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A Strategy to Improve the Health of the Ciba Church According to Principles of Natural Church Development in the Context of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination and Culture

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE CIBA
CHURCH ACCORDING TO PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL
CHURCH DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DENOMINATION
AND LOCAL CULTURE

by

Jiao Wang Xin

Adviser: Benjamin D. Schoun

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE CIBA CHURCH
ACCORDING TO PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DENOMINATION
AND LOCAL CULTURE

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Problem

Adventist churches in China do not operate under a denominational structure. As

the government continues to open more churches, an increasing number of people

become Adventists every day. Because of the fast growing pace of many churches in the

past three decades, not much attention has been given to the health and quality aspect of

church life. Therefore, the question of how to help the church to grow and to become

healthy has become an urgent matter.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a strategy to improve the

health of the Ciba Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southwest China by applying Christian Schwarz's Natural Church Development (NCD) principles in the context of Chinese Seventh-day Adventism and the local culture.

Method

The methodology was to use NCD to profile the Ciba church in southwest China and to identify its minimum factor, the lowest score among the eight quality characteristics of NCD. Attention would be given to the special context of the Chinese Adventist Church and Chinese culture in regard to NCD principles. One year after Ciba has worked on its minimum factor, a second profile would be done to compare with the first, and the result would be documented in this project.

Result

Holistic Small Groups was found to be the minimum factor as the result of the first profile. Strategies were developed to increase this quality characteristic. However, the result of the second church profile showed little improvement of the minimum factor.

Conclusions

Looking back at the results of the two church profiles and development and implementation of the strategies, it is still too early to tell if NCD principles can be useful in China. But I do believe NCD is a good measuring tool to help the Ciba church to identify its weaknesses. The potential that this experience may have a bigger impact in China lies in the fact that the Ciba church members were willing to put themselves to the test. As they share what they learned with Adventists in other parts of China, the possibility of raising awareness of the importance of a healthy church is very promising.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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I wish to dedicate this project to my wife Charlotte, who made sure I had enough quiet time to concentrate on my writing and encouraged me to go on when I felt the end of completion was nowhere in sight; and my two lovely children, Belicia and Ethan, who bring constant joy and happiness to my life.

Lastly, all glory goes to God, who chose me to be His child when I was still "in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:13).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

The world is changing fast, and whether we like it or not, we all get caught up in the rush. As Leonard Sweet describes it, "In your lifetime and mine, a tidal wave has hit."[1] Changes often come as the result of crisis.[2] Many people do not like the idea of being impacted by crisis, and yet our Chinese culture looks at "crises" differently. The word for "crisis" (*wēijī*) in Chinese is made up of two characters, the first means "danger" and the second means "opportunity."[3] As an Adventist born in China, a deep passion in my life has been the sharing of Jesus Christ with billions of my own countrymen. My passion for sharing Jesus means that I have been and will continue to be exposed to dangers and opportunities. Not only will the following personal history bear out these two elements of "crisis" but it will set the stage for understanding my passion to see the church experience robust and healthy growth.

Both of my parents became Seventh-day Adventists in their youth. It was in the

[1]Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 17.

[2]David K. Hurst, *Crisis & Renewal: Meeting the Challenge of Organizational Change*, The Management of Innovation and Change Series (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1995), 68-72.

[3]Jeffrey Russell and Linda Russell, *Leading Change Training*, The Trainer's Workshop Series (Boston, MA: Elsevier, 2006), 161-162.

1950s, a time of change which was both exciting and dangerous. They were on fire for the Lord, and filled with youthful zeal, dedicated their lives to serving the church.

However, the good times did not last long. My parents were only able to work for the church a few short years before political turmoil in China forced them into years of confinement in prison and labor camps. My father was sentenced to twelve years of hard labor camp and my mother to three years in a labor education camp.

Through all the hardship they endured, my parents never considered abandoning their faith to escape their pain and suffering. They were convinced that faith in Jesus Christ was more valuable than anything else in the world, and they were determined not only to stand up for their Lord, but also to educate their children to do the same.

I was born after my father served his sentence in a labor camp in northwest China. My parents made sure that their children understood the Bible and Christian teachings so we would not go astray when we grew up, even though they knew that by doing so they could be imprisoned again. My brother and I learned to memorize Bible texts even before we knew the meaning of them, and we embraced Christian values as our way of life.

When I was only a month old, my father bought a lamb to give some needed nutrition for my mother. As he was chopping up lamb bones, I was sleeping in a crib nearby. Suddenly the head of the ax flew off the handle. Failing to find it anywhere else, eventually he found the ax head lying beside my head. Had it flown any further, I would have been killed. My life was spared and my parents told me that I should always thank God for it. As I grew up my parents often reminded me of this incident, and to this day I firmly believe that God spared my life for a special reason.

Growing up as a Seventh-day Adventist has advantages but there is also the

danger that when religion becomes part of life too early it might never be internalized. The first real test to my faith came when I was about to graduate from high school. I had dreamed of being a medical doctor, and I intended to get a high score on the college entrance exams so I could get into medical school. Unfortunately part of the exam was scheduled on Sabbath. Keeping Sabbath was important for my parents, and when my brother and I reached school age, they taught us at home until they found a school that would allow us to be off on Sabbath. We kept up with school work by going to classmates' homes to get the homework assignments on Saturday evenings so as to be able to turn in the homework on Monday like everybody else.

The test of my commitment to the Sabbath was different this time. If I did not take the national exams, I would have no hope for medical school. My parents did not force me to keep the Sabbath, but told me that I should make the decision myself. I decided not to take the exams without too much of a mental struggle. As I reflect back on that experience, I realize that my decision was dictated more by ingrained customs and habits than by some noble desire to uphold the truth. Without the scores from the exams given on Sabbath, my aggregate score was too low for any college. Thus after graduating from high school, I was left with no clear direction for the future.

As reality settled in, I began to question, "Do I really want God in my life? Has faith in God brought me any good?" I began to search for meaning which included the bigger question of who was in control of my life. Since I was raised in a Christian home, it was natural for me to search for answers in the Bible. I had time, lots of time, so I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, taking time to categorize passages under different headings. One year later I had a thick notebook filled with notes and Bible passages.

Furthermore I had a clearer picture of the God who knew me before I was born.

However, I was still not sure what God wanted me to do for my life. One day I came across an article in the *Signs of the Times* magazine that talked about David Livingstone, the missionary who dedicated his life for the people of Africa.[4] The article hit me hard and I sensed a clear call that God wanted me to serve him. Like Isaiah's lips touched by the hot coal,[5] I knelt down and prayed to God, "God, I want to dedicate myself to you. Please show me the way."

The direction for the future suddenly became very clear and in a miraculous way God began opening up door after door. In 1989, about a month after I finished my Bible discovery journey, I found myself standing in the men's dormitory lobby at Southern College (now Southern Adventist University), with only a one hundred dollar bill in my pocket. I was ready to start my theological training.

How God led me all the way to the United States was nothing short of a miracle. That year, 1989, was the year that students all over China demonstrated on the streets and the government cracked down hard on student activities in Beijing. From a human point of view, because of the student movement, to get out of the country was almost impossible. Yet God chose this time that I should apply for a passport and visa to the United States. Normally a passport application took more than 50 days to process. When

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[4]More details of David Livingstone's life can be found in: Fern Neal Stocker, *Growing Up with David Livingstone* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1986); Tim Jeal, *Livingstone* (New Haven; London: Yale Nota Bene, 2001).

[5]"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'" (Isa 6:6). Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this project are to the New American Standard Bible.

I received an acceptance letter and an I-20 from Southern, it was only a month before school was to begin. I prayed and went to apply for a passport, and to my amazement, I received my passport in twenty days. I was now left with about ten days to apply for a visa and get everything ready for school. Long lines were formed outside of the American Consulate, and some people waited through the nights to get inside to submit their application. When I finally went in, I was examined by an American Consulate officer. I was afraid that he might speak English to me and I would not know what to say. I was shocked when I heard him speaking perfect Mandarin to me. He did not ask too many questions, except the standard question asked by the U.S. Consulate, How do I know you will not stay in the States after you finish your study? I was not sure how to answer so I blurted out, "I am a Christian, and I do not tell lies." He did not ask any more questions, and my visa was approved.

I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to study in the United States. I remember when I was a small child, I would sit on the high bank of the Yellow River and watch the sunset beyond the mountains. I would think about the future but the idea of going away from that small labor camp in the remote northwest of China to another place in the world never crossed my mind.

My study in the United States opened my eyes to a new world. A primary benefit I received was experiencing a different culture than my own. The experience taught me to be more open-minded to new ideas and the importance of evaluating and accepting the best of this new culture. I learned to accept people's differences rather than trying to change others to fit my ideas and customs. I learned that differences are not bad and that we should not impose our culture on others.

I arrived in Hong Kong in 1994, and throughout the years I have observed that Adventist churches in China have functioned very well without outside help as evidenced by the fact that they have been self-supporting for many years. As I now travel to China to visit church leaders and lay workers, I am often asked to share what Adventist churches are like in the outside world. I usually give them a general picture, but then I tell them that church growth in China is unique, and they need to figure out the growth formula that works best for them. My role is not to tell them what to do or follow certain strategies, but to help them to see a larger picture of the Adventist church around the world and to enable them to sense and feel that they belong to a world movement.

Purpose of the Project

Adventist churches in China do not operate under denominational structure[6] and thus they have basically operated congregationally. The Chinese Union Mission in Hong Kong performs the unique role of caring for Adventists in China even though China is considered as "Unorganized Territories." As the government continues to open more churches, Christians in China are enjoying more freedoms than before.

Increasing number of people became Adventists every day, but numeric growth really does not mean that Adventist churches in China are healthy. In fact, because of the fast growing pace of many churches in past three decades, not much attention has been given to the health and quality aspect of church life. Therefore the question of how to

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[6]China currently does not an have an official Adventist church structure, as all Christian churches in China are under the rule of Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which promotes the three principles of self-governance, self-support (i.e., financial independence from foreigners) and self-propagation (i.e., indigenous missionary work). More details on this can be found in Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Origins and Evolution of the Three-Selfs in Relation to China," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14, no. 1 (1990): 28-36.

help the church to grow and to become healthy has become an urgent matter.

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a strategy to improve the health of the Ciba Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southwest China by applying Christian Schwarz's NCD principles[7] in the context of Chinese Seventh-day Adventism and the local culture.[8]

Justification for the Project

The concept of church growth is quite unique in China. It is always interesting to see how the church experienced tremendous growth after the Chinese government started to open up churches around 1980.[9] The Adventist Church also experienced tremendous growth, but the growth has become slower during the recent years.[10]

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[7]Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 1.

[8]Ciba Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the city of Kunming, southwest China. Kunming is a tourist city known for its beautiful scenery like the Stone Forest and Li River. There is a high concentration of minority people groups in the city and its surrounding mountains. Among other things these colorful people groups are known for their able singers and dancers.

[9]During the late 1970s, the first phase of the Reform Era, there were "great leaps" in economic progress, and some signs of more religious freedom. First, some of the churches that had been closed or used for other purposes during the Cultural Revolution were permitted to re-open for worship services. The earliest re-opened churches included Mi Shi Da Jie Church in Beijing, the Moore Memorial Church, the Pure Heart Church and the Trinity Church in Shanghai, the Dongshan Church in Guangzhou, etc. In the years which followed, more churches were re-opened, and there were twenty-one churches open for services in 1980 in the following cities: Beijing (1), Tianjin (1), Shenyang (1), Nanjing (1), Shanghai (5), Hangzhou (2), Ningbo (1), Wenzhou (1), Fuzhou (1), Xiamen (1), Shantou (1), Guangzhou (3), Chengdu (1), Chongqing (1). The growth continued rapidly in the 1980s. If the first decade since the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China was characterized by the decline and deterioration in the health of the Chinese church, and the second decade by death and dormancy of the church, then the two decades of the Reform Era under Deng Xiao Ping and his successors could be described as a period of recuperation, rapid expansion and record growth. See *Xin Xi Shen Zhou: Dang Dai Zhong Guo Da Lu Jiao Hui Gai Kuang* [Overview of Christianity in China Today] (Hong Kong: Christian Communication, 1998). And "Pray for China: A Bi-Monthly Report on Life and Thought inside China Today," *China Research Centre Christian Communications* (1980): 4.

[10]Terry Tsui, *Secretary's Report* (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, December 4-6, 2007), Minutes of Meetings of Annual Council.

Many reasons contribute to the slowdown of the Adventist Church growth, including the influence of western materialism and secularism in the big cities, and furthermore, as more and more people move into cities, the growth of Christianity in rural areas consequently slows down.[11]

There is another factor that hampers church growth and that is the rapid initial growth rate of some churches. This sudden church growth has created a huge demand for qualified ministers and workers, but unfortunately the lack of seminaries and Bible schools has caused congregations to rely on many untrained ministers for leadership. It should also be noted that in terms of numbers, the church has been growing better in a rural environment and yet such growth is dampened by the influence of traditional Chinese culture which is stronger in rural areas.[12]

The fact remains, however, that China is still a closed country in terms of religious freedom.[13] Many attempted analyses of church growth in China can only be based on eye witness accounts and personal observations. While the big picture of the Christian church in China in general is available, specific studies concerning individual churches are hard to come by. Analysis of specific Adventist churches in China is basically non-existent.

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[11]See Jinqiang Li, Shaoyuan Tang, and Ka-lun Leung, *Zhonghua Ben Se: Jin Dai Zhongguo Jiao Hui Shi Lun* [Recent Christian History in China] (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 2007); and Jia Lin Liang, *Gaige Kaifang Yilai De Zhongguo Nongcun Jiaohui* [The Christian Church in Rural China since the Reform Era] (Hong Kong: The Alliance Bible Seminary, 1998).

[12]Liang, 408-427.

[13]Since 1999, the Secretary of State has assigned the "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) designation to China under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. More details can be seen at Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "International Religious Freedom Report 2008, China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)," U.S. State Department, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108404.htm (accessed November 1, 2008).

Thus this project is focused on the small picture by using principles represented in Schwarz's NCD, which I believe can be applied in China. The Ciba Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southwest China is the focus of this project. The results will contribute to the limited body of knowledge about Adventist churches in China.

Limitations

Several limitations are involved in this project. The first limitation is the scale of this project being limited to the Ciba church in terms of healthiness, growth, and NCD principles. It does not address all the church growth issues that churches in China are facing, although lessons and conclusions learned from this project could be beneficial for the church as a whole.

Second, there is the lack of comparative research materials. This project is the first attempt to use NCD principles to analyze a local Adventist church in China. NCD has been used in Adventist churches around the world, especially in Europe and the US, but it is still foreign to Adventist congregations in China.

The third difficulty was the limiting of research caused by the rules and regulations of the Chinese government. Interviews and NCD surveys had to be done discretely[14] and the concept of NCD could only be explained to members of the church

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[14]China regulates the religious activities of foreigners to attending religious activities at approved sites and forbids their lecturing or sermonizing without permission from religious leaders at the provincial, autonomous region, or municipality level. Foreigners are banned from conducting missionary work or distributing religious materials, and the solicitation and acceptance of foreign funds are strictly regulated. The Religious Affairs Bureau issued a follow-up set of rules in 2000 that exhaustively details the prohibitions related to the missionary activity of foreigners. More details can be found in Maurice O'Sullivan, "Jesus in the Middle Kingdom," America 196, no. 6 (2007): 18-19; "Document No. 6: Circular on Some Problems Concerning the Further Improvement of Work on Religion," *Chinese Law and Government* 33 (March-April 2000): 59; "Regulations on the Supervision of the Religious Activities for Foreigners in China, Order 144," *Chinese Law and Government* 33 (March-April 2000): 64-65.

board, lay workers, and selected individuals, but not for the whole church. This had some impact on the survey results and the involvement of the church, especially when it came to implementing improvement of the minimum factor. Some of these difficulties could be overcome by encouraging those who had the opportunity to attend the initial NCD session to share with others on an individual basis, but the understanding and embrace of the concept of NCD by the whole church is hampered because of this difficulty in communication. Further limiting the research was the fact that I was not able to work directly with the congregation. This is mainly because of the religious regulations in China that prohibit anybody from outside China to be directly involved in local church affairs. I had to work through mainly the pastor and a few church leaders close to him, this meant the process of introduction and implementation of NCD strategies could not always be carried out as I wished.

Finally, time and resources were limiting factors. Working full time as one of the Chinese Ministries Directors in the Chinese Union Mission, part of my job is to care for quite a few local churches in the southwest part of China. As much as I would like to spend significant time in the Ciba church, responsibilities in other churches do impact my time management and energy. The distance between the Ciba church and Hong Kong also posed a challenge as I also needed to keep a balance among work, study, and spending enough time with my family.

Description of the Project Process

The methodology was to use NCD to analyze the Ciba church and to identify its

minimum factor.[15] The Ciba church has about 1,500 church members, and more than half

of the membership are from minority people groups. The Chinese translation of the NCD

survey obtained from NCD partner China was used, and the senior pastor plus thirty

church members participated in the survey. The survey data was analyzed by computer

software to form a comparison with all the surveys taken around the world, which NCD

estimates to be 168 million.[16] The results then determined the quality of the Ciba church

in eight key areas of ministry.

It was anticipated that the Ciba church would find ways to improve the score of

the minimum factor. Suggestions for improvement would be based on the NCD coaching

materials.

It should be noted that attention will be given to the special context of the Chinese

Adventist Church and Chinese culture in regard to NCD principles. Adventist churches

are generally considered as being different and unique from mainstream Christian

churches in China. Many Adventist members also take pride in their differences and they

are not very receptive to ideas from other Christian churches. During the research and

coaching of the Ciba church to work on its minimum factor, it was important not to give

them something they could not accept. NCD principles would be blended with general

church growth concepts, and the church would need to understand that the NCD survey

was used not to find their faults but to help them to grow and become a healthy church.

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[15]In NCD, the minimum factor is referred to the weakest area of the church health; more details about the minimum factor will be given in chapter 4 of this project.

[16]"NCD Survey and Coaching," NCD International, http://www.ncd-international.org/public/profiles.html (accessed September 17, 2008).

Even though many difficulties were anticipated, it was hoped that by going through the evaluation and implementation process of NCD, the Ciba church would become healthier, strong, and experience steady growth. It is also hoped that the methodology and subsequent changes made at the Ciba church can also be used as a model for other churches across China to consider and implement.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theological Analysis of Church Growth Theories

Church growth has occurred throughout the Christian era, and it is not really new

or modern. The early Christian church experienced rapid growth, but it did not have any

of the modern day growth theories. Probably they were not too concerned about theories

either. Gradually more and more theories were developed. Gisbertus Voetisu (1589-1676),

a Dutch missiologist, believed that the "first goal of mission is the conversion of the

heathen; the second, the planting of churches; and the highest, the glory of God."[1] These

three goals really are a condensed version of the modern Church Growth[2] movement,

which as many scholars agree,[3] should be credited to Donald McGavran, who coined the

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[1]Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 21.

[2]The term Church Growth was coined as a capitalized proper noun by early Church Growth leaders, and the practice continued. The advocates of Church Growth believed that the term should be capitalized because it represents a social science or a discipline, an entity. More details can be seen in C. Peter Wagner, "American Church Growth Update," *United Evangelical Action* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 15-16, 34.

[3]See evaluation of Donald McGavran's Church Growth theory by the following scholars: J. Robertson McQuilkin, *How Biblical Is the Church Growth Movement?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 61; Wilbert R. Shenk, *The Challenge of Church Growth, A Symposium* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1973), 103; Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974), 124; David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 68-72.

term "Church Growth" in his book *Understanding Church Growth,*[4] It was McGavran's

followers, at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission, who further

disseminated his Church Growth ideas until it became a movement.[5]

McGavran spend thirty years doing missionary work in India.[6] He became

interested in church growth when he saw the result of a study that was conducted in India

of 145 mission complexes. "One hundred thirty-four had a percentage growth of less than

the population. In nine others the growth in adult conversions was 200 percent."[7]

McGavran was interested to find out why those nine complexes would experience so

much growth. Eventually he teamed up with J. Waskom Pickett, who published *Christian

Mass Movement in India*,[8] to work on a study of growth in India.[9]

His experience and study led to the publication of his first book, *The Bridges of

God*: *A Study in the Strategy of Missions*.[10] McGavran's basic theological understanding

of church growth is that "the establishment of churches (assemblies of baptized believers)

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[4]Donald Anderson McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Irving, TX: ICI University Press, 1996).

