

Guillermin Library
Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA 24502

**BRINGING AVALON HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH
THROUGH THE TWO HUNDRED BARRIER**

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

A Thesis Project
Presented to the Faculty
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry

1997

by
David D. Rieke

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

B
GRADE

Frank Schutt
MENTOR

Rich Pasberry
READER

ABSTRACT

BRINGING AVALON HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH THROUGH THE TWO HUNDRED BARRIER

David D. Rieke

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997

Mentor: Dr. Frank Schmitt

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify as specifically as possible the elements which consistently contribute to the growth of the small church through the two hundred barrier, and then to incorporate these elements into a dependable strategy for such growth. The work includes a thorough review of relevant church growth literature, a review of Fuller Institute's "How to Break The Two Hundred Barrier Seminar," and it includes the results of a survey of fifty pastors who have led their congregations to regular worship attendances of over two hundred in recent years.

Abstract length: 91 words.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1. BIBLE, THEOLOGY AND THE 200 BARRIER..	10
CHAPTER 2. CHURCH GROWTH THEORY AND THE 200 BARRIER.....	33
People.....	35
Programs (Ministry Activities).....	54
Facilities.....	73
CHAPTER 3. A SURVEY OF FIFTY GROWING CHURCHES.....	78
The Most Important Ministry Investments In The Church Today.....	80
The Least Helpful Ministry Investments.....	86
The Most Important Changes For Church Growth.....	89
The Most Successful Methods For Church Growth Today.....	93
Transferable Methods: If They Had It To Do All Over Again.....	99
"Church Growth Factors" Survey Summary.....	101
A Composite Sketch Of The CGF Survey Church.....	105
CHAPTER 4. A CHURCH GROWTH CASE STUDY: Avalon Hills Baptist.....	108
CHAPTER 5. A SPECIFIC STRATEGY FOR BREAKING THE 200 BARRIER.....	120
Strategy For Every Pastor To Begin Immediately.....	121
Strategy When An Outreaching Pastor's Influence Has Grown.....	125
Strategy When An Outreaching Pastor's Influence Is Greatest.....	129
Two Final Matters Of Strategy.....	131
Strategy Conclusion.....	132
APPENDIX A - 200 BARRIER STRATEGY ILLUSTRATED.....	134
APPENDIX B - SURVEY "PRIORITIES" CHART.....	135
APPENDIX C - SURVEY "KEY METHODS" CHART.....	137
APPENDIX D - SAMPLE SURVEY WITH TYPICAL RESPONSES.....	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	143

INTRODUCTION

According to church growth authorities, the great majority of churches in America average fewer than two hundred people in attendance on Sunday morning.¹ Of course, all church leaders ought to have a desire to evangelize and edify more individuals for Christ than they do, but growing beyond an attendance of two hundred is difficult. John Maxwell suggests that the "two hundred barrier" is the most difficult barrier of all to overcome because it is a congregation's *first* great attendance barrier.² If a workable strategy for bringing an established but faltering congregation through this "two hundred barrier" could be discovered, the benefit could be tremendous.

Fortunately, in recent years many congregations have grown through the two hundred barrier, and research into the contributing factors of their growth is now viable. When the common denominators of this kind of growth are collected and analyzed, a specific strategy of church growth for small congregations may be confidently proposed.

While there have been a great many books written on the subject of church growth, there has not been an adequate publication of the *specific* methods employed by effective church leaders, and of the "defining moments" which aided the growth of their small

¹Lyle Schaller, The Small Membership Church, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 49.

²Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, and CBN Ministries, How to Break the 200 Barrier, (seminar, unpublished videorecording in 12 volumes, 1989), vol. 1.

churches. As a small-church pastor himself, the author has had a vested interest in seeking out and applying the strategic methods and principles presented in this thesis project. His own church, Avalon Hills Baptist Church, has quadrupled its attendance in three and a half years while doing so. One cannot expect, of course, that the strategies which have been so effective for one particular congregation will be repeatable in every local church context. But the various methods which have worked consistently for bringing church growth are enormously important to the discussion at hand and seem to merit further research and attention.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Church growth researchers have suggested that the typical American church of eighty worshipers is no longer as attractive or effective in this modern era as the larger churches of two hundred or more.³ Since attempting to change today's cultural climate is unrealistic, it would seem to behoove the Christian community to nurture the growth of its small churches in order to bring them in line with the current culture. Of course, this desire begs the question of just what recommendations the Christian community might have for fostering the growth of small churches. The purpose of this thesis is to identify as specifically as possible the elements which consistently contribute to the growth of the small church through the two hundred barrier, and then to incorporate these elements into a dependable strategy for such growth.

³Aubrey Malphurs, Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 32-33.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For purposes of definition, a "small church" is one which consistently averages less than two hundred in Sunday morning worship attendance. The "two hundred barrier" is an attendance barrier which tends to prevent the growth of a Sunday morning worship ministry beyond an average attendance of more than two hundred.⁴

STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

First of all, the emphasis throughout this thesis project shall be on the physical and human influences which work to bring a small congregation through the two hundred barrier. The author entertains no doubt as to the preeminence of the spiritual factors in church growth, but these cannot be orchestrated or programmed. On the other hand, particular physical and man-made influences have proven to be more conducive to spiritual ministry than others, and these influences are what the author has intended to capture in this work.

The scope of this thesis is also largely limited to the church growth problems peculiar to small churches which are already established and already have their own facilities. Newly planted congregations without a facility, or older congregations which meet in houses, rented facilities, etc. present special challenges for growth which would be best treated under a separate discussion. Similarly, while the definition of "small

⁴Elmer Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth: a Practical Encyclopedia, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 73.

church" may include in some minds churches which exceed two hundred, this thesis does not deal directly with the church growth challenges peculiar to churches which have already progressed beyond an average worship attendance of two hundred.

Furthermore, this work is limited to a discussion of churches within the American cultural arena and particularly focuses on congregations which might be described as middle class and English-speaking. Wealthy, impoverished or ethnic congregations present some unique church growth challenges which might best be addressed elsewhere.

Because of the scarcity in periodical literature of original thought on this topic, this thesis project relies almost exclusively on material derived elsewhere. The books, seminar material and dissertations of others, along with the survey discussed in chapter three of this work, provide much greater research potential than the sparse periodical materials which are available in this field of inquiry.

Finally, certain theological parameters are applied in this thesis, limiting it to churches which may be described as fundamental or evangelical and non-charismatic. Once again, going beyond these theological limitations would compromise the value of this work in the minds of those who might be most benefitted by it.

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The author is the senior pastor of a small church which has experienced a growth of over two hundred percent in less than three years time. His ministry at Avalon Hills Baptist Church was used both as a case study and a laboratory for the strategy which this thesis project ultimately recommends for breaking the two hundred barrier.

An extensive bibliography of church growth literature has been called upon to establish general knowledge or the conventional wisdom of nurturing church growth. But the distinguishing feature of this thesis project is its first hand research of some fifty American, non-charismatic, evangelical/fundamental churches which have actually broken the two hundred barrier in the past twenty years.

The author made inquiries of various denominations and individuals who were able to help locate particular churches which have grown through the two hundred barrier in the recent past. A detailed questionnaire was then completed and received back from fifty such churches. The data gained from the returned questionnaires was compared and contrasted. Certain patterns and specific ingredients emerged as the most effective means for bringing a small church through the two hundred barrier. These, in turn, were arranged into a strategy for small-church growth.

Chapter 1 of the thesis explores the biblical and theological issues at stake in bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier. Chapter 2 summarizes the existing literature and seminar material on the subject at hand. Chapter 3 of the thesis reviews the findings of the questionnaires which were received from fifty churches which have actually grown through the two hundred barrier. Data is presented, compared and analyzed, and patterns are highlighted. Specific personnel, program and facilities influences are carefully noted. Chapter 4 of this work is a case study outlining the recent growth of the author's own congregation. Chapter 5 suggests a specific strategy for bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anderson, Leith. Dying for Change. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1990.

An analysis of American culture and its implications for the church. Includes topics such as baby-boomers, generation X, globalization, pluralism, church leadership and ministry planning. Also includes many analogies to business and marketing.

Barna, George. Marketing the Church. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988.

Important work on the subject of making church ministries attractive to outsiders. Deals extensively with researching demographics, planning, strategizing, envisioning. Provides practical instruction for advertisement and publicity.

Barna, George. The Frog in the Kettle. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.

Addresses trends in American culture and appropriate ministry responses. Includes discussion of contemporary ministry ideas which emphasize relationships and recognize current reluctance of "boomers" to trust institutions, sacrifice leisure and behave according to principles. Lists several "hot" ministries for future.

Barna, George. User Friendly Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991.

Discusses kinds of church ministries which are (and are not) likely to attract newcomers. Recommends ministries which are positive, quality and people-oriented, vision-focused, with much lay involvement and fine children's/youth programming.

Bast, Robert L. Attracting New Members. Monrovia, Ca.: Church Growth Press, 1988.

Practical and general guide to attracting and keeping visitors, and to bringing them into membership, especially "active" membership. Discusses specific advertising, evangelism, programming ideas. Interesting descriptions of age groups in ministry.

Callahan, Kennon. Twelve Keys to an Effective Church. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.

Delineates twelve ministry keys including discussions of missional objectives, leadership, visitation, worship, relational methods, visibility, finances and facilities. Good, specific data relating to methods and facilities.

Carroll, Jackson W., ed. Small Churches Are Beautiful. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.

A defense of the small church. Ten articles written by various authors on the history of the small church, cultural changes affecting the small church and the programming, lay involvement and clergy of the small church.

Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, and CBN Ministries, "How to Break the 200 Barrier," seminar, unpublished videorecording in 12 volumes, 1989.

A church growth seminar for church leaders featuring C. Peter Wagner, Carl George and John Maxwell. Speakers establish the existence of a two hundred barrier and lecture extensively on the subjects of leadership, lay involvement and various program adjustments which enhance church growth.

Hemphill, Ken. The Antioch Effect: Eight Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1994.

Based on the New Testament portrayal of the church at Antioch. Describes the key characteristics of ministry, including providence, worship, prayer, vision, leadership, burden for others and edification of saints.

Hemphill, Ken. The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991.

Likens church growth obstacles to intentional stunting of growth in Bonsai tree. Discusses obstacles arising from property/facilities limitations, poor organization and leadership, poor vision, unnecessary tradition and lack of assimilation. Maintains that growth is natural and supernatural.

Malphurs, Aubrey, Pouring New Wine Into Old Wineskins. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.

Extensive discussion on the topic of changes in ministry, including treatments on the problems associated with change, the people who lead change, how to bring about change, and the seven characteristics of the rightly changed church.

Rainer, Thomas. The Book of Church Growth. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993.

Good summation of the field of church growth. Book includes history, theology and principles of church growth. Fine synopsis of leadership, lay involvement, evangelism, worship, program considerations and facilities.

Reeves, R. Daniel and Jenson, Ronald. Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984.

Many helpful descriptions of the principles and problems of church growth. Very technical evaluation of church growth typologies (approaches for growth in various circumstances). Good appendices regarding debates surrounding church growth and various authors' keys for growth.

Sanders, J. Oswald. Spiritual Leadership rev. ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

Classic on the subject. Equates leadership with influence. Approaches leadership from a distinctively Christian perspective. Includes cost of leadership, responsibilities, necessity of prayer, servant attitude, other essential qualities.

Schaller, Lyle E. Forty-Four Ways to Increase Church Attendance. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.

Specific suggestions for church growth. Interesting discussion regarding worship format and schedule, program choices and quality, facilities considerations and in-reach.

Schaller, Lyle E. The Small Membership Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

A defense of the "second-commandment" (small) church which intentionally focuses on in-reach rather than outreach. Description of why small churches remain small and how they might survive the years to come.

Sullivan, Bill M. Ten Steps to Breaking the Two Hundred Barrier. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988.

Specifically aimed at small churches which desire to grow beyond the 200 barrier. Includes motives for growth, importance of prayer, faith, goal-setting, planning, programming and leadership.

Towns, Elmer L. Ten Of Today's Most Innovative Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.

Describes churches/church leaders noteworthy for their striking ability to adapt to ministry needs, including Maxwell, Hybels, Hayford, Galloway, Lindsay, Vines and Edwin Young.

Webster, Douglas D. Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing the Church? Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.

A critique of the extremes of the church growth movement with accompanying criticism of failings of the traditional church. Describes dangers of compromise based on market demands. Defines the more wholesome "household of faith."

Zunkel, C. Wayne. Growing The Small Church. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1982.

Handbook with study questions for smaller churches desiring growth. Maintains that small is not ugly, but growth is natural. Suggests workable strategies, leadership considerations, obstacles, program adjustments and the role of sovereignty.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLE, THEOLOGY AND THE TWO HUNDRED BARRIER

The Small Church in Theory

In *theory*, the small church should be the paradigm of kingdom productivity. Lyle Schaller has recently written The Small Membership Church in which he proposes that some churches are simply more comfortable with the philosophy of a small, tightly knit, family-like congregation of believers, and that these churches should be applauded and supported in their philosophy.¹ He further reminds his readers that the small church has been the entire platform of American Protestant assembly from this country's earliest times. Some denominations and church fellowships are still notable for the predominance of their small congregations, and all denominations are still mostly composed of small churches. Indeed, until a few decades ago few Christians even imagined the possibility that so many large churches would exist as they do today.

In New Testament times the vast majority of churches met in the homes of key Christians in their particular locations (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2), and for the first three centuries of church history Christianity expanded by means of

¹Schaller, The Small Membership.

multiplying the number of house churches.² Even up to the present, in times of financial limitation and hardship or in countries where Christians are few in number, the small church, or even the house church, is the standard expression of Christian assembly. No thinking Christian could ever marginalize the importance of small churches through all the nineteen centuries of Christian history.

The fact is, there is far more evidence in the New Testament to support the legitimacy of a small congregation than there is for a large. The Jerusalem church in early Acts seems to lend biblical legitimacy to the concept of the church of several thousand (Acts 2:41; 4:4, 5:14; 6:7), but the Jerusalem church is usually thought of as somewhat exceptional because of its prominent location, its commonwealth financial policy (Acts 2:44-45) and its apostolic leadership (Acts 6:2; 15:4). If, therefore, the large congregation in Jerusalem was exemplary in the age of the primitive church it would still seem to be something short of normative.

The Small Church in Actuality

Unfortunately, while *in theory* the small church should be the best church, *in actuality* today's small church is chronically ineffective. Lyle Schaller speaks about a cultural shift in American thinking about the small church. He postulates that in recent years the "societal context for the small Protestant church has changed from supportive

²Donald L. Norbie, New Testament Church Organization, (Kansas City, MO: Waterick Publishers, 1977), 24.

to neutral to, in many places, a hostile environment."³ He goes on to say that today's "small church exists in a culture dominated by large institutions"⁴ and may therefore be a little out of place in contemporary America. Aubrey Malphurs concludes that churches with fewer than two hundred worshipers cannot "provide the services" which people now seem to expect from churches.⁵ Hence, while the New Testament allows churches to be either small or large, the small congregation may no longer be as attractive as the large congregation from the standpoint of fulfilling the church's mission.

Another problem commonly encountered by small churches is what researchers have called *koinonitis*,⁶ an "ecclesiastical disease" which may make a small church ingrown and disinterested in outreach. There are obvious theological implications connected with this condition. In churches where *koinonitis* is strong, there is often very little to attract outsiders and new members. In these cases a lack of spiritual vitality contributes to the negative impression culture already carries regarding the small church.

For such reasons as these, it is commonly said among researchers in the field of church growth that most of the people who attend church services in America prefer to attend the services of larger churches. Says Dudley: "Although the majority of churches

³Schaller, The Small Membership, 12.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Malphurs, Pouring New Wine, 32-33.

⁶Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 284.

are small, the vast majority of members belong to larger churches."⁷ The cultural consensus seems to be that small congregations are small for very predictable reasons (i.e. because they seem fragile, unhelpful, etc. to the vast majority of their neighbors).

Author and seminary professor Douglas Webster is offended by much of the popular church growth school of thought, but he quickly admits that the traditional church which he describes as being "content with a *small* congregation"⁸ [italics mine] has missed the boat in many areas of spiritual authenticity. He laments the "irrelevant liturgy . . . stares and stiff handshakes . . . corny announcements, pitiful music and repetitive sermon" of the typical small-church services.⁹ He also regrets the small-church philosophy which allows the design and maintenance of the church facility to be amateurish and second-rate, the endless committee meeting quarrels over trivia, the power-mongering of unqualified and unspiritual "leaders" and the overall irrelevance and ineffectiveness of far too many small-church ministries.¹⁰ Spiritual failures seem to contribute to a church's smallness.

Lyle Schaller concludes that "words such as *routine, mundane, ordinary, commonplace, and humdrum* come closer than terms like *exciting, adventurous, romantic, transcendent, or transformational* in describing everyday life in the typical

⁷Carl S. Dudley, Making The Small Church Effective, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1978), 21-22.

⁸Douglas D. Webster, Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing The Church?, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1992), 43.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 44-46.

small church."¹¹ He asks his readers: "What do many young people say when asked why they rarely share in the corporate worship of God in the second-commandment [small] congregation? The most common response is 'It's dull and boring.'"¹²

Similarly, Jackson W. Carroll says: "Many small churches are mediocre and nonviable as currently functioning. This should be acknowledged in all candor and honesty."¹³ And Jeffrey S. Atwater reminds his readers that "many small churches" suffer from such ailments as inadequate financial resources (struggling merely to maintain a building and a salary for the pastor) and chronic "fatigue-of-the-faithful-few."¹⁴ He further reports that small churches often experience "an unending series of short term pastorates" either because of financial or professional reasons on the part of the pastors "or because it takes one faction [of the congregation] that long to heat things up enough to make further fruitful ministry impossible."¹⁵ Atwater adds that "small congregations are notorious for being resistant to change" and that the "desire to be a big fish, even if in a small pond, has led some to throw their weight around," and to try to "exercise control and have status."¹⁶ "Most small congregations," he says, "have a defeatist attitude." They

¹¹Schaller, The Small Membership, 135.

¹²Ibid., 117.

¹³Jackson W. Carroll, ed., Small Churches Are Beautiful, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), xi.

¹⁴Ibid., 109-111.

¹⁵Ibid., 110.

¹⁶Ibid., 111.

are "tired of trying." And to make matters worse, "personal animosities have a way of disrupting things and lingering to poison the life of a small church."¹⁷

Peter Wagner uses the words "turf" and "control" when describing some reasons small churches do not grow.¹⁸ Carl George suggests that small-church musicians, deacons, etc. have a vested interest in avoiding church growth, fearing that more capable people may come along and replace them in their positions of prominence in their social circle.¹⁹

Ken Hemphill decries the state of many small churches: "The church that has been kept artificially small . . . is often controlled by one or two family groups Churches are often 'bonsaied' by families who have enjoyed exercising control by their money or influence in the community." He rightly supposes: "They like the church the way it is."²⁰

But Carl Dudley's findings are more troubling. He reports that "small congregations prove particularly susceptible to social conflict."²¹ And he describes small-church personalities who "have learned to 'enjoy' mutual enmity," having grown accustomed to "cool cordiality that masks their deeper hostility."²² His research has led him to conclude

¹⁷Ibid., 112.

¹⁸Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., vol. 11.

²⁰Ken Hemphill, The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 97-98.

²¹Dudley, Making the Small Church, 132.

²²Ibid. 133.

that "it seems as if fighting is a natural way of life in the small church"²³ and "stable small churches are free to fight."²⁴

Interestingly enough, it is not at all uncommon for small-church congregations and pastors to lament their own state of affairs and to look with longing eyes at their larger sister congregations who seem to be doing the job so much better than they. The thoughts of those who attend the small churches themselves, not to mention the impressions of outsiders, are often filled with regret and frustration over their condition.

Lawson and Yamamori wrote a work which has in its title the assertion that church growth is "everybody's business."²⁵ In it they say that, of the congregations with which they are familiar, "most of them would like to grow, but they do not know how."²⁶

Hemphill writes: "Most pastors and laymen I talk to want their churches to grow."²⁷ And

Hogue says that the growth of one's church "must always be the indomitable dream."²⁸

Few would ever wonder why an opportunity for the pastor of the small church to receive a "promotion" to a larger congregation would be met with eager acceptance, especially when dreams for warm productivity in a small congregation are so frequently

²³Ibid. 132.

²⁴Ibid. 133.

²⁵E. LeRoy Lawson and Tetsunao Yamamori, Church Growth: Everybody's Business, (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing) 68.

²⁶Ibid., 68.

²⁷Hemphill, Bonsai, 13.

²⁸C.B. Hogue, I Want My Church to Grow, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977), 18.

frustrated. In ministerial circles "career success" has come to be equated with "moving from smaller to larger churches."²⁹ America's small churches "have long been viewed as proving grounds for new pastors."³⁰ To minister beyond the small church is considered an advancement. Outsiders *and* insiders seem to sense the dilemma of the small church.

The congregation of the small church typically looks forward to the coming of each new pastor with the hope that this might really be the one to help their church grow. Robert Dingman in his work The Complete Search Committee Guidebook asks, "When is it time to look for a new leader?" The first answer he offers is: "when the numbers are slipping."³¹ He goes on to point out that search committees "seem to seek . . . the ability of Rev. Bill Hybels to get a church to grow."³² All the evidence suggests that the small congregation itself senses and regrets that it is ugly and without influence in its community, but it does not usually have any idea how to become beautiful.

American people are not alone in rejecting this stereotypical small-church scenario. Even more damning than the sentence American culture has passed on the small church is the realization that, from a *biblical* standpoint, many of today's small churches are in a spiritually deplorable state.

²⁹Carroll, ed., Small Churches, 82.

³⁰Carl S. Dudley and Douglas A. Walraith, Developing Your Small Church's Potential, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988), 3.

³¹Robert W. Dingman, The Complete Search Committee Guidebook, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988), 21.

³²*Ibid.*, 92.

The Mandate to Grow

Nowhere in the New Testament is one given the slightest impression that Christian worship and preaching can be carried out in a heartless manner so long as they are done so in a small congregation (John 4:23-24; I Thes. 1:5). Rudeness, ignorance and carelessness are not only anti-culture in America today, they are also anti-Bible. Nor does one gather from scripture that leaders in the church are allowed to be petty and quarrelsome as long as they fellowship in small congregations (Phil. 1:37; I Pet. 3:8). The small church in America which is notorious for infighting, splits and volatile business meetings is called to the same passion and purity as every other size church. The small congregation cannot be exempted from the New Testament standards of grace and vitality merely because it is small, and if the small churches of America try to claim exemption from these standards it is certain that neither their culture nor their God will think well of their ministry. If Christian passion, physical and intellectual diligence, compassion, gentleness and vital witness were suddenly achieved in a small church's ministry, it very likely would grow. Growth is natural under these conditions. A consuming passion for culturally sensitive outreach is probably one of the surest remedies for *koinonitis*, infighting and haphazardness in ministry. Only the non-growth churches can afford to overlook these faults.

The most cursory reading of the New Testament indicates that it is indeed every church's duty to reach beyond itself with the gospel of Jesus Christ and grow. Jesus' passion, "I will build my church" cannot be misunderstood any more than his expectation can be, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." No mere

maintenance ministry is in view in such scriptural statements as these.

