Church Planting To Reach Postmodern Generations: Launching a New Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ABSTRACT

CHURCH PLANTING TO REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS:
LAUNCHING A NEW CHURCH IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

by

Jeffrey T. Potts

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Title: CHURCH PLANTING TO REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS: LAUNCHING A NEW CHURCH IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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Date completed: June 2009

Problem

The Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was failing to attract unchurched young adults (ages 18-35). Many of the young adults who had grown up in the church were lapsing into irregular worship attendance. Attempts were made to help the congregation become more relevant to postmodern generations. However, these attempts failed to create a church environment that truly engaged young adults.

Method

Under the direction of its senior pastor, the Henderson Highway Church decided to plant a new congregation to reach unchurched young adults. The church was designed
to be relevant to the postmodern context. Launched at the end of 2006, the new congregation focused on being an authentic community and creating a culture of evangelism. The Lighthouse of Hope Church was conceived as a high expectation church in which all members are expected to participate in cell groups and be involved in ministry. Sabbath worship experiences were designed to be informal and contemporary.

Results

From a small core group of sixteen individuals, The Lighthouse grew in two years to become a church family of more than 100 who attend worship at least monthly. At the end of 2008, the average worship attendance was 63 people per Sabbath. Half of the adults who regularly attend are in the target age range of 18-35. Half of the 28 individuals who were added to the church by baptism or profession of faith in the first two years were young adults. As of the end of 2008, 82 percent of regularly attending young adults were involved in ministry, and 77 percent were actively participating in small groups. Half of the regulars were not attending an Adventist Church prior to connecting with The Lighthouse. A Natural Church Development survey conducted in March of 2009 indicated exceptional church health.

Conclusions

In its first two years, The Lighthouse Church has been relatively effective at engaging young adults. Many more such congregations must be planted in order to reach postmodern generations. To fulfill the Great Commission, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must become a church multiplication movement in which newly planted churches repeatedly give birth to new daughter congregations.
CHURCH PLANTING TO REACH POSTMODERN GENERATIONS: LAUNCHING A NEW CHURCH IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by
Jeffrey T. Potts
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project is to lead the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church in the task of planting a new church in the city of Winnipeg to reach postmodern generations.

This project will help develop my church planting knowledge and skills. It will help create a culture in Winnipeg for planting new Adventist churches which are both biblically faithful and culturally relevant. I hope and pray that this project will also encourage prospective church planters to commit their lives to raising up new Seventh-day Adventist churches that will reap a great harvest of young adults who are currently not being engaged by traditional Adventist congregations.

Justification for this Project

The Adventist church in North America today is aging. Many young adults who grew up in the church have opted out. This has been the experience of the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Additionally, there are nearly 200,000 young adults in the city of Winnipeg. None of the existing Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the city have been overly effective at reaching them. A serious attempt must be made to plant a new church in Winnipeg that will engage postmoderns.
Church growth literature indicates that it is easier to reach the unchurched by planting new churches than by attempting to transform traditional churches.

In North America today, the fastest growing denominations are the ones with the most aggressive church planting programs. Because congregations grow most quickly in their first ten years, an effective church growth strategy is to keep planting new churches.

**Definition of Terms**

**Church Planting**

*Church planting* is the intentional process of starting and growing new local churches. There are numerous ways to go about the task. Various church planting models are described in chapter 3.

**Postmodernism**

The term *postmodernism* refers to a philosophical shift that caused significant cultural changes in western societies in the 1960s. It is a reaction to modern rationalist Enlightenment thinking. Disillusioned by two world wars and the reality that science has not solved all the ills of society, postmodernism rejects the idea that there is inherent goodness in knowledge. It asserts that there is no such thing as objective truth, there are no universal rules, and no all-inclusive explanations.

**Generation X**

Generation X, or the "baby buster" generation, is the generation that follows the baby boomers. Generation X, also dubbed "the internet generation," is the first postmodern generation. In this paper, Gen X refers to the generation born between 1965 and 1983. In 2009, these individuals are 26-44 years of age.
Generation Y

Often referred to as Millennials, Gen Y is the generation that follows Gen X. Generation Y is the second postmodern generation. These individuals have never known anything but a digital world. In this paper, Gen Y refers to the generation born between 1984 and 2002. In 2009, these individuals are 7-25 years of age.

Young Adults

In this paper, the term young adult refers to an individual who is 18-35 years of age. This encompasses younger members of Generation X and older members of Generation Y. Today’s young adults are postmodern by virtue of the fact that they have been born in the postmodern era.

Unchurched

The term unchurched simply refers to an individual who is not actively attending church. It is not a pejorative term. The unchurched may have formerly attended church, or never attended church. They may be secular or religious. In this paper, individuals who attend church only once or twice a year are considered to be unchurched.

Assumptions

This project assumes that there are substantial similarities between Canadian and American church planting. While there are certainly differences between the two nations, it is assumed that the similarities are sufficient enough to allow church planting research conducted in the United States of America to be relevant in Canada. Currently, there is a lack of quality Canadian research on church planting. This necessitates making decisions based on American observations and research.
Limitations

This church planting project is regional in scope. While the basic principles are likely transferable to other Canadian and American settings, this church plant has been specifically designed as a Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the local context of Winnipeg, Manitoba. As such, the practices implemented in this project should not be considered normative outside the local setting.

Methodology

Current literature on church planting and effective strategies for reaching postmoderns will be reviewed. A church planting strategy will be designed to reach postmodern Winnipeggers. The Henderson Highway Church will then give birth to the new congregation before the end of 2006.

The new church will implement the strategy. Then, after two years, the project will be evaluated on the basis of how effective the new church has been at reaching unchurched individuals in the targeted age range of 18-35. Evaluation criteria will include how many previously unchurched young adults are participating in small groups, regularly attending worship, and actively serving in ministry.
CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF CHURCH PLANTING

Introduction

Church planting is rooted theologically in the *missio Dei*—the mission of God. Ultimately, mission is derived from the very nature of God.\(^1\) He is a missionary God. He longs to bring His wayward children back into a right relationship with Himself.

The heart of God is revealed in many places throughout Scripture. One of the clearest revelations is found in Luke 15. The shepherd searches persistently for his lost sheep and rejoices when he finds it. The woman sweeps the house carefully and celebrates in the recovery of her missing coin. The father wraps his arms of love around his wayward son who has come home at last. These are portraits of a loving God who is on a mission to reconcile the world to Himself.

In Christ, the mission of God was incarnated. Jesus came to this earth “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).\(^2\) He revealed to humanity the character of God, and paid the redemption price. Then, before returning to heaven, Jesus commissioned His church to carry forward the mission of God. The mission of the church was thus rooted in God’s mission to save the world. Historically, as the early disciples joined God

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\(^2\)All scripture references are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.
in His mission, church planting became their primary evangelistic strategy. Thus church planting is rooted theologically in the mission of God.

This chapter will focus on (1) Christ’s mission, (2) His commission to the church, and (3) the evangelistic strategy of the early church.

**Christ’s Mission**

**Christ Came to Announce God’s Kingdom**

As Jesus began His public ministry, He proclaimed, “The time has come... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught constantly about the kingdom of God. “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Matt 4:23). When the people of Cana wanted Him to stay longer, Jesus told His disciples, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). Jesus understood His mission in relation to the Kingdom of God.

Bosch comments that “the reign of God (basileia tou Theou) is undoubtedly central to Jesus’ entire ministry. It is, likewise, central to his understanding of his own mission.” To Jesus, God’s kingdom was not exclusively a future reality. It was both future and already present. The kingdom had arrived, and yet it was still to come.

The present reality of God’s kingdom was manifest, for example, as Christ healed the sick, or cast out demons, or raised the dead. Jesus affirmed, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20). In Christ,

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3Bosch, 31.
the kingdom had already arrived. His ministry was a tangible expression of God’s care and concern for people in the present.

The kingdom, however, was also a future kingdom. The parousia was yet to come. The final eschatological fulfillment of the kingdom was still pending. In this sense, Jesus spoke of the final judgment when He will say to His faithful ones, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matt 25:34). Jesus came to announce the kingdom of God as both a present and a future reality.

Christ Came to Impart Salvation

Christ’s soteriological perspective was comprehensive. Salvation included both social and spiritual elements. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus stood up to read this passage from Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). After reading this scripture, Jesus declared to the people that He was the fulfillment of the prophecy. He declared Himself to be the promised Messiah. He had come to help the poor, heal the afflicted, and minister to people in need. This was the social mandate of salvation. “He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Of course, Jesus also focused on the spiritual aspect of salvation. He had been sent to “save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). He declared that “the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). He told Nicodemus, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not
perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son” (John 3:16-18). Jesus came to save the world, not condemn it.

Jesus came to reveal the Father to the world. To know God is to have eternal life. So Jesus came to make known to humanity the character of God. Praying to the Father, He said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). When His disciples asked to see the Father, Jesus stated, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). It was essential to the plan of salvation that Jesus reveal the true character of God.

Ultimately, Jesus came to this earth to take upon Himself the sins of the world, and sacrifice His life to pay sin’s penalty. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). By His substitutionary death, Jesus reconciled humanity to God. “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12).

Christ Came to Establish His Church

With intentionality, Jesus went about the task of establishing His church—His ecclesia, “the called out ones.” Jesus established a community of believers who would carry on with His mission after He had returned to heaven. Much of His public ministry was invested in developing the people who would lead the church after He was gone. To them He made this promise, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not
overcome it” (Matt 16:19). It was His church. He would build it.

Christ Himself determined the purposes of the church. Two significant passages of scripture reveal Christ’s five purposes for His church—Matt 22:36-40 and Matt 28:18-20. These passages are commonly known as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

The greatest commandment of all is to love God with one’s entire being. Jesus said, “‘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” (Matt 22:37-40). These commandments are two of Christ’s purposes for His church. To love God is worship. To love people is service.

In the Great Commission, Jesus communicated three further purposes. He declared, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19, 20). Christ commissioned His church to make disciples, baptize, and teach. To make disciples is evangelism. Baptism signifies another of the purposes of the church: fellowship—incorporation into the body of Christ. Christ-followers are called to belong, not just believe. Christ also desires His church to teach new believers to obey all that He has commanded. This final purpose of the church is about helping people mature and become fruitful in their faith. The term often used for this is discipleship.

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Christ came to establish His church. As the head of the church, He is the One who determines its purposes. The church exists (1) to worship God, (2) to serve others, (3) to evangelize the nations, (4) to provide fellowship, and (5) to disciple believers.

Jesus came to announce God's kingdom, to impart salvation, and to establish His church. Christ's mission is foundational to the church's mission.

**Christ's Commission to the Church**

With His parting words, Jesus focused the leaders of His church on the task of making disciples. He declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:18, 19). This was to be their mission. All five purposes of the church were significant. However, in this commission Jesus focused the early church on the priority of the evangelistic mandate of making disciples. Worship and fellowship were not to be neglected. The social mandate of ministering to the community was not to be overlooked. But Jesus was absolutely clear that the task of making disciples was to be the number one priority of the church.

By commanding the disciples to "go," Jesus indicated that He was organizing His church for the purpose of mission. The church was not to wait for people to come to her. She was to "go." "The New Testament church clearly understood that its reason for existence lay in the making of disciples among all the nations. The priority of mission was the overwhelming purpose of this early church. In fact, the early church cannot be understood aside from this mission consciousness."\(^5\)

It is noteworthy that the Great Commission focused the apostles on the task of

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making disciples of “all nations.” Every *ethnos*, every people group, was to be 
evangelized. Inherent in the Great Commission was the strategy of planting new 
churches within each people group.

The Product of the Commission

Christ commissioned His disciples to “go and make disciples.” It is necessary to 
understand what Jesus meant when He used the word *mathetes*—disciple. The term is 
defined by five statements Jesus made about disciples.\(^6\) In the first statement, Jesus 
declared, “A student [*mathetes*] is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 
It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the 
head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his 
household!” (Matt 10:24-25). According to Jesus, a disciple is a student—someone who 
is in a learning relationship with his master. Additionally, Christ’s disciples can expect to 
be treated with persecution and ridicule just as He was. A disciple is one who is mature 
enough to withstand such treatment.

Second, Jesus said this about being a disciple: “If anyone comes to me and does 
not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even 
his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and 
follow me cannot be my disciple. . . . In the same way, any of you who does not give up 
everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-33). This statement indicates that 
true disciples were fully devoted to Christ. Discipleship meant cross-bearing—being 
willing to suffer for Jesus. Discipleship meant self-denial. Discipleship meant

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\(^6\)Ibid., 25-43.
unreserved, radical commitment to Christ.

Third, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31, 32). Disciples are totally committed to the teachings of Jesus.

Fourth, Christ told His disciples, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34, 35). Disciples are characterized by unconditional love for each other.

Last, but not least, Jesus declared, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8). Disciples are characterized by fruitfulness. In the context of the great commission, fruitfulness is defined as making other disciples. This is how Christ-followers show themselves to be genuine disciples.

So according to Jesus, His disciples are radically devoted to Him. They are willing to endure ridicule and persecution for His sake. They are willing forsake everything for Him. They hold fast to His teachings, love one another unconditionally, and make other disciples. This is no small commitment. Jesus raised the bar high. His church was a high-expectation church. He commanded His disciples to go and make this kind of disciples. This was to be the product of the commission.

The Power for the Commission

The accounts of Christ’s commission recorded by Luke and John reveal that Jesus emphasized the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the fulfillment of the mission. In Acts 1, Luke records Christ’s parting promise to His disciples, “you will receive power when the
Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit would empower them to be Christ’s witnesses. Without this power, the mission would be doomed to failure.

The commission account in the Gospel of Luke places a striking emphasis on the necessity of the Spirit’s power. Jesus said, “You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:48-49). The disciples were not to commence their mission until they had been “clothed with power from on high.”

In John’s gospel, Jesus gives the commission on the very day of His resurrection. “Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:21-22). Once again the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connection with the commission. Just as the Father had commissioned Jesus, He was now commissioning the disciples. And in order to accomplish the mission they must “receive the Holy Spirit.”

Christ not only gave the commission, He also promised the power. Because “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18) had been given to Jesus, the disciples could “go” with confidence. What Jesus had commanded them to do, the Holy Spirit would empower them to do. He was the power for the commission.

**The Mission Strategy of the Early Church**

The early church was mission-driven. David Hesselgrave has pointed out the clear mission strategy of the church as illustrated by the church planting endeavors of the
The church commissioned missionaries to plant churches (Acts 13:1-4; 15:39-40). Church planters contacted the audience they hoped to reach (Acts 13:14-16; 14:1). Church planters communicated the gospel to receptive people (Acts 13:16-41). The new believers were congregated (Acts 13:43) and established in the faith (Acts 14:21-22). Leaders were appointed in the new churches (Acts 14:23). Once leadership was fully transferred to the new leaders, the church planters left (Acts 16:40). New congregations were made part of the sisterhood of churches and sent representatives to various church councils (Acts 14:26-27; 15:1-4). The book of Acts clearly documents the fact that the early church was organized for mission. It was mission-driven.

For the early church, the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were evidence enough that the last days had already arrived. The reign of God had already begun. “The early church understood its missionary engagement with the world in terms of this end-time, which had already come and was at the same time still pending.”

The mission of the early church was foundational to its theological development. Mission was the mother of applied theology. The need to communicate God’s saving message to the world forced the Church to theologize. “Mission was, in the early stages, more than a mere function; it was a fundamental expression of the life of the church.”

The early church was truly a missionary movement. The book of Acts reveals the key elements of the church’s mission strategy: earnest prayer, relentless evangelism,

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8Bosch, 41.
aggressive church planting, holistic small groups, and empowering leadership.

Earnest Prayer

From the outset, the mission of the church was bathed in earnest prayer. Before He ascended, Jesus told the apostles, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:46-49).

For the next ten days, those first believers prayed earnestly in the upper room. “They all joined together constantly in prayer” (Acts 1:14). The believers were convinced that the only way they would be effective in their mission was to be “clothed with power from on high.” So they prayed earnestly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was the result.

The early church was a praying church. In the book of Acts prayer is mentioned more than a hundred times. The high value the apostles placed on prayer is seen clearly in Acts 6 when the seven deacons were commissioned to oversee the daily distribution of food to the widows. The apostles declared, “We will turn this responsibility over to them [the deacons] and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3, 4). The priorities of the apostles were clear—praying and preaching. As they focused on these things, the power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed, and the church grew rapidly.
Relentless Evangelism

Evangelism was the focus of the early church. The early believers were radically committed to communicating the gospel and urging people to receive Christ. The disciples were constantly telling people about Jesus. They did it publicly. They did it relationally. And they sought to do it in a way that was relevant to the culture.

