

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY

CHURCH GROWTH IN THE NORTHWEST MINISTRY NETWORK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF MINISTRY
IN CANDIDACY OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY

PHILIP E. BEIER

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

DECEMBER 2014

Copyright © 2014 by Philip E. Beier
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

With the consistent decline of the Church in the United States, leaders need to put forth greater efforts to put the body of believers back on course to fulfill its purpose. Most churches within the Northwest Ministry Network (NWMN) of the Assemblies of God fall within this category. However, leaders seem largely unaware of how to turn a corner and begin growing their churches. On the positive side, many churches are experiencing numeric growth and appear to be avoiding the national church decline. This research project studies a portion of these growing churches to discover how this growth is happening and to determine if there are lessons people can learn to benefit the other churches under the NWMN umbrella.

The research aspect of this project incorporates the qualitative method of research and provides the means to gather data through interviews. I derived the sample group of churches from the Northwest Ministry Network's Annual Church Ministry 2012 Report, which documents each church's attendance for the last five years. I subdivided churches showing ten percent or more growth in three of the five years into five attendance groups. I interviewed the lead pastor of two churches from each group to form a picture of the practices and philosophies that contributed to their growth.

The project goal examines this information to determine patterns and commonalities within individual groupings and across all size groups. The project summarizes the overall conclusions and implications applied for the benefit of church leaders within the Northwest Ministry Network so they can glean information for their unique contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I complete this project and the Master of Arts in Missional Leadership, there are many people I want to acknowledge. The first are my fellow students from 2010, 2011, 2012 MAML Cohorts. I had the greatest privilege of connecting with you in a way that I will always cherish. Guys and gals, thanks for sharing your lives with me. You amaze me with your insight and skills and gifts. You challenged me by helping me clarify my thinking and pushing back at times when my comments were confusing or unclear. You inspired me to dig deeper and reach higher to become a better Christ-follower and a better leader to see the Gospel of Jesus Christ touch and transform lives.

Next, I offer a special thanks to Dr. Alan Ehler for helping us through this program and most specifically guiding me through this research project. Your comments and challenges were very useful. Your insights guided me through my haze of thoughts as I was struggling where to take this thing. I hope you are enjoying the sunny side of Florida.

Also I want to acknowledge Dr. Joseph Saggio's words of encouragement that fanned in me a fire for excellence. Joe, the care and attention I felt through your class and as second reader in this project will long be remembered. I marvel at your ability to encourage, yet still offer the guidance needed to improve my writing. Thanks.

My greatest appreciation goes to my wife Kym. Your support and input throughout this program was invaluable. I cannot express how much I appreciated this opportunity to be stretched. I understand the great sacrifice you made as I spent innumerable hours reading and writing in my office; as I was away at school for week long periods. Thank you! From the depths of my heart I am grateful for you on so many levels. You are indeed my sunshine and laughter.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	
The American Church Shift.....	5
Internal Problems Affecting Church Growth.....	10
Contemporary Thoughts on Fixing the American Church.....	16
METHODOLOGY.....	31
Rational.....	31
Sample.....	32
Process.....	34
Biases and Value Influences.....	35
Ethical Issues.....	40
Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	40
ANALYSIS.....	42
Leadership.....	45
Large Gathering.....	55
Organization.....	63
Pentecostal Distinctives.....	74
Conclusion.....	76
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION.....	78
Pursue Principles Over Practices.....	79
Prioritize Pentecostal Distinctives.....	87
Topic for Further Study.....	89
WORKS CITED.....	91
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Email Request for Interview.....	95
Appendix B: Interview Informed Consent Form.....	97
Appendix C: Research Interview Questions, Initial and Revised.....	98
Appendix D: Interview Transcripts.....	100

ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

1. Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God's growing churches by grouping size and percentage.....32
2. CMR statistics for churches of pastors participating in research project.....33

Figures

1. Comparison of themes participants identified as contributors to growth.....43
2. Numeric comparison of themes participants suggested for other pastor's church growth.....44

INTRODUCTION

According to scholar Donald McGavran, “Tremendous church growth is going on in the world today. We live in the age of the most rapid forward advance of Christianity that history has ever known.”¹ As one of the foremost thinkers in missiology, McGavran penned those words over thirty years ago. However, his observations appear at odds with modern realities in America. Since McGavran’s comment, American churches are on a downward slide, creating an emergency as cultural conditions and shallow believers combine to create what Olson calls “the American Church crisis.” His perspective offers a sobering truth, “In reality the church in America is not booming. It is in crisis.”²

So what does a crisis within the Church in the United States look like? The Barna Group paints a dismal picture, noting in 2008 that only one in five adults participated in spiritually-centered activity in a one-month time frame. This activity includes many forms, including attendance at a conventional church service to a real-time ministry event online.³ Olson declares that only 17.5 percent of the United States population attends church on any given Sunday.⁴ The Pew Forum emphasizes the 13 percent decline in Protestant affiliation from 1972-2012. More

¹ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, edited by C. Peter Wagner, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3. Dating of McGavran’s comment is derived from the 2nd edition in 1980.

² David T. Olson, *The American Church Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 16.

³ “New Statistics on Church Attendance and Avoidance,” Barna Group, March 3, 2008, accessed June 13, 2013, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/18-congregations/45-new-statistics-on-church-attendance-and-avoidance>.

⁴ David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 28.

importantly, they note an increase in people declaring no religious affiliation. This trend mirrors the Protestant decline over the same time frame.⁵ These figures point to a significant problem.

This project's intent is to address this dilemma from two perspectives. The first perspective, a literature review, provides a survey of contemporary authors' observations about causes and advice offered to stem this decline. The works this section consults predominately focus on popular authors, although the study incorporates a few academic dissertations and journals. In most of these works, the perspectives are generally evangelical and non-Pentecostal.

The second major perspective this project includes is a qualitative research component comprised of interviews from pastors within growing churches. Because this multifaceted decline of the Church in America affects various regions and Christian denominations differently, this project focuses on one organization, the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God (NMNAG). (I chose this organization for research based on my affiliation as a credentialed minister.) According to NMNAG's annual report, of the almost three hundred churches within the network, 60 percent showed a decrease in attendance in 2012. Taking the problem even further, over a five-year span, 84 percent of the churches either decreased or maintained their numbers when population growth is considered.⁶ Churches bucking this trend make up the focus group for this research, leading to the exploration of the steps some congregations are taking to bring organizational growth.

⁵ "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation," Pew Forum on Religious & Public Life, October 9, 2012, accessed June 22, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx#growth.pdf>.

⁶ The Washington State average for 2005 to 2009 was 6.5 percent for 2011. "Population Estimates, National Totals: Vintage 2011," United States Census Bureau, December 21, 2011, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2011/tables/NA-EST2009-02.xls>.

An additional aspect of this study is the Pentecostal orientation of the Assemblies of God. This Pentecostal viewpoint places heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit's role in accomplishing the Great Commission. The Assemblies of God organization emerged from a movement that focused on His empowering gifts. The clarion call of the founding believers was, "Not by power, not by might but by my Spirit saith the Lord" (Hagah 4:6⁷). The Bible describes many different expressions of the Spirit's power and presence, but the restoration of tongues for the building and edification of the individual and faith community figured prominently in Pentecostal theology and practice.

As a worldwide movement, Pentecostalism is growing faster than any other expression of Christianity,⁸ except in the United States. According to the National Council of Churches, the foremost church growth is happening in these churches: Jehovah's Witnesses, 4.37 percent; Seventh-Day Adventists, 4.31 percent; and Mormons, 1.42 percent. They reported the Assemblies of God at a .52 percent growth.⁹ The NMNAG reported 70 percent of the United States Assemblies of God churches declined in 2012 attendance.¹⁰ This growth, while encouraging compared to other Christian organizations, is still well below the necessary

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this paper are to the New International Version (NIV) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

⁸ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 1.

⁹ "Trends Continue in Church Membership Growth or Declines, Reports 2011 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches," National Council of Churches, February 14, 2011, accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www.nccusa.org/news/110210yearbook2011.html>.

¹⁰ "2012 Annual Church Ministries Report," Northwest Ministry of the Assemblies of God, accessed June 5, 2013, http://resources.razorplanet.com/510093-8874/2012_acmr_final_report_63131370386951.zip.

percentage to merely keep pace with the inflation rate of just over 1 percent,¹¹ let alone attrition that happens for various reasons.

This study is important because the lack of church growth by the overwhelming majority of churches in the NMNAG cannot expect to accomplish the Great Commission. This commission in Matthew 28:19-20 states that the Church needs to make disciples for Jesus Christ throughout the world. Every person needs the opportunity to become a follower of Christ. The American Church decline requires church leaders to reconsider the nature of their mission and how to carry out it. This goal of making disciples looks different in a culture turning away from Christianity than one turning towards it. The message is the same, but the specifics of how to build the Church are not. This project explores the steps a sample group of pastors within the Pacific Northwest are taking to move towards that goal.

¹¹ “Population Estimates, National Totals: Vintage 2012,” United States Census Bureau, December 2, 2013, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2012/tables/NST-EST2012-01.xls>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical to this project is an examination of existing information about church growth. Contemporary authors provide an abundance of material designed to change the course of the Church in the United States with relevance for Pentecostal organizations, specifically in the Pacific Northwest. This review highlights the influence of the American cultural shift on churches, the internal problems affecting congregations, and the responsibility church leadership has in the problem. Finally, this study considers perspectives steering churches towards growth and revitalization.

The American Culture Shift

A major influence on the Church's inability to grow is the current cultural shift in America. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov define culture as "the unwritten book with rules of the social game that is passed on to newcomers by its members, nesting itself in their minds."¹² Niebuhr broadens this picture to include all interactions between people when he states, "Social life is always culture."¹³ Culture provides the grid or structure that influences how people think and act. Since it establishes the boundaries of understanding, churches cannot ignore the parameters culture creates.