In Schaller's work, The Small Membership Church, he argues that there are two legitimate models for churches to adopt. The "first-commandment churches" love God with all their hearts. Of these Schaller says, "The best of the large churches are organized *primarily* around the first great commandment to respond in a meaningful manner to the religious needs of people."³³ He further explains that this priority is "expressed through high-quality worship, preaching, intercessory prayer, the teaching ministries, modeling, missions, learning, drama, visual communication, and the challenge to discipleship."³⁴

In contrast to this model, Schaller commends the "second-commandment churches." He maintains that "all healthy small churches seek to live out the second of what Jesus defined as the two great commandments (Matthew 22:35-40). The best small churches are organized primarily around the principle of loving your neighbor."³⁵ In answering the question of why "the best" of small (second-commandment) churches--even those in growing communities--rarely experience numerical growth, Schaller is concise. "To compete in that arena," he explains, "the small second-commandment church would have to change and become a first-commandment congregation."³⁶ He notes that this would be "an unlikely possibility" since "congregations that are primarily organized around

³³Schaller, Small Membership, 31.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 30.

³⁶Ibid., 34.

nurturing interpersonal relationships . . . are less likely to attract strangers."³⁷ Schaller finally explains that the second-commandment churches which do change into first-commandment churches do so "out of a desire to reach more people with the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior."³⁸

In contrast, however, to the small church's assumption that building relationships between members is the first mission of the church (as Schaller describes), the New Testament assumes that all churches everywhere must be diligent to obey the Great Commission. The second-commandment model Schaller describes loses sight of this duty and is in an unbiblical mode of ministry. The men and women of Acts 8:4 "went everywhere preaching the word." The foot armor of every Christian must be "the preparation of the gospel" (Eph. 6:15). The saints must ever "shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16). And the best and healthiest of all churches, regardless of size, should have it said of them that they "sounded out the word of the Lord . . . in every place" (I Thes. 1:8). How interesting to find that the small churches which overemphasize member relationships (second-commandment churches in Schaller's research) are so often the very ones which "prove particularly susceptible to social conflict" (in Carl Dudley's research)!³⁹

The New Testament compels one to conclude that the number of Christian converts must ever increase through the ministry of local churches, and increase *always means*

³⁷Ibid., 34-35.

³⁸Ibid., 38-39.

³⁹Dudley, Making the Small Church, 132.

growth for one congregation or another. Even the smallest of churches, the house church, must reach out in a meaningful way to its own "Jerusalem" within its own community if it is to be faithful to the work of Christ. A congregation may be free to adopt a philosophy of ministry which does not include growing through the two hundred barrier, but it will never be free to neglect the Great Commission or to approach it with an un-Christlike heart or method. The failure to nurture true conversions on the part of one congregation, while a sister congregation in exactly parallel circumstances nurtures many true conversions, is the *ultimate* failure in Christian ministry and should cause the barren congregation the most profound examination of its consecration and methods of ministry.

Douglas Webster, commenting on the typical small churches which exist in a "maintenance mode" (apparently equivalent to Schaller's second-commandment churches) says: "The number one problem for the traditional church is that it has lost its vision for growth and outreach."⁴⁰ C. Wayne Zunkel agrees: "Growing is the natural thing to do You know a sickness has set in when a people have been entrusted with *the most important news of all time* and simply sit on it."⁴¹

When the small church (or any church) becomes content to continue with "ministry" without actually seeing souls truly converted, that church is not allowed, as it may be prone, to excuse itself by saying, "We submit to God's sovereign will in being passed over by Him as the means He chooses for the saving of souls." That church is just

⁴⁰Webster, Selling Jesus, 42.

⁴¹C. Wayne Zunkel, Growing the Small Church, (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1982), 7.

simply failing in the ministry. If it truly had the mind of Christ in the matter it must either see the salvation of the lost or break its heart in failing to see it (Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:2). If a particular congregation feels no compulsion to break the two hundred barrier, let it assuredly feel compelled to grow to its potential, whatever it may be, and then to plant another small congregation besides. In light of the Great Commission, any philosophy less than this is disobedience.

Churches are responsible for being vital, winsome, authentic and evangelistic, and the churches which exhibit these characteristics will very likely reach people and therefore grow. The church which is not manifesting these qualities and is not therefore growing is a rebuke to Christianity and should amend its shortcomings with all haste. Every church should feel the passion of John Knox: "Give me Scotland or I die,"⁴² and express desire to expand or to perish in the trying. This is not the usual "maintenance mentality" of American small churches, but this reality only demonstrates better the great need for small churches today to realize their gospel outreach potential, and make the changes necessary to become biblical and vital. Christ will build his church, and all believers must rally to his side.

Growth, but Not at All Costs

Certain results may be sought by the local church at *all* costs, but numerical growth is not one of these. Spiritual consecration, integrity, genuineness, passion, affection, humility, wisdom, etc. are never optional for the Christian congregation and must be

⁴²Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishing, 1979) 1670.

sought at *all* costs. Wherever these qualities exist congregations *tend* to grow in number. Researcher C. Wayne Zunkel argues that growth is natural for the church as a living organism.⁴³ Likewise, Ken Hemphill considers growth both natural and ordained: "God didn't call us to create a decorative piece of art, but a growing, living community."⁴⁴

The dangers in this regard are two. First is the danger that the ingenuine congregation will wrongly claim vitality, harden itself to its faults and excuse its barrenness. This is apparently one of the greatest problems in the small American church today. Even Carl Dudley's conclusion that "stable small churches are free to fight"⁴⁵ indicates that this is a temptation. The hardened congregation will not pay the great cost of self-examination, repentance, dedication and labor necessary to remedy its spiritual and evangelistic ineffectiveness. Sayings like "We just can't," or "We've never done it that way before," or "It's just not the real me," or "Those are worldly methods" are worth more to such a congregation than all the texts of scripture and experiments which imply the contrary.

The other great danger regarding the cost of church expansion is that the small congregation, in its passion to reach others, might be tempted to pay *too much* for numerical growth. The assumption must never be made that churches become large only as a result of superior spiritual authenticity. Compromise, too, may result in great numerical growth.

⁴³Zunkel, Growing the Small, 7.

⁴⁴Ken Hemphill, Bonsai, 94.

⁴⁵Dudley, Making the Small Church, 132.

The "baby boomer" in particular has been raised on the notions of plurality, diversity, inclusion and subjectivity. There is today a conditioned disdain for discrimination of any kind in political or religious issues. One hears almost daily of "alternative lifestyles," being pro-"choice" and what "works for me." But there are certain biblical parameters set for the doctrines and practices of the local church which may never be neglected, even if church growth might seem to favor their neglect. George Barna admits: "We will be tempted to soften the truth so that a hardened generation will give us a fair hearing."⁴⁶

Douglas Webster addresses this matter strongly and justly: "Today's ecclesiastical visionaries . . . know what the people want: . . . laid-back, easy-flowing, eighteen-minute messages, just the right combination of anonymity and tender loving care . . . an upbeat, positive, exciting atmosphere; no pressure . . ." ⁴⁷ He continues: "Sin and money are seldom mentioned."⁴⁸ He asserts that "American Christianity is increasingly tolerant of any and all methods, as long as they bring numerical results."⁴⁹ Then he sums up the spirit behind much of today's Christianity: "Anything goes," he explains, "as long as it is defended for the sake of evangelism."⁵⁰

While a greater number of adults are college educated today than in times past and have grown accustomed to an environment of ideological permissiveness and diversity,

⁴⁶George Barna, The Frog in the Kettle, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 123.

⁴⁷Webster, Selling Jesus, 10.

⁴⁸Ibid., 74.

⁴⁹Ibid., 29.

⁵⁰Ibid.

the church must never be like the university classroom in this regard--even if expansion is at stake. Leith Anderson warns that "the fastest growing ethic among many evangelical Christians is universal acceptance . . . along with a heightened tolerance of relativism and diversity."⁵¹ He writes: "The baby boomer who is a conservative Christian heterosexual . . . may be fully accepting of a liberal agnostic homosexual."⁵²

While this "consumer-driven, sex-crazed, self-preoccupied"⁵³ society responds most quickly and attentively to appeals based on sex and love for money, the church must never follow these trends--again, even when numerical church growth seems to be at stake. "Unconsciously," writes Webster, "the evangelical church has slid toward New Age thinking, catering to the self as god, by offering an impressive range of what we call 'necessities' rather than 'sacrifices.'"⁵⁴

One need not search long to encounter stories of churches and denominations which have compromised biblical and historical standards relating to inerrancy, pop psychology, feminism, Christian conduct, charismatic abuses, etc. out of a concern for numerical strength. The vital, authentic church can never be one in which the believer and "Unchurched Harry," the orthodox and the heretical, or the spiritual and the carnal all express mutual appreciation for one another's differing religious views. To do so might somehow bring congregational expansion, but it would make that congregation

⁵¹Leith Anderson, Dying for Change, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany house, 1990), 32.

⁵²Ibid., 87.

⁵³Webster, Selling Jesus, 20.

⁵⁴Ibid., 144.

something other than a truly Christian church. Growth must never cost this much.

In general, it may be concluded from scripture that a church ceases to be authentic whenever it departs from the biblical emphases of the fundamentals (II Tim. 3:15-18, I Cor. 15), personal and corporate consecration (Rom. 6) and worship (John 4:23-24), charity (I Cor. 13), integrity (Phil. 1:10), humility (Mk. 10:42-45), simplicity (I Tim. 6:6-8), chastity (I Thes. 4:3-7) and gospel witness (Matt. 28:18-20). Many things which are contemporary, trendy and stylish may be adopted by the church that it "might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:19-23), but never if the particular contemporary, trendy and stylish elements in question are contrary to these New Testament parameters. "In fact, we have large churches that probably need to become smaller if they are to experience church growth. Spiritual growth would shrink, not expand, many of our churches."⁵⁵

No numerical church growth in the world can ever warrant disobedience to the very words of the Lord of the church. As a matter of fact, churches grow very well without making the too costly compromises of disobedience.

Should Every Church Break the 200 Barrier?

When small-church leaders realize that today's small American churches are largely failing to influence their communities because they are in an unbiblical maintenance mentality, they must decide first of all if they will take responsibility for leading their churches out of their current *mode* of ministry. Regardless of its size, a church with an unbiblical mode of ministry must be changed.

⁵⁵Webster, Selling Jesus, 151-152.

The next issue that must be resolved involves how large a congregation should become. The New Testament undoubtedly allows for churches to become large (as in the Jerusalem church of the first century). Since research seems to indicate that larger churches may be able to carry out the evangelistic mission of the church in today's American culture better than small churches, it would seem reasonable for the small church to attempt to grow through the two hundred barrier.

Again, according to the statistics already cited, eighty five percent of the churches in America have fewer than two hundred in attendance for worship on Sunday morning,⁵⁶ leaving only fifteen percent of all American churches with *more* than two hundred in worship. One might assume, then, that only fifteen percent of all Sunday morning church-goers would attend these larger churches (with over two hundred in attendance), but actually, *forty or fifty percent* of the total number of church-goers attend them.⁵⁷ These statistics indicate that almost half of the people in American culture who attend church prefer to attend the very few churches which average more than two hundred worshipers on Sunday morning.

In America, at least, "crowds draw crowds." Nothing seems to capture the interest of others or legitimize a philosophy like a crowd. This is not necessarily, or even usually, a helpful human tendency, but it is a true tendency. The rally, the show of support and the "million man march" have very strong cultural moorings in a democratic society in which

⁵⁶Carl F. George and Warren Bird, How to Break Growth Barriers, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House, 1993), 184.

⁵⁷Dudley, Making the Small Church, 21-22.

popular consensus can change everything. When a church grows beyond a few weary parishioners huddled together for survival into a small crowd with all its combined energy and talent, American culture takes a stronger interest. This synergy and cultural interest seems to occur most readily after a church exceeds an average worship attendance of two hundred. Aubrey Malphurs suggests that one reason for the annual disbanding of 3,500-4,000 churches is "the inability of seventy percent of the churches in America to break through the '200 barrier,' which is the size necessary in a metropolitan setting to provide the services people expect from a church in the 1990s."⁵⁸

Those who study church growth have suggested that a single staff pastor can maintain a significant relationship with each person in his church until it reaches an average attendance of almost two hundred worshipers--the "two hundred barrier."⁵⁹ After that, visitors tend to feel left out, regulars tend to feel forgotten and programs tend to be poorly organized. If, however, a church will make the necessary staff, program and facilities adjustments, and continue to grow through the two hundred barrier, it will usually improve its ministry in every measurable way.

If the small church were at its best, as it once was in Protestant America, its music and message would be a kind of folk art, its participants would know no "generation gap,"⁶⁰ and its facility would perfectly reflect the quality of the other structures in its

⁵⁸Malphurs, Pouring New Wine, 32-33.

⁵⁹C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984),

77.

⁶⁰Schaller, The Small Church Is Different, 30-31.

community. At its best, the small church could still influence American culture as the New Testament prescribes. As things stand, however, artistry, quality and the participation of youth hardly describe the typical small church.

On the other hand, the terms artistry, quality and energetic youth ministry *do* accurately describe so many of the churches which have pushed through the single-pastor, family chapel and two hundred barrier stage. One of the reasons for this may be found in the enlarged labor pool enjoyed by the larger churches. Where additional staff and volunteers use their combined gifts and talents in ministry, the artistry and quality of programs inevitably improve. Many small churches simply do not have the personnel to put together a special music selection for each service which combines genuine worship with artistry. Many have failed in their search for qualified individuals who would be able to provide a meaningful program for youth and singles. Many simply cannot provide the manpower to build or maintain facilities which are as attractive and well kept as the homes in their communities. Yet experience teaches that the churches which have the larger pool of workers do enjoy such things and find increased ministry and appreciation in their culture. If a larger labor force is likely to improve the missional effectiveness of a local church, then the small-church leader should be open to that possibility.

Of course, a larger labor pool should lend itself to better programming. If the church of one hundred worshipers cannot find a point man to get a meaningful youth ministry off the ground, the church of more than two hundred usually can. If the small church cannot produce special music with enough quality to keep from distracting the worship,

the larger churches usually can. If the small church cannot seem to find an individual to groom the church lawn on a regular basis, the large church never fails. If a new outreach presents itself to the small church which cannot even manage its current work load satisfactorily, the church of more than two hundred can probably address it. "People are our greatest asset." So the oft-repeated slogan says. Never is this more true than in the local church where people actually *are* the church and not merely a separate asset of the church. Once again, if better programming consistently assists a congregation in accomplishing its God-ordained mission, the leaders of small churches should not be too quick to discount growth through the two hundred barrier.

The matter of improved stewardship is the third benefit which the small church should address in determining whether it should grow through the two hundred barrier. The typical American small church sits on a property which is almost never used to its capacity for ministry (the house church being the obvious exception to this rule). The thousands of churches which have auditoriums built for one hundred or more worshipers might very easily go to multiple services on Sunday morning, allowing growth through the two hundred barrier and greatly increasing their gospel productivity without buying a single acre more of ground or adding another pew to their seating capacity. The reader may immediately discern that it is infinitely better stewardship for the small church to do this than to always assume that every one hundred Christians in America ought to launch out on their own, buy several acres of well located real estate, build a new house of worship and then struggle for the next several decades as a typical, weary, humdrum church. Far better to have more than two hundred worshipers donating monetary gifts

toward the maintenance of one property than it is to have two hundred worshipers trying to support two separate properties. The former case is much more likely to result in a culturally acceptable facility, while the latter tends to yield two second rate properties and two exhausted congregations besides.

An enlarged pool of laborers, improved ministry endeavors and better financial stewardship are all packaged in the church of more than two hundred for one grand earthly result--improved outreach with the gospel. All talk of productivity and efficiency in ministry boils down to just this. Some school boy or girl, some teenager, some young adult, some senior adult in his last season of life will be reached for salvation or strengthened because a church left its maintenance ministry posture and made itself attractive to its community. The leaders of small churches can ignore cultural considerations and continue to cobble together houses of worship on a shoestring budget, to let church musicians sneak and squeak through their "ministries," and they can continue quarreling with one another in business meetings. But if they do they will never be leaders of authentic Christian ministries, and they will never know the joys that some of their larger sister churches have known when they have been the means of saving and changing the lives of those who have walked across the biblical and cultural bridges they have constructed.

Theoretically, the small church could greatly influence America. Practically, however, that is not happening very frequently, and it has not been happening for a long time. Churches are forbidden by scripture to settle into a maintenance mode of ministry, but they are also forbidden to compromise the dictates of scripture in order to ensure

numerical expansion. The Christian community is left, then, with thousands of small churches across the country which already have the facilities and the potential to become influential in American culture by growing beyond the two hundred barrier. If the leaders in some or many of these thousands of small churches would determine that their churches should become vital and authentic, and that they should carry out the Great Commission in a meaningful way in their communities, much good could be done for the cause of Christ. The remainder of this work will be devoted to the subject of how the small church can be brought through the critical transformation from small, weary and culturally ugly, to fertile and effective in the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT CHURCH GROWTH THEORY AND THE 200 BARRIER

The churches of today are clearly struggling. Researchers report that eighty percent of the churches in the United States today have plateaued or declining attendances.⁶¹ The largest Protestant denomination in America, the Southern Baptist Convention, recently reported that two hundred and thirty five of their churches disband every year.⁶² Of the churches from all denominations which still survive, eighty-five percent of them have never grown through the two hundred barrier to become significant forces in their communities for the gospel.⁶³ Sixty percent of all Protestant congregations do not even average one hundred in worship attendance.⁶⁴ There is a great need today for the truly good churches to shake off the cobwebs of ignorance and indifference and go after the lost.

In Fuller Institute's "How to Break the 200 Barrier" seminar, Peter Wagner borrows statistics from Schaller, Tinsley, Walraith and Dudley to demonstrate the consensus that

⁶¹George, Growth Barriers, 184.

⁶²D.G. McCoury and Bill May, Southern Baptist Church Growth Plan, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991), 20.

⁶³George, Growth Barriers, 132.

⁶⁴Lyle Schaller, The Small Membership, 49,53.

a barrier to growth does indeed seem to exist at about the two hundred in attendance stage of a church's growth. Schaller, according to Wagner, sees the barrier at two hundred in worship attendance, Tinsley at two hundred fifty. Walraith regards a church of under two hundred as a small church and the church of above two hundred as a mid-size church. Dudley makes a similar distinction at a figure of two hundred fifty. Wagner concludes from his research that the consensus of opinion is that the "two hundred barrier" to church growth is likely to be encountered whenever a congregation reaches the range of one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty "active adults" (with the understanding that not *every* active adult will be present at worship on any given Sunday).⁶⁵

Whether a church will grow or fail to grow will be determined, humanly speaking, by three things--its people, its ministry activities and its facilities. Generally speaking, churches with the best people, ministry efforts and/or facilities *usually* grow, and churches with mediocre or inferior people, programs and/or facilities *usually* do not. Even when a church fails miserably in one of these three areas it may still grow if it is strong enough in one of the other areas to make up for its failure.⁶⁶ Some churches may very well grow even without the true blessing of God on their ministries (as evidenced by the rise in popularity of certain cults in recent years), but even in these cases growth has apparently come because of charismatic personnel and attractive activities and facilities.

⁶⁵Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 1.

⁶⁶Kennon L. Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 91.

In the last twenty or thirty years hundreds of books have been written on the various facets of church growth, and many of these speak either directly or indirectly to the issue of how to bring the small church through the elusive two hundred barrier.

Many helpful principles and some specific strategies may be gleaned from the existing church growth literature which has been published in recent years. In researching these many volumes on the subject of church growth certain recurring themes become evident. These themes may be arranged under the three categories discussed above--people, ministry activities and facilities.

PEOPLE

Staff People

A congregation of people is the first and foremost ingredient for any church. The local church congregation will usually be made up of one or more *staff workers/worshippers* and any number of *volunteer workers/worshippers*. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of both the staff and the volunteer workers/worshippers for fostering the growth of the local church.

Virtually all church growth authorities agree that the senior pastor's role in church growth is absolutely vital. C. Peter Wagner has said, "In America, the primary catalytic factor for growth in a local church is the pastor. In every growing, dynamic church I have studied, I have found a key person whom God is using to make it happen."⁶⁷

Similarly, Reeves and Jenson say:

⁶⁷Wagner, Your Church Can, 60.

Those who study church growth factors will usually cite strong, effective leadership as the key to continued successful results. When a church has a senior pastor who functions as a pacesetter and is supported by energetic and competent staff and lay leaders, that church invariably experiences growth.⁶⁸

W.A. Criswell has said: "I've always agreed . . . that great pastors build great churches, average pastors build average churches and weak pastors build weak churches."⁶⁹

This vital link between pastoral leadership and church growth has very direct implications for the small church which is very often in no position to attract, support or even locate an exceptional minister. Many times a small church must settle for a young pastor who is inexperienced and unproven in the ministry or an older pastor who has never demonstrated ministry skills adequate for being promoted to a larger church.⁷⁰ The best hope for the small church in this regard would be, it seems, for the current small-church pastors who are earnest Christians to become acquainted with the principles and methods of how people are best reached and strengthened for Christ. These pastors may then implement what they have learned to the best of their ability, thereby nurturing the growth of their own churches.

The many authors of church growth literature emphasize various desirable qualities for pastors to possess. The research of Reeves and Jenson demonstrates the importance

⁶⁸R. Daniel Reeves and Ronald Jenson, Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth, (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984), 22.

⁶⁹Elmer Towns, Ten of Today's Most Innovative Churches, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 211-212.

⁷⁰Dudley and Walraith, Your Small Church's Potential, 3.

of the pastor simply liking to be with and to work with people in general.⁷¹ This "pastor's heart" idea is not to be overlooked. Many church growth experts emphasize the importance of the pastor's passion for growth. His desire to see the church grow and to reach others with the claims of Christ in an environment of affection and acceptance is a key to the whole dynamic of a growing congregation. Certainly, if the pastor does not set the pace here he is not likely to progress very far toward a growing ministry.

Authors on this subject also mention repeatedly the pastor's leadership ability as a key to a church's effectiveness. Sheep want and need a shepherd to lead them even though they are notorious for resistance to change. Carl George has said: "People will follow a pastor who takes the lead, but they won't like following, so they will gripe and complain. Keep leading anyway, you don't have to enjoy it, just do it."⁷²

Every pastor is surprised at times to find out just how many of his people are so ready to bemoan and criticize him at the slightest provocation, but a good shepherd knows that he must lead, so he does. On the other hand, the grumbling of the sheep can be kept to a minimum if the shepherd will persuade the sheep that his vision is the very best thing for them. When the sheep come to believe the shepherd, they begin to move forward with him. If they never come to believe in him they will not follow him.

J. Oswald Sanders comments powerfully and convincingly on the idea that

⁷¹Reeves and Jenson, Always Advancing, 156.

⁷²Carl George in an interview with William C. Ankerberg, as quoted in William C. Ankerberg, "How to Make Homewood Baptist Church Break Through the Barrier at Four Hundred in Average Sunday Morning Worship Attendance," (D.Min. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 58.

