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, I will sing of you among the peoples.” God did not intend for his praises to be confined to only Christians. Lastly, interrelated worship fosters a receptivity for the word. Worshipping people will become more open to receive the word of God (Sorge 118). When people praise God, they are more open to receive what God has for them.

Robert Webber believes the primary purpose of worship is to experience faith in the community of worship in such a way that the Christian faith is not just known intellectually but experienced as a reality (89). The key to aliveness in worship is “a

spirit filled congregation—a warm, loving, and caring community of people—the community of faith in action” (89).

**Evidence of engaging worship.** When a church participates in engaging worship, people are connected to God as well as to fellow worshipers. The worship service glorifies God and, in doing so, creates a sense of excitement in the life of believers so they not only look forward to worshipping but want to invite their friends, too. Engaging worship engages not only the people’s hearts but also their minds. This engagement takes place not just in the music or the sermon but in every aspect of the service. People experience a sense that they are participating in something of which God is a part.

### **Transforming Discipleship**

**What is a disciple?** Often people ask, “What does being a Christian mean? Is it accepting a theological system? Is it an experience of faith or following a code of conduct?” Note that Jesus never called his followers “Christians.” The term “Christian” was a derogatory term given by the persecutors of the “Christ followers” (Acts 11:26; 26:28). This term was not one of endearment but a way of making a joke of the people who identified themselves with Jesus Christ. Jesus always referred to his followers as “disciples.” Jesus called his followers to a life of discipleship, a life of following his example. Jesus taught that entry into the kingdom was synonymous with entering a life of discipleship, of submitting to the demands of the God who is king (Green 221)

A good place to begin identifying the meaning of discipleship would be with the word disciple. The word disciple, which is *mathetes* in Greek, is a common word in the Greek language. It means learner or student. The New International Dictionary of New

Testament Theology states,

A man is called a *mathetes* when he binds himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. He may be an apprentice in a trade, a student of medicine, or a member of a philosophical school (Brown, Collin 485).

By that definition, Jesus had many disciples. In Luke 14:25-33, we find a tremendous crowd following Jesus and learning from him. By the above definition, they were disciples. Jesus told them that they were not ready to become disciples. He challenged them with the cost of discipleship. He said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, his brothers and sisters, even his own life, anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me, any of you who does not give up everything cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

Jesus here is giving an added dimension to *mathetes*. He has changed the definition. Being a disciple of Jesus is different than being a disciple of any other rabbi. The people who want to be a disciple are those who seek righteousness in God’s kingdom. Jesus suggested several characteristics of the community of disciples. The first one is that of love. Jesus sums up the whole law in the twofold command of love: love for God and love for one’s neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40). This love even extends to love for one’s enemies (Matt. 5:43-46).

Another characteristic of the community of disciples is that of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the only feature of the Lord’s prayer to receive an elaborative comment (Matt. 6:14-15). Another characteristic that defines disciples is servant leadership. To be part of Jesus’ community, we must become like children (Matt. 18:1-5). The greatest in the community of Jesus’ disciples is to be measured in terms of humble service to all (Matt. 20:26-28; 23:11-12).

Each of the many definitions of disciple call a person to be a follower of Jesus, he/she must have the characteristics that Jesus exhibited while he was on earth.

Following Jesus, by its very nature, should be transforming. A healthy church that strives to help people live out the model of Jesus' life must help its people understand how lives are transformed by Jesus' example. Let us look now at some further theological evidence of discipleship

**Theological basis for transforming discipleship.** Discipleship involves the teaching and admonishment of the Christian believer to become more Christlike in nature and activity. J. Dwight Pentecost talks about this concept in Design of Discipleship when he explains that Christian discipleship requires an obedience to Christ's teachings (16).

In 1937 Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote The Cost of Discipleship. He was responding to the secularization of the Lutheran Church. Bonhoeffer observed in his church an excuse for the lack of discipleship. The church pointed to Martin Luther as the prophet that spoke of easy grace and secularization. "Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship" (53). Bonhoeffer discovered following Christ is not to be achieved by a select few but is a divine call and command to all Christians without exception (50). Grace without surrender is not a biblical reality. It is a result of a secular world's need for God and an easy way out. "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (47). He also said, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ" (52).

Robert Coleman suggests that cheap grace is not only powerless, but it is actually

unattractive to the secular person. An argument could be made that the church should make the entrance into the family of God easy and as cheap as possible in order not to frighten people away. The church could make it easier for nonbelievers and not ask for commitment, avoid discussing daily disciplines, and ignore the cost of discipleship.

Maybe the Church should just invite the unbeliever to come and celebrate the free gift of God. Robert Coleman would say no.

If we try to circumvent the cross, we assure our own ultimate defeat, for we cut the nerve of obedience and kill the life-style of the Great commission. No one will take seriously the command to make disciples who has not taken up the cross. (Discipleship 116)

Jesus communicated his intentions for the church in his last words in the Gospel of Matthew:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

The scope of this commission is all encompassing: “all authority,” “all nations,” “everything I have commanded,” “always, to the end of the age.” The Church has to occupy itself with the business of making disciples until Jesus returns.

If making disciples is the goal of the Great Commission, a definition of disciple becomes necessary. To some people, being a disciple is being a well-polished Christian, exemplary in every way (Wagner, Strategies 51). Wagner states a disciple is a Christian (52). Disciples are people who are born again by the Spirit of God. They have confessed with their mouths the Lord Jesus and believed in their hearts that God has raised him from the dead (Rom. 9:9-10). Acts 2:42 describes disciples as continuing “steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”



Different views of discipleship include, what place it should have in the church, and how important is it to the Christian. Allan Coppedge believes discipleship is the key to strengthening the Church as well as to reaching the world. He believes God desires “a closer, more intimate, personal relationship with His people, an invitation which always comes to those who have begun to follow Him” (24).

Coppedge gives three basic essentials in becoming and remaining a disciple.

The discipleship method is designed to build relationships. One principle is the essentiality of life-to-life sharing, the second essential principle of discipleship is the cultivation of habit patterns that make it possible to develop one’s relationship with God. Learning to pray, study the scriptures, memorize the Word, fast, and worship in community are all part of the process of developing tools for one’s walk with God, the third essential principle of discipleship is accountability. The disciples learned to be responsible to Jesus for their conduct, attitudes, ministry, and relationships. They also learned to be accountable to one another. (162)

Robert Coleman, in his book The Master Plan of Evangelism, has examined Jesus’ ministry and his strategy for disciple making. Jesus’ steps were (1) Selection, (2) Association, (3) Consecration, (4) Impartation, (5) Demonstration, (6) Delegation, (7) Supervision, and Reproduction (13).

As Jesus stated, discipleship requires obedience, but it is not simply a discipline of works. The life of discipleship does not consist of living life alone. Leslie Weatherhead explains it by saying, “The normal life of the Christian is a life of fellowship. A normal and full Christian life cannot be lived alone” (63). Leroy Eims also believes “a growing Christian needs fellowship” (64). His book emphasizes the fact that believers need to have fellowship with God but also fellowship with one another. “Inwardly, people must be motivated to have fellowship with Jesus Christ, and outwardly they must become witnesses for Jesus Christ” (51).

**Images of transformation.** To be involved in the discipleship process involves change. The twelve original disciples experienced a process that led to behavioral transformation. “The twelve arrived at their final intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees” (A. B. Bruce, Training 11). Other books that lend support to this debate include Jesus and the Twelve by Robert Meye and Call to Discipleship by Juan Carlos Ortiz.

The definition of transformation according to Webster’s Dictionary is “an act, process, to convert, a change of variables or coordinates in which a function of new variables is substituted for each original variable” (728). Transformation through discipleship involves a process and a change of variables (way of life, attitude, actions) from the way of the world to God’s way. Transformation does not take place in an instant; it is a lifelong process. This transformation takes place not only in our lives, but we are then called to transform the world around us. Transformational discipleship is greater than a personal walk with Christ; it is a way of life that affects every person with whom we come into contact in life.

John Driver, in Images of the Church in Mission, talks about images of transformation. These are salt, light, and a city. Jesus uses these three images in Matthew 5:13-16 to reveal the messianic community’s character and mission. Salt represents purifying and sanctifying the surrounding community. Light symbolizes the covenant community’s saving mission to the nations. A mountain top city attracts surrounding people to itself. These three images highlight the Christian’s purpose of mission. The Christian is to neither withdraw completely from the world nor to conform to the values of society. Salt, light, and the city need both identification with the world, but distinction from it in order to help transform the community (198).

Driver has another image, which is a witnessing community. The term *martus* (witness) is prominent in the NT understanding of the believing community and the individual believer. In Luke's version of the Great Commission, Jesus commands his followers to be his witnesses throughout the whole world (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). This witness is more than verbal testimony; it implies witnessing to truths and realities experienced, making confession, and suffering, and possibly dying as a result (198).

**Evidence of transforming discipleship.** Transforming discipleship is not a specific program or way of helping people grow in the faith, but it is a process to which a church must devote itself. Transforming disciples seek to build a desire within the heart of believers to read Scripture, pray, fast, and participate in activities that draw them closer to God. Since not everyone grows in the faith at the same rate or in the same way, opportunities need to be offered in the life of the church for believers to learn to be better disciples of Jesus Christ. Since all Christians are called to be disciples, transforming discipleship is for everyone. As a Christian, to grow in the faith is very important.

### **Summary of Other Beeson Health Characteristics**

Because this dissertation is part of a group project by four Beeson scholars from Asbury Seminary, I will be taking the other six quality health characteristics and summarizing them for reference purposes. For a larger treatise of these characteristics, please refer to James Kinder's dissertation and the proposals of Scott McKee and Keith Taylor (see Works Cited).

**Authentic Community.** The biblical ideal of community is a reflection of creation itself. In Genesis, God desires to make humans that bear the image of the stamp of God. Jesus came proclaiming a gospel that had relationships at its very core. The

Sermon on the Mount addresses issues such as anger between brothers (Matt. 5:22) and how to respond to enemies (Matt. 5:44-45). Jesus did much more than just talk about loving relationships; he modeled them. He spent time cultivating a relationship with his disciples. Jesus modeled the life that he called his disciples, which consisted of a life lived by having oneness with God and harmony between believers (John 17). Paul prays in Ephesians 3:17-19 that people might discover the ultimate expression of God's love "with all the saints" (verse 18). A person cannot fully know the love of God apart from community.

We find in Acts the best description of biblical community. It was a community that had unity and harmony, being of one mind, one soul, and one heart. (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). It was a community that shared its resources with each other (2:44; 4:32). They met for prayer, fellowship, and teaching (1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:15).