America is experiencing a cultural shift which encompasses three dynamic elements: Christian to post-Christian, modern to post-modern, and mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic.¹⁴ Of the three, the first two have the most pressing influence on the Church, but all elements have

¹² Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), 26.

¹³ Richard H Niebuhr, *Christ & Culture* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951), 33.

¹⁴ David T. Olson, *The American Church Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 162.

polarizing effects on America's form of Christianity embedded in modernity. McNeal notes the degree of this shift is parallel to other epic transitions, such as the ancient Church to the medieval period, and from the medieval period to modernism.¹⁵ The emerging post-Christian culture embraces spirituality but not necessarily Christianity's version. Stetzer's observation of the problem also implies a contributing influence. He observes, "Millions have turned to various kinds of secular spirituality. I call it the Oprahization of North American spirituality."¹⁶ This shift in America's culture takes several forms, but the ultimate expression that is relevant to the Church is the people's distancing from their country's Christian roots.

Post-modernism

One reason this shift is significant centers on the Church's adoption of modernism, a worldview Americans are currently attempting to shed. Beginning in the fifteenth century, the Enlightenment emerged as the dominant worldview that governed western culture.¹⁷ This new plausibility structure allowed only the credibility of scientifically derived information. Sweet observes modernism as a world with "order, regulation, stability, singularity, and fixity."¹⁸ These external forces mandated churches embrace modernity, transitioning it from a worldview shaped by mythology and spiritual influences.¹⁹ The western church eventually adapted to cultural influences and became effective at existing within modernism.

¹⁵ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/A Wiley Imprint, 2003), 2, Kindle.

¹⁶ Ed Stetzer, "Writing on the Wall," *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 38.

¹⁷ Leonard Sweet, *AquaChurch 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), location 392, Kindle.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Olson, 164.

This epic shift from modernism to post-modernism requires churches to invest equal efforts in adapting to this new worldview as it did to modernism. Sweet provides a contrasting illustration between the two—“The shift from a Gutenberg world to a Google world is a change from images of landscape to images of seascape.”²⁰ Post-modernism is fluid. Olson highlights some characteristics of post-modernism, including subjectivity, skepticism, and cynicism over objectivity and certainty; communal life over individualism; care for the world; and story as the preferred vehicle for communication. Spirituality is popular, just not the Christian version.²¹ Creps adds two more post-modern characteristics: syncretism and a suspicion of authority.²² The monumental change expressed by these characteristics implies an appropriate response by churches. McNeal takes the thought even further by stating, “The postmodern world will demand a new church expression, just as did the rise of the modern world.”²³

While in the midst of this shift, Creps observes that American culture is far from uniform. He contends, “Millions of people still hold the modernist perspective with its optimism, faith in science and technology, and a logical approach to problem solving.” He warns church leaders not to stereotype people but to instead realize individuals fall in various places along the post-modern spectrum. Creps also emphasizes the difficulty of trying to place this transition into a clear category when he argues, “Getting a grip on a concept like postmodernism is like nailing Jell-O to the wall.” Too often, church leadership misread their ministry environments when they

²⁰ Sweet, location 406.

²¹ Olson, 164.

²² Earl G. Creps, “Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns,” *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 71.

²³ McNeal, 5.

make assumptions as Creps describes. He suggests that leaders avoid knee-jerk reactions and customize their ministry approaches based on contextual observations.²⁴

Post-Christian

Another cultural shift impacting churches is the reality that America is distancing itself from any Christian influence. McNeal observes, “The American culture no longer props up the church the way it did, no longer automatically accepts the church as a player at the table in public life, and can be downright hostile to the church’s presence.”²⁵ American culture’s rejection of a modernistic worldview brings into question basic aspects of the form of American Christianity shaped by the Enlightenment. Churches effectively adapted to modernity’s worldview but have yet to adjust to the implications of postmodernism.²⁶ As a result, Christianity finds itself pushed toward the margins of society.

A significant contributing factor to the de-Christianization of America is pluralism. Due to globalization, the plurality of cultures and religions has come into the living rooms, workplaces, and schools of America. The accompanying familiarity encourages acceptance of this diversity and a resistance to evaluate any theological ramifications. In response, people celebrate plurality to the exclusion of any ideology that resists the “truths” of diverse religions (i.e., fundamentalism, religious totalitarianism). Leslie Newbiggin observes that much of the Western world sees pluralism as the reasonable response within a secular society in which no officially sanctioned or approved pattern of belief or conduct exists.²⁷ The resulting attitude

²⁴ Creps, 68, 70.

²⁵ McNeal, 5.

²⁶ Olson, 164.

²⁷ Leslie Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 1.

towards Christianity is to reject its claim of “privileged access to divine revelations” as contained in the Bible, rejecting the uniqueness of Jesus and the salvation He provides for all humanity through His death, and to adopt the belief that all religions lead to the same destination.²⁸ As this philosophy seethes into American culture, Christianity and the story of Jesus stands out in stark contrast, at times creating great opposition. The distancing effect on the part of culture mandates a Christ-centered response.

Many Christians lament the passing of a culture embedded with Christian virtues and influence, but Stetzer sees great potential in this new condition. He asserts, “This marginalization is not necessarily a bad thing. Historically, God often moves at times when society has marginalized the church.”²⁹ He also highlights the opportunity for believers to see the distinction between biblical and cultural Christianity, making the necessary adjustments to separate from “pseudo-Christian” roots.³⁰ For this to happen, people must address the dysfunctions associated with this form of Christianity.

Internal Problems Affecting Church Growth

Discipleship Dysfunction

²⁸ Ivan M. Satyavrata, “What’s so Special about Jesus? Responding to the Challenge of Religious Pluralism,” *Enrichment Journal* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 66-67.

²⁹ Stetzer, “Writing,” 39.

³⁰ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church That’s Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 19.

Internal dysfunctions, even more than the external cultural shift, hinder church growth. There are many obstacles to the Church fulfilling its purpose, including the shallowness of believers as expressed by their lack of maturity and lack of participation in the Great Commission and worship void, among others. McNeal sees these as symptoms of a bigger problem—a church engulfed in modernism and its accompanying secularism.³¹ This project identifies it as a dysfunction in discipleship; Christians are not developing as disciples.³² When Christ gives the Great Commission to the Church (Matt. 28:19-20), He incorporates a maturing process, a step which American believers seem to skip.

This dysfunction is not unique to just a few organizations, but it is spread across the nation. Within the Assemblies of God, the following statistics vividly relate the story: “From 1995-2005, the Assemblies of God in the United States reported 5,339,144 decisions for Christ while Sunday morning attendance for the same period grew by only 221,790. The ratio of Sunday morning attendance gain to reported conversions is 4 percent.” Charles Crabtree goes on to emphasize that congregations need a 14 percent growth just to compensate for death and those exiting churches.³³ Within the NMNAG, the 2012 statistics indicate over 7,500 people took the step to follow Christ (almost 12 percent of cumulative attendance), but overall attendance only increased by 1 percent.³⁴ Leaders cannot overlook this dilemma.

Shallowness of Faith

³¹ McNeal, 7.

³² Charles Crabtree, *Transformational Discipleship: Experiencing the Life-Changing Power of His Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2007), 12.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7, 12.

³⁴ “2012 Annual Church Ministries Report.”

Another expression of this dysfunction is a shallowness of faith that permeates churches. This immaturity manifests itself as a lack of distinction between people who claim faith and those who do not; they both act the same.³⁵ Miroslav Volf, author of *Free of Charge*, sees the problem as a lack of passion. He contends, “We don’t really identify with the deep conviction of the faith we embrace.”³⁶ This discipleship dysfunction encompasses two dimensions: failure to convert and failure to mature, both of which are essential for believers to fulfill the Great Commission. Donald McGavran pinpoints the problem as failure to enfold. He identifies these two essential aspects of discipleship as “folding and feeding.”³⁷

Failure to Convert. McGavran’s enfolding encompasses “proclamation, finding, and aftercare.”³⁸ The traditional expression of evangelism encompasses the first two but ignores the third component. The beginning point of discipleship is conversion—the point where an individual is reconciled to God through Christ. God enlists believers to partner with Him in this process. The Great Commission has an accompanying empowerment through the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:8, Scripture promises Christians the power to witness and to accomplish their part in the process. Unfortunately, only about 10 percent of Christians take this mandate seriously. Also of interest is researcher Randy Hurst’s contention that only 10 percent of the decisions to become Christians happen in a church service. There are a multitude of reasons for Christians to sideline themselves. Hurst suggests most believers do not share their faith because of a lack of

³⁵ Peter L. Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 17.

³⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 224.

³⁷ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, edited by C. Peter Wagner, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6.

³⁸ McGavran, 6.

confidence.³⁹ Stetzer feels that doubt in the gospel is another reason Christians hold back, stating, “Our loss of confidence in the gospel is evidenced by the fact believers are sharing their faith less and less.”⁴⁰ The root problem of low conversion rates falls heaviest on believers failing to participate in this process.

Failure to Mature. The problem of failing to pursue maturity is even greater than failing to convert. Crabtree emphasizes that Assemblies of God churches show people are accepting Christ as Savior, but the same people are failing to make the complete transition to become disciples. He doubts true conversion happens when individuals reject water baptism. Crabtree highlights how Jesus “knew a decision to follow Him was meaningless if there was not resulting change.”⁴¹ Bob Roberts, Jr. agrees with Crabtree’s assessment that immature Christians may not be Christians at all. He argues, “In my tribe, we’re known for morality. But we’re not necessarily known for being transformed people.”⁴² This transformation is what Paul envisions when he writes, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). This is a process short-circuited in most American churches.

Worship Void

Another vital area this discipleship dysfunction affects is worship. George Barna refers to it as a “worship problem,” with two distinct elements: an ignorance of worship in both experience and understanding. His research shows overall that regular church attendees have not

³⁹ Randy Hurst, “Biblical Principles and Practices for Effective Personal Witness,” *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 86-91.

⁴⁰ Stetzer, “Writing,” 39.

⁴¹ Crabtree, 9.