"leadership is influence."⁷³ His thesis is that a minister's leadership is only as strong as his *influence* in the congregation. Every young ministerial student in seminary is counseled not to begin ministry at a new church with a lot of new ideas and changes. "When a new pastor arrives at a church he has one great urge that must be resisted," writes Robert Kemper, "he wants to jump right in and start fixing things. You may spot instantly something you believe must be changed. Do not change it, but note it for future reference."⁷⁴ A congregation will recoil at too much change initiated by a stranger, even if the stranger is the pastor. This is because a stranger has no influence.⁷⁵

A pastor gains influence over time, after he has endeared himself to his people, and after he has demonstrated good decision-making skills over and over again. Zunkel suggests that many pastorates follow a pattern of procession from "chaplain" (a conductor of religious services) to "pastor" (a relational care-giver) to "leader" (a spiritual guide/overseer).⁷⁶ As his influence grows, the magnitude of the decisions he makes may also grow. Dudley reminds his readers that the pastor's office does not automatically give him the trust of his congregation. "The young pastor may confuse high visibility with leadership."⁷⁷

⁷³J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 31-34.

⁷⁴Robert G. Kemper, Beginning a New Pastorate, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 95-96.

⁷⁵Malphurs, Pouring New Wine, 116 and 128.

⁷⁶Zunkel, Growing the Small, 48.

⁷⁷Dudley, Making the Small Church, 70.

In the Fuller seminar, John Maxwell speaks extensively on this matter. He suggests that the new minister begins with small influence which comes to him as a *right* in view of his position. He will gain influence in his church if he has the personal skills to establish real *relationships* with the people of his church. He will reach a third level of leadership influence if he is able to produce praiseworthy *results* in his ministry. And finally, a minister reaches the highest level of leadership when his people come to *respect* him as a person.⁷⁸ The people will observe their chosen one carefully to see if he conducts himself wisely. If they are not convinced of his love for them or his decision-making skills, they will not follow him. Without both love and trust, the flock will not follow the shepherd, even if he occupies the office of a pastor. "Churches . . . grow on trust," says Kemper, and pastors "must do their part in keeping that trust growing."⁷⁹

The wise pastor of a small church will be at first content to endear himself to the people, making only small decisions as needs arise. *And let him be sure that the decisions he makes are very good ones!* Again, Dudley writes of congregations which seem to be "composed of families who have agreed to disagree violently but passively," having "learned to 'enjoy' mutual enmity." But he warns: "Woe to the program that gets tossed up between these families: they will destroy it. Woe to the unsuspecting pastor . . . he will be chewed to pieces."⁸⁰ Any unpopular decision a newer pastor pushes through must work wonderfully. Anything less will probably destroy his credibility.

⁷⁸Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 5.

⁷⁹Kemper, Beginning a New, 126.

⁸⁰Dudley, Making the Small Church, 133.

The pastor should identify from the beginning the existing leaders and patriarchs of the flock--deacons, teachers, etc.--and work as closely and warmly with them as possible.⁸¹ If these natural flock leaders can be won to his side, the rest of the flock will follow.⁸² As rapport grows and people become convinced of a pastor's wisdom and leadership, the way is paved for the next change the pastor desires to orchestrate. When a history of affection, growth and improvement can be documented under a particular pastor's ministry, that pastor begins to enjoy not only the respect that comes with his *office*, but also that which comes from being a wise and noble *person* and a fine *leader*.

George Barna, John Maxwell, Rick Warren and most of the other church growth scholars deal extensively with the issue of vision--clearly defined and articulated strategies and objectives for ministry--and the ability of a pastor to inspire others to help bring that vision to pass. "Unless God's people have a clear understanding of where they are headed," says Barna, "the probability of a successful journey is severely limited."⁸³ The ability to see the vision clearly and the personality skills necessary to transfer it to the key people in a congregation are invaluable for the growing church.

Most small-church pastors have never really acquired a vision for attempting great things for God, or they have lost their vision for such attempts somewhere along the way. According to Barna's research more than ninety five percent of all senior pastors are

⁸¹Ibid., 134-135.

⁸²Towns, Ten of Today's, 38-39.

⁸³George Barna, The Power of Vision, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 11.

incapable of communicating a clear vision for their churches' ministries.⁸⁴ But Ken Hemphill writes: "Most pastors who have experienced healthy church growth readily agree that vision is the fuel for church growth."⁸⁵ And Elmer Towns has said: "The first law of leadership is the law of vision/dreams. When people buy into leaders' vision, they buy into their leadership."⁸⁶

Passion-less pastors are spiritually obligated to seek a renewed passion for the gospel of Christ. And the pastor who has a zeal for Jesus Christ but no knowledge of how best to further the gospel in his community is in need of developing a vision for his church.

A "vision statement" which describes the ultimate destination for a particular ministry should be prayerfully written and promoted in every small church.⁸⁷ The pastor and congregation should be excited about it and inspired by it. The vision statement itself should be based on faith and reality--"Where we are wrong, give us insight. Where we are right, strengthen our hand."⁸⁸ It should be general enough to allow for "tweaking" as God leads in the future and specific enough to guide future decisions. It should serve as a sort of "master plan" for the ministry--not the detailed instructions but the general

⁸⁴George Barna, Today's Pastors, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 124.

⁸⁵Ken Hemphill, The Antioch Effect: Eight Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1994), 128.

⁸⁶Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 286.

⁸⁷Elmer L. Towns, Ten Sunday Schools That Dared to Change, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 73 and 148-151.

⁸⁸Edward R. Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom, Strategy for Leadership, (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1979), 55.

shape "upon completion."⁸⁹ It may very well have stages or phases attached to it: "If the Lord grants this, then we'll move on to . . ." The simple act of setting out in a direction is the first step toward reaching a destination.

A "ministry statement" may also be composed for the small church. If the vision statement may be likened to the master plan in a set of blueprints, the ministry statement may be likened to some of the working drawings. The vision statement is the destination. The ministry statement is the path chosen to reach the destination. In it the church answers the questions of general *strategy* for ministry--what it will depend upon to reach its destination and what it will bypass. This planning, too, is an essential element of pastoral leadership.⁹⁰

In Fuller's "How To Break the 200 Barrier" seminar, Peter Wagner and Carl George speak in great detail about the pastoral strategy of going from the role of a shepherd to that of a sheep rancher. They explain that the history of pastoral ministry in America, as well as the personal inclinations of many pastors themselves work together to cause ministers to think of themselves as *providers* of ministry rather than *arrangers* of ministry.⁹¹ This philosophy of ministry leads the pastor and congregation alike to expect that the pastor should personally perform all the tasks of caring for the flock--from visiting at the hospital to preparing the bulletin to repairing the church bus. This arrangement may be very gratifying to the pastor who craves significant contact with

⁸⁹Hemphill, Antioch, 140-141.

⁹⁰Ibid., 208-209.

⁹¹Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vols. 1,2,4,10,11.

each member of his flock or to the minister who enjoys having great control of the flock. On the other hand, this arrangement is counterproductive to church growth beyond a flock of two hundred or so individuals.⁹²

In the sheep-rancher philosophy of pastoral ministry, the pastor effectively uses "ranch hands" to care for the sheep. He equips and mobilizes laypersons and staff members to ensure that ministry to every person is being carried out, yet he himself will not attend personally to each need. Maxwell quips in the seminar about his congregations actually paying him to get *them* to do the work of the ministry.⁹³ All three of the Fuller seminar lecturers (Wagner, George and Maxwell) insist that this shift in pastoral strategy--from shepherd to rancher--is a key to church growth potential.⁹⁴

Small churches are small for a reason, or for multiple reasons. The wild-eyed visionary on the one hand, the sleepy chaplain on the other hand, and the zealous but uninformed pastor in the middle should never expect to lead their churches through the two hundred barrier. The problems of trust and motivation will keep these churches small. They may survive for centuries, but they will be maintenance ministries, and their people will ever and only be "minding the store." The church leadership, beginning with the pastor, must desperately desire to do something great for God, they must have a tenable plan for accomplishing that great thing, and they must have the hearts of the

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., vol. 9.

⁹⁴Ibid., vols. 1,2,10.

flock with them in order to see it come to pass.⁹⁵ If any of these three ingredients are lacking, a church should not expect to see significant growth.

The small church which is prone to experience a high turnover in its pastoral office has yet another disadvantage in the area of church growth. Daniel Reeves and Ronald Jenson have suggested that the longevity of a pastor's ministry at a particular church is a key factor for overall ministry effectiveness.⁹⁶ A pastorate of several years is seldom adequate for the most effective local church leadership, and many pastors of small churches end up leaving their churches at the very time when their productivity might be significantly increased. The typical Southern Baptist pastor, for example, remains at his charge for only four years.⁹⁷ And Malphurs suggests that "the average pastoral tenure among Protestant churches in the United States is 3.7 years."⁹⁸ And yet it appears that the pastor's most effective and influential years at a church do not really even begin until he completes more than four years with the same congregation. "Most experts agree," says Zunkel, that the "most effective years for leadership in most pastorates are years five through fourteen."⁹⁹ One survey of Southern Baptist churches clearly indicated that growing churches were more likely than plateaued or declining churches to have pastors

⁹⁵Zunkel, Growing the Small, 44-46.

⁹⁶Reeves and Jenson, Always Advancing, 24.

⁹⁷As reported in a 10/96 telephone interview with the Home Mission Board (median tenure, 1993)

⁹⁸Malphurs, Pouring New Wine, 118.

⁹⁹Zunkel, Growing the Small, 49.

with tenures of four or more years.¹⁰⁰

In regards to the actual number of full time pastors a church should hire, Win Arn, C. Wayne Zunkel and others in the field of church growth commonly suggest that one staff pastor should be hired for each one hundred fifty people in morning worship attendance.¹⁰¹ C. Peter Wagner advocates very aggressive staffing for churches which desire growth. His recommendation is that a second full time pastor should be hired before the church reaches one hundred active adults, and a third before the church reaches three hundred active adults.¹⁰² The thinking behind this is that one pastor can only maintain a significant relationship with the number of people that are in a church which has not yet broken through the two hundred barrier. Furthermore, psychologically, a congregation may become so accustomed to relating with only one pastor that they feel cheated if the man in the pulpit is not the one who springs into action whenever they have a need for ministry attention. Challenging that presupposition is one of the most difficult tasks in breaking the two hundred barrier. To grow through the two hundred barrier, the addition of a second staff pastor may be helpful or necessary.¹⁰³

When hiring a second staff pastor the church should be very cautious in making its choice. It is much easier to hire a minister than to fire one. The candidate should be

¹⁰⁰C, Kirk Hadaway, Church Growth Principles, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 76.

¹⁰¹C. Wayne Zunkel, Strategies for Growing Churches, (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1986), 19.

¹⁰²Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 3.

¹⁰³Bill M. Sullivan, Ten Steps to Breaking the 200 Barrier, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 95.

made very familiar with the pastor's philosophy of ministry and the vision of the church, and he should be very comfortable with them.¹⁰⁴ In that sense, while having a different *specialty* than the senior pastor, he should be very much like the senior pastor.¹⁰⁵ He should also have an outstanding record of accomplishment in his field. If he is hired out of the congregation, his record of accomplishment in that church's particular setting may be more easily ascertained.

Many small-church pastors have never been adequately convinced of the importance of letting other saints become involved in local church ministry. Senior pastors should be careful to ensure that lay leaders and additional staff pastors are given true liberty to shepherd and bond with their flocks as they should.¹⁰⁶ Until the senior pastor is willing to delegate significant ministry tasks to others his church is resigned to smallness.

Volunteers

All Christians who attend services and contribute to a local congregation without financial remuneration may be regarded as *volunteer* personnel. Even if these Christians do nothing beyond joining in the worship of the congregation, worship *is* service to the Lord, and that service is being rendered voluntarily.

How do churches come into being in the first place? They are planted by gifted (and,

¹⁰⁴Jerry W. Brown, Church Staff Teams That Win, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1979), 77 and 87.

¹⁰⁵Harold J. Westing, Multiple Church Staff Handbook, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), 31.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 34.

typically, by financially supported) "point men" who reach out to others for the furtherance of the gospel. Without these spiritual leaders churches would rarely come into existence. Obviously, leadership, and especially financially supported leadership, is a key to local church life. On the other hand, a viable local church exists only after a congregation of believers has actually been formed. Without a congregation a church planting "point man" is really only an evangelist and not a church planter at all. Similarly, without an energetic and dedicated congregation (volunteers), the staff pastor of a small church is, at best, a frustrated point man.

Wagner suggests that an exceptional pastor is the first key to bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier (church growth), and congregational participation is the second key.¹⁰⁷ "In a smaller church of up to two hundred members the pastor can do all the work, and many do. But such a church will not be able to grow past that point without lay ministry."¹⁰⁸ With one voice church growth authors and experts emphasize the utter importance of wide and strong congregational involvement in the life of a growing church. Hogue writes that growing churches characteristically feature "lay persons who have a faith to share, a burning desire to share it, an ability to articulate that faith in witnessing to others . . . a concern for people outside the church."¹⁰⁹

Author Frank Tillapaugh describes how his own Bear Valley Baptist Church in Colorado was utterly transformed when the congregation began to feel the burden for and

¹⁰⁷Wagner, Your Church Can, 69.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁹Hogue, I Want My Church, 40.

take initiative in the actual ministry efforts of the church. Ministries for which lay leadership and support were apparent became part of the life of the church, but programs which failed to grow out of the congregation and to inspire them were shelved until and unless more popular interest could be aroused.¹¹⁰

All the best church programs share one great common theme: the involvement of the many. That this is a real key to church growth is affirmed by Wagner, Belew, Hogue, Arn, McGavran, Orjala--virtually every writer in the field of church growth. "As we involve people . . . the church cannot help but grow."¹¹¹

Evangelistic methods which emphasize inviting acquaintances to church services and activities, or witnessing to others in the everyday conversations of life are the most effective.¹¹² This is because *everyone* can participate in this outreach. Sunday school has always been a lay-oriented ministry.¹¹³ It not only provides biblical grounding for the people of the church, it also unites a great army of individuals in the tasks of shepherding and group interaction. This is exactly the kind of dynamic lay ministry a congregation needs. It gives the Sunday school leaders a meaningful ministry and the class participants an opportunity to testify and encourage one another. Ministry takes place on every hand in such ministries, and all that involvement is bound to lead to many good

¹¹⁰Frank R. Tillapaugh, The Church Unleashed, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982).

¹¹¹Zunkel, Growing the Small, 89.

¹¹²Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 238.

¹¹³Elmer Towns, Towns' Sunday School Encyclopedia: a Practical Guide for Sunday School Workers, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1993), 287.

things. George and Logan have issued a strong warning to all ministers who neglect the participation of lay persons in ministry: "Larger churches constantly receive members from smaller churches as people find their need for development frustrated in congregations where pastors try to do all the ministry."¹¹⁴

Especially helpful is the channeling of all available individuals in the congregation into one or more ministries for which they are particularly gifted and suited. Several spiritual gifts surveys are being endorsed by church growth organizations to help fulfill this objective.¹¹⁵ Because of various background and personality problems, some Christians will probably never make good small-group leaders, communicators, etc. To promote these individuals to such prominent positions within the church could damage the church's influence in the community. But even these should be used *somewhere* in the total church ministry. On the other hand, many church members who are perfectly capable of reaching and influencing others are spending far too much time behind the scenes or, worse still, perhaps they are not being used at all.

Another concept, that of shared leadership, is also very important to the whole topic of bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier. Shared leadership can provide tremendous motivation for ministry.¹¹⁶ Until the vision of the church has trickled down from the pastor(s) to the other leaders to the lesser involved attendees, the church

¹¹⁴Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, Leading and Managing Your Church, (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1987), 16.

¹¹⁵A very fine "Spiritual Gifts Inventory" is offered by the Church Growth Institute, P.O. Box 7000, Forest, Va. 24551.

¹¹⁶Towns, Ten of Today's, 36-40.

cannot readily move forward. The congregation must become inspired by the leaders' vision, too. Without their combined energy, the battle will be lost. Hogue writes: "The effective pastor plans for church growth by involving his laity in all phases of the decision-making process."¹¹⁷

John Maxwell encourages pastors to train the most dedicated twenty percent of their people to minister to the remaining eighty percent. He recommends that pastors train them by doing ministry *with* lay people observing, and then by observing the lay people as they *do* the ministry themselves and, finally, by assigning them to do the ministry *without* his participation.¹¹⁸

The wise small-church pastor will seek to increase communication with the people of his congregation who are already influential in the church family. A good working relationship with them will work wonders in the church. He will begin to locate and develop leadership qualities in other earnest Christians as well. If the pastor(s) and the key lay people interface well and present a united front, the rest of the sheep will follow, and the strength and morale of the church will grow.¹¹⁹ American Christians instinctively believe in the safety of a "multitude of counselors" for their church leadership, and many of them long for the satisfaction of significantly contributing to the cause of Christ. Shared leadership, therefore, is very important to the growth and well being of a church.

¹¹⁷Hogue, I Want My Church, 116.

¹¹⁸Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 12.

¹¹⁹Towns, Ten of Today's, 40.

Attitude of People

Congregations which grow through the two hundred barrier do so because they have a passion to do it. Lyle Schaller speaks about attitudes of "unwillingness to change" and a congregation's "reluctance to pay the price" as key hindrances to a church's growth.¹²⁰

The attitude of the congregation towards becoming larger is consistently mentioned in church growth literature as one of the keys to breaking church growth barriers. Wagner says that the greatest obstacle in moving a congregation beyond the two hundred barrier is the desire of the people to preserve the intimacy of their small church.¹²¹

Reeves and Jenson speak about growing churches as having a clear sense of a higher calling on their church's life. "Almost without exception," they say, "growing churches have a sense of destiny."¹²² Likewise, virtually all church growth researchers speak of the importance of the congregation's faith actually motivating the growth and influence of their church in their community. The morale, the determination to work together to make a difference, the climate of warmth towards outsiders all blend together in this sense of destiny to drive the church forward. The church which lacks a sense of a higher calling will not be willing to adapt and make the personal sacrifices which go along with being Christian servants to a larger, less familiar circle of people. Bill Sullivan says: "People love the excitement of growth and the conversion of new people. It is important

¹²⁰Lyle E. Schaller, 44 Steps Up Off the Plateau, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 61.

¹²¹Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 2.

¹²²Reeves and Jenson, Always Advancing, 19.

to take advantage of that excitement."¹²³

Carl George maintains that a church will consider an attendance pattern--growth, decline or plateau--to be "normal" for their church if their church has experienced that pattern for a period of five or more years.¹²⁴ Therefore, if a church has not experienced growth for a long period of time, it may seem somewhat "abnormal" to them to suppose that they could begin to grow now. Such a congregation may need to experience small victories in the area of growth before they realize their full potential.

In a personal conversation with William Ankerberg, Leith Anderson expressed the opinion that most people can readily remember only sixty names or so. Furthermore, they get a little uncomfortable if they do not know at least one out of every four people in their social group.¹²⁵ Wagner teaches "the rule of forty."¹²⁶ This rule is based on research into military organizations, sports teams, community organizations, classroom settings, etc. which indicates that people naturally congregate in groups of forty individuals. It is understandably very difficult, therefore, for small-church members to imagine ever being happy while attending a large, cold-hearted "super church." The good news is that warmth and largeness are not opposites as some people imagine.

In one case, the people who attended a church of ten thousand members were asked

¹²³Sullivan, Ten Steps, 77.

¹²⁴Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 11.

¹²⁵Leith Anderson in an interview with William C. Ankerberg, cited in Ankerberg, "Homewood Baptist," p.54.

¹²⁶Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 3.

by interviewers why they chose to attend this particular large church. The answer they received repeatedly was that this church was the friendliest church in the region. The warmth and friendliness continued despite the church's size because an entire company of staff pastors and some seven hundred devoted laypersons had personally taken on the challenge of reaching out to every person associated with their church.¹²⁷ Surely, if a church of that size can be friendly, the small church has no need to fear growth through the two hundred barrier.

Fickett emphasizes another attitude which is necessary for bringing healthy church growth: confidence in the church's leadership.¹²⁸ This includes confidence in the *doctrinal direction* of the church.

The whole thesis of Dean Kelley's book Why Conservative Churches Are Growing is that religious groups which expect high levels of dedication from their members are the ones which are actually growing best in America today. One might think that the churches which offer a "free ride" would be the most popular. But Kelley suggests that the main reason most liberal churches have experienced declining membership in recent years is that they cannot inspire people to religious living and cannot attract those who are already dedicated to religious living.¹²⁹ Ultimately, most people seem to know that they must do what is good to feel good, do what is noble to feel noble, and do what is

¹²⁷C. Peter Wagner, Leading Your Church to Growth, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 59-60.

¹²⁸Harold Fickett, Jr., Hope for Your Church, (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1972), 7-11.

¹²⁹Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977).

significant to feel significant. A church which teaches otherwise does not earn the same confidence as one which is more biblical in its doctrine.

Other researchers voice their belief that growing churches are those which have leaders with a Bible-centered philosophy of ministry. "Although not every specialist agrees on every technique, most agree that . . . the following five principles are present in any church that experiences sustained, legitimate growth [the first item listed is 'biblically based concepts']."¹³⁰ Wagner's research leads him also to conclude that biblically conservative churches are the ones that are most likely to grow.¹³¹ A Bible based mission undoubtedly lends great credibility to a minister's direction in the minds of many people.

PROGRAMS (Ministry Activities)

The most basic ingredient of a local church is its people--staff and volunteer. But if fine Christian people wander around aimlessly, the worship and work of Christ can never be accomplished. Obviously, action in Christian service is necessary, too. The term "program" sometimes carries a mechanical connotation, but the program of a local church must never be allowed to become mechanical. Programs are the organized ministry activities in which a church participates.

The quality of a program is very important in today's American culture. Schaller

¹³⁰Hogue, I Want My Church, 38.

¹³¹Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 6.

concludes that while pastoral house calls were the best means for organizing new congregations and strengthening established churches in the 1950s, great church programming is the best means for doing so now.¹³² And George Barna offers church leaders a sobering piece of advice:

We have come to expect quality in every product and service we encounter. Those that lack quality will be discarded . . . because there are so many available options that we will eventually locate the best. If your church cannot provide an excellent program . . . you would do the body of Christ a service by not offering the program at all.¹³³

In his book Ten Steps to Breaking the 200 Barrier Bill Sullivan recommends that church leaders make a list of every ministry currently being offered at their churches. Then he recommends that they make a second list of the ministry activities which are actually producing growth. Finally, he recommends that they identify the several best growth programs their churches offer, and emphasize these more than ever before.¹³⁴ To stay with what works, what a church is already good at, is a key to good church programming.

Three basic kinds of programs are necessary for every church. Worship programs are designed especially to serve and honor the Lord. Evangelistic programs are designed especially to carry the gospel to the lost. Edification programs (education, fellowship, etc.) are especially designed to strengthen the saved. These three overlap one another

¹³²Schaller, 44 Ways, 79.

¹³³George Barna, Marketing the Church, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1988), 113-114.

¹³⁴Sullivan, Ten Steps, 69.

constantly, and yet all three are essential to the life and growth of the small church.