Public Evangelism

On the day of Pentecost, the church grew from 120 believers to 3,120. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter preached boldly to thousands. This public evangelistic sermon launched the Jerusalem church. The public proclamation of the gospel continued to be a key element of the church’s evangelistic strategy. The apostles understood that God had called them to pray and to preach. As God worked miracles of healing, large crowds were attracted, and the gospel was preached. Thousands were being converted.

Filled with jealousy, the Jewish religious leaders arrested the apostles and put them in jail. “But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ‘Go, stand in the temple courts,’ he said, ‘and tell the people the full message of this new life.’ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people” (Acts 5:19-21).

The apostles had a clear mandate from God to keep preaching. This they did fearlessly. Even though Peter and John were arrested again, flogged, and ordered to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, they continued to preach. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42). They were absolutely relentless in their public proclamation of Jesus.
Relational Evangelism

In addition to addressing large crowds in public places, the apostles also taught small groups of people in private homes. There was a powerful relational element in the witness of the early church. The gospel spread naturally as believers shared their faith with family, friends and associates—their oikos. “The Gospels, Acts, and Epistles show that the bridges of oikos were used regularly as a means to spread the Good News.”

There are numerous examples of relational evangelism in the New Testament. Among them are the demon possessed man (Mark 5:19), Levi Matthew (Mark 2:15), Peter (John 1:41), Philip (John 1:45), Cornelius (Acts 10:24), Lydia (Acts 16:15), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:34). Paul modeled relational evangelism in Corinth when he befriended a Jewish couple, Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3). Like him, they were tentmakers. As Paul worked together with them, they became good friends. Later, Aquila and Priscilla joined Paul on one of his mission trips. The book of Acts reveals that Paul not only preached Christ publicly, he also shared Christ personally with friends.

Culturally Relevant Evangelism

Christ had commissioned the church to take the gospel to the entire world. He told His followers, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Such a global mission required an evangelistic approach which would be culturally relevant to each of the targeted groups. Christ’s commission included all nations, all ethnos. “If disciples were to be found among all nations, this meant that Christianity must not be localized in Jerusalem, but transformed

into an international church. This internationalization of the church occurred very quickly in the experience of early Christianity. Within the lifetime of the original apostles, Christianity had already ceased to be a Jewish sect and had become an international church that appealed across cultural lines.”

The disciples first worked to reach Jews. They had the same cultural background. In time, however, evangelistic contact was also made with non-Jews. God sent Peter to Caesarea to the home of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. It was there that Peter declared, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34-35).

At this point, the mission got more complicated. Church leaders criticized Peter for eating in the home of a Gentile. However, when they came to believe that God was truly leading them to evangelize the non-Jewish world, there were cultural issues to sort out. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) convened for the purpose of figuring out whether or not Jewish customs should be imposed on Gentile believers. Issues such as circumcision needed to be addressed. Once the church had done the hard work of separating culture from the essence of the gospel, the stage was set for Christianity to spread to “the ends of the earth.” The “internationalization of the church could not have occurred had not Christianity become culturally relevant to the various nations.”

The Apostle Paul sought to make the gospel culturally relevant wherever he went. He said, “I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the

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11Burrill, Radical Disciples, 52.

law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel” (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Paul did not compromise the integrity of the message. However, he did package it in a way that would enable him to reach people of different cultures effectively. He contextualized his message. In Acts 17, for example, when Paul was speaking with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, he used an evangelistic approach that was far different from the approach he took when he spoke to Jews in the synagogues. Paul studied culture. His evangelistic strategy was to present Christ in a way that would connect well with his target audience. Evangelism in the early church was, in truth, culturally relevant.

Aggressive Church Planting

The early church spread primarily through church planting. The book of Acts documents the missionary journeys of Paul and his associates as they travelled from place to place raising up new churches. Paul got his first taste of church planting in Syrian Antioch. The first Christ-followers who arrived in Antioch focused on communicating their message to Jews only. However, the Holy Spirit later impressed some other believers to work for the non-Jews living in Antioch. Although these Gentiles lived in the same city, they were culturally very different from the Jews. A different approach was needed to reach them. God blessed the intentional attempt to reach this new people
group. "The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

Barnabas and Paul ended up in Antioch teaching the new converts and establishing the church. It was exciting work. Great numbers of people were converted. After they had spent a year in Antioch, God sent Barnabas and Paul off on their first missionary journey to plant churches in other cities.

Later in life, Paul confessed, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation" (Rom 15:20). Paul’s passion was to plant churches in places where no other Christians had previously worked. He would preach, raise up a church, train leaders, and move on to start another church. It was an effective strategy. Paul could proclaim, “from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:19).

“The early church developed a deliberate strategy to plant culturally sensitive churches in every people group they found. The early church quickly developed into a church planting movement. . . Church planting was not one of many strategies in the New Testament church; it was the strategy."

Holistic Small Groups

In the early church, the believers met for worship in homes. For the first few hundred years, Christianity was a home-based movement. Paul commonly referred to

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this or that family and “the church that meets at their house.” Paul said to the Ephesian elders, “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

These small home groups were of a holistic nature. Believers gathered in homes to worship and fellowship and pray and eat together. “They [the believers] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

The early church was obviously a very caring community. The believers enjoyed the kind of loving relationships that gave power to their witness. Meeting together in small groups created the perfect environment for developing authentic, healthy relationships. In this context, the Lord “added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Holistic small groups were a vital component of the evangelistic strategy of the early church.

Empowering Leadership

The early church was also characterized by an empowered laity. Local elders were lay people who led congregations. Paul wrote to Titus, “I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I

\(^{14}\text{Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 1:2.}\)
instructed you” (Titus 1:5). This verse indicates that church leaders understood it was their “work” to equip lay people for leadership and ministry. It was standard practice for Paul and the other apostles to mentor younger leaders. Timothy, Titus, Silas, and John Mark are examples.

Members of small house churches could not depend on professional clergy to do ministry. The church members themselves engaged in ministry using their spiritual gifts. Paul urged the lay people in Rome, “If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly” (Rom 12:7-8).

Early church members were empowered and expected to make disciples. When persecution scattered the believers from Jerusalem, it was lay people who went far and wide preaching the gospel (Acts 8:1-8). It was lay people who raised up churches such as the one in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). Every church member played a vital role in accomplishing the mission.

This strategy of the early church was far different from the pastor-dependent ministry models we see in so many North American churches today. The early church sensed that in order for the mission to be accomplished, every member had to be mobilized for ministry. The ecclesiology of the early church supported this strategy. She understood herself to be the body of Christ, the people of God, and a royal priesthood.
The Body of Christ

The body metaphor emphasized that the role of church leaders was to equip members for ministry. “It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:11-12).

Paul made it clear that each and every member had been given spiritual gifts, and those gifts were to be used in ministry. “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. . . . There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. . . . Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . . The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor 12:1, 4, 5, 7, 12, 27).

The People of God

The members of the early church believed that they were “the people of God.” Peter declared, “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God” (1 Pet 2:10). Just as God had chosen Abraham, even so He had chosen the church to be His special people. What is noteworthy here is that the entire church was the laos of God—the people of God. There was no dichotomy between clergy and laity. There was no such separation in the New Testament church. All believers were ministers. All believers were actively involved in accomplishing the mission of the church.

Many Christians today have the false idea that clergy are to do the ministry, and the laity are to simply “pay and pray.” This idea was totally foreign to the early church.
In the early church, there was no such distinction between clergy and laity. Clergy and non-clergy alike were both very much involved in the mission.

**A Royal Priesthood**

Peter also taught that the church was a “priesthood” of all believers. “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9). John the Revelator proclaimed this truth, as well. He praised Jesus, saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God” (Rev 5:9-10). John made it clear that all the redeemed are priests—all believers serve in ministry.

So the theological self-understanding of the early church served to reinforce the concept that every believer had a vital role to play in carrying out the mission. Church leaders empowered the believers to serve, and as members were emancipated to use their gifts and talents in ministry, the early church grew at a phenomenal rate.

**Conclusion**

The evangelistic strategy of the early church was powerful and effective. The church literally exploded with growth. The various elements of the strategy—earnest prayer, relentless evangelism, aggressive church planting, holistic small groups, and empowering leadership—all worked together as a harmonious whole. The heart of this strategy was the intentional planting of new churches.

Church planting is rooted theologically in the mission of God. The early disciples saw that mission was modeled in the person and ministry of Jesus. Having received from
Christ the commission to go and make disciples, they proceeded to raise up new churches all over the Roman Empire. “In fact, the planting of new churches is the object of all mission strategy. It should be the goal of every congregation to plant a new church. Only when a church planting priority is reestablished in the church, and as new churches are continually being planted in new groups of people, can we truly see the fantastic growth envisioned by the Great Commission.”  

15Burrill, Recovering an Adventist Approach, 44.
CHAPTER 3

A REVIEW OF CURRENT RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This project on church planting to reach postmodern generations requires a review of literature about church planting and strategies for reaching postmoderns. In the first decade of the 21st century, many young adults have chosen to disengage from church. Traditional methodologies no longer seem relevant to them. The current view is that starting culturally appropriate churches is one of the most effective ways to reach these emerging generations.

This chapter will focus, first, on the church planting literature—why we need new churches, how they can be planted, and what key factors impact growth. Second, literature on understanding postmoderns and how to engage them will be reviewed.

Church Planting

Since the early 1980s, much has been written about how to plant churches. More than fifty thousand new churches were planted in North America between 1980 and 2000.\(^1\) In the last three decades, we have witnessed the rapid growth of many of these

\(^1\)Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 11.
new church plants. More than half of the hundred largest churches in America today have been launched since 1980.²

Many of the books in this field have been authored by church planters themselves. Not as many have been written by researchers. A landmark book on church planting by Aubrey Malphurs came out in 1992. Dr. Malphurs has been a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary since 1981. He is recognized as an expert in the fields of leadership and church planting. *Growing Churches for the 21st Century* is a comprehensive guide for starting culturally-relevant, strategic, high-impact churches. Because this is such a foundational text, the book has been revised and updated twice. The third edition came out in 2004. Malphurs has put into one book virtually everything a church planter should know.

Another very significant book on church planting came out in 2003. Ed Stetzer's *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* is an instruction book for planting churches which are both biblically faithful and culturally relevant. This book embodies much of Stetzer’s Ph.D. research on church planting. He studied 600 church plants and the effects of certain church planting practices on the attendance of those churches over the first four years of their existence.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dr. Russell Burrill is recognized as the leading authority on church planting. His book *Rekindling a Lost Passion*, is a thorough treatment of Adventist church planting—the need for it, the history of it, and how to do it.

This review of church planting literature will focus on: (1) the rationale for

²"The Outreach 100," *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2008, 34.
planning churches, (2) church planting models, and (3) key factors in planting growing churches.

The Rationale for Church Planting

It Is Biblical

Malphurs provides this definition: “Church planting is an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new local churches as based on Jesus’ promise and in obedience to His Great Commission.” The promise of Jesus to which Malphurs refers is found in Matt 16:18: “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Malphurs’ definition indicates that the rationale for church planting is to accomplish the Great Commission. The fact that church planting is a biblical methodology is highlighted in the previous chapter. Church planting is a vital strategy for accomplishing the Great Commission.

It Is Effective

The literature indicates that new churches grow more quickly than mature churches. In 1979, Lyle Schaller observed that the only North American denominations which were growing were the ones planting new churches. He advised, “The first step in developing a denominational strategy for church growth should be to organize new congregations.” Church growth guru Peter Wager once claimed, “The single most

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effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”5 Research confirms this.

A study conducted by Roger Dudley back in the 1980s showed that the majority of newly planted North American Adventist churches experienced growth rates in excess of 10 percent per year.6 This is a significantly higher rate of growth than established Adventist churches. Dudley found that churches planted in small towns or in rural areas tended to grow more slowly. However, one-fourth of the churches planted in urban and suburban environments had annual growth rates higher than 40 percent.7

Another Adventist study which substantiates the claim that church planting does, in fact, accelerate church growth rates was conducted by Skip Bell and Rod Davis in the New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Their study has provided evidence that “indeed church planting is an effective evangelistic strategy for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.”8

Recent experience in the Texas Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church also confirms that church planting increases church growth rates. Under the leadership of Church Planting Coordinator Tom Evans, the Texas conference has launched what is currently the most aggressive church planting campaign of any conference in the North American Division. From 2002 to 2008, the Texas Conference launched 84 new congregations, increasing the number of congregations in the conference by nearly 50

5 C. Peter Wagner, Church Planting for a Greater Harvest (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.


7 Ibid., 43.

percent. In the seven years preceding 2002, the Texas Conference averaged 1,894 accessions per year. In the seven year period 2002-2008 the average number of annual accessions jumped to 2,139. That is 245 more baptisms and professions of faith every year—an increase of 13 percent over the previous seven year period. An unpublished Texas Conference study demonstrates that this increase in baptisms is a direct result of aggressive church planting.

It should not be surprising that church planting increases church growth rates. Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist Church grew very quickly in the 19th century when it was a church planting movement. Ellen White promoted church planting as the primary role of the pastor. For example, in 1902 she wrote, “Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. . . . Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members at work. They will need to be taught how to labor successfully. Let the minister devote more of his time to educating than to preaching.”

Ellen White cast a vision for pastors to plant new churches, train the members to carry forward the work, and then move on to plant more churches in other communities. In her era, there were virtually no “settled” Seventh-day Adventist pastors whose work it was to care for church members. Evangelism and church planting were the order of the day. However, early in the twentieth century the role of the Adventist pastor in North America shifted from planting churches to caring for members. Correspondingly, the growth rate of the church quickly diminished. Russell Burrill has documented the tragic

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9 For relevant Texas Conference statistics, see appendix.

impact this shift in clergy role has had on the growth of the church.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{It Is Needed}

The life cycle concept helps explain why new churches grow more quickly.

"Studies suggest that congregations usually go through a historic process that is in some ways comparable to the life cycle of any organism."\textsuperscript{12} Accordingly, churches grow most quickly when they are young. As they mature, growth slows.

Research suggests that one reason for the current decline of the church in North America is that many churches are reaching the end of their life cycles. "Churches in the first decade of the twenty-first century are closing at a phenomenal rate. Eighty to eighty-five percent of American churches are on the downside of their life cycle. Win Arn reports that 3,500 to 4,000 churches close each year. Our churches are dying, and our culture is changing. We know new churches can make a difference."\textsuperscript{13}

The life cycle effect within the Adventist church in North America has been clearly documented. The Adventist church participated in three U.S. interfaith studies conducted in 2000-2001 by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.\textsuperscript{14} The data has provided an up-to-date body of knowledge about the state of the church in America. To date this is the largest study of American religion ever conducted. This research gives a clear picture of Adventist congregational life at the beginning of the 21st century. Monte

\textsuperscript{11}Burrill, \textit{Recovering an Adventist Approach}, 164-178.

\textsuperscript{12}Monte Sahlin, \textit{Adventist Congregations Today: New Evidence for Equipping Healthy Churches} (Lincoln, NE: Centre for Creative Ministry, 2003), 48.

\textsuperscript{13}Stetzer, 10.

\textsuperscript{14}Faith Communities Today (FACT) in 2000, the Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS) in 2000, and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCL) in 2001.
Sahlin reports, "Local congregations started in the 1950s and earlier are more likely to be declining congregations. Those formed in the 1960s through the 1980s are just slightly more likely to be growing, while those planted in the 1990s are twice as likely to be growing churches."\textsuperscript{15} The older the congregation, the more likely it is to be in decline. The younger the congregation, the more likely it is to be growing. The evidence is clear. New congregations are desperately needed today.

In view of the Great Commission, it is imperative for the church of the 21st century to return to the New Testament evangelistic strategy of aggressive church planting. Robert Logan declares, "We never will fulfill the Great Commission without the multiplication of churches."\textsuperscript{16} Newly planted churches today are growing at a faster rate than mature congregations. Church planting is biblical, it is effective, and it is needed. This is the rationale for church planting today.

Church Planting Models

There are numerous ways to start new churches. Some church plants are initiated by local churches. In these models, the “mother church” plays a vital role in planning and establishing the new church. There are also a number of “motherless” models. These plants are initiated by either individuals or denominations.