⁴² Bob Roberts, Jr., *Transformation: How Global Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 59, 15.

experienced God's presence in the past year. His data also indicates age plays a significant role in this problem. The younger the individuals, the more likely they see God as impersonal and distant. This worship problem is significant, because believers need a reason for gathering. If experiencing the presence of God is not the highest reason, leaders must determine the reason. Barna also offers a profound inhibitor to worship when he asserts, "Nearly half of the people who attend worship services at Protestant churches are not Christian."⁴³ This is a wet blanket for any worship service.

Lack of Leadership

Regardless of the specific errors or failings of the Church as a whole, people can generally place the root problem at the feet of her leaders. Scripture is very clear that leadership has the greatest share of responsibility for the health of the Church (James 2:1). John C. Maxwell, author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, sees it more definitively: "Everything rises and falls on leadership."⁴⁴ Bill Hybels echoes Maxwell's emphasis when he asserts, "I am absolutely convinced that the church will never reach her full redemptive potential until men and women with the leadership gift step up and lead."⁴⁵ Olson pinpoints the importance of leadership in direct relationship to church growth. He argues, "Churches do not grow without godly and gifted pastoral and lay leadership."⁴⁶ Clearly effective leadership cannot be overlooked as the key to church growth.

⁴³ George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999), 83-84, 93.

⁴⁴ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2008), VIII.

⁴⁵ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 27.

⁴⁶ Olson, 139.

Scripture substantiates this conclusion as it shows leaders are the primary vehicle through which God accomplishes His will. Moses' successful experience in leading Israel to the Promised Land confirms this truth. A lesser leader would have wilted against Israel's rebellion. Paul's effectiveness in spreading the gospel also validates this conclusion. His perseverance in the face of rejection, persecution, and hardships validates God's wisdom in choosing him. In both cases, leadership is the defining factor. On the other hand, Solomon's inability to control his lusts costs Israel dearly by establishing a legacy of disobedience that haunts them for hundreds of years. These examples point to the importance of effective leadership for guiding groups of people to God's desired destination.

Churches need a different type of leader to respond to the American culture shift. Currently most congregations are led by managers. As managers, pastors keep their ships sailing efficiently, but they are not equipped to make significant course changes. Historically, pastors are responsible for "teaching, feeding, healing the wounds, developing unity, helping people find their gifts, and doing whatever else is necessary to see that they continue in faith and grow in their spiritual lives."⁴⁷ Olson points out that senior leadership with just pastoral gifts are only effective in a culture heavily influenced by Christian values.⁴⁸ In contrast, true leaders have the ability to set goals and communicate those goals in such a way that people volunteer to achieve the goals through delegation and transfer of responsibilities. They are more like ranchers than shepherds.⁴⁹ Church transformation requires the leaders to steer the organizational ship in a strategically different direction, the result of leadership skills.

⁴⁷ Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Book, 1994), 135.

⁴⁸ Olson, 163.

⁴⁹ Wagner, *Spiritual Gifts*, 149-150.

For Barna, it is the organizational ship that determines leadership priorities. He sees effective leaders as more likely to delegate preaching, administration, counseling, fundraising, evangelism, and program development. This step frees leaders to focus on fundamental leadership necessities like communicating for widespread ownership of the vision, strategic thinking, creative problem solving, team building, resolving conflict, long-term planning, developing future leaders, evaluating the ministry and opportunities.⁵⁰ These organization leadership practices significantly contrast the traditional church leadership priorities of teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and counseling. Barna does not minimize the importance of traditional responsibilities, but his version of effective leadership empowers others for these tasks.

Author C. Gene Wilkes adds a caution to Barna's organizational model of leadership. Too often, a leader's agenda becomes the destination, and the means to reach the goal is secondary. Wilkes learned the hard way that leaders must care for their people first and then seek to lead them. He points to Jesus' style of leadership—rooted in love, service, and openness—as the path all leaders should travel. Though church leaders seek to steer their organizations, they cannot forget that the purpose of their congregations is to act as Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:19-20).⁵¹

Since leadership is the number-one influence on growth and health, developing leaders should be the permeating priority. Jesus serves as the example of what leaders should do. He equipped, empowered, and delegated the ministry of reconciliation into the hands of His disciples. Fast forward two thousand years, and the lesson the apostles learned so well is lost.

⁵⁰ Barna, 31.

⁵¹ C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the Secrets of Leadership from the Life of Christ* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1998), 91, Kindle.

Too many leaders hoard too much of their organizations' potential in their hands.⁵² Aubrey Malphurs and William F. Mancini declare a state of emergency on leadership development, emphasizing, "Our leaders don't know how to train other leaders."⁵³ According to Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, the problem of leaders who only know how to get things done but not how to enable others to lead is common. Ignorance of empowering others may allow pastors to lead a squad, but they will never lead an army.⁵⁴ This deficiency in developing leaders directly contributes to the void of leadership in American churches.

Contemporary Thoughts on Fixing the American Church

As church leadership seeks to navigate the waters of church growth, an overwhelming majority of voices declare the need for transformation, not just minor adjustments. Such a dramatic change in destination requires the vessels of effective organizations. Various authors and studies suggest leadership complete the following organizational actions during this voyage: commit to leadership development, engage in strategic processes, cultivate a culture of change and adaptation, pursue spiritual vitality, organize for connectedness, make outreach a preeminent focus, craft a discipleship process, and multiply through church planting. Through these steps and by charting a course through Great Commission waters, leaders can anticipate fruitfulness for their efforts.

⁵² Glenn Reynolds, "Let My People Go: Releasing Your Team to Lead, Not Just Follow," *Enrichment Journal* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 21.

⁵³ Aubrey Malphurs and William F. Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprint for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), location 128-149, Kindle.

⁵⁴ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 52.

Commit to Leadership Development

As emphasized in the previous section, leadership development is essential at every level of organizations. In Scripture, Paul is constantly on the lookout for people he can shape into leaders, as illustrated in the lives of Timothy and Titus, two of his prominent students. Church leadership cannot hope to grow healthy organizations without first growing healthy leaders. Malphurs and Mancini emphasize the importance of this preeminent leadership function by declaring, “Every leader in a ministry must be a leader-maker.” This is the foundation for all other activity. This priority is so intense that these authors accuse organizational leadership of “abuse” if they neglect this step.⁵⁵

A core understanding and priority of leadership development grows from the senior leadership’s willingness to empower others. Few leaders resist the idea of developing an army of laborers willing to accept responsibility, promote the best interests of their organizations, and diligently working to ensure their success. However, taking the necessary steps to shape their organizations accordingly falls outside most leaders’ desires and abilities. In *The 3 Keys to Empowerment*, Ken Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph offer senior leadership a model to move past these obstacles through the following three empowerment keys: sharing information, establishing boundaries, and replacing hierarchy structure. Empowerment, which involves individuals at every level, maximizes their knowledge, experience, and motivational power for organizational success.⁵⁶ These suggestions point to a scary place for leaders who feel that control is the only means to ensure their organizational ship takes the shape and course

⁵⁵ Malphurs and Mancini, 8.

⁵⁶ Ken Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph, *The 3 Keys to Empowerment* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1999), 2, 6.

important to them. In contrast, effective empowerment allows more hands to share the responsibilities of church transformation and growth.

Applying the primacy of developing leaders can take a myriad of shapes. Wilkes suggests this five step process: encouraging people to serve, qualifying them to serve, understanding their needs, instructing them, and praying for them. He sees it as being a Barnabas to another person.⁵⁷ Malphurs and Mancini affirm the need for a process to develop leaders at every level within organizations. However, they add this caveat: the creation of a process finds its fullness by undergirding it with a leadership culture. They explain this step as “a unique interrelationship of values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions within a group of leaders who reproduce patterns of thinking and behaving among them and their followers.”⁵⁸ Leadership development cannot be an afterthought, a program, or a nice idea; it must permeate organizations starting from the top down. A process is important, but adding structure to facilitate that process is vital. However, any effort to develop leaders is stunted without creating a leadership environment that infects all who board the organizational ship.

Cultivate a Culture of Change and Adaptation

Part of the process of organizational direction includes leaders’ skills at changing it. America’s cultural shift mandates the Church adjust its course. Olson emphasizes this idea by declaring, “The American church needs to be ‘forever building.’”⁵⁹ This requires leadership to navigate changing waters. In fact, the rate of change mandates developing a church culture capable of adjusting its course with minimum disruption. In the past, people did not recognize

⁵⁷ Wilkes, 189.

⁵⁸ Malphurs and Mancini, 195.

⁵⁹ Olson, 221.

churches or their leaders for their ability to adjust to the internal or external pressures to change. Getting too comfortable is the enemy of change. In *Leading Congregational Change*, Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr emphasize that changing leadership walks a tenuous tightrope between service and risk, continuity and change, team learning and personal accountability, order and chaos. Keeping these leadership paradoxes in balance is the challenge of transformational leadership.⁶⁰

Engage in Strategic Processes

Leaders must develop their churches' culture to readily embrace change. This facilitates strategy-based organizations able to provide clear direction for their organizational ships. Gil Rendle and Alice Mann see the strategic approach as a conversation that answers the questions of who people are and what they are to do. They argue, "Congregations need structured ways to talk about their identity, purpose, and future, and they need a path to develop consensus and a commitment to act."⁶¹ Carl F. George, author of *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, sees the importance of clear strategies directly linked to mission accomplishments. He states, "Ultimately, whether or not a church demonstrates the care and love of Christ boils down to its vision and structure."⁶² Developing a strategy is like creating a road map with clear directions to a desired destination. Sharing a vision without providing the steps to achieve it only frustrates people who want to journey together towards a different tomorrow. Also, having a vision with strategic steps that ignore the implementation aspect of the process is like putting the work on a shelf as an object to refer to but without influence. Organizational leadership must fully

⁶⁰ Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 97-99.

⁶¹ Gil Rendle and Alice Man, *Holy Conversations* (Herdon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2003), xv.

⁶² Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church For the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 19.

comprehend the importance of establishing clear paths forward and effectively communicating that course for corporate engagement.