The Worship Ministries

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the corporate worship of a congregation. In Schaller's Forty-four Ways to Increase Church Attendance the very first chapter is entitled "Begin With The Worship Experience."¹³⁵ Worship includes preaching, singing, praying, testifying, baptismal observance, Lord's supper observance, etc. Dr. Robert Webber of Wheaton College has studied and written extensively on the subject of worship. He suggests that church-shoppers who once might have been inclined to ask which church had the best *preacher* in town might be more likely now to ask which church had the best *worship* in town.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, the definitions from church growth researchers of what "best" worship is may differ significantly from one another.

Virtually all the church growth authors emphasize the importance of having powerful and meaningful gatherings for worship each Sunday. One statistic indicates that eighty two percent of the people who join a church do so on the basis of being attracted by the worship service of the church.¹³⁷ James White cites research from personal interviews which demonstrates that unchurched people avoid church services because of the modern churches' unceasing pleas for money, their boring and lifeless worship and their

¹³⁵Schaller, 44 Ways, 21.

¹³⁶Robert Webber, SuperConference lecture, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Oct. 8, 1996.

¹³⁷Robert L. Bast, Attracting New Members, (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth Press, 1988), 46.

irrelevant and unhelpful sermons.¹³⁸

With many others, C.B. Hogue emphasizes the need for solid Bible preaching as a must for growing churches. "Growing churches invariably have pastors who go to the pulpit with eloquent, positive Bible-preaching sermons."¹³⁹ The pulpit ministry is still viewed by many church members as the climax of the worship service, so it must be biblical, and it must be done well. Here again, the research implications are clear: ". . . sermons that do not catch the attention of the listeners will be useless, despite their rich content. Ours is a generation of television, movies, and entertainment. Dull and lifeless sermons will send all the guests and many members in different directions."¹⁴⁰

Much comment and debate is being expressed today amongst church growth scholars on the subject of the style of music to use for worship. Many have concluded that a "blended," or "something for everyone" approach is best in this regard for each service.¹⁴¹ Some have opted to have multiple morning services in which each service uses a different style of worship and music to attract a different audience.¹⁴² Since no consensus is likely to be reached in this area of church growth theory, it would seem best

¹³⁸James Emory White, Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1992), 19-20.

¹³⁹Hogue, I Want My Church, 44.

¹⁴⁰Thomas S. Rainer, The Book of Church Growth, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 233.

¹⁴¹Schaller, 44 Ways, 44-45.

¹⁴²Ibid., 53-55.

to turn more attention to the quality of worship, rather than the style of music chosen for worship.

In this regard Schaller recommends that churches "hasten the pace" of their worship service,¹⁴³ eliminating long and boring announcement periods, long periods of inactivity, etc., while promoting more participation and more lively singing and praise. Many churches attribute their growth to such changes in their worship formats which seem to enhance the atmosphere of the entire church program. Peter Wagner observes that growing churches are likely to worship in a Sunday morning service for as long as thirty or thirty-five minutes without interruption.¹⁴⁴

Lyle Schaller has carefully researched the subject of going to multiple services. He reports that approximately four out of five congregations which add a second Sunday morning service see an increase in worship attendance of somewhere between ten and twenty percent. There is also a similar decrease in attendance when a church with multiple services reverts back to offering a single service again.¹⁴⁵ These statistics, of course, offer no guarantee for church growth, but going to multiple worship services on Sunday morning may be a benefit worthy of consideration.

The Edification Ministries

Great interest in small group ministry is being expressed amongst church growth

¹⁴³Ibid., 32-33.

¹⁴⁴Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 6.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 49-50.

theorists today. Rick Warren, author of The Purpose-Driven Church, is famous for his small group ministry and strategy. Similarly, the explosive growth of Dale Galloway's New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon has attracted a lot of attention. The five hundred or so "TLC groups" hosted by New Hope have been the impetus for much of the growth this church has experienced.¹⁴⁶ Paul (David) Yonggi Cho's church in Seoul, Korea is the largest church in the world. This church has been wholly built on the cell group/home Bible study strategy.¹⁴⁷ A quarterly periodical entitled "Cell Church: a Magazine for The Second Reformation" is also being warmly received by many Christians today.

In contrast to these very successful small group strategies, the churches of the Southern Baptist denomination and other traditional churches are well known for their huge emphasis on, and great successes in, the small groups philosophy of the Sunday school program. Regardless of what shape small groups may take on, many students of church growth theory are persuaded that dynamic small group ministries are a top priority for church growth.

The importance of the small group for the edification of individuals and a congregation is clearly established. Bill Sullivan refers to the small group as "the only organizational unit in most churches and the principal means of incorporating people socially into the life of the church."¹⁴⁸ It is in the small group that personal matters are

¹⁴⁶Towns, Ten of Today's, 71-78.

¹⁴⁷Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 54.

¹⁴⁸Sullivan, Ten Steps, 80.

discussed, questions are entertained, lay shepherding is undertaken and discipling relationships are formed and fostered. These things rarely if ever occur in gatherings of the whole congregation, and yet they are very much a part of Christian assembly. The small group, therefore, is the only viable outlet for this sort of ministry and must be done well.

When a church is very small its entire ministry functions as one ongoing small group. In this arrangement the pastor is the small group shepherd and must perform many of the same intimate shepherding tasks of a Sunday school teacher or home Bible study discipler.¹⁴⁹ Of course, as the congregation grows, others should certainly be trained and enlisted to help with these intimate shepherding tasks. At any rate, a very fine and somewhat unique shepherding opportunity exists for the pastor in the form of handwritten notes and cards. Schaller reports:

An increasingly common practice among ministers is to mail every member a personal handwritten note on special occasions such as a birthday, the first day of first grade, a wedding anniversary, a promotion at work, graduation, the birth of a grandchild, or the completion of a special task at church.¹⁵⁰

He likewise mentions the special power of a personal letter written to a widow on the anniversary of her spouse's death, a letter written to a newly baptized individual or a thank you letter. It is suggested that two dozen such letters can be written in the time it takes to make ten phone calls or five personal visits.¹⁵¹ All such ministry, whether

44. ¹⁴⁹Lyle E. Schaller, The Small Church Is Different, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992),

¹⁵⁰Schaller, 44 Ways, 36-37.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

performed by the pastor or various program lay leaders, increases the sense of love and fellowship in the congregation and strengthens each Christian involved.

Children's programs have always been important to the church, but never more than they are today.¹⁵² Carl George suggests that a church's pre-school population is the most important statistic for predicting the church's long term health.¹⁵³ He further warns that small churches "hemorrhage" away (to larger churches) members who have children entering their teen years.¹⁵⁴ These members seek the exciting youth programs the larger churches have to offer. Parents feel the need for the help churches offer in child-raising, and a good children's and youth ministry will undoubtedly be very attractive to today's single-parent families and traditional families alike. Bast's research indicates that more than forty percent of church attenders make their decision to stay at a church on the basis of its children's programming.¹⁵⁵

The Evangelism Ministries

Once again, without exception, church growth scholars point out that a powerful outreach program is an absolutely essential ingredient for church growth. Forty years ago Donald McGavran warned that churches tend to place too much of their ministry effort

¹⁵²Bast, Attracting New Members, 70.

¹⁵³Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 11.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Bast, Attracting New Members, 70.

into tending their existing flocks rather than reaching out to the lost.¹⁵⁶ That warning, however, seems to have gone largely unheeded. The small church which has no effective evangelistic thrust should never expect to grow through the two hundred barrier.

Some statistics indicate that fifty-seven percent of the people who visit a church do so because they are specifically invited to come by someone in the congregation, while another thirty percent of all church visitors come because the church facility catches their attention.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, George Barna does not believe that the appeal of a church's signage and property (passive media) are terribly important to church growth.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, it is said that seven percent of all church visitors come because some form of church advertisement attracted them.¹⁵⁹

Whereas home visitation was once the key to unlock all church growth, this seems to be no longer the case. Some church growth theorists still highly recommend house-to-house visiting as the key to the outreach ministry of the local church, but more and more researchers are leaning away from that view. Thomas Rainer and George Barna suggest that people in today's overly busy society guard their time jealously and regard an uninvited stranger's visit as an intrusion rather than a courtesy.¹⁶⁰ Television programming has, no doubt, greatly contributed to this sense of interruption which

¹⁵⁶Donald McGavran, The Bridges of God, (New York: Friendship Press, 1955), 33.

¹⁵⁷Bast, Attracting New, 46.

¹⁵⁸Barna, Marketing, 108.

¹⁵⁹Bast, Attracting New, 46.

¹⁶⁰Rainer, Church Growth, 214.

people seem to have at the visit of a house-to-house evangelist. Rainer writes about his personal experience with door-to-door personal work:

Over ten years ago I accompanied an Evangelism Explosion team going door-to-door, seeking an opportunity to share the gospel with a stranger. After several unsuccessful visits, Jim allowed us to enter his apartment. We went through the carefully scripted plan of salvation, and Jim asked Christ into his life. Within two weeks Jim made his faith public in church, and he was baptized soon after. A few weeks later Jim had made some friends in his Sunday school class and became increasingly active in the church. He is now a leader in that church The not-so-good news is that I have not witnessed a similar story since.¹⁶¹

Barna also suggests that the age of the productive house-to-house visitation program is now past. He recognizes that this method has worked well in the past and is firmly entrenched in church methodology, but then he concludes:

Times have changed, however, and successful churches grow because they have generally understood the change They know that the chances of meeting a responsive person who gets a cold call at their front door are minimal. They know that their good-hearted attempt at service may close the person's mind to the gospel. Given the range of other, proven means of affecting change in the person's heart, they simply do not believe that the methodology warrants the high risk of failure.¹⁶²

Church growth researchers like Thomas Rainer still appreciate the value of Evangelism Explosion and similar programs, but they believe such training will be most beneficial for Christians to use in reaching those with whom relationships have already been established. The feeling of most church growth researchers seems to be that effective evangelism, almost without exception, takes place over time, as a result of existing relationships. Leading strangers to Christ "on the spot," they maintain, is so rare an occurrence that the whole concept should be overhauled. There is not unanimity in

¹⁶¹Rainer, Church Growth, 215-216.

¹⁶²George Barna, User Friendly Churches, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 180.

this regard, however.

Other prominent figures still retain a very strong interest in the cold-call forms of evangelism like Evangelism Explosion, door-to-door surveys, etc. Says Sullivan, "Many say that even today [door-to-door visitation] is still the best method for reaching people."¹⁶³

As with house-to-house visitation, telemarketing techniques for evangelism have not proven to be very helpful in today's cultural climate. Telephone evangelism shares all the drawbacks of door-to-door evangelism--no prior relationship, time interruption, prospect irritation, etc.--but with greater amplitude. Barna has a very negative impression of telephone prospecting, calling the technique "ludicrous."¹⁶⁴ Schaller, on the other hand, lists it as a viable church growth option.¹⁶⁵ This method is being experimented with in church planting. It has been demonstrated that tens of thousands of phone calls can be used to generate first service attendances of one hundred to three hundred people.¹⁶⁶

Direct mail is another means of outreach which Schaller lists as worthy of budgetary consideration.¹⁶⁷ Rick Warren reports that his church in southern California was

¹⁶³Sullivan, Ten Steps, 82.

¹⁶⁴Barna, Marketing, 114.

¹⁶⁵Schaller, 44 Ways, 76.

¹⁶⁶Sullivan, Ten Steps, 79.

¹⁶⁷Schaller, 44 Ways, 76.

launched through the use of a direct mail campaign in 1980.¹⁶⁸ The campaign which targeted Easter Sunday visitors included 15,000 pieces of mail and was responsible for a first service attendance of two hundred and four.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, Barna regards direct mail expenditures as high risk investments. He reports one case in which a rather confrontational church sent out 40,000 Easter service promotional pieces with no resulting visitors that Easter morning! When a church expects to reach only a couple households per dollar, the expense of direct mail really must be justifiable. Barna goes on to say that at its best--when the literature is both beautiful and inviting--one thousand pieces of mail might generate ten visitors (apparently men, women and children) for a service or event.¹⁷⁰

The small church may be tempted to invest its resources in multi-church, cooperative outreach efforts to foster its growth. It seems, however, that the great cooperative evangelistic efforts which come along from time to time are also largely ineffective for evangelism and church growth.

Perhaps the largest and most well known cooperative strategy ever undertaken was the "Here's Life America" ("I found it!") campaign initiated by Campus Crusade in the 1970s. Campus Crusade's Bill Bright received early reports of its success and said it was the "greatest spiritual harvest in the history of the church . . . 1000 times greater than

¹⁶⁸Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 41-42.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Barna, Marketing, 115.

anything I have ever seen or read about in the almost 2000 year-old history of the church."¹⁷¹

Unfortunately, the suspicions many people had about the overall ineffectiveness of the campaign were later confirmed by Win Arn's research. Participating churches reported that the first week of telephoning went well, but then resistance grew through the second and third week. This led them to wonder if the campaign may have actually built resistance instead of responsiveness to the gospel.¹⁷²

Even the Billy Graham crusades are not likely to benefit participating local churches very much. Again, Win Arn's research of the Greater Seattle Crusade of 1976 is helpful. This particular crusade was researched because it was considered by the Graham team to be exceptionally productive. Arn found, however, that the many decisions made for salvation yielded only a small number of regular church attenders to be distributed among the many participating churches throughout the whole Seattle area. Yet many of these churches had funneled untold hours and energies away from their own local church ministry efforts and into the campaign effort.¹⁷³ Arn's research seems to indicate that large, cooperative evangelistic endeavors are not the best methods for local church outreach.

Oppositely, there are several "front door" methods of outreach and several "side door"

¹⁷¹Win Arn, ed., The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook, (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1979), 44.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid., pp.95-109.

methods of outreach which seem to foster significant church growth. A front door strategy seeks to actually bring the prospect into the facilities and worship of the congregation.¹⁷⁴ A side door strategy is one which seeks to associate the prospect with an individual member of the church or a "fringe benefit" ministry of the church.¹⁷⁵

Nothing takes the place of "word of mouth" invitation by friends, relatives and acquaintances to the services of the church--a front door method of outreach. This is almost universally regarded as the most successful method of outreach in America today. The research and conclusions of George Barna on this matter are typical of all others:

The most effective means of getting people to experience what a church has to offer is having someone they know who belongs to the church simply invite them to try it. Call it whatever you wish--word-of-mouth, personal invitation, friendship evangelism--this is indisputably the most effective way of increasing the church roles.¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately, this lesson has even been learned by cult groups. Even though Mormons are well known for their door-to-door methods, these efforts have little effect on the rapid growth of the Mormon sect. In fact, less than one door out of a hundred is ever even opened to the door-knocking missionaries. It is the recruitment of friends and relatives by the common Mormon layperson which really brings growth to the organization. The Mormon term for this recruiting of converts through existing relationships is "friendshipping."¹⁷⁷ The troubling truth is that the Mormons'

¹⁷⁴Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 238.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 353.

¹⁷⁶Barna, Marketing, 109.

¹⁷⁷Jerry Mahan, "Overcoming Barriers to Church Growth," (D.Min. diss., Fuller Seminary, 1989), 64.

friendshipping is a very well-organized and well-conceived program which roughly parallels Evangelicalism's friendship evangelism strategy, and it works very, very well.

Obviously, the very best method of outreach is to invite unsaved and unchurched individuals to the events and services of a fine local church. Even better, this word-of-mouth outreach can also be coupled together with other front door outreach strategies. Maxwell recommends providing baptismal candidates with ten beautifully engraved invitations to their baptismal service so that they might use them to invite reachable friends and family members to one of the services of their church.¹⁷⁸

In Sullivan's list of "rapid growth ideas" he endorses one-day attendance drives like "Friend Day."¹⁷⁹ This strategy suits Reeves and Jenson as well. These two authors recommend "high visibility" events at the church facility in order to bring visitors in the front door.¹⁸⁰ In times past "revival" services of a week (or even several weeks) long were very popularly received in America. Now, however, because of time pressures and other factors it is difficult to attract a lost individual even to a half-week long revival.¹⁸¹

William Harris wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1993 on the subject of combining traditional revival/crusade meetings and cold-call visitation methods for an effective outreach strategy. His hope was that a traditional outreach blitz would induce a great crusade attendance and result in immediate church growth. He says: "The traditional

¹⁷⁸Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 9.

¹⁷⁹Sullivan, Ten Steps, 78.

¹⁸⁰Reeves and Jenson, Always Advancing, 74.

¹⁸¹Rainer, Church Growth, 234.

visitation was accompanied by some well developed mail-outs to accomplish this task. The visitation was a dismal failure. I overestimated greatly the number of persons in our community who would indicate a willingness to be visited by our church."¹⁸² He tells of making appointments for visits via telephone survey, only to call on empty homes, reschedule for a later time, and then do it all over again. He later regretted even asking for appointments over the phone because permission to visit was so overwhelmingly denied. In his project summary he reports: "This project was . . . directed mostly toward the parents [in the local school district]. Much time, money and effort was invested in this project and the response from the adults of our community was minimal."¹⁸³ In the end, the adults did not respond well to the cold-call methods, and they could not be induced to attend the half-week long evangelistic crusade. "It is disappointing," says Harris, "that there was no noticeable growth in our average Sunday school attendance."¹⁸⁴

Thus, the one-big-day events built around the worship services of the church seem to be the better way to reach others in the community. Day long events still seem to have the ability to attract visitors. Here again, word-of-mouth invitation in conjunction with a big event can turn out be a winning combination for the growth of a local church.

A final front door method of outreach targets the new residents in a community. Reeves and Jenson report that this outreach strategy typically involves the use of a

¹⁸²William D. Harris, "Developing and Implementing an Evangelistic Strategy for Outreach to Families in the Lake Hamilton School District for Antioch Baptist Church," (D.Min. diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 52.

¹⁸³Ibid., 76.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 73.

combination of letters, phone calls and personal visits.¹⁸⁵ Rainer actually describes relocation as a "crisis event" for a family, and then he suggests that carefully contacting one hundred households might result in the addition of one family to the church.¹⁸⁶

It should be added here that the proper greeting and recognition of visitors to a service is essential to the lasting effect of front door evangelism. When visitors arrive, they must be made to feel at ease.

Gone are the days when guests want to wear a sticker on their lapel labeling them as visitors for all to see. Some researchers follow Bill Hybels' recommendation of maintaining the anonymity of visitors to protect them from embarrassment.

"Unchurched Harry," says Hybels, "wants one thing when he walks into a church: anonymity. He doesn't want to say anything, sign anything, sing anything or give anything."¹⁸⁷ Others, generally in the case of small churches, recommend some small but very low-risk recognition of visitors. The idea of "touching" (by advertisements, personal greetings before/after the service, follow-up, etc.) individuals with the message of Christ and the church seven times in succession has special merit.¹⁸⁸

Regardless of what a church decides in the matter of public recognition, visitors *need* to be greeted individually as often as possible in the course of their visit. Multiple friendly encounters are a must for each visitor. Special parking places and literature for

¹⁸⁵Reeves and Jenson, Always Advancing, 76.

¹⁸⁶Rainer, Church Growth, 242-243.

¹⁸⁷Towns, Ten Most Innovative, 50.

¹⁸⁸Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 269-270.

visitors, good signage to point the way to various rooms and buildings, greeters and escorts standing by, and cordial follow-up all make for a pleasant first impression of a congregation in the visitor's mind.¹⁸⁹ The wisest congregations will also substitute the term "guest" for "visitor" since guests are usually thought of as being invited while visitors simply drop in.¹⁹⁰

Several side door strategies of outreach are also worth noting. The first of these is the hosting of off-campus events in homes and neutral auditoriums. The entire cell group philosophy of outreach is based on the success of friends and neighbors gathering at a convenient and cozy location away from the church facility.¹⁹¹

Similarly, special events hosted by the church in neutral auditoriums may attract the interest of those who had not previously considered any association with the hosting church. An introduction in this way may prove to be beneficial,¹⁹² but this strategy also has some risk attached to it.

In his doctoral dissertation Lavern Brown described his own church's big Easter Sunday event off campus. A celebrity speaker was scheduled to bring the Easter morning message in a neutral, off-campus location. Then six phone lines were installed at the church and volunteers were enlisted to make six thousand calls. The respondents

¹⁸⁹Fuller Seminar, 200 Barrier, vol. 11.

¹⁹⁰Rainer, Church Growth, 230.

¹⁹¹Jeffrey Arnold, The Big Book on Small Groups, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 36.

¹⁹²Rainer, Church Growth, 217.

who sounded favorable to the idea of attending the Easter morning event received five mailings to keep the event before their eyes. There were also radio and newspaper advertisements for the whole affair. Unfortunately, while yielding some secondary benefits to the church, the effort was quite expensive and time consuming, and it did not prove to be very productive for evangelism and church growth.¹⁹³

Other churches have used various clubs, support groups, sports teams, etc. to meet felt needs within the community, thereby introducing individuals to the various ministries and people of the church.¹⁹⁴ This first impression may lead eventually to meaningful ministry in the lives of those who participate.

Lifestyle evangelism is another favorite form of side door outreach.¹⁹⁵ The lifestyle evangelist constantly seeks out friends and acquaintances who might be receptive to the gospel message. In this case the prospect is not necessarily specifically invited to the services of the church, but to saving faith in Christ. When a personal witness has been blessed by the conversion of a friend, the local church of the personal worker may realize the addition of another member.

A final element of church growth theory to be considered in the matter of evangelistic ministry is "homogeneity." Most church growth theorists now acknowledge

¹⁹³Lavern Brown, "A Model for Implementing Church Growth Principles in Established, Declining Churches," (D.Min. diss., Western Theological Baptist Seminary, 1995), 164-165.

¹⁹⁴Towns, Evangelism and Church Growth, 353.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 289.

the importance of attempting "homogeneous" outreach efforts.¹⁹⁶ The oft-maligned theory proposes that people naturally respond best to others who are of their own language, culture and social standing.¹⁹⁷ After all is said and done, the all-white church in the all-black area of a city will not usually be very likely to reach its nearest neighbors. Neither will the campus ministry church be expected to be effective at evangelizing the typical family population of its community, nor will the poor congregation be expected to attract the typical wealthy businessman to its services. While admitting that this state of affairs is not ideal or spiritually laudable, many researchers recognize its pervasiveness and strategize their evangelism accordingly.

FACILITIES

The facilities of a church may be a tremendous asset or liability to an individual congregation. A minister in England writes:

The British public view the "church" as a building, which represents all that is constant and unchanging in life If the foreign missionary [to England], the outsider, waits until he has enough people in order to acquire a building, he will soon discover that those people will never come without first having the building.¹⁹⁸

Similar thinking seems to exist in contemporary American culture as well many times. Lyle Schaller points out that "while a new building may not attract people, an

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 268.

¹⁹⁷Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 223-227.

¹⁹⁸Jack Hoad, "A Report From London," Baptist Bible Tribune (Sept. 15, 1996), 16.

unattractive or functionally obsolete structure often does repel people."¹⁹⁹ If, as Bast's research suggests, thirty percent of the people who visit churches do so because of their notice of church facilities (which, as pointed out previously, Barna seems to doubt), then church facilities are enormously important to the objective of growing through the two hundred barrier.²⁰⁰ Regardless of what the correct statistic might be, it does seem that Americans often judge books by their covers, and the "cover" of the church is its physical property.