Mother Church Models

Burrill lists several common ways a local church may intentionally give birth to daughter churches: hiving off, colonization, partnership, scattered satellites, gathered

\textsuperscript{15}Sahlin, 31.

satellites, and multiple services.\textsuperscript{17} Cell church planting is an additional model.

Hiving off

Hiving off is sometimes referred to as “swarming.” In this model a group of members from the mother church forms the nucleus of the new church. One problem with this model is that the core group comes entirely from the mother church. The parent congregation may be reluctant to “give away” a significant group of its members. However, most churches that hive off another congregation find that within a year new people have come in to replace those who left.

Another problem with hiving off is that it does not initially increase the church’s network of unchurched friends. The gospel spreads most naturally by relationships. When a core group is gathered in other ways—especially when it is gathered from unchurched people—the new church immediately begins to influence people who were not previously in its friendship network.

Colonization

The colonization model is similar to hiving off. The difference is that the core group actually relocates to a distant community. The core group moves to a new area for the expressed purpose of raising up a new church. When several families move together, a good nucleus for the new church is established and loneliness is less of a factor.

Partnership

In the partnership model, two or more churches join together to plant a new

\textsuperscript{17}Russell Burrill, \textit{Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement} (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1999), 125-132.
church. Since the core group does not come from just one church, this model has a few advantages over the hiving off model. One is that the parent churches do not lose as many members. This can be an important advantage for small parent churches.

Scattered satellites

In the scattered satellites model, the mother church plants several branch churches in the city. Like a university with several campuses, the branch churches are still part of the mother church, they just meet at different locations. One advantage of this model is that the branch churches benefit from being part of a larger church, with all the programming options, and at the same time maintain the closeness of a smaller church.

Gathered satellites

The gathered satellites model is a variation of the scattered satellites approach. Rather than planting the satellites in different locations in the city, they are planted within the same building. Two or three congregations may effectively share one facility. The main advantage is financial savings. The new congregations can be "incubated" for a time without a lot of expense.

Multiple services

In the multiple services model the congregation simply adds additional worship service options to meet people's varying schedules and worship preferences. Although some people would not consider this to be church planting, in reality, having two or three different services is just as effective as having two or three different congregations. And it costs much less than operating in several different venues.

Many new church plants add worship services as quickly as possible in order to
create options that more effectively reach the unchurched. For example, Bay Area Fellowship in Corpus Christi, Texas, added five services in their first seven years of existence. In 1998, the church was launched with 236 people in attendance at their first service. In 2006, by offering six different worship services, they were welcoming 4,500 worshipers each weekend. Adding services was a key part of their growth strategy.

Cell church planting

Though a cell church plant is not necessarily a mother church model, often the original cell group comes from a mother church. When this is the case, the process is essentially a variation of hiving off. Cell church plants can begin with just a handful of people. As the original cell grows and multiplies, a core group is gathered and cultivated. Once there are sufficient people for a critical mass, the new church is publicly launched.

“Cell churches don’t require a huge budget, a large plot of land, modern buildings, or super-talented pastors. The cell strategy uses the houses of people all over the city as the primary meeting locations.” Although cell churches take longer to get to the point where the church is ready to launch (often 1-2 years), there are some distinct advantages: (1) they lend themselves well to lay leadership, (2) they tend to make disciples who make disciples, and (3) cell leaders who have effectively multiplied their cell and coached the daughter-cell leaders are prime candidates for planting future cell churches. This model has the potential to generate new lay church planters continually.

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18 Bill Easum and Bil Cornelius, Go Big: Lead Your Church to Explosive Growth (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 3.

Motherless Models

The motherless models do not preclude the involvement of a local church as a supporter of the new church plant. Indeed, it is ideal for every church plant to have the benefit of the prayers and financial support of an existing church. These models are “motherless” in that the initiative to plant the new church does not come from a mother church. Although variations exist, there are three primary motherless models of church planting: the catalytic church planter, the founding pastor, and team planting.

The catalytic church planter

The catalytic church planter starts a new church, raises up leadership from the harvest, and then moves on to plant other churches. This is the classic New Testament model used by the Apostle Paul. It was the normal paradigm for itinerant Methodist and Baptist ministers in nineteenth-century America. Adventist church planters continued to function under this model effectively even into the twentieth century. Today, this model is not as common. It is hard on the families of church planters to move frequently from one community to the next. However, in large metropolitan areas it is conceivable that a catalytic church planter could spend an entire lifetime starting churches without ever having to move. One big advantage of this model is that the planter becomes very adept at church planting. Experience is a great teacher!

The founding pastor

The founding pastor plants a new church and then continues to serve as pastor of

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that church. This is the most common model in North American church planting today. Many of the largest mega-churches have been launched in this manner. Studies have shown that “longer tenured pastors tend to grow stronger churches.”

Some founding pastors, however, plan to stay with the church plant for only three to five years, before moving on to plant another church. Stetzer calls this type of founding pastor an “entrepreneurial planter.”

Team planting

In the team planting model, several salaried planters work together to launch the new church. This model has several advantages. It brings together a good ministry gift mix, offers mutual support for the planters, and it provides a solid leadership base for the new church. Not surprisingly, research shows that team plants start larger and grow more quickly than single planter models. Stephen Gray studied 2,285 new American churches launched between 2000 and 2006. Only 168 of those congregations broke the 200 barrier within three years of their launch. The vast majority (88 percent) of these 168 fast-growing churches had been started by a church planting team. Perhaps the most effective church planting team is a full-time lead pastor, and a part-time second pastor with worship and evangelism skills. Unfortunately, the team planting model is the least

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21 Stetzer, 64.
22 Ibid., 62.
23 Ibid., 68.
used model today. The cost of funding multiple planters for a single church start is often prohibitive.

**Lay Church Planters**

Many of the models mentioned above are being used effectively by lay people. Church planting does not need to be dependent on salaried “professional” church planters. In the last several years, the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has empowered over forty lay people to launch new churches. The vast majority of these congregations are small—under 100 members. However, small is not an indication of ineffectiveness. On the contrary, Natural Church Development research has demonstrated that smaller churches actually grow more rapidly than larger churches. When it comes to reaching people for Christ, small churches are sixteen times more effective than mega-churches.  

Lay church planters were the norm in New Testament times. “Who founded the church in Antioch? In Alexandria? In Rome? No one knows. The apostles didn’t plant those churches themselves. They were established by now-anonymous lay people. The word had gone ahead of the apostles, carried by ordinary people whose lives had been touched by the power of the gospel.”

To gather the harvest today, many lay people must be developed and mobilized as church planters. Russell Burrell insists that the Adventist church today must not depend on clergy alone to plant churches. “If the first century church had attempted to plant

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26 Robert E. Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God’s Heart for Church Multiplication* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006), 34.
churches as we do today, by appointing a pastor to watch over each new congregation, the result would have been weak churches composed of immature Christians who were not disciples.\textsuperscript{27}

Ten Key Factors in Planting Growing Churches

Church plants succeed to varying degrees. Some fail. Others thrive. What factors make the difference? While it is beyond the scope of this review to consider all the factors that impact church planting success, ten key factors will now be considered.

An Empowering Leader

It is not surprising that leadership is a key factor affecting the success of a new church plant. As John Maxwell says, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”\textsuperscript{28} Russell Burrill attributes most church plant failures to having selected the wrong person to lead. He declares that nothing is more important than choosing the right leader.\textsuperscript{29}

In his research Stetzer, discovered that, on average, church planters who had gone through an assessment process were more effective than those who did not.\textsuperscript{30} Stetzer recommends the 13-point assessment developed by Charles Ridley. An effective church planter has visioning capacity, is intrinsically motivated, takes ownership of ministry, relates well to the unchurched, has spousal cooperation, effectively builds relationships, is committed to church growth, is responsive to the community, utilizes the giftedness of

\textsuperscript{27}Burrill, \textit{Radical Disciples}, 60.


\textsuperscript{29}Burrill, \textit{Rekindling a Lost Passion}, 111.

\textsuperscript{30}Stetzer, 79.
others, is flexible, effectively builds group cohesiveness, demonstrates resilience, and exercises faith.\(^{31}\)

Ridley’s categories help identify characteristics of effective church planters. A few of these merit further comment. Successful planters are people of faith and prayer. Launching a new church is not simply about techniques. Effective planters are spiritually grounded. They must expect and be prepared for spiritual opposition and warfare. Jim Griffith has coached church planters for thirteen years. He tells them, “If you think you can march into occupied territory without resistance, you’re wrong.”\(^{32}\) He says that the biggest mistake planters make in the pursuit of the Great Commission is neglecting the Great Commandment. Church planting can become all-consuming. Caught up in the thrill of building a new faith community, too many church planters neglect their relationship with God.\(^{33}\)

The ability to cast a clear, compelling vision of a preferred future is vital for any effective leader. Growing church plants are led by individuals who cast and recast the vision repeatedly. According to Andy Stanley, vision leaks. “Casting a convincing vision once is not enough to make it stick. Twice is not enough either. Vision needs to be repeated regularly.”\(^{34}\) Successful church planters are leaders who unite and energize their congregations by repeatedly casting vision in a variety of ways.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., 79.

\(^{32}\)Jim Griffith and Bill Easum, Ten Most Common Mistakes Made by New Church Starts (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 16.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., 5.

\(^{34}\)Andy Stanley, Making Vision Stick (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 33.
A Culturally Relevant Worship Service

Another key factor in successful church planting is launching churches which are both biblical and culturally relevant to the target audience. There is consensus in the literature that this is a very significant factor. Culture changes over time. Language, music, clothing, and lifestyles vary from one generation to the next. George Barna declares, “The pet peeve of younger generations [the post-boomers] is irrelevance: they quickly abandon anything that is not entirely germane to their personal passions. . . . If they do not immediately sense the relevance of something, they dismiss it out of hand and move on to the next alternative.”

Russell Burrill agrees. “Planting new churches enables us to reach the present generation. This is a more important reason today than in previous generations. The emergence of the Boomers and Generation X has resulted in more significant generational differences than previously. Any church that ignores these differences will not reach significant numbers of these generations.”

Bruce Norman reports that emerging generations are not attracted to lifeless, predictable worship formats. They crave worship experiences which are creative and interactive. They want to hear testimonies from real people who have struggled in life and experienced God’s help. They prefer practical sermons about day-to-day life. They appreciate messages which are enhanced with visual images, props, and video clips. They want energy, passion, informality, casual dress, acceptance, and warmth. They

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35 George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2005), 44.
36 Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion*, 94.
desire God-focused, contemporary worship music.³⁷

The music question has been a controversial one for many denominations. However, the research is conclusive. The use of contemporary instruments in worship is a factor in church growth. Ed Stetzer’s research showed that worship style in new church plants had a clear and consistent impact on attendance. Those congregations with a contemporary worship style showed the most rapid growth. “Worship style does impact church size. When comparing six styles, and looking at attendance over four years, contemporary and seeker churches tend to be larger than the other worship styles.”³⁸ Two-thirds of the unchurched say they would prefer to come back to an “informal” worship service.³⁹

The same conclusions came out of the second Faith Communities Today (FACT) study which was conducted in the United States in 2005. More than half the congregations with contemporary styles of worship have experienced substantial growth since 2000. Over half the congregations that use drums and or electric guitars often or always in their worship services have experienced substantial growth from 2000 to 2005.⁴⁰ Church planters are missionaries. To reach their target audience effectively, planters need to select worship music that is culturally appropriate for the context.

The use of dramatic skits in worship is also a component of contemporary

³⁸Stetzer, 272.
worship styles. The 2000 FACT study data reveals that “fast-growing Adventist
churches are eight times as likely to make use of drama as are declining congregations.”\textsuperscript{41} However, this study does not indicate whether the growth experienced by these churches
is transfer growth, or conversion growth. It may not be conclusive evidence that drama
attracts unchurched people to Adventist congregations.

The issue of cultural relevancy is an urgent one for the Seventh-day Adventist
Church today. Congregations are aging. Including children, the median age in the
Adventist community in North America is now fifty-one.\textsuperscript{42} Young adults have a
tendency to disengage from congregations which are perceived by them to be irrelevant.
Roger Dudley’s landmark study of Adventist adolescents revealed that “at least 40 to 50
percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the
church by their middle 20s.”\textsuperscript{43} Culturally relevant Adventist congregations are
desperately needed today. Successful church planters strive to create culturally relevant
worship experiences.

\textbf{An Emphasis on Church Health}

Church health is another important factor in establishing growing church plants.
Research conducted by Christian Schwarz from 1994 to 1996 proved scientifically the
existence of universally applicable church growth principles. That initial project
involved 1,000 different churches from thirty-two countries on six continents. It was the

\textsuperscript{41}Sahlin, 23.

\textsuperscript{42}Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, “Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic
Profile” (Milton-Freewater, OR: The Centre for Creative Ministry, 2008), 5.

\textsuperscript{43}Roger L. Dudley, \textit{Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study}
(Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 35.
most comprehensive church growth research project ever conducted. His findings were published in 1996 in his book *Natural Church Development*. In the decade following 1996 the findings of the first study were repeatedly confirmed. The data base grew to include more than 45,000 churches in seventy countries.\textsuperscript{44} NCD research has demonstrated conclusively that high quality healthy churches are growing churches.

The eight essential quality characteristics of healthy churches are: (1) empowering leadership, (2) gift-based ministry, (3) passionate spirituality, (4) effective structures, (5) inspiring worship services, (6) holistic small groups, (7) need-oriented evangelism, and (8) loving relationships.

Effective church planters can take advantage of the NCD process to help their congregations become high quality churches. The NCD process involves surveying the congregation and implementing strategies to become healthier in the area in which the congregation is weakest.

**A Plan for Multiplication**

A key factor in reaching more people for Christ is to plant “church-planting” churches. Bob Logan declares, “Church multiplication is part of the very fabric of what it means to be a church. . . . Church planting is not enough. If one church is planted and then the process is over, that won’t be enough to fulfill the great commission. Jesus called us to go and make disciples of all the nations. This means not just a few more churches, but many more . . . exponentially more.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44}Schwarz, 20.

\textsuperscript{45}Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, 13.
In his book *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, Logan presents ten essential aspects of a church multiplication movement: (1) spiritual dynamics, (2) shared vision, (3) planning, (4) mobilizing planters, (5) developing planters, (6) assessing planters, (7) coaching planters, (8) planting new churches, (9) developing multiplying networks, and (10) funding a church planting movement.46

The Hope Chapel Movement is an amazing example of the power of multiplication. In 1971 Ralph Moore, founder of the movement, planted his first church in California. Only fifteen months into that first plant, Moore commissioned twenty-five of his 120 members to go and start another church. So began his practice of rapid multiplication from a single location. In 1983, Moore himself took a team of thirty people and moved to Hawaii, to plant his second church—Hope Chapel Kaneohe Bay. Today, in 2009, Moore is still leading the Kaneohe Bay church. Since 1983, that one church has blossomed into a network of more than 700 hundred congregations on six continents! Moore writes, “My friends and I have been at this for a long time. Perseverance is our great ally. We have known success mostly because we have kept at the task. We have no secret formula other than a belief that every church should be about the business of planting churches—repeatedly.”47 Moore says it is not about fitting more people into the existing model. It is all about new models and multiplication.

“Church planting is not an end in itself. It is a means by which we reach more souls,” says Wayne Cordeiro, lead pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in

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46Ibid., 65-178.

Honolulu. "The best way to do that is through multiplying churches." Cordeiro launched New Hope in 1995. Currently, in 2009, over 14,000 people worship at New Hope each weekend. They operate five different sites on the island of Oahu. Since 1995 they have launched eighty-three new churches. New Hope Christian Fellowship is one of the congregations that was raised up through Ralph Moore’s Hope Chapel movement.

Bill Easum comments, “At a time when very few churches are beginning to think outside the box by considering planting a church, churches beyond the box are developing church planting multiplication movements. At a time when denominations are struggling with how to plant a few churches that survive, a growing number of congregations are beginning to function as church planting movements.” Clearly, multiplication of churches is a key growth factor.

Burrill says the key to creating a church planting multiplication system is coaching. He states, “Currently, the biggest obstacle to church planting is not finances, but finding the right people to serve as coaches.”

A Network of Small Groups

The literature indicates that in order for a local church today to be a vital, healthy, growing congregation, holistic small groups are necessary. Research done by Christian

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50 Easum and Travis, *Beyond the Box*, 105.