[5]His followers include Arthur Glasser, Peter Wagner, Alan Tippett, Charles Kraft, and Paul Hiebert. See Wells, 68.

[6]Brief history and life sketch of Donald McGavran can be see in Elmer L. Towns and Gary McIntosh, *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9-15.

[7]Jon Dybdahl, "Anatomy of the Church Growth Movement," *Spectrum* 12, no. 3 (1982): 6.

[8]Jarrell Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movement in India: A Study with Recommendations* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1933).

[9]Dybdahl, 6.

[10]Donald Anderson McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955).

is pleasing to God."[11] It is God's will for the church to grow, and this is evident in the whole plan of salvation that God intended for his people to be saved that he is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Based upon this theological understanding, McGavran also contributed to three other basic principles of the Church Growth movement. The first principle is the notion of people movement that "most of the church's growth has not been by individual conversion but by group conversion in people movement."[12] "People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers."[13] This is also referred as the homogeneous principle. This principle is perhaps the most controversial because critics have interpreted it as classist or racist, but as Russell Burrill points out, "McGavran was descriptive here and not prescriptive. His studies revealed that most congregations ended up reaching people who were like them. As a result, large segments of the harvest were unreaped."[14]

This phenomenon is also evident in many parts of China as the gospel has been spread into town and villages. The very first few conversions in the family can often lead to baptism of the whole family, and that sometimes results in the transformation to Christianity for the whole village.

The second principle of McGavran's Church Growth movement is that responsible research into the causes and barriers to church growth must be conducted.

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[11]McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, xvii.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., x.

[14]Russell Burrill, *How to Grow an Adventist Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2009), 36.

Dybdhal points out that this principle tells us that as "good stewards of God's gifts, we must formulate clear objectives . . . that enable us to take advantage of these opportunities. All Phases of church's missions program should be ruthlessly evaluated to see whether or not they are fulfilling their objectives. Anything not contributing to the church growth is to be scrapped."[15] God has given us the Great Commission, and we dare not assume that all is going well or that we are doing the best that can be done.

The third principle is closely related to the second that once evaluation is done, specific plans should be developed based on the facts that are discovered. "Taking the initiative to set goals and develop bold strategies to win people to Christ and to plant new churches must be the practical results of meaningful conviction and research."[16]

There is agreement among critics and adherents alike that the Church Growth movement has made significant contributions to the mission of the church, contributions that cannot be ignored. Walter Russell III summarized the two major theological contributions of the Church Growth movement:

> The first contribution is the theological clarification that the growth of the Church is not something that should be simply an overflow of the life of the Church. Rather, growth must be something that is intentional and embraced at the purpose level of the Church. [The] second contribution is the clarification and development of the Church's understanding of the leadership qualities and characteristics necessary to catalyze and mobilize a group of Christians."[17]

Having looked at the main ideas of the Church Growth movement, its underlining theology becomes clear: God wants his lost children found, and His command is for those

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[15]Dybdahl, 8.

[16]Towns and McIntosh, 16.

[17]Walter Russell III, "Forty Years of Church Growth: A View from the Theological Tower," *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 6 (1995): 18.

who have already accepted Him to do their best to seek the lost. This theology of Church Growth harmonizes with the Great Commission in Matt 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

If McGavran's ideas and principles are truly carried out, church growth will occur. Unfortunately this has not been the case in many churches in America, as Charles Arn says that "most churches older than 30 years are having little or no impact in reaching unchurched people."[18] The problem, as Christian Schwarz points out, is that often church growth is been equaled to numeric growth,[19] which has also been observed in the so called "megachurch movement."[20]

Thus instead of merely focusing on numeric church growth, recently more attention has been put on church health. Although church growth and church health are not synonymous, they are closely related. As Rick Warren points out, "church growth is the natural result of church health."[21] When a church is healthy, it will grow naturally.

One of the most influential studies regarding this natural growth mechanism is

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[18]Charles Arn, "Worship & Church Growth - Three Views," *Worship Leader* (November/ December 1994): 8.

[19]Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 8-9.

[20]Burrill, 46.

[21]Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 49.

Christian A. Schwarz' NCD principles,[22] and it is based on the plant metaphor Jesus

spoke of in Mark 4:27, "And he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed

sprouts and grows--how, he himself does not know." This kind growth is what Schwarz

calls "growth automatisms."[23]

Schwarz describes NCD this way:

> Natural (or biotic) church development is an attempt to study nature, and thus God's creation, to discover principles that are applicable far beyond the realm of biology. This appeal to the biological world, the 'largest and most successful organizational system we know,' involves the use of *analogy* as a method of perception. This analogy is not concentrated on the external appearances; rather it attempts to 'press on to the underlying basic principles'."[24]

Schwarz's theory was the result of a scientific study from 1994 through 1996. One

thousand churches in thirty-two countries were surveyed to determine if, in fact, there

were principles that produced healthy church growth independent of denomination or

theology, country or culture, leadership style, size, or ministry model. The responses, 4.2

million answered questions, were then tabulated.[25]

The result of the study was that growing churches clearly scored above the

qualitative median in each of the eight categories, and declining churches were similarly

below the median. What was considered the most spectacular discovery of the survey was

the fact that there was a phenomenon for which they did not find a single exception

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[22]Russell Burrill considers "Christian Schwarz's book on NCD to be the most significant book on church growth published in twenty-five years." More details can be seen in Burrill, 57.

[23]Schwarz, 12.

[24]Schwarz, 233.

[25]Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, *Evangelism-Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 123.

among the 1,000 churches surveyed. Every church in which a quality index of 65 or more was reached for each of the eight quality characteristics occurred in a growing church.[26]

It should be noted that NCD is not against the ideas of Church Growth movement. In fact, Schwartz's eight essential qualities of healthy churches are simply affirmations of previous Church Growth findings presented in the 1970s and 1980s. As one reviewer of NCD writes, "In my opinion, if church leaders embrace natural church development, they've adopted the heart of Donald McGavran's church growth thinking."[27]

Also, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Church Growth movement stresses the importance of constantly monitoring the degree of church growth in local churches through fact finding and research, then setting goals and developing strategies to win people to Christ. This is exactly what NCD sets out to accomplish. What then are the theological foundations of NCD principles?

Theological Foundations of Natural Church Development Principles

What is the key for church growth? One thing is certain, a church must be healthy in order to grow. The church is like the tree planted by the water, in order for it to grow, it must have water and nutrition. Like the Psalmist says, "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (Ps 1:3).

Schwarz explains that healthy churches will grow naturally. Just as a living

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[26]Ibid., 123-125.

[27]Dan Simpson, "Natural Church Development," *Ministry Advantage* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 12. See also, Burrill, 46. Burrill explains that NCD is "a return to the principles enunciated by McGavran in the early days of the church growth movement, before it was hijacked by the megachurch movement."

organism grows, it will naturally spread its influence in the community. The principles of church growth, in essence, are all about drawing closer to the living God.

God is the source of life and as the church builds its relationship with God it will gain balance and health, power and wisdom, depth and open-mindedness. People will feel the natural drawing power of Christ through the church, and the results within such a church will be growth of the membership.[28]

Schwarz further explains that NCD "does not approach the question of church growth from the perspective of its quantitative effects, but (deliberately) from the perspective of the underlying spiritual strategic causes."[29] Thus a healthy church must reflect the characteristics of a living organism. This includes looking for the following eight quality characteristics: (1) empowering leadership, (2) gift-oriented ministry, (3) passionate spirituality, (4) effective structures, (5) inspiring worship service, (6) holistic small groups, (7) need-oriented evangelism, and (8) loving relationships.

Empowering Leadership

Every effective leader must have a close relationship with God, when that relationship is developed, he will reflect the image of Christ and understand how God is calling him/her to ministry.

An effective leader also knows the importance of making disciples and empowering others to find their role in the church, so they can work together to fulfill

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[28]Christian A. Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development Experiencing All That God Has Designed You to Be* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2005), 48.

[29]Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 241.

God's will on earth. As Schwarz says, an empowering leader operates "less like that of a shepherd of sheep, and more like that of trainer of a team."[30]

Ellen G. White explains this concept very well in her book, *The Desires of Ages*:

Christ intends that His ministers shall be educators of the church in gospel work. They are to teach the people how to seek and save the lost. But is this the work they are doing? Alas, how many are toiling to fan the spark of life in a church that is ready to die! How many churches are tended like sick lambs by those who ought to be seeking for the lost sheep! And all the time millions upon millions without Christ are perishing.[31]

The concept of empowering leadership emphasizes the importance of empowering other Christians for ministry. Growing churches equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to share the joy of winning people to Jesus. As George Barna says in his book, *User Friendly Churches*, his research has shown that leaders of growing churches are willing to delegate responsibility, and "they perceive delegation as a means to an end; it was a way to empower other people to do ministry."[32]

The concept of empowering is very evident in the Bible, from the very beginning of human history, God delegated responsibilities to Adam and Eve, and he told Adam to "rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28). God had all the power to care for the living creatures in the Garden of Eden by Himself, but he wanted human beings to have the experience of dominion and power, so they can have experience as leaders.

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[30]Ibid., 187.

[31]Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1975), 825.

[32]George Barna, *User Friendly Churches: What Christians Need to Know About the Churches People Love to Go To* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 147.

Jesus also empowered people during his ministry on this earth. He mentored twelve disciples. For three and a half years, he spent day and night with them. He wanted them to imitate him. He also sent them out two by two, "and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. . . . And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them" (Mark 6:7, 13).

Then when Jesus was getting ready to go back to heaven, He commissioned His disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:18-20).

In fact, Jesus empowered His followers by allowing them to be part of His plan of salvation. He could have sent angels to share the gospel, and saved the whole world just by Himself, but he invites those who have received his grace to share with others, and he values the human effort in saving the lost.

In order for church leaders to empower members to do ministry, they have to learn to "encourage leaders to invest in other people, guiding and equipping them to reach their full potential in Christ".[33] In essence, I believe this is the characteristic of a servant leader. Servant leadership emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. At heart, the individual is a servant first, making the conscious decision to lead in order to better serve others. The objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement.[34]

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[33]Burrill, 18.

[34]Robert K. Greenleaf and Larry C. Spears, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 21, 22.

Jesus was also an example of servant leadership. When He was on this earth, he did not appear as king and ruler, but a lowly carpenter from Nazareth. He mingled with people and spent time with sinners, and He says, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). Jesus made it clear that He did not come to force people to believe in Him, but to win people's hearts.

Even though He was a lowly person, a servant, His influence was so far reaching that today people around the world have heard of His name and dedicated their lives to Him.

Clearly, servant-leaders empower people because they believe that people have intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, servant-leaders are deeply committed to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of each and every individual within the organization.

Gift-Oriented Ministry

This principle is based on the conviction that God knows His people the best and He gives them different gifts to accomplish His commission. The role of church leadership is to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries. As Schwarz points out, this principle grows out of the concept of "priesthood of all believers." In growing churches, members are active in the areas of

their giftedness so they can serve happily and effectively.[35]

Like Jesus' parable about the talents (Matt 25:14-30), every Christian is given special spiritual gifts to spread the gospel. It is important for church leaders to lead congregations to find out their spiritual gifts and use them in church ministries so that the body of Christ "grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16).

As created by God, the human body survives and prospers by utilizing oxygen, food, and water, and similarly the spiritual body of the church survives and prospers through the release of these spiritual gifts. When God grants His spiritual gifts, He is in fact releasing Himself to the church. These spiritual gifts cannot be discounted as "things." His gifts are a manifestation of Himself. When the gifts are present and operative, He is present and operative.

In the Scripture, there are many incidents where God used people according to their gifts. When Moses was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses objected that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod 4:10). God understood his weakness and provided a mouth piece for him, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. . . . You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him" (Exod 4:14-16). Exercising their gifts together, Moses and Aaron were able to bring God's people out of Egypt. Clearly the purpose of spiritual gifts is not for personal gain, but for the accomplishment of God's

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[35]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 24.

ultimate purpose on this earth—to save lost people.

Paul, before his conversion, was a zealot for Judaism (Gal 1:13-14), and he was using his talents to persecute Christians. God's intent was for him to use gifts from above to advance the kingdom of heaven. After he met Jesus on the way to Damascus, he understood his true mission and God's ministry for him. He says in Gal 1:15-16a, "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles." Paul used his gifts to build up churches across Europe and Asia Minor, as people exclaimed, "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (Gal 1:23).

God gives spiritual gifts to people in order to strengthen and edify the body of Christ. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ . . . from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph 4:11, 12, 16).

Ellen G. White strongly urged Adventists to develop this balanced approach to the doctrine of spiritual gifts:

> The greatest cause of our spiritual feebleness as a people, is the lack of real faith in Spiritual Gifts. If they all received this kind of testimony in full faith, they would put from them those things which displease God, and would everywhere stand in union and in strength. And three-fourths of the ministerial labor now expended to help the churches could then be spared to the work of raising up churches in new fields.[36]

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[36]Ellen G. White, "An Appeal to the Friends of Truth," *Review and Herald*, 14 January 1868, par. 8.

It is evident from the Bible that appropriate and biblical usage of God's gifts by His people provides power and growth for the church. As Russell Burrill points out, many church leaders spend a lot of time doing church ministries themselves, but neglect to help members to discover their gifts. Once the leaders are no longer at the position, they leave a big hole nobody else can fill. Thus it is more important for church leaders to train members to use their gifts so they are active in all areas of church ministry.[37]

Passionate Spirituality

There is a desire within human beings to experience spirituality. The church is the place to provide spiritual experience. One expectation the majority of people shared was the desire for some kind of encounter with God. "Beyond the program, the social interaction, the music, and the message, they wanted to touch God."[38] Providing opportunities like this for people to encounter and interact with God should be one of the church's primary tasks. Unfortunately, that has not been the case, as George Barna reports, "Countless Americans have rejected Christianity because they wanted to grow in spirituality, but were not taught about spirituality."[39]

When members are passionate about their spirituality and they are on fire for the Lord, they will want to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, and the church will grow naturally, as Bob Jackson points out, "Lukewarm will never have the energy and

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[37]Russell Burrill, *Waking the Dead: Returning Plateaued and Declining Churches to Vibrancy* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub., 2004), 72-80.

[38]Chuck Smith, "Leading People to an Encounter with God," *Worship Leader* (August-September 1992): 26.

[39]George Barna, *The Barna Report 1992-1993: An Annual Survey of Life-Styles, Values and Religious Views* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 41.

attractiveness to grow the church. Churches grow when the people are passionate about their faith and the business of sharing it."[40] Schwarz also commented on this point, "Any church, however orthodox its doctrine and its view of the Bible may be, can hardly expect to grow if it does not learn to live its faith with passion."[41]

Passionate spirituality addresses the need to build a personal relationship with the source of our strength, Jesus Christ. When Jesus was on this earth, He valued his relationship with God. Scripture often says that after a long day of healing and teaching, He would get up early next morning to pray and meditate on God's word, so that He would have enough strength to go on. Effective ministry flows out of a passionate spirituality. Spiritual intimacy leads to a strong conviction that God will act in powerful ways.

It is also important to note that spirituality needs to be paired with passion, and the Bible often talks about passion in our pursuit of spiritual things, as Paul says in Rom 12:11, "Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." God also told Moses, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). A burning desire should be present when walking with Christ, just as the disciples' hearts were set ablaze when they walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32).

In spiritual life, God will not lead people to do great works if they are not passionately in love with God. Merely knowing facts about God are not enough.

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[40]Bob Jackson, *The Road to Growth: Towards a Thriving Church* (London: Church House, 2005), 217.

[41]Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 124-125.

Scripture describes true spirituality as passionate spirituality, and that can be seen in many of the terms the Bible uses when it talks about the kinds of passions that ought naturally to stir in every believer's heart. For example, the Bible says to fear God, to have great hope in the Lord, to hate sin, and to thirst after God's presence, as a deer pants after water. God invites His people to taste holy joy, to know sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart.

When members' spiritual lives are improved, naturally they will want to reach out and share their convictions with other people. By demonstrating genuine concern for people, they prove to the outside world how valuable they are to Jesus and to us.

Early in the life of the Adventist church it also received counsel regarding passionate spirituality, "Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things."[42]

According to General Conference statistics, less than one-third of church members share Jesus with others or are involved in community service.[43] Members should be encouraged to build friendships with neighbors and people around them, so their Christian values can be seen and they become lights in this dark world.

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[42]Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 58.

[43]Taashi Rowe, "World Church: Pastor the Community, Not Just Members, Adventist Church Leaders Urge," Adventist News Network, http://news.adventist.org/data/2007/1170172375/index.html.en (accessed September 18, 2008).

Effective Structures[44]

A church must be structured because it is the living body of Christ. The body

includes many systems that work together to achieve optimal health. When the church

body is small, it is easy to manage, but when the church body becomes larger, it becomes

harder to manage, and some kind of system or structure becomes necessary. As Burrill

points out, "When we use the term *[Effective] Structures*, we are primarily referring to a

church having structures that are supportive of its mission."[45] The structure must have a

clear purpose. When that purpose becomes blurred or forgotten, the structure becomes

ineffective.

Howard A. Snyder points out that structure in itself is neither good nor bad. "The

question concerns the kinds of structures that best serve the church in its life and witness.

Particular structures will be legitimate or illegitimate, depending not only on what they

are intended to accomplish but also on their function—what they actually do

accomplish."[46] Thus a church that intends to grow must be structured in ways that enable

the church to accomplish its mission. A church that does not practice the biblical principle

of structure will never achieve the quality of growth and the authenticity of discipleship

that God intends.

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[44]The title of this characteristic was changed from "Functional Structures" to "Effective Structures" in 2006 edition of Schwarz's book, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*. This is to make the terminology of NCD compatible to the changes that have been made in other NCD tools. Mote details can be found in "Revised & Updated Edition-What's Different ?" NCD International, http://www.ncd-international.org/public/BooksNCD-differences.html (accessed July 13, 2009), and Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (2006), 6.

[45]Russell Burrill, *Creating Healthy Adventist Church Through Natural Church Development* (Berrien Springs, MI: NADEI, 2003), 39

[46]Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 160.

What then is the biblical principle of structure? In essence, "The organizational structure of the church was not developed first with the mission having to fit around it. Instead, the organizational structure was developed to facilitate the church's mission."[47] It is evident in both Old and New Testament that God is concerned about structure, and the structure God intended was to accomplish His will for his people. When Jacob and his family moved to Egypt, their number was small, but their numbers grew, and by the time they went out of Egypt, 430 years later, there were about "six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children" (Exod 12:37). How to effectively care for this large group of people was a daunting task for Moses, and he certainly needed help.

Moses' father-in-law Jethro came to the rescue. He saw that Moses was spending all his time, from morning to evening, helping people. In his weariness Moses was not really effective in carrying out his mission, which was to lead God's people into the promise land. Moses already had a clear mission from God, all he needed was an effective structure to accomplish his mission.

The same principle can also be seen in the New Testament church. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples gathered in the upper room, waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After they were filled with Holy Spirit, the disciples started to proclaim the good news about Jesus boldly, and their words touched many people's hearts, and many became followers of Christ. The Bible says, "That day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). In one short day, the number of disciples skyrocketed.

The increase of membership was certainly good, but the increased numbers

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[47]Burrill, 40.

brought increased problems. In Acts 6, the problems began to surface, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food" (Acts 6:1).

The disciples did not ignore this problem, and they organized the church and delegated responsibilities to different leaders so they could concentrate on prayer and preaching of the Word. When the structure was working well, God continued to add numbers to them, "and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Ellen G. White also had teachings in the area of effective structure:

> As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work into new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.[48]

In short, structure is necessary for church growth, for the accomplishment of the mission of the church. That is why growing churches spend energy on organizing the church ministries with effective structures so the whole body of Christ will work together to fulfill God's will on earth.

Inspiring Worship

Schwarz says that inspiring worship is another divine growth automatism. If

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[48]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1944), 26.

worship is inspiring, the people will be drawn to the services. Since the focus of worship

is God, not people, the goal of inspiring worship is an encounter that can be described as

a celebration in which both the seeker and mature disciples meet God and understand

Scriptures. When worship experience becomes truly inspiring, the church can

demonstrate to its community that they truly follow Christ and are proud of their

experience as worshippers of the creator God.[49]

Worship should be centered on God. God must be present in personal and

corporate worship in order for people to experience the happiness and times of quiet

reverence. Although there are many worship styles, inspiring worship is not about

worship style, but about how to experience God's awesome presence.