Conventional wisdom would seem to dictate that church facilities should be located on a major thoroughfare, near the freeway, near malls or favorite shopping areas and in a growing area of the community.²⁰¹ If the church is thus located, a draw of individuals who live fifteen or twenty miles away may still be realistic.²⁰² Schaller suggests that even though most church properties were well located when constructed, ten percent of all Protestant congregations would probably benefit from relocation.²⁰³ Sometimes relocation is the best answer for providing adequate ministry facilities.

In the Southern Baptist Church Growth Plan D.G. McCoury and Bill May suggest that forty percent of a church's property be used for buildings, thirty percent for parking and twenty percent for landscaping. They further suggest that each acre may be expected

¹⁹⁹Schaller, 44 Ways, 92-93.

²⁰⁰Bast, Attracting New, 46.

²⁰¹Callahan, Twelve Keys, 72,

²⁰²Ibid., 73.

²⁰³Schaller, 44 Ways, 102-103.

to provide ministry and parking for only one hundred and twenty five people--perhaps less if softball fields, Christian schools, etc. are part of the church's vision.²⁰⁴

Of course, auditorium space and lay-out are key considerations in evaluating facilities. Schaller recommends using chairs rather than pews so that the seating of a particular sanctuary may be adjusted as needed.²⁰⁵ He also recommends setting the chairs several inches apart to make people feel more comfortable. Where pews are used, he recommends twenty four to twenty eight inches of space for each person in attendance (as opposed to the smaller spaces required by municipal codes).²⁰⁶

With one voice the researchers say "amen" to the eighty percent maximum rule: when the available seats are more than eighty percent filled, people feel uncomfortable.²⁰⁷ Apparently, only preachers enjoy packed auditoriums. Conversely, if less than sixty percent of the available seating is being used, seats should actually be removed.²⁰⁸ The psychological impact of seeing too many empty seats has a very negative effect on the morale of the congregation as well. Simply removing some seats or pews and setting up attractive display tables or a fellowship area in the back of the sanctuary can give an auditorium a whole new feel.

Some churches may be benefitted by remodeling for beautification or updating.

²⁰⁴McCoury and May, Church Growth Plan, 14.

²⁰⁵Schaller, 44 Ways, 51-52.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 100

²⁰⁸Ibid.

Church growth literature is replete with exhortations to the importance of a neat, attractive facility, both inside and out.²⁰⁹ Seating comfort, temperature control, lighting and acoustics should all be pleasant for those who attend.²¹⁰ Periodically, visitors to the property should be asked their first impressions of the facility.

Churches with a cell group philosophy of ministry may not be so concerned with educational space as churches with a traditional Sunday school ministry must be. The churches which emphasize the evangelistic potential of the Sunday school may actually come to the point where their need for more educational space may outweigh their need for additional auditorium space.²¹¹ A particular church's philosophy of small group ministry, therefore, is foundational for determining its requirements for educational space. If the traditional Sunday school model is intended, thirty square feet of space for each child up to first grade, and twenty square feet for every other individual is recommended as ideal.²¹² Callahan suggests that churches construct large flexible rooms which can be set up and "torn down" as needed for a variety of activities, instead of small rooms with permanent walls and limited uses.²¹³

Callahan's suggestion is also relevant in designing fellowship space. Space for

²⁰⁹Ibid., 92.

²¹⁰Ibid., 95-98.

²¹¹Callahan, Twelve Keys, 96.

²¹²William M. Easum, The Church Growth Handbook, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 79-81.

²¹³Callahan, Twelve Keys, 96.

fellowship activities is also among the top facilities priorities for church growth.²¹⁴ If it is unpleasant or impossible to host many and varied fellowship activities, the life of the small church will suffer, and growth "brakes" will be applied.

Parking space availability is also one of the most important facilities considerations today.²¹⁵ Most researchers suggest that one acre of parking area will probably be required for every one hundred or so cars and every two hundred or two hundred twenty five people in attendance. Callahan even urges churches to have a twenty percent surplus of parking spaces so people can immediately see that there is room for them in the life of the church.²¹⁶ The use of nearby lots, shuttles to and from more remote parking areas, valet parking attendants, etc. may answer the parking problems of the growing church at least temporarily. Oftentimes, buying nearby residences and razing them is the best answer to providing adequate parking space. In cases of extreme hardship parking ramps may be built at a cost of more than five thousand dollars per parking space.²¹⁷ The situation can be desperate, though, when visitors are seen simply driving away when convenient parking is not readily available.

²¹⁴Schaller, 44 Ways, 96.

²¹⁵Callahan, Twelve Keys, 86-87.

²¹⁶Ibid., 89.

²¹⁷Ankerberg, "Homewood Baptist Church," 56.

CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF FIFTY GROWING CHURCHES

Too much church growth theory and literature is overly theoretical, general and random. To further complicate matters, differences of opinion exist over various principles and methods to follow. Of course, the typical pastor seems to know very well that the churches with the prettiest facilities and best locations, those with the best musicians and youth programs and those with the sharpest and most energetic lay workers etc. are the ones that are growing. The real question is not so much what makes a church grow as it is this: How can a small church with a very limited talent/labor pool and a very limited budget decide what ministries and equipment to invest in *first*? Where time is limited should a pastor do more house-to-house visiting, or should he prepare more thoroughly for his sermons? Where money is tight should the congregation buy additional space in the Sunday paper for advertisement, or should it put new carpet in the nursery? Where the pool of labor is strained, should the church start a new college and career class, or should it start a new class for young married couples? All of these things are wonderful. All of them could be conducive to church growth. Large churches do them all. But the small church simply cannot. So what should it do first?

The choosing of proper priorities is one of the most important tasks of life. If key

battles are fought well and won, the war will also be won. On the other hand, if a myriad of insignificant skirmishes are being addressed, and even won, while certain strategic battles are being lost, the outcome will still be bleak. If there is any truth to Alfredo Pareto's notion that accomplishing the most important twenty percent of one's tasks will yield eighty percent of one's desired results, then the church leader must not "waste" time on battles which may not be keys to his church's life.²¹⁸

With these thoughts in mind, fifty well established, non-charismatic, evangelical churches were sought out and surveyed. The denominational headquarters of the Southern Baptists, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Free Churches and the Conservative Baptist Association provided suggestions for churches to be surveyed. Most of the churches which were chosen for the survey have actually gone from attendances of well under two hundred through the two hundred barrier since 1990. This Church Growth Factors (CGF) survey contained sixteen questions on the subject of exactly how these congregations actually grew through the two hundred barrier. The purpose of the CGF survey was to discover what the leaders of each church regarded as the keys to their church's growth. The word "key" was actually used in eleven out of the sixteen questions. The ultimate intention was to compare the survey answers one to another in order to find the most important common denominators in growing churches today.

The first question of the CGF survey was designed to force the respondent to prioritize the importance of each of his church's ministries in fostering church growth.

²¹⁸Sullivan, Ten Steps, 44.

The second question would reveal the most important and memorable changes each church made in order to bring about that church's growth. Questions three through fifteen were designed to polarize the respondent--to make him admit, regardless of any personal bias, whether or not a particular method really worked in his situation. The final question would reveal transferable methods of ministry by asking the respondent what he would do if he had to lead a church through the two hundred barrier all over again (see CGF Survey Summary chart next page).

Of particular interest in the survey were the bigger answers given to the overarching question of what--in a maze of suggestions for what *might* be done--what *must* be done to promote church growth in small churches with limited resources today. The vast majority of popular prescriptions for church growth were included in the survey for evaluation, and a consensus became apparent.

The Most Important Ministry Investments in the Church Today

The first section of the CGF survey asked pastors to rank in the order of importance for their church's growth thirteen programs or areas of ministry investment. Their choices were: pulpit ministry, music and other platform ministry, Sunday school or other small group ministry, teen ministry, children's ministry, singles ministry, senior adult ministry, nursery/pre-school ministry, outreach ministry, stewardship awareness, layperson involvement, involvement of additional salaried staff, and facilities improvement. Again, because the survey was designed to locate *keys* to small church growth, the top several answers and the bottom several answers (to indicate least

CGF SURVEY SUMMARY

Section One/Question One: Priority Ministry Investments
"Rate how the following areas of ministry have contibuted to your church's growth"
(lowest points indicate highest rank)

BEST

Pulpit.....	137pts.
Music/Platform.....	237pts.
Lay Involvement.....	265pts.
Sunday School/Small Groups.....	296pts.

(Also: add staff, 375pts.; invest in facilities, 380pts.)

WORST

Stewardship Campaigns.....	618pts.
Singles.....	602pts.
Senior Adults.....	586pts.

Section Two/Question Two: Key Changes

"Identify the most important changes made in your programs during your growth periods"

In Worship.....	16 out of 50 respondents
In Sunday School/Small Groups.....	12 out of 50 respondents
In Lay Involvement.....	10 out of 50 respondents
In Facilities.....	10 out of 50 respondents

(Also: add staff, 8 respondents; add second service, 8 respondents)

Section Three/Questions Three through Fifteen: Key Methods

"Was _____ a key to your church's growth?"

(affirmative answers)

BEST

Inviting/Lifestyle Evangelism.....	37 out of 50 respondents
Multiple Services.....	35 out of 50 respondents
Staff Additions.....	33 out of 50 respondents
Quality Music.....	28 out of 50 respondents
Quality Facility.....	27 out of 50 respondents

WORST

Tract Distribution, Crusade Evangelism.....	0 out of 50 respondents
Busing.....	1 out of 50 respondents
Street Evangelism.....	2 out of 50 respondents
House-To-House Evangelism.....	4 out of 50 respondents

Section Four/Question Sixteen: Transferable Methods

"If called to pastor a small church again, what would you suggest in the following areas (S. school, worship, children, youth, adult, outreach, facilities, staffing, other) to lead your church to an average worship service attendance of well over two hundred?"

SPECIFIC

Staff Additions.....	29 out of 50 respondents
Tidy Facilities.....	22 out of 50 respondents
Relational Evangelism.....	18 out of 50 respondents

GENERAL

General Quality Of Worship Service.....	35 out of 50 respondents
General Lay Involvement.....	34 out of 50 respondents

effective ministry investments) are most important. As would be naturally expected, several survey respondents chose not to rate their lowest priorities at all.

The Priority of a Dynamic Pulpit Ministry

Far and away, the pastors of churches which had broken the two hundred barrier indicated that the pulpit ministry was the first priority and most important area of ministry in bringing about their churches' growth. This ministry was suggested as the number one key to church growth by almost half (24 total) of all the respondents, and it was given as one of the top four most important areas of ministry by virtually all the respondents (45 total). For some reason the force of this priority does not seem to be communicated nearly as well as it should be in church growth theory today.

The implications of the CGF survey in this regard for the small-church pastor are enormous. Pastors are often referred to in America as preachers. When Americans inquire about a particular church they might be likely to ask, "And who is the *preacher* over there at your church?"

How strange that the pastors of today's small churches hold within *themselves* the very first key to church growth! Not another person in the world can be blamed if this task is poorly done in any given pastor's ministry. Neither the music nor the facilities, the offerings nor the lay workers have any significant influence over the pulpit ministry of the small church. The preaching pastor, and he alone, decides what will come out of his mouth and heart at 11:30 Sunday morning. Let every pastor tremble at the prospect of getting up on the platform and boring his people with religion for a half hour every

Sunday morning. It may very well be God's grace which keeps the audience of the careless preacher small.

The Priority of the Worship Ministry

Of the thirteen broad categories for ministry investment listed in the CGF survey, the second most important ministry indicated was the "music and other platform ministry" category-- the worship of the church. One out of every ten pastors who had led their churches through the two hundred barrier ranked this area of ministry as the number one, most important ministry in their church, and almost half (23 total) of the fifty pastors surveyed ranked it in the top three of their most important church ministries.

If there ever was a time when small American churches could get by with building a "worship" service on a few dirge-like hymns interrupted by several monotoned announcements, an offering, an ill-prepared music special and a passionless pastoral prayer, that time has certainly passed. The survey respondents gave definite indication that if earnest, genuine worship had not been experienced, their churches would not have grown out of a maintenance ministry mode.

All of this confirms the importance of church musicians being competent and prepared. A worship soloist need not be professional to be effective, but being well-rehearsed and at ease with his song (competent) is essential.²¹⁹ Of course, the song

²¹⁹A world-class theme park employs an elderly German gentleman who apparently has a touch of Parkinson's disease. This man sings traditional Bavarian folksongs. A very competent band provides his accompaniment. The man himself has occasional intonation problems, and he evidences no signs of ever having professional voice training, but the overall effect of his music is beautiful and charming.

director should have a competent and winsome platform presence as well. If he is unenthusiastic about the music service, worship will probably be absent from the service.

The "worship hour" typically includes the greeting and announcement time in the Sunday morning service. As such, announcements should be fresh and informative, and they should project the vision of the church in an inspiring way to the hearers.

A flow in worship should be sought. Unnecessary interruption or explanation should be avoided, and chiding the worshipers for not smiling, singing more loudly, etc. should be avoided at all cost. If the platform leaders are doing their tasks well, the congregation will almost certainly enter into the worship of the service.

The Priority of Lay Ministry

The category of "layperson involvement" was ranked as the third most important ministry investment for the small church to emphasize. Once again, a handful (8 total) of pastors rated the involvement of lay people as the number one incentive to their growth, and almost one third (16 total) of all the pastors surveyed ranked it among the top three factors for their churches' growth. The Sunday school or small group ministries of the church were favorite areas for lay ministry in the CGF survey responses.

Obviously, the church which fails to enlist the participation of many individuals in lay ministry is missing a key to church growth and effectiveness. This failure alone could have dire consequences.

The Priority of the Sunday School or Small Group Ministry

According to the CGF survey, the fourth most important area of ministry investment for growth in the small church is the Sunday school or other small groups ministry. A few (7 total) pastors actually ranked this ministry as the most important ministry for their church's growth, and more than one third (19 total) of all the respondents ranked it in the top three. Furthermore, the relationship between a church's small groups ministry and its lay person involvement (the third ranked priority) is clear.

A good Sunday school, home Bible study, cell group, etc. program accomplishes two very necessary things, and sometimes three. First, the small group setting allows interaction, fellowship and social bonding. The elements of Sunday school--discussion of spiritual things, refreshments, etc.--enhance the bonding process which is so important in the Christian family.

Another great accomplishment of the Sunday school ministry is the spiritual and biblical grounding of Christians. Christians who actually think through and embrace the core biblical values and doctrines of scripture are the success stories of the church. One never feels assured of another person's conversion until this has taken place. The interaction of the Sunday school Bible study is a key to all the discipleship efforts of the church.

A third value of Sunday school may be found in the area of evangelism. If the Sunday school (or home Bible study) is used to attract visitors to a more casual and intimate Bible study than is usually associated with a church worship service, the gospel witness of a church may be greatly furthered.

Other Priorities

The fifth ranked priority investment for the small church was the addition of a second staff pastor. The sixth ranked ministry investment was in the area of facilities for ministry. These emphases were nearly equal in the CGF survey, but they were removed from the fourth ranked priority (small groups) by a fairly wide margin.

The Least Helpful Ministry Investments for Small-Church Growth

It may be expected that the pastors who participated in the survey had some difficulty ranking the growth produced by some of the less prominent ministries offered by their churches. Clearly, however, there were three areas of ministry which were not very helpful in fostering the growth of their small churches. The ratings given to these ministry areas in the CGF survey are worthy of notice.

The Ineffectiveness of Stewardship Campaigns

Only a few (7 total) of the successful ministries reflected in the CGF survey even ranked stewardship campaigns in the top ten most valuable ministry efforts. Exactly half (25 total) of the CGF respondents gave it the lowest possible ranking in their priorities.

If this statistic astounds the U.S. clergyman, it probably will not astound lay people. Research indicates that unchurched people have a very negative view of ecclesiastical fund raising efforts. Moreover, the case may be made that even the faithful Christians are weary of the guilt-motivated stewardship drives so prevalent today. In light of the CGF results, however, it seems incredible that so much emphasis on stewardship and

capital fund raising campaigns is found in church growth circles.

The Ineffectiveness of Singles Ministry

Next to the bottom of the list of helpful ministry investments was the area of singles ministry. The general feeling among pastors who led their congregations through the two hundred barrier seems to be that single individuals contributed very little to the growth of their churches. For this reason singles ministries must be regarded as "pure" ministries--efforts for which minimal growth benefits to the local church will be realized. This, undoubtedly, may be attributed to the transitional nature of "singlehood" in America.

The typical full time college student has little social standing, little compelling reason to stay in his present location after graduation, little financial ability, little time, no winsome spouse and no lively children from which a church might derive benefit. On the other hand, the student has great financial, social and academic pressures which few small churches can absorb.

The situation only grows worse, in the case of men, if a single individual decides not to pursue college or some other skill enhancing education. Taking a few classes at the local junior college, or long term working at jobs which do not require job skills and which offer no future often puts the young single in roughly the same position as an adolescent.

Add to these disadvantages the problems that come from a growing number of divorced singles, singles who lack the maturity for marriage, etc., and the challenges of

singles ministry become clear.²²⁰ Campus churches and churches which target military singles have, it seems, wonderful evangelistic potential, but very limited church growth potential.

The Ineffectiveness of Senior Adult Ministry

Removed from the next highest priority area of ministry investment by a wide margin, senior adult ministry was certainly not regarded as a key to the growth of the churches surveyed. It is often said that senior adults, as a class, are the most difficult to evangelize. The oft repeated testimony is that they are also generally the most resistant age group to change,²²¹ growth and the role of servanthood in Christianity. Spending a lifetime ministering to the needs and demands of the elderly may be very noble and worthwhile--another pure form of ministry--but, according to the CGF figures, it is not generally a good outreach strategy.

"Priorities" Section Summary

The implications of the first section of the CGF survey are well worth noting. In the first place, it is apparent that the typical two-hundred-barrier-breaking churches have enviable pulpit ministries. Then, the preaching ministry of such churches is supported by an equally meaningful music and worship ministry. The small churches which grow

²²⁰Douglas L. Fagerstrom, ed., The Singles Ministry Handbook, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988), 35-37.

²²¹Robert M. Gray and David O. Moberg, The Church and The Older Person, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 109-111.

through the two hundred barrier also have great Sunday school or other small group programs, and they structure great portions of their ministries around volunteer lay workers. On the other hand, these "successful" churches do not target singles or senior adults for church growth. Nor do they regard stewardship campaigns as being very helpful for boosting church growth.

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR CHURCH GROWTH

The second question on the Church Growth Factors (CGF) survey requested that respondents identify the most important *changes* made during their churches' growth periods. Every ministry has problems which function as "brakes" which slow down their ministries. When these problems are resolved, the wheels of outreach may roll smoothly again. Changes, therefore, are often the keys to a church's success in breaking the two hundred barrier. These changes, on the other hand, are not exactly synonymous with the church growth *priorities* mentioned above, since priorities which were already in place prior to growth would not necessarily require further changing. The value of this question, however, lies chiefly in its ability to locate common faults--areas of ministry which needed to be addressed similarly by many congregations in order to carry their ministries forward. It is also noteworthy that the respondents to the survey were not somehow prompted or given suggestions from which to choose in answering this question. Their answers, therefore, reflect the changes which stand out most powerfully in their minds. One might think of their answers as *their* prescriptions for their churches' growth. Four such changes were mentioned repeatedly.

Important Changes

Change the Worship

By far, the most frequently mentioned area of change made by growing churches was in the ministry area of worship. Almost one third (16 total) of all the ministers surveyed agreed that one of the most important changes they made for the goal of growth involved the character and quality of their worship service. Words like excitement, variety, warmth, dynamic, quality and relevance described the changes various pastors had made in their worship services. In contrast to the problems which plague the worship services of the typical American small church, these churches expected excellence at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning.

Change the Small Groups/Sunday School

The second most popular change mentioned in the CGF survey had to do with the area of small groups ministry. Almost twenty five percent (12 total) of all the respondents to the survey indicated that a change in their Sunday school or small group ministry was a key to their churches' growth. Eighty to ninety percent of the churches involved in the CGF survey still regard the Sunday school ministry as their principal small group ministry. Changes along the lines of starting new classes/cells, making existing classes warmer, using and training competent teachers/class leaders received highest marks on the CGF survey.

Change the Lay Leadership

Two ministry changes were ranked as the third most popular of all the changes mentioned in the CGF survey. One of these related to lay leadership. Twenty percent (10 total) of the CGF respondents indicated that improvements in lay ministry were key changes for bringing about growth in their churches. More people becoming involved in outreach for their small groups or other services was a key to some growth. Others spoke about the impact that discipleship and the development of lay leadership had on their growth. In every case, the addition of actual workers in the ministry was a key to growth.

Change the Facilities

Another twenty percent (10 total) of all the ministries surveyed identified a change in their facilities as a key to the growth of their churches. A couple of these churches merely renovated existing space and yet considered this to be a key change for fostering growth. Others had to expand or even change locations at critical moments in their growth.

Other Changes

Honorable mention might also be made of two additional changes which were highlighted in the CGF survey. Eight out of fifty respondents considered the addition of a staff pastor to be a key change fostering growth in their churches. And another eight out of fifty regarded a move to multiple services as a key growth inducing change.

"Changes" Section Summary

An examination of the information garnered from this section of the CGF survey leads to a further understanding of the common denominators of growing churches. As the first question of the survey also predicted, most CGF pastors have come to the conclusion that if their churches had not instituted qualitative changes in their worship time each Sunday morning, they would not have grown. It may be safe to assume by this that the majority of small American churches may have a problem in this area of worship, and that changes in this area might very well be a turning point for them as well.

Another large block of respondents pointed to a revitalized Sunday school hour as a church growth breakthrough. Some pastors made use of other small group ministries to accomplish Sunday school-like objectives, but many agreed that past faults in this area served as "brakes" which held their entire ministries back. The mundane Sunday school programs which seem to dominate many small-church ministries should be overhauled at the earliest opportunity.

Many responding pastors realized that recruiting and training additional lay persons to shoulder ministry opportunities was a desperate need in their small churches. This having been done, their churches grew. This theme runs continually through all church growth literature. The small church is notorious for being a one man show. Wherever a local church ministry is being conducted by too few people, expeditious change is essential.

Finally, somewhat in contrast to the earlier section of the survey, changes in facilities

stood out in a large number of pastors' minds as among the most important changes they made to foster church growth. One may conclude from this that many small churches are probably at least somewhat held back from growth by their failure to remedy the inadequacies of their facilities.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL METHODS FOR CHURCH GROWTH TODAY

Every pastor is certain to hear of various "secrets to success" in ministry throughout his lifetime. One giant in the ministry might insist that if pastors just did more door-to-door visiting their small churches would really take off and grow. Another says that Sunday school busing is the secret key. Another says that advertising will make all the difference in the world. When everything cannot be done at once or equally emphasized in one small church, the pastor is left to guess which key really will unlock his church's growth.

Section three of the Church Growth Factors survey asked pastors to declare very simply if various methods really worked as keys to the growth of their churches through the two hundred barrier. A very definite consensus among the pastors of these growing churches may be discerned by their answers.

Keys That Work

Going to Multiple Services Is a Key

Seventy percent (35 total) of the pastors surveyed declared that going to multiple

services was a key to their churches' growth. This runs quite counter to the thinking which is so prevalent today in churches. So many church leaders assume that as soon as their present sanctuaries reach eighty percent capacity they are compelled to go into an expensive building program, but the way of wisdom would seem to dictate otherwise. Not only does a multiple services philosophy relieve a church from burdensome financial pressure, it also engenders growth! People enjoy having a choice of services, and some will visit a church simply because it offers a choice.