Schwarz indicates that the multiplication of small groups is the single most important principle in church growth.\(^{52}\)

Jimmy Long, a regional director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, comments on the importance of small groups as they pertain to postmodern generations. He says the role of authentic community in promoting spiritual growth cannot be overemphasized. “The emerging postmodern Xer generation craves intimate community. Small groups characterized by intimate community will be a key factor in trying to minister to Generation X.”\(^{53}\)

The FACT 2000 study revealed that declining Adventist congregations are more likely to have few of their members participating in small groups. Conversely, growing Adventist congregations were more likely to have 20-60 percent of their members participating. Surprisingly, however, there were equal numbers of declining and growing churches in which “most” of their members (more than 60%) were involved in small groups.\(^{54}\) The number of congregations in this last category, however, was quite small. This may explain the anomaly. Very few Adventist congregations have more than 60 percent of their members participating in small groups.

Stetzer is emphatic about the need for groups. “No matter what form these small groups take, every healthy church needs a multiplying network of small groups that aid in binding the church together.”\(^{55}\)

\(^{52}\) Schwarz, 35.


\(^{54}\) Sahlin, 26.

\(^{55}\) Stetzer, 219.
A Big Launch

Planting a new church eventually involves conducting a public worship experience. One of the factors affecting the success of a church plant is the size of the launch. The more people there are in attendance at the first public service, the better. The current trend is to wait for the core group to become large enough to ensure that there will be more than 100 people at the grand opening. In most contexts, launching with fewer than 100 people does not give the new church a large enough critical mass to overcome inertia and get off the launching pad. Adequate numbers of people are needed to populate the required ministry teams. "The more people collected before the church launches, the more chance the church has of surviving and becoming an effective ministry." Griffith and Easum declare that launching prematurely virtually guarantees failure.

To launch with more than 100 people requires a core group of 50-100 people. Burrill suggests that the most effective way to grow the core group to that size is by multiplying small groups. Once the core group is sufficiently large, Burrill recommends launching the church with a public series of meetings. He says, "This plan actually has been the most successful way of starting an Adventist church.""57

A System for Assimilating Guests

Another determining factor in the success of a new church plant involves creating an intentional plan to welcome and follow up the guests who visit the church. These

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56 Griffith and Easum, 37.
57 Burrill, Rekindling a Lost Passion, 194.
individuals need to know that they matter. The goal is to help them feel warmly welcomed, and to create a desire in them to return again and again. One church which has gained a reputation for doing this well is The Journey Church of the City in New York. Founding pastor Nelson Searcy launched with 110 in attendance on Easter Sunday, 2002. The next week only 55 came back. Five months later they were averaging only 35 for worship. Searcy was discouraged. Thankfully, God led him to begin focusing on the three or four first-time guests who came each week. He developed a system of greeting and following up these guests. Then the church turned around. As of March 2009, more than a thousand people worship at The Journey Church each Sunday. Searcy has shared his Assimilation System with many pastors who have used it with similar success.

Nelson Searcy lays out the plan in his book *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church.* The plan includes welcoming people warmly when they arrive at the church, providing refreshments before worship, inviting them to fill in a communication card during worship, and sending them home with a gift book. E-mail and snail mail communications are then sent out, thanking them for coming and inviting them to return next Sunday. In the letter he often inserts a metro pass or a Starbucks gift card. His goal is to get first-timers out the second time, and then turn them into regular attenders. He seeks to involve people as soon as possible in small groups and entry-level ministry. After people have attended for two months they are invited to take

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the membership class and join the church. An intentional assimilation plan like this one is a factor in growing new churches.

**A Discipleship Track**

Another vital success factor is implementing a process for helping new members mature in their faith. Perhaps the most famous discipleship track is Rick Warren’s Life Development Process. The Saddleback baseball diamond represents four deepening levels of commitment: membership, maturity, ministry, and mission.\(^{59}\) The four classes are a good basic plan for developing new believers. Stetzer’s research indicates that churches which require people to attend a membership class, sign a membership covenant, and commit to ministry, are faster growing churches. He concludes, “When a church planter articulates high expectations and describes the vision of the congregation, members will respond positively.”\(^{60}\) This confirms what Thom Rainer discovered in his study of 2,000 congregations. “Churches with high expectations not only reach the unchurched but retain them as well.”\(^{61}\)

In addition to attending discipleship classes, a personal approach is required to help new believers become disciple-makers. Burrill says, “It would be helpful for new people to have a personal mentor who is responsible for their discipleship.”\(^{62}\) Others refer to these mentors as “growth partners,” or “accountability partners.” Involvement in

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\(^{59}\)Warren, 144.

\(^{60}\)Stetzer, 292.

\(^{61}\)Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 112.

a small group is also a helpful part of the discipleship process. Neil Cole, founder of Church Multiplication Associates, advocates what he calls Life Transformation Groups (LTGs). These LTGs are gender-specific accountability groups of three people who meet on a weekly basis. LTG members ask each other very direct questions. These groups do not require a leader, and tend to multiply spontaneously.63

A Process for Equipping Members for Ministry

Equipping members for ministry is another vital success factor in church planting. Although this is part of the discipleship track, its importance is such that it bears special mention. Members should be equipped for ministry as soon as possible. “A person who attends but does not begin to serve will drop out within a year. . . . If people begin to serve, they stick. . . . It is no small thing to feel that you are needed.”64 Members must be placed in ministry according to their spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences (S.H.A.P.E.).65

Church growth experts agree that the most effective way to equip people for ministry and leadership is on the job training. Leaders must be intentional about reproducing themselves through mentoring new leaders. New churches seem to do this well. Ralph Moore says, “Every church labours to develop and disciple new leaders, but new congregations do it faster.”66

65Warren, 381.
66Moore, 27.
In addition to equipping members, it is also important to have readily available entry-level service opportunities for new people. Nelson Searcy says, “Responsibility will be the catalyst that moves them [newcomers] from regular attendance to membership. . . . It doesn’t matter how well you preach, or how passionate your worship team is—if your newcomers do not find relationships and take on responsibility within the church, they will not stay long.”

A Commitment to Continue Evangelizing

Another factor that spells success for a new church plant is a commitment to continue evangelizing after the church is launched. “Evangelism is not a ‘phase’ of church life; it’s the ‘LIFE’ of the church.” A culture of inviting people to church must be nurtured. Both relational and public evangelism must continue.

Malphurs indicates that new churches evangelize better than established churches. Per capita, new churches experience more conversion growth than mature churches. Bruce McNichol reports that among evangelical churches, those under three years old win ten people to Christ per year for every one hundred members. Those churches from three to fifteen years old win five people per year for every one hundred members. And after a church reaches fifteen years of age, the figure drops to three people per year for every one hundred members.

The evangelistic strategy of the church must be relevant to the focus group.

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67 Searcy, 134.
68 Griffith and Easum, 47.
69 Malphurs, 44.
Bruce Norman declares that to effectively reach any generation for Christ, the gospel message must be fashioned according to the intended audience. The rational approach worked well with modern generations. A relational approach works best with postmoderns. Norman is not suggesting that the message itself be changed. It just needs to be packaged differently.

In the past three decades, many new North American church plants have experienced rapid growth. Malphurs calls these congregations “new paradigm churches.” He has observed that they are characterized by the following qualities: (1) a Great Commission vision, (2) strong servant-leadership, (3) a well-mobilized lay army, (4) a culturally relevant ministry, (5) holistic, authentic worship, (6) biblical, culturally relevant evangelism, and (7) a robust network of small groups. Malphurs argues that it is difficult to transition traditional churches to this new paradigm. The changes needed are usually too sweeping, he says, for even the best of change agents to bring about. The best way to get more cutting-edge churches is to plant them. “It’s easier to have babies than to raise the dead!” Malphurs’ list of the qualities of new paradigm churches highlights several of the key factors that make for healthy, growing church plants.

**Toward a Strategy for Reaching Postmoderns**

**Understanding Postmodern Generations**

In the United States today there are 100 million young adults between twenty-one and forty-five years of age. That is one third of the population of America. Sociologist

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71 Malphurs, 17.
72 Wagner, 25.
Robert Wuthnow, who initiated the National Young Adults and Religion Study (NYARS) in 2003, reports that only 20 percent of American young adults attend worship weekly. However, another 55 percent attend church occasionally. He says, "If I were a religious leader, I would be troubled by the facts and figures currently describing the lives of young Americans, their involvement in congregations, and their spiritual practices. . . . Young adults are less likely to participate in religious services than they were a generation ago."

In order to engage postmoderns effectively, it is imperative that the church study and understand the prevailing culture. This is foundational to every effective missionary enterprise. The reality is that post-Christian America is a mission field. "Faithful mission practice requires an understanding of the culture in which one is serving. Historically, discerning missionaries have engaged culture, seeking to communicate the gospel in indigenous forms while remaining faithful to scripture. . . . The church must recognize that we are in the midst of a cultural revolution and that nineteenth-century (or older) forms of church do not communicate clearly to twenty-first-century cultures."  

Philosophical Values

So what does the literature indicate about postmodern culture? Unfortunately, postmodern generations lack a universal worldview. It is not easy to fit them into neat little categories. Tim Elmore, for example, has noted many contrasts between Generation

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74Ibid., 214.

75Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 17.
X (born 1965-1983) and Generation Y (born 1984-2002). However, general postmodern philosophical values are as follows: (1) the denial of personal objectivity, (2) the uncertainty of knowledge, (3) the death of any all-inclusive explanation, (4) the denial of the inherent goodness of knowledge, (5) the rejection of progress, (6) the supremacy of community-based knowledge, and (7) the disbelief in objective inquiry.\(^7\) In the minds of postmodern young adults there is no such thing as absolute truth, there are no universally applicable rules, and there is no guaranteed happy ending.\(^7\) Postmodernism is also characterized by a mistrust of organizations, including the church.

The problem is this: “Postmodern thinking subtly, yet directly, challenges the very basic assumptions on which the Adventist church bases its existence and evangelistic mission.”\(^7\) For years the standard Adventist evangelistic approach—a modern approach—has been to preach the truths of God’s Word, and invite people to follow “the truth.” In today’s postmodern world, however, the prevailing view is that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Anyone who claims to “have the truth” is actually viewed with suspicion.

**Perceptions of the Church**

Dan Kimball reports that young adults today have six common negative perceptions of the church: (1) the church is an organized religion with a political agenda; (2) the church is judgmental and negative; (3) the church is dominated by males and

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\(^{76}\)Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 19, quoted in Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 120.


\(^{78}\)Norman, 27.
oppresses females; (4) the church is homophobic; (5) the church arrogantly claims all other religions are wrong; and (6) the church is full of fundamentalists who take the whole bible literally.79

Research conducted by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons of the Barna Group has confirmed Kimball’s observations. They assert that Christianity has an image problem. Their three year study indicates that non-Christians view Christians as being hypocritical, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political, and judgmental. “Our research shows that many of those outside Christianity, especially young adults, have little trust in the Christian faith. . . . They reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians.”80

A Basic Profile

In spite of these negative perceptions, there are many fine qualities about postmodern generations. A basic profile of postmoderns provides clues as to how the church can best engage young adults. In general, postmoderns love community, appreciate authenticity, and hunger for better, healthier families. They are very comfortable with digital technology. They value music and the arts. They learn best through images, relationships, and experiences. They are open-minded. They value spirituality, and they are willing to experiment. Accordingly, “spiritual tinkering is quite common among the young adults of today. . . . It involves piecing together ideas about spirituality from many sources, especially through conversations with one’s friends.”81

79Dan Kimball, They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 69.


81Wuthnow, 134-135.
Reaching Postmodern Generations

It Can be Done

A growing number of missional congregations in the United Kingdom and the United States are effectively engaging postmoderns. The emerging church movement is a good example. The movement is comprised of new congregations which are committed to discovering culturally appropriate church practices in order to reach postmoderns. In a recent five year study of emerging churches, Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger have observed that these churches are characterized by nine practices. They (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, (3) emphasize community, (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.\(^{82}\)

The goal of these missional communities is to practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. They reject the idea of “targeting” people as objects of evangelism. Rather, they focus on incarnational ministry—living among the people, serving them, and welcoming them into kingdom community. Emerging churches value spirituality above numbers of people gathered. As a result, these congregations are seldom large. Worship in these churches tends to be very experiential, unashamedly spiritual, and often includes a participation in ancient patterns. They appreciate mystery, ritual, touch, and beauty.

Congregations need not be “emergent,” however, in order to connect with postmoderns. The growth of the emerging church movement is simply evidence that postmoderns can be effectively engaged. Other types of congregations are also reaching young adults today. Mosaic in Los Angeles is a good example. Lead pastor Erwin

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\(^{82}\)Gibbs and Bolger, 45.
McManus says, "My goal is not necessarily to have a postmodern church. My goal is to have a biblical church that effectively reaches the postmodern context." McManus has adapted the purpose-driven model to make it more relevant to postmoderns. Rather than focusing on the five purposes of the church, he speaks about five "soul environments" for spiritual health. Each environment is wrapped around a different elemental image—wind (mission), water (community), wood (ministry), fire (worship), and earth (discipleship). Mosaic is not an "emergent church," but it is effectively reaching postmoderns.

Essential Characteristics of Effective Churches

What are the essential characteristics of churches which are effectively engaging postmodern generations? Leonard Sweet sums them up with the acronym E.P.I.C.—experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connected. Essentially, Sweet is touching on two main issues—worship and community. To engage postmoderns effectively, worship must be experiential, participatory, and image-driven; and authentic community must be a reality. Worship and community are just two of the five purposes of the church. However, the literature indicates that they are key touchpoints for postmoderns. It seems that an effective strategy to engage young adults should include an emphasis on experiential worship and authentic community.

Experiential worship

In order to engage postmoderns, worship must be experiential. All the senses

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84 McManus, 166-182.
85 Sweet, 28.
should be involved. When young adults come to worship they are looking for a genuine encounter with God. They want to sense His presence and open up to Him in community with others. Postmodern seekers are hungry for worship experiences that are creative, sincere, and relevant. They want to experience the arts. They want to laugh and cry. They want to enter into worship with their whole being—head, heart, and body.

Participatory worship calls for preaching that is more interactive. The “sage on the stage” monologue approach is no longer effective in this “karaoke culture.” Young adult worshipers today are not interested in being spectators. They want to be involved.

Our media-saturated society has created a culture that is image-driven. To engage postmoderns, worship must include visual elements. There is power in images because they generate emotions, and people respond to their feelings. People remember what they see. Images stick. People think in terms of pictures, not words.

Authentic community

The literature is clear. Postmoderns long to belong. Authentic community is a must for any church which is seeking to engage young adults today. These genuine relationships are best formed in a small group environment. Perhaps the most important thing that can be done to help postmoderns in their faith journey is provide small fellowship groups where they can experience genuine Christian community. These small groups are environments where perceived needs are addressed, support is provided, personal experiences are shared, friends are prayed for, and social interaction is enjoyed. Postmoderns are not looking for “friendly,” they are looking for friends. Young adults

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Gibbs, ChurchNext, 179.
value community that is accepting and non-judgmental.

Young adults “want real people to speak to them, to be in personal relationships with them, and to show love and concern for them in tangible ways that affect their everyday lives.” Postmoderns “are not interested in listening to people who presume to have all the answers. Rather they want to meet people who have a transforming relationship with God.”

The bottom line is that many postmoderns are open and reachable, if only the church will put a little effort into creating E.P.I.C. environments. The good news is that “for young adults—the busiest, best educated, and most cosmopolitan segment of our society—religion is potentially important. It engages as many as a quarter of them quite extensively in their congregations, and another half of the young adult population is at least somewhat inclined to participate in religion.”

**Conclusion**

Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic strategy in the world. When they are launched well, new churches grow more rapidly than mature congregations. New congregations are desperately needed in order to reach postmodern generations which, to a great extent, have disengaged from traditional churches. An effective strategy to reach postmoderns is launching culturally relevant churches which include a focus on experiential worship and authentic community.

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87 Norman, 120.
88 Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 130.
89 Wuthnow, 231.
CHAPTER 4

DESIGNING AND PLANTING A NEW CHURCH TO REACH
WINNIPEG’S POSTMODERNS

Introduction

In this chapter I will first relate the story of how the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church initiated a church planting movement in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is the context in which the Lighthouse Church was conceived. Then I will proceed to describe the design of the new church and how it has been implemented.