The word "inspiring" means people are inspired by the Spirit of God. If the

worship service is conducted with the presence of the Holy Spirit, people will be inspired

and they will enjoy the experience.

Unfortunately, going to church for many Christians is just to fulfill a duty. These

people do not attend church because it is a joyous and inspiring experience, but to do the

pastor or God a favor.[50] With this kind of thinking, they have failed to comprehend that

worship services are important for church growth. When worship is inspiring, it draws

people to the services.

Jesus attended worship regularly. At the age of twelve, Jesus' parents took Him to

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[49]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development,* 31.

[50]Mark Dolliver, "Keeping the Faith, but Not in Church," *Adweek* 38, no. 44 (September 29, 2003): 34. The Barna Research Group reported that in 2005, "47% of American adults [said that they] attend church in a given weekend, not including a special event such as a wedding or a funeral." For details see The Barna Group, "Church Attendance," http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic& TopicID=10 (accessed October 30, 2008).

Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. And when they departed for Nazareth, He became

separated from His family. Assuming that Jesus was with others in the group of travelers,

His parents were not immediately concerned. But after a day, they returned to Jerusalem

to look for Him, and eventually "found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the

teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). Jesus was so

enthralled by the wonder of worship that he got "lost" in the temple.

The early church also placed a high priority on the experience of worship.

Worship was a spiritual reality that they experienced almost daily. Robert E. Webber

describes it this way, "The primary purpose of worship is to experience faith in the

community of worship in such a way that the Christian faith is not merely known

intellectually, but experienced as a reality."[51]

Worship services can only be inspiring through the presence and manifestations of

the Holy Spirit. If a church service is held in an interesting and Spirit-inspired way,

people will love to visit it again. When Christians think of church attendance as a boring

but "holy" routine it is a very dangerous sign. It means that the church service is far from

where God intended it to be.[52] As Sally Morganthaler observes, "We are producing a

generation of spectators, religious onlookers lacking, in many cases, any memory of a

true encounter with God."[53]

Jesus counseled the Samaritan woman that true worship is done "in spirit and in

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[51]Robert Webber, *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 89.

[52]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 30.

[53]Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 17.

truth" (John 4:23-24). Worship has two dimensions—vertical relationship with God and horizontal fellowship with other believers. The vertical aspect of worship is successful when people learn how to give glory to God in their daily activities. True worship also calls God's people to draw closer to one another. Nowdays people want to do more than just intellectually investigate the words of Christ. They want to meet Christ.[54]

Ellen G. White also commented on inspiring worship,

The magnificence of the first temple, and the imposing rites of its religious services, had been a source of pride to Israel before their captivity; but their worship had ofttimes been lacking in those qualities which God regards as most essential. . . He values His church, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of its members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience. He looks for the principles of love and goodness. Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ's representatives. A congregation may be the poorest in the land. It may be without the attractions of any outward show; but if the members possess the principles of the character of Christ, angels will unite with them in their worship. The praise and thanksgiving from grateful hearts will ascend to God as a sweet oblation.[55]

Overall, the very purpose of the church's existence is to worship God. Before members can serve others in different areas of the church ministry, they first show their love for worshipping God. Worship service must be inspiring and uplifting to provide members with zeal and power to share their convictions with people.

Holistic Small Groups

Rick Warren says, "Small groups are the most effective way of closing the back

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[54]Ibid., 59.

[55]Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 565-566.

door of your church."[56] When a member joins the church, he/she needs to make some friends before they settle in. Yet it is very difficult for new members to form friendships with other church members when they are suddenly placed in a church community. A small group will provide a much safer and easier environment for the newly baptized to make friends and get used to church life.

Small group ministry is also a great tool for motivating members to participate in church work.[57] When members join the small group ministry, they no longer wait for the pastor to share the Gospel. They take an active role in welcoming new members and also pray especially for interests to join the group. Not only are small groups a place for members to interact with new believers and those who are interested in the truth, they are also a place for nurturing the member's relationship with God and his fellow human beings.

Russell Burrill suggests that small groups are the best environment for spiritual growth. The essence of small groups "is the heart of what church is all about: community." Small groups provide relationship nurture and development of knowledge about God; they help the Christians to enjoy a closer communion with God and man.[58]

The Bible has ample examples about the effectiveness of small groups. When Moses selected leaders to oversee the daily operation of the civil court for the people of

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[56]Warren, 327. Dann Spader of Sonlife Ministries says a typical unchurched person must get to know 5.3 believers relationally before they will trust the message of Christianity. Research also shows that they must hear the message five to seven times before they will fully understand it. For details please see Rob Campbell, *Dance with Me, Daddy* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2003), 100.

[57]Warren, 329.

[58]Russell Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1997), 16.

Israel, he included the different levels of leadership: officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Exod 18:21). This has been the model of modern day small group structure.

The effectiveness of this model is that it does not put a burden on one person and it involves everyone in the group. Also, the small group concept ensures that the needs of everyone in the group are met and nobody is left out.[59] When Moses was dealing with so many people at the same time, the effectiveness of his ministry became very low, but when he divided people into small groups, he became a much more effective leader.

Jesus himself was a small group leader who trained twelve followers, and later the New Testament church had small groups.[60] After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the number of the Christians in Jerusalem suddenly increased many fold. With so many people, how could they worship at the same time? Synagogues were not big enough for everybody to worship under one roof. The Bible says that "all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:44-46). Not only did they have worship services in the temple, they had more small group meetings at home as they ate and fellowshipped together.

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[59]Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry: A Troubleshooting Guide for Church Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 24-27.

[60]C. J. Mahaney, *Why Small Groups? Together toward Maturity*, Pursuit of Godliness Series (Gaithersburg, MD: Sovereign Grace Ministries, 1996), 95; and Henry Cloud and John Sims Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 27, 28.

Scripture records indicate that small groups were an integral part of the early churches. When people joined the church, as the number of Christians continued to grow, it was very likely that people were assigned to small family groups and that ensured that newly baptized members' needs were taken care of and they could quickly make friends with others in the group.[61]

The scripture tells us that "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2: 46-47).

Ellen G. White also endorsed the concept of small groups, "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err . . . Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others."[62]

It is evident that the concept of holistic small groups is based on the Scripture. When people gather in small groups, they build trust relationships that can never be achieved in a large church setting. When members draw closer to each other, they are also coming nearer to God. This is a much needed experience that people cannot find in worldly relationships, and that can be a powerful force to draw people to God.

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[61]Mikel Neumann, *Home Groups for Urban Cultures: Biblical Small Group Ministry on Five Continents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 24, 25.

[62]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* Vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1909), 21.

Need-Oriented Evangelism

Evangelism is related to church growth. Schwarz points out that in churches that are growing, evangelism is important because it is central to their vision and mission.[63]

Schwarz also emphasizes that that need-oriented evangelism refers to the fact that the needs of non-Christians should be met during the evangelistic effort. Jesus' life is the best example of need-oriented evangelism. When Jesus was on this earth, people flocked to him because he met their needs—physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, and financial. He did not judge some needs as being more legitimate than others, and he made sure that people did not feel guilty for their needs. He treated each person with dignity and respect.[64]

Jesus built on felt needs to open the door to evangelize people, when He came into contact with people; he often asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" God uses all kinds of human needs to get people's attention. There is no right or wrong motive for people's initial contact with the church, and what matters the most is that they come. Once they enter into God's presence, God can work on their motives, values, and priorities.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. Ellen G.. White says, "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He . . . ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"[65]

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[63]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 35.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, Christian Home Library (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 143.

The conversion experience is a process in which people discover the key to their own hearts.[66] When a person has been emotionally attracted to Christ, he/she will gladly follow on to accept His teachings. Although it is hard to find the key to each person's heart, nevertheless the most likely place to start is with the person's felt needs, and this is exactly the approach Jesus used. He met people's physical and spiritual needs, and they were drawn to him. He was concerned about people's well-being, and they became attached to him.

Jesus' mission to this world was to demonstrate God's love, and He knew basic human needs had to be met before people would be inclined to listen to him. Thus He healed the sick and spent time with people. When people knew He was genuinely interested in their well being, the door was open for Him to introduce God's love to them.

James also gave a strong rebuke to Christians who thought the answer to every need was a sermon or Bible verse: "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (Jas 2:15-16) Meeting human needs, no matter what they are, is following God's command.

Ellen G. White commented on how Jesus met the needs of people when He was on this earth, "He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. . . . He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs."[67]

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[66]Warren, 219.

[67]Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964), 151.

When a church focuses on need-oriented evangelism, outside people will come naturally if they sense their felt needs will be addressed. Also, there are some universal needs among the unchurched,[68] which include the need for love, acceptance, forgiveness, meaning, self-expression, and a purpose for living. Above all, people's real need is to meet God, as Chuck Smith suggests. If the church atmosphere allows people a chance to take down their masks and barriers, then they will sense a permission to interact with God as He works in their hearts.[69]

Loving Relationships

Having Loving Relationships are at the heart of a healthy, growing church. The church is filled with people from different backgrounds, and thus it is important to intentionally build up loving relationships, as instructed by the Apostle John, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).[70]

God is a relational being and he created human beings to experience love in relationships. When God first created Adam, He asked him to give names to all the animals and birds, but the Bible says there was not found "a helper suitable for" Adam (Gen 2:20). God had already had a plan to provide Adam with a suitable mate, and he

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[68]Morgenthaler, 67.

[69]Chuck Smith, 53.

[70]Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 135.

"caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man" (Gen 2:21-22). Adam called Eve "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23), and thus God instituted marriage as one of the deepest human relationships (Gen 2:24).

Even God's commandment is summarized in terms of love. Jesus said in Matt 22:37-40, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The biblical definition of love is much deeper than feeling and emotions. Rather it is a love that stems from the soul and character of the individual. Glenn Daman summarizes biblical love in four ways:[71]

Biblical love is an expression of the will. Scripture describes love as a decision rather than feeling. The most popular term, *agape*,[72] focuses on will and commitment, and it is very different from the love portrayed by popular cultures today. The Holy Spirit instills this love in the life of the individual and congregation. A church with a loving character is committed to people, to meet their needs, and to serving people without expecting anything in return.

Biblical love involves sacrifice. Biblical love is not measured by attitudes, the real

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[71]Glenn Daman, *Shepherding the Small Church: A Leadership Guide for the Majority of Today's Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002), 118-121.

[72]Thomas M. Finn, "Agape," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (1999), 1:24-25.

expression of love is seen when church members are willing to sacrifice for the needs of others, as Paul says in Eph 5:2, "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Thus, a church that demonstrates Christ's likeness is a congregation that is willing to sacrifice their time, energies, and resources for those outside the congregation as well as those within the church.

Biblical love is unconditional. People tend to love those they like, but biblical love is so unconditional that even those who are enemies of and oppose the church are to be loved. The Bible teaches that true followers of Christ will desire the prosperity of others, pray for people, and minster to peoples' needs (Luke 6:27-36). Church leaders should encourage members to welcome and include people in the activities of the congregation, regardless of their present spiritual condition.

Biblical love manifests itself through service. The church needs to learn to be servants of the community. Love is manifested not by what people say but how they serve, and by their willingness to set aside their own personal agendas and self-interests and serve others, as Paul writes in Gal 5:13, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Jesus Himself demonstrated this when He set aside his garments and washed the disciples' feet. When love is present within the church community, people desire to exercise their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others.

Biblical love is learned. Because love in the Bible is an act of the will, it can be learned. Paul writes in 1 Thess 4:9, "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another."

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The Holy Spirit teaches people in the church to love and reflect the image of Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit also includes teaching people how to serve, react, and demonstrate care for others.

God's primary desire is to build a loving relationship with human beings. As Henry Blackaby points out, God Himself pursues a love relationship with the people He created. He takes the lead in bringing people into this kind of loving relationship. The purpose of human existence should be a loving relationship with God.[73] Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him" (John 14:21). Anyone who wants to know God must first love Him and obey Him.

Ellen G. White also urged the church to practice the love that Jesus demonstrated to us when He was on this earth, "If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to be truth where now there is only one."[74]

When a church is full of loving members, it opens the way for outside people to come in and feel the love and care of the group. When a church is willing to share its love, God will use the members to share His love around the world.

Summary

In this theological consideration, two areas were examined, theological analysis of

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[73]Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 79-98.

[74]Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, 189.

church growth theories and theological foundations of NCD principles.

There is no understanding of church ministry without first considering God's will for his people. God is the center of all ministries and His will is for His church to grow and draw people into his flock. Although over the years many church growth theories have developed and the trends for understanding church growth are always changing, the one unchangeable fact is that the church is a living organism. As long as the church is alive and functioning, it will grow naturally, as growth is ultimately caused by God, the life source. Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of NCD are based on this biblical principle. When local churches spend effort on improving these areas, they will surely see growth that brings in abundant of harvest.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Plenty of literature has been written on the topic of church growth. Since this

project focuses on using NCD as a tool to assess the situation in the Ciba church and find

ways for this church to become healthier, the following literature review will focus on

three areas: NCD concept, change principles, and leadership essentials.

NCD Concept

Overview

Since the high point of the Church Growth Movement in the 1970s, students of

church growth have noted that growing churches tend to share certain characteristics. It

seems that healthy, growing churches can be identified by the signs of life that they bear.

This is especially evident in recent years, as the church moves into the twenty-first

century more church growth experts are beginning to use the term *church health* rather

than *church growth*.[1]

But what exactly are those key characteristics? Many writers and church leaders

have developed lists based upon a combination of observation and conviction, and most

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[1]Towns and McIntosh, 22. See also Will Mancini and Network Leadership, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 31-32.

of them are fairly confident that if their approach is followed, church growth can be achieved.

Peter Wagner answers this question in his 1979 book, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* by examining spiritual "diseases" that can attack any church. He then suggests seven vital signs of a healthy church:[2]

1. A positive pastor

2. A well-mobilized laity

3. Meeting members' needs

4. Proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell

5. A common homogeneous denominator

6. Effective evangelistic methods

7. Biblical priorities

Wagner discovered that pastors in general tend to know little about the field, and their churches may be sick without their realizing it. Pastors also may suspect that their churches are sick, but are not able either to diagnose the disease or to prescribe a cure. Wagner's book was an attempt to help pastors to find the diseases that are infecting the

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[2]C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 21-24. Wagner's understanding regarding church growth has changed over the years, and his list of spiritual diseases really came from McGavran, who pointed out eight terminal illnesses that is afflicting the church: "Ethnikitis" (a static church in a changing neighborhood) or "Ghost Town" syndrome (a deteriorating community); "Old Age" (members are getting old with no new members); "People Blindness" (cultural differences existing between groups of people living in geographical proximity to one another); "Hyper-Cooperativism" (when interdenominational unity hinders evangelism); "Koinonitis" (spiritual navel-gazing); "Sociological Strangulation" (the flow of people into a church exceeding the capacity of the facilities to accommodate their numbers); "Arrested Spiritual Development" (people in the church are not growing in the things of God or in their relationships with one another); and "St. John's Syndrome" (Christians in name only). More details can be found in Donald Anderson McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Irving, TX: ICI University Press, 1996), 308.

church, and in turn find ways to cure them. Once cured, the church will become healthy.

Mark Dever lists nine essential and important marks of a healthy church in his book, *What Is a Healthy Church?*[3]

1. Expositional Preaching

2. Biblical Theology

3. Biblical Understanding of the Good News

4. Biblical Understanding of Conversion

5. Biblical Understanding of Evangelism

6. Biblical Understanding of Membership

7. Biblical Church Discipline

8. Promotion of Christian Discipleship and Growth

9. Biblical Understanding of Leadership

For Dever, "a healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as his character has been revealed in his Word."[4] Out of these nine marks, Dever considers the first three to be essential characteristics of a healthy church.

Still others, such as Gene A. Getz,[5] offer measurement of church health in view of the Apostle Paul's theology that the true yardstick of church health is not measured in attendance or the pastor's speaking ability, but in terms of the evidence of the three so

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[3]Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007). This list is explained in detail in his previous book, Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

[4]Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?*, 40.

[5]Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church: How God Defines Greatness in a Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007).

called Christian graces: faith, hope, and love.

Rick Warren is among many who contend that a healthy church is one that balances the different needs of the church body. Often pastors are tempted to develop one or two ministry areas where they are most gifted, but a balance is what is needed most, and a balanced church will be a healthy church.[6]

It is obvious that the task of identifying the most helpful list among the different options available is not easy. One thing is certain, most of the lists mentioned above are more or less the summary of one person's (or a group of people's) experience. Could not a more objective view of church health be based on scientific research data, and therefore more credible?

Surveys and measurement instruments have been developed for the purpose of evaluating church health. For example, Steven Macchia offered ten indicators of a healthy church in his book *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics*.[7] Macchia's research involved developing an intuitive list of healthy church principles based on one hundred church visits. Surveys of 1,899 "highly committed Christians" participating in his annual conference enabled Macchia to rank the characteristics according to their degree of importance and relevance regarding their opinions about the attributes of healthy churches. Although Macchia provided a workbook for anyone who wishes to use his

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[6]Warren, 128.

[7]Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999). Macchia's conclusions are based on the study of 100 churches visited in New England, and he offers ten indicators of a healthy church: God-empowering presence; God-exalting worship; attention to spiritual disciplines; learning and growing in community; community of loving, caring relationships; servant-leadership development; wise administration with accountability; networking within the body; stewardship and generosity.

material, unfortunately, no information regarding the development of the instruments was provided. Because Macchia did not offer any tools for measurement of church health, it was impossible to do any church health assessment based on his research findings.[8]

Wagner's seven vital signs of a healthy church were used as the benchmarks of a healthy church in a study conducted in England of 350 Baptist churches, the results of which were published in 1981 by Paul Beasely-Murray and Alan Wilkinson.[9] This led to the Beasley-Murray's tests, which looked for associations between growth and the vital signs.

George Barna, founder of Barna Research Group, offers insights on church health. He stated that there are nine highly effective church habits in his book, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches*. Barna's research is not particularly focused on church health; he states that his book is about church health, "but it addresses this from the perspective of spiritual depth. . . . The prescriptions offered are based upon the practical experience of numerous churches across America."[10]

A survey based on a wider research database is also worth mentioning here. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) has been carried out on four occasions in Australia:

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[8]Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church. Workbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001).

[9]Paul Beasley-Murray and Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide: An Assessment of Baptist Church Growth in England* (London: Bible Society, 1981). This was the first published scientific study of the applicability of Wagner's "seven vital signs" to an empirical situation. The result was that five were affirmed, and two were questionable.

[10]George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: Being Strategic in Your God-Given Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 15-24. The nine habits are: 1. Rely upon strategic leadership. 2. Organized to facilitate highly effective ministry. 3. Emphasize developing significant relationships within the congregation. 4. Invest themselves in genuine worship. 5. Engage in strategic evangelism. 6. Get their people involved in systematic theological education. 7. Utilize holistic stewardship practices. 8. Serve the needy people in their community. 9. Equip families to minister to themselves.

1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006. In 2001 around 435,000 church attendees from over 7,000

parishes and congregations in some 19 denominations took part in the survey. Twenty-

two denominations participated in the 2006 NCLS. The National Church Life Survey

database provided an opportunity to conduct comparative research of church planting and

other mission strategies. From the result of this research, the researcher proposed nine

core qualities of healthy churches:[11]

1. An alive and growing *faith*

2. Vital and nurturing w*orship*

3. Strong and growing *belonging*

4. A clear and owned *vision*

5. Inspiring and empowering *leadership*

6. Open and flexible *innovation*

7. Practical and diverse *service*

8. Willing and effective *faith-sharing*

9. Intentional and welcoming *inclusion*

Within these nine qualities, the *faith*, *worship*, and *belonging* core qualities are

indicators of both the commitment of members and their confidence in the church. The

leadership and *vision* core qualities reveal the extent to which members are committed to

the directions and visions of the church, and how much they are familiar with the overall

direction of the church. The *innovation* core quality reveals openness to change, and

members' willingness to be involved in change. Finally the *service*, *faith-sharing*, and

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[11]Peter Kaldor and Survey National Church Life, *Connections for Life: Core Qualities to Foster in Your Church* (Adelaide, Australia: Openbook, 2002), 24-25.

inclusion core qualities reveal how members are involved in mission activities.