Authentic community is summed up in Paul's letter to the Romans (12:9-21). Paul talks about a genuine love with no hint of hypocrisy (v. 9). This authentic community needs to be motivated by the Holy Spirit. The health characteristic "Authentic Community" looks at "the organic aspect of the body of Christ as it relates together, it includes the quality of its fellowship and the locale of its connection in both large and small groups." (Taylor 42)

One of the logical ways authentic community is attained in the life of a local church is through small groups. Because of the breakdown of society and family structures, the need is great for people to find authentic community in their lives.

Functional structures. Healthy churches must strive to discover the most effective means of accomplishing the mission and values of the local church. When looking at

functional structures, they can be addressed in four categories: multidimensional, flexible, intentional, and dynamic.

Every church is multidimensional. Three primary dimensions that are at work in churches include the church as a cause, the church as a corporation, and the church as community. The local church is an organism that must keep multiple dimensions working at any given time. The church is called to something bigger than itself. The mission of the church is clear: “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). The body of Christ also exists as a corporation. Certain structures are needed in order to exist as a corporation. The word for administration in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:8 is *kubernesis*. The word is translated as leading, governing, ruling, organizing. “Scripture is not anti-structure, it is a matter of priority” (Taylor 46). The church also has to function in the dimension of community. The church must mesh its mission and organization with the relational living of its members. It needs to be a place where “people are love and are loved, serve and are served, minister and are ministered to, care and cared for, admonish and are admonished” (Malphurs, Values 91).

The Church is by design an organism and it also contains the elements of an organization. “Healthy churches are intentional about designing systems that will promote the mission of the congregation while embracing the interconnectedness of each ministry part” (Taylor 47).

Church structures must also be intentional in their design and implementation. Because churches are organizations, special attention must be paid to the development of structures that help the organization function at its highest potential. “The Biblical purposes of the church must be supported by the structures developed for their

fulfillment” (Taylor 49). A perfect church structure does not seem to exist, but church health suggests that leadership should be about streamlining and shaping the structure in order to gain the results they are looking to achieve.

The structural system of the church needs to always guard against becoming so entrenched that it cannot be changed. Because we live in a rapidly changing society, the church needs to have an openness for adaptation in order to address the complexities of the world. In essence, the church does not have to use 16<sup>th</sup> century structures to minister to a twenty-first century crowd.

**Intentional evangelism.** “Healthy churches are intentional about evangelism” (McKee 38). Evangelism is to announce the good news. The word *evangelizo* is not used very often in the Gospels, but the concept is pervasive. The concept usually has to do with “preaching” or “proclaiming.” For Jesus, evangelism was much more than preaching and proclamation. Jesus wanted to express the realities of the kingdom as he taught, healed, and conversed. The first individual evangelistic effort recorded in the New Testament is that of Philip. He traveled and “preached the good news of the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12).

Evangelism in the early Church is recorded in the book of Acts, and it begins with the mission given by Jesus prior to his ascension. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Evangelism includes the intent of making disciples. A response to the gospel being proclaimed is expected but not required in order to be considered evangelism. Evangelism includes proclaiming the message to groups as well as one-on-one. When

referring to the body of Christ, evangelism is not to be reserved for just a few believers, but all believers are to be involved in the sharing of the good news with others. The message to be proclaimed is the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

When communicating the gospel to others, it needs to be spoken in word and done in deed. Debates have gone on for centuries as to which should be a priority, but a balance between proclaiming the gospel and living the gospel must be present in the lives of believers and in the lives of churches in order for the message to be best received.

Evangelism will not just happen in the life of a church or in the life of individual believers unless it is an intentional priority in their lives or in the mission and budget of local churches. Without the intentionality element, evangelism will become less and less of a priority because it is so time and energy consuming.

**Mobilized Laity.** A healthy church looks at all of its members as ministers rather than just looking toward the pastor or a small group of leaders to carry the load of ministry. Throughout history the pendulum has swung back and forth between the church being lay led and clergy led.

There exists very little Biblical support to the idea of a distinct class of persons that should be set apart for ministry. Ministry belongs to the body of believers. Many of the current understandings of clergy and laity are carried over from the priesthood of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the idea of “priest” is so radically redefined that the entire body of believers is now described by nature as a priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).

Healthy churches help mobilize their laity for mission. They help each person discover and use their unique gifts for ministry. They honor each person’s gifts and recognize that everyone is needed to fulfill the mission of the church. Saddleback

Community Church in California has four pillars for every-member ministry that includes the following: Every believer is a minister; every ministry is important; every one is dependent on each other; and, ministry is the expression of the way God made us (Warren 367).

Churches need to help members not only discover their ministries, but components need to be in place to help people find and use their gifts. A placement process needs to be in place in the local church to help match people with their corresponding gifts. Each member must be equipped, coached, and encouraged in order to help prevent burnout. Churches need to have many opportunities for involvement in the life of the church as well as even encouraging members to work beyond the local church in ministry. People must be given the freedom to establish new ministries if their giftedness leads them in that direction.

The laity of the church will not mobilize themselves. They need the encouragement, support, and training of the leaders in the local church. A healthy church will put the processes in place to help facilitate the training and sending out of an army of people ready to perform the work of God in the world.

**Passionate spirituality.** “Spirituality relates to the way the congregation’s spirit relies upon the presence and power of God for the life of the church” (Kinder 47). The spiritual issue in the church has to do with the supernatural, dynamic part of the church. Without the breath of God, the Holy Spirit, health will not be present.

In Acts chapter one, Jesus gave instructions to his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit will give them great power. This was a supernatural power, given from God to the disciples for



ministry. In Acts 12 we see passionate spirituality at work in the church at Antioch. Peter was imprisoned there, and the church began to passionately pray for his release. Because of the prayers, an angel of the Lord was sent to free Peter.

Jesus declared in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” The growth and health of a church are supernatural events. They are more than good formulas or theories, but God working supernaturally in the lives of people.

Passion is a strong enthusiasm focused on a particular issue (C. Brown 2,116). Passionate spirituality is “an intense intentional seeking and reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide and work within the church” (Kinder 49). Passion defines the church’s relationship with God and is connected with the life and ministry of the church. To be passionate for spiritual things is to actively seek the Holy Spirit’s direction and power for daily life and ministry.

Some of the characteristics in a spiritually passionate church include a hunger for a move of God. This type of church is moving closer to God and wants to experience a visitation from God. An interest and excitement about the spiritual disciplines is also another characteristic of a healthy church. When a church is spiritually passionate, that passion will flow through the entire congregation. Conversions will happen; barriers will be broken down. Passions will be shared among all people.

**Empowering leadership.** Empowering leadership refers to the ability of church pastors to set a vision for the direction of the church. They must also establish goals, motivate, and equip people for the work of the vision.

Aubrey Malphurs lists several biblical examples of leadership. He notices in the

list of the apostles that Peter is named first. The book of Acts chapters 1-5, 8-12, and 15 mention Peter fifty-seven times. All the other apostles are only mentioned twenty-five times. Jesus is displayed as the leader of the disciples; James is the head of the church in Jerusalem (Values 140).

Jesus functioned as a servant leader. In Matthew 20:25-48 Jesus talks about how greatness is achieved through servanthood. To serve is a great calling than to be served. One of Jesus' greatest examples of being a servant leader is in John 13 when he takes the form of a servant and washes the feet of the disciples. Then as a leader does, he commands them to do likewise.

A primary function of a servant leader is the ability to multiply his or her own leadership in the life of the church. Ministry responsibility must be shared with others. There are five identified behaviors of a servant leader. Peter Drucker has written a book called The Effective Executive in which he identifies five practices shared by effective leaders. These are (1) knows where his/her time goes, (2) focuses on the outward contribution rather than internal issues, (3) builds on strengths, (4) concentrates on a few major areas, and (5) makes effective decisions (19).

In the days in which we live, it is important that local churches be served and led by pastors who lead by empowering others so they will see the fruit in their own lives. Not only are the laity happy to be serving, but the people are freed up to use their gifts to lead ministry.

### **Research Methodology**

Using Robert DeVellis' guidelines in scale development the Beeson Church Health instrument was created through a collaborative effort of the dissertation team (51-

89). The first step was determining what needed to be measured. In this instance church health was the independent variable needing to be measured.

Second step was the generation of an item pool. This was accomplished through a thorough literature review and consultation with different church experts. The outcome was a list of eight church health characteristics with twenty corresponding questions relating to each characteristic.

Step three was to determine the format for measurement. A five point Likert Scale was chosen to provide ordinal scale measurement. These points were assigned numerical values of one to five, one being highest (Wiersma 182).

Step four involved a review of the initial item pool by a variety of church leaders. Many of these leaders were involved in the Beeson Pastor Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. Based upon their suggestions the pool of 160 questions was narrowed to fifty-five. Care was taken to make sure the questions were specific, concrete, and free of hidden biases (Fink and Kosecoff 31).

Step five was a field pre-test of the Beeson Health Instrument. Two churches in the Lexington Kentucky area, Centenary UMC and Southland Christian were chosen. Two members of the dissertation team presented the self-administered questionnaire answering any questions or clarifications as needed (Fowler 102). Question and answer time followed the completion of the survey by the respondents to gain valuable information used to refine the instrument.

Evaluation of the items was made through a split-half reliability test based on correlations between scale scores (DeVellis 34). Questions having significant

correlations were included in the final survey. Care was also given as to the length of the survey limiting the survey to a twenty minute time frame.

## **Conclusion**

The theology of the kingdom of God is foundational for building the disciplines of church health and church growth. If these two disciplines, without the continued understanding that God is the primary builder of the church will simply be an empty pursuit. When the local church realizes it does not grow for the sake of the church alone, but to bring people into the kingdom, God will be freed to do his work in and through the church. Through engaging people in worship, we help them discover that we serve a God of creativity and stability, and his desire for all of us is to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

The church health movement is right to examine the church as an organism. We see the kingdom also as an organism that lives and breathes and is involved in our every day life. Church growth is right to examine the church from a mechanistic perspective. Certain constants exist that are at work in the person of God as well as in the kingdom. Both of these movements have the same goal in mind – to see people come into the kingdom and grow to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

Without an adequate understanding of the role of the kingdom of God in the life of the church, a temptation exists to build one's own kingdom and bring people into the kingdom of the church or the kingdom of the pastor. With a proper perspective on the kingdom one can realize that the work of the church is not accomplished by one's own power or might. The kingdom undergirds the church. A great temptation exists to allow theories of church health or church growth to be the driving force of how church is

managed and run. The kingdom brings perspective and direction to a church in an exciting time of ministry.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The church has long tried to quantify its effectiveness through asking questions such as, “How do we increase worship attendance?” and “How do we increase financial giving?” Church attendance and financial giving do not provide a complete picture because they fail to recognize many other vital aspects of the church. Therefore a dissertation team was assembled to study the correlation between church health and church growth in different contexts.