Context: The Henderson Highway Church in 2003

The Henderson Highway Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba is a multi-cultural congregation. Thirty different nationalities are represented in this church family. In January of 2003, there were 529 members on the church books. Worship attendance was running about 400 people. There were three worship services, each in a different language—English, Korean, and Spanish. The 11:00 a.m. English service was averaging 245 for worship. The Spanish service, which ran simultaneously in the fellowship hall, was attracting 35. And 120 were attending the 1:00 p.m. Korean service.

The Korean congregation became independent in June of 2003. A wave of immigration in 2001-2002 boosted attendance from 25 to 120 people in two years. Most of the newcomers attending our Korean service in 2003 were not yet members of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church. In fact, the Korean Company was formed with only 35 baptized members. There were nearly 100 pre-Adventists attending the worship service!

Church morale was good. However, the English service attendance had not increased significantly in several years. I had arrived as senior pastor in 1999. With God’s blessing, we had baptized 123 people in the four year period 1999-2002. However, in spite of adding these new members, our worship attendance had not increased much. We were on a plateau. Actually, we had been on a plateau for over fifteen years.

Between December, 1987 and December, 1998, church membership numbers had fluctuated somewhat. But the bottom line was not great. The net increase during that twelve year period was only thirteen members! The church had gone from 398 members to 411 members in twelve years.

I also began to realize that there were not many people in the 18-35 year age range who were regularly attending church. Many youth and young adults had become sporadic in their church attendance. Some had stopped attending altogether. We had not done a very good job of retaining the young adults who had “grown up” in the church. Nor were we attracting many new ones.

It was time for a reality check. The church had not grown much in years. A number of the young adults were opting out. I sensed that Henderson Highway needed to become more relevant to Generation X. However, I was concerned that it would take some radical changes in order to reach unchurched Gen Xers effectively. I was doubtful that the Henderson Highway Church would be willing to embrace the kind of change that
would be needed. It was a relatively conservative congregation with a traditional worship service.

In addition, there was a serious parking shortage at Henderson Highway. The church had been built thirty-five years earlier, and only sixty parking spaces were provided. Since the sanctuary could accommodate 400 people, we should have had enough parking for 200 vehicles. I began discussing growth options with the church board. We either needed to acquire more property for parking, move, or start planting new churches. But since there was no adjacent property for sale, and not many of our members were in favor of moving, we began to consider seriously the church planting option.

I had been casting a vision for church planting for several years. In 2002 I had even gathered a group of a few dozen members who felt God was calling them to launch a new church. I met with the group for several planning sessions. We sent two potential leaders off for training to SEEDS—a Church Planting Conference at Andrews University. However, in the end, neither of those individuals felt they could commit to leading the church plant. The project was put on hold.

I sensed an urgent need for new Adventist churches in Winnipeg, a city of 700,000. Including the newly-organized Korean company, there were only five Adventist congregations in the city. On any given Sabbath about 800 worshipers gathered in those five churches. To reach Winnipeg with the message of Christ's grace, His Sabbath, and His soon return, we needed more churches! We especially needed congregations which would reach emerging generations. There were about 200,000 twenty- and thirty-somethings in the city, the vast majority of whom were unchurched.
God was calling me to lead the Henderson Highway Church into parenthood. We needed to birth a new church that would engage postmodern generations.

**Design and Implementation**

**Deciding to Give Birth**

Before we could move ahead with preparations for planting the church, it was necessary to get the majority of the Henderson Highway Church members on board. I needed to persuade the church that God was calling us to plant a new congregation to reach unchurched young adults. In addition, I also needed to convince the church (and my conference administrators) to release me from most of my responsibilities at Henderson, so I could focus my energies on the new church plant. Henderson Highway was the largest church in the conference. There were some very capable elders who could lead the church and oversee its ministries. I just needed to get everyone on the same page.

With this in mind, 2004 became our year of visioning. As we started the process, we held visioning sessions with our board members, and later the church at large. The church board appointed a “dream team” of eight respected visionary leaders. We met monthly to seek God and dream and strategize. How could the Henderson Highway Church really impact the city of Winnipeg for Christ? The shared vision which emerged from this process was our “2020 Vision.” As voted by the church at our Annual General Meeting on February 5, 2005, the statement read:

**The 2020 Vision of the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church**

*It is the dream* of helping people embrace Christ and His truth for these last days by establishing in the city of Winnipeg a network of Christ centred, grace oriented, purpose driven, and culturally relevant Seventh-day Adventist churches.
It is the dream of planting by the year 2020 at least twenty thriving new Adventist congregations to bring faith, hope, and love to the people of Winnipeg.

It is the dream of welcoming 5,000 new members into the fellowship of our Winnipeg Adventist family—loving, learning, laughing, and living together in harmony as we look forward with expectation to the soon return of Jesus.

The 2020 Vision captured the imagination of many of our church members. We had already launched a Korean congregation in June of 2003, and an Hispanic congregation in December of 2004. Now the stage was set for a church planting movement.

One of our Henderson Highway cell groups caught the vision. Members of that group lived in Transcona, a community on the east side of Winnipeg. God impressed them to raise up a church there. In October of 2005 they rented a church, invited their friends, and held their first public worship service. Fifty people came, including twelve non-Adventist guests. They continued meeting for worship once a month for an entire year. Then, in October of 2006, they began worshiping each Sabbath. The congregation was officially organized as a company on March 1, 2008.

The plan to launch a special church to reach young adults was formally voted at Henderson’s Annual General Meeting on February 4, 2006. That is when it became official. We would have another baby. The goal was to launch the new congregation by the end of the year.

I began working with my Henderson Highway elders, preparing them to run the mother church so I could focus on the church plant. Since the head elder would be carrying significantly more responsibility, the church board voted to pay him a small monthly stipend of $200. The other elders were also assigned additional responsibilities. These included equipping people for ministry, chairing the church board, coordinating visitation, organizing communion services, serving communion to shut-ins, leading our
strategic planning process, supporting our ministry leaders, coordinating our calendar of events, and conducting our membership class.

The Conception Stage

Aubrey Malphurs indicates that the process of church planting “involves six stages, which are analogous to the human birth process: conception, development, birth, growth, maturity, and reproduction.”\(^1\) As I describe the design and implementation of the church plant, I will follow Malphurs’ outline.

The conception stage includes the following steps: (1) discovering the church’s core values, (2) developing a mission statement, (3) developing a vision statement, and (4) developing a strategy.\(^2\)

Core Values

Malphurs defines a church’s core values as the “constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive its ministry.”\(^3\) The church’s core values are the basis for everything it does. These values determine how the church will allocate time, energy, money, and other resources. These values will help in making decisions, setting goals, and solving problems.

The process of discovering the core values of the new church started with me. I prayed. I thought. I studied statements of core values from other churches. Then I came with a proposed list, and shared it with my core group. We discussed the values, and the

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\(^1\) Malphurs, 250.
\(^2\) Ibid., 251-252.
\(^3\) Ibid., 253.
group adopted them. The values we agreed on are as follows:

1. We believe that all people matter to God, and must be loved and accepted.
2. We believe that the church must be culturally relevant without compromising the Word of God.
3. We believe that the pursuit of full devotion to Christ and His cause should be the goal of every believer.
4. We believe that teamwork is God’s design for effective ministry.
5. We believe in the priority of prayer. When we work, we work. But when we pray, God works.
6. We believe that God is worthy of our best efforts. Excellence honors God and inspires people.
7. We believe that life-change happens best in small groups. Big faith is grown in small groups.
8. We believe that the church is a community of servants, where every member is a minister.
9. We believe that the church thrives when gifted, emerging leaders are identified and trained to lead with diligence.
10. We believe that starting new churches is the most effective way to reach the world for Christ.

**Mission Statement**

Developing our mission statement was a similar process to the core values. I drafted it and proposed it to the core group. The description of the early church in Acts 2:42-47 was my inspiration for the statement. The early church was community of believers who were totally committed to Christ, radically committed to each other, and utterly committed to helping people come to faith. I longed for our new church to be the same kind of community. The statement I drafted is unique in that it is a mission to “be” something rather than to “do” something: “Our mission is to be an authentic biblical community that transforms people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.”

This mission statement highlights the fact that the church is about making disciples—fully devoted followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit transforms our lives as we live in community with one another. And since postmoderns are all about community, I
felt this would be a solidly biblical mission statement that would resonate well with young adults.

**Vision Statement**

A vision is a clear, compelling picture of a preferred future. A vision statement paints a picture. Vision is about dreams and what can be. It is the leader’s responsibility to cast the vision for the new church. A good vision communicates direction, inspires people, and touches the emotions. It was a powerful and moving experience for me as I dared to dream about what God wanted to accomplish through this church. This is what God put in my heart:

**The Lighthouse Dream**

*It is the dream* of establishing an authentic biblical community in which the believers are totally committed to Christ, radically committed to each other, and utterly committed to helping others come to faith. (Acts 2:42-47)

*It is the dream* of growing a spiritual community in which the hurting, the depressed, and the frustrated find love, acceptance, forgiveness, belonging, healing, and hope.

*It is the dream* of sharing the good news of Christ, His Sabbath, and His soon return with thousands who live in the Winnipeg area.

*It is the dream* of creating a church environment which is relevant to young adults.

*It is the dream* of welcoming a thousand people into our Lighthouse family.

*It is the dream* of developing people to spiritual maturity through Bible studies, small groups, seminars and retreats.

*It is the dream* of equipping every member for significant ministry, and empowering them to use their God-given gifts and talents to serve others.

*It is the dream* of launching a new daughter church every year—filling the city of Winnipeg with vibrant, multiplying Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

*It is the dream* of purchasing at least five acres of land on which will be erected a worship centre large enough to accommodate a thousand people each Sabbath.
It is the dream of raising up a new generation of Christ-followers who will change the world.

Strategy

Strategy is about deciding who you want to reach, and determining the best way to reach them. Strategy involves coming up with a specific plan to accomplish your goals. A basic strategy principle is to profile your target audience. Rick Warren suggests personalizing the profile. He came up with Saddleback Sam. Willow Creek has Unchurched Harry and Mary. Our personality is Postmodern Pete. What follows is our description of Pete and our strategy to disciple him:

Born in 1980, Pete has grown up in the postmodern era. He knows that science is not the answer to all the ills of society. Because he craves meaningful relationships, he sticks close to his friends. He text messages his live-in girl friend many times a day. Pete likes to be involved in stuff, but his schedule is quite full, and he’s reluctant to make commitments. He does, however, make time for coffee at Starbucks, and he still enjoys watching reruns of Friends. He gets almost all his information from the internet. He loves MTV and listening to high energy music on his ipod. He lives for the weekend when he can go to the club, party with friends, or catch a movie. He is often tired, and likes to sleep in on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Pete’s parents got divorced when he was 13. He hardly ever hears from his father any more. His mother is a spiritual person, but has long ago given up on “organized religion.” Although she attended Sunday School as a girl, she has never taken Peter to church. As such, Pete is pretty much biblically illiterate. Christianity as he perceives it seems irrelevant. The Christians he knows are narrow-minded and judgmental. He has little interest in religion, and is skeptical of anyone who claims to have “the truth.” Yet, when he thinks about recent world events, he often wonders what the future has in store. He’s curious about Bible prophecy, but finds it too confusing.

We’ve designed The Lighthouse Church with Postmodern Pete in mind. Here’s how we seek to make the “Old, Old Story” relevant for Pete and other unchurched young adults:

1. We focus on relationships, so that Pete will find a place to belong, not just a place to believe.
2. We worship at 4:00 pm, which enables Pete to sleep in on Sabbath mornings and still come out to church. This time slot doesn’t interfere with his evening plans either.

3. We keep our celebrations to 60 minutes in length because Pete has a short attention span. (Too many video games?) He could never imagine spending 3 hours at church!

4. We choose relaxed, casual dress for worship, so that Pete will feel comfortable coming to church in his jeans. He doesn’t own a suit or tie.

5. We sing contemporary worship songs because Pete enjoys music with energy and passion. He doesn’t care much for hymns or organ music.

6. We feature personal testimonies during the worship service, because Pete likes to hear real stories from real people about their relationship with Christ. These stories inspire him to believe that he too can have a deep and satisfying relationship with God.

7. We keep our worship experiences interactive, because Pete would rather be involved, than be a spectator.

8. We use a big video screen with lots of images because Pete is so visually oriented.

9. We serve refreshments after every celebration, because this gives Pete time to connect with his new friends. It almost feels like Starbucks!

10. We strive to create Sabbath celebrations of E.P.I.C. proportions: Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, and Connected.

11. We encourage Pete to join a small group. We know this is the best place for him to build meaningful relationships, experience authentic biblical community, and become involved in ministry. Here he can begin serving long before he is ready for baptism. In our groups truth is more “caught” than “taught.”

12. We conduct Bible Prophecy Seminars because Pete is curious about the future, and wants to understand the book of Revelation.

13. We provide an intentional discipleship track for Pete, so he has a clear pathway on which to continue his spiritual journey and keep growing in his relationship with Christ. Bit by bit he moves from the COMMUNITY (the unchurched) to the CROWD (the regular attenders) to the CONGREGATION (church members) to the COMMITTED (maturing members), and finally to the CORE (lay ministers).

So that is the rationale for the way we do church. We have designed it to be relevant to Postmodern Pete. We want him to experience first century passion for Christ in the twenty-first century world.

The discipleship track mentioned above is Rick Warren’s Life Development Process. We have adapted it for use in our church. Why reinvent the wheel?

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Warren, 144.
Finances

There never seems to be enough money. It is the responsibility of the church planter to find other sources of funding in addition to the people in the core group. Stephen Gray’s research showed that planters who launched fast-growing churches were usually personally involved in raising financial support for the church plant.\textsuperscript{5} Church planting is about faith and prayer. We had budgeted to receive $20,000 from financial partners in our first year. Although we fell short of that goal, God blessed us with several very generous donations. We were also fortunate to receive some Global Missions funding from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The Development Stage

In the development stage the planter takes three to twelve months to prepare for the first public service. The core group must be gathered, cultivated and grown. A core group of at least fifty people is needed in order to ensure a strong launch.

Throughout 2005, I had been meeting weekly with a group of young adults from the Henderson Highway Church. That cell group became the core of what was to become The Lighthouse of Hope Church. Early in 2006, the original cell multiplied to two groups. Then, in the fall of 2006, we launched a third cell group.

After the Henderson Highway Church voted in February of 2006 to approve the plan to launch the new church, I began gathering a team of people who were passionate about helping me launch a new church that would be relevant to young adults. I organized several young adult potlucks, and cast the vision for the new church. I invited

\textsuperscript{5}Gray and Short, 72.
everyone I knew who was in the target group, or who had a heart for young adults, to pray about joining me in this venture. Gradually the core group began to grow. By October of 2006, I had gathered thirty-one people to help me launch the church. Seven of these individuals were Adventists who had not been attending church. Five were not yet church members. The other nineteen individuals were regularly attending members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

That fall, we worked at developing our ministry teams—our children’s ministry team, our praise team, our audio-visual team, our hospitality team (greeters and food service personnel), and our communications team (website and PR). We would launch the new church with a Bible Prophecy series. The meetings were scheduled to begin on November 3, 2006. That date was rapidly approaching.

The Birth Stage

A church is “born” at its grand opening when it goes public. Five steps are needed to prepare for the first public meeting: (1) deciding when to start, (2) choosing a name, (3) locating a place to meet, (4) publicizing the meeting, and (5) planning the meeting.6

Deciding When to Start

Peter Wagner’s rule of thumb is that you need 50 to 100 people in your core group before you launch. However, it depends on how large you want the church to grow in the long run. Wagner says, “If it [the church] desires to grow larger than 200 people,

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6 Malphurs, 317-339.
then it should have 50 to 100 adults in the core group before it goes public.\(^7\) If the church plans to be a church of less than 200, then a core group of 25 to 30 adults is adequate. If you do not have the critical mass required for the size of church you want to become, the literature recommends delaying your launch. Wayne Cordeiro waited until he had 180 people before launching New Hope. He needed that many people just to staff all the ministry teams required for the kind of program he wanted to offer.

In October of 2006, we had gathered just thirty-one people. Although we were somewhat shy of fifty, we decided to proceed anyhow. We hoped and prayed for a good harvest at our Revelation Series. If we could add another twenty people to the core group through our evangelistic meetings, we would have the critical mass needed to get off the launch pad.