Among all the research and measuring instruments, perhaps the most comprehensive and scientific study is Christian Schwarz's NCD, and it is well documented.[12] A focused literature review regarding NCD will be detailed in the following pages.

Natural Church Development

According to Schwarz, founder of NCD concept and principles, there are three building blocks within NCD. The first building block is the eight quality characteristics which show what should be done in order to achieve natural growth. The second building block is the minimum strategy that the church needs to focus upon. The third building block is the six growth forces or biotic principles that impact growth.[13]

Schwarz has written a number of books on these subjects, and these books have been used as manuals for churches who wish to use NCD principles for church growth.

Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches[14] was originally written in 1996, and it explains in detail the NCD principles and suggestions for implementation. This book was updated in 2006, with renewed confidence that NCD was truly a scientific way of finding weaker areas of the church health and subsequent solutions for improvement. Ten years after the publishing of the original book, which was the result of a study of 1,000 churches, NCD has been used by

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[12]Booker and Ireland, 123.

[13]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 9.

[14]Ibid.

more than 45,000 churches in seventy countries.[15]

After understanding NCD principles, churches using NCD need to know how to improve their index in each of the eight essential qualities. Detailed instructions are given in the book written by Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*,[16] it gives instructions on how to do the NCD Survey and guides a church through the process of developing a strategy to address the minimum factor. It also includes an extensive training program to help church leaders learn and apply the six biotic principles.

There are two key areas of church health that this book deals with. The first key area includes practical suggestions on what to do for each of the eight characteristics. The second is concerned with the six principles that underlie these eight characteristics. The book gives training exercises to help church leaders/pastors to think biotically and to make decisions regarding church health using life-giving principles.

The ABC's of Natural Church Development[17] is a short booklet in which Schwarz condenses information from NCD into a popular, easy-to-read format that introduces his eight essential quality characteristics especially for congregational leaders. The book is often used in conjunction with the survey to help them understand basically what leaders in the church should be doing with respect to an NCD survey.

Schwarz asserts that the whole concept of NCD is rooted in a biblical concept of

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[15]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (2006), 3.

[16]Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

[17]Christian A. Schwarz, *The ABC's of Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

natural growth, the concept is a new paradigm shift: "The goal of NCD is to let God's growth forces flourish, instead of wasting energy on human-made programs."[18] Thus Schwarz presents his theological discourse on NCD in *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking*. In the book, he presents the foundational theological paradigm for the practical tools and concepts behind NCD, seeks to answer some of the misunderstandings about NCD, and provides background for his theory so skeptics may understand that NCD is a biblical-based concept.[19]

With NCD, Christian Schwarz introduced a new approach to church growth that has been used all over the world. His more recent book, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development*[20] is what Schwarz calls "Second Chapter of NCD."[21] It shows how the biblically-based principles of NCD can also be a blessing for the spiritual development of the individual believer.[22] Although NCD's main focus has been the development of healthy churches, Schwarz feels that if these principles are applied to personal life, it will help Christians to develop a healthier spiritual life.

NCD has proved to be useful in churches around the world, but there are some

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[18]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 9.

[19]Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church,* 11.

[20]Schwarz, *Color Your World*. More books in the "Color" series are underway, which eventually, for each of the eight quality characteristics there will be a book. Two already published books are Christian A. Schwarz, *The 3 Colors of Ministry: A Trinitarian Approach to Identifying and Developing Your Spiritual Gifts*, NCD Discipleship Resources (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001); Christian A. Schwarz, *The 3 Colors of Love: The Art of Giving and Receiving Justice, Truth, and Grace*, NCD Discipleship Resources (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2004).

[21]Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 6.

[22]Ibid., 6-7.

voices speaking against it. For example, John Ellas and Flavil Ray Yeakley felt there are

weaknesses in Schwarz' methodology, that it is "fatally flawed by the pseudo-scientific

way the material is presented."[23] They felt since Schwarz does not provide enough

information for other researchers to replicate his study; it is a violation of the scientific

principle of replication.[24] They also claim "significance levels" that indicate the

probability of results occurring by change are not reported, and correlation coefficients

for areas where Schwarz claims to have found strong correlations are not given.[25] In a

fiery rebuttal, David Wetzler, president and publisher of ChurchSmart Resources, pointed

out that the research for NCD received "the highest possible grade and accolades for

academic excellence" from the University of Wuerzburg, Germany.[26] Also, many of Ellas

and Yeakley's objections were also answered by Christoph Schalk,[27] co-author of

Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development.[28]

 In summary, it is important to note that no instrument or list is perfect. The

ultimate goal of church health assessment is to help the church become healthy. Even

though method is important, it is even more vital to make sure that church leaders are

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[23]John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley, "Natural Church Development," *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 10 (Spring 1999): 85.

[24]Ibid., 83.

[25]Ibid., 84-85.

[26]David Wetzler, "A Response to John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley," *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 10 (Fall 1999): 84.

[27]Christoph A. Schalk, *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches: The Statistical Development of the "Natural Church Development" Survey and Its Relation to Organizational Psychology* (Würzburg, Germany: Institute for Natural Church Development, 1999).

[28]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

willing to accept the need for change and experience it with their congregation(s).

Change Principles

Natural Church Development is a change process, but change usually does not come easily. A survey of literature shows that human beings generally feel more natural with status quo than change itself. People usually prefer to stay the same because change can be uncomfortable, exhausting and mind boggling. But unless there is change, there is no growth. Human experience is about change and change will always occur whether people like it or not.[29]

However, what exactly is change? Regarding change theory and practice, Robert J. Marshak suggests that current Western worldview regarding change is based on the assumptions that permanence and stability are in all cases preferred over chaos and change. All this is inherited from Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle who claimed there is something "wrong" with continuous change or chaotic conditions which should be avoided if at all possible. Unfortunately, these assumptions hinder and limit our ability to think about and address change in contemporary organizations.[30]

But out of all this was spawned the classic change theory developed by Kurt Lewin, which is a three-stage model of change that moves from unfreezing to moving and back to refreezing. It is essentially an equilibrium/transition model. Lewin's model differentiates between two main stages, equilibrium periods, and transition periods. The

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[29]John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 22.

[30]Robert J Marshak, "Morphing: The Leading Edge of Organizational Change in the Twenty-First Century," *Organization Development Journal* 22, no. 3 (2004): 12-13.

major insight was that organizations need a special pre-period of reflection and involvement to become ready for change.[31]

Whereas Lewin's change theory is focused on stability in that change is viewed as a disturbance to stability, Karl E.Weick and Robert E. Quinn trace a growing shift toward understanding the temporal processes associated with organizational change, suggesting a continuous, evolving, and incremental view of change. Change is viewed as an ongoing adaptation and adjustment. Although these adjustments may be small, they may also tend to be frequent and continuous across units, which means they are capable of altering structure and strategy.[32]

Lewin's, Weick's, and Quinn's ideas do have similarities believing that change flows with time. When difficulties arise, change agents must first freeze the flow cognitively, mapping it to make sense of it. Only then is it possible to rebalance what has gone out of alignment, after which the flow can resume.

The problem with this kind of understanding of change is that theoretically time can be frozen, but in reality time goes on. The future continues to arrive, and soon the cognitive map generated from a frozen image becomes outdated.[33]

Thus a more logical understanding of change is needed. Deone Zell suggests that change only occurs when the pain to go on under the current situation is greater than the

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[31]Ronald E Purser and Jack Petranker, "Unfreezing the Future: Exploring the Dynamic of Time in Organizational Change," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 41, no. 2 (2005): 184.

[32]Karl E Weick and Robert E. Quinn, "Organizational Change and Development," *Annual Review of Psychology* 50 (1999): 361-386.

[33]P. J. Robertson, D. R. Roberts, and J. I. Porras, "An Evaluation of a Model of Planned Organizational Change," *Research in organizational change and development* 7 (1993): 1-39.

pain of change.[34] Zell describes change as a process, and he compares change with a terminally ill patient, who does not want to accept the reality of his situation, but as time goes by, he eventually accepts the diagnosis. When change is understood as a process, it can be compared to a cycle that goes through stages that always ushers in something new and exciting.

Since change has huge impact on those who are going through it, it is important for leaders to pay attention to the psychological and emotional needs of the people so changes can become a positive experience rather than a cause for fear and dread. Leaders who take the lead in the change process must convince their people that change is necessary and exciting, and people are thrilled to follow along, even though the process may be painful and difficult.

Because human emotions are involved in the change process, change cannot be merely treated as insensible policies and regulations. Jim Folaron points out that the importance of the human side of change cannot be underestimated. If the human element is neglected or left to chance, the improvement process implementation can be prolonged, the change effort can become more frustrating, the resulting benefits will be diminished,

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[34]Deone Zell, "Organizational Change as a Process of Death, Dying, and Rebirth," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 39, no. 1 (2003): 73-96. Zell conducted an experiment in a university regarding the change of Physics department, he found that circumstances suggest that the process of change experienced by the department in response to a crisis that threatened its survival resembles the process of death and dying experienced by terminally ill patients as they prepare for their lives to end. That is, the department and its members were found to progress through five distinct stages that included denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.

and the entire improvement risks being short-lived.[35]

Statistics show that seventy percent of organizational change fails or falls short of achieving its intended objectives.[36] Fullan believes what makes the change sustainable is people's desire to continue to do things the new way. This desire is primarily a result of the real or imagined effects or consequences that result from an individual's doing the new task or behavior.[37]

Besides the desire to change and carry out the steps required for change, Ellen B. Van Oosten believes individual and organizational change must be intentional in order to have long lasting results.[38] And this Intentional Change Theory is further explained by Richard E. Boyatzis:

> People change. People change in desired ways but not without intentional efforts. Teams, organizations, communities, and even countries can change in desired ways. But again, without intentional efforts, the changes are slow, result in worse unintentional consequences to the original desire, and arouse a shared hopelessness about the future and diminish the human spirit. Through intentional change theory, we can understand how individuals, groups, organizations, and whole communities can bring about desired changes in a sustainable way.[39]

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[35]Jim Folaron, "Leadership and Management-the Human Side of Change Leadership-Identify Potential Resistance to the Planned Changes and Design Motivation into the New Process," *Quality progress* 38, no. 4 (2005): 39-44. See also Michael Fullan, "The Change Leader-to Sustain Reform, Leaders Cultivate Relationships, Share Knowledge, and Offer a Coherent Vision," *Educational leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, N.E.A.* 59, no. 8 (2002): 16-22; Martin F. Stankard, "Management-the Dark Side of Process Measurement-While Not Easy to Accomplish, a Change in Employee Behavior Must Accompany All New Process Improvement Measures," *Quality Progress* 38, no. 7 (2005): 53-59.

[36]Richard H Axelrod and others, "Beat the Odds and Succeed in Organizational Change," *Consulting to Management* 17, no. 2 (June 2006): 6.

[37]Fullan, 16-20.

[38]Ellen B. Van Oosten, "Intentional Change Theory at the Organizational Level: A Case Study," *Journal of Management Development* 25, no. 7 (2006): 708.

[39]Richard E. Boyatzis, "An Overview of Intentional Change from a Complexity Perspective," *Journal of Management Development* 25, no. 7 (2006): 619.

According to Boyatzis, change is non-linear and discontinuous, appearing or being experienced as a set of discoveries. Individuals or organizations are often aware of the need to change, and if they intentionally develop plans and strategies to change, they will usually succeed.[40]

Another aspect that is important for long lasting change is to build relationships with people, as suggested by Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher.[41] If relationships improve, change will sustain. If relationships remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus, leaders need to build relationships with diverse people and groups—especially with people who think differently.

Since change is inevitable, and it is particularly important for churches to change in order to grow, how do church leaders push for change? Having understood the change process, it is vital to look at some literature regarding change implementation.

Boyatzis's Intentional Change Theory outlines change as different discoveries in an organization setting:[42]

1. First Discovery—Ideal self, discover a shared vision

2. Second Discovery—Real self, discover strengths and weakness of the organization

3. Third Discovery—The learning agenda, discovery of the organization's strategic plans.

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[40]Ibid., 609.

[41]Michael Fullan, Claudia Cuttress, and Ann Kilcher, "Eight Forces for Leaders of Change: Presence of the Core Concepts Does Not Guarantee Success, but Their Absence Ensures Failure," *Journal of Staff Development* 26, no. 4 (2005): 54-59.

[42]Oosten, 708-709.

4. Fourth Discovery—Experimentation and practice, discovery of action planning for the organization.

5. Fifth Discovery—Develop supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible, discovery of social capital, i.e., the web of relationships that share a common fate in the success of the organization.

It is obvious that implementing change takes determination and a well crafted plan, and it is also interesting to see that Boyatzis puts an emphasis on relationship building.

To achieve a fast change in the ever changing world, Malcolm G. Evans suggests a four-stage approach:[43]

1. The wake-up call—moving to problem awareness. Leader has the responsibility to bring the need to change to people and let them know that it is an emotional realization that what has worked in the past will not work in the future.

2. Focusing change—what usually is called project management. It is the stage which everyone goes through when they ask themselves, what are we trying to do? How are we going to do it?

3. Leveraging change—learning new habits is not always easy. At some point, the real change must happen. And in reality, all organizational change is made up of individual changes in behavior. This requires a high level of conscious competence.

4. Persistence—make sure that there is no regress in change, protecting progress from going backwards.

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[43]Malcolm G. Evans, "Fast Change-How to Avoid Getting in the Way of Your Own Success," *Industrial and Commercial Training* 39, no. 4 (2007): 209-212.

Evan's approach is simple and similar to Boyatzis's model in that change is a forwarding cycle, a momentum that needs to be built up.

Finally, John P. Kotter's *Leading Change* model deserves some attention. Kotter's model is quite original as he does not try to borrow or cite ideas from others as suggested by the lack of any footnotes or endnotes in his book.[44]

Kotter emphasizes the critical need for leadership to make change happen, and he identifies an eight-step process that every organization must go through to achieve its goals:

1. *Establishing a Sense of Urgency*. This step is crucial to gaining cooperation. If people do not feel the necessity to change, they can find countless excuses not to cooperate, and the only way to get people on board is to create a situation in the organization by making people uncomfortable to stay in the status quo.

2. *Creating the Guiding Coalition*. Change is a major task, and it is impossible to accomplish by one individual or leader, thus a strong team is needed, and they must share a common vision, have high level of trust, and target the same goals. Building this kind of team is crucial for making the change a reality.

3. *Developing a Vision and Strategy*. Vision is a picture of the future. In a change process, a good vision helps to clarify the direction, motivate people to take action in the right direction, and aids to coordinate the actions of different people.

4. *Communicating the Change Vision*. It is important to have a common understanding of the vision, and it is vital to let people in the organization to know where

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[44]Kotter, x.

they are headed. Communication takes a lot of effort and time, but without communication, people will not see the need for change.

5. *Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action*. "In this ever faster-moving world . . . the idea of helping more people to become more powerful is important."[45] Leaders and managers are scared of giving people power, but with the right structure, training, and supervisors to build on a well-communicated vision, leaders can tap into the rich resources of people in the organization to produce needed changes.

6. *Generate Short-Term Wins*. People get tired of changes that give no indication of change for the better right away. Short-term wins make people feel good; they see evidence that sacrifice for change is worth it, and they are more likely to have faith to go along with the change.

7. *Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change*. Major change often takes a long time, especially in big organizations, and short-term wins are a good boost for people, but if the celebration of those wins breaks the momentum and lessens the urgency, then previous changes could be lost. Thus it is necessary to consolidate the gains, to stimulate more changes.

8. *Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture*. "Culture refers to norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people."[46] When a new practice is developed during the change process that is not compatible with the relevant culture or practice in the organization, the change will be likely to go into regression. Leaders in the organization

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[45]Ibid., 101.

[46]Ibid., 148.

should take deliberate time and effort to put the new practice into place until it becomes part of the culture.

Although it is impossible to list all of the change principles from the literature reviewed, it is sufficient to say that change is a continual process and it is hard work. In order to achieve the best results, people have to see the need for change. Once they are ready, steps need to be taken to ensure that they will go through the actual change process. Momentum can be built by shared vision development, careful planning, persistence in implementing of the change, and using small gains for achieving long term benefits.

It is also evident that change is impossible without good leadership. Leadership essentials and the basic qualities of a good leader make up the next part of this literature review.

Leadership Essentials

Leadership in itself is a word that does not have a universal definition. Even though plenty of books and articles have been written on the subject, the task of giving "leadership" a precise meaning is not easy. This problem is outlined very clearly by Joseph C. Rost in his book, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*:

> [The] problem with leadership studies as an academic discipline . . . is that neither the scholars nor the practitioners have been able to define leadership with precision, accuracy, and conciseness so that people are able to label it correctly when they see it happening or when they engage it. . . . The word *leadership* (and, to some extent, related words such as *lead*, *leader*, and *leading*). . . are used in scholarly and popular publications, organizational newsletters and reports, and the media to mean very different things that have little to do with any considered notion of what leadership actually is."[47]

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[47]Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 6.

Rost also traced the history of the definition of leadership, starting from the 1900s.

Up until the 1960s, the definition of leadership emphasized control and centralization of power.

From the 1960s, the definition shows increasing support for viewing leadership as behavior that influences people toward shared goals, and this is evident from the development of Theory X and Y by Douglas McGregor, who proposed that organizations are interacting groups and that leaders are a part of those groups. The leader's interaction and relationship with the employee must be a supportive relationship so all members of the organization feel that the organization's objectives and their achievement, are of personal importance to them.[48]

From the 1980s on, an explosion of new ideas about the nature of leadership were developed. Leadership is gradually being defined as persons with certain preferred traits that influence followers to do what the leaders wish to achieve.[49]

Looking at the historical definition of leadership yielded many valuable insights, but perhaps a more comprehensive perspective is offered by Gregory Stone and Kathleen Patterson's article, *The History of Leadership Focus.* The authors proposed that the understanding of leadership can be seen as the development from transactional leadership to transformational leadership.[50]

Transactional leadership focuses on performance, and leaders exchange rewards

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[48]Derek Salman Pugh and David John Hickson, *Great Writers on Organizations* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth, 1993).

[49]Rost, 37-95.

[50]Gregory Stone and Kathleen Patterson, "The History of Leadership Focus," *Servant Leadership Research Roundtable* (August 2005): 1-22.

for employee's compliance, a concept based on bureaucratic authority and a leader's legitimacy within an organization. It focuses on control, not adaptation.[51] It emphasizes ways to maintain the status quo and manage the day-to-day operations of a business. It does not focus on identifying the organization's goals and how employees can work toward and increase their productivity in alignment with these goals.[52]

Transformational leadership on the other hand focuses on a deeper level of change of individuals in an organization. The job of the transformational leader is not to make every decision within the organization, but to ensure that collaborative decision-making occurs.[53] People do not act just because of the benefit they receive, but they are transformed into wanting to take new steps because of the changes that have taken place inside of them. This type of leadership motivates individuals to work together to change organizations to create sustainable productivity.[54]

Transformational leaders transform the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization by fostering an environment where relationships are formed and by establishing a climate of trust where visions are shared. Ultimately, transformational leaders can develop a very powerful influence over followers. The focus on relationship is the key for transformational leadership. When relationships are

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[51]Bruce J. Tracey and Timothy R.Hinkin, "Transformational Leaders in the Hospitality Industry," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1994): 18-24.

[52]Bruce J. Avolio, David A.Waldman, and Francis J.Yammarino, "Leading in the 1990s: The Four I's of Transformational Leadership," *Journal of European Industrial Training* 15, no. 4 (January 1, 1991): 9-16.

[53]Joseph Badaracco and Richard R. Ellsworth, *Leadership and the Quest for Integrity* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1989), 88, 189.

[54]Diane L. Dixon, "The Balanced CEO: A Transformational Leader and a Capable Manager," *The Healthcare Forum Journal* 41, no. 2 (March/April 1998): 28.

developed, it is easy for people to follow their leaders.[55]

Many different authors have developed lists of characteristics a transformational leader must have, and they are somewhat similar in nature, as seen in table 1.

Among all the suggestions, Skip Bell's list is somewhat different from the others because it includes a spiritual element, such as inspiring a God-given passion-stirring vision and faith-based optimism. This is important for spiritual leaders and church leaders, because after all, leadership in church organizations is a spiritual matter.