Adding Staff Pastors Is a Key

Almost two thirds (33 total) of the CGF surveys indicated that adding another pastor to the church staff was a key to a small church's growth. Adding competent, well-liked shepherds for tending the flock is one of the best things one can do for the care of sheep. Since some church growth scholars recommend planting churches with more than one pastor right from the start, it would be hard to imagine hiring a second staff pastor too early in a small church.

Improving the Music Is a Key

Over half (28 total) of all the respondents to the CGF survey stated that some change in the music ministry of their churches was a key to their growth. While it is true that many of these growing ministries are using contemporary music, the emphasis on competence and meaning seemed to be the main consideration in the surveys.

Improving Facilities Is a Key

Again, more than half (27 total) of the CGF survey respondents said that a change in their churches' facilities was a key to the growth their churches experienced. Ranging from tidying up the place to relocation, answers in this section remind the leaders of small churches to get everything squared away or be prepared to suffer the ill growth effects of neglecting the physical representation of God's work amongst them.²²²

Personal Invitation and Lifestyle Evangelism Methods Are Keys

No issue strikes at the heart of a local church more than the issue of evangelism--outreach to the unsaved and unchurched. Of all the programs that can be tried, two very definitely came to be favored by the pastors surveyed. Over ninety percent (47 total) of the growing churches surveyed owed their outreach effectiveness to two non-confrontational methods of evangelism. The first ranked method was described as "invitation evangelism," simply inviting others to church programs, events and services. The other method is popularly called "lifestyle evangelism," a relational, non-confrontational witness as opportunity arises in the everyday duties of life. No other method was ranked anywhere near these two in the affections of growing churches.

²²²One survey respondent indicated that his church--a historic downtown church--grew to the point of needing to relocate and actually experienced a church split over the issue. Both congregations are doing well, but the respondent regrets that a consultant was not called in. Very likely, a friendly daughter church could have been established and the split avoided.

Keys That Do Not Work

Culture is always in a state of flux, but no culture has changed so quickly as the American culture in the past generation. No wonder that what works for one decade may be a dismal failure in the next! The CGF survey definitely suggested abandoning any reliance one might have on several traditional keys to church growth.

Busing Is Not a Key

At one time all the great churches seemed to be using Sunday school busing to achieve record church attendances. Only one of the churches involved in the CGF survey regarded a Sunday school bus ministry as a key component for its growth. The problems of expense, increasingly unruly children, manpower, etc. have made busing a somewhat obsolete method of outreach today. Aggressive children's ministry is still wonderful for evangelism, but not church growth.

Crusade Evangelism Is Not a Key

None of the churches surveyed declared crusade evangelism as a key to their church's growth. Growing churches may participate in and benefit from various evangelistic crusades, but a multi-church or city-wide crusade is not typically very useful in the area of church growth.

House-To-House Visitation Is Not a Key

Ninety two percent (46 total) of the growing churches surveyed indicated that their

growth did not come from traditional "cold call" visitation. This is not to say that this form of evangelism has no place in church ministry today, but it does give perspective to the minister who continually hears that house-to-house visitation is *the* method of outreach for every age and culture. Somehow this kind of visitation has been elevated in Christianity to the level of dogma. It has become synonymous with true Christian service, and to relinquish it as a priority of ministry is often regarded as compromise.²²³ Prevailing wisdom seems to dictate the use of house-to-house visitation as a sort of ineffective, last resort method of finding the "gleanings" of a harvest. Also, the cold call ministry that is being done today tends to be much less confrontational than in years gone by. The church should probably continue some form of visitation in the homes of strangers, but it should not expect its investment therein to be a key to its growth.

Literature Distribution Is Not a Key

None of the churches which responded to the CGF survey indicated that tract and literature distribution had any key influence on their growth. Once again, this is not to suppose that this method of evangelism should be completely abandoned. There is occasional and thrilling response to gospel literature. On the other hand, where investment of time and energy is concerned, there are better ways for the small church to reach the lost and unchurched.

²²³By taking certain gospel passages out of context (MT 10:12, LK 10:7, etc.) some laymen and leaders have come to regard this as a primary method that Jesus and the disciples practiced. But the instructions of Luke 10:7, "go not from house to house," effectively confirm that these texts cannot be used to prove their point.

Street Witnessing Is Not a Key

Only two of the churches surveyed regarded the various forms of street evangelism (street preaching, singing, doing chalk art or gospel magic on a street corner, at the beach, etc.) as a key to church growth. One church mentioned its value in its youth ministry. The cultural appropriateness of these methods is debatable, but they may still have legitimacy, especially in large cities. In any case, it is not a key for bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier.

Public Advertisement Is Not a Key

More than eighty percent (41 total) of the growing churches surveyed expressed that the typical marketing methods (direct mail, flyer distribution, radio time, newspaper ads, phone book ads, etc.) were not keys to their growth. Several churches gave honorable mention to telephone outreach, direct mail, newspaper advertisement, etc., but there was no other consensus expressed than that these methods were not typically important for breaking the two hundred barrier.

"Keys To Growth" Section Summary

From the churches which have actually succeeded in breaking the two hundred barrier one finds that certain methods are effective, and certain others are probably bad investments. Key strategies should include an emphasis on invitation and lifestyle evangelism, adding staff pastors "before they're needed," going to multiple services before the present sanctuary fills, expanding and beautifying church facilities, making

interesting and meaningful changes in the worship services, and polishing the entire Sunday school ministry "until it shines."

The small-church ministry may certainly include outreach via door-to-door visitation, tract distribution, crusades, advertisement, busing, hosting special speakers, introduction of home Bible study cells, etc., but experience teaches that these are not usually essential church growth components and should not be treated as such.

TRANSFERABLE METHODS: If They Had It To Do All Over Again

The last section of the CGF survey asked the extraordinary pastors who were surveyed to indicate what they would do in key areas of ministry if they were somehow made pastors of small churches again today. The value of this section lies in its ability to identify methods which pastors believe to be *transferable* to other local church scenarios. Based on the sum total of their life experience they commented on Sunday school, worship, children, youth, adult and outreach ministries, as well as facilities and staffing. As with section two of the CGF survey, the pastors answered these matters subjectively with no external promptings.

Specific Transferable Methods

The Advantage of Adding Staff Is Transferable

The most popular of the specific answers in this section of the CGF survey (given by well over half--29 total--of the respondents) was that they would add paid church staff

members in order to induce growth in their small churches. The specific choices of what staff to hire first, when to hire, etc. varied. Some preferred hiring youth ministers first, others only recommended adding as many staffers as possible as soon as possible. The consensus, however, was very clear that additional staffers would be instrumental for growth.

The Advantage of Improving Facilities Is Transferable

Almost half (22 total) of the CGF pastors specifically stressed the importance of crispness and tidiness for all church facilities in order to bring growth to small churches. Others also anticipated the need of upgrading/expanding facilities, and some emphasized the need for maximum utilization of all facilities available.

General Transferable Methods

The Advantage of Improving Worship Is Transferable

More than two thirds (35 total) of all the pastors surveyed commented generally on the importance of a quality worship service. Still others specifically mentioned that preaching and music (in that order) would be key concerns of theirs if they were ever made pastors of small churches again. Some used the term *contemporary* to describe the services they had in mind. A few mentioned warmth, enthusiasm, etc. A few respondents also mentioned multiple services in this section.

The Advantage of Motivating Adult Involvement Is Transferable

Again, just over two thirds (34 total) of all the churches surveyed maintained that lay person involvement would prove effective for the growth of any small church. Many respondents commented on lay participation repeatedly in this section, especially when commenting on small groups, evangelism, and youth ministries (in that order respectively).

The Advantage of Using Relational Evangelistic Methods Is Transferable

More than a third (18 total) of all the surveyed pastors specifically mentioned that they would promote the use of lifestyle evangelism and/or inviting others to church as their favorite methods of evangelism if they were called to a small church again. No other answer appeared with any degree of frequency. Eleven pastors recommended *some* form of visitation, usually of the "follow-up" variety.

CHURCH GROWTH FACTORS SURVEY SUMMARY

The full value of the CGF survey is realized when all four of its sections (two objective and two subjective) are compared side by side. The small-church pastor may be able to learn from this multitude of counselors--competent counselors--what factors best induce growth. He may also learn where *not* to invest his personnel and resources for maximum stewardship of the ministry entrusted to him. A consensus certainly arises in the survey, and the pastor of the small church would do well, it seems, to heed it.

What Growing Churches Do NOT Depend on for Growth

Despite all one may hear to the contrary, there are certain ministries and methods which do not typically yield exciting growth dividends to the small church. This is not to suggest that these particular ministries and methods have no value, but that they should not be thought of as important church growth factors. With rare exceptions, confrontational or "cold" methods of evangelism are not proving to be effective for church growth. House-to-house visiting, literature distribution, street meetings, beach evangelism, etc. are not as effective as they seem to have been in past American culture, and sometimes they even hinder growth. Crusade evangelism and busing are also typically insignificant methods for inducing church growth today. Advertising through the various media (TV, radio, newspaper, billboards, direct mail, etc.) is not typically advantageous for bringing about the growth of small churches. In addition to these, singles ministries do not typically induce growth. Senior adult ministries, likewise, are not expected to yield very significant growth in small churches. And stewardship campaigns do not often seem to render any significant help in the matter of bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier.

Again, the typical small church is led and dominated by senior adults and their desires for the direction of the ministry. Yet the CGF respondents seem to indicate that specially investing limited personnel and resources in senior citizen programming is probably exactly the wrong thing to do to induce church growth. A similar and even stronger assessment of singles-oriented small-church ministry investments may be drawn as well.

What Growing Churches Do Depend on for Growth

The small church with its natural limitations cannot possibly do everything in a first rate manner. It must pick its battles carefully and get the biggest return it can on each time, money and energy investment. Realistically, only the highest priorities can be done well, and every effort must be made to perform the top several priorities with vision, passion and clarity. According to the CGF responses, the priorities of preaching, music and worship, lay involvement, small groups ministry, adding staff pastors and improving the quality of church facilities must become the preoccupations of the small church which desires growth.

Growing Churches Depend on Preaching for Growth

Even though sections two (what to change) and three (best methods) of the CGF survey had no direct references to the pulpit ministry, it ranked as the number one priority in section one (church growth priorities). It also received a large amount of attention in section four (transferable keys). The simple truth is that the effective pastors surveyed take the ministry of biblical preaching very, very seriously. It absolutely must be done well or all else is hindered besides. This is *the* place for small-church pastors to begin for church growth.

Growing Churches Depend on Music and Worship for Growth

Nothing could be more clear from the CGF survey than the importance which churches that desire to grow place on the worship ministry. It ranked as the second

priority of ministry in section one. In section two it ranked as the most popular *change* effective churches made to foster growth. It ranked as the fourth most popularly acknowledged *key* to growth in section three. And one third of the effective pastors surveyed confirmed that they would make it a priority if they were ever to be called to a small church again.

Growing Churches Depend on Additional Lay Leadership/Involvement for Growth

Rallying additional lay personnel to the work of the ministry was rated in the first section of the CGF survey as the third most important priority of the growing church. That some considerable weakness in this area exists in small churches is revealed by the CGF responses in section two regarding key changes for growth. The third most popular growth inducing change in the survey had to do with increasing lay person involvement, and section four of the survey clearly indicated that lay involvement is a theme effective pastors would emphasize if they ever pastored a small church again.

Growing Churches Depend on Sunday School/Small Groups for Growth

A dynamic small-group ministry (usually Sunday school) is the fourth most important facet of small-church ministry according to section one. It was also ranked in section two as the third most popular area to change in order to promote growth. Pastors of growing churches made continual reference to the importance of small groups in their overall church strategy, and some of these gave the small group ministries of their churches top priority.

Growing Churches Depend on Additional Paid Staff for Growth

Among the most frequently acknowledged keys in the CGF survey to spurring along the growth of small churches was the addition of competent staff pastors. Responses in sections one and two certainly indicated this, and the responses in section three were even stronger. Furthermore, the most popular response given in section four by pastors who had led their churches through the two hundred barrier was that they would hire additional competent staff pastors as soon as possible if they were once again pastoring small churches.

Growing Churches Depend on Quality Facilities for Growth

In section one the quality of facilities was ranked as the sixth priority of the effective church. In section two on the subject of changes made to promote church growth, a change in the church facilities ranked tied for third among the most popular responses. Other strong responses were found in section three (keys to small-church growth) where facilities improvement ranked as the fifth most commonly acknowledged key to the growth of small churches. Finally, in section four, the second most common and specific response given by pastors had to do with the appearances of church facilities.

A Composite Sketch of The CGF Survey Church

Churches which are postured to break the two hundred barrier have personalities and qualities which are unique to their own situations. On the other hand, a consensus certainly surfaces as one studies the CGF survey. It becomes possible, therefore, to

picture the ideal, growing, small church and to strive to come as close to that ideal as possible. In locating ministry priorities and choosing the best ministry investments, small churches may likewise increase their influence for Christ.

The small church which is likely to break the two hundred barrier has a pastor who is devoted to excellence in preaching the word of God. Quality, relevance and nurturance mark the pulpit ministry of this church. The worship services of the church have energy and emotion. The musicians and music leaders have an attractive platform "presence." They are not so nervous that they cannot truly lead in worship, neither are they drowsy, unfeeling, or ingenuine.

The Sunday school is Bible-centered, interactive and nurturing. Testimony, discussion and fellowship are key elements. The teachers or class leaders are part of the whole shepherding ministry of the church.

In the small church destined to break the two hundred barrier may be found a host of lay leaders. These serve as "point men" for various church ministries. They are shepherding the sheep for which they are especially burdened--the teens, the church visitors, the unsaved neighbors, etc. They also oversee the administrative or maintenance needs of the church for which they are burdened. The staff pastor encourages his people to have burdens for other sheep, lost and saved, and then he gives them the training and liberty to minister to the needs of those for whom burden is realized. A second staff pastor will be added when possible (perhaps when the congregation averages one hundred fifty in morning worship). He, too, will be an exceptionally gifted shepherd who will attract others to Christ and the church by his ministry.

The church which will break the two hundred barrier will maintain facilities which are fresh, crisp and adequate. The appearance will not be one of being "cobbled together." The facilities will be comfortable and utilized to their maximum comfortable potential. When the sanctuary becomes crowded the church will go to multiple services, thereby increasing the efficiency of its facilities usage while increasing the ministry choices offered by the church for all people.

This church will emphasize and specialize in evangelistic strategies which revolve around inviting acquaintances to church services and events or speaking to others non-confrontationally in the everyday duties of life. Many other forms of outreach may be utilized, but these will be emphasized. The church will inspire every individual to be constantly alert for any individual who might be invited to a service or befriended for Christ.

This is the picture of the church which will break the two hundred barrier as drawn by the CGF survey. Many other matters could be discussed and debated. Some might be inclined to object to the survey findings. Teachability, however, is a Christian grace, and the ministries which have done what some eighty percent of all American churches cannot do (break the two hundred barrier) ought to merit, it would seem, a listening ear from every small church of this generation.

CHAPTER 4

A CHURCH GROWTH CASE STUDY: AVALON HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

As a boy the author had aspirations of being a missionary. So it was only natural for him, when he later felt the Lord leading him into a North American pastoral ministry, to be keenly interested in outreach. The question of how best to serve the Savior ran through his heart and mind over and over again. His first inclination was to become the very best expository preacher he could be, thereby influencing many other souls for Christ. In his later years of Bible college, however, it began to occur to him that perhaps his desire to be influential over many people was actually being driven more by pride than by holy zeal.

Gradually, through the rest of his Bible college and seminary training he became more and more inspired by the idea of going to a small city which might be "in need" of a strong Bible-centered ministry and planting a church there. This goal could only be accomplished, he reasoned, by great personal faith and sacrifice. He would be shunning the cries of ego and casting himself on the mercy of Him who would build His church.

After far too little prior research and preparation the author chose to attempt a church plant in a small mountain city in Arizona. So in January of 1988, with no

denominational or outside support he moved his wife and two small sons to this place where they were strangers to all. They had nothing but their Lord, their faith, their prayers and their Bibles. That in itself provided a small thrill to the whole experiment.

It was his expectation that he would be a tent-making church planter, earning his own support and being a burden to no one until a viable congregation had been formed. A certain job opportunity seemed to be open to him and he thought his financial needs might be met by it. Shortly after they had arrived in their new home, however, it became apparent that the opportunity had been closed. Finances were bound to be a problem, but he had a sterling work ethic and a confidence that God would supply. Besides, he was perfectly willing to spend every penny he possessed in the Lord's service. No reserves, no retreat, no regret!

The author's intention was to live frugally, work hard and put the word out everywhere that a new, passionate, Bible-centered congregation was being formed. He would put out posters and flyers. He would visit many houses door to door. He would distribute literature on the streets like he had seen the Jews For Jesus groups do in Chicago. Maybe he would do some street evangelism like his friends in Bible College had done on Chicago's Rush Street each Friday night. He would put together a weekly broadcast for the local AM radio station. He would advertise in the paper. And then, surely, the people would come. They would appreciate, wouldn't they, the depth of sacrifice his wife and he were making, and how, after seven years of college and seminary he was willing to support his own family on a shoestring income? And they would be sufficiently satisfied by his honorable intentions and educational credentials to

know that he was not some kind of an unstable soul.

Following the example of the apostle Paul the author worked night and day. All the personal visiting he hoped to undertake was undertaken. All the public advertisement he hoped to initiate was initiated. Every effort and resource was consecrated to the Lord's service. He hoped people would forgive him if his preaching wasn't very fresh each week. After all, he was working overtime just to make a way for the little ministry to survive. He hoped, too, that they would forgive him if his clothes were not as new as those of other preachers. There simply wasn't enough money for the purchase of better. And after more than two years of true spiritual warfare, he was able to gather just two other families and several individuals into their little, rented, ramshackled chapel/parsonage for Sunday worship. Only seven individuals had professed salvation as a result of his ministry, mostly children, and only one or two of these ever attended the services with any regularity. Satisfaction with such meager effectiveness would have been an insult to the Lord he served, and he continued in great earnestness to seek God's face for direction.

Christian friends in Norfolk, VA had established a rapport with a living room full of enlisted Navy men by the time talk began of a potential Gulf War in 1990. These friends were impressed with the evangelistic potential of the hour, and they requested that the author come to help in the expected harvest of souls. There were already more people assembling for spiritual reasons in the living room at the home of these friends than he had gathered at his mission church plant in Arizona after two years of exhausting labor and failure. Maybe this would prove to be the beginning of a brand new church in

Virginia.

So once again, at excruciating personal sacrifice, in September, 1990, his family was uprooted and moved to another strange land. He still had all the old methods--the flyers, the tracts, a dilapidated storefront facility near the Navy base, in a poor neighborhood, and a homemade sign in the window. And he had a great willingness to sacrifice and pray and serve. He no longer had enough money for radio and newspaper advertisements. Once again, he did not have enough money for groceries half the time. Unskilled labor jobs would hold him over. Maybe someday the mission church would be strong enough to support him. And if his preaching wasn't well prepared the people would understand because it was only a mission enterprise and he was just a tent-maker. Now all would be well because they had a receptive military audience in a time of war.

In the months that followed--both before and after the war--attendance at the Sunday morning services grew. They began to experience attendances approaching one hundred. The publicans and sinners were hearing the gospel. Almost every week would bring them another profession of faith from some sailor or neighborhood resident. He was able to devote all his time to ministry now that the offerings had come to more than two thousand dollars per month. This response fueled his soul for almost two years.

But when the war had been long past, when plateaued attendance gave way to decline and when it became painfully apparent that good Christian families with core biblical values did not want to venture into his mission church's neighborhood, the look of weariness began to appear on every face. Failure to establish a lasting light for Jesus Christ stared them all, but especially the author, in the face once more.

At a low time in his ministry, just before his martyrdom, missionary Roger Youderian wrote this entry in his diary.

About ready to call it quits. Seems to me there is no future in Jivaria for us and the wisest thing for us to do is to pull up stakes . . . the reason: failure to measure up as a missionary and get next to the people It's a bit difficult to determine just what is the cause of my failure and the forces behind it I'm not going to try to fool myself. I wouldn't support a missionary such as I know myself to be, and I'm not going to ask anyone else to. Three years is long enough to learn a lesson and learn it well You say that when the Lord calls, he supplies. You can have my boots any time you want them. The failure is mine and my own failure to achieve the personal experience of Christ that could meet the needs here. It didn't pan out . . . what is the answer? I do not know, and I am discouraged about finding any satisfactory solution This is my personal "Waterloo" as a missionary Of this much I'm sure: it will draw me to read His word more, be more tolerant of others, and less venturesome²²⁴

The great missionary certainly might have found a true soul-mate in the author. His words mirrored the author's own thoughts so exactly that his wife mistook them for his own words when he read them to her over the phone. He determined to call it quits, too, for the second time in only five years of ministry and for a win-loss record of no wins, two failures.

One great realization began to dawn on him, however, by this time in his ministry. He had known all along that he was not following the conventional wisdom of pastoral ministry while he was working as a church planter. But he had imagined that most of the standard way of doing things was motivated by ministers who were just timid about

²²⁴Entry from Roger Youderian's diary, as quoted by Elisabeth Elliot, Through Gates Of Splendor, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1956), 152-153.

witness (not like the Jews For Jesus or the Salvation Army of old) and just trying to live comfortable Christian lives. The author determined that he would do without personal comforts and the security of an ingrown ministry. He would enter the battle with all his heart and never look back.

But after five years of failure, the author had finally begun to conclude that effective ministry in America usually occurs within certain parameters of cultural appropriateness and conventional wisdom. Moreover, he realized that extraordinary dedication, sacrifice, talent and even consecration are not generally sufficient to produce effective ministry outside of these parameters. Exceptions could probably be found throughout church history, but it was by now evident to him that *he* was not going to be one of those exceptions. He came to know that his future in the ministry, wherever that ministry might be, would ultimately depend not only on his devotion to Christ but also on his understanding of how modern people think about and react to spiritual things. He began to make mental notes of every effective idea and method he remembered, observed or read about. In his next ministry, he would fill the role of a shepherd who really knows about sheep. He would implement the strategies outlined in the body of this work.

Twenty-five minutes up the freeway from the author's failing mission church the only seven members which remained of another church, the Avalon Hills Baptist Church (AHBC), were still meeting each Sunday for services. They gathered in a run down little church facility at the outlet of an important freeway exit ramp. The church was thirty-seven years old but had been plagued from its inception with problems, splits and mismanagement. Most recently, a long tenured minister had been terminated for

committing adultery, and constant strife had marred the church's ministry under the leadership of the four pastors who followed in the years 1990 through 1993 (!). The author candidated and was called to the pastorate at Avalon Hills Baptist in July, 1993. The mission church in the poor neighborhood immediately disbanded and a handful of its people moved their membership to AHBC.