We would invite our prophecy seminar guests to join us for worship on Sabbath, November 25, part way through the series. For several Sabbaths we would conduct “preview” worship services which would enable us to work out some of the kinks before our Grand Opening on December 23. The preview services would also provide a final opportunity to enlarge our core group before the launch.

**Choosing a Name**

We chose to leave off the denominational label and go with a generic name. Peter Wagner cautions church planters to “think twice before using the name of your denomination.”\(^8\) In our worship services we are up front about the fact that we are a

\(^7\)Wagner, 119.

\(^8\)Ibid., 118.
Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are proud to be Adventists. However, we do not want the local prejudice against Adventists to prevent people from making an initial visit to our church. "Planters use generic names to attract people beyond their denominational boundaries. . . . Most new churches today do not identify their denomination in their names."9

"Lighthouse of Hope" was not my first choice for a name. However, it was a democratic process. The core group chose the name. The metaphor of the lighthouse has spiritual significance. "Hope" is something postmoderns yearn for. In everyday usage, we simply refer to the church as "The Lighthouse."

Locating a Place to Meet

We chose to locate in the south part of Winnipeg for a several reasons. First, there were no other English-speaking Adventist Churches in the area. Second, we wanted to be close to the University of Manitoba. The 25,000 students who attend U of M are in our target group. Third, there were a lot of new houses going up in the area.

Finding a venue in that area proved to be a challenge. We wanted something highly visible and easily accessible by bus. We felt that our target group would connect better with a neutral venue than a traditional church setting. We thought we had lined up some nice commercial office space that would be available to us free of charge for one year. But the deal fell through. Fortunately, the Korean Adventist Church is in the area, and they opened their doors to us. The Korean congregation had worshipped for thirty years at the Henderson Highway Church. I had been their pastor for several years. They

9Stetzer, 233.
felt glad that they could “give back” by welcoming us into their facility.

Publicizing the Meeting

People in our core group personally invited their friends and family to our Grand Opening. We mailed out invitations to everyone in our data base—about 200 names. We mass mailed 5,000 invitations in the area around the church. We also did some radio advertising. We billed the event as both our Grand Opening and a Christmas Celebration. We announced that a banquet would follow the worship service.

Planning the Meeting

Our first service was a Christmas celebration. We put a lot of effort into making it special. We decorated the church. We prepared our friendliest greeters to welcome the people. With the help of some borrowed staff, the children’s program was ready to go. We had invited a local Adventist recording artist by the name of Christine Wollmann to sing. I would share a short message on the birth of Jesus. The ladies from the Korean congregation would provide the banquet. We were ready.

We welcomed a crowd of 155 people for our Grand Opening on December 23. There were, however, only thirty-four non-Adventist guests in the group. Most of the individuals who came that day were members of the Henderson Highway Church. They came to celebrate with us on our “big day.” Sadly, only three of the non-Adventists who came on December 23 returned the following Sabbath. Attendance on December 30 plunged to forty people. It was heartbreaking. In retrospect, most of the non-Adventist guests who came to our Grand Opening were seniors. The worship style may not have worked for them.
The Growth Stage

The Lighthouse is now in the growth stage. Currently, in March of 2009, we are into our third year. After the launch, our focus shifted from planting the church to growing the church. In this stage there are three main essentials: (1) evangelism, (2) equipping members for ministry, and (3) multiplying cell groups.

Evangelism

The newly planted church must continue to focus on evangelism. Transfer growth is not kingdom growth. Conversion growth must be the goal. The process of evangelism must be ongoing—both relationally and publicly. At the Lighthouse, we encourage our members to cultivate relationships with unchurched friends. We try to instill the value of being involved in the community and making friends for Christ. We regularly offer felt-needs seminars. We plan special Sabbath celebrations so that our members will have events to which they can invite their friends. In our worship services, we regularly give our guests the opportunity to make decisions for Christ. We offer Bible studies to interested individuals. We also conduct reaping meetings twice a year. We believe that evangelism is the life blood of the church.

We have found it difficult to hold public evangelistic meetings in the winter. Winnipeg is the coldest major city in Canada. We are located north of North Dakota. Winter in “Winterpeg” lasts for five months. People like to stay home where it is warm. Accordingly, we plan public evangelistic events each spring and fall. Congregations in the warmer south may hold meetings more frequently. However, we have found that conducting them twice a year is an appropriate plan for our context.

So far, I have done the preaching for all of our live Lighthouse evangelistic
meetings. We participated in a city-wide crusade in the spring of 2007, and we were a downlink site for the HeartQuest satellite series in the fall of 2007. However, neither of these events did much in the way of adding new members to our church. To date, we have conducted three Revelation of Hope series at the Lighthouse. We have welcomed six to nine new church members each time.

We have tried various felt-needs programs—marriage seminars and groups, parenting groups, stress seminars, a 12-step recovery group, and a money management group. Additionally, a number of people who attend the Lighthouse have benefited from the healthful cooking classes and the Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP) offered by the Henderson Highway Church. Our felt-needs programs have had mixed success. The best experience we have had to date was with the Love & Respect Marriage Conference. This video conference was organized by one of our cell groups. Over 150 people came out, the majority of whom were not Seventh-day Adventists. One couple who attended ended up coming to a Revelation of Hope series and joining our church. Now they are involved in marriage ministry at the Lighthouse.

**Equipping Members for Ministry**

Every church member is a minister. Helping members find the right places to serve is a vital key to church growth. God has uniquely shaped every person. When we equip and empower people to serve in ministries that fit who God made them to be, exciting things happen. Few things excite me more than hearing my church members exclaim, “I love this ministry!” That is when I know we have the right person in the right ministry for the right reason.

At the Lighthouse, we take ministry assignments seriously. Our membership
covenant requires prospective members to commit to serving in ministry according to their God-given gifts, passions, abilities, personality, and life experiences. In a two-hour class, Lighthouse 301: Discovering My Ministry, we help members discover their “S.H.A.P.E.” We have borrowed Rick Warren’s material and adapted it for our own use. I have been teaching this class myself. However, I am in the process of training our ministry placement coordinators to take it over. We had planned to offer the class two or three times a year, but unfortunately we have only conducted it twice in our first two years. Things should improve now that someone other than myself will be doing it.

Following class 301, people meet with one of our ministry placement coordinators to review their profile and identify an appropriate ministry in which they can serve. The ministry placement coordinator then refers the individual to the ministry leader for training and scheduling. Our ministry placement coordinator follows up a month later to see how things are going. If there are problems, they meet again and consider other ministries that might be appropriate. We believe that prayerful experimentation is the best way to identify one’s spiritual gifts.

We also empower our ministry leaders to recruit their own staff. Some new ministers are placed through our ministry placement process, while others are recruited by the ministry leaders themselves. The end result is that new people are being placed into ministry with regularity. To date, we have not used a traditional nominating committee system at the Lighthouse. Our leadership team appoints our ministry leaders. Those leaders are then responsible for building their own ministry teams. The ministry leaders are also responsible for reproducing themselves by mentoring other leaders.
Multiplying Cell Groups

From the outset, the Lighthouse has been a church of small groups. We expect our members to participate weekly in a cell group. Our membership covenant requires people to agree to this before they join the church. Not everyone follows through with the commitment, but we continually strive to include everyone in group life. Our goal is to involve at least 80 percent of our regularly attending members in group life.

Cell groups are about developing authentic biblical community. They are also the primary means of member care at the Lighthouse. Since life change happens best in community with other believers, the cell groups are a key element in our discipleship process. Cells also help identify and develop emerging leaders. And these groups support our evangelistic philosophy of “belonging before believing.” There are a number of people attending our groups who are not yet church members. Some of them also attend worship. Others have not yet developed that habit. So there are several reasons why our cell groups are vital to the growth of the Lighthouse: (1) community, (2) member care, (3) life transformation, (4) leadership development, and (5) evangelism.

Defining terms

There are a variety of approaches to small groups today. Not every small group is a cell group. There are ministry groups, recovery groups, affinity groups, and other types of groups. Joel Comiskey defines a cell group as “a group of 3 to 15 people who meet weekly outside the church building for the purpose of evangelism, community, and discipleship with the goal of multiplication.” 

\[10\] Comiskey, The Church That Multiplies, 20.
characteristics of a cell group. Not everything that is “small” and is a “group” is a cell
group.

Many churches have small groups as part of their program. Some of the members
participate in group life, others do not. However, in a cell church all members are
committed to participating in group life. “Although many cell churches have other
ministries, they do ask the people involved in those additional ministries to actively
participate in the cells. In this way cells remain the base of the church. Growing the cell
infrastructure is the number one priority in the cell church.”11 The support structures
vary from one cell church to the next. There are different models for coaching leaders
and multiplying the cells, but the common denominator in all cell churches is that the
cells are the base of the church.

As of March 2009, we have eight small groups and an additional group which is
loosely connected to the Lighthouse. This latter group, SMART (Searching for Meaning
Answers Required Today), is a student group at the University of Manitoba. It was
organized by Adventist students. There are currently more than fifteen individuals in that
group. Half of them are not yet Seventh-day Adventist Church members. SMART
currently leads worship at the Lighthouse once a month. We are custodians of their
funds. Their group leader attends our cell group leaders meetings. But SMART really
operates independently of the Lighthouse.

The eight Lighthouse groups currently functioning include three cell groups, a
task group (our praise team), a parenting group, a marriage group, and two small 3-4

11Ibid., 62.
person Bible study groups. Our approach to groups is not a “pure” cell approach. However, the cell groups are the backbone of the Lighthouse.

Cell group leader support

Because the cells are the base of our church, we strive to ensure that the leaders are adequately trained and supported. Healthy leaders grow healthy groups. Our group meetings follow the basic 4Ws outline: welcome, worship, word, and work. With a view to multiplying each group, we ask each group leader to train at least one other leader. Our goal is for each group to multiply each year. However, to date, we have only had three groups which have actually multiplied. We realize that coaching is the key to multiplication. Our infrastructure is still in progress. Our small groups coordinator facilitates a monthly group leaders meeting. Both group leaders and their apprentices attend this meeting. In addition to praying together and reporting on how things are going with their groups, there is also a training segment to each meeting.

Currently in our group leaders’ meetings we are discussing one chapter each month from Dave Earley’s book 8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders. It is a helpful training manual. By clarifying the eight essential habits, Earley makes it easier for group leaders to practice them. The habits are as follows: (1) dream of leading a healthy, growing, multiplying group, (2) pray for group members daily, (3) invite new people to visit the group weekly, (4) contact group members regularly, (5) prepare for the group meeting, (6) mentor an apprentice leader, (7) plan group fellowship activities, and (8) be committed to personal growth.12

12Dave Earley, 8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders: Transforming Your Ministry Outside the Meeting (Huston, TX: TOUCH Outreach Ministries, 2001), 15.
Effective group leader support, however, requires more than just a monthly meeting. So we are working on implementing a more comprehensive coaching plan. What we are aiming for is something like the plan suggested by Joel Comiskey. He suggests that a minimal coaching plan includes (1) daily prayer for the leaders being coached, (2) weekly contacts to listen and provide encouragement, (3) monthly equipping sessions, (4) quarterly visits to the group, and (5) biannual celebrations for all group leaders. The best coaches are the group leaders who have successfully multiplied their groups. Our challenge is that we do not have many leaders who have done that. This year I will be doing much of the coaching. As our groups multiply, the plan is for the group leader who trained the apprentice to be the one to coach the apprentice when he becomes the leader of a new group.

Other Growth Factors

The assimilation system

As of March 2009, we have just recruited the person who will lead our process of following up and assimilating our guests. We will be implementing the plan outlined by Nelson Searcy in his book Fusion. Our assimilation coordinator will serve refreshments before worship, set out the gift books for first-time guests, send out the e-mails and letters, set up the guest surveys on our website, and encourage returning guests to join a group and get involved in entry-level ministry. This ultimately leads to a membership class. Our membership class, Lighthouse 101: Discovering Church Membership, needs to be conducted more regularly. I have only taught this class once with a group. I have

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1Joel Comiskey, How to Be a Great Cell Group Coach (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, a Division of TOUCH Outreach Ministries, 2003), 122.
been teaching it on an individual basis as I prepare people for baptism. However, I would like to work toward offering this class quarterly. I believe it will help some of our regularly attending pre-Adventists to decide to join the church.

Natural Church Development survey

We have recently completed our first NDC survey. Our Leadership Team will be implementing a strategy to improve our minimum factor. We plan to re-survey every two years. We will seek to apply the biblical principles which lead to church health. We will seek to remove the barriers to growth. However, it is God who makes the church grow.

Worship service development

As mentioned in the last chapter, a creative, culturally relevant worship experience is vital for connecting with postmoderns. After two years of using “canned” music for worship, we finally have a live worship band, complete with lead guitar, bass guitar, and drums. The live band has taken our Sabbath celebrations to the next level. All three of the instrumentalists were previously unchurched, and have just started attending The Lighthouse in the past few months. One of these individuals was an inactive Adventist. The other two have not had any previous connection to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their participation has infused a considerable amount of excitement into our praise team.

Goals

On February 28, 2009, at our first Annual General Meeting, the church voted the following goals for 2009:

1. Welcome 30 new members by baptism or profession of faith
2. Average worship attendance: 100 people by the end of 2009

3. Ministry Involvement: 80% of those adults regularly attending worship

4. Group Participation: 80% of those adults regularly attending worship

5. Cell groups: 7 of them by the end of 2009

6. Praise Team goals: a live band, 2 separate praise teams, 3 worship nights

7. Children’s Ministry goal: establish 2 separate groups (4-6 yrs & 7-10 yrs)

8. Community guest days at Easter, Fathers’ Day, Thanksgiving & Christmas

9. Leadership Development: quarterly training meetings with an emphasis on all leaders reproducing themselves

10. Church social events: 1 per quarter

At the same meeting, we also voted the following five-year goals (to be accomplished by the end of 2013):

1. Welcome an average of 300+ people for worship each Sabbath

2. Conduct 2 worship services each Sabbath

3. Be known in Fort Garry as “the church that helps people.”

4. Establish our own daycare centre

5. Establish a thriving campus ministry at the University of Manitoba

6. Have a thriving network of 30+ cell groups

7. Establish 4 separate children’s Sabbath School groups

8. Establish a thriving youth group

9. Purchase property

10. Launch our first daughter congregation

We are now ready to do the strategic planning that will lay out the specifics for
accomplishing these goals—resources, leadership, action steps, and time lines.

Maturity and Reproduction

The final stages in the process of church planting are maturity and reproduction. As the church reaches maturity it must address the issue of purchasing or erecting a facility. When it comes to buying property, Burrill says you need an acre of land for every 100 people who will be in attendance on Sabbath. He also recommends that the minimum parcel size be three acres. Burrill suggests waiting at least five years before purchasing property. He says the tendency is to buy too small if you buy too soon.\footnote{Burrill, Rekindling a Lost Passion, 197-198.} The Lighthouse has set a goal of purchasing five acres of land by the end of 2013.

Reproduction is in the Lighthouse DNA. It is one of our core values. We have set a goal of launching our first daughter church some time within the next five years. Malphurs says that most churches, regardless of their size, think they are too small to reproduce. Of course, in general, the larger the church, the easier it is to reproduce.\footnote{Malphurs, 385.} It has been suggested that when a congregation hives off some of its members to launch a new church, it should send away no more than 10-20 percent of the congregation. I would like to be able to give away 50-100 people to birth our first daughter church. In order to this we should have at least 250 people attending the Lighthouse before giving birth.

\footnote{Burrill, Rekindling a Lost Passion, 197-198.}
\footnote{Malphurs, 385.}
Conclusion

The Lighthouse of Hope Church has been birthed in the context of Henderson Highway’s 2020 Vision. Designed to reach young adults, The Lighthouse was launched on December 23, 2006. Currently in the growth stage, we are focusing on evangelism, equipping members for ministry, and multiplying our cell groups. We look forward to planting our first daughter church before the end of 2013. The effectiveness of the design and implementation will be evaluated in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Introduction

In this chapter I will first describe the outcomes of this church planting project. Outcomes for both the mother and daughter churches will be examined. The outcomes for the mother church—the Henderson Highway Church—will be considered in the greater context of the 2020 Vision. Second, I will evaluate the effectiveness of the church planting process.