This study is part of a collaborative effort by a group of four Beeson pastors in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. Each member of the team conducted similar research in a unique population sample. The design of the study and research tool is identical; only the implementation and population differ.

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between church health and church growth in United Methodist churches in the West Ohio Conference. What are the correlate characteristics of church health as derived from the literature on church growth with certain particular indices of growth? The purpose was accomplished through correlating the eight scales corresponding to the Beeson Church Health Characteristics as drawn from a thorough literature review and a cooperative study of this dissertation team.

#### Research Questions

Three primary research questions guide this study.

##### Research Question #1

How do churches in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC) rate on each of the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics?

A survey tool was created to measure the eight quality health characteristics in a congregation. These characteristics are (1) Empowering leadership, (2) Passionate spirituality, (3) Authentic community, (4) Functional structures, (5) Transforming discipleship, (6) Engaging worship, (7) Intentional evangelism, and (8) Mobilized laity.

### **Research Question #2**

How does the health of the surveyed churches correlate to the rate of church growth over the past five years?

This project is built on the premise of a positive correlation between church health and church growth. The primary index for growth will be defined as the annual rate of change in the average number of persons attending the principal weekend worship service(s). This average annual attendance is calculated for the time period of 1996-2000. Other indices for growth measured include recorded conversions and baptisms over the same time period.

### **Research Question #3**

What are the contextual factors apart from the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics that influence church growth?

Our survey tool measures the following contextual factors: (1) Length of Senior Pastor's tenure, (2) Ratio of staff to congregation, (3) Age of church facility, (4) Adequacy of the current church facility for current ministry, (5) Growth rate of community, and (6) Population size of community. These questions were derived from a number of different surveys as well as the perception that there are contextual factors that affect not only the health, but the growth of a local church.

### Population and Sample

The population of this survey included all 1254 churches of the West Ohio Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The sample for this study included individual churches randomly selected to be sampled. The churches in the sampling were limited to those over thirty in average attendance and were selected from the fourteen districts of the West Ohio Annual Conference. The sampling was done through a stratified convenience sample based on church size. After the sampling was complete, 270 churches ranging in average attendance from thirty to three thousand were chosen. Due to the huge difference in church size, the number of subjects from each church were determined by the size of the worshiping congregation. The following table provides the percentages of participation targeted for each church.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**Population sample based on church attendance**

<b>Size Range</b>	<b>Number of Churches in sample</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>	<b>Approximate number of surveys</b>
30-100	151	75%	75
101-200	59	50%	50-75
201-400	39	30%	60-80
401-600	11	20%	80-100
601-1000	7	15%	90-100
1001+	3	10%	100-200

### Instrumentation

This project was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode that utilized



researcher-designed questionnaires to measure church health and growth. The congregational instrument consists of a self-administered questionnaire with seventy-one items measuring church health (see Appendix A). A second researcher-designed questionnaire (pastoral) consists of ten items intended to measure church growth (see Appendix B).

### **Beeson Church Health Characteristics**

Based on literature review and team discussion, eight critical categories of church life were identified. These categories are leadership, spirituality, discipleship, worship, structures, community, laity involvement, and evangelism. Each member of the team selected two categories based upon individuals' interests and expertise to develop further.

Each individual reviewed relevant literature in particular categories and qualified each category by proposing an appropriate adjective to further define the health characteristic. Following a team meeting and discussion, each adjective was approved to further define the category, thus making it a characteristic of church health. The following is the completed list of church health characteristics: (1) Empowering leadership, (2) Passionate spirituality, (3) Authentic community, (4) Functional structures, (5) Transforming discipleship, (6) Engaging worship, (7) Intentional evangelism, and (8) Mobilized laity.

### **Congregational Questionnaire**

Each team member consulted other instruments and surveys used to measure church health. The individual member developed twenty questions to measure each specific characteristic. Following a team meeting, the questions were narrowed to a maximum of twelve and a minimum of nine for each characteristic. The results were a

fifty-five item questionnaire used to measure church health (see Appendix A). This tool has been created with a Likert-type scale. It measures congregational attitudes toward the eight health characteristics. It is four pages in length. This questionnaire also consists of demographic and contextual questions.

### **Pastoral Questionnaire**

A second questionnaire was developed to measure church growth, baptisms, conversions<sup>2</sup>, and specific contextual factors for the senior pastor or his/her designate. The instrument issues concerning population size, age of the facility, average weekend worship attendance, baptisms and conversions per year and consists of sixteen items. This questionnaire consists of ten items and is two pages in length.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Construct validity was determined as each question was checked against the literature review to verify its representation in Chapter 2. The surveys were pretested in two separate churches in the Lexington, Kentucky area in order to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. The pretest was administered in a classroom setting with the researchers present. The length of time to complete the survey was about 15-20 minutes. The results of the survey were processed, and the reliability coefficients were measured. Reliability was determined with “split-half” reliability analysis and factor analysis.

### **Data Collection**

Based on the number of churches in the conference, an appropriate random sample of churches and number of participants were established with help of the Doctor of Ministry office at Asbury Theological Seminary.

---

<sup>2</sup> The understanding of baptism and conversion were interpreted through the polity of the United Methodist Church.

I approached the cabinet of the West Ohio Conference to write a cover letter that would encourage the involvement of churches in this survey. A couple of days after sending the cover letter, I wrote another letter fully explaining the project and the benefits of participating. I included a self-addressed, stamped response postcard. Churches returned them to me indicating either their desire to be involved or not to be involved in the study. Along with my research reflection team, we made a follow up phone call or e-mail to those churches from which I did not receive a response. After sufficient time and a follow up call, I had received 105 responses. The follow up mailing included the cover letter, a sheet of instructions, congregational surveys, a pastor's survey, and a return envelope. I instructed the pastors to try to use all of the surveys sent to them. The pastors were also asked to send the questionnaires back within one month. It was administered to the selected churches between 8 July and 8 September 2001. Participants were given the survey and asked to return it the following week.

After I received the questionnaires from the churches and a follow up phone call was made to churches who had not completed the questionnaires, they were forwarded to Asbury Theological Seminary for scoring by 1 October 2001. Data from the completed questionnaires were encoded and manually entered into StatPack, a statistical computer software package for analysis.

The results of the survey created a "snapshot" of the churches sampled and their relative health. Each church's health index was then compared to their growth statistics to find correlation between health and growth.

### **Variables**

The dependent variable of this study is church growth that was operationalized to

include the following: average weekend worship attendance, number of conversions, and number of baptisms of the participating churches for the five year time period of 1996-2000. The independent variable is church health. This will be operationalized as the Beeson quality characteristics of a healthy church.

Intervening variables of the subjects include, spiritual disciplines, personal demographics, and church demographics. Spiritual disciplines were personal devotions, family devotions, ministry involvement, prayer, sharing of faith, Bible study, and other disciplines. Personal demographics were church membership, number of years involved in their particular church, frequency of worship attendance, percentage of money given to the church, participation in a small group or ministry team, other church involvement, perception of community (i.e. growing, plateaued, declining), age, gender, marital status and number of children. Church demographics were tenure of senior pastor, age of facility, adequacy of facility size, growth of community, adequacy of staffing, and population of community.

### **Data Analysis**

After all of the questionnaires were returned, they were sent to Asbury Theological Seminary for statistical analysis. Along with the help of Dr. Leslie Andrews and Ms. Barbara Jaeger, they coordinated the inputting and analyzation of the data. The data from the surveys was summarized with frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, and the use of Pearson's product moment correlation. The results were sent back to me for further analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Over the past three decades, the signs of success for leaders in the local church have been the measurement of attendance at the weekly worship services. This focus has been shortsighted because it was only one measure of how a church functions. This view limits the church to a mechanistic organization. Another way of looking at the local church has been needed. Church health looks at the church through the lens of a living, breathing organism, which the apostle Paul calls the body of Christ. Because of this shift, the Beeson Quality Health Characteristics were created. This study attempted to define the relationship between church health and church growth in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church (WOCUMC).

Three research questions have controlled this study: How do churches in the WOCUMC rate on each of the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics? How does the health of the surveyed churches correlate to the rate of church growth over the past five years? What are the contextual factors apart from the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics that influence church growth?

#### **Profile of Subjects**

The questionnaires were given to the pastors of the churches surveyed with the intention of distributing them to those present during the time of surveying. The total population of this study was forty-five local churches. The total number of surveys completed was 1,139. Nine hundred and eighty of the respondents were members of their respective churches. One thousand and fifty-nine of those who filled out the survey attended worship three times or more a month. Another discovery was that forty-nine

percent of the population that completed the survey are simply attendees only while forty-seven percent were in leadership positions in the church.

Regarding spiritual disciplines, more than 50 percent of all subjects reported that prayer, Bible study, involvement in ministry, and devotional times were a regular part of their spiritual lives. Family devotional times were reported as the least practiced spiritual discipline (see Table 4.1).

**TABLE 4.1**  
**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES OF SUBJECTS (N=1,139)**

<b>Personal Spiritual Disciplines</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Bible study is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	561	49.5
No	573	50.5
Devotional times are a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	617	54.4
No	517	45.6
Family devotional time is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	210	18.5
No	924	81.5
Involvement in ministry is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	639	56.4
No	494	43.6
Prayer is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	1016	89.6
No	118	10.4
Sharing my faith is a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	725	63.9
No	409	36.1
Other spiritual disciplines are a regular part of my spiritual life.		
Yes	167	14.7
No	967	85.3

### Church Health Characteristics

The Beeson Church Health Characteristics survey examined eight essential measures of health in each local church. These measures were transforming discipleship, passionate spirituality, engaging worship, empowering leadership, authentic community, functional structures, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity. Subjects tended to perceive engaging worship and passionate spirituality as the strongest of the health characteristics. On the other hand, subjects perceived transforming discipleship and authentic community as the weakest of the health characteristics. The difference between the strongest characteristic (engaging worship) and the weakest characteristic (transforming discipleship) was .50, with very similar variations (see Table 4.2).