During his first year at AHBC it was made clear to the author that profound "homesteading" had occurred amongst some of the seven members (mostly elderly) who maintained the functions of the church when there was no other help in the ministry. The property, facility, parsonage and inventory seemed to have almost taken on the identity of personal property in the minds of some of these members. "Turf" would not be an improper term to describe the prevailing spirit in at least some of the thinking which existed at that time. Virtually every decoration in the church, every room, every item in the mailbox seemed to have enormous sentimental value and symbolism attached to it.

Furthermore, a seniority system was being endorsed by some of them which ensured that the ones who had been members longest might be expected to have the most authority in church decision-making. Spiritual qualifications, giftedness and ability were not thought of as terribly necessary or important in comparison with one's seniority. Obviously, the church-growing concepts of lay person involvement and leadership, facilities updating and expansion, quality programming, warm reception of visitors, etc. never generated a lot of interest with some of the senior members.

Despite these hindrances, a generally good spirit of harmony was felt in the congregation most of the time. All the work they enjoyed with the military singles at the

mission church continued to be a source of encouragement for everyone involved. The message was sent on all sides: if you know anyone you might be able to invite to church, please do so. And the people responded to this non-confrontational approach to evangelism.

The author had by now learned that quality preaching was the most important thing he could offer his congregation and the visitors they were bringing with them. So he began to try harder than ever before to be a good pulpit minister. The music and worship time was still in need of overhaul. The man who picked out the songs, the energetic pianist, would come flying in late, scribble down a few hymn numbers on any scrap of paper available, hand it to the song leader, and worship was begun. The singing was pretty hearty, however, so not all was lost. And people began to come. The church began to emphasize small group interaction in the adult Sunday school class. The outside property also began to receive more attention and maintenance. Attendance began to climb towards the one hundred mark.

At the end of the first year it became the author's constitutional responsibility to arrange for the election of new church officers. By now, two out of three of the existing board members only attended one service of the church each week, or less. They contributed little to the life of the church and plainly disliked all the new faces, lay leadership, talk of expansion, etc. When the author used his influence to remove them from office they left the church altogether and, one regrets to say, with tremendous hurt, frustration and anger. They would afterward threaten a court battle in response to their removal from office. In all, two elderly couples and several individuals never came

back.

By this time, August, 1994, two glaring faults had emerged in the AHBC ministry. First, they had no dynamic children's ministry. The Sunday school hour was tolerable, and the nursery service was barely tolerable. But there was nothing to attract the families they knew they had to reach. So they determined to move quickly in order to fulfill a long postponed dream of hosting an AWANA program for the children. And they wanted to begin the program by late September or early October. This would require a major facilities renovation to accommodate the AWANA style game time. They had a 40'x45' room which had been divided into six classrooms, two hallways and a storage area. When all the walls in this section of the building were removed to make a multi-purpose/ fellowship hall, AWANA became a reality for them. The additional fellowship hall space was also necessary for pot luck dinners, banquets and other activities. They were no longer amazed when worship attendance reached one hundred on any particular Sunday.

The other great fault in their ministry also related to their facilities. While situated on a six lane artery just off the freeway, very few people took notice of their church facility. The people who designed and built their facility envisioned placing a second story on it someday. This never occurred. So the building looked more like an old, flat-roofed warehouse, office or other plain commercial structure than a church. Many, many regular passersby professed ignorance that a church even existed at their location. Arrangements were made so that, in January, 1995, a new decorative front complete with steeple and cupola was added to the church, vastly beautifying the facility and increasing

its visibility in the community.

Now people who drove past would occasionally visit their services. Some visitors came when they saw AHBC's modest ad and slogan in the Yellow Pages. Some came when they were discontent with a former church. Of course, all AHBC people were still being constantly exhorted to invite all their acquaintances to church services or activities whenever possible. And visitors came. Upon entering they would find a friendly, handshaking, smiling congregation gathered of some one hundred twenty people, a preacher who really strove for pulpit quality, a part time administration pastor to handle church business efficiently, a small but fine teen program, an enthusiastic AWANA program for the children and an interactive adult Sunday school class (three interactive adult classes after September '95). They would also hear an inspiring announcement time with mention being made of special, periodic fellowship activities as well as the regularly scheduled activities. Their visit would be followed up with a "Thank You For Worshiping With Us" letter from the pastor and an offer of a personal visit if desired. Regular attenders would also receive a personal note in the mail from the pastor any time they missed a Sunday morning worship service.

Visitors to AHBC's first Friend Day in November, 1995, would find an average worship attendance of almost one hundred forty and a Friend Day attendance of almost two hundred. They would also worship in a sanctuary fully remodeled (except for the ceiling), with foyer walls removed in order to accommodate overflow seating when attendances reached into the two hundreds. They would also sing congregational songs chosen carefully by the pastor before the bulletin went to press. This would become the

routine way of planning morning worship.

Advertising in a community newspaper, a supermarket directory of area churches, and a military business guide did little or nothing to bring visitors into the church. Neither was AHBC's growth furthered by the offering of its facility to a MOMS club which now meets on its property each month. All the advertising budget, with the exception of the Yellow Pages advertising, was dissolved.

The first quarter of 1996 was marked by the promoting of the pastor of administration from part time to full time status. For outreach, each member was given fifty-two business card size invitations to church services and was asked to give out one invitation each week to an acquaintance. More pointed business card size tracts which included a member's name and a gospel message were printed for thirty or so interested members to use for lifestyle evangelism. Additionally, Sunday school teachers and program leaders began to be challenged to shepherd their little class-flocks, dotting over them with calls and letters, and bonding with each one. Special music providers were called to a higher level of quality. This quarter also ushered in the remodeling of two nurseries, a restroom and a Sunday school room. The average attendance would eek up to one hundred forty two. The second quarter saw a rise in attendance to one hundred fifty eight. At this time the author introduced in earnest his desire to build a multi-purpose gym addition for the fall. Church leadership had often spoken about it. He felt the time had come to press forward even though it would entail great financial strain. After negotiating with trusted allies on the board he was persuaded to table the matter until an average attendance of one hundred seventy five was realized in morning

worship--perhaps in January of 1997. The third quarter brought an average worship attendance of one hundred seventy two, the remodeling of a hallway and a gravel parking lot expansion. At this time AHBC also began contact with a wonderfully competent engineer who has offered his services free of charge for the development of a master plan for AHBC property and working drawings of their impending multi-purpose hall.

Early Fall, 1996 brought AHBC its first attendances in the two hundreds. The typical Sunday morning found some forty individuals gathered in four rooms of the parsonage for Sunday school. During the worship service the first row or two of its overflow area are being used. The typical Wednesday evening found some one hundred children plus adults in every part of the church building for AWANA club and nursery, and some fifty or more adults gathered in the parsonage for prayer meeting. In November, a lifestyle evangelism expert addressed and motivated AHBC members for further gospel witness, and Friend Days are now being scheduled as annual events for the month of November.

AHBC sits today on the very brink of the two hundred barrier. If its leaders do not conduct themselves wisely all momentum will be lost--perhaps for a very long time. But at least the author and AHBC leaders know what the way of wisdom is, and they are determined to heed it. They know at least in part how the people in their communities respond to the presentation of spiritual things. They are aware of how other good shepherds have shepherded their sheep up to the present moment. With full awareness of the uniqueness of each flock in each location, they have yet come to know what *usually* works. And that in itself is comforting.

CHAPTER 5

A SPECIFIC STRATEGY FOR BREAKING THE TWO HUNDRED BARRIER

Having reviewed the spiritual mandate for small churches to grow, current church growth theory, highlights of the best known seminar on the subject of breaking the two hundred barrier, the experiences of fifty churches which have actually broken the two hundred barrier, and the case study of Avalon Hills Baptist Church, it becomes realistic to propose a rather specific course for small, established American churches to pursue in order that they, too, might "do everything right" and break the two hundred barrier.

While it is true that a small church can never be absolutely guaranteed that a particular strategy will result in its breaking the two hundred barrier, if it ever does it, it probably will do so by following this path.

Here, then, is one researcher's understanding of the sum total of wisdom from the field of church growth on the essentials of leading the small church through the formidable two hundred barrier. The pastors and church leaders who follow this counsel are in company, generally, with the most knowledgeable Christians in this field today.

STRATEGY FOR EVERY PASTOR TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY

Seven Foundation Steps

There are seven specific things which the pastor of the small church can (and must) do in order to begin the whole church growth cycle. Other church leaders may also enter into most of these measures, but pastoral leadership cannot be realistically circumvented in the small church. The beauty of each of these things is that every pastor can do them, and they can be begun today. None of these human factors requires the pastor to have any degree of influence over his people or funds on hand, and yet they are, from the human side, the absolute essentials to his church's growth. Furthermore, he must begin them today and *never* forsake them. They are the foundational steps for every other stage of his church's future growth.

The *first* of these is that the pastor, beginning now, must strive to preach better than ever before. No matter what other duty of ministry must be set aside, this one must be accomplished well. It is his first two hundred barrier breaking step. His preaching must be so captivating that his enemies, *not just his friends!* will be duly impressed with his earnestness and thought. This is the kind of preaching that brings growth. The pastor may employ whatever means he desires to learn this tool of his trade but learn it he must, or suffer the disheartening consequences.

Second, without delay, the pastor must clarify his own vision for the church--what it could someday become and accomplish for the Savior--and then he must commit this vision to writing so he can begin to articulate it intelligently, in whole or in part, to few or to many, as prudence allows. The vision should include the number and type of

people involved in the ministry, the location, that which distinguishes his ministry from the ministries of other nearby churches, etc. Every vision is subject to being revised and rewritten as God works in lives, but a lack of desire and expectancy in the ministry is the death knell of gospel furtherance. If allies can be brought immediately into the pastor's dream of faith, all the better. If not, at least for now, until his influence grows, he may have to dream alone. In any case, a lack of truly spiritual vision will lead to the perishing of precious people.

Third, beginning immediately, the part played by the pastor throughout the worship service on Sunday morning must be improved. This is because a meaningful worship service always tends to bring growth to the church. The welcome, announcements and prayer time are entirely left up to the pastor to quicken or to kill. He alone can brighten this portion of the service, and he can do it regardless of the church's financial state or the degree of influence he has gained in the congregation. When every informed church growth pastor/leader lays great emphasis on the importance of the worship time and then warns the small church of its failings in the matter of worship, immediate action is called for. The pastor has direct control over a third or a quarter of the entire worship time. The responsibility for that period of time, therefore, falls directly on him. The welcome time is his chance to bond with the sheep. The announcement time is his chance to project the vision and to "sell" (or enlist others to sell) the ministries of his church. The pastoral prayer is his opportunity to lift his congregation to the throneroom of heaven (or to give them opportunity to express their own petitions in some way). The worship service is the key, and the pastor must plan how he will perform these tasks more

enthusiastically and convincingly at the next service of his church.

Fourth, nothing keeps a pastor from immediately improving his bond with his sheep. In the small church he is clearly the most visible shepherd. If he loves them and *communicates* love for them, they will grow in spirit, and his flock will grow in size. Mailing them personal birthday cards, anniversary cards, "missed you" notes, "thank you" notes, etc. will bond them to him far better than any church newsletter would. If *he* hosts a Sunday school class or Bible study which is exceptionally interactive and participatory, his sheep will feel important and bond with him. And none of these things requires special funding or influence.

Fifth, beginning today, the pastor must embrace and begin articulating to the congregation the priority of personal and non-confrontational methods of evangelism (i.e. personal invitation to the services and activities of the church, and friendship evangelism). Effective outreach is both the means and the objective of church growth. Any predispositions the pastor might have to mass evangelism, door-to-door witness, busing, etc. must be subjugated to these personal, non-confrontational methods. Then he must begin to teach and reinforce these ideas continuously among his flock by using examples, testimonies, public honors, and by using them repeatedly (over and over and over again!). He must plan a "Friend Day" outreach each year (probably as a big fall season outreach) and, of course, a great Easter Sunday outreach. Every friend and member of the congregation should be encouraged to pray for and invite a friend to these special services, and all others. The more these ideas capture the hearts of his flock, the better. The pastor can begin to envision and reinforce this outreach paradigm without

requesting any budget considerations and without having a high degree of influence over his flock. No external barrier stands in the way of his taking this great and essential church growth step. It should be taken now.

Sixth, the pastor should immediately identify the existing leaders of the flock--those who wield influence, regardless of any office or titles they might have--and begin showing special concern and appreciation to them. These should receive more friendly phone calls, more "thank you" notes, more special occasion cards, more invitations to dinner, etc. The counsel of these influential individuals in the flock should be solicited and honored by the pastor. If these hesitate to give their blessing on one or another of the pastor's ideas, the pastor should think long and hard before attempting to push the idea through. Specially befriending these existing lay leaders in the church is a natural leadership step for the pastor to take. It will be a key to every other growth factor in his church, and it can be begun without any funding or previous influence over the congregation.

Finally, at the earliest possible moment, the pastor must, in spite of any natural inclinations to the contrary, embrace the utter importance of maintaining a clean and tidy church facility. Attractive facilities induce church growth. With his standard being the shopping mall, the sit-down dinner restaurant or the hospital lobby, the pastor must organize and enlist the support of others in decluttering, polishing (and maybe freshly painting) every inch of the church facility, and in manicuring the church lawn. He will be able to do this with a bare minimum of influence over his flock since very few will object to cleanliness, and he will be able to do so with a minimum financial investment.

Newcomers will visit and return to his church because of what he gets accomplished in this area of ministry. It is a major church growth step and cannot be put off.

All seven of these church growth fundamentals fall entirely within the grasp of the small-church pastor. If he is tempted to shun any of the seven he must realize that he does so in the face of virtually every church growth researcher. Every pastor is completely at liberty to order his ministry around these seven essentials. No one can hinder him. The newly ordained pastor, the pastor with the plateaued or declining attendance and the pastor who has failed until now--each one of these has the ability to implement these church growth fundamentals presently. If he will begin today, as he should, then the laying of a sure church growth foundation will be already under way. The superstructure will come with time.

STRATEGY WHEN THE OUTREACHING PASTOR'S INFLUENCE HAS GROWN

Four Superstructure Steps by Encouragement

Many things which are helpful for bringing the small church through the two hundred barrier cannot be initiated by the pastor until he has become influential in his church. On the other hand, immediate follow-through on the seven essentials mentioned above is exactly what gives a pastor influence. If he is an inspiring preacher and worship leader, if his vision for the church is intelligent and exciting, if he befriends other influential members, if he begins to persuade others to employ non-confrontational methods of outreach, and if he begets a more inviting facility, his influence (and his congregation) in most cases *will* grow. Henceforth, the pastor will have many trusted allies working

together with him to present a united front in his flock. When this kind of uniting occurs, the following four church growth superstructure steps may also be pursued.

First, as soon as possible, the pastor and other leaders in a small church should try to influence the quality of the music ministry of their church. The worship service of the church is the centerpiece of most growing congregations. It must be charming and meaningful. And while the pastor may hold the keys to the preaching, announcements, welcoming of guests and congregational prayer time, he usually does not have direct control over the quality of the music ministry of the church. Church musicians, soloists, etc. should be encouraged to approach their part in the service with confidence, competence, poise and a worshipful frame of mind. Individuals who do not have a good platform presence should be encouraged to sing or play only in groups where their deficiencies will not be so distracting. All musicianship, including sound system control, should be as well rehearsed as possible in order to eliminate unnecessary clumsiness in worship. Encouraging improvement in the existing music ministry should be done as soon as the influence of the pastor and his allies allows it.

Second, as soon as their influence makes it possible, the leaders of the small church should seek to improve the quality of the church's Sunday school/small group program. The small group ministry of the church is a great motivator of growth. Existing teachers and class leaders should be encouraged to facilitate more discussion in their small groups, to be more interactive in their teaching style. They should also be influenced to take the shepherding responsibilities of the class (sending notes and cards, telephoning, showing hospitality, etc.) as seriously as they do the teaching responsibilities. Teacher

training and curriculum selection should be provided for the teachers, with special attention being given to those who are ready and willing to improve their service to the Lord in this regard. To make each class time more relational and informative is to posture the church for growth, and this improvement should be encouraged as soon as possible.

Third, whenever pastors and church leaders achieve the level of leadership status necessary to address improvements in the children's programs, they should immediately do so. Attractive children's and teen ministries induce growth, especially in the number of families added to the church--the most important kind of growth! Fine children's ministries *are* outreach and evangelism ministries. Parents will come to Christ and to a particular church simply because of the church's ministry to their children. Attention, then, should center around these ministries as opposed to programs for senior adults or singles.

Leaders of small churches must encourage the overall attractiveness and cleanliness of the nursery. Nursery staff should be encouraged to be prepared, bright and cheerful. They should think of themselves as shepherds to those who otherwise could not attend worship, as well as to the littlest lambs of a congregation.

For the grade school children, leaders of the small church should use their influence to provide a very attractive, weekly, Sunday or Wednesday evening program in addition to the regular morning Sunday school ministry. The small church will have a hard time doing better than AWANA Clubs in this regard, although denominational programs, Pioneer Clubs, etc. are all praiseworthy. Once again, the adults who lead this program

should be encouraged to think of their class members as their own little flocks to shepherd with birthday cards, phone calls, special outings, etc.

For the teens, small-church leaders must use their influence, even when it is small, to encourage frequent activities in addition to the Sunday school program. The supervising adults should have a fine rapport with the kids and should be prepared to shepherd them by phone, mail, transporting them to and from activities, etc.

When leaders have exerted influence to improve the quality of their children's programs, they will be providing reasons for families to take an interest in their church. Such ministries meet the felt needs of the unsaved and unchurched and will be appreciated by them, thus bringing about exciting church growth. These ministries should be addressed as soon as the influence of the pastor and his allies allows it.

Finally, pastors and church leaders should encourage the development of a truly attractive church property. With greater influence comes the possibility of seeking greater improvements for church facilities. Smaller remodeling projects or larger repairs might be encouraged. These, too, will enhance the attractiveness and "curb appeal" of the church property and foster church growth.

All of these changes require only a small degree of influence in the congregation. Many lay people already favor improved musicianship in worship, interactive small groups with shepherd-like class leaders, attractive programs for the children of all ages and various repairs and upgrades in the church facilities. What remains, then, is for the pastor to initiate the first seven foundational steps in this proposed strategy in order that these additional four improvements might be brought about by encouragement as well.

STRATEGY WHEN THE OUTREACHING PASTOR'S INFLUENCE IS GREATEST

From Encouragement to Assurance

The great respect of the congregation towards its pastor and other church leaders is what gives them great influence to be change agents in their church for growth. When a congregation sees the happy effects of the changes that come from foundational improvements in the worship services, small groups program, children's ministries, facilities, evangelistic methods, etc., they begin to follow and trust the leadership of the church with larger decisions. When trust has been earned, the four superstructure steps outlined above may be undertaken. And when influence is great, church leaders may go beyond *encouraging* these improvements. They may eventually *assure* that these improvements are carried out.

With great influence the leaders of the small church can assure the quality of the worship service by utilizing only qualified musicians. The substandard church musicians should be phased out of the worship services completely in some gracious way, or trained to do better. And earnest Christians with musical ability should be trained and phased in whenever possible. This, undoubtedly, will enhance the atmosphere of the service, decrease distraction from worship and foster additional church growth.

Pastors and leaders of small churches who have great influence may also assure the good quality of the small groups ministry of their churches. They may develop earnest small group shepherds who share their burden for using interesting methods, discussion and interaction in their classes. They may train them in how to shepherd their classes responsibly. They may also phase out the teachers who neglect such things, at least until

they are trained to do better, and replace them with teachers who are able to establish a better rapport with class participants.

When great influence is entrusted to the leaders of small churches they may be able to assure that the children's programs of the church are first rate. They may develop leaders who share their vision for the ministry, even replacing, when necessary, program workers who do not have the rapport or inclination to shepherd, interact and bond well with their little flocks.

Finally, when the influence of the leadership is at its strongest, it becomes possible for the leaders to assure that all the facilities of the church are admirably clean, attractive and well utilized. Large renovation or expansion projects may be addressed. Inadequate structures can be updated or beautified as needed, or new structures can be built.

These are the kinds of changes for which church leaders must use extreme caution in their attempts to implement them. Suggestions about replacing church musicians, teachers and leaders, or making expensive facility upgrades must only be made in an atmosphere of great endearment, trust and influence. Anything less will only engender misunderstanding and hurt. It is better for the pastor, first of all, to lay very carefully the seven-fold foundation of this proposed church growth strategy. Then he and his fellow laborers may influence *by encouragement* the various superstructure improvements. Finally, if he accomplishes these tasks well, he and his likeminded leaders may move to a more direct influence over the church's programs, *assuring* their quality.

The first seven steps--the foundational steps--the pastor may take alone. Beyond these, he cannot go alone. Even to influence the ministry by encouragement, he must

have the help and support of many kindred spirits. To make these final refinements and improvements will require the combined energy, talent and giftedness of a whole army of shepherd-laborers.

TWO FINAL MATTERS OF STRATEGY

Two final strategic steps should be taken by the small church which desires to break the two hundred barrier--the hiring of a second full time staff pastor and the transition to multiple Sunday morning worship services. The timing of these two steps is partly determined by the influence of the pastor and leaders in the congregation, but it is also strongly affected by certain external factors.

When the Sunday worship attendance reaches an average of one hundred fifty, the small church should hire its second full time staff pastor. Organization of church ministries, personal time with the pastor, church business, etc. all begin to suffer if the church will not make this step at this stage of its growth. It will not be possible for one pastor to maintain satisfying relationships with each member of the congregation in a church larger than this. Someone else should be called to help full time with the shepherding responsibilities of this growing flock.

Then, when the church sanctuary is routinely filling to more than eighty percent of its capacity, the church should *not* build a new sanctuary. Instead it should make the transition to hosting two morning worship services. It may be that a few chairs or pews will need to be removed from the sanctuary in order to accommodate a smaller congregation at each service without looking discouragingly empty, but eighty percent of

the churches which go to two services find the growth results very satisfying.

STRATEGY CONCLUSION

While it would be impossible to outline a specific strategy for breaking the two hundred barrier which would work in every case, one may say with some degree of confidence that this specific strategy represents the concepts of church growth theory, the findings of fifty churches which have actually broken through the two hundred barrier recently and the experience of one church which is now poised to break the barrier as a result of the application of this strategy.

Other strategies for growth have been offered in church growth literature, but one wonders why these have emphasized so little the priority of preaching, the relative insignificance of certain popular outreach methods, and the many specific changes and methods which have been most helpful to the churches which have broken the two hundred barrier. How frustrating to find that many well known speakers, books and organizations are still promoting hopelessly flawed "secrets" and strategies for church growth--costly media advertisement, extensive demographic research, computerized mailing lists, door-to-door visiting, city-wide crusades, annual "revivals," busing, literature distribution, stewardship campaigns, singles ministries, the abandonment of the Sunday school, etc.!

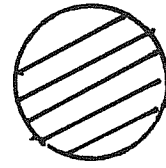
At any rate, it seemed that an informed, concise answer had yet to be offered to the many small evangelical churches all over America which, not knowing how to do it or where to begin, would like very much to impact their communities with the gospel. So,

from one who desperately yearned to learn how to minister effectively in this present cultural climate, and from one who set out on a long journey to discover the best man-made methods of ministry known today, this more specific strategy is also now proposed.