Christian authors have written numerous books on spiritual leadership, and one familiar example is Henry and Richard Blackaby's book, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. The Blackaby's suggest that the leader's character in real life moves others to follow. Modern day secular leadership is all about influence, but how do spiritual leaders influence others? Henry and Richard Blackaby list five legitimate sources of influence: God's authentication, encounters with God, character/integrity, a successful track record, and preparation.[56] As for the necessary qualities of the spiritual leader, the Blackabys suggest: (1) the spiritual leader moves people from where they are to where God wants them to be; (2) spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit; (3) spiritual leaders are accountable to God; (4) spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just God's people; (5) spiritual leaders work from God's agenda.[57]

Blackaby's spiritual emphasis on the leadership is important for church leaders. It

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[55]Packianathan Chelladurai, *Human Resource Management in Sport and Recreation* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2006), 202.

[56]Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 86-118.

[57]Ibid., 20-25.

TABLE 1

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Rost[58]	Bennis and Nanus[59]	Kouzes and Posner[60]	Bell[61]
Influence	Attention through vision	Challenging the process	Inspiring a God-given passion-stirring vision
Relationship	Meaning through communication	Inspiring a shared vision	Faith-based optimism
Real changes	Trust through positioning	Enabling others to act	Exercising solid integrity
Mutual purposes	Deployment of self	Modeling the way	Modeling the way
		Encouraging the heart	Risk-taking courage
			Unswerving belief in empowering people
			Empowering people through Motivation
			An abundance mentality

is because God should be the source and center of all activities. A leader's task is to move

people onto God's agenda so everything he/she does is for service to God. Too often,

people assume that the leader has the responsibility of determining what should be done.

They develop aggressive goals. They dream grandiose dreams. They cast grand visions.

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[58]Rost, 102-103.

[59]Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Collins Business Essentials, 2007).

[60]James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 13.

[61]Skip Bell, *A Time to Serve: Church Leadership for the 21st Century* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2003), 2.

Then they pray and ask God to join them in their agenda and bless their efforts. That's not what spiritual leaders do. They seek God's will, and they want to know God's plan for their life. They then marshal their people to pursue God's plan.[62]

Finally, in order to lead people to achieve God's plan, a leader must learn to be a servant. The idea of servant leadership is developed by Robert K. Greenleaf, and he believes that the prime motivation for leadership should be a desire to serve. Servant leadership takes place when leaders assume the position of servant in their relationships with fellow workers. Self-interest should not motivate servant leadership; rather, it should ascend to a higher plane of motivation that focuses on the needs of others.[63] In so doing, they allow extraordinary freedom for followers to exercise their own abilities. They also place a much higher degree of trust in their followers than would be the case in any leadership style that required the leader to be somewhat directive.[64]

Conclusion

This literature review has shown that NCD is a scientific tool to measure church health, and it can help the church to find ways to grow and become healthy.

However, no instrument or list is perfect as other tools and viewpoints mentioned in this review were also developed by dedicated scholars and church leaders who have had rich experience in church growth.

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[62]Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 20.

[63]Greenleaf and Spears, 27.

[64]Robert F. Russell and A. Gregory Stone, "A Review of Servant Leadership Attributes: Developing a Practical Model," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 23, no. 3/4 (January 1, 2002): 145.

NCD is chosen for this project because of several factors:

1. NCD is the result of one of the largest scale research projects regarding church growth, and NCD's objective evaluation components are rarely seen by any other method.

2. Church growth is not a program or experience. Since NCD is based on corporate and individual needs being addressed, the comprehensive NCD survey and church profiling was necessary for understanding where the growth needs really were.

3. NCD's focus is not church growth, but church health. Numeric growth maybe achieved through different methods, but once the church becomes healthy, growth will be the natural result.

4. There is abundant literature and resources available for local churches to help implement NCD; much of the materials are available in various languages.

Although method is important, it is even more vital to make sure that church leaders are willing to accept the need for change and experience it with their congregation. When a church is faced with the reality, it must have a well crafted plan to enable the members to see that change is necessary. Several change models were reviewed in the previous pages, overall, they are similar and they stress the importance of raising awareness for change, persistence in pushing for change, and constant review of progress to ensure that change is going forward.

Finally, a servant leader, who is also a spiritual leader, must cultivate the necessary leadership traits to lead his followers to embrace change for a better and brighter future.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

Methodology

According to Schwarz, NCD is a scientific method to evaluate church health, and
it is based on the most comprehensive research project ever conducted.[1] The
methodology used by this project follows the suggestion given by Schwarz and Schalk in
their book, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

In order to find out the health situation of a church, a church profile has to be
developed, as it is the "key to getting an accurate diagnosis."[2] A church profile can help
the local church to find out its critical factor(s) for the development of the church in the
context of its current situation. It helps to focus limited resources at the critical points. It
helps to identify the church's strengths and weaknesses. It can save time and eliminate
the risk of an inaccurate analysis. In short, by applying a scientific and exact process, it
can provide local churches with an outside perspective so they know how they measure
up with other churches.[3]

A church profile is developed through conducting a church survey, which consists

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[1]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 7.

[2]Ibid., 9.

[3]Ibid., 11.

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of one questionnaire to be filled out by the senior pastor and another one by thirty church members. Schwarz and Schalk recommend that if possible, the ones who fill out the questionnaire should be those who actively get involved in the church, have a regular task in the church, and should be member of a small group in the church.

It works best to allow thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire during one of the church's regularly scheduled meetings, and the completed questionnaires are immediately collected. Those who participate in the survey should be informed of the reason, purpose, and process of this project, and they should understand that the church has decided to take this step, in order to find out its weaknesses and subsequently to determine directions for future growth.[4]

Once the questionnaires are filled out, they can be returned to NCD consultants to be analyzed or to be analyzed by purchased CORE software. Whichever is chosen, the resulting analysis will be returned to the church. The analysis will contain a church profile with a minimum factor and with suggestions on how to improve the minimum factors.[5]

What then exactly are the minimum factors? Simply put, they are the weakest areas of the church's health.

Since there are eight quality factors to be kept up to standard, how can any church hope to keep working on them all? The key thing, Schwarz and Schalk suggest, is to focus on the minimum factor. A church will be only as healthy as its weakest

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[4]Ibid., 12.

[5]Ibid., 13.

characteristic, since this is the primary thing that will be holding back the growth God desires. The key insight of NCD is that even a church which scores well above average in several ways will be held back in terms of its overall health by just one weak area.

Schwarz uses a number of analogies from life and from natural processes to press home this point, and the most helpful way to grasp the concept is through the milk barrel image: In Switzerland, milk has been traditionally kept in barrels made from vertical slats of wood. If these slats are of different lengths then the amount of milk that can be held will depend upon the height of the shortest slat. Barrel capacity can only be increased by making the shortest slat longer, and any changes to other parts of the barrel are a waste of energy.[6]

Schwarz and Schalk suggest the following steps as the local church then works on improving the minimum factor:[7]

1. Build spiritual momentum. Members have to be on board and passionate about improving the church health. They need to have a "spiritual yearning" for God.

2. Set qualitative goals. Determine concrete, specific and measurable goals to work on.

3. Identify areas of difficulty and resistance.

4. Apply God's growth principles, which mean that raising the quality of the minimum factor will naturally results in quantitative growth.

5. Exercise the strengths, which mean to use strong areas of the church to help the

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[6]Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 51-62.

[7]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 22-38.

weaker areas to develop and grow stronger.

6. Monitor effectiveness. A good system of feedback is needed to allow church leaders to know how the church is improving.

Once the minimum factor has been strengthened, further growth in church health can follow. Schwarz suggests that six to twelve months after the first church profile is done, the church should do another survey to see the growth progress and find out the new minimum factor to be worked on. Actually the process never stops, as the church continues to experience growth naturally.[8]

It is also important to note that the minimum factor does not necessarily mean that the church is defective in that area. As the church health improves, the overall score of each quality characteristic will also become higher, but by focusing on the minimum factors, the church can achieve faster growth in the shortest amount of time possible.[9]

The First Survey

The first survey of the Ciba church was taken in March, 2007. A total of 30 church members selected by the senior pastor of the Ciba church took part in the survey, and they were all active in different church duties including elders, deacons, deaconesses, lay activity leaders, choir members, training center students, Sabbath School superintendents, church clerk, church treasurer, and church cashiers. Even though Schwarz recommends that those who fill out the survey should be part of a small group,[10]

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[8]Ibid., 38.

[9]Ibid., 47.

[10]Ibid., 12.

it was impossible to do so at that time as a small group ministry was not really developed in the church.

Before the survey was taken, a short seminar was conducted for those who were selected to participate in the survey. Participants understood that the Ciba church had embraced the concept of NCD, and they knew their truthful answers to the questionnaire were important because the survey result depended upon it, as well as the subsequent recommendations for improvement.

A Chinese translation of the survey questionnaire was obtained from NCD partner China, Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement. CORE software for producing NCD profiles was also purchased from them.[11]

The survey was finished in about fifty minutes. A few participants wondered about the meaning of some of the survey questions. This was mainly due to the differences caused by translating the questionnaires from English to Chinese. An English survey was available to clarify any ambiguity in the survey questions. Once all the participants finished the survey, the questionnaire sheets were put into a sealed envelope. The senior pastor also filled out a questionnaire by himself, as part of the NCD survey process.

The Minimum Factor

Once the survey results were entered into the CORE software, the NCD profile for the Ciba church became very clear. As indicated in table 2, the minimum factor is

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[11]"NCD Partner China," NCD International, http://www.ncd-international.org/public/ PartnersChina.html (accessed September 17, 2008).

TABLE 2

THE CIBA CHURCH'S FIRST SURVEY RESULT

Characteristics	Score
Empowering Leadership	38
Gift Oriented Ministry	78
Passionate Spirituality	53
Effective Structures	47
Inspiring Worship Services	37
Holistic Small Groups	33
Need Oriented Evangelism	59
Loving Relationships	45

Holistic Small Groups with a score of 33. Other characteristics with score lower than 50 are, Inspiring Worship Services (37), Empowering Leadership (38), Loving Relationships (45), and Effective Structure (47).

Analysis of the Minimum Factor

Several observations and analyses can be gleaned from the first survey result.

First of all, it is interesting to see that Holistic Small Groups is the minimum factor, and it certainly fits with the situation in the Ciba church. Schwarz warns that intuition is often misleading, i.e, that many church members think they know their church quite well, and they think they understand what needs to be improved. In fact they only know part of the problem and see part of the picture of the total reality.[12] But in the case of the Ciba church, a small group ministry has never been developed; even Sabbath School is more like a worship service. This has to do with cultural issues and the unique

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[12]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 21.

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situation in China, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 of this project.

Second, Holistic Small Groups scored 33, which is below the critical line of 35. Schwarz states that a score below 35 indicates problems that cannot be ignored.[13] This means that in order for the Ciba church to grow and become healthier, it must improve the quality characteristic of Holistic Small Groups. Since the score is so low, many of the potential suggestions for implementing improvement would likely be strange and maybe even unwelcome to the members. The Ciba church would need to have an open mind and be willing to try something new, and they need effective application of change principles and leadership actions.

Third, Inspiring Worship Services received a low score of 37, and Empowering Leadership scored 38.

Schwarz and Schalk point out that the scores are calculated based on a mean of 50 with a deviation of 15, which means that the "average score of a quality characteristic for an average church is 50."[14] This also means that if a church's score is between 35 and 65, its characteristics are within the average. For the Ciba church, most of the scores are within this range, but with an average mean score of 48.75, the overall score is a bit below the average.

For Inspiring Worship Services, the Ciba church would be expected to receive a lower score because the way people worship has not changed much for many years. Because Adventist churches in China have been separated from the world church family

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[13]Ibid., 16.

[14]Ibid.

for several decades, the preaching, music, and worship style remain the same as it was when the church opened almost thirty years ago.

For Empowering Leadership, a lower score is also not surprising. Schwarz and Schalk pointed out that this characteristic often gets lower scores in growing churches where there is a demand for better leadership.[15] The Ciba church and most of the churches in China have experienced tremendous growth after the official church door was opened at the beginning of 1980s. But because there are no Adventist schools and seminaries in China, the lack of leadership skills is evident in many Adventist churches in China, including the Ciba church.[16]

Fourth, out of the eight characteristics, one high score (well above average) is Gift Oriented Ministry (78). This would indicate that the Ciba church pays attention to church member's spiritual gifts and they are well integrated into the different ministries in the church. This is truly evident from the involvement of lay people in church ministry. Apart from the senior pastor, most of the church offices are taken up by lay people. They are not paid by the church to be involved in ministries and they dedicate their time and effort to win souls to Jesus.

Last, the low score on Holistic Small Groups correlates with surveys taken in many Adventist churches in North America. As pointed by Russell Burrill, Holistic Small Groups and Gift-oriented Ministry represent the lowest score for Adventist churches.[17]

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[15]Ibid., 47.

[16]Ciba church started with only one family in the 1950s, now with over 2,000 church members, it looks after around 80 smaller churches in the whole province, with a total membership of close to 15,000.

[17]Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 70.

At this point in the project, NCD appeared to be an adequate tool to evaluate church health, at least from the norms laid down by Schwartz. The Ciba church has taken the important first step to achieve better health, as they work on the recommendations suggested by the first church profile.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE MINIMUM FACTOR

Culture and Contextual Issues

Could an appropriate strategy for improving the minimum factors at the Ciba

church be implemented? Changes were needed for the church to become healthier, but

what kind of change? Merely following the suggestions given by Schwarz was not

enough, as Schwarz and Schalk pointed out, "We have consciously avoided step-by-step

programs for each of the quality characteristics, because it would never do justice to the

individuality of each different church situation." Therefore it is important to

"individualize" each idea and relate it to the concrete situation of each local church.[1]

Before any suggested changes take place, one would have to consider some

cultural and contextual issues related to Chinese thinking and philosophy. These

considerations are important because NCD is a tool produced by Western minds, and in

order for it to be implemented, contextualized, and "individualized," we would need to

understand the cultural differences between Western and Chinese societies.

Studies concerning cultural differences have been conducted by various scholars.

Even though many aspects of culture cannot be understood by research alone,

nevertheless research is helpful to get a grip on the concept of culture and cultural

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[1]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 42.

variations in different places around the world. Two leading researchers in the field are

Geert Hofstede, a senior researcher at Wageningen University in the Netherlands[2] and

Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz. Hofstede's research was based on attitude surveys

of 117,000 employees of IBM in 75 countries, whereas Schwartz conducted his study

from 87 samples of teachers and students from 41 cultural groups in 38 nations.[3]

Even though these research efforts were conducted at different times and places, it

is interesting to note that "the result of the major studies . . . have some remarkable

similarity."[4] This means there are some common traits in cultural variations that can be

compared and studied.

The first step in comparing Western and Chinese cultures is to define culture.

Hofstede says culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the

members of one group or category of people from others."[5] Whereas Edgar H. Schein

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[2]Gert Jan Hofstede, *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2002), 233.

[3]More details of Hofstede and Schwartz's research and comparison of their findings can be found in Marieke K. de Mooij, *Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 33-50; Clive Seligman, James M. Olson, and Mark P. Zanna, "The Psychology of Values," in *Ontario Symposium on Personality Social, Psychology*, The Ontario Symposium, v. 8 (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 1-24. Subsequent studies were conducted by Fons Trompenaars, managing director of Trompenaars Hampden-Turner Intercultural Management Group. Over a 10-year period, he collected data comprising 50,000 cases from over 100 countries. The most recent study was undertaken as part of the Global Leadership and Organization Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) program. GLOBE involved 170 researchers working in 62 different societies and collected data from approximately 17,000 middle managers in 951 organization. More details can be found in Alfons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2006), 252; and *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, ed. Robert J. House et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), xv.

[4]David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 62.

[5]Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (London: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 4.

defines culture as the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles

dilemmas. Because these problem solving methods have worked well for the group, they

are considered valid and are taught to new members as "the correct way to perceive, think,

and feel in relation to those problems."[6] Essentially these two definitions are similar.

Culture is learned and shared among group members, and once a culture is developed, its

pattern and practice will continue to pass onto new members.

Perhaps a better understanding of culture can be learned from how Geert Hofstede

compares culture to "mental programming"—programming of the mind, i.e., much like

software for the computer,

> Every person carries with himself or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and
> potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been
> acquired in early childhood. . . . Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because
> it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social
> environment, which is where it was learned. . . . Culture is learned, not innate. It
> derives from one's social environment rather than from one's genes.[7]

Culture as "mental programming" does not mean that people are programmed like

a computer and they are bound to react the way they are designed, "the software of the

mind . . . only indicates what reactions are likely and understandable, given one's past."[8]

But it does mean that most people in the same culture will likely have similar behavior.

Geert Hofstede's understanding about culture is basically threefold: culture is

learned, it is shared with people of the same social environment, and it is embedded

deeply in people's minds in that change does not come easy. This is because culture

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[6]Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 17.

[7]Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organization*, 4-5.

[8]Ibid., 3.

patterns and practice is learned early in life, as Geert Hofstede points out, "as soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting have established themselves within a person's mind, he or she must unlearn these before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time." [9]

How does this understanding of culture help to develop a strategy for the Ciba church? Essentially, in order for the strategy to be effective, it has to fit with the culture that members of the Ciba church could relate to. Any change that would take place must not be foreign to them.[10] Ideas and methods developed by persons of different cultural backgrounds could be used in the Ciba church, but it would take dedicated effort and contextualization for members in the Ciba church to internalize them.

With this in mind, it is helpful to look at some of the research findings regarding the difference between Western and Chinese thinking. But first it is important to remember that these research findings are descriptions of the norm, and they should only be used as a general rule about the behavior of a cultural group.[11] This is because there are limitations in the research. Ideally, to understand culture differences, it is best to

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[9]Hofstede comments that contrary to most animals, humans at birth are incompletely equipped for life. Fortunately our human physiology provides us with a receptive period of some ten to twelve years, a period in which we can quickly and largely unconsciously absorb necessary information from our environment. At the end of this period, we gradually switch to a different, conscious way of learning, focusing primarily on new practices. More details can be found in ibid., 8.

[10]Certainly these changes have to be in line with biblical principles, in cases that elements of culture that are contrary to biblical principles, Bible should be upheld above culture. As in Marvin Keene Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Crosscultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), missionaries are change agents. They have stopped widow burning in India, the killing of twins in Africa, and prostitution in Hawaii. They have introduced hospitals and education and dignity for women. In thousands of ways Christians have been salt and light in culture, exposing darkness and preserving the good.

[11]Thomas, 68-69.

sample all the cultures in the world, but it is a task that is almost impossible to do.

Research indicates that there are four areas of cultural difference between Westerners and Chinese.

1. *Individualism.* Geert Hofstede discovered that people in Western societies traditionally demonstrate a high degree of individualism, whereas in Chinese societies, people demonstrate a high level of collectivism. This suggests that compared to Westerners, Chinese are less likely to speak out and stand out. Chinese position themselves within a complex web of social networks with high levels of obligation and dependence. Individuals learn to view themselves as an integral part of the social order, bound to their family or clan, and having obligations to it. On the other hand, Western children tend to be encouraged to see themselves first as individuals, and only second as members of a community.[12]

Amy Tan, an American writer of Chinese descent whose works explore mother-daughter relationships, illustrates this point well in her novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, about a Chinese mother who desperately is trying to teach her America born daughter Chinese values,[13]

> I taught her how American circumstances work. If you are born poor here, it's no lasting shame. You are first in line for a scholarship. If the roof crashes on your head, no need to cry over this bad luck. You can sue anybody, make the landlord fix it. You do not have to sit like a Buddha under a tree letting pigeons drop their dirty business on your head. You can buy an umbrella . . . but I couldn't teach her about Chinese character, how to obey parents and listen to your mother's mind. How not to show your own thoughts, to put your feelings behind your face so you can take advantage

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[12]Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 49-78. See also Sara F. Y. Tang and Paul S. Kirkbride, "Developing Conflict Management Skills in Hong Kong: An Analysis of Some Cross-Cultural Implications," *Management Learning* 17, no. 3 (1986): 293.

[13]Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (New York: Putnam's, 1989), 254.

of hidden opportunities. . . . How to know your own worth and polish it, never flashing it around like a cheap ring. Why Chinese thinking is best.