Design a Discipleship Process

One of the first processes to address is the dysfunction of discipleship, which is an essential contributor to healthy churches. Paul establishes the destination of any discipleship efforts in Galatians 4:19 when he states, “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.” The discipleship journey must guide believers towards this end. Traditionally, the disciple-building process centers on providing information through teaching and preaching, but leaders often fail to establish a clear direction or destination. This haphazard approach has limited effectiveness. Malphurs sees disciple building as a process broken into the following four elements: formulate the mission of the church by making mature disciples, identify characteristics of a mature disciple, design the process for “disciple-maturing,” and create a spiritual measurement process.⁶³ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger apply the same elements in their book, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples*. Their research indicates effective churches develop simple organizational structures that implement their disciple-making processes.⁶⁴ For many congregations, small groups are the vehicle of choice, providing structure where discipleship happens. Roberts applies this simple discipleship approach as he seeks to address discipleship’s missing link—application. His process takes the shape of a triad called “T-Life,” which has three core elements: interactive relationship with God, transparent connections with people, and glocal (global and local) impact through a

⁶³ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning, A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 195.

⁶⁴ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 26, Kindle.

convergence of life, vocation, and ministry.⁶⁵ Dallas Willard, a philosophical theologian, sees the destination of all discipleship processes as the transformation of the whole person in which all “essential parts of the human self” center on God’s restorative, sustaining companionship.⁶⁶ The specifics vary according to the organization, but the destination is the same—becoming like Christ.

Pursue Spiritual Vitality

Leaders attempting to navigate the uncharted waters of transformation and change must realize the primary motivation for their journeys, keeping their vessels afloat and on course flows from vibrant relationships with God. Jesus’ command to love God first (Matt. 22:37) is the means by which all ministry should happen. One cannot overstate the importance of a leader’s intimacy with God. According to Wilkes, the source of power for leaders is worship, which is “the energy source for passion in a servant leader’s life.”⁶⁷ Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck warn church leadership against sacrificing their intimacy with God on the altar of church work. The relentless demands of ministry swirling around the ship can too easily marginalize the relationship between pastors and God. Heuser and Shawchuck offer a few incentives for leadership intimacy. First, they remind believers that “spirituality supports ministry.” The power of the Holy Spirit is only available in intimacy (Zech. 4:6). Furthermore, “spirituality renews vision and energy.”⁶⁸ Leaders find the ability to withstand the storms of

⁶⁵ Roberts, 75.

⁶⁶ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 31.

⁶⁷ Wilkes, 200.

⁶⁸ Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 33-36.

ministry here. Goodall adds the importance of leaders listening to God in all areas of their lives as a safeguard against making poor choices that ship wreck their ministries.⁶⁹ Leadership cannot overlook this critical link for longevity and effectiveness. Often, ministers lean on their own resources to such a degree that they do not recognize they neglect their spiritual intimacy—until it is too late.

Only leaders living in spiritual vitality can lead organizations that place the same priority on intimacy with God. Stetzer and Dodson’s survey of comeback churches validates this essential link—pastors’ spiritual vitality energizes their congregations to pursue the same. From this renewal position, their love for Jesus empowers them to live lives of love for others. It becomes the energy for change as pastors seek to steer their churches from the brink of loss.⁷⁰ Malphurs makes a similar connection between leadership’s and the congregations’ spiritual vitality. He asserts, “Spiritual vitality is infectious.”⁷¹ All authors consulted in this study emphasize the essential relationship between congregations’ spiritual vitality and change. No growth or restoration is possible without it.

Worship Service as a Means to Spiritual Vitality

One of the strongest means to facilitate spiritual vitality in churches is worship services. Leaders can address the worship problem Barna points out through instruction and experience. Instruction reinforces the following worship fundamentals: clearly defining worship and spiritual vitality, reaffirming its priority, addressing wrong perceptions, encouraging sensitivity to God’s presence, and understanding the importance of addressing personal sin. One major focus of this

⁶⁹ Wayne Goodall, *Why Great Men Fall: 15 Winning Strategies to Rise Above It All* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2005), 50-51.

⁷⁰ Stetzer and Dodson, 54.

⁷¹ Malphurs, 91.

instruction is for individuals to accept responsibility for their levels of intimacy and to overcome God-encounter obstacles. Vital to facilitating this encounter is the believer's expectation and persistence to connect with God's presence. Barna relates the importance of these factors by contending they make "a world of difference in the quality of worship."⁷²

When congregations display intimate worship, they influence the next contributor to church growth. Their worship is infectious. Stetzer points to a peripheral benefit of worship in regards to the lost when he states, "One of the most effective evangelistic methods a church can use is exposing the unchurched to the authentic worship of God." He views this "divine-human" encounter as very effective in stirring a yearning for personal encounters with God. He challenges leadership to create a worship environment that is "appropriate" for believers and unbelievers alike.⁷³ Stetzer's comments are irrelevant unless congregations have lost souls mixed with believers. So in addition to creating this environment, leadership must also strategize a process to ensure lost individuals are present in their churches.

The priority of preaching

Even as worship services come under scrutiny for their vital contribution to fulfilling the Great Commission, leaders cannot overlook effective preaching. However, this centerpiece of communication within churches and the world-at-large can only maintain its potent ability to influence lives if preachers become contextual in their communication. As missiologist DeLonn Rance emphasizes, preachers no longer have the luxury of assuming people are similar; they not only need to exegete the biblical text but their audiences as well.⁷⁴ Individuals influenced by the

⁷² Barna, 84-86, 89-92.

⁷³ Stetzer, *Planting*, 261-263.

⁷⁴ DeLonn L. Rance, "Exegeting Your Audience," *Enrichment Journal* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 97.

American culture shift are listening. Preachers must determine how they will respond. While preachers consider the changes in their audiences, they also have the continuing mandate to seek change within their audiences. Since preaching is the primary discipleship opportunity, it must move from maintaining the status quo to initiating and sustaining change.⁷⁵ Graham Johnston identifies three aspects for preachers' consideration: expect differing worldviews from the pew, look for opportunities to preach in unprecedented ways, and reconsider past preaching methodologies. He highlights the tenuous balance of reaching culturally influenced listeners while faithfully adhering to biblical integrity.⁷⁶ Preachers desiring to maximize the opportunities audiences give them must consider the most effective ways to connect with their listeners.

Another influence in the preaching equation is the presence of unbelievers. Just as church leaders wrestle with maximizing unbelievers' worship service experiences, preaching must accomplish the same goal. Stetzer's emphasis that new churches must perform the dual roles of "encouraging unbelievers" and edifying believers⁷⁷ should carry over to existing churches as well. Traditionally, pastors gear their preaching for believers, but they instead need to consider both believers and unbelievers. Ehler's recommendation for reaching both groups consists of the following seven elements: 1) has biblical, Christ-centered content, 2) relevant to unbelieving listeners, 3) preached with persuasive appeal, 4) uses engaging illustrations and 5) has dynamic delivery, 6) spoken by an authentic preacher, and 7) speaker who is empowered by the Holy

⁷⁵ Jon D. Good, "Missional Preaching: The Forerunner to Kingdom Growth" (D.Min. diss., Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2008), 45, accessed June 12, 2012, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

⁷⁶ Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-first Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), location 112-170, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Stetzer, *Planting*, 269.

Spirit.⁷⁸ This dual focus for preachers must become second nature if their priority is fulfilling the Great Commission.

Incorporating the Power of Prayer

Leaders must lace any revitalization of churches, including their corporate gatherings, with prayer. Throughout Scripture, prayer is the connecting point to God that brings the necessary changes in the hearts of leaders and followers alike. Prayer is the vital link in Nehemiah's revival (Neh. 9). The disciples' prayers precede the birth of the church in Acts (Acts 1:14). Paul constantly calls his readers back to prayer (Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2). More so than any other biblical figure, Jesus' intimacy with the Father and focus on doing God's will flows from their time together during prayer. His example inaugurates the standard to which God's people should aspire (Matt. 14:23). As displayed in the life of Jesus, prayer is an integral aspect of spiritual life, but specific focus is necessary for its direct connection to church growth and renewal.

Since prayer is the beginning point and sustainer of renewal, Olson also emphasizes the lack of prayer as a "major" oversight for enduring ministry fruitfulness.⁷⁹ Barna's research shows highly effective churches incorporate prayer in four key ways: teams of prayer partners interceding prior to and during the worship service, preachers spending substantial effort in prayer for their messages, during the service, setting aside time for earnest prayer towards its success, and praying throughout the week by staff, lay leaders, and prayer teams towards the next

⁷⁸ Alan Ehler, "Preaching to Reach: Seven Characteristics of Effective Evangelistic Preaching" (D.Min. diss., George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2007), abstract, accessed May 30, 2013, https://discovery.northwestu.edu/file.php/10885/Preach_to_Reach.pdf.

⁷⁸ Olson, 147, 156.

⁷⁹ Olson, 147, 156.

service.⁸⁰ Stetzer and Dodson echo Barna’s findings for comeback churches, declaring prayer as the most important principle for church growth. They report that comeback leaders develop a “strategic prayer emphasis,” which includes a community focus and accompanying action plan to reach out.⁸¹ Most churches and leaders pray. The level and intensity are what Ed Stetzer and Thomas Rainer find to be the distinction between average churches and transformational churches.⁸²

Organize for Relational Vitality

This emphasis on spiritual vitality through prayer and worship has a commensurate overflow into relational vitality (i.e., fellowship). A consistent theme among churches making impacts in their communities is their relational vitality with each other. Above this, Jesus emphasizes the relational priority His disciples should display when He states, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:35). This love is manifest in tangible ways. In Acts 2:42-47, relational vitality is one of the expressions of this healthy church. Unfortunately, most churches do not enjoy this element of discipleship without an organizational structure that facilitates it. The need for structure increases as churches get larger. George recounts the story of how small-group ministries became the model that Paul Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the largest church in the world, initiated to meet the needs of his huge congregation.⁸³ As a result, small groups have become the means to channel people into environments where they can connect with others and receive care. Stetzer and Dodson assert

⁸⁰ Barna, 106-107.