**TABLE 4.2**  
**CHURCH HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN THE WEST OHIO**  
**CONFERENCE**

<b>Beeson Health Characteristic</b>	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>
Engaging Worship	1.86	.58
Passionate Spirituality	2.01	.54
Intentional Evangelism	2.11	.48
Mobilized Laity	2.17	.56
Functional Structures	2.17	.56
Empowering Leadership	2.29	.54
Authentic Community	2.34	.40
Transforming Discipleship	2.36	.50

Because this dissertation was part of a group study, a comparison was made between the health characteristics of WOCUMC churches and the General Association of General Baptist Churches (GAGBC) who also participated in the study. The top five characteristics in each sample had identical rankings: engaging worship, passionate spirituality, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, and functional structures. Between the two sample groups two characteristics have identical findings: engaging worship and authentic community (see Table 4.3).

**TABLE 4.3**  
**Church Health Characteristics comparison between WOCUMC and GAGBC**

<b>Beeson Health Characteristic</b>	<b>WOCUMC (N=45)</b>		<b>GAGBC (N=9)</b>	
	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>
Engaging Worship	1.86	.58	1.86	.58
Passionate Spirituality	2.01	.54	1.96	.53
Intentional Evangelism	2.11	.48	2.09	.45
Mobilized Laity	2.17	.56	2.26	.51
Functional Structures	2.17	.56	2.29	.59
Empowering Leadership	2.29	.54	2.44	.57
Authentic Community	2.34	.40	2.34	.42
Transforming Discipleship	2.36	.50	2.33	.46



### Church Growth and Church Health

The Beeson Church Health Characteristic survey also measured different demographic variables such as membership, conversions, baptisms, and weekend worship attendance. For each of these statistics, a rate of change was calculated for a five-year period beginning in 1995 and concluding in 1999 (see Table 4.4)

**TABLE 4.4**  
**FIVE YEAR GROWTH RATE FOR WEST OHIO CONFERENCE (N=45)**

Growth Factor	Rate of Change
Weekend Worship Attendance	9.29
Baptisms	35.69
Conversions	20.47
Membership	-4.79

Correlations were made between each church health measure and church growth measures in WOCUMC churches. Only those correlations that were statistically significant are represented in Table 4.5.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**CORRELATION OF CHURCH GROWTH MEASURES TO CHURCH HEALTH MEASURES**

Health Characteristic	Attendance	Baptisms	Conversions	Membership
Authentic Community	.10**	---	---	---
Empowering Leadership	.13***	---	---	-.09**
Engaging Worship	.13***	.10**	---	---
Functional Structures	.17***	.12***	---	-.08*
Intentional Evangelism	.20***	.15***	-.10**	---
Mobilized Laity	.14***	---	---	-.11**
Passionate Spirituality	.14***	.10**	---	---
Transforming Discipleship	.20***	.14***	-.08*	---

\*\*\*p=0; \*\*p≤.01; \*p≤.05.

- Attendance correlated positively in the areas of authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship.
- Baptism correlated positively in the areas of engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship.
- Conversions correlated negatively in the areas of intentional evangelism and transforming discipleship.
- Membership correlated positively in the areas of empowering leadership, functional structures, and mobilized Laity.

While the correlations were small to modest, they do reflect the tendency for the church health characteristics to be related in demonstrable ways to weekend attendance, baptism, conversions, and membership.

### Church Health and Spiritual Disciplines

The Beeson Church Health Study sought to distinguish any intervening variables that could affect the relative health of the churches. Some of these variables focused on the subjects completing the survey. We measured participation in the following spiritual disciplines: Bible study, devotional times, family devotional times, ministry involvement, prayer, sharing of one's faith, and other spiritual disciplines. Participants were asked to indicate whether they participated in these spiritual disciplines (see Table 4.6).

**TABLE 4.6**  
**RELATIONSHIP OF THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO PERCEPTION OF**  
**HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS (N=1139)**

HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS	YES		NO		t
	MEAN	S.D.	MEAN	S.D.	
<b>AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY</b>					
Bible Study	2.27	.40	2.40	.40	4.23***
Devotions (Personal)	2.30	.38	2.38	.42	2.88**
Ministry Involvement	2.28	.39	2.41	.40	4.02**
Other Disciplines	2.23	.41	2.36	.40	3.24**
Prayer	2.33	.39	2.43	.46	1.97*
Sharing Faith	2.26	.37	2.49	.42	7.47***
<b>EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP</b>					
Sharing Faith	2.26	.54	2.35	.53	2.34*
<b>ENGAGING WORSHIP</b>					
Bible Study	1.79	.58	1.93	.57	3.81**
Devotions (Personal)	1.80	.57	1.94	.59	3.66**
Prayer	1.84	.58	2.04	.60	3.29**
Sharing Faith	1.76	.56	2.04	.59	7.23***
<b>FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES</b>					
Bible Study	2.13	.57	2.22	.55	2.52*

Other Disciplines	2.09	.60	2.19	.55	1.92*#
Prayer	2.16	.57	2.28	.52	1.78*#
Sharing Faith	2.11	.57	2.30	.54	4.93***
<b>INTENTIONAL EVANGELISM</b>					
Bible Study	2.08	.49	2.14	.46	1.94*#
Devotions (Family)	2.02	.50	2.13	.47	2.65**
Devotions (Personal)	2.08	.50	2.14	.45	1.89*#
Prayer	2.09	.48	2.28	.46	3.55**
Sharing Faith	2.04	.49	2.25	.44	6.32***
<b>MOBILIZED LAITY</b>					
Bible Study	2.03	.54	2.32	.55	7.96***
Devotions (Family)	2.05	.58	2.19	.56	2.88**
Devotions (Personal)	2.05	.55	2.32	.55	7.21***
Other Disciplines	1.96	.57	2.21	.55	4.88***
Ministry Involvement	2.00	.49	2.45	.56	12.70***
Prayer	2.15	.55	2.39	.60	3.81**
Sharing Faith	2.04	.53	2.42	.55	10.15***
<b>PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY</b>					
Bible Study	1.95	.55	2.08	.52	3.56**
Devotions (Family)	1.92	.55	2.03	.54	2.39*
Devotions (Personal)	1.98	.56	2.05	.52	2.13*
Other Disciplines	1.90	.54	2.03	.54	2.81**
Prayer	1.99	.54	2.17	.53	2.96**
Sharing Faith	1.92	.53	2.18	.53	7.19***
<b>TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP</b>					
Bible Study	2.25	.49	2.48	.48	7.24***
Devotions (Family)	2.27	.50	2.38	.50	2.48*
Devotions (Personal)	2.25	.48	2.50	.50	7.93***
Other Disciplines	2.14	.44	2.40	.50	6.06***
Ministry Involvement	2.30	.49	2.45	.51	4.24***
Prayer	2.32	.48	2.76	.50	8.05***
Sharing Faith	2.24	.48	2.59	.46	10.61***

---

\*\*\*p=0; \*\*p≤.01; \*p≤.05; #p=1-tailed test

- Those who participated in the practice of spiritual disciplines perceived the church health characteristics as higher than those who did not participate.
- Those who participated in the sharing of one's faith consistently perceived each church health characteristic stronger than those who did not share their

faith.

- Sharing of one's faith was the only significant factor in the health characteristic of empowering leadership.
- For transforming discipleship all seven of the spiritual disciplines measured proved to have statistically significant correlations.
- For mobilized laity all seven of the spiritual disciplines measured proved to have statistically significant correlations.

The respondents were also asked to report whether their spiritual life was growing, plateaued, or declining. Subjects who described their spiritual lives as growing, perceived each of the health characteristics more positively than those who reported their spiritual lives as plateaued or declining. Another discovery was that as the subjects' involvement in the life of the local church increased, their perceptions of the health characteristics of transforming discipleship and mobilized laity tend to increase.

The data seemed to demonstrate that those respondents who practiced spiritual disciplines viewed the health of the church higher than those who did not practice spiritual disciplines. The more involved they were in the disciplines of the faith, the more likely they were to perceive the church as healthy.

### **Church Health, Personal Characteristics, and Church Characteristics**

The following tables focus on personal demographic data discovered in the study. These variables included church membership, number of years involved in their particular churches, frequency of worship attendance, participation in small groups or ministry teams, perception of the community in which the churches were located (i.e., growing, plateaued, declining), personal spiritual life (i.e., growing, plateaued, declining),

age, gender, marital status, and number of children. Table 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 indicate which characteristics were significant.

**TABLE 4.7**  
**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN PERCEPTION OF CHURCH HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS**

HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS	MALE		FEMALE		t
	MEAN	S.D.	MEAN	S.D.	
Authentic Community	2.40	.41	2.30	.39	3.43**
Empowering Leadership	---	---	---	---	----
Engaging Worship	1.97	.58	1.79	.57	4.77***
Functional Structures	2.23	.55	2.13	.56	2.45*
Intentional Evangelism	2.18	.45	2.06	.49	3.65**
Mobilized Laity	2.25	.56	2.12	.56	3.17*
Passionate Spirituality	2.08	.55	1.97	.53	2.95**
Transforming Discipleship	2.49	.49	2.28	.49	6.22***

\*\*\*p=0; \*\*p≤.01; \*p≤ .05; #p=1-tailed test.

- Women tend to perceive the church to be healthier than men in every category except empowering leadership.

**TABLE 4.8**  
**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN PERCEPTION OF CHURCH HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS**

HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS	YES		NO		t
	MEAN	S.D.	MEAN	S.D.	
Authentic Community	---	---	---	---	----
Empowering Leadership	2.30	.54	2.21	.52	1.82*#
Engaging Worship	---	---	---	---	----
Functional Structures	---	---	---	---	----
Intentional Evangelism	---	---	---	---	----
Mobilized Laity	2.14	.55	2.35	.61	3.57**
Passionate Spirituality	---	---	---	---	----
Transforming Discipleship	---	---	---	---	----

\*\*\*p=0; \*\*p≤.01; \*p≤.05; #p=one tailed test.

- Non-church members perceived empowering leadership more positively than church members.
- Church members perceived mobilized laity to be stronger than those who were not members.

**TABLE 4.9**  
**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATION IN PERCEPTION OF CHURCH**  
**HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS**

HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS	YES		NO		t
	MEAN	S.D.	MEAN	S.D.	
Authentic Community	2.27	.41	2.42	.39	5.07***
Empowering Leadership	---	---	---	---	---
Engaging Worship	1.83	.58	1.90	.58	1.98*
Functional Structures	---	---	---	---	---
Intentional Evangelism	---	---	---	---	---
Mobilized Laity	2.00	.53	2.40	.52	11.50***
Passionate Spirituality	1.98	.54	2.05	.54	1.75*#
Transforming Discipleship	2.28	.49	2.45	.50	5.12***

\*\*\*p=0; \*\*p≤.01; \*p≤.05; #p=1-tailed test.