2. *Goals oriented*.[14] It refers to the manner in which individuals seek to attain their goals. Chinese and Western societies differ, according to Geert Hofstede, in that Chinese are more goals oriented than Westerners.[15] One example of this difference is the increasing number of Asian students in American universities, especially in the natural science fields, such as physics and chemistry. This is at least partially related to the way Chinese are raised and taught that they should seek for higher education, in order to seek higher position in the society. According to Liu Jun, author of *Asian Students' Classroom Communication Patterns in U.S. Universities*,[16] international students fill the spots in many graduate programs created by a lack of American students entering into graduate study in these fields. Without foreign students, these programs would not survive, and according to statistics, the majority of these foreign students were from Asia.[17]

3. *Power Distance*. It describes the steepness of the hierarchy of power relations within a society, and it is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."[18] Geert Hofstede's research indicates Chinese societies tend to have higher

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[14]Geert Hofstede actually used the term *Masculinity verses Femininity*, but because of the obvious gender generalizations implied by Hofstede's terminology, this dimension is often renamed by users of Geert Hofstede's work to Quantity of Life versus Quality of Life.

[15]Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 79-108.

[16]Jun Liu, *Asian Students' Classroom Communication Patterns in U.S. Universities* (Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, 2001).

[17]Ibid., 2.

[18]Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 46.

power distance than Western societies, which basically means that Chinese are more respectful for those who are in high positions and they can tolerate more power differences than Westerners. This is because Chinese place important emphasis on an individual's place in the hierarchy of social relationships. For Chinese people, building relationships with those who possess power is more important than holding power, as power is limited but relationship is endless.

4. *Confucian Work Dynamism*. This is perhaps the most significant cultural difference between Chinese and Westerners, and it is suggested by *The Chinese Culture Connection*, which conducted a study based on Chinese values, as an effort to investigate the possibility that Geert Hofstete's study might contain cultural bias because it was developed in the West. This survey was conducted in twenty-three countries and the result was very similar to Geert Hofstede's original study except it included a suggestion of a new dimension, Confucian Work Dynamism that is important in the Chinese culture.[19]

Basically this dimension says that Confucian thinking appears to run through the life patterns of most Chinese, irrespective of where they live. As Bih-Shiaw Jaw and others points out, Confucianism stresses the value of diligence and working hard to achieve the long-term goal of benefit. It makes sense to prepare for the future, and change is always welcomed.[20]

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[19]"Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-Free Dimensions of Culture: The Chinese Culture Connection," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 18, no. 2 (1987). See also Wen-Shing Tseng and David Y. H. Wu, *Chinese Culture and Mental Health* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1985), 29-45.

[20]Bih-Shiaw Jaw and others, "The Impact of Culture on Chinese Employees' Work Values," *Personnel Review* 36, no. 1 (2007): 767.

Perhaps two Chinese words can help to understand this dimension. As mentioned earlier, in collective societies, social relationships tend to assume great importance. In Chinese societies, this relationship is governed by what is called *guanxi*, literally meaning *relationship*. Unlike "friendship," which in the West tends to have few implications in terms of mutual obligations, *guanxi* is a bond between people, on the basis of which friends are expected to look after each other's well being. In other words, in Chinese societies, people are more dependent upon each other. The importance of *guanxi* in Chinese societies also means that there is no distinction between personal relationships and business relationships. This is quite different from the West, where the two sets of relationships are kept separate.[21]

Another Chinese word, *mianzi*, literally means *face*. *Mianzi* is central to much of social behavior, i.e., people talking of giving, harming, and protecting face. Much thought is given to protecting one's own and others' face. It is considered very impolite to harm another person's face, for example, by embarrassing them in public. In an individualistic culture, individuals are free to choose the image they project to others. In Chinese societies, other people's *mianzi* should be respected, which means doing everything possible to protect one's own face and the face of his/her family and friends.[22]

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[21]John H. Dunning and Changsu Kim, "The Cultural Roots of Guanxi: An Exploratory Study," *World Economy* 30, no. 2 (2007): 333. Also see Farh Jiing-Lih, Rick D. Hackett, and Liang Jian, "Individual-Level Cultural Values as Moderators of Perceived Organizational Support--Employee Outcome Relationships in China: Comparing the Effects of Power Distance and Traditionality," *Academy of Management Journal* 50, no. 3 (2007).

[22]Wenshan Jia, *The Remaking of the Chinese Character and Identity in the 21st Century: The Chinese Face Practices* (Westport, CT: Ablex Pub, 2001), 57-68. See also Daryl Koehn and Alicia Leung, "Dignity in Western Versus in Chinese Cultures: Theoretical Overview and Practical Illustrations," *Business & Society Review* 113, no. 4 (2008): 488-489.

This is also related to how Chinese handle conflict. For example, if there is an interpersonal problem in an organization, a Chinese boss will normally talk to the people involved individually and try to resolve the problem privately without harming either person's face. Western bosses, however, often consider it more healthy to bring interpersonal conflict out in the open, in order to get to the root of the problem.[23]

In summary, it is sufficient to say that it is widely accepted that Chinese culture is very different from that of the West. Even though most of the research findings mentioned above were conducted by westerners, they are nevertheless accepted and used in many Chinese scholarly writings.[24] Generally speaking, Chinese people pay more attention to relationships and they tend to emphasize social needs over more individualistic needs. They are goal-oriented in that the motivation for them to achieve their goals is based more on the acquisition of money and possessions rather than quality of life. They respect and accept those in higher positions and are less likely to disobey orders from above. Finally, Chinese people are open to change because they are willing to suffer short-term loss to achieve long-term benefit.

In developing a strategy for the Ciba church, it is important to remember these cultural differences. It is also vital to pay attention to how Chinese culture affects

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[23]Tang and Kirkbride, 294. See also Albert Chan and David Choo, "Not Saying No Doesn't Mean Yes," *Conference Board Review* 44, no. 5 (2006).

[24]Writings by Chinese scholars confirmed these cultural differences. For example, in the area of Individualism verses Collectivism, just the fact how addresses and names are written differently for Westerners and Chinese reflected the cultural dissimilarity. For Chinese, the name always comes at the end of the address, rather than at the beginning. Also, the surname (last name) always comes first, where in the west it comes second. More details can be found in Hui Wang and Guoliang Yu, *Quan Qiu Guan Xi Zhong De Zhongguo Chu Jing* [China in the Global Relationships] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998), 38-57. See also Zhengkun Gu, *Hu Gou Yu Yan Wen Hua Xue Yuan Li* [Linguistic Culturology] (Beijing: Qing Hua University Press, 2004), 165-220.

members in the Ciba church in their openness to change. The best strategy is to utilize the uniqueness in Chinese culture that will lead to the natural growth that God desires.

This is particularly true in the development of a strategy to increase the score of Holistic Small Groups for the Ciba church. For example, because Chinese people pay more attention to relationships, emphasis should be put on how to build relationships among church members through small groups. Because Chinese people are goal-oriented, a clear defined vision and goal would be important for them to see how small group ministry would eventually cause the church to grow in numbers. Because Chinese people are more likely to respect and accept those in higher positions, it is vital for the Ciba church leadership to understand and become passionate about making the church healthier through small group ministry, and they would in turn influence the members to feel the same way. Because Chinese people are open to change that they are willing to suffer short-term loss to achieve long-term benefit, active participation in small group ministry should be emphasized. This way members understand that even though it may seem hard to change their habit and custom, their hard effort will eventually pay off.

China's Unique Situation and Limitations

China has a long history, and that means that this country has a deep rooted and rich culture, as Kevin Latham puts it, "Chinese people often proudly proclaim 5,000 years of history and point to more than 3,000 years of literature, poetry, and philosophical scholarship."[25]

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[25]Kevin Latham, *Pop Culture China!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle*, *Popular Culture in the Contemporary World* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 1.

As for Christianity, all that scholars knew about the earliest Christians in China came from the Nestorian Stone, a tablet discovered in 1625 by Jesuit missionaries in China. This stone provided historians with evidence that Nestorian Christianity entered into China in 635 A.D. The stone tells how the Nestorian monks came, how Chinese officials were appointed to listen to their explanations, and how they approved of the new religion as having good principles. Several emperors accepted, or at least included Christianity among their religions. However, Nestorian Christianity did not make a lasting impact, because it was "unable to resist the inroads of ignorance and superstition and changing political affairs. It [eventually] degenerated and disappeared."[26]

The history of modern Chinese Christianity began in September 1807 when an English missionary named Robert Morrison came to China.[27] In the early years, because of political force and unequal treaties by foreign governments,[28] Christian churches repeatedly met with resistance from the Chinese people as well as government officials.

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[26]Charles F. Horne, *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, vol. 12, *Medieval China* (Kila, MA: Kessinger, 1997), 381. Because of the absence of other documentation, Nestorian Christianity had long been considered a marginal group that never penetrated Chinese culture. But Martin Palmer, who heads the Britain-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation, discovered evidence of a Christian church underneath a Chinese temple 50 miles southwest of ancient Chinese capital of Xian. Palmer's discovery shows how important those first Christians really were: Their church sits squarely in the middle of what was an imperial compound for the study of Taoism, the official religion of the Tang dynasty. For more details, please see Bay Fang, "Did Christianity Thrive in China? Digging for Evidence in an Ancient Church; Lou Guan Tai, China," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 5, 2001, 51.

[27]Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 178-182. See also Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 636-641.

[28]The so-called unequal treaties were made to provide certain privileges to foreign nationals which were not reciprocally granted to the Chinese. Foreign citizens, for example, were not under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government and they could claim exemption from Chinese taxes. One such unequal treaty also resulted in China conceded Hong Kong to Great Britain. More examples of these treaties can be found in Antony Anghie, *Colonialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72-73.

The political and cultural clashes meant that missionary work proceeded slowly, and results from mission activities were not significant.[29]

Beginning with the 1880s, thanks to the missionaries' efforts in disseminating Western culture in education, medicine, publication, and other fields, the influence of Christianity gradually spread in China. Missionaries around the world flocked to China, with almost half of them from America. By 1920, the total Protestant missionary force peaked at 8,158 being located in more than 1,100 mission points. The number of Christians was about 800,000, among China's estimated 440 million population at that time.[30]

China closed its door to the outside world with the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Although missionaries and foreign organizations continued to stay in China beyond 1949, the task of spreading the Gospel was becoming increasingly difficult. Christianity seemed to die out officially in what the Chinese called "The Cultural Revolution," from 1966-1976.[31]

Since China adopted the policy of reform and opening up to the outside world in 1978, Christianity has developed greatly and the number of Christians has grown exponentially in spite of the difficulties of trying to be a practicing Christian in a somewhat antagonistic environment. Despite the openness of China in many areas

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[29]Wayne Flynt and Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 1-3. See also Daniel H. Bays, *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[30]Flynt and Berkley, 4-10.

[31]John S. Peale, *The Love of God in China: Can One Be Both Chinese and Christian?* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 5.

including economy and trade, there are still a lot of restrictions in terms of religious freedom in China. China often bars foreign missionaries from engaging in religious activities, and the government sometimes harasses or imprisons Christians. China has an official Catholic Church and an official nondenominational Protestant Church, which are not suppressed, and people can join freely.[32] Yet the fastest-growing church groups are the underground ones—usually evangelical without any specific denomination bias. These groups attempt to be independent of the government.[33]

There are various estimates about the total number of Christians in China. According to a recent article in *The Economist*, there are up to 130 million Christians in China. This is far larger than previous estimates. The government says there are 21 million (16 million Protestants, 5 million Catholics). Unofficial figures, such as one given by the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity in Massachusetts, put the number at

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[32]The Christian church (including Adventists) in China is governed by Three-Self Patriotic Movement (officially China Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee; the Three-Self Church) and the China Christian Council. These are two pro-government ("patriotic") Christian organizations in the People's Republic of China. Together they form the only government-sanctioned ("registered") Protestant church in mainland China. They are usually referred to as the 'two associations.' There are large numbers of house churches in China which are outside of the registered organizations. In 1951, a Cantonese Christian named Wú Yàozōng initiated the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which promoted a strategy of 'self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation' in order to remove foreign influences from the Chinese churches. This was to assure the communist government that the churches would be patriotic to the newly-established People's Republic of China. The strange-sounding name 'Three-Self' is a characteristically Chinese way of abbreviating 'self-governance, self-support, self-propagation'. The movement began formally in 1954. From 1966 to 1976 the Cultural Revolution stopped the expression of religious life for Christians in China. In 1979 the church was restored, and in 1980 the China Christian Council was formed. Through the council, the registered Protestant church participates in the World Council of Churches. The two associations claim that Christianity in China is 'post-denominational:' Protestant denominations prevalent in other parts of the world have no place in China. Christians are said to congregate on Sunday each week in service, implementing the principle of mutual respect. Although Adventist beliefs are recognized by the Three-Self and Adventists are allowed to worship on Sabbath, nevertheless, they are sometimes harassed by Sunday keepers and been labeled as a cult. More details of Three-Self can be found in Shenk, "The Origins and Evolution of the Three-Selfs in Relation to China," 28-35.

[33]Nicholas D. Kristof, "Keeping Faith in China," *New York Times*, June 25, 2006, 4.

about 70 million. A study of China by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, an American think-tank, says indirect survey evidence suggests many unaffiliated Christians are not in the official figures. It would mean China contains more Christians than Communists (party membership is 74 million) and there may be more active Christians in China than in any other country in the world.[34]

What are the contributing factors for China's church growth? There seem to be many different answers. Some people say that just like the early Christian church, the blood of the Chinese martyrs has become the seed of the gospel. Some people simply say that suffering has produced a greater driving force for people to turn to God.[35] Perhaps because atheistic education has swept away the folk religions and superstitions, it has also cleared the ground for the acceptance of Christianity by creating a spiritual vacuum.[36] Or maybe as David Aikman suggested, the growth of the church is mainly due to the charismatic and evangelical nature of house churches in China.[37]

From a cultural perspective, Kwan Kai-man and Han Siyi suggest several reasons.[38] First, although Christianity and the Chinese culture have a lot of differences, they are not incompatible. They may even possess important similarities, especially in

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[34]"Asia: Sons of Heaven; Christianity in China," *The Economist*, October 4, 2008, 46-47.

[35]"Love and Miracles in China," *Christianity Today* 41 (1997): 40. See also Leslie Hook, "Christianity Comes to China's Cities," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December, 2006, 10; and Andrew Chi Sing Ma, "Toward a Contextual Theology of Suffering: The Chinese Christian Perspective since 1949" (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2005), 287-308.

[36]Bays, 7.

[37]David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Lanham, MD: Regnery Pub., 2003), 136.

[38]Kwan Kai-man and Han Siyi, "The Search for God in Chinese Culture and Contemporary China," *Canadian Social Science* 4, no. 3 (2008): 29.

contrast with modern ideologies like secularism and communism. Furthermore, after facing the challenge of modernity for two centuries, the Chinese are now much more aware of the deficiencies of the Chinese culture and religions. This provides a motivation for them to look for something new in Christianity.

Second, Chinese have watched how Christianity has helped to shape Western societies. Since the majority of Western countries are more developed than China the Christian faith is immensely attractive as a potential way to improve their lives.

Third, the Chinese culture places a special emphasis on morality and ethics. However, modern China is now facing a moral crisis due to severe challenges from different ideologies and social problems caused by the rapid rise of the market economy. It is natural for the Chinese to treat Christianity as a moral ally.

Whatever the case, it is an undeniable fact that churches in China are growing, and it is certainly not caused by forces or influences outside of China. As Daniel H. Bays points out, although Christianity came into China as a foreign religion, over the past few decades, it has been "domesticated." "The majority of Chinese Christians were converted by other Chinese, not by foreign missionaries." Basically, the growth of Christianity in China has "established its own momentum of development on the basis of its own resources."[39]

A survey of literature shows many different reasons for the phenomenal growth of Christianity in China for the past three decades, but the majority of them do not consider church growth in terms of church health, as Ehud M. Garcia writes in his book, *The*

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[39]Daniel H. Bays, "Chinese Protestant Christianity Today," *The China Quarterly* 174 (2003): 503.

Wisdom of James, "the healthy church is the one that is tested with fire. . . . The church was healthy because of the persecution that was taking place. Only the faithful were able to stand; there was no chance for the weak. The same happens in China today."[40]

Perhaps the fundamental question is this, while churches in China are growing rapidly, is numeric growth equal to a healthy church? Will growth continue if efforts are not put into place to help churches in China to understand the natural growth mechanism designed by God?

The growth pattern of Adventist churches in China can help to answer this question. Adventist work in China began as a project of one layman, Abram La Rue, an American gold miner, seaman, and shepherd, who became an Adventist at an advanced age. Perceiving that the Advent message was to be given to the world, he attended Healdsburg College to prepare himself for the gospel work, and requested that he be appointed to China. The Mission Board, considering him too old (he was about 65 at the time), suggested instead that he bear his witness on one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean. He went first to the Hawaiian Islands, where his work led to the establishment of permanent Adventist work on the islands. Still longing to carry the Adventist message to China, he went in 1888 to Hong Kong. In the same year he visited Canton, and in 1889 went to Shanghai, in both places selling and distributing SDA publications among the English-speaking residents there.[41]

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[40]Ehud M. Garcia, *The Wisdom of James: Word and Deed for the Diaspora* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 63.

[41]Samuel Young, ed., *Chinese SDA History*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), 1:32-35.

At the end of 1904 there were 64 Adventists in all of China. After the General

Conference sent more missionaries, two schools opened, and regular public preaching

began during the summer of that year.

Church structure began to build up in China by 1930, when the China Division

was formed. There were already six union missions, twenty-nine local missions, 156

churches, 9,456 church members, 947 workers, 103 church schools, and 3,325 students.

There were seventeen educational institutions of secondary and college level, one

publishing house, two smaller local presses, and eleven medical institutions.[42]

By 1950 the political climate changed in China. The last division report indicated

that the total number of Adventists in China at that time was around 21,000.[43] Soon after

the change of government on the mainland, the work there was separated from the rest of

the Adventist body.

When church structure was taken away, and when the church members were

severely persecuted, did Adventists membership also shrink to nothing? Many faithful

Adventists willingly endured the hardship. The spirit of those Adventists did not die, but

became even stronger. Even though there was no official church membership record from

1950 to 1986, by the end of 2000, twenty years after China opened the closed door to

Christianity and allowed freedom of religion, the estimated membership in China was at

297,232.[44] Compared to 21,000 members in 1950, Adventist church membership at the

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[42]Ibid., 69.

[43]Ibid., 117.

[44]Ibid.

end of 1986 was 75,000, and the growth from 1986 to 2000 was about 16,000 per year.

But this growth is showing signs of slowdown. At the end of 2008, the official Adventist membership in China stands at 370,334.[45] Compared to the growth during the eighties and nineties (16,000 a year) the average annual growth recently has dropped to about 9,000.

Some would argue that statistical data in China is not accurate and it is impossible to count the number of house churches. As Tony Lambert points out, many of the statistics used in the West to count the Chinese house churches are exaggerated.[46] Nevertheless, the slowing down of growth is obvious, as outlined in table 3.

Adventist church growth is running against the tide of secularism and materialism. As China opens up more, many people immerse themselves in the influx of Western ideas and customs, which in many cases is not good at all.

However, the fact remains that if the Adventist church in China wants to achieve sustainable growth as God intended, merely relying upon the curiosity factor of the Christian faith is not enough. Thirty years ago when Christian churches were just opened, the fact that people had been denied the right of religious freedom made Christianity feel like a breath of fresh air. Sometimes whole villages would convert to Christianity. But curiosity and thirst for religion also led to the rise of sects, cults, and offshoot groups.[47]

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[45]Tsui, *Secretary's Report* (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, December 2-4, 2008), Minutes of Meetings of Annual Council.

[46]Tony Lambert, "Counting Christians in China: A Cautionary Report," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 1 (2003): 7.

[47]Joseph Kahn, "Violence Taints Religion's Solace for China's Poor; the Great Divide--Competing for Souls," *New York Times*, November 25, 2004, A25.

Table 3

NUMBER OF BAPTISMS IN CHINA SINCE 1986[48]

Year	Number of Baptisms
1986	53,832
1987	7,000
1988	6,200
1989	10,000
1990	10,231
1991	6,646
1992	16,770
1993	25,314
1994	18,246
1995	31,323
1996	21,239
1997	15,331
1998	19,078
1999	26,075
2000	16,852
2001	14,115
2002	6,321
2003	8,762
2004	11,847
2005	5,846
2006	8,793
2007	7,906
2008	8,561

Even though curiosity about Christianity still draws people to church, people are getting to know about Christian beliefs through many more different ways: (1) more and more people in China are being educated in the West and subsequently convert to Christianity and thus they bring back their new found beliefs to their families and friends.