THE END

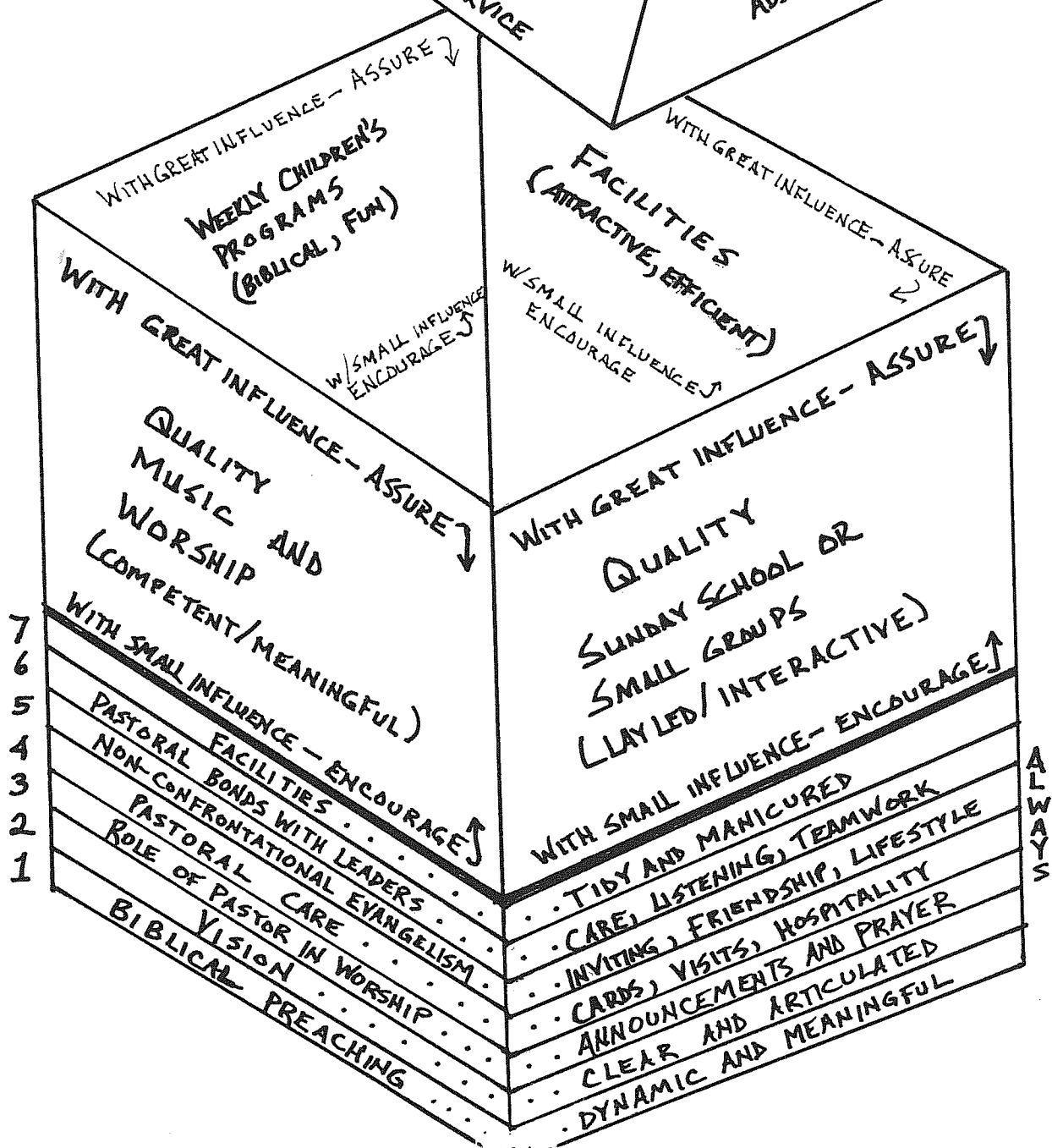
HOW TO BREAK THE 200 BARRIER

APPENDIX A



ADD SECOND WORSHIP SERVICE

ADD SECOND STAFF PASTOR



APPENDIX B - SURVEY "PRIORITIES" SUMMARY CHART

The chart on the following page summarizes the responses to question one which were given by the fifty churches surveyed for this thesis project. When asked to rank fourteen areas of ministry in order of importance for bringing their churches through the two hundred barrier, the respondents placed a number one next to the ministry they considered to be most important, a two next to the second most important ministry, etc.

When all the surveys were completed, the numbers which the fifty respondents placed beside each "ministry area" were totalled. If, for example, all fifty respondents had ranked the pulpit ministry as their number one priority for growth, the score for "pulpit ministry" would have been fifty points (50 respondents x 1). If a respondent did not rank a particular area of ministry at all, it was treated as unimportant to that respondent and was automatically ranked as a fourteen, the lowest score possible.

The verticle column on the chart lists the churches/respondents. The horizontal rows list the scores each ministry received from the respondents. The point totals are given at the bottom of the chart.

APPENDIX B - SURVEY "PRIORITIES" CHART.

	pulpit min.	music/platform min.	S. school/sm. grps. min.	teen min.	children's min.	singles min.	senior adult min.	nurs/preschool min.	outreach min.	stewardship campaign	lay involvement	facilities	add staff	other
Hopewell Baptist	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Bethel Baptist	1	4	8	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	3	7	2	
Hillcrest Baptist	4	6	1	5	7	12	9	8	10	11	1	2	3	
Chattanooga	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	1	
Agape Baptist	1	4	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	4
New Covenant Bap.	3	2	4	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	8	7	N/A	9	N/A	5	1
First Baptist, Palm C	1	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	4	5	3	
Walnut Mem. Baptist	1	2	8	10	12	13	11	6	7	14	4	5	9	3
Colonial Baptist	4	3	5	8	9	11	12	10	7	13	1	2	6	
First Baptist, St. B.	1	12	3	7	8	9	10	11	2	13	6	4	5	
First Baptist, Wolfo.	2	11	1	3	9	10	5	6	8	12	7	13	4	
Rimrock Baptist	1	4	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	14	2	7	5	
Charleston	1	1	2	4	2	8	6	2	3	8	4	2	3	
Woodcrest Chapel	3	2	5	12	9	11	13	10	8	14	4	6	7	1
Hagerman Baptist	2	7	1	5	6	9	10	8	4	13	3	11	12	
Central Baptist	3	8	11	4	2	5	6	2	9	10	7	13	12	1
First Baptist, Highla.	1	1	3	8	4	12	7	6	5	11	10	2	9	13
Skyway Church	1	2	5	3	4	N/A	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	6	8	9	7
First Baptist, Lutz	1	1	1	5	6	14	14	7	14	14	9	8	4	
Trinity Baptist	1	2	7	8	6	12	13	4	10	9	5	3	11	
Green Pines Baptist	1	7	6	10	9	12	13	3	2	11	8	4	5	
Oakview Baptist	1	13	8	2	3	6	7	9	10	12	5	11	4	
Macedonia Baptist	1	2	3	5	6	14	10	8	3	9	4	7	4	
Open Door Baptist	1	4	12	7	10	8	11	9	3	13	6	2	14	5
First Baptist, Leesb.	1	6	2	5	9	13	10	7	8	11	4	3	12	
Bethlehem Baptist	1	2	3	10	9	13	12	4	6	11	5	7	8	
N. Rocky Mt. Baptist	10	6	2	8	7	9	11	5	4	12	1	3	14	13
Mount Zion Baptist	4	8	1	5	7	13	12	11	10	14	3	9	6	2
Central Baptist	3	2	7	4	5	14	13	8	10	12	6	11	9	1
McKee Rd. Baptist	5	6	12	7	4	13	8	11	3	14	10	9	2	1
Clearpoint Baptist	1	2	3	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	
Shellpoint Baptist	2	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	
Dallas	1	5	6	2	4	13	12	7	8	11	10	9	3	
Fellowship Baptist	2	3	4	8	7	9	12	10	13	14	1	5	11	6
Candies Crk. Baptist	4	5	3	7	8	13	11	9	2	14	6	12	10	1
Center Grove Bap.	2	3	8	7	9	10	11	6	13	12	1	4	5	
Landstown Comm.	12	5	6	7	2	13	11	10	14	9	3	8	4	1
Brookhill Wesleyan	1	7	9	4	5	N/A	N/A	8	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	2
Believers Baptist	2	3	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	6	7	1
Bainbridge Alliance	3	2	N/A	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	4
Alliance Bible	3	9	5	8	7	N/A	N/A	10	4	N/A	1	2	6	
First Baptist, Lex.	1	3	2	8	6	13	12	5	9	11	10	4	7	
Blanchard Rd. Allian	2	3	6	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	7	1	5	
Bible Baptist	3	4	1	5	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	7	N/A	
Washington Hts. B.	2	3	4	6	5	12	11	7	8	13	1	9	10	
Medford Neighbor.	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	1
Parkway Wesleyan	1	4	13	5	6	12	11	9	10	3	7	8	2	
New Life Commun.	3	4	7	8	9	10	12	11	2	14	5	13	6	1
Miami Lakes Baptist	2	1	7	6	3	12	13	10	8	11	4	9	5	
Alliance Bible	1	8	7	11	2	14	10	12	6	9	5	4	3	
TOTALS	137	237	296	406	395	602	586	444	405	618	265	380	375	
RANK	1	2	4	9	7	12	11	10	8	13	3	6	5	

APPENDIX C - SURVEY "KEY METHODS" CHART

The chart on the following page summarizes the responses to questions three through fifteen as they were given by the fifty churches surveyed for this thesis project. For these questions each respondent was asked whether a specific ministry was a "key" to his church's growth. A "yes" answer is indicated by an "x" on the chart.

Once again, the vertical column on the chart lists the churches/respondents. The horizontal rows indicate the affirmative responses under each area of ministry. The total number of affirmative answers for each area of ministry is given at the bottom of the chart.

APPENDIX C - SURVEY "KEY METHODS" CHART

	house-to-house visitation	busing	S. school visitors	home cells	additional staff	marketing	special speakers	change in music	change in facilities	fund raising	multiple services	tracts/literature	house-to-house evang.	lifestyle evang.	inviting evang.	street evang.	crusade evang.
Hopewell Baptist	x		x				x				x				x		
Bethel Baptist			x		x			x	x		x				x		
Hillcrest Baptist			x		x				x		x				x		
Chattanooga					x									x	x		
Agape Baptist								x	x	x				x			
New Covenant Bap.				x	x		x	x							x		
First Baptist, Palm C.					x			x	x					x	x		
Walnut Mem. Baptist								x	x						x		
Colonial Baptist					x			x	x		x			x			
First Baptist, St. B.			x						x		x				x		
First Baptist, Wolfo.			x		x		x				x			x			
Rimrock Baptist	x		x		x	x			x		x		x				
Charleston					x	x		x	x		x				x		
Woodcrest Chapel					x						x				x		
Hagerman Baptist					x			x	x		x			x	x	x	
Central Baptist	x	x				x							x	x			
First Baptist, Highla.					x			x	x		x				x		
Skyway Church				x	x			x	x		x				x		
First Baptist, Lutz			x		x			x	x		x			x	x		
Trinity Baptist								x	x		x			x	x		
Green Pines Baptist			x		x	x								x	x	x	
Oakview Baptist			x		x						x			x	x		
Macedonia Baptist			x		x		x		x	x	x		x		x		
Open Door Baptist			x					x	x		x			x		x	
First Baptist, Leesb.			x		x				x		x			x			
Bethlehem Baptist	x				x			x	x	x	x				x		
N. Rocky Mt. Baptist			x	x							x			x			
Mount Zion Baptist			x		x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x		
Central Baptist					x			x			x			x	x		
McKee Rd. Baptist			x		x						x				x		
Clearpoint Baptist				x	x			x						x	x		
Shellpoint Baptist			x								x				x		
Dallas					x	x			x					x	x		
Fellowship Baptist			x	x	x			x			x			x	x		
Candies Crk. Baptist								x			x			x			
Center Grove Bap.			x		x		x		x		x						
Landstown Comm.					x			x									
Brookhill Wesleyan											x			x			
Believers Baptist											x			x	x		
Bainbridge Alliance					x	x		x	x		x			x	x		
Alliance Bible					x	x		x	x		x			x	x		
First Baptist, Lex.									x						x		
Blanchard Rd. Allian.				x	x	x		x	x		x			x	x		
Bible Baptist				x				x	x					x			
Washington Hts. B.					x			x	x		x				x		
Medford Neighbor.														x	x		
Parkway Wesleyan					x			x	x	x	x			x	x		
New Life Commun.								x						x	x		
Miami Lakes Baptist					x			x		x	x			x	x		
Alliance Bible										x					x		
TOTALS	4	1	18	7	33	9	6	28	27	6	35	0	4	30	37	2	0
RANK					2			3	4		1				1		

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE CGF SURVEY WITH TYPICAL RESPONSES

PASTOR DAVID D. RIEKE

AVALON HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

5728 Indian River Rd. Virginia Beach, Virginia 23464 (804) 420-5583

Dear Pastor,


Would you consider mentoring me for just a few minutes? I am a fellow minister and a doctoral candidate at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. I am currently working on my doctoral thesis project dealing with the subject of church growth--bringing the small church through the two hundred attendance barrier.

I have heard through the grapevine that your church has experienced some wonderful growth in recent years. What an exciting thing that must have been for you all to be a part of!

I would greatly appreciate it if you would take ten minutes of your time to fill out the survey I have sent along with this letter. You will be mentoring a less experienced brother by doing so, and you will be greatly assisting me in my doctoral studies. Frankly, if the seventy-five or so surveys I've sent out to growing churches like yours nation-wide don't generate responses, my project will be second-rate. There is the real possibility that your information may be helpful in furthering the gospel.

I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience and would be delighted to have your response as soon as possible. Please remember that my main question relates to how your church went from well under two hundred in morning worship attendance to well over two hundred. If your church is much larger than that now, try to think back to what it was like then.

Thank you so much,
I am very truly yours,


Pastor David D. Rieke

CHURCH GROWTH FACTORS SURVEY

Your Name: **Sample**

Your Church's Name: **Sample**

1) Please rate how the following fourteen areas of ministry have contributed to your church's growth. (Place a #1 beside the *most* significant area of ministry for your church's growth, a #2 by the second most significant area of ministry, etc.)

- 1-----pulpit ministry
- 2-----music and other platform ministry
- 4-----small group/Sunday school ministry
- 9-----teen ministry
- 7-----children's ministry
- 12-----singles ministry
- 11-----senior adult ministry
- 10-----nursery/pre-school ministry
- 8-----outreach ministry (including advertisements, greeting, etc.)
- 13-----stewardship awareness
- 3-----layperson involvement
- 6-----facilities improvement/location
- 5-----additional salaried personnel
- 14-----other ministry (please describe)

2) Please identify the most important change(s) made in your programs during your growth periods.

We improved:

- 1. quality of worship*
- 2. quality of Sunday school (teachers as shepherds, interaction)*
- 3. recruiting/developing/involving of lay persons*
- 4. church facilities*
- 5. (added) a staff pastor*
- 6. (added) a second service on Sunday morning*

3) Has house to house visitation (cold call evangelism) been a key to your church's growth?
(if yes, please describe method preferred and/or any method that has not been helpful)

no (46)

4) Has a bus ministry for Sunday school been a key to your church's growth?

no (49)

5) Have Sunday school visitors been a key to your church's growth?

no (32)

6) Have home Bible studies been a key to your church's growth?

no (43)

7) Has the addition of assistant staff pastors been a key to your church's growth?

yes (32)

8) Has public advertisement been a key to your church's growth? (please describe what has or has not been helpful--direct mail, flyers, radio spots and programs, newspaper columns and display ads, phone book ads, etc.)

no (42)

9) Have special speakers, revival meetings and/or conferences been a key to your church's growth? (if yes, please describe)

no (44)

10) Has a change in your music ministry been a key to your church's growth? (if yes, please describe)

yes (27) no consensus in description

11) Has a change in your facility been a key to your church's growth? (if yes, please describe)

yes (26)

12) Has the use of a stewardship or faith promise campaign been a key to your church's growth? (if yes, please describe)

no (44)

13) Please underline the kind of evangelism which has most contributed to your church's growth: a) tract and literature distribution, b) house to house visitation, c) lifestyle evangelism, d) invitation evangelism (inviting others to church programs, events and services), e) street evangelism, f) multi-church crusade evangelism.

14) Please underline the children's ministry (not including Sunday school or Christian schooling) which has most contributed to your church's growth: a) AWANA clubs, b) Pioneer clubs, c) denominational children's programs, d) other (please describe)

no consensus

15) Has going to multiple Sunday morning services been a key to your church's growth?

yes (34)

16) Based on your answers above and your total experience, if today you were made the pastor of a congregation of one hundred middle class, white, suburban men, women and children in a plain but adequate facility, what would you suggest in the following areas to lead your church to an average worship attendance of well over two hundred?

a) Sunday school ministry--

Involve and develop lay persons

Organize well

b) worship services--

Quality preaching

Quality music

c) children's programming--

Have special programs/events

Involve lay persons

d) youth programming--

Involve lay persons

Have special programs and events

Disciple teens

e) adult programming

Involve/develop lay leaders

f) outreach and evangelism--

Use lifestyle evangelism

Use inviting evangelism

Involve lay persons

Do some kind of visitation

g) facilities--

Make them neat and attractive

Make them function well

h) staffing--

Add staff whenever possible

17) Just for your own personal interest, would you like to receive by mail a summary of the responses I have collected from this national survey?

yes

Thank you very, very much for your timely response to my survey. Please return the survey to me in the self addressed stamped envelope I have included, and God bless you in your ministry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Leith. Dying for Change. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1990.
- Ankerberg, William C. "How to Make Homewood Baptist Church Break Through the Barrier at Four Hundred in Average Sunday Morning Worship Attendance," D.Min. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995.
- Arn, Win., ed. The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook. Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1979.
- Arnold, Jeffrey. The Big Book on Small Groups. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Barna, George. Marketing the Church. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988.
- Barna, George. The Frog in the Kettle. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.
- Barna, George. The Power of Vision. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992.
- Barna, George. Today's Pastors. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993.
- Barna, George. User Friendly Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991.
- Bast, Robert L. Attracting New Members. Monrovia, CA: Church Growth Press, 1988.
- Belew, M. Wendell. Churches and How They Grow. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971.
- Brown, Jerry W. Church Staff Teams That Win. Nashville, Convention Press, 1979.
- Brown, Lavern. "A Model for Implementing Church Growth Principles in Established, Declining Churches." D.Min. diss., Western Theological Baptist Seminary, 1995.
- Callahan, Kennon. Twelve Keys to an Effective Church. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.
- Carroll, Jackson W., ed. Small Churches Are Beautiful. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.
- Dayton, Edward R. and Engstrom, Ted W. Strategy for Leadership. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1979.

- Dingman, Robert W. The Complete Search Committee Guidebook. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988.
- Dudley, Carl S. Making the Small Church Effective. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.
- Dudley, Carl S. and Walraith, Douglas A. Developing Your Small Church's Potential. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988.
- Easum, William. The Church Growth Handbook. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Elliot, Elisabeth. Through Gates of Splendor. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1956.
- Fagerstrom, Douglas L. The Singles Ministry Handbook. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988.
- Fickett, Harold. Hope for Your Church. Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1972.
- Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth and CBN Ministries. "How to Break the 200 Barrier." Unpublished videorecordings in 12 volumes, 1989.
- Galloway, Dale E. 20/20 Vision: How to Create a Successful Church. Portland, OR: Scott Publishing Co., 1990.
- George, Carl F. and Bird, Warren. How to Break Growth Barriers. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.
- George, Carl F. and Logan, Robert E. Leading and Managing Your Church. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1987.
- Gray, Robert M. and Moberg, David O. The Church and the Older Person. Grand Rapids, MI: Eardmans, 1962.
- Hadaway, C. Kirk. Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991.
- Harris, William D. "Developing and Implementing an Evangelistic Strategy for Outreach to Families in the Lake Hamilton School District for Antioch Baptist Church." D.Min. diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993.
- Hemphill, Ken. The Antioch Effect: Eight Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches. Nashville, Broadman Press, 1994.

- Hemphill, Ken. The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991.
- Hoad, Jack. "A Report from London." Baptist Bible Tribune (September, 1996).
- Hogue, C.B. I Want My Church to Grow. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977.
- Kelley, Dean M. Why Conservative Churches Are Growing. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977.
- Kemper, Robert G. Beginning a New Pastorate. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.
- Lawson, LeRoy and Yamamori, Tetsunao. Church Growth: Everybody's Business. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, undated.
- Mahan, Jerry. "Overcoming Barriers to Church Growth," D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. Pouring New Wine Into Old Wineskins. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.
- McCoury, D.G. and May, Bill. The Southern Baptist Church Growth Plan. Nashville: Convention Press, 1991.
- McGavran, Donald. The Bridges of God. New York: Friendship Press, 1955.
- McGavran, Donald. Understanding Church Growth. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Norbie, Donald L. New Testament Church Organization. Kansas City, MO: Waterick Publishers, 1977.
- Orjala, Paul R. Get Ready to Grow: a Strategy for Local Church Growth. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1978.
- Rainer, Thomas. The Book of Church Growth. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993.
- Reeves, R. Daniel and Jenson, Ronald. Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984.
- Riggs, Donald, E. Make It Happen. Warsaw, NY: L.P. Products, 1981.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. Spiritual Leadership rev. ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

- Schaller, Lyle E. Forty-Four Steps Up Off the Plateau. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Schaller, Lyle E. Forty-Four Ways to Increase Church Attendance. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Schaller, Lyle E. The Small Church Is Different. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.
- Schaller, Lyle E. The Small Membership Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Sullivan, Bill M. Ten Steps to Breaking the Two Hundred Barrier. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988.
- Tan, Paul Lee. Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations. Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979.
- Tillapaugh, Frank R. The Church Unleashed. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982.
- Towns, Elmer L., ed. Evangelism and Church Growth: a Practical Encyclopedia. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995.
- Towns, Elmer L. Towns' Sunday School Encyclopedia: a Practical Guide for Sunday School Workers. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993.
- Towns, Elmer L. Ten of Today's Most Innovative Churches. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.
- Towns, Elmer L. Ten Sunday Schools That Dared to Change. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993.
- Wagner, C. Peter. Leading Your Church to Growth. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984.
- Wagner, C. Peter. Your Church Can Grow. Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1984.
- Warren, Rick. The Purpose Driven Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Webster, Douglas D. Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing the Church? Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Westing, Harold J. The Multiple Church Staff Handbook. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985.

White, James Emory. Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth. Nashville: Convention Press, 1992.

Yeakley, Flavil R. Why Churches Grow. Nashville: Anderson's Publishing Co., 1977.

Zunkel, C. Wayne. Growing the Small Church. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1982.

Zunkel, C. Wayne. Strategies for Growing Your Church. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1986.

VITA

David D. Rieke

PERSONAL

Born: August 2, 1960

Married: 1982, Teresa

Children: Three sons

EDUCATIONAL

Bible-Theology Diploma, Moody Bible Institute, 1982

B.A. Bible, Arizona College Of The Bible, 1983

M.Div., Talbot Theological Seminary, 1987

PROFESSIONAL

Independent Baptist Mission Church Planting, 1988-1992

Pastor, Avalon Hills Baptist Church, 1993-present