- Those involved in a small group tend to perceive authentic community, engaging worship, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship more positively than those not involved in a small group.

Other intervening church characteristics focused on the pastors and physical structures of the churches. These variables included tenure of the senior pastor, age of the facility, whether the size of the facility was adequate for current ministries, whether the community in which the church was located was growing, plateaued, or declining, whether the staffing at the church was adequate, and the population within a twenty-minute radius of the church. The following intervening variables were found to have a



significant impact on the study.

Subjects who perceive their communities as growing view every church health characteristic more positively than those who perceive their communities to be plateaued or declining. Subjects who perceived the current staffing situation in the local church as adequately staffed rated the following health characteristics higher: empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, and passionate spirituality.

When asked about the size of the church facility and if it was adequate for current ministries, subjects who perceived the facilities to be strongly inadequate ranked health higher in the following categories: authentic community, empowering leadership, functional structures, mobilized laity, and transforming discipleship.

Subjects who reported population within twenty minutes of the local church to be 200,000 or more perceived the church to be stronger in the characteristics of empowering leadership, functional structures, and mobilized laity. When the population was below five thousand, intentional evangelism was perceived as the strongest health characteristic.

### **Summary of Significant Findings**

Some of the significant findings of this study include the following:

1. The majority of respondents reported that they attended worship three or more times a month, but only half of those were involved in any type of leadership ministry;
2. The WOCUMC churches and GAGBC churches were very similar in their overall evaluation of church health;
3. Church growth measurements of weekend worship attendance, baptism and conversions increased while membership decreased. Weekend worship attendance had

only a slight increase.

4. Those who participated in spiritual disciplines tended to view church health higher than those who did not participate in the spiritual disciplines. Sharing of one's faith positively affected every health characteristic;

5. People who saw their churches in the midst of a transition time (need for more staff or buildings) ranked their churches as healthier.

These personal and church characteristics shed interesting insight as the data is further examined in the next chapter. The healthier persons perceive their lives, churches, and surroundings to be, the healthier they perceive the church.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This project originated out of a desire to see if the health of a local church can be connected with the decline or growth of its congregation. The Beeson church health dissertation team created, tested, and implemented a statistically sound tool that attempted to measure the health of a church. The hope of this study was to measure the overall health of WOCUM churches and compare health with the areas of church growth. This data can be used to help churches discover how to become more healthy as they advance the kingdom of God.

#### **Personal, Spiritual, and Demographic Information of Participants**

Unlike Natural Church Development, the Beeson Church Health Survey sought to understand those who took the survey. Those who set aside the time to fill out the survey were those most interested in their churches. An overwhelming majority of people who participated in the study were members of their local churches. They had an investment in the life of the church. Barely half of the respondents were involved in leadership team positions. A couple of observations can be made about these findings. The first observation is that many scholars who study churches say the Pareto “eighty/twenty rule” applies in the life of local churches (Maxwell, 21). That is 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people of a given church setting. The survey would suggest a fifty/fifty split between leadership involvement and work accomplished.

These findings might refute the eighty/twenty rule except for another potential observation on these findings. Since this study was a voluntary one, people who tended to fill the survey and return it might be more apt to take the work of the church more

seriously than a casual attendee. Such findings might point to the need to implement the survey in a slightly varied way. The survey might need to be filled out in the body of a weekend worship service to ensure that both casual attendee and ministry leader have the equal opportunity to respond.

Included in this study was a process to identify other variables that would account for a different measuring of a church's overall health. Other intervening variables that played a role in the determination of the health of a church ranged from spiritual disciplines to basic demographic factors.

### **Overall Health of WOCUMC**

The West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist church rated engaging worship as the highest ranking health characteristic and transforming discipleship as the weakest.

As one examines the rankings of the characteristics in detail, they seem to fall into three stratifications. The first stratification includes engaging worship and passionate spirituality. These two categories stand out as the strongest areas of health in the life of the local churches.

The second stratification includes three characteristics: intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, and functional structures. These characteristics, as ranked on the 5-point Likert scale, were still above the midline of what would be perceived as health. The third stratification included the last three characteristics or the weakest: empowering leadership, authentic community, and transforming discipleship.

Clearly the weakest area is transforming discipleship. This finding would make sense because as transforming discipleship is viewed as low, so the other characteristics

suffer. As people's lives are not transformed by following God, so empowering leadership and authentic community will suffer. This finding would also correspond with the majority of respondents that did not participate in spiritual disciplines like sharing of one's faith, Bible study, and personal devotions. If people are not participating in disciplines that help them grow in the Christian faith, then their lives will not be transformed by the power of God.

The strongest areas of engaging worship and passionate spirituality point to an interesting correlation. An odd correlation is that people's engagement with God in worship and a passion for spirituality would be high while transforming discipleship would rank low. This might point to the amount of pluralism that exists in the United Methodist Church. The churches in WOCUMC are so diverse in theology and style that people might rank worship and spirituality high while disconnecting them from the transforming power of God through the spiritual disciplines.

Also interesting is the find of transforming power of disciplines as low but the desire to be intentional about evangelism as high. One must wonder if the high health score for intentional evangelism is a product of actual behavior or assumed behavior?

### **Comparison between WOCUMC and GAGBC Churches**

Even though this study was done in the context of the WOCUMC, the Beeson tool was also used to measure the level of health of selected churches in the General Association of General Baptist Churches. The sampling sizes between the two groups were greatly different. The two samplings varied greatly, but the perceived level of health in the two groups was very similar. To see such similar results between the two samplings was very surprising. Such a finding would either point to the suggestion that the Beeson Church

Health tool is an accurate instrument and/or people in each setting perceived their church settings similarly, regardless of differences in denomination, tradition, and setting.

A definite difference in culture exists as the GAGB churches were all located in Missouri while the WOCUM churches were located in Ohio, but the similar results may be attributed to the fact that both Ohio and Missouri consider themselves a part of the Midwest of the United States.

The rank order of the characteristics was very similar. The first five characteristics were identically ranked, and the seventh characteristic of both samplings was the same. The only difference in the ranking was in the sixth and eighth ranked characteristics. These characteristics simply changed places.

Also of note was the similar grouping of characteristics. The groupings were identical with engaging worship and passionate spirituality in the first group. Intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, and functional structures were in the second group. Transforming discipleship, authentic community, and empowering leadership comprised the final group.

Recognizing the substantial difference in the church bodies of the WOCUMC and the GAGBC, finding such similarities in the outcomes of the surveys was interesting. Notably, churches that struggle to find a measure of health is not one of denominational basis; rather this struggle seems to be of a more universal nature. Perhaps religious tradition does not affect health as much as people tend to think.

### **Church Growth and Church Health**

As has been stated by scholars church as George Barna and George Hunter, few churches in America grow by 10 percent a year (Barna, 15; Hunter). The churches of the

WOCUMC are no different. The five-year rate of growth in the church sample was less than 10 percent. In fact many of the churches surveyed are plateaued or declining.

The argument between church growth and church health continues to be a hot debate in scholarly circles. Many church growth experts see the church health movement as nothing more than an outgrowth of the church growth movement. While many church health proponents believe these two have separate foci and are not related.

One of the most substantial results from this study revolves around the findings that the sample churches reported a reasonable level of health, but reasonable growth numbers did not seem to match the level of health reported. It would have been expected, based on the low percentage of church attendance, and negative membership growth, that the perceived level of church health would have been at least on the midline of three or below on the Likert 5-point scale. Instead discovering the respondents rated their churches as relatively healthy was surprising.

Even Warren and Wagner assumed that if a church is healthy, it would be growing (Miller, 23; Schaller, Your Church, 17). The assumption is the healthier the church, the greater tendency it would have to grow.

One of the criticisms of Schwarz is that he does not make such a strong statement. Schwarz argues that a church can be healthy while going through a state of decline and decay. Church growth proponents see this statement as simply a way for Schwarz not to have to deal with the bottom line of increased numbers.

The Beeson Church Health Survey attempted to correlate the health of local churches with the growth rate of the churches and see if church growth and health actually are related.

WOCUM churches indicated that they were healthy, but the growth rate was only slightly positive for worship attendance and negative for membership. The growth rate for baptisms and conversions was positive.

Of the correlations made between the individual health characteristics and the growth measures, the growth rate for attendance had the most significant findings. All eight measured health characteristics proved to have a correlation to the increase in attendance. Intentional evangelism and transforming discipleship had the greatest effect. Therefore if the church wants to increase attendance it would focus on intentional evangelism and transforming discipleship.

Such an observation opposes what Schwarz would indicate as the minimal barrel theory. He states that to improve the overall health of the church, one would use the strongest category to strengthen the weakest. However, the strongest category is engaging worship, which had the least correlation to increased attendance. Yet the weakest category, transforming discipleship had the largest correlation to attendance growth. Transforming discipleship, the weakest characteristic, still had a positive impact on attendance growth.

In the other areas of church growth i.e., baptisms, conversions, and membership, the number of correlations were smaller and less significant. Something of importance to note is that some of the health characteristics had a negative impact on the positive growth rate of the churches. For example, intentional evangelism and transforming discipleship had a negative correlation to conversions, yet the growth rate for conversions was positive.

This observation could be attributed to different issues. One issue would be the



differences in opinions about what a conversion is in the United Methodist Church. We do not specifically have a reporting category called conversions. Because of the plurality that exists in the United Methodist Church, there are some who believe in the traditional biblical description of conversion found in the Gospel of John chapter three. Yet others may believe in a more universalist view that all people go to heaven so there is no need for conversion. It does seem strange that the two health categories (intentional evangelism and transforming discipleship) that should influence conversions in a positive way actually have a negative correlation. Could it be that United Methodist needs to re-examine its view of what conversion really means?

It stands to reason when talking about baptisms, the more a church focuses on transforming discipleship and intentional evangelism, there is a greater the tendency for the baptism rate to rise. But it was interesting do discover that other correlations to baptism such as engaging worship, functional structures and passionate spirituality also have a positive effect on the rate of baptism. One may not think that making sure structures are in place in the church in order for it to run smooth would have any effect on the number of baptisms. Perhaps people who have their babies baptized or who are baptized as adults like the fact that a church they would have a tendency to call home is organized and runs smooth.

Membership in the churches surveyed went down and it was negatively correlated only slightly to empowering leadership, functional structures, and mobilized laity. This would make sense in that as leadership, structures and mobilization of the laity is lax, people tend not to commit to a church. People desire strong leadership in the church. Often times when leadership is weak, the structures of the church and the organization of

the laity also falters. Could leadership be a crucial area that the West Ohio Conference should focus on?