Outcomes

Outcomes for the Mother Church

Launching the Lighthouse was a challenging experience for the Henderson Highway church family. It was significantly more challenging than launching the Korean and Spanish churches. Although these ethnic congregations had been part of the Henderson Highway family, they had functioned relatively independently of the English-speaking congregation. However, when the reality set in that some English-speaking members would be leaving Henderson to start new churches, the congregation entered a period of stress and turmoil.

Following the business meeting in February of 2006, at which the Henderson Highway Church voted to launch two new congregations (a church to reach young adults
and a church in Transcona), a few influential Henderson Highway members began to undermine the 2020 Vision. It was asserted that “many” Henderson Highway Church members had not “bought into” the vision for aggressively planting new Adventist congregations in the city of Winnipeg. My leadership was called into question. One individual brought his concerns to our board of elders. He later phoned the conference president and asked him to intervene. Fortunately, the 2020 Vision process had been well documented. My conference president sensed that it was only a vocal minority who were opposed to the church planting vision.

However, as more and more of my time was spent on preparing for the launch of two new churches, some Henderson members felt I was neglecting my responsibilities to the mother church. At one point, I received an anonymous letter asking, “Isn’t it time you get back to doing what you’re being paid to do?” Clearly the writer felt that church planting was not what I was being “paid to do.”

I had been preaching that the primary role of a pastor is evangelism and church planting, not member care. I had worked during 2004 and 2005 to establish a network of holistic small groups in which members would receive excellent mutual care. However, in spite of my efforts, the majority of Henderson Highway members in 2006 were still not participating in group life. I discovered that it is difficult to transition an established church of several hundred members to become a church of small groups.

To complicate matters, the plan to release the majority of my Henderson Highway duties to the elders did not go smoothly. Our team of a dozen elders was supportive of the direction we were going. They were in accord with the vision to fill Winnipeg with vibrant new Adventist churches. However, the added responsibilities put a strain on our
team of elders. Three of them, including our head elder, resigned. Others struggled to accomplish their assigned tasks. Member care suffered. It was not an easy time for the congregation. Church morale was ebbing away.

As the two new congregations began conducting weekly Sabbath services in the fall of 2006, worship attendance decreased at the Henderson Highway Church. This decrease was accentuated by the fact that in 2005 we had created a contemporary worship service option on Sabbath mornings in the Henderson Highway fellowship hall. Led by our youth pastor, this service attracted about thirty-five individuals each Sabbath, predominantly teens. Thus, people who had been worshiping at Henderson at the beginning of 2005 were, by the end of 2006, worshiping in four different venues—Henderson sanctuary, Henderson fellowship hall, Transcona, and The Lighthouse. Attendance at the main Henderson worship service had decreased noticeably.

Although the Transcona Church was established as a lay-led congregation, I was still doing most of the preaching. I preached at 9:30 a.m. in Transcona, at 11:00 a.m. in the Henderson Highway Church, and at 4:00 p.m. at The Lighthouse. Additionally, when we started weekly Sabbath services at The Lighthouse in November of 2006, we were in the midst of an evangelistic series. I was preaching Friday nights, Saturday nights, Sunday nights, and Wednesday nights. For the last three weeks of that series I preached six times each weekend. When the series ended there was great joy as we celebrated our first baptisms. But I was totally exhausted. We had not even held our Grand Opening, and I was already out of energy. I felt anxious that the launch was just a few weeks away, and I had nothing left to give.

Early in 2007, I shared with my conference president the fact that I was worn out.
He indicated that he would try to get me some help. By springtime, a budget had been created for an additional pastor at Henderson Highway. It was proposed that with three pastors at Henderson (myself, and two associates) the needs of the mother church could be adequately met, and I could focus most of my time on The Lighthouse. I suggested that it might be better simply to get a new senior pastor for Henderson, and allow me to focus on the church plants. In the end, that is what we did. In June of 2007, I announced to the Henderson Highway Church that I would cease to be their senior pastor as of the end of August.

The new senior pastor did not arrive at Henderson until June of 2008. In the intervening months, Henderson members continued to call on me for various pastoral services—visits, weddings, funerals, and the like. It took many months for me to regain my energy. I had not realized how close I was to burnout. Throughout 2007 and into 2008 low energy levels hampered my ministry.

In spite of the challenging experience it was for the Henderson Highway Church family, and for me personally, the emphasis on church planting has resulted in significant measurable growth. In June of 2003, Henderson Highway gave birth to the first of four daughter congregations. Since 2003, there have been increases in worship attendance, increases in accessions (baptisms and professions of faith), membership increases, and tithe gains.

**Increased Worship Attendance**

Table 1 reveals the average fourth quarter worship attendance for Henderson Highway and her four daughter churches. These attendance figures are the quarterly averages of actual headcounts taken at the worship services. Children are included. The
Korean statistics for 2005 and 2008 are estimates provided by the head elder. Headcount statistics are not available for those two quarters.

The Adventist Community Services Centre is also included in this table. In the fall of 2006, a Henderson Highway member began conducting Sabbath morning services at the ACS Centre. ACS clients and other friends were invited to come and watch a sermon video and enjoy lunch together. Though the number of people attending this service has declined, a steady group is still attending. At present there are no plans to organize this group into a company.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Highway</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>405</strong></td>
<td><strong>390</strong></td>
<td><strong>391</strong></td>
<td><strong>390</strong></td>
<td><strong>476</strong></td>
<td><strong>492</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combined worship attendance of Henderson Highway and her daughters increased 21 percent in five years from the fourth quarter of 2003 to the fourth quarter of 2008. This increase is in spite of a dramatic drop in worship attendance at the Korean Church in 2004. Several Korean families moved away from Winnipeg that year resulting in a 31 percent drop in worship attendance from 113 to 78 people.
If one calculates the increase in combined worship attendance of Henderson and her daughter churches from the fourth quarter of 2004 (after the substantial drop in Korean attendance) to the fourth quarter of 2008, attendance grew from 390 to 492 in four years—an increase of 26% over four years, or 6.5% per year.

Unfortunately, worship attendance statistics are not available prior to the fourth quarter of 2003. We started counting worshipers at Henderson in November of 2003. So there are no hard numbers that would enable us to make a comparison between attendance growth rates pre-2003 and post-2003. However, my observation from 1999 through 2003 indicates that worship attendance had not increased significantly during those years.

Church planting from 2003 to 2008 resulted in a significant increase in the combined worship attendance of the Henderson Highway Church and her daughters. It should also be noted that attendance at Henderson’s English services actually increased slightly over the same time period—from 255 to 271. Although worship attendance at Henderson Highway did decrease to 236 in the fall of 2006, it recovered by the end of 2008.

**Increased Accessions**

Table 2 shows the annual accessions (baptisms and professions of faith combined) of Henderson Highway and her daughter congregations from 2003 through 2008. In the ten year period preceding 2003, the average number of accessions per year at Henderson Highway was eighteen. For the six year period 2003-2008 the average annual combined accessions of Henderson and her daughters was thirty-four—twice as many as Henderson had previously. During those years, a total of 202 individuals joined the Seventh-day
Adventist Church by baptism or profession of faith at the Henderson Highway Church, the Winnipeg Korean Church, the Nueva Esperanza (New Hope) Church, the Transcona Church, and The Lighthouse.

### TABLE 2

ACCESSIONS (BAPTISMS AND PROFESSIONS OF FAITH)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Hwy</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcona</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>202</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noteworthy that the combined accessions of Henderson and her four daughters constituted a full 43 percent of all the accessions in the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference from 2003 through 2008. (There were a total of 465 accessions in the conference during these six years.) This seems to indicate that placing an emphasis on church planting is one of most effective ways to create a culture of evangelism. New congregations have an innate desire to grow.

### Membership Increases

Table 3 records the year-end book membership of Henderson and her daughter congregations from 2003 through 2008. Over this time period, the Henderson Highway Church “gave away” 95 members to start up four new church plants. In June of 2003, the
Henderson Church transferred 33 members to form the Korean Company. In December of 2004 Henderson transferred 38 members to form the Spanish Company. In March of 2008 another 24 individuals who had originally been members of the Henderson Church were transferred to the Transcona and Lighthouse Companies—15 to Transcona, and 9 to The Lighthouse.

**TABLE 3**

BOOK MEMBERSHIP AT YEAR END

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Highway</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>586</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the end of 2002 the Henderson Highway Church had 529 members. In spite of giving away nearly 100 members between 2003 and 2008, the membership of the Henderson Highway Church actually increased from 529 to 541. The Henderson Highway experience seems to corroborate the claim that when a mother church gives away members to start new churches, God replaces the ones who were given away.

The combined membership of Henderson Highway and her daughter churches increased from 529 at the end of 2002, to 720 at the end of 2008. That’s a net membership increase of 36% over six years, or 6% per year.
Tithe Gains

Table 4 shows the annual tithe in Canadian Dollars of the Henderson Highway Church and her offspring from 2003 through 2008. Until a new church plant is organized as an independent company, its finances are run through the books of the mother church. The tithe figures of the Henderson Highway Church therefore include the tithe from her daughter congregations up until the time when they were organized as companies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>$570,024</td>
<td>$550,904</td>
<td>$547,704</td>
<td>$501,390</td>
<td>$625,803</td>
<td>$590,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>17,159</td>
<td>45,945</td>
<td>51,019</td>
<td>38,303</td>
<td>47,561</td>
<td>40,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>24,605</td>
<td>22,082</td>
<td>19,447</td>
<td>24,378</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54,958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38,715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$587,183</td>
<td>$596,849</td>
<td>$623,328</td>
<td>$561,775</td>
<td>$692,811</td>
<td>$749,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combined tithe of Henderson Highway and her daughters increased 27.6% in the five years following 2003. This is an increase of 5.5% per year. The cumulative tithe gains during those five years (a total of $288,098 above the 2003 tithe level) more than adequately covered the salaries of the pastors who were added to the field. In 2003, there were already three pastors—two at Henderson Highway, and one at the Korean Church. In June of 2006, a half-time pastor was added for the Spanish Church. Then, in June of 2008, a full-time budget was added when the senior pastor vacancy at Henderson
Highway was filled. My point is simply that the tithe gains created by church planting have funded the additional pastors placed in the field.

All of the data indicates that the outcomes of the Henderson Highway church planting initiatives have been positive. Since Henderson began planting churches in 2003, combined worship attendance increased 21%, the number of accessions per year has doubled, combined membership has increased 36%, and there has been a 28% tithe gain which has more than funded the 1.5 full-time-equivalent pastors added to the field.

In addition to giving away ninety-five members to start four new churches, Henderson also contributed a total of $9,500 to assist in the launching of those churches. Though the experience was, at times, a challenging one for the mother church, she is now the proud parent of four daughter congregations. She has made a significant contribution to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Henderson Highway has launched a church planting movement in the city of Winnipeg. Only in eternity will the full impact of this initiative be known.

Outcomes for The Lighthouse

The Lighthouse of Hope Church was birthed on December 23, 2006. It was organized as an independent company on March 1, 2008. As of the end of 2008 the Lighthouse Company had forty baptized members.

Increasing Worship Attendance

In two years the Lighthouse family has grown to include more than 100 individuals who attend worship or a small group at least monthly. In spite of the fact that fourteen of our regular attenders moved away from Winnipeg during 2007 and 2008,
worship attendance has continued to grow. As of the first quarter of 2009, there are over fifty individuals (including children) who attend worship regularly—at least twice a month. Half of these individuals were not attending an Adventist Church prior to coming to The Lighthouse. Most of them were unchurched. A few attended non-Adventist churches.

Table 5 shows the average worship attendance month by month. The number of people attending worship at The Lighthouse increased over the first two years. In 2007, we averaged forty-eight worshipers per Sabbath. In 2008, we averaged sixty-three. That’s a 31 percent increase in one year.

TABLE 5
AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE BY MONTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
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Average monthly attendance figures for December are consistently higher than other months because of the many guests who come out to celebrate our birthday. When the Lighthouse was launched on December 23, 2006, there were 155 people in attendance. For our first anniversary celebration on December 15, 2007, we welcomed a record 231 people. There were 122 people who came out on December 20, 2008 to celebrate our second anniversary.
Young Adult Accessions

In her first twenty-five months, The Lighthouse welcomed twenty-eight new members by baptism or profession of faith. Table 6 shows the breakdown by age group.

TABLE 6
ACCESSIONS BY AGE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Young Adults (18-35 years)</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle-aged Adults (36-55 years)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniors (56 years and up)</td>
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<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Nearly half of the individuals who joined The Lighthouse by baptism or profession of faith in the first two years were young adults. Although the initial core group was comprised mainly of young adults, the church has attracted new members of various ages. We have been pleased to welcome into our church family a number of mature adults. We believe it is healthy to have all age groups represented in the congregation. However, the percentage of young adults who have joined the church is higher than any other age group. We are doing a better job of reaching young adults than are most North American Seventh-day Adventist Congregations.

Young Adult Attendance

Currently, in the first quarter of 2009, there are forty-three adults who regularly
attend worship at the Lighthouse. Half of them are young adults. The median age of adults who regularly attend the Lighthouse, not including children, is thirty-four. Table 7 shows the breakdown of regularly attending adults by age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Young Adults (18-35 years)</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Middle-aged Adults (36-55 years)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
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**Young Adult Involvement**

Currently, in the first quarter of 2009, 70 percent of all our regularly attending adults are involved in some kind of ministry. However, 82 percent of the regularly attending young adults are involved in ministry. The percentage of young adults serving in ministry is higher than the percentage of mature adults. We strive to involve all our members in ministry. The majority of those not yet serving are not yet members.

Another evaluation criterion is group participation. What percentage of adults who regularly attend worship also participate in group life? Currently, in the first quarter of 2009, 72 percent of all the adults who regularly attend worship are also participating in a small group. In the young adult age group, 77 percent of regularly attending worshipers are also enjoying the benefits of group life. Our young adults are slightly more involved in small groups than are the rest of the adults who regularly attend worship.
Compared to most Adventist churches, The Lighthouse has attracted a higher percentage of young adults. The vast majority of them are involved in ministry and in group life. This is not surprising, since ministry involvement and group participation are expected of Lighthouse members.

A Healthy Church

Twenty-seven Lighthouse members participated in our first Natural Church Development survey on March 7, 2009. The results were very encouraging. The Lighthouse scored 70.4 points. This places the congregation among the healthiest churches in Canada. Only 15 percent of all churches completing the survey score more than 65 points. The majority of churches (70% of them) score between 35 and 65 points. Above 50 points is above average. Below 50 points is below average. Only 15 percent of churches score less than 35 points.

Figure 1 is a bar graph of the Lighthouse scores for each of the eight quality characteristics. There are only six points separating the maximum and minimum factors. This also is a very positive health indicator.
Evaluation

Though The Lighthouse is a healthy church, it has not grown as rapidly as I had hoped it would. While I praise God for the lives which have been changed in the first two years of our existence, I realize that I have made a number of mistakes which have limited the growth of the church. Although I still have much to learn about planting churches to reach postmoderns, I have learned a number of important lessons through this project.
Mistakes I Made

I Spread Myself Too Thin

I have commented on the fact that I was worn out even before the Grand Opening. I was attempting to plant two new churches while simultaneously providing leadership to the largest church in the conference. That was a recipe for burnout. Though the Transcona church plant was led by lay people, it still required some of my time and energy. The Henderson Highway Church turned out to be more pastor dependent than I had anticipated. I really underestimated the energy that would be required to get The Lighthouse up and running. Planting a church is a demanding task. It requires discipline, balance, and focus. By spreading myself too thin I compromised my family, my health, the Henderson Highway Church, and the effectiveness of The Lighthouse. “A planter’s focus is absolutely vital during the early years of a church plant.”¹ When an individual is leading other congregations in addition to launching a new church, it is likely that the growth of the church plant will be negatively impacted.

I Should Have Made Prayer a Greater Priority

Although I was certainly praying and seeking God on a daily basis, I failed to recruit an adequate intercessory prayer team. I urged my core group to pray. But in addition to that I should have assembled an external team of prayer warriors. As we launched the church it became very apparent that a spiritual battle was raging. A thief broke into my vehicle and stole my computer bag which contained my laptop and myPDA. Several of my Henderson Highway elders suddenly resigned. My integrity as

¹Gray and Short, 66.
leader was called into question. I received three traffic tickets in three months, which cost me several hundred dollars in fines. (Prior to that, I had not had a ticket in over eight years.) My wife and I experienced significant marital stress. I experienced unusual technical problems with computers, and printers, and projectors, and cordless remotes. I missed an early morning flight when my alarm failed to go off. I was stranded for hours in a snow storm without adequate clothing. It was truly a spiritual battle. I would have benefitted from an intercessory prayer team beyond our core group.