⁸¹ Stetzer and Dodson, 70-71.

⁸² Ed Stetzer and Thomas S. Rainer, *Transformational Churches: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 126.

⁸³ George, 52.

that comeback churches uniformly attend to the relational needs of their congregations through small groups.⁸⁴

Make Outreach a Preeminent Focus

As churches experience spiritual and relational vitality, the energy for engaging in the Great Commission increases. Traditionally, evangelism fills the void of mission by providing training and structure to share the gospel as an event. Stetzer and Dodson note that comeback churches approach evangelism as an integral expression of their existence; they “think and live evangelism.” These churches develop a “comprehensive and effective evangelistic strategy” in which leaders pursue pluralities of opportunities. The authors emphasize three roles every congregant should embrace—“pray-ers, tell-ers, and bring-ers.”⁸⁵ The critical link in this process is the vision. Leadership must effectively present and maintain clear destinations to pursue God’s mission to reach lost souls.

From a Growth Mindset to a Mission Mindset

Another consideration for leaders in this American culture shift is to transition their thinking from church growth to church mission. A misguided perspective towards church growth focuses on just getting people in the door. Many times, there is no distinction if the people are already Christians or not. In a culture immersed in Christian values, leaders easily forget why they exist—to build disciples. Too often, the practice of “building their futures on the ‘circulation of the saints’”⁸⁶ becomes more important than God’s mission. Rainer and Geiger

⁸⁴ Stetzer and Dodson, 146-147.

⁸⁵ Stetzer and Dodson, 108.

⁸⁶ Alan Roxburgh, “Navigating the Changing Waters of Leadership,” *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 44.

address this tendency to “drift” off mission focus.⁸⁷ This drifting takes various shapes. For attractional churches, drifting focuses on programs that offer Christians better options, such as a home church that will meet their felt needs. According to Roxburgh, “Here people can find happiness and get fed. They feel the children’s and youth programs will take care of their children and keep them safe from the incursions of a secular world.”⁸⁸ Attractional churches adrift cater to consumer-minded Christians who look towards church ministries as products to meet their wants and needs. Stetzer emphasizes that adapting to this American culture shift incorporates a shift on the part of church leaders from attractional churches (come and see) to missional churches (go and tell). He does not disparage the attractional church approach but emphasizes it is “not enough.”⁸⁹ Stetzer’s constant theme is for churches to return to a missional focus—God’s original intent.

According to Stetzer and Putman, the transition for leadership to adopt this missional mindset begins by “moving beyond trying to recycle and reproduce church culture models.” They explain that reaching out to lost people looks different in cultures distant from Christianity and modernism. For years, the dominant approach to evangelism was to offer some type of gospel presentation. In Christian-influenced cultures, such practices worked, but this is no longer reality. Presenting the gospel in post-Christian, post-modern cultures takes on a different character—one more like the New Testament.⁹⁰ Leaders can only make this type of shift when

⁸⁷ Rainer and Geiger, 75.

⁸⁸ Roxburgh, 44.

⁸⁹ Stetzer, *Planting*, 17.

⁹⁰ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 3, 60.

they are willing to go against the current of church tradition, steering themselves back to God’s mission of building disciples.

Multiply Through Church Planting

In order to accomplish this goal, church leaders have to expand their thinking. Too often, leaders think only of growing their organizations. In a post-Christian culture, ministers must instead think about how their actions can benefit the Kingdom of God. The only means to fulfill the Great Commission in America is by planting churches. C. Peter Wagner’s comment from 1990 is even more relevant today: “The single most effective evangelistic method under heaven is planting new churches.”⁹¹ The precedence established in the book of Acts shows God forming churches wherever people became Christians. As a result, the Church grew to such a degree that Christianity became the official Roman Empire religion in 381.⁹² Olson highlights several reasons to pursue church planting including the presence of an emerging generation that needs churches that culturally connect with their values and communication styles, the fact that historically new churches are more effective at reaching America’s growing ethnic population, the truth that conversion rates are significantly higher in new churches, and the realization that churches must multiply to chip away at America’s lost population. He also sees a peripheral benefit of church planting is to provide the “best way to reinvigorate the existing church.”⁹³

Planting churches addresses one contributor to America’s spiritual blight—a lack of churches. Thomas T. Clegg and Warren Bird spotlight America’s drastic decline in the church-

⁹¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.

⁹² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity, From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910), 63.

⁹³ Olson, 147, 156.

to-population ratio. In 2004, there were eleven churches for every ten thousand Americans compared to twenty-eight churches for the same number in 1900.⁹⁴ For American churches to keep pace with the population increase and adherent exodus, denominations must increase their total number of churches by 3 percent annually.⁹⁵ The U.S. Assemblies of God would need to triple their 2012 net increase of 127 churches.⁹⁶ This significant increase is only possible as individual churches accept the challenge to participate in church planting efforts.

Conclusion

Churches must embrace the reality that America's culture shift has direct and immediate ramifications for them. Contemporary authors offer significant help in determining how to best steer their organizational ships and the direction they should travel. This literature review briefly describes external contributors to the condition of the American Church. As America incorporates post-modernism and distances itself from Christianity, the Church must consider how to respond. It has also considered some of the voices offering the Church advice in this historic shift. The overwhelming consensus is that leaders must take the helm, using effective organizational practices that focus on the mission of God in building disciples—from conversion to maturity.

⁹⁴ Thomas T. Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America: How You and Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2001), 30.

⁹⁵ Stetzer, *Planting*, 5, 9.

⁹⁶ "U.S. AG Churches Opened and Closed 1965-2012," Assemblies of God, accessed August 5, 2013, <http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/AG%20Statistical%20Reports/2012/ChuOpCI2012.pdf>.

METHODOLOGY

A significant element of this project is determining what practices and philosophies leaders use in churches experiencing growth. This project seeks relevant information through a qualitative research methodology. The goal of this study is to identify trends and themes common to growing churches within the NMNAG and compile several of them into a findings conclusion to the project.

Rationale

The reason for choosing this form of research methodology is the subject's individualized nature. Qualitative research is an inductive approach to research involving the use of questions and procedures to collect data based on unique experiences that researchers interpret into themes and patterns. The choice for this research process centers on the individual situation; no research projects are exactly alike, and they require an instrument with the ability to change according to the revealed information. A static survey or questionnaire would not provide the latitude to discover this study's unique context and historical information, nor would it allow for alternative responses relevant to the research problem. The benefit of qualitative research grows from honoring the unique and complex aspect of each participant's situation. One aspect of qualitative research is emergent design. It is a dynamic learning process that incorporates new information as it seeks to understand the problem from the participant's perspective. All relevant discoveries are then synthesized into the project's conclusions.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 4, Kindle.

Sample

The sampling group for the interview process comes from churches within the NMNAG. This organization covers northern Idaho and all of Washington State, encompassing almost 300 churches. It self-publishes an annual report called the Annual Church Ministries Report (ACMR). Contained in this document are statistics for their five-year weekend worship service attendance trend and the percentages of attendees in small-groups or discipleship classes, as well as the number of conversions, Holy Spirit baptisms, and water baptisms. I selected these church leaders by identifying the churches with an increase in attendance in three of the five years listed and an overall increase of 10 percent or more. I subdivided the identified churches into these five size categories: G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5. From this list, I interviewed ten church leaders (two from each group) to determine their perceptions of why their churches have grown. Table 1 lists the size of each category and the findings of the ACMR review.

Table 1. Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God’s growing churches by grouping size and percentage

	Total	G1 (0-100)	G2 (101-200)	G3 (201-300)	G4 (301-500)	G5 (501-up)
Growing churches ^a	47	12	13	3	8	11
Total churches ^b	297	162	64	26	16	29
Growing church percentage	15.8%	7.4%	20.3%	11.5%	50%	37.9%

Source: Data adapted from Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, “2012 Annual Church Ministries Report,” accessed June 5, 2013, http://resources.razorplanet.com/510093-8874/2012_acmr_final_report_63131370386951.zip.

^a Growing churches are designated by three of five years of increased attendance and 10 percent or more overall.

^b Total is determined by churches reporting organizational data. Several churches were listed without data.

An important statistic contained in Table 1 is the growing church percentage of 15.8 percent. This number gives a clearer picture of the need for change, because 84.2 percent of the

churches in the NMNAG are not showing any significant growth. This study identifies relevant ways to address this problem.

Table 2 contains the ACMR statistics for the ten churches of the pastors that participated in this research project.

Table 2. ACMR statistics for churches of pastors participating in research project

	Group ^a	Weekend Attendance ^b	Sm Grp/Disc	Conversions	HS Baptisms	Water Baptisms
P1 ^c	3	30%	33%	12%	0%	8%
P2	4	256%	47%	16%	1%	5%
P3	3	88%	42%	8%	8%	5%
P4	1	358%	40%	7%	0%	0%
P5	2	72%	40%	3%	0%	5%
P6	5	70%	80%	6%	0%	5%
P7	1	83%	48%	7%	0%	12%
P8	2	94%	30%	7%	2%	11%
P9	5	115%	64%	37%	2%	5%
P10	4	126%	59%	7%	0%	3%

Source: Data adapted from Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, “2012 Annual Church Ministries Report”, (self-published PDF), accessed June 5, 2013, http://resources.razorplanet.com/510093-8874/2012_acmr_final_report_63131370386951.zip.

^a Size of grouped churches are G1: 0-100, G2: 101-200; G3: 201-300; G4:301-500; G5:501-up.

^b Percentage is determined by the attendance change from 2008 to 2012.

^c These alphanumeric identifiers are used in place of participating pastor’s names.

These statistics highlight various aspects of church growth that give an aerial view of organizational health. Though these numbers are only general indicators that are not verified, they are relevant if accurate. For example, leaders can reasonably assume if an organization has a strong conversion rate, water baptism ratio, and weekend worship attendance, it is fulfilling the Great Commission.