An argument could be made that the individual health characteristics do not have as great an effect on the individual growth measures as a whole. Therefore one would not look at the individual categories in comparison to growth rates as much as one would look at the overall health of the church. However, the challenge with that argument is that the overall growth rates are low while the health measures are high.

Instead of identifying healthy churches as growing ones, we discovered that the health and growth numbers related negatively to one another in the surveyed churches. This finding can be attributed to many things. I think the first question, which is a fundamental one for this study, is “What does health look like?” A discovery was made in this study that people’s perception of health was higher than the actual health of the church.

Often times people have an idealistic view of their local church, or they might be afraid to be totally honest on the survey. Perhaps they have no other frame of reference from which to see a healthy church.

Many ideas exist of what church health looks like. If people in a certain local church have worshiped the same way, ministered in their town the same way for years, they may perceive their decline in numbers as “sickness” in the world, rather than sickness in their local church. Blinders are easily put on if people are not acquainted with situations that stretch their view of church or ministries in the church. Often times an outside source is needed, perhaps a doctor (a church consultant), or an experience of a church that is truly healthy, to help a person discover that problems exist with the

ministries and philosophy of their local church. It may take these outside experiences to help a church discover what is unhealthy in the church body.

Church health may not be as “scientific” or “concrete” as many people, including Christian Schwarz, make it out to be. People’s perception of church health seems to be a subjective issue. People may perceive health through the lenses to which they have been exposed, not necessarily the lenses of Scripture. When Jesus stated the two greatest commandments as, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39), people may perceive that they love the people in their local church but are not really welcoming to new people. The majority of the respondents in this study looked at their local church, and responded positively to the category of engaging worship. They may have perceived that their worship is engaging to them, just the way they like it, rather than realizing that worship needs to be engaging for the spiritual seeker or person wanting to connect with God. This seems to fly in the face of what Peter Steinke said: “A healthy congregation will know who they are and what they are doing for the Lord” (30). Perhaps local church members are not able to see their churches as healthy or sick because of the “blinders” that are put on based on lack of other models of church health.

The church is more than just a simple organism. A system exists of many complex parts that combine to form the church. 1 Corinthians 12:12 says, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.” Ronald Richardson identified six systems that comprise the church: emotional, structural, communication, decision making, economic, and cultural (28-29).

Another factor determining the health of a church would be viewing the church as

a collection of different organic systems. Like the human body, the church has a physical aspect, a psychological aspect, and a spiritual aspect. Although a church measures its overall health positively, it may only be measuring one aspect of health (i.e., physical health). However, if the church is made up of different systems, then the health of each of these systems likewise needs to be measured. WOCUMC churches seem to have a low self-value (psychological health). This low self-value could account for the positive health measures (physical), while they have extremely low growth measures.

Health, or the lack thereof, can be viewed through physical, emotional, or spiritual lenses. Bodies, whether they be human or churches, contain more than just the physical side of health or sickness. Other measurements of health need to be examined in order to achieve a holistic view of health.

Our study seemed to focus only on the physical, measurable side of church health. Perhaps church health has been reduced to the very thing that it has accused the church growth movement of becoming, a scientific way to address a spiritual problem.

I think, as Towns and Byrd say, that church size is not an indicator of health, but based on the study of the WOCUMC, it is clear why people tend to gravitate to concrete numbers like worship attendance, baptisms, conversions and membership. These statistics are easier to grasp, but they only measure a portion of church health. It seems evident that the overall health of a church may be a very difficult concept to fully comprehend.

### **Spiritual Disciplines and Church Health**

One of the strengths of the Beeson Health Characteristic study includes the correlation of spiritual disciplines to church health. The practice of certain spiritual

disciplines was found to have a direct correlation to the way the participants perceived the different health characteristics.

Unlike other church health survey tools, the Beeson Church Health Survey sought to examine the spiritual life of the individuals taking the test. Two leading spiritual disciplines of prayer and sharing of one's faith point favorably to the spiritual life of the participants. Conversely the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, ministry involvement, and devotional times ranked low in priority for the respondents. This information proves valuable when assessing the overall health of the churches.

Also, those people who participated in spiritual disciplines tended to perceive the relative health of the church higher than those who were not involved in those disciplines. The research here shows that ones own personal spiritual health affects the overall health of the church, a reasonable finding in light of viewing the church as a system and or as an organism. If the hand is sick, the whole body is sick.

The health characteristics most related to the spiritual habits of the respondents were mobilized laity and transforming discipleship. Those who participated in Bible study, personal devotions, other spiritual disciplines, involved in ministry and sharing of their faith perceived mobilized laity to be higher than those who did not participate in those disciplines. Other disciplines had the same effect on mobilized laity, only at a lesser significance level. They were family devotions and prayer.

Those who participated in Bible study, personal devotions, other spiritual disciplines, involved in ministry, prayer, and sharing of their faith perceived transforming discipleship to be higher than those who did not participate in those disciplines. Family devotions had an impact on transforming discipleship but at a lesser significance level.

Sharing of one's faith was the discipline that had the strongest relationship to authentic community, empowering leadership, engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship. Prayer and Bible study correlated to all of the health characteristics except empowering leadership.

Interestingly, every spiritual discipline contributed to a higher level of health in the local church. Perhaps everyone who attempts to live a fully devoted Christian life sees the church in a different light than those who do not practice these spiritual disciplines. The more people participated in spiritual disciplines the greater they reported the level of health. This could be a self-perception issue. The better a people feel about themselves, their relationship with God, and their surroundings, the better they feel about the church. A connection could also be made to one's self-esteem. One can safely say as a person is more devoted to God through prayer, Bible study, sharing of one's faith, the more devoted he/she tends to be to the life of the church. According to the data, these have a direct correlation with each other. As Ken Hemphill states, "Church growth is the by-product of a right relationship with the Lord of the church" (10). Allan Coppedge believes that discipleship is the key to strengthening the church as well as reach the world (24).

Many issues concerning the kingdom of God apply here. I will mention two. The first issue is that in the kingdom, the righteousness of the people, the strength of their spiritual journey, flows out of the life and example of the Messiah. The Messiah stands at the center of the kingdom. To be a part of God's kingdom, people need to follow after the example of the Messiah who has become present in the bodily form of Jesus Christ.

Jesus invites everyone into that sphere where God's kingly rule operates, where we understand his will and his way for our lives.

The second issue about the kingdom of God is the reality that to be a part of the kingdom involves a radical decision for God. People must choose between the reign of the world and the reign of God. If they choose the reign of God, their actions and attitudes toward people need to reflect the kingdom attitude. Here is where spiritual disciplines come into play. Spiritual disciplines are not the checklist that gets people into the kingdom; rather the spiritual disciplines are what help them to be effective disciples of Jesus and of the kingdom.

### **Personal and Church Demographics and Church Health**

In our attempt to understand church health as it relates to church growth, we sought to correlate church health to personal and church demographics. Clearly some relationship between those factors exists. One demographic of note was that those respondents who indicated they were female rated the health of the church higher in every characteristic except empowering leadership, which did not have a significant correlation. Perhaps women in the church do not perceive empowering leadership as an important characteristic in regards to church health. It also might mean that empowering leadership is a difficult characteristic to see in comparison to engaging worship or transforming discipleship. In the areas of engaging worship and transforming discipleship, women perceived a direct correlation to church health, possibly showing the reality that a majority of respondents were women and the population of most churches includes more women than men. This correlation could also point to the issue that women take Christianity more seriously on the whole than men. When they are more

involved in the church, they rate the church higher in the level of health.

Another personal demographic to note was the response of those who indicated they were a part of a small group. Those who indicated they were part of a small group rated church health higher in the following categories: authentic community, engaging worship, mobilized laity, passionate spirituality, and transforming discipleship. Authentic community, mobilized laity and transforming discipleship had a direct correlation to church health. Another indication here is that as people become more involved in the life of the church, they see the church in a different light than those who are not as involved, perhaps only casual worship attendees. Even though we did not use small groups as a health characteristic as Christian Schwarz did, we believe them to be an important part of the life of the local church. Small groups are a place where the building of meaningful relationships takes place as well as holding people accountable to spiritual life issues. People who are in small groups would have a tendency to see their spiritual life as healthier and view the church as healthier.

Some interesting correlations were made regarding demographics in the church and community. When respondents viewed their community as growing, they perceived local church health higher in every category. When asked if their current staffing situation in the local church was adequate, those who said yes perceived health as higher in engaging worship, functional structures, intentional evangelism, and passionate spirituality. When asked about the adequacy of the church facilities for current ministries, those who said they were inadequate rated the church higher in the following categories: authentic community, empowering leadership, functional structures, mobilized laity, and transforming discipleship.



This data points to the issue that when people see their church and community demographics in a positive light, such as a growing community, growing church, stable staff situation, they see the church as being healthier. Again, this issue is related to self-esteem. When people perceive that their church is growing and things are going well in the life of the church, the perception is that the church is healthy. Perhaps the demographic where a church is in a growing community may point to the logical fact that the larger the population around the church, the more potential available to draw people into the fellowship. However, churches in smaller, declining communities find themselves with fewer people to draw from. Perhaps this area merits further investigation. This correlation strengthens the Beeson Church Health survey because one of the issues many have with Natural Church Development is that they ignore many of the contextual factors such as staffing, facilities, size, etc.

### **Beeson and Schwarz**

After the creation, testing, and implementation of the Beeson Church Health tool, there still remain disagreements with Christian Schwarz and the methods he uses to make his conclusions. Our instrument was scientifically created and tested. We can only assume that the Natural Church Development survey is also a scientific survey. Some of the problems with Schwarz's survey still remain. Ellas and Yeakley and other critics report that the Natural Church Development survey cannot be replicated because the statistical data has never been reported by Schwarz. One thing the Beeson Health Characteristic study has done is to provide correlation coefficients, reliability measures, and statistical results from the survey. The survey is also available to the general body of educational knowledge to be used and reworked as needed. In Chapter 4 a record is

made of the strong positive correlations and the study can be classified as a correlational study. The critics of Schwarz claim that his study cannot be called a correlational study.

Another substantial difference from the Natural Church Development model was that this study did not limit the number of respondents to thirty for each local congregation. When the surveys were sent to each church at least thirty were given and in the majority of cases, more than thirty were sent, allowing for a more broad response for each congregation.

### **Implications of the Study**

This study provides some good groundwork for expanding the existing body of knowledge regarding church health. The Beeson Church Health Survey tool was scientifically created through the examination of the body of knowledge that existed regarding church health. It was tested before being implemented in an actual study of church health, differing from Schwarz' approach. He created his categories of church health as he was surveying churches. The Beeson Health Characteristics were compiled after thorough reading and visits to many churches throughout the country that validated our characteristic definitions.