Early in January of 2009, I felt convicted to set aside one day each week to fast and pray. I sensed God calling me to spend my Monday mornings in prayer for my church members and for the growth of the church. As I did so, God began to work in unusual ways. Several of my members took significant responsibilities off my shoulders. Band members for whom I had been praying for two years suddenly appeared. A friend assumed leadership of one of my cell groups so that I could spend Friday evenings with my family. God was showing me that He rewards those who diligently seek Him in prayer. Earnest prayer must be a top priority for church planters.

I Launched the Church Pre-Maturely

In chapter 4, I mentioned that by October of 2006 I had only thirty-one people who were committed to helping me plant The Lighthouse. As it turned out, many of them only thought they were committed to the project. Half of those individuals evaporated on me when I needed them the most. When we started our Revelation of Hope Bible Prophecy Seminar in November of 2006, half of my team went AWOL.

As a result, we ended up launching The Lighthouse with substantially fewer people than the suggested minimum required for a critical mass. We did not have fifty.
We did not even have thirty. We launched The Lighthouse with only sixteen people. If I had known then what I know now, I would have postponed our launch until I had at least fifty reliable individuals in the core group. That pre-mature launch put a tremendous strain on all of our core members. There were far too few people to shoulder the work. Looking back, it is a miracle that we even survived.

I Should Have Spent More Time Developing Leaders

I was surprised that our NCD score in the area of Empowering Leadership was so high. I really have not spent enough time empowering and equipping leaders. It was one of those tasks which seemed to slip easily to the bottom of my “to do” list. There were usually many other seemingly urgent items on the list. It was easier for me to do ministry alone than to pick up someone else and take him-her with me. Occasionally I would e-mail information and ideas to ministry leaders. But some leaders functioned for months without even a written job description. I often told leaders what to do, but failed to provide anything in writing. I knew better. I was just not functioning at peak performance levels. The leaders I most effectively empowered were the ones who took the initiative to contact me. Had I not been surrounded by several of these dedicated Christian leaders, the Lighthouse would likely not be in existence today.

One of the most vital lessons I have learned is the need to identify and develop new leaders in every cell group quickly. These individuals must be given opportunities to lead the group so they are prepared for multiplication. Coaching is vital to the multiplication process. Unless leaders are intentional about it, groups tend not to multiply. That has been our experience at The Lighthouse.
I Failed to Adequately Tap into the Creative Energy of Young Adults

One thing I have learned is that young adults do things differently than I do. Initially, I made the mistake of being the primary worship planner. But I am a baby boomer. I am not part of our target group. What made me think I should be the one to try and design meaningful worship experiences for young adults? I should have tapped into the creative energy of young adults much earlier. Currently, in the spring of 2009, we are in the process of creating a worship planning team comprised of young adults.

Several months ago, one of our young adults took over the job of creating the images for projection during my messages. He is very artistic. Now the power point slides for my messages have an entirely new look—one that is more appealing to postmoderns.

Our live band had its debut in February of 2009. For the first two years, we used canned music for worship. The band has brought new life to our worship service. Our young adults are now noticeably more enthusiastic about worship. I have been a little concerned that some of our older people might be hesitant about the bass guitar and the drums. But we do not seem to have scared anyone off yet. It seems to have been a challenge for me to be fully committed to worship music which solidly connects with postmoderns. I just need to get over that, and jump in with both feet.

Our worship service is becoming more and more culturally appropriate for postmodern generations. When we started The Lighthouse, I was too concerned about what conservative Adventists might think if they visited the church. More and more, I am learning to trust my worship team and let them conduct worship as they see fit.
I Did Not Adequately Adjust My Preaching Style

During the first two years, I did not adequately adjust my preaching style to fit a postmodern audience. Since I am a boomer, I have had to be intentional about adapting my communication style. It has not come naturally. I have attempted to use a more interactive style. I invite dialogue. I ask for responses such as a show of hands. At times I ask for volunteers to help with illustrations. I have even encouraged people to text message me questions and comments during my talk. I did this for several months. I would take a few minutes at the end of my talk, read the text messages, and interact with the questions. I thought it was a good idea, but it seemed to die out after a while.

I am now preaching narrative sermons more frequently. I am working on keeping my messages shorter. I have become more intentional about weaving drama, video clips, props, and testimonies into my messages. The mix has been welcomed.

I Should Have Placed More Emphasis on Relational Evangelism

Our initial evangelistic strategy emphasized felt needs seminars as a way of making friends and attracting people to the church. Regular public evangelistic events would then provide opportunities for the people to make decisions. However, offering felt needs seminars has not proven to be an effective way of making new friends in the community. We need to discover better ways of doing that. I personally need to model getting out and spending time with non-Adventists. If I want my members to do it, they need to see me doing it. I have spent far too little time mingling with unchurched people.

Two of our lowest NCD scores in the area of Need-oriented Evangelism pertained to deepening relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus, and praying for
friends, colleagues and relatives to come to faith. Evidently, this is an area where we need to improve in 2009. I am scheduled to teach the class Lighthouse 401: Discovering My Life Mission. This should help somewhat. (Unfortunately, this class was not offered in either 2007 or 2008.) Additionally, I need to strive to instill this value in the hearts of our Lighthouse members.

I am interested in experimenting with some free market “hobby” type groups at The Lighthouse. I think this might be an effective way to meet people who have similar interests to our church members. I would also like to launch a seeker group for agnostics who are open to discussing evidence for the existence of God. A few of our members have agnostic boyfriends. We are also looking forward to getting more involved in the community through various service projects. Whatever it takes, Lighthouse members will become better at establishing relationships with people in the community. Our reaping meetings will become more productive in proportion to the number of friends we have made in the community.

I Should Have Found Someone to Coach Me

In retrospect, I would have benefitted from regular contact with a church planting coach. Many of the mistakes I made probably would have been avoided if I had been in a coaching relationship with someone who is an experienced church planter and has a heart for reaching postmoderns. “A recent denominational research study by Ed Stetzer demonstrated that planter coaching resulted in a broader ministry impact in terms of church growth (measured by attendance). New church developers who met weekly with
a mentor or coach started churches that were almost twice the size of those who did not meet with a mentor."

Things We Got Right

This evaluation would not be complete without touching briefly on some of the things we got right. In spite of the numerous mistakes I made, there is much that is good about The Lighthouse. This church has a bright future. I am grateful for what God has done as we have begun to figure out how to do church in a way that engages postmoderns.

A Culture of Evangelism

There is a definite culture of evangelism at The Lighthouse. Somehow our people understand that we exist to make disciples. Perhaps it is because we keep our mission constantly before the people. Perhaps it is because we regularly conduct reaping meetings. Maybe it has to do with our clear focus on reaching unchurched young adults. Maybe it is because our vision and goals are so growth oriented. Whatever the cause, the culture of evangelism is real. Our members know that we exist to bring people to faith and help them mature into fully devoted Christ-followers.

An Authentic Community

The Lighthouse is an authentic biblical community. We value one another. We are radically committed to one another. We do life together. This is likely the reason why our highest NCD score is Loving Relationships. Our emphasis on every member

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2Logan, Be Fruitful and Multiply, 50.
participating in a small group is paying off. We eat together. We enjoy fellowship
together. We pray with and for each other. We encourage one another. We accept one
another. We love one another. When you are part of The Lighthouse family, you belong.

A Place to Serve

The Lighthouse is a high expectation church. In addition to expecting members to
participate in group life, they are also expected to be involved in some kind of ministry.
We have developed an effective system for helping people find places to serve. We focus
on identifying ministries that are a good fit for people. It is thrilling to be part of a church
family where the vast majority of people are committed to serving in ministry. We are a
truly priesthood of all believers!

Conclusion

Launching The Lighthouse has been a stressful experience for me personally. It
was complicated by the fact that I was simultaneously assisting a group of lay people
who were planting another church. In retrospect, it was unwise for me to have attempted
to participate in both launches within the same timeframe. As I focused on the two
church plants, some Henderson Highway members felt I was neglecting my
responsibilities to the mother church. In the course of trying to lead Henderson, and
simultaneously launch two new churches, I was brought to the brink of burnout.
Fortunately the Man-Sask Conference agreed to hire a new senior pastor for Henderson
Highway. This set me free to focus my energies on the two church plants.

In spite of the awkward process, the Henderson Highway Church has faired well.
She birthed four new churches from 2003 to 2008. Together, Henderson and her
daughters generated 43 percent of all Man-Sask Conference baptisms in that six year period.

The Lighthouse is one of the healthiest churches in Canada. Nearly half of the 28 accessions in her first two years were young adults between the ages of 18 and 35. Worship attendance increased by 31 percent from 2007 to 2008. An average of 63 people per Sabbath attended worship at The Lighthouse in 2008. Though it is currently a small church, The Lighthouse is in the vanguard of Canadian Adventist Churches which are effectively reaching out to postmodern generations.
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The mission of the church is to make disciples. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, first century Christ-followers did this very effectively. The book of Acts reveals that their primary mission strategy was aggressive church planting. Paul and other apostles travelled throughout the Roman Empire starting up church after church.

In the 19th century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America grew rapidly as it focused on church planting. The primary role of Adventist clergy in those days was planting new churches. This was the norm until the second decade of the 20th century. Following the death of Ellen White in 1915, the emphasis on church planting diminished. As the role of clergy shifted to that of member care, the growth rate of the church declined.

In order for the Adventist Church to accomplish its mission, it must once again become a church-planting movement. The current literature indicates that church planting is still the most effective church growth strategy in the world. In North America today, the fastest growing denominations are the ones which are aggressively planting new churches. Since the inception of the SEEDS Church Planting Conferences in 1996, the rate at which new Adventist congregations are being planted in North America has increased dramatically. Prior to SEEDS, there were only twenty-five new church starts a
year in the North American Division. Now there are five times that many churches being planted—125 of them each year. A passion for church planting has indeed been rekindled in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The challenge today is to launch Adventist churches which effectively reach postmodern generations. Significant culture shifts have accelerated the rate at which young adults are disengaging from traditional Christian Churches. The decline of Christianity in the west has been well documented. Europe is seriously post-Christian. Weekly church attendance in Canada has fallen from 70% in the 1950s to only 17% in 2006.\(^1\) And only 20% of young adults in the U.S. attend church on a weekly basis.\(^2\)

Currently, in 2009, the median age of Adventist church members in North America is fifteen years higher than the rest of the population. According to a demographic study conducted by the North American Division in 2008, the median age of Seventh-day Adventist Church members (children included) is fifty-one.\(^3\) To reach unchurched young adults, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must become more intentional about launching new churches which are culturally relevant to today’s postmodern generations.

The Lighthouse Church in Winnipeg, Canada has been launched with a view to reaching postmoderns. Although the church was launched pre-maturely, it has grown significantly in the first two years. The initial core group of sixteen has grown into a church family of over 100 individuals who attend at least monthly. As of the first quarter

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\(^2\)Wuthnow, 53.
of 2009, half of the adults who attend The Lighthouse are in our target group—young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

Though numerous mistakes were made in the process of launching The Lighthouse, it has become a healthy church which is effectively connecting with young adults. The Lighthouse is a high expectation church. Commitments to participate in ministry and in a small group are required for membership. The Lighthouse is a community of believers who are totally committed to Christ, radically committed to each other, and utterly committed to helping people come to faith.

Conclusions

New Churches Are Desperately Needed

The first conclusion of this project is that we desperately need more Adventist church plants which target postmodern generations. These churches must be characterized by authentic community that is accepting and non-judgmental, and by creative worship experiences that include contemporary music, drama, and other art forms. These must be missional churches with a strong culture of evangelism—both relational and public. In addition, these churches must provide opportunity for people to serve—both within the church, and out in the community.

More Must be Done to Facilitate Church Planting

Current structures in most local conferences in North America are insufficient for supporting church planters. Too few conferences have really made church planting a priority. Most conferences have an inadequate budget for church planting. Pastors who

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\(^5\)Sahlin and Richardson, 5.
have a passion for launching new churches are often required to do it in addition to serving one or more other congregations. One thing I have learned from my experience is that simultaneously leading an existing church and raising up new congregations is a recipe for burnout. This is an ineffective way to start new churches. It puts pastors, their families, and their churches at risk. Also, I suggest that this method of church planting tends to produce smaller churches which grow more slowly. The bottom line is that more must be done to free up pastors to focus on church planting.

In addition, more must be done to empower gifted lay people to plant churches. The Texas model has been very effective. In the past seven years, more than forty lay-planters have raised up new churches in Texas. These individuals have been identified and trained. They have been coached by area pastors. Facilitating this program required that the conference hire a church planting coordinator. Tom Evans was not given this responsibility in addition to other full-time responsibilities. He was hired to spend 75 percent of his time coordinating church planters.

Church Multiplication Movements Must be Launched

Planting a church here and there will not fulfill the Great Commission. Church multiplication movements must become the order of the day. A culture must be created for planting churches that reproduce. SEEDS Conferences have helped put church planting on the Adventist agenda. These conferences build enthusiasm, provide networking opportunities, and offer training, but more is needed. Adventist church planters with a passion for reaching emerging generations must be identified, equipped and empowered to launch reproducing churches. This will most certainly require an effective plan for mentoring and coaching new church planters. It may also require more
specialized training than what is currently offered at SEEDS.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Church Planters

I have learned a few things about church planting in the past several years. Although I still have much to learn, here are my top ten recommendations for church planters:

1. Prioritize prayer.
2. Spend significant time with unchurched people in your target group.
3. Read a good book on church planting or church growth every month.
4. Find yourself an experienced coach.
5. Focus on the things you do best. Delegate everything else.
6. Have fun with your team.
7. Cast the vision repeatedly.
10. Attend a church planting conference once a year.

Recommendations for Conference Administrators

Recently my conference president asked me what administrators can do to support the church planting cause. Here is what I recommended to him:

1. Pray earnestly for God to create a church planting movement in the conference.
2. Appoint a Church Planting Coordinator.

3. Raise the profile of church planting in the conference. Get the pastors on board. Instill the value in the hearts of the constituents.

4. Educate the constituency about the need for culturally relevant churches.

5. Help fund new church starts for their first two to three years.

6. Put in place a system for identifying and equipping potential lay church planters.

7. Assign a trained pastor to coach each lay church planter.

8. Provide funding for church planters and their key leaders to attend a yearly church planting conference such as SEEDS.

9. Allocate some of the tithe revenue from new church plants to hire full-time church planters for large cities.

10. Allow full-time church planters to focus on only one church at a time, so long as the growth rate meets expectations.

It Is All About Reaching People

Lost people matter to God. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus commissioned His followers to go and make disciples of the people for whom He died. The best way to reach lost people today is through church planting. "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."4

4Wagner, 11.
APPENDIX

TEXAS CONFERENCE STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Churches</th>
<th>Number of Companies</th>
<th>Accessions (Bapt + POF)</th>
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The statistics for 1995-2007 were collected from the Annual Statistical Reports of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. With the exception of the tithe figure, statistics for 2008 were gathered from NAD Secretary's quarterly statistical reports.

It should be noted that, at the end of 2008, many of the 84 new congregations planted between 2002 and 2008 have yet to be organized into companies, and, as such, they do not yet appear on the GC or NAD statistical reports.
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VITA

Born in 1961 in Cambridge, Ontario, Jeff was raised in the United Church of Canada. Through the witness of a High School friend, he became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1980. Jeff enrolled in the theology program at Canadian Union College in 1981. He spent a year serving as a student missionary in Botswana, Africa in 1982/83.


From 1987 to 1989 Jeff earned his M.Div. at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In 1990 Jeff began serving as pastor of the Perth-Carleton Place District in eastern Ontario. Jeff helped launch the Smiths Falls Seventh-day Adventist Church in the fall of 1992. He was ordained to the gospel ministry on May 15, 1993.

Jeff served in the British Columbia Conference from 1994 to 1999, where he led the Terrace and Stewart congregations. In 1999 Jeff accepted a call from the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference to lead the Henderson Highway Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Since 2007 he has been focused on growing The Lighthouse Church.

Jeff and Nancy have four beautiful daughters: Elissa, Jolene, Melina, and Nadine. Jeff enjoys running marathons, climbing mountains, and wilderness canoe tripping. His passion is helping people come to faith in Jesus.