Process

To begin the research process, I contacted the qualifying churches to request pastoral interviews. I contacted all potential participants by phone for a verbal confirmation and then sent emails (except one that I had to mail) that contained an introductory letter and an Informed Consent form (IFC⁹⁸). The introduction letter described the purpose of the study, the process, and its implementation. I required those agreeing to participate to sign the accompanying IFC. The IFC acknowledged that I would protect the participants' rights throughout the research process. Once I received the signed IFC, I contacted each participant to set up an interview date and time. On the day of the scheduled interview, I called the participants. I recorded each interview, and I had each recording transcribed with the participants' names replaced with alphanumeric identifiers (i.e., P1). I changed any unique identifiers given in the interview to obscure the participants' identities.

The research question for this project centers on church growth within churches of the NMNAG. The research question is as follows: What are growing churches in the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God doing to facilitate growth? The initial interview questions appear in Appendix C. These questions established a baseline for the interviews, but they were subject to change based on the participants' responses. Latitude in interview questions is important for inductive development in qualitative research.⁹⁹ During the first interview, I recognized problems with the wording and structure for many of the original questions. Appendix C also contains the adjusted baseline questions.

⁹⁸ See Appendix A for the introductory letter and Appendix B for the IFC.

⁹⁹ Creswell, 175.

Biases and Value Influences

Due to the human element on which qualitative research heavily leans, this assessment considers factors that have influenced the outcome of this process. These considerations are twofold. The first consideration relates to biases identified during the proposal development process, while the second addresses the limitations identified during or following the interviews.

During the initial stages of this project's development, I identified and addressed potential biases and limitations, both from the standpoint of the participants and myself. It is unrealistic to expect the absence of biases when working with people, so anticipating these issues has lessened their negative impact. One limitation on the part of participants was the potential of partiality concerning their observations. Most were senior leaders in their organizations—the primary decision makers—so it was reasonable to assume that some bias would influence their comments. This bias was acceptable considering the primary focus of this study is how leaders view their church growth. Information based purely on their perspectives has been beneficial for the outcome of this study.

The next limitation was the communication element to the process. Each participant varied in their abilities to articulate accurately their responses to the questions. To address this problem, I used the skills of paraphrasing and feedback to explore the participants' responses.

Another influence—if not limitation—in the interview process was the use of telephone calls as the only medium for the conversations. This mode of communication removed my ability to incorporate non-verbal communication into my understanding of the

participants' responses. This required my use of extra care to address this limitation through the use of questions and clarifying statements.

Another limitation to this project was the interpretive element of qualitative research. Since researchers act as the instruments for gathering data,¹⁰⁰ the dynamic process places heavy emphasis on their abilities to accurately store and analyze information. Therefore, identification of any researcher bias is necessary. I entered this project with two dominant biases. The first is my bias against outreach efforts that leaders do not root in biblical precedence. I minimized the practices of activities like relational evangelism and church events with negligible spiritual content aimed at lost people. I also did not see the benefit of pursuing relationships that centered on shared interests and activities. It seemed like wasted time when the participants could embark on more spiritual practices—like prayer and fasting. This resistance stemmed from my perception that spiritual activities are godlier than casual or recreational activities. I did not view the practice as having a biblical precedence.

My second bias was towards the benefit of Pentecostal distinctives. Incorporated in this bias was the perspective that the power of God through signs, wonders, and miracles is the strongest means of promoting church growth. Several factors contribute to this predisposition. First, I believe these events captivate people's attention. They lower psychological defenses and authenticate the existence of the supernatural realm. Finally, they validate the accuracy or viability of Christian assertions.

Addressing these biases required a paradigm shift. With regard to my preference for Pentecostal or Charismatic practices, I tempered this belief with an acknowledgement that many churches have excellent results, which honor God, without aligning with my preferred

¹⁰⁰ Creswell, 176.

theology and practices. I realized there is more than one way for the Gospel to bear fruit in American culture. Making that mental shift also influenced my second bias against extra-biblical outreach efforts. In essence, this broadened my thinking to include philosophies and practices beneficial for attracting people, as long as they did not contradict the Bible.

Another bias, or more of an assumption, was that churches experiencing growth within the NMNAG generally fell into alignment with contemporary philosophies on church growth, which this study examines in the Literature Review section. I assumed any distinctions along the lines of historical Pentecostal approaches to church growth would be minimal. This assumption could have influenced me to listen for factors that substantiated this position. In the interview process, I observed that Pentecostal expressions were identifiable in various degrees in most of the participants' responses. Through acknowledging this bias, I was deliberate in listening attentively for any practices that aided growth, regardless of Pentecostal influence.

The second part of the limitations related to this project centers on discoveries I made late in the interview process and afterwards. The following observations have diminished the potential value of this process: I displayed poor interview skills, and I had poorly worded interview questions.

Since researchers are the key instruments in qualitative research for quality data collection,¹⁰¹ they must employ effective interview techniques. On several occasions, I rushed the process because I interpreted silence as the end of the individuals' comments and did not give time to see if it was merely due to the participants' collecting their thoughts. Also, incomplete responses to questions were fairly common, but I did not identify those

¹⁰¹ Creswell, 174.

instances until I reviewed the interviews. For example, I phrased most of the preliminary questions to discover how particular subjects affected the participants' organizational growth. Consistently, participants did not address how the subjects affected their growth; they only provided descriptions of the subjects. A possible reason for this error could have been that recording the interviews gave me the illusion that I could relax. If I would have taken notes during all interviews, I could have lessened this tendency. Also, many responses did not accurately address the questions, yet I did not press for relevant comments. In turn, I lost an advantage of qualitative research.

Another bias I identified late in the interview process influenced the quality of the interviews. On several occasions, I failed to stay focused on my purpose as the interviewer. During these times I sought out specific examples of ministry that had no value in describing how the theme affected growth. This tendency flowed from my quest for ideas relevant to my personal ministry. As one example, I asked for specifics in expressions of ministry as opposed to how the subjects contributed to individuals' church growth. This practice lessened my ability to maximize the interview opportunities and to contribute more information during the analysis phase of the project. Clear responses indicating how the practice affected church growth would have maintained the project's stated priority.

This issue flowed over into the second challenge within this project—poorly worded preliminary questions. As indicated earlier, I changed the preliminary questions early in the interview process to more accurately reflect the project's goal of determining causes of church growth. The need to revise some questions arose when participants double checked if they answered the questions accurately. I should have picked up on the questions' ambiguity

when I heard comments such as, “If that is what you are asking.” This happened on several occasions and clearly highlighted my need to reconsider the research questions.

As I revised the initial questions I dropped four through six. My intent was to discover how each question affected church growth, but their ambiguity brought more confusion than benefit. The adjusted questions related to leadership development and their emphasis on prayer. They also included a direct question about the participants’ recommendations to pastors seeking church growth. This question drew the most significant comments.

Even though qualitative research project interviews morph according to emerging information, I recognized the need to give general parameters through preliminary questions. The two questions designed for maximum participant flexibility, the first about perceived factors to growth and the last about recommendations to other pastors, bore the most fruit. Most of the other questions provided correlative elements to the study’s literature review section. Of the eight questions, seven arose from contemporary literature’s emphasis on the value of church growth. The question on Pentecostal distinctives came from the project’s isolated focus on the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal organization.

My limitations to the interview process were evident yet not significant enough to obscure the report’s finding. One clear challenge for me was to fully engage in the interview process due to personal circumstances. For example, I conducted one interview while on a trip across the state. The distractions in that situation lessened my ability to explore the interviewee’s responses. All things considered, even though there were drawbacks to the way I conducted the interviews, I found great value toward this project’s purpose in the data collected.

Ethical Issues

Because of the nature of qualitative research, participants are at risk of misuse of the information they share. Therefore, this study took the following steps to safeguard against participants' concerns. First, interviewees signed an informed consent form (IFC) that clearly summarized the purpose and procedures. Also, I safeguarded the identity of participants through the use of numeric identifiers on the interview transcripts and the removal of any identifying elements in the participants' responses. I clearly saw the need for this step, because two participants were reluctant to share their philosophies and practices that contrasted church cultural norms. One G5 pastor hesitated to share a specific type of outreach event his church used because of potential negative ramifications. On both occasions, I reminded participants of interview anonymity. In retrospect, I should have opened each interview by highlighting the safeguards to their comments, even though I clearly shared them in the IFC.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The final step in the qualitative research process is making sense out of the information collected. Creswell suggests the following steps for analysis:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis
2. Obtain a general sense of the information
3. Coding the data (breaking it into self-identified segments)
4. Use of coding to generate a description
5. Determine representation of themes and descriptions

6. Define the lessons learned¹⁰²

The Analysis section of this project is the result of steps one through five , and step six appears in the Findings and Conclusion section.

In the final section of this project, Findings and Conclusion, I draw relevant conclusions based on the Literature Review and Analysis sections. I chose several themes that either interview participants directly mentioned as bringing church growth or that emerged from my opinion¹⁰³ about what brings church growth or health. Closing out this section are suggestions for possible further study and implications of the findings for leaders seeking tools for church growth.

¹⁰² Creswell, 183-89.

¹⁰³ Creswell, 189.

ANALYSIS

The next step in this project is an analysis of the research interviews. This process begins by identifying commonalities within participant responses that correlate to church growth. Two questions (the first and last) of the research project's ten preliminary questions helped determine these connections. These two questions were open-ended to determine what each participating pastor viewed as growth contributors to their churches and what advice they would give to other pastors about church growth. These responses are the primary focus of the research process. From these responses, I clustered common elements into themes. I designed the other eight questions to discover the extent particular practices or subjects affected participants' growth.