Possibly the greatest strength of this study was the correlation work completed between church health and a number of growth, personal, and church variables. Church health was found to have an effect on church growth, both positively and negatively. What was also discovered was that a number of intervening variables also affect church health.

Whereas Schwarz recommends that in order to make your church healthier, you must use your strengths to strengthen your weakness, this study would argue that one

must focus on specific spiritual disciplines in order to strengthen a particular area in the church.

Also, ones personal life affects ones view of the church. Therefore, if you want to increase your church's overall health, you must help the people to see their lives, their church, and their community in a more positive light.

### **Weaknesses of the Study**

When thinking about this study and after examining the data, a few areas of weakness emerge. The goal of this study was to get more than thirty responses per church. The response was weaker than hoped. In the future taking this survey in the midst of the worship service would ensure a good cross section of the congregation is surveyed. Many churches only responded with a 10-30 percent response rate. Churches were chosen that had thirty or more in worship. Many churches responded with less than thirty surveys returned.

Perhaps an underlying suspicion played a part because of the newness of this study to the clergy and respondents. Church health is a relatively new paradigm for many United Methodist churches in the West Ohio Conference. I think a better job could be done explaining the survey and some background behind the church health movement. Many churches that indicated they wanted to be a part of the study did not return the surveys. Perhaps the level of commitment and involvement was too much for the church to manage.

One of the possible weaknesses in our study was its inability to measure behaviors rather than simply opinions. I believe people answered the questions in the survey based upon their perceptions rather than their actual behaviors. Some of the

questions in the survey may need to be refined to attempt to get at the behaviors of people rather than opinions. We attempted to do this as we created the survey tool, but more work needs to be done.

Another weakness in this study has to do with the definition of conversion in United Methodism. Many pastors' surveys returned that did not include the figures for conversions. In United Methodism, there is not a specific statistical category that measures conversions. A category in United Methodism is called "profession of faith" and is the closest thing to the concept of conversion. In other denominations, the categorization of conversion is less convoluted.

A factor that was not measured was the history of the person taking the survey. The perception of health is not necessarily the same thing as the actual health of a congregation. If the subjects completing the survey had a negative experience in a previous church, they would tend to view their current church as healthier, which does not mean the church is healthy, only that their current church is healthier than the one they previously attended.

Based on the data received from the surveys I also see the Beeson Church Health tool and other church health instruments have failed to look at all of the aspects of church health. Maybe church health is much more complex than anyone can understand. Peter Steinke says that "health is wholeness" (vii). All of the parts of the body must work together to achieve the goal of health.

### **Contribution to Research Methodology**

This study has contributed to the body of research in the creation and implementation of a scientifically designed, tested, and implemented instrument that

measures church health and church growth. This tool also correlates health to growth. Many authors talk about church health as it correlates to church growth, but few have tried to measure it.

This study has provided what Christian Schwarz has not provided -- the scientific, statistical methods by which this survey was constructed and implemented. This study can be reproduced in any setting. Our study was very forthcoming with all of the strengths and weaknesses of its tool. The question must continually be asked, "What is church health?" Does a church exist that can be looked at and held up as a "model church"?

### **Further Studies**

With the first testing of the Beeson Health Characteristic tool we have found it is a sound tool statistically, but further testing and tweaking of implementation is needed to further validate this tool. It would be profitable to invite someone else to take the Beeson health tool and use it in other contexts to continue to discover its effectiveness and needed adjustments.

Another suggestion for further study would be to do some teaching in the life of a local church setting and do a pretest/posttest study of the church as a whole. Christian Schwarz's health tool has been used to see if the health of a church increases after focusing on the weakest levels of health for a period of a year and then retaking the test to see if health has increased.

Another researcher examining the Beeson health tool and improving on the questions in order to find a way to measure concrete behaviors rather than just attitudes would gain benefit. The actual implementation and scoring of the tests should be refined

to assure a better response rate and a better picture of church health in a local church.

Likewise, taking the Beeson health tool and discovering a way to put it into practical terms for local churches to use and examine church health in their context would also be beneficial. The data this study deals with is in a raw format and not helpful for use in a local church setting.

The West Ohio Conference has experienced a tremendous shift in focus over the past three years from being a conference unaware of health issues to a conference focused on health issues because of Bishop Bruce Ough. Because of this shift in leadership, I would suggest that in three years, the West Ohio Conference do a random survey of local churches and use the Beeson Health Instrument and compare those findings to the findings of this paper. Consequently, the new findings would be different.

### **Personal Reflections**

When I began this process, along with three of my colleagues in the Beeson Pastor Program at Asbury Seminary, I was challenged by my mentor to take part in a study that will make a difference in the kingdom of God. What has been discovered, I believe, will help add to the knowledge about how to continually achieve what God wants the Church to accomplish. I have discovered that neither church health nor church growth is a perfect “science” or “system.” What these concepts are is an attempt to discern how to make the Church the best it can possibly be and hence be a part of God’s move in the world to help establish the kingdom of God on earth. The leaders of today and tomorrow will need to put their scientific tools aside and become artisans to help God establish the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

When this study began the intent was to study the correlation between church

health and church growth. As the data returned, another issue was brought to the forefront, the issue of a person's walk with God. I believe we have discovered, or rediscovered, what church health and church growth really encompass. It is the call of Christ to take up his cross and follow him. When people do that, they are going to find that not only are their churches becoming healthier, not only will their churches win the lost, but they will become the people God desires. That is how the concept of the kingdom of God arose in the Old Testament. It was God's presence and interventions in the lives of individuals, and God continues to build the kingdom the same way today.

Through this project, I have seen a shift in the way I want to lead the local church I am serving. Before this process, I saw myself interested in spiritual disciplines and wondering how they fit in the scheme of transitioning a church. Now I see the teaching, and the modeling of spiritual disciplines as one of the most important things the church should be doing. If we are going to see churches begin to come alive again, impact the community in which it is located, and fulfill the mission Jesus gave to the church to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20) we must focus on the things that transform lives.

As a pastor, called by God to do his work in the world, my desire is to see the church become the best it can be. With the help of the Beeson Church Health instrument and other scholars and technicians in the church world praying and discerning what God desires the church to be, we will work to this end until either the end of our lives or until Christ returns in his glory.

## APPENDIX A

## Congregational Questionnaire

## WHAT IS YOUR CHURCH'S HEALTH QUOTIENT?

**Instructions:** This survey is designed to assess the general health of local congregations. The entire survey generally takes 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name and answers will remain anonymous. For best results, complete the survey quickly without pausing to consider any one item in depth. Thank you for participating.

1. Name of your church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name of the town in which your church is located? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your age \_\_\_\_\_
4. Gender
  - 4.1  Male
  - 4.2  Female
5. Marital status
  - 5.1  Single
  - 5.2  Married
  - 5.3  Widowed
  - 5.4  Other:
6. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_
7. The following are a regular part of my spiritual life (check all that apply):
  - 7.1  Bible Study
  - 7.2  Devotional times
  - 7.3  Family devotional time
  - 7.4  Involvement in ministry (Christian service)
  - 7.5  Prayer
  - 7.6  Sharing my faith with others
  - 7.7  Other spiritual disciplines (fasting, etc.):
8. Are you a member of this church?
  - 8.1  Yes
  - 8.2  No



9. Which best describes your current involvement with the local church you attend most?  
check one)

- 9.1  Attendee only  
 9.2  Leadership board member  
 9.3  Ministry leader/teacher  
 9.4  Pastoral Staff

10. Approximately how many years have you been involved with this particular church?

11. Which of the following best describes how often you attend weekend worship services? (check one)

- 11.1  Visitor  
 11.2  Less than once a month  
 11.3  1-2 times a month  
 11.4  3 + times a month

12. In the past year, approximately what percentage of your total income from all sources did you give to your local church?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

13. The current staff, for the ministries of your church, is...? (check one)

- 13.1  Understaffed  
 13.2  Adequate  
 13.3  Overstaffed

14. I actively participate in a small group or ministry team

- 14.1  Yes  
 14.2  No

15. How would you describe the community within which your church is located? (check one)

- 15.1  Growing and thriving  
 15.2  Plateaued  
 15.3  Declining

16. I would describe my personal spiritual life as: (check one only)

- 16.1  Growing  
 16.2  Plateaued  
 16.3  Declining

Instructions: Using the scale provided below, fill in the number beside each statement which corresponds most nearly to your assessment of that aspect of your church.

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree

*Strongly  
Agree*

*Agree*

*Somewhat  
Agree*

*Disagree*

*Strongly  
Disagree*

17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries.
18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events.
19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.
20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging and encouraging to my walk with God.
21. My local church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.
22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.
23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.
24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).
25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.
26. Our church is lead by individual(s) who articulate vision and achieve results. The leaders of our church articulate vision and achieve results.
27. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring.
28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement
29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.
30. Tithing is a priority in my life.
31. I believe that interpersonal conflict is health with appropriately and in a biblical manner.
32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.
33. The music in the church services help me worship God.
34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.
35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.
36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.
37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.
38. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in my church.

Strongly  
Agree

Agree

Somewhat  
Agree

Disagree

Strongly  
Disagree

39. There are few training opportunities in our church.
40. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I like to invite my friends.
41. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.
42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).
43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.
44. This church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s).
45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.
46. The lay people of our church receive frequent training.
47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.
48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.
49. I enjoy the tasks I do in church.
50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.
51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.
52. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invite others to my church.
53. I look forward to attending worship serves at this church.
54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources.
55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.
56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.
57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.
58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.
59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.
60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with other worshippers.
61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.
62. Our church has very few programs, which appeal to non-christians.
63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.
64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.
65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.
66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.
67. When I leave a worship service I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.
68. We have an effective and efficient decision making process in our church.
69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.
70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.
71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.

Response area for items 39-71, including Likert scale markers (circles) and handwritten marks.