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[48]"World Church Statistics," General Conference-Office of Archives & Statistics, http://www.adventiststatistics.org/fieldsearch.asp?search=china (accessed May 9, 2008).

(2) factory workers leave their homes in the countryside to find work in the city and they

bring along their Christian faith to their co-workers, (3) Christian businessmen share their

faith with their partners and encourage factory workers to attend church, and (4) china's

intellectuals and scholars are increasingly drawn to Christianity.[49]

All of these factors are also impacting Adventist churches in China, and compared

to Christian churches as whole, the growth slowdown in Adventist churches is a sign that

the church is experiencing growth pains. The uniqueness of this project was using the

western-oriented and successful NCD program and applying it to the Ciba Adventist

Church in Southwest China. The strategy as developed in this project was the first of its

kind among Adventist churches in China, and the documented results were probably also

among the first few NCD profiles done in China.[50]

But there are several limitations in doing this project in China. First is that China

is still wary of letting its citizens enjoy the kind of religious freedom as understood by

people in the West. As John Paele points out, being a Christian in China is still a private

matter for many people, even though the constitution guarantees religious freedom.[51]

Persecution is still going on in different places, although most Christians in China are

able to worship freely and openly.[52] The Ciba church also had to be careful in learning

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[49]Bruce Einhorn and Chi-Chu Tschang, "Praying for Success in Shanghai; the Head of SMIC Is a Born-Again Boss Who Mixes Evangelical Christianity with Business," *Business Week*, July 14, 2008, 87. Also see "Asia: Sons of Heaven; Christianity in China."

[50]According to NCD partner China, which is located in Hong Kong, NCD profiles have been done in China, but the number is small. Chi Wai Wu, "NCD Profiles for China," e-mail to author, December 29, 2008.

[51]Peale, 6.

[52]Kristof, 4.

and implementing a program like NCD that comes from outside because church activities are still being closely monitored by the local Religious Affairs Bureau.

Second is the lack of ability for the Adventist denomination to demonstrate any support for doing a project like this in China. This is mainly due to the unique situation in China in that all Christian churches are under "one denomination," i.e., the Three-Self church.[53] Adventist churches are congregational in nature, which means each local church basically operates independently on its own.[54] The Ciba church was under no obligation to cooperate with the research of this project, other than the fact that they were willing to learn and accept new ideas, and they were willing to try something new.

Third is the limitation of comparative research data available for NCD profiling of churches in China. According to NCD International, "If there is no NCD Partner in a given country yet, it indicates that so far no national norm has been developed for that country. Without this norm it is impossible to do the Survey. Using the norm of another country inevitably produces wrong results."[55]

Ideally NCD profiling of the Ciba church should be analyzed with norm of Adventist churches in China, or at least Christian churches in China. But as this project was the first NCD profile of an Adventist church in China, there were no previous profiles to use for comparison and analysis. As for norm of general Christian churches in China, the fact that there is an NCD Partner China would indicate that there is a norm for

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[53]See footnote 32 for detailed explanation of Three-Self.

[54]Robert C. K. Wong, "A Doctrinal Training Program Adapted to the Current Chinese Setting" (DMin dissertation, Andrews University, 1993), 2-3.

[55]"NCD Survey and Coaching," NCD International, http://www.ncd-international.org/public/ profiles.html (accessed July 11, 2009).

China. In reality what NCD can provide is very minimal. In an email communication

with NCD partner China about the norm they use for profiling churches in China,

Director Wu Chi Wai said, "We do NCD for churches in China, but the number is small.

Even if you have the core software, you cannot get the data. The reliability of NCD does

not depend on the regional area, and most churches accept the results they get."[56]

Although NCD International strongly discourages doing NCD surveys without a

country norm, NCD partner China does not seem too concerned about the difference

between China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. It should be recognized that there are

already established norms for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.[57] Because of the

similarity among Chinese in this region, the norms for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

have been used for profiling churches in China, until a proper norm for China can be

established.

Finally, NCD was developed by people in the West, which in many ways is

different from Chinese culture. But there are universal applications in spite of cultural

differences and the uniqueness and limitations of Chinese political environment. The

expectation is that the results of this project can have a bigger impact on other Adventist

churches in China.

In short, China is unique and unpredictable, but it also has the most opportunities.

Christianity has experienced a lot of growth after years of suppression and persecution,

but that trend is changing, as in the case of Adventist membership growth patterns. For

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[56]Wu.

[57]Wu, "NCD Experience in Hong Kong," http://www.chinesepastor.com/ncd/2005/may/sub_homepage/1.htm (accessed July 11, 2009).

sure there are signs of a slowdown in recent years. The causes for this slowdown are many. But one thing is certain among Adventist churches in China. Not much attention has been put into how to make a church healthier, and the concepts of NCD and its principles are largely foreign to them. This project was an attempt to introduce and use NCD to profile the Ciba Adventist Church in Southwest China.

Suggested Implementation Strategy and Goals

The minimum factor in the Ciba church was found to be Holistic Small Groups.[58] After sharing the results of the first survey with the Ciba church board, several meetings were held to help them understand the significance of improving the minimum factor so as to improve the overall health of the Ciba church.

The church board carefully studied the principles of NCD and read over the Chinese translation of Schwarz and Schalk's book, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.[59] After careful consideration of Schwarz's material, the Ciba church decided on the following implementation strategy and goals.

Understanding the Process of NCD

As discussed previously in this chapter, all Christian churches are under one denomination governed by Three-Self; furthermore, China is a communist country that considers religion to be a superstition, a leftover of old China whereby the ruling classes used it to keep power. The very idea of church growth is against the communist ideology

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[58]See detailed analysis in chapter 4 of this project.

[59]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

because the only reason churches are open for people to worship is to maintain a harmonious society and eventually when true communism is fully realized, all religion, including Christianity will naturally die out and disappear.[60]

Because of this special circumstance, it was suggested that the term NCD would not be introduced to church members, but in order to help the members to understand the importance of a healthy church, the church pastor would preach a series of eight sermons on the eight quality NCD characteristics in the second quarter of 2007. A Chinese PowerPoint of NCD principles would also be prepared to share NCD concepts with selected groups within the church, which included the elders, deacons, deaconesses, youth, choir members, and those who were responsible for visitation. Once these core groups of people became familiar with NCD, they would in turn share it with other church members on a personal basis. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the collective nature of Chinese society would help the Ciba leadership to share the concept of NCD with the members. Because Chinese pay more attention to relationships, in spite of political difficulties, the message could be spread among church members quickly.

Determine the Starting Point

The score for the minimum factor of Holistic Small Groups in the Ciba church is only 33, and according to Schwarz, since this score is below 35, a lot of time should be invested in improving this area.[61] Thus it was important to find out the root cause of the

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[60]Stephen Uhalley and Xiaoxin Wu, *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 67.

[61]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 42.

minimum factor.

The pastor and the Ciba church board held discussions with several key people serving in different areas of the church, and they felt the root cause for a low score in the area of Holistic Small Groups was mainly due to the fact that the church offered practically no small groups.

The simple solution would be to start offering small groups. However, there were several considerations in building up Holistic Small Groups ministry in the Ciba church.

The concept of small groups actually was not foreign to members. In fact, before the government opened up churches for worship at the beginning of 1980s, people worshiped in family or house churches.[62] Each family was a small group and because the limitations of family housing, the size of each family church was not very big.

The survival of church life depended upon small group family circles. Because of the restriction on religion and Christianity in China, for almost thirty years after communists took over leadership, Christians could not go to church and they could only gather in small groups. Even the gathering of small groups was dangerous if the group activities were reported to the police. But incredibly, the number of Adventists in China continued to grow, despite the fact that religious freedom was not guaranteed and many people suffered hardship and persecutions for their beliefs.[63]

As the Chinese government continued to guarantee more religious freedom in

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[62]G. Keith Parker, "House Church," *The encyclopedia of Christianity*, (2001), 2:599-600. See also Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 363.

[63]Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 258.

recent years, big churches were opened. As in the case of the Ciba church, from a small

family worship of less than ten people, the membership grew to about 1,500. As the Ciba

church took on the role of mother church, which oversees about eighty churches in the

province of Yunnan and Guizhou, the close knit relationship of family churches gradually

disappeared. In the past ten years, much energy in Ciba was spent on building new

churches.[64]

A small group ministry for the Ciba church was actually a call back to family

relationships that they were naturally and culturally familiar with. The Ciba church

leadership also realized that the very reason the church was not growing as fast as they

anticipated was because they lacked an effective small group ministry. Many people were

attracted to the truth of Jesus Christ and biblical principles appealed to many in the

society, but when they joined the church, they were faced with lost friendships from their

previous small circle of friends and there was not much opportunity to make new friends.

After awhile, newly baptized members started to go back to their former friends, as they

could not find needed friendships and relationships in the church.

Thus it was determined that the Ciba church would focus its energy in the coming

years to develop a small group ministry, especially house church small groups. It would

be a gradual process, starting with training small group leaders, and the forming of small

groups would be based on the church's current ministries so members could adapt it

easily.

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[64]According to Chinese Union Mission's most recent statistic, close to twenty new churches were
built in the province of Yunnan and Guizhou in the past decade. More details can be found in Tsui,
Secretary's Report.

Practical Steps and Goals

The following practical steps and goals were set up by the Ciba church to build a small group ministry.

1. Determine the type of small groups. Since the church did not have small groups in the past, building a small group ministry would take effort. Several types of small groups were planned:

A. Home church groups. Many of the Ciba church members are of indigenous races that live in the mountains. They often walk several hours on Sabbath morning to attend worship service in Ciba. Because of the distance between their home and the church, it is difficult for them to attend many of the church programs which are not held on Sabbath. The goal was to establish twenty home church groups in church members' homes. People who live close by or within a village would meet at least once during the week as a small group. These groups would also provide care for elderly or sick members who could not attend church on Sabbath in Ciba.

B. Sabbath School groups. Sabbath School in the Ciba church was much like a large Bible study class with one teacher talking throughout the whole lesson time. The plan was to divide church members into Sabbath School action units,[65] and each Sabbath School unit would select a discussion group leader and a care coordinator. The discussion group leader would be responsible for reviewing the high points of the lesson, securing full participation, and applying the lessons to daily life. The care coordinator would care for missing class members and encourage members to relate their experiences to the

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[65]Calvin L. Smith, *Church Growth through Sabbath School Action Units* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992).

Sabbath School lesson content. The anticipated result was that Sabbath School members could care for each other, and members would gather not just for Bible study, but also for building relationships. The goal was to encourage all church members to join this kind of group, and a total of ten Sabbath School groups would be established in 2007. Newly baptized members would also be assigned to one of the Sabbath School groups to provide opportunities for them to make needed friendships in the church.

C. Care groups. These groups would focus on inviting and caring for interests. It is hard for visitors and interests to get acquainted in a large church like Ciba, but it is much easier if they are part of the care group. The responsibility of the care group members would be building personal relationship with those who are not yet baptized and helping them to understand the basic Adventist teachings. Since there are several high schools and junior colleges around the Ciba church, the goal was to establish five care groups in 2007 especially for students from these surrounding schools.

D. Choir groups. There are already three choirs in the Ciba church, but the members only meet for choir practice. The goal was to pair up choir members to become spiritual partners. Study material would be provided for them to study, pray, and encourage each other at least once a week. When they come back to choir practice on Sabbath, they would spend thirty minutes to share about their experiences with other group members.

E. Leader groups. This group is mainly for elders, deacons, and deaconesses in the church. Ciba has three elders and about twenty deacons and deaconesses. Since they are the ones who are most involved in different church ministries, the goal was to form three leader groups, and three elders would lead these three groups consisting of deacons and

deaconesses. The main purpose for these groups would be to discuss the implementation of the small group ministry in the Ciba church, and share ways of overcoming difficulties.

2. Provide training for small group leaders. Training is important because although many members have the zeal for small group ministries, they may not be equipped to do so. Thus the training would have two purposes: One was to provide the pastor or overseer of small groups tools to train his or her small group and create an environment in which to do it. The second purpose was to provide support for small group leaders so they could get help when they encounter difficulties.[66] For the Ciba church, a monthly training was planned for topics on how to lead small groups, provide available resources, coaching, interpersonal communication, empowering, equipping, mentoring, motivation, supervision, etc.

3. Encourage a planned process of multiplication. Schwarz points out that if most of the church members are integrated into small groups, and if each of these group members would just win one person to Christ in one year, the membership of the church would double within five years. That sounds like a realistic goal. But in order for this goal to become reality, there must also be a plan for adding small groups when a group reaches a certain size.[67] After careful study, the Ciba church felt that the best way to encourage multiplication was not simply to divide the groups as this can lead to hurt feelings, but to equip members within the group who can go out and start new groups.[68] One model that

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[66]Cloud and Townsend, 15-16.

[67]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 98-99.

[68]Ibid., 98.

fits with this kind of multiplication is the G12 model developed by Joel Comiskey in

Bogota, Columbia, which basically requires all twelve group members to go out and form

their own group within the first year. They believe that everyone, regardless of spiritual

gifts, can lead a group. Thus they have multiplication without division. Each member

goes out to form their own group, while remaining a part of the existing network.[69]

However, the G12 model requires high commitment, as each member would need

to spend time at least in three small group meetings every week.[70] A modified model was

adopted at the Ciba church that within the first year, every group leader would find

someone they could train, and by the end of first year, these apprentices would go out and

form new groups.

Identifying Areas of Difficulty and Resistance

It was anticipated that it would take some effort for church members in Ciba to

understand the concept of small group ministry, and it was mainly due to the political

overtone of the term *small group*.

Small group in Chinese is *xiaozu*, and is a term that people are familiar with, but

usually it refers to a group that the government sets up for various political purposes. For

example, in the political structure of China, a leading small group (LSG) is an ad hoc

supra-ministerial coordinating and consulting body formed to build consensus on issues

that cut across the government, party, and military systems when the existing bureaucratic

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[69]Joel Comiskey, *Groups of 12: A New Way to Mobilize Leaders and Multiply Groups in Your Church* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1999).

[70]G12 model requires each leader to be a member of their original twelve-member group, a leader of a twelve-member group, and a leader of a open group that is forming into a twelve-member group.

structure is unable to do so. The authorization for the formation of leading small groups

comes from Chapter IX of the Constitution of the Communist Party of China.[71]

Because of the political connotation of the term *small group*, people are either not

willing to be associated with some groups or afraid of being left out from other groups.

This kind of thinking has been the cause of some divisions in Adventist churches in

China, and because of the political situation, small group ministries, wrongly

implemented, could lead to division and segregation in the church.

Currently there are already several prominent Adventist groups in China,

including the conservatives, liberals, and those in between. Independent ministries and

off-shoot groups also try to make their mark in China. Since there is no official Adventist

church structure, it is difficult for the church to take a stand against certain dangerous

groups. For example, when a reform group goes to a certain church, and starts to spread

their doctrines about eating grapes for the sake of salvation, a group of people attracted to

their teaching will come together to divide the church, and if they become part of the

small group ministries in the church, they will certainly cause more harm than good.

Thus the emphasis on the holistic aspect of small group ministry would be

important for the Ciba church, and as Russell Burrill points out, "Holistic small groups

create a safe place where people can be themselves and grow in Christ without

condemnation."[72] Years of political turmoil in China has molded people in a way that

they are very sensitive to group dynamics and prone to criticize or condemn other church

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[71]David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 16-19.

[72]Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 70-71.

members. The concept of holistic small groups would help people to realize that there is no condemnation in Christ because we are all sinners.

The Ciba church felt it was important to recognize that forming small groups based on personal interests would be very dangerous. Rather, they felt the purpose of the small group ministries should be for outreach to unbelievers and edifying group members. When groups are formed with these purposes in mind, the newly baptized members would likely find friends. As interests are cared for in the group, the church would grow and members will stay with the church.

Exercising the Strengths

Schwarz suggested that the church should exercise their strengths to help the weaker areas grow.[73] Two characteristics with higher scores in Ciba were Gift Oriented Ministry (78) and Need Oriented Evangelism (59). According to Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, a small group leader may have success in previous ministry roles but it does not mean that they are fit to be a small group leader. Often people assume that as long as they have experiences as leaders, they can lead small groups. That may not be the case as small group leaders require special skills. "Accessing and affirming someone's spiritual gifts affords the church a way of looking at the heart of a candidate, trusting God's wisdom and design over our own wisdom and desires."[74] What kind of spiritual gifts are necessary for small group leaders? Donahue and Robinson suggest the gifts of leadership,

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[73]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 104.

[74]Donahue and Robinson, 64.

administration, and discernment.[75] A spiritual gift discovery seminar was planned in the

Ciba church to help small group leaders to discover whether they had the right gifts for

leading small groups.

As for Need Oriented Evangelism, the Ciba church planned to help different types

of small groups to recruit members by offering need-oriented evangelistic activities. A

youth program specially designed for the high schools and junior colleges around the

Ciba church was planned for every Friday night. Young people would take the lead to run

these programs with lots of singing and interesting topics designed for young people.

Participants would be given invitations to join one of the care groups, which would meet

every Sabbath afternoon in the church. Also it was planned to offer free classes on

computer skills, English conversation, choir singing, and healthy cooking. As people in

the community came and enrolled in these classes, they would also be invited to join

small groups to know about the Adventist lifestyle.

<center>Monitoring Effectiveness</center>

Once a month, small group leaders would have a meeting with the pastor and they

would share and discuss how well they are doing with small group ministry and the

difficulties they encountered. In order to monitor how effective were the practical steps

taken to improve the minimum factor, a new church profile was planned one year from

the first profile. In this way the Ciba church would know if the efforts focused on Holistic

Small Groups had been successful enough so that they should move on to the next quality

characteristic. A summary of goals and objectives can be seen in table 4.

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[75]Ibid.

TABLE 4

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Items	Goals and Objectives
Home Church Groups	20
Sabbath School Groups	10
Care Groups	5
Choir Groups	3
Leader Groups	3
Training for group leaders	monthly
Train additional group leaders	every leader
Leaders meeting with Pastor	monthly

Change Theory Applied

For the Ciba church, the most important issue was how to implement change so that suggested strategies would be carried out and the church would become healthy and grow naturally.

Although many different change theories were discussed in chapter 3 of this project, John P. Kotter's Leading Change eight-step model[76] made the most significant impact on developing small group ministries in the Ciba church.

1. *Establishing a Sense of Urgency*. The number of baptisms in Ciba had been declining,[77] the Ciba church leadership realized that they must change, and it was imperative that they understood the need for change. If change did not take place, the growth of the Ciba church would stagnate and plateau. The focus on developing new

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[76]Kotter, x.

[77]Baptism in 2005 was 140, 107 in 2006, and 114 in 2008. Details can be seen in the Secretary's report by Tsui, *Secretary's Report*.

churches in towns and villages had depleted the energy and focus of church leadership so that they failed to meet the needs of members and interests. The urgency level was raised by discussing the issue of membership decline in every church board meeting on Fridays. Soon most of the board members were convinced that if they put more energy and effort into developing small group ministries, the quality of church life would grow and eventually it would lead to membership increase.

2. *Creating the Guiding Coalition*. In order to achieve the necessary change in Ciba for establishing small group ministries, they needed a team who shared a common vision, had a high level of trust, and targeted the same goals.[78] In June 2007, the church had a nominating committee to select a team of new officers who were willing to invest their time and energy for small group ministry. A two-day retreat in a nearby hotel was held in August to build up the church leaders and lay workers so they became familiar with the concept of small group ministry and were inspired to implement it in the church.

3. *Developing a Vision and Strategy*. A vision for the Ciba church was adopted from Ellen G. White's vision, as follows:[79]

> In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and

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[78]Kotter, 52-66.

[79]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), 9:126.

there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844.

This vision pictures the future people of God being impelled by the message of heaven, and they are actively participating in different areas of church ministry. This is a description of God's people in a healthy church where church members are opening their home for small group meetings. The Ciba church believed that if they followed God's principles and guidance, as more members participate for small group meetings and activities, people would be saved for God's kingdom.