From the responses to the first question—"What factors do you believe have contributed to the congregational growth listed on the 2012 ACMR?"—I identified these seven themes: leadership, large gathering, organization, outreach, relationships, discipleship, and Pentecostal distinctives.¹⁰⁴ I rated the participants' comments according to the frequency these ten pastors considered the themes relevant to their growth. I graphed the results in Figure 1. The top five themes offered no surprises. Contemporary authors have consistently identified them as vital ingredients to church growth. However, I cannot state the same for the last two categories—discipleship and Pentecostal distinctives. Contrary to the Literature Review section, which pinpoints the lack of maturity among Christians as a primary contributor to the impotence of the American Church, these pastors placed other priorities first. Only two of the ten pastors saw this factor influencing their growth. As expected, the last growth factor was Pentecostal distinctives. Only one of the ten pastors viewed this theme as contributing to his church's growth. This

¹⁰⁴ For the narrative phase of this project three of these themes were positioned as subheadings: outreach and discipleship under organization; relationship under leadership philosophy.

highlights a disturbing trend for Pentecostal churches whose unique spiritual expressions are the root of their identity and growth. Generally speaking, however, the themes these pastors identified as contributing to their churches’ growth closely parallels contemporary authors.

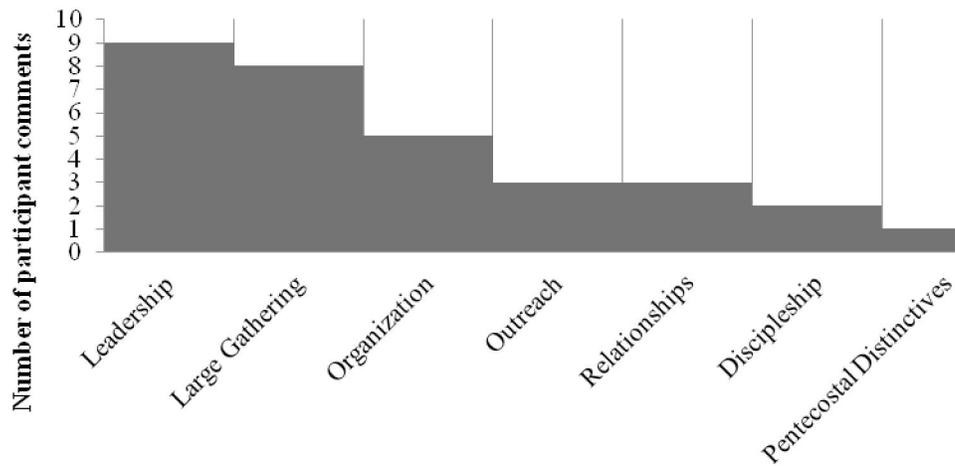


Figure 1. Numeric comparison of themes participants identified as contributors to growth.

The next question I utilized to discover church growth priorities was the last question—“Do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?” It shifts the emphasis from what these pastors viewed as growth contributors to their advice for other pastors about church growth. It was a fundamental shift from observation to philosophy. Their responses to this question generally fell into these six themes: leadership, large gathering, outreach, relationships, discipleship, and Pentecostal distinctives.¹⁰⁵ These themes generally aligned with the themes identified from the first question. Again, I rated the comments according to the number of times the participants considered them relevant. I placed the results into a graph in Figure 2. The one theme that pastors did not mention for this question was organization. Any

¹⁰⁵ For the narrative phase of this project, I positioned three of these themes as subheadings—outreach and discipleship under organization, and relationship under leadership philosophy.

duplicate themes do not taint the findings but reinforce these pastors' perceptions of what brings about church growth.

It is significant that organization dropped from the list of responses for the last question. With five of the ten pastors making specific remarks about culture, strategy, and systems, my assumption was that the participants would repeat the previous themes. One theme that received strong remarks in the first question, guest retention, received none in the second set of responses. Furthermore, strategy and culture are essential aspects for organizations, but the participants did not consider them relevant to the last question. Another significant change was the increase of the priority on Pentecostal distinctives. One additional pastor adhered to the philosophy that these distinctives should be prominent for Pentecostal pastors. His response seemed to point to his belief that Pentecostal distinctives are ministry/theological priorities, not essential contributors to growth.

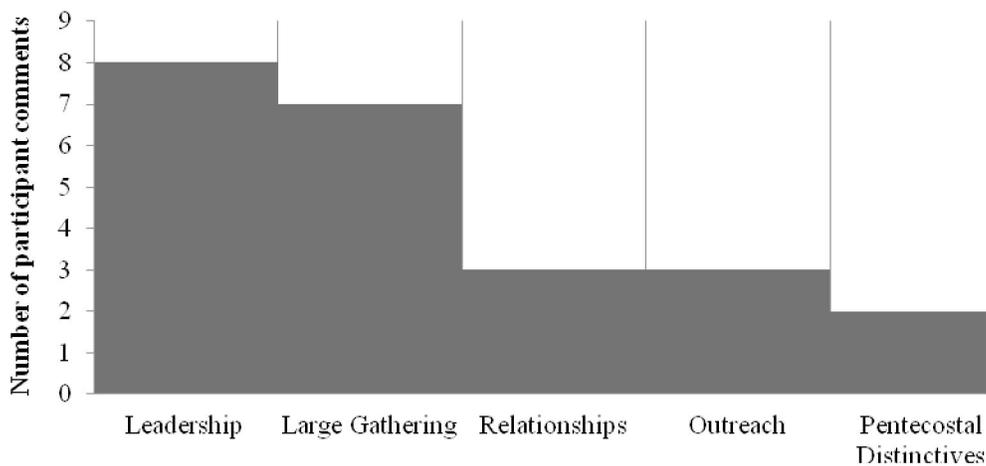


Figure 2. Numeric comparison of themes participants suggested for other pastor's church growth.

Leadership

The first theme, leadership, was the pastors' primary contributor to church growth with eight of the ten participants highlighting various aspects of leadership. For this project, I made a distinction between organizational leadership and personal leadership. Though these two are intertwined, personal leadership qualities stood out as foremost in participant comments. This section identifies and covers three areas essential to leadership: character, philosophies, and practices.

Character

The participants highlighted the personal lives of leaders as their foremost concern. They consistently pointed out attitudes and actions that church leaders must not neglect, including emotional health, passion, humility, and devotional life. I could have extracted other virtuous characteristics from the interviews, but the participants directly referenced these points. The pastors pointed out some of these issues as direct contributors to church health, while most emerged as suggestions for church growth. Combined together, these characteristics flow from the hearts of healthy leaders.

Emotional Health

The theme of health emerged several times throughout the interview process. This emphasis had nothing to do with leaders' physical bodies, but addressed more important issues. For example, one participant, P10, placed emphasis on every pastor's need for a healthy heart. He used the word "healthy" fifty-five times. As he shared his journey towards a "major heart change," P10 would not let the interview progress until he felt I grasped the need as well. He went on to emphasize that the heart is the foundation from which ministry happens. His intense desire for other leaders to see the importance of proper alignment of their hearts and minds

emerged out of his own odyssey to rid himself of prideful craters in his heart.¹⁰⁶ Prior to this discovery, P10 bottomed out after enduring a drastic drop in his church's attendance. He paints it dramatically by declaring, "I rode it down." The resulting revelation propelled him on a journey to help other "stuck" pastors recognize that the solution they seek may not be external. He said, "I honestly believe that declining churches, that plateaued churches ... the churches are not stuck; the pastors are stuck."¹⁰⁷ P10 encouraged leaders to first consider their personal contributions to any state-of-affairs within their churches.

Accompanying P10's heart emphasis, participants P3 and P9 added their own nuance to this issue by focusing on the uniqueness of each pastor. In his closing comments, P3 argued a significant leadership characteristic that contributes to healthy churches is leadership not "afraid of just being themselves." He saw it as a necessary link to reach people, stating, "People are hungry for something real." When leaders put on a show or hide behind a façade, it tarnishes peoples' abilities to connect with God. In his final comment, P9 saw harm in leaders trying to duplicate other leaders' styles. He then repeated the priority challenge to young leaders—be yourself.¹⁰⁸ As P10 pointed out in his statements, this philosophy of being authentic accentuates his heart issue emphasis.

Adding his voice to this chorus for healthy hearts, P5 suggested in his final comment that pastors should practice inward exploration to acquire and maintain vibrant ministry fitness. He stated, "I need to stay healthy with my temperament, my strengths, my weaknesses, all the pieces

¹⁰⁶ P10's God-encounter is found in Appendix D.

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P10 on December 12, 2013. P10 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor's name for privacy purposes.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P9 on November 6, 2013. P9 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor's name for privacy purposes.

that make me who I am.” His all-encompassing approach highlights leaders’ responsibilities to put as much effort at leading their own hearts as they do at leading their organizations. P5 emphasized the importance of staying healthy and surrendering in Christ while incorporating relationships that hold leaders accountable.¹⁰⁹ P5’s effort to keep his heart in check is a practice he encouraged other leaders to embrace.

Although the participants did not identify them as church growth contributors, they viewed the tools of self-understanding as vital. For P5, various tools (i.e., Meyers/Briggs, Strength Finders 2.0, Mel Ming’s Leadership Intensive) helped him identify aspects about his temperament that proved to be a “tremendous help” to letting God flow “through me.”¹¹⁰ P9 commented that his staff releases him to work within his three strengths. With refreshing transparency, he acknowledged straying outside his strengths “doesn’t go well.”¹¹¹ P6’s observation of his lead pastor paralleled P9’s statements. He commented that his pastor “has realized, I’ve got to staff for my weaknesses.”¹¹² Instead of ignoring or denying these perceived shortcomings, these men compensate by tapping into people with offsetting strengths. For them, self-understanding is essential in maximizing their abilities.

Passionate

Another characteristic two participants isolated as essential for ministry was passion. P1 made it his “number-one leadership push.” He emphasized, “This has to drive you in everything

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P5 on October 24, 2013. P5 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

¹¹⁰ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹¹¹ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹¹² See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P6 on October 30, 2013. P6 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

you do.” In his closing comments, he strongly admonished other pastors to “just be passionate about what you do. I mean, I can’t state that enough.” One way he accomplishes this goal is being present in the church members’ lives as opposed to operating as someone who just “run[s] a church service, and after . . . resume[s] their life.” Not only does he model this choice, but he looks for the same decision in ministers he hires. He stated, “If you think ministry is a job, don’t come work for me, because if you treat it like a job, you’ll fail.”¹¹³ P9 echoed a similar sentiment about the importance of passion, but he broadened the specific expression and incorporated giftedness. For this participant, if ministers are working in areas of passion and giftedness, “it doesn’t seem like work.” As with P1, he reiterated that ministry must be a lifestyle. Both pastors see passion as an essential ingredient in church growth but more so as critical in the lives of anyone in ministry.

Humility

Few of the character qualities respondents emphasized as important directly related to growth, except humility. When I asked P10 what contributed to his church’s growth, his response of intense humility caught me off guard. He shared his story of “a series of humbling situations” that exposed pride, which contributed to a hardened heart that impeded his ability to “exploit the ideas the Spirit brings.” As his heart changed, his church changed and became a place where the people “started bringing their friends.”¹¹⁴ This intense humility P10 described provided the fertile ground through which God could maximize his strengths. This also is the ground on which other characteristics that participants identified, like surrender and accountability, grow.

¹¹³ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P1 on October 9, 2013. P1 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

¹¹⁴ P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Devotional Life

Another area two participants expressed as contributing to church growth was daily devotions. P8's response to the first question took many twist and turns as he shared his story and insights from thirty-years of ministry. For him, growing churches begin in the heart of the pastors, which was evident through his foundational priority, "You love God every day; you pray; you read your word."¹¹⁵ In alignment with this statement, P2 observed that church growth results from "a very strong relationship with God." He then pointed out the means—"spiritual disciplines" present in "your life every day."¹¹⁶ While I could assume every participant would agree with this priority, only P8 and P2 emphasized it.

Ministry Philosophies

The participants primarily discussed the philosophies they considered important during the final question, but they also emerged at other times. They addressed attitudes, assumptions, and priorities.

Mission-Centered Focus

The beginning point for any discussion about ministry philosophies focuses on the fundamental purpose of churches, which is to build disciples. Though only one pastor commented that a mission-centered focus contributes directly to church growth, there were several comments about its importance for organizations as a whole. P9 stated his church's growth happened as the body focused on the church's mission. Early in the planting of his church, P9 had to resist the pressure of some people to shift focus away from bringing people

¹¹⁵ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P8 on November 4, 2013. P8 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor's name for privacy purposes.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P2 on October 17, 2013. P2 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor's name for privacy purposes.

with no church experience to Christ. Overcoming that pressure proved very fruitful as the congregation grew to G5 status in about ten years.

Another comment that emphasized the importance of mission-centered focus included P6's statement, "We are constantly reminding ourselves that we are, our mission, our purpose, is to lead people into a growing relationship with Christ. So that's what drives us and motivates us." P10 added that mission-focused activity provides a unifying aspect to bodies of believers. He stated, "And so I found myself trying to hold it together with having three or four major factions in the church, and no common mission, which is what holds a church together; that common mission." Adding to the idea of cohesion, P5 commented on the importance of a mission-centered focus on church health when he said, "We've gotta go outside thinking, because if we don't we'll just become a bunch of consumers." Mission-centered focus is the glue and motivation essential to accomplishing God's will for each church. Any other purpose steps outside of its original intent.

Don't Count

Another philosophy highlighted by three different participants centered on the need to avoid counting heads. P10 addressed the most dramatic effect of a wrong attitude about church numbers. He attributed a "very, very, painful, very painful" experience of riding an organization down and bottoming out to "church success as my idol."¹¹⁷ He compared this attitude to a dysfunctional heart condition.

A close parallel to this idea is the need for pastors to relax and not get caught up in whether or not their churches are growing. P8 observed a shift on the part of Assemblies of God leadership away from church health to church numbers (how many people are attending). He

¹¹⁷ P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

said it is causing significant frustration in pastors. He suggested a more pressing priority—“You just take those people that come to your church and love on them.”¹¹⁸ P4 also commented on the harm the numbers game can cause. He stated, “You can get bogged down because you’re not growing, and you wonder what in the world is going on.”¹¹⁹ Both seasoned pastors have seen the injury that counting heads can cause and cautioned other pastors to steer clear of this practice.

Relationships

Another philosophy that one pastor felt was lacking yet essential to church growth was the development of relationships with the people that attend church. P8 commented that too often pastors do not connect in meaningful ways with these folks. The intensity of his comments and the reality of ministry without relationship was the driving force behind this viewpoint, which exclusively came from his observations.

P8 saw church growth as “developing relationships and investing in people.” This priority of relationships surfaces on several different levels: members to pastors, members to members, and pastors to families. He noted that foremost, members connect with their pastors above and beyond any other relationship in churches. With that understanding, he said he makes a point of connecting with each person from hand shakes, to coffee, to pastoring them. His relational style of pastoring causes him to see his congregation as his family, and he follows through with that philosophy in meaningful ways. He also leverages his role as pastor by connecting potential members to existing members. The last, yet most important, relationship to P8 is the one with his family. He strongly emphasized to other pastors to not “sacrifice your

¹¹⁸ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹¹⁹ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P4 on October 21, 2013. P4 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

children on the altar of ministry, because God knows I have done it.”¹²⁰ This passion for relationships permeated his interview.

Freedom to Risk

Another philosophy two participants emphasized overflows into leadership development. They prioritized developing environments in which they acknowledge risk and understand falling short is not fatal. P5 pointed out the importance of creating a “safe place to fail” and the tension it brings.¹²¹ P6’s church recognized the same tension as they put their “young leaders ... in places where they can grow, mature, learn ministry; while at the same time ... not limiting it.” Their “we expect progress-not-perfection” philosophy established the freedom to fail.¹²² This safe place to risk created an environment in which leaders are willing to stretch and grow.

Practice: Raising up Other Leaders

An expression of ministry philosophies that participants specifically contributed to their growth moved the project’s focus away from attitudes governing ministry to the priority of rising up other leaders through mentoring, both intentional and relational, and coaching. Three participants commented on the relevance of this key ability to create a continuous “pipeline”¹²³ of other leaders to benefit their growth. While participants expressed some level of leadership development, there were several noteworthy comments regarding this critical aspect of church growth.

¹²⁰ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹²¹ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹²² P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹²³ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Mentoring

Participant P9 planted his church over a decade ago and included empowerment of other leaders as a key element to their growth. He observed, “The more I let go of leadership, just the more people that just brought around.” P9 described his intentional efforts at developing leaders through personally mentoring ten men. He also extended this expectation to his staff. He stated, “I hire them to raise-up people to do the ministry with them.” He illuminated his organization’s effectiveness at this essential process when he commented, “People in my church and on my staff are constantly getting hired other places. Our job is to equip people to do ministry; we are not just the ones that do it.”¹²⁴ P2 commented about a similar practice in his leadership development process. He reflected on the expectation he has for his leaders when he stated, “I strongly encourage apprenticeship in the church.” His ministry leaders should have “at least three apprentices in ... every area of ministry.”¹²⁵ Mentoring serves churches as a vital tool for leadership development.

Relationships and Teaching

Another ministry philosophy that has significance in the leadership equation is participant P5’s approach to filling the leadership vacuum he stepped into after the tension-filled exit of a previous pastor. Through relationships, P5 established an environment of trust. This was essential for moving the organization towards health. Over a three-year period, he meticulously crafted a leadership infrastructure that contributed to the church’s growth. This infrastructure included a leadership development component and empowerment supported by establishing a delicate balance of formal and informal elements. Unique about P5’s situation as a G2 pastor of a

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

congregation of nearly 250 people is that he was the only paid pastor on staff for his church. His leadership infrastructure enabled this organization to rely on lay volunteers to carry out ministry tasks. This speaks volumes of P5's ability to use his leadership gift to train and empower others. His emphasis on relationships and informal teaching was the catalyst for restoring organizational health, which P5 anticipates will help the congregation become a "regional church." His vision rests on an intentional leadership development process that is well within reach as he strategically plods forward.¹²⁶

Coaching

For some, coaching is an important component in leadership development. Participant P5 describes his practice of equipping his worship leader. For over twenty years, P5 filled the role of worship leader in larger churches, so he could have easily given this budding leader clear concise direction, telling her specifically what to do. Instead, he described his practice of leadership development by "not telling her what to do or how to do it, but literally coaching; pulling out of her, asking questions, being a sounding board, listening." At times, he threw out multiple ideas, asking which she might use, thus allowing the leader to have ownership over her ministry. His practice of putting it back on the leader was an essential building block in moving his leadership team forward.¹²⁷ Participant P6 commented on how his church's lead pastor is "always coaching young leaders, challenging their paradigms, helping them with their practices."¹²⁸ For these organizations, coaching is an essential tool for leadership development.

¹²⁶ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹²⁷ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹²⁸ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Large Gathering

The second primary category participants identified as contributing to their growth was the large gathering. This also is the theme that received the second most comments with seven of the ten pastors offering growth-centered recommendations to other pastors. For all of these pastors, the weekly large gathering service is their primary means to fulfilling their purpose. I break this category into two distinct sections: the underlying philosophy and the elements of the gathering (i.e., preaching, worship,¹²⁹ and environment).

Philosophy

The philosophy undergirding the organizations' approaches to their large gathering events had two prominent components: priority of emphasis and balance. The priority of emphasis is a value held by more than one participant, and balance emerged out of their context and the demographic they ministered to.

Priority of Emphasis

There was an underlying attitude clearly stated by both G5 churches—"Sunday is first." Participant P6 explained, "We realize that Sunday is the optimal time for [the] optimal amount of people to come and be here." In his suggestions to other pastors, he recommended, "Simply a focus on your weekend services, rather than a focus of energy on everything else." He admonished pastors to put all their energy towards the main service by improving the preaching and the environment for adults and kids. He stated with confidence the outcome of these efforts, "When you do that, then your church is gonna grow."¹³⁰ Along this line of thinking, participant

¹²⁹ In the interview question that related to this, I used worship instead of large gathering to identify the main service. In the question, both preaching and music were combined. But for this section, I separated worship from preaching. Worship