**APPENDIX B****Pastoral Questionnaire****Contextual factors**

1. What is the name of your church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the name of the town your church is located in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you served as senior pastor of this church? (Circle one)  
0-2 yrs.      3-6 yrs.      7-10 yrs.      10-15yrs.      Over 15yrs.
4. What is the age of the facility? (Circle one)  
1-3 yrs.      3-5yrs.      5-10yrs.      10-15yrs.      Over 15yrs.
5. How large is the population within 20 minutes of your church? (Circle one)  
Under 5,000      5,000-15,000      15,000-50,000      50,000-200,00      200,000+
6. What was the average weekend worship attendance for the following years:  
1996 \_\_\_\_\_  
1997 \_\_\_\_\_  
1998 \_\_\_\_\_  
1999 \_\_\_\_\_  
2000 \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many baptisms occurred in the following years:

1996 \_\_\_\_\_

1997 \_\_\_\_\_

1998 \_\_\_\_\_

1999 \_\_\_\_\_

2000 \_\_\_\_\_

8. How many conversions were recorded in the following years:

1996 \_\_\_\_\_

1997 \_\_\_\_\_

1998 \_\_\_\_\_

1999 \_\_\_\_\_

2000 \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

## Listing of Health Questions according to Characteristic

1 - Strongly disagree 2 - Moderately disagree 3 - Neither agree nor disagree  
4 - Moderately agree 5 - Strongly agree

**Authentic Community:**

- 18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events
- 25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.
- 31. I believe that interpersonal conflict or misconduct is dealt with appropriately and in a biblical manner.
- 38. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in our church.
- 45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.
- 52. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invite others to my church.

**Empowering Leadership:**

- 59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.
- 66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.
- 19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.
- 26. Our church is led by individual(s) who articulate vision and achieve results.
- 32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.
- 39. There are few training opportunities in our church.
- 46. The lay people of our church receive frequent training.

**Engaging Worship:**

- 53. I look forward to attending worship services at this church.
- 60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with other worshippers.
- 67. When I leave a worship service, I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.
- 20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging, and encouraging to my walk with God.
- 27. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring.
- 33. The music in the church services helps me worship God.
- 40. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I would like to invite my friends.

**Functional Structures:**

- 47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.
- 54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources.
- 61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.
- 67. We have an effective and efficient decision-making process in my church.
- 21. Our church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.
- 28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement.
- 34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.

**Intentional Evangelism:**

- 41. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.
- 48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.
- 55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.
- 62. Our church has very few programs, that appeal to non-Christians.
- 69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.
- 22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.
- 63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.

**Mobilized Laity:**

- 35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.
- 42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).
- 49. I enjoy the tasks I do in the church.
- 56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.
- 23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.
- 70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.

**Passionate Spirituality:**

- 29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.
- 36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.
- 43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.
- 50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.
- 57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.
- 71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.

**Transforming Discipleship:**

- 24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).
- 30. Tithing is a priority in my life.
- 37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.
- 44. Our church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s).
- 51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.
- 58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.
- 65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.

17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries-This question is a demographic question rather than a health characteristic question.

## WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Leith. A Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992.
- . Dying for Change. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1990.
- Barclay, William. The Gospel of John Vol. 1. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975.
- Barna, George. The Barna Report 1994-95.
- . Never On a Sunday: The Challenge of the Unchurched. Glendale, CA: Barna Research Group, 1990.
- . User Friendly Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991.
- Beasley-Murray, George Raymond. Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.
- The Bible. New International Version.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship. New York: Macmillan, 1949.
- Brauer, Jerald. A Handbook of Christian Theology. Ed. Marvin Halverson. New York: Meridian Books, 1958.
- Bright, John. The Kingdom of God. Nashville: Abingdon, 1953.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Brooks, James. "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament." Southwestern Journal of Theology. Spring 1998: 21-37.
- Brown, Collin. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library–Zondervan, 1967.
- Brown, Raymond, The Gospel according to John, Vol. 1. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966.
- Bruce, A. B. The Training of the Twelve. New York: Armstrong, 1908.
- Bruce, F. F. The Gospel of John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Carson, D. A. The Gospel according to John. Grand Rapids: Innervarsity, 1991.



- Coleman, Robert E. The Master Plan of Discipleship. Old Tappan, NJ: Revel, 1987.
- . The Master Plan of Evangelism. Old Tappan, NJ: Revel, 1963.
- Coppedge, Allan. The Biblical Principles of Discipleship. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.
- Cox, William Edward. An Examination of Dispensationalism. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1963.
- Crossbow Ministries. What is Church Health? 22 Feb. 2000 <[www.Kingdomgrowth.com/crossbow/page5.html](http://www.Kingdomgrowth.com/crossbow/page5.html)>.
- Davies, John G. A Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship. New York: McMillan, 1972.
- DeVellis, Robert F. Scale Development: Theory and Applications. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991.
- Dodd, C.H. The Parables of the Kingdom. London: Nisbet and Co, 1935.
- Driver, John. Images of the Church in Mission. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Pr., 1997.
- Drucker, Peter F. The Effective Executive. New York: HarperCollins, 1966.
- Ecloy, Lee. "Jesus' Surprising Definition." Leadership: A Practical Journal for Church Leaders Summer 1997: 40.
- Eims, Leroy. The Lost Art of Disciple Making. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- Ellas, John, and Flavil Yeakley. "Natural Church Development." Rev. of Natural Church Development, by Christian A. Schwarz. Journal of the American Society for Church Growth. Spring 1999: 83-92.
- Elwell, Walter A., ed. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Estep, William. The Anabaptist Story. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Ferguson, Everett. "The Kingdom of God in Early Patristic Literature." The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation. Ed. Wendell Willis. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1987: 46-198.
- Fink, Arlene, and Jacqueline Kosecoff. How to Conduct Surveys. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1985.
- Fowler, Floyd J. Jr., Survey Research Methods. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993.

- Galloway, Dale E. Definition of Leadership, ms. DM816 Developing Leadership in the Local Church. Asbury Theological Seminary.
- Garrett, James Jr. Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Green, Joel B. and Scot McKnight. Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Pr., 1992.
- Hemphill, Ken. The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1994.
- Henn, William. "The Church and the Kingdom of God." Studia Missionalia 1997: 119-47.
- Hoon, Paul W. The Integrity of Worship. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.
- Hunter, George G. Personal interview. 29 Sept., 1999.
- Hustad, Donald. True Worship. Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1998.
- Jones, Cheslyn, Jeofery Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, eds. The Study of Liturgy. New York: Oxford, 1978.
- Kinder, James. "The Relationship between Church Health and Church Growth in the General Baptist Church." Diss.: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002.
- King, Roy. What is a Healthy Church? 6 Sept. 1999 <[www.churchhealthl.org/articles/healthyp.htm](http://www.churchhealthl.org/articles/healthyp.htm)>.
- Kung, Hans. The Church. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1967.
- Ladd, George Eldon. A Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Littell, Franklin. The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism. New York: Macmillan, 1964.
- Logan, Robert. Beyond Church Growth. Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1989.
- Macchia, Stephen A. Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Malphurs, Aubry. Values Driven Leadership. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Martin, Ralph P. Worship in the Early Church. London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1964.

- Maxwell, John. Developing The Leader Within You. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993.
- McGavran, Donald, and George G. Hunter, III. Church Growth: Strategies That Work. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.
- McGavran, Donald. Understanding Church Growth. 3 ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- McIntosh, Gary. "Church Health Questions." E-mail to Keith Taylor. 3 Feb. 2000.
- McKee, Scott. "The Relationship between Church Health and Church Growth in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church." Proposal, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2000.
- Meye, Robert P. Jesus and the Twelve. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Miller, Kevin A. "Comprehensive Health Plan: To Lead a Healthy Church Takes More Than Technique." Leadership: A Practical Journal for Church Leaders, Summer 1997: 22-29.
- Morganthaler, Sally. Worship Evangelism. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. Sign of the Kingdom. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Ortiz, Juan Carlos. Call to Discipleship. Plainfield, IL: Logos, 1975.
- Padillia, C. Rene. "The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God." Transformation. Apr.-June 1984: 16-20.
- Patrick, Dale. The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav, Ed. Luther's works: Introduction to the reformer's exegetical writings. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955.
- Pentecost, J. Dwight. Design of Discipleship. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.
- Pigott, Susan. "The Kingdom of the Warrior God: The Old Testament and the Kingdom of Yahweh." Southwestern Journal of Theology Spring 1998: 5-20.
- Richardson, Ronald W. Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- Saucier, Edward. "The Import of the Kingdom of God for the Local Church." Southwestern Journal of Theology Spring 1988: 83-98.

- Schaller, Lyle. ed. Your Church Can Be Healthy. Creative Leadership Series. Nashville: Abington, 1979.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. The Gospel according to St. John, Vol. 1. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
- Schwarz, Christian A. Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996.
- . Paradigm Shift in the Church. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999.
- . "The Strong Little Church: Check Healthy Churches Worldwide, This Seer Says, and Less is Usually More." Leadership: A Practical Journal for Church Leaders Fall 1999: 53-54.
- Simpson, Daniel E. "Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches." Rev. of Natural Church Development, by Christian A. Schwarz. Journal of the American Society for Church Growth Fall 1998: 57-69.
- Singletary, Charles. "Organic Growth: A Critical Dimension for the Church," Church Growth: The State of the Art. C. Peter Wagner, Ed. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1986.
- Snyder, Howard. Models of the Kingdom. Abingdon: Nashville, 1991.
- Sorge, Bob. Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship. Canadaigua, NY: Bob Sorge, 1987.
- Spader, Dawn and Gary Mayes. "Grow a Healthy Church." Leadership: A Practical Journal for Church Leaders. Summer 97: 38.
- Steinke, Peter L. Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach. Albin Institute, 1996.
- Stookey, Stephen. "Models of the Kingdom of God in Church History." Southwestern Journal of Theology Spring 1988: 38-52.
- Stuart, Streeter S. "A New Testament Perspective on Worship." Evangelical Quarterly 1996: 209-21.
- Taylor, Keith. "The Correlation between Church Health and Church Growth in the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada." Proposal: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2000.
- Towns, Elmer and Warren Byrd. Into the Future: Turning Today's Church Trends into Tomorrow's Opportunities. ms. 2000.

2000 General Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church.

Nashville: Cokesbury, 2000.

Underhill, Evelyn. Worship. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1936.

United Methodist Communications. Facts and Figures. 22 April 2000.

[www.umc.org/abouttheumc/organization/factsandfigures.htm](http://www.umc.org/abouttheumc/organization/factsandfigures.htm).

Viviano, Benedict. The Kingdom of God in History. Wilmington, DE: Michael Galzier, 1988.

Wagner, C. Peter, ed. Church Growth: The State of the Art. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986.

---. The Healthy Church. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996.

---. Strategies for Church Growth. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1987.

Warren, Rick. The Purpose Driven Church. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

Weatherhead, Leslie D. Discipleship. New York: Abingdon, 1934.

Webber, Robert. Blended Worship. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1984.

Wiersma, William. Research Methods in Education. 6th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.

White, James. Introduction to Christian Worship. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.