4. *Communicating the Change Vision*. Once the vision was clear, it was up to the pastor and church board members to share that vision with the Ciba church members. A variety of programs and activities were designed to communicate this vision. The vision statement was placed on a blackboard at the side wall of the main church. At the beginning of each month, a new article regarding different aspects of small group ministries would be posted on the board. The vision statement was read at the beginning of each board meeting. To lead by example, the senior pastor was the first one who started a small group in his home, and he spent effort to invite people to join his group, especially those guests who came on Sabbath morning. The pastor also led a Sabbath School action unit, and he led members to share and pray together.

5. *Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action*. The Ciba church decided to give a small one-time startup fund of 500 Chinese Yuan to all newly established small groups. This was a bold move because Ciba had never given any funding for materials and activities incentive or stipend to their lay workers. The training of small group leaders was also part of the action to empower members to make an impact in small group ministry.

6. *Generate Short-Term Wins*. Instead of waiting for a year to see the result of their efforts in small group ministry, a special baptism was planned for interests who made decision to join the church in small groups. Although the tradition had been for baptisms to be held once a year during the summer season, this special baptism was in the Fall of 2008 with a total of fifty-nine baptisms. This small gain was well received and the senior pastor did not forget to use the opportunity to encourage members to open their homes as small group meeting places.

Summary

This chapter's focus was on developing a strategy for improving the minimum factor of Holistic Small Group in the Ciba church. Since NCD was developed by Western scholars and church leaders, the differences between Western culture and Chinese culture were compared. It was felt that the concept of NCD could work in China, even in the Ciba church, but it had to be adapted and contextualized. A strategy for the Ciba church was developed in consultation with local church leadership as outlined in this chapter.

Some of the adaptation and contextualization included using a Chinese survey form provided by NCD partner China, which has been adapted into Chinese language and culture; using NCD principles and materials without actually using the term "NCD" in the Ciba church; taking advantage of the collective nature of the Chinese culture to quickly inform and provide information regarding NCD process to members; introducing and implementing the concept of small groups not as a new program, but a call for them to go back to the family relationships they are familiar with when they were still worshiping in house churches; establishing small groups that they can relate to, but avoiding forming groups based on personal interests to prevent division within the church;

using Gift Oriented Ministry and Need Oriented Evangelism as strengths to help the Ciba church in its small group ministry.

What would be the result of this strategy and outcome of the second church profile? These questions will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

OUTCOMES

The Second Survey

One year after the first survey was taken in March, 2007, a second NCD survey
was conducted in the Ciba church in March, 2008, in a manner very similar to the first
survey in 2007. Thirty members were selected by the senior pastor, and as recommended
by Schwarz and Schalk,[1] they were all members of different small groups, including
home church groups, Sabbath School groups, care groups, choir groups, and leader
groups. Although Schwarz does not specify that the same people from the first survey
should also participate in the second survey, about fifty percent of the participants were
the same. The result of the second survey and comparison with the first is displayed
below in table 5. The differences in score are shown with a plus (+) or minus sign (-) to
indicate increase or decrease in score.

The second survey did not show a significant increase in scores, and the only
noticeable increase was Need Oriented Evangelisms (+6). This score was already
relatively high in the first survey result (59) and the increase in score was probably due to
the youth program that was developed for the young people from surrounding schools.

The most obvious decreases were found in Empowering Leadership (-9) and Gift

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[1]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 12.

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TABLE 5

THE CIBA CHURCH'S SECOND SURVEY RESULT AND

COMPARISON WITH THE FIRST SURVEY

Characteristics	First Score	Second Score	Differences
Empowering Leadership	38	29	-9
Gift Oriented Ministry	78	65	-13
Passionate Spirituality	53	55	+2
Effective Structures	47	43	-4
Inspiring Worship Services	37	35	-2
Holistic Small Groups	33	35	+2
Need Oriented Evangelism	59	65	+6
Loving Relationships	45	46	+1

Oriented Ministry (-13). After spending energy on developing a small group ministry, the

score in Empowering Leadership became even lower. In reality, because the initial score

for Empowering Leadership was already low at 38, it could have been the minimum

factor instead of Holistic Small Groups. As the church spent energy working on

developing small group ministries, the weakness in the area of leadership became even

more evident. The lowest score of the second profile was Empowering Leadership (29),

which became the new minimum factor. According to Schwarz, as church improves its

health, one of the eight quality characteristics is always the minimum factor, and the

effort of improving the minimum factor is never finished.[2]

Gift Oriented Ministry received the highest score of 78 in the first survey, and it

indicated that the Ciba church members were aware of their gifts and were using their

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[2]Ibid., 38.

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gifts for ministries. The decrease in score in this area for the second survey was a sign that some of the church emphasis had shifted for the past year away from this area. As pointed out by Schwarz and Schalk, this is the reason that church should monitor its progress regularly.[3] This way they will know their progress and adjust their strategy accordingly.

As for the minimum factor from the first profile, Holistic Small Groups, there was an increase of two points, but was not significant enough to be considered a real improvement.

What would be the next step for the Ciba church? Should the Ciba church continues to work on establishing a small group ministry or concentrate on leadership development instead? The answer is not simple, but some clues can be discovered from how the Ciba church responded to the changes suggested by the first NCD profiling.

The Ciba Church's Response to the Change Process

The concept of NCD was new to the Ciba church; in fact, Ciba was the first church in China to be profiled by NCD. Seminars on the NCD concept had been conducted in Ciba, but there was a large gap between understanding the concept and implementing the changes.

Since Holistic Small Groups was found to be the minimum factor, goals and objectives were suggested for the Ciba church to work on. The Ciba church's leadership was keen on implementing the strategies developed from the NCD survey, but nevertheless, they were met with several difficulties and challenges.

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[3]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 18.

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1. The political climate in China had made people a little afraid to change. As discussed in chapter 3 of this project, change often was viewed as instability. For many years, people lived in fear as the government suppressed Christianity; there were no churches to go to, and many faithful Adventists endured persecution for their beliefs. When churches were finally opened and as people began to enjoy worshipping freely in the church, they treasured the experience so they would attempt to safeguard their opportunity to worship in the church. Even though people were used to worshipping in small groups at homes during the hard times in the past, pushing small group ministry could easily be viewed as a threat to stability. Also in many peoples' minds, the concept of small groups seemed to be going backward in church development, as new and bigger churches continue to be constructed in cities and towns across China.

Thus many church members in Ciba did not see the need to have small groups. Even though church leadership understood the importance of small group ministry, it took time for members to embrace the concept. After one year of communication and modeling the way, the number of members who participated in small groups was still less than fifty percent.

2. There were also worries that some people would organize small groups not for the purpose of evangelism and nurture, but for division. In fact, one incident happened at the end of 2007 when one couple came from northeast China to Ciba to introduce the benefit of a vegetarian diet. This would normally be a good idea but for most members in Ciba, eating clean meat has been their tradition, as the diet in the province of Yunnan

often consists of meat.[4] The couple learned that the church was encouraging people to open their homes for small groups meetings, and they were eager to open their home to share the vegetarian diet message with the Ciba church members. Their intention was good, but the problem was that they asked members not to attend Sabbath afternoon activities in the church, and to go to their home for a health talk instead. As their small group drew more attention, members who decided to follow the vegetarian diet started to criticize others who continued to eat meat. Soon the church was divided on the issue of vegetarian food versus clean meat diet, and some quickly jumped to the conclusion that meat eaters would not be saved.

Seeing this issue was dividing the church, church leadership visited the couple and shared with them how their small group was causing conflict in the church. The couple agreed that they would present a balanced view to members and only have group meetings in Friday evenings. They were also invited to share the health messages with church members. This arrangement would work if everyone had a humble spirit. But, unfortunately, some bad words started to spread among those who were against vegetarian diet. This couple also became angry at those remarks. The ideal resolution of this conflict would be that if this couple wanted to have a small group, they needed to be incorporated into the leadership group and receive some supervision as well. The Ciba leadership also needed to have a balanced view on vegetarianism. On one hand, they needed to affirm that vegetarian diet was God's original plan for His people. On the other hand, they should never equate the vegetarian diet with tickets to heaven.

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[4]Damian Harper, *China's Southwest* (Hong Kong: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 229.

However, because the Ciba church leadership did not have a good method of conflict management, they finally ask the couple to leave because they were dividing the church.

3. There was a concentration of power in the Ciba church among the core leadership, especially the senior pastor. This phenomenon is not unique to Ciba, although it is more evident than many other Adventist churches across China. This is directly related to the authoritarian style of leadership in the Chinese government.[5] Although church leadership should be very different from the government, Adventist members in China cannot escape being influenced by the environment they lived in and by the education they received in government schools. Adventist Churches, including the Ciba leaders and members, have been conditioned to the authoritarian style of church administration. Generally speaking, the pastor makes important decisions, although many issues are discussed in the church board, but the pastor often has the final say. For members, even if they are not satisfied with the performance of the pastor, they usually will not express it openly to the pastor. This kind of church administration style was a hindrance to the development of a small group ministry, as most of the members tend to take on passive roles. In the case of the Ciba church, the senior pastor was very supportive in developing a small group ministry, and the members were merely following along, but they were not very active in implementing it. Education was needed to convince members that they too could make an impact on the future direction of the church, but this kind of change would take years to achieve.

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[5]Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39-52.

4. There is a danger involved by attempting to implement changes in Ciba. Since Adventists are still part of the Three-Self, any changes made are closely monitored by the Three-Self. It was not easy for the Ciba church members to implement the strategies of developing small group ministries by themselves, and they needed help from coaches who had experience in church growth. This meant people from outside of China would need to go in and work with the local church. The church had to use "foreign" NCD principles, take the church profile, and find out their minimum factor. Since Three-Self upholds the principle of self-governance, they really do not allow outsiders to interfere with local Chinese church affairs. The only way to accomplish the task was to build a good relationship with the local church and conduct surveys as discretely as possible. The Ciba church had a good relationship with the Three-Self and Religious Affairs Bureau, and, as a result, many activities including the surveys were accomplished without official approval.[6] Unfortunately the good relationship did not last. By June 2008, the local Religious Affairs Bureau was planning to give permission to Three-Self to build a new church in the same district where Ciba is located. This would not be an Adventist church, and the Religious Affairs Bureau pushed Ciba to join this church. The Ciba church was not willing to do so because they feared that once they joined this church, they would have to open up Ciba for worship service on Sunday. The relationship between the Ciba church and Religious Affairs Bureau became very bad and they had to put many of the planned activities on hold.

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[6]The Religious Affairs Bureau, as an agency of the government, is the mediator between religious organizations like Three-Self and the Communist Party. More details can be found in Jinghao Zhou, "China, Communist," *Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom* (2003), 47.

Coming back to the question raised earlier, since the second church profile revealed that Empowering Leadership was the new minimum factor, should the Ciba church switch to leadership development instead? Following the first church profile implications, the Ciba church had decided on a strategy to develop small group ministries. One year after the first survey, the score for Holistic Small Groups only increased two points to 35. The survey result would suggest that the strategies were not really effective. At this point, if Ciba abandons their effort in building small groups ministry, whatever goals and objectives they had achieved would be not sustainable. On the other hand, the second survey pointed out a real weakness of the Ciba church, which is Empowering Leadership (29). In fact, the score for Empowering Leadership was also low at 38 for the first survey, but because it was higher than Holistic Small Groups (33), the Ciba church did not concentrate its effort in this area. This was in line with the recommendation from the first church profile. Because the Ciba church was the first Adventist church in China to be profiled, everything done here was all first attempts in its kind, it was recommended to stick with NCD instructions as close as possible.

Goals and Objectives Achieved and Actual Outcomes

After one year of effort, did the Ciba church reach their goals and objectives? The result is shown below in table 6.

Obviously Ciba did not reach all the goals and objectives they set in the beginning. The main difficulty was in forming home church groups. There was a pervasive fear that home church groups were going backwards in church development. Also home church groups became divisive. For Sabbath School groups, members were still not used to forming into discussion groups, and the difficulty of finding enough classrooms for

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TABLE 6

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED

Items	Goals and Objectives	Achieved
Home Church Groups	20	5
Sabbath School Groups	10	5
Care Groups	5	1
Choir Groups	3	3
Leader Groups	3	3
Training for group leaders	monthly	quarterly
Train additional group leaders	every leader	6
Leaders meeting with Pastor	Monthly	monthly

different groups was also a challenge. For choir groups and leaders groups, they were

already well established so it was not hard to reach the goal. Lack of qualified trainers in

the church and few outside trainers made it difficult to hold training sessions. Finally, not

all group leaders were able to find or identify someone whom they could train.

In short, the Ciba church spent considerable amount of time and effort to develop

a small group ministry in the church, but they only realized a marginal increase in the

NCD profile score. The next step for the Ciba church should be a continuation of the

development of small group ministry. Some of the goals and objectives should be

modified to better reflect the real situation of the church. It must be recognized that

because the Ciba church started off with a below average score of 33 in Holistic Small

Groups, after one year of development, it is still in infant stage in this area of quality

characteristics. For any visible significant improvement, longer time and effort is required.

Furthermore, in order for Ciba to experience real growth and improvement in

church health, effort must be spent on leadership development. This was already evident

from the first survey. The concentrated effort on Holistic Small Groups probably also resulted in a decreased score of some quality characteristics, the Ciba leadership needs to learn how to be servant leaders and how to empower its members so they are equipped to achieve the church's vision and mission.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, SIGNIFICANCE,

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project started with a theological analysis of church growth theories, which led to reasons why NCD was chosen as a tool to measure the Ciba church's health, and how to develop a strategy to improve the health of the Ciba church by applying NCD principles in the context of Chinese Seventh-day Adventism and the local culture.

Literature was reviewed in the areas of the NCD concept, change principles, and leadership essentials. The method for evaluation of the Ciba church's health was to conduct two church profiles. The first one was to determine the minimum factor, and the strategies for improving the minimum factors, and the second one was to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation strategy. Holistic Small Groups were found to be the minimum factor for the Ciba church from the result of the first survey. Measurable goals and objectives were developed to improve the minimum factors. Careful consideration was placed upon culture and contextual issues, which focused on cultural differences between Western and Chinese culture, and how these differences affected planned strategies for improvement. Also discussed was China's unique situation and limitations, which impacted how well the Ciba church could implement the strategies and the challenges and difficulties they faced.

The result of the second church profile revealed that there was only slight increase

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in the characteristic of Holistic Small Groups, but Empowering Leadership emerged as the new minimum factor. In the process of implementing the strategies for improvement, Ciba was not able to achieve all their goals and objectives. Looking at what was accomplished, there was a very serious effort put into improving the minimum factor, despite the difficulties they faced.

Confucius and Lao Zi have a saying that many people are familiar with, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."[1] One year was not enough for the Ciba church to make significant improvement on its church health, but it was their important first step toward a healthier church. Looking back at the results of two church profiles and development and implementation of the strategies, it is still too early to tell if NCD principles can be useful in China. But I do believe NCD is a good measuring tool to help the Ciba church to identify its weaknesses. The potential that this experience may have a bigger impact in China lies in the fact that the Ciba church members were willing to put themselves to the test. As they share what they learned with Adventists in other parts of China, the possibility of raising awareness of the importance of a healthy church is very promising.

The Ciba church was the first Adventist church in China to be profiled by NCD, and the significance of this attempt is two fold:

1. Adventist churches in China are now one step closer in indentifying the reasons behind the slowdown of growth in membership. As mentioned earlier, when Adventist churches grow in quantity, the quality of each church becomes increasingly important.

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[1]Ralph Keyes, *The Quote Verifier: Who Said What, Where, and When* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 107.

NCD forces each local church to take an honest look at how they measure up to the standard, and how they can set real measurable goals and objectives in an attempt to become healthier churches.

2. The Ciba church's experience can become a basis for further developing the NCD tools to be used in China. The China situation is unique but with all the challenges there are many opportunities. There are billions of unbelievers to be reached. Tools like NCD are useful, but they must be adapted and contextualized. This first attempt of NCD measurement in Adventist churches in China can be a stepping stone to help build a church health assessment tool that can be used widely across China.

As the result of this project, there are several recommendations that I would consider. One, it is important to consider working on several minimum factors at the same time, especially if all their scores are relatively low. In the case of the Ciba church, the result of the first survey shows that Holistic Small Groups received a score of 33 and the next lower score was Inspiring Worship Services at 37, but Empowering Leadership was also low at 38. This leads to the obvious question, should the Ciba church have focused more energy on empowering leadership from the very beginning? From the result of the second survey and the overall effectiveness of the action steps suggested by NCD profiling, it seems that if some of the problem in leadership is dealt with from the very beginning, and in retrospect the empowering of quality leadership would also have improved small group ministries.

Two, a comprehensive understanding of the situation should not be overlooked in determining the weak areas in church health. Merely following directions can be dangerous, especially if it is not contextualized to fit the need of the local church.

Schwarz warned against intuition,[2] but it is nevertheless vital to understand the local church culture and general weakness in the area of leadership in Adventist churches across China. Because there was no norm yet for Churches in China, let alone a norm for Adventist churches, profiling of the Ciba church using norms for Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan could lead to unexpected result. In the process of developing strategies for the Ciba church, there was a debate as whether empowering leadership should have been the main focus. But because this was the first NCD profile of Adventist church in China, and since the Holistic Small Groups received the lowest score, it was determined to follow the strategies on developing small group ministries.

What should have been done is the suggestion give by Robert Folkenberg Jr. in his book, *Health for the Harvest*, the church should focus 80 percent of its effort on the minimum factor, and 20 percent effort on the second lowest score.[3] In the case of the Ciba church, the second lowest score was Inspiring Worship Services (37), and that was only one point lower than Empowering Leadership (38). Seeing the importance of leadership development, more energy spent in this area would have been more effective for the overall health of the church. What also could be done is to work on training small group leaders first without rolling out actions steps for small group ministry. Once leaders are trained with empowering leadership, they would be more capable small group leaders. This way both minimum factors can be worked on.

Three, it should be recognized that the overall score of the Ciba church was

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[2]Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 21.

[3]Robert Folkenberg, Jr., *Health for the Harvest* (Berrien Springs, MI: North American Division Evangelism Institute, 2002), 140.

already low in several areas. This meant that the Ciba church would have a hard time to get things moving. Much like a heavy locomotive, gaining momentum was hard, but once it started to gain speed, things become easier. For the Ciba church, starting point could be from several areas, and the fact it concentrated its effort on Holistic Small Groups was not a wrong decision. In reality, any of the low scored area could be the starting point, and probably no distinct result would have been seen within the first year. What I recommend is to use more creative ways to introduce NCD concept to church members, although circumstances prohibit someone from outside of China to teach the congregation directly about NCD, printed material, audio and video lectures prepared ahead of time could be used for teaching aid. Once members understand the NCD principles, their will for participation would be greatly heightened.

Four, I should acknowledge the limitation of my role in the whole process of profiling and implementation of strategies. The Ciba church, like all Adventist churches in China, is congregational in nature. This project depended upon the relationship I built with the church leadership and congregation. As much as I wanted to spend time in Ciba, I was not able to stay there for an extended period of time. Once they found out the result of the first survey, it was entirely up to the church to decide if they want to go ahead with the suggested implementation or not. I was thankful the church was willing to try something new, and they faithfully went through the actions steps suggested by the NCD profile. If NCD profiling was to be done over again, I would consider working with someone who has had training in NCD from one of the Adventist seminaries outside of China. This person could spend considerable amount of time with the local church, and I would just be the coach.

Five, all mother churches in China should take part in an NCD survey and in turn

develop a strategy for improving their own minimum factors. Every church's

participation in the survey would lead to eventual establishment of a norm for China, and

this will enhance the accuracy of the church profile and contribute to the localization and

contextualization of the NCD principles and guidelines.

Six, a simple instrument should be developed for measuring church health

specifically for Adventist churches in China, base on the principles of NCD. It is because

NCD was developed by westerners, even though its principles are based on research

around the world, the whole profiling process may be too complex for Adventist churches

in China to handle. With the current political climate, it would be impossible to establish

a NCD norm for China in the near future. A simple instrument would enable local

churches, especially mother churches[4] in China, to be aware of the need to become a

healthy church, and that the membership will continue to grow, resulting in the gospel

message spreading all across China.

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[4]Chinese Union Mission in Hong Kong has identified about forty potential mother churches, among 4,000 some churches and meeting places in China, A "mother church" takes care of a number of smaller churches in the surrounding areas. These mother churches' health is important for the overall growth of Adventism in China. Ciba church is one of the mother churches. For a list of the mother churches, see Tsui, *Secretary's Report*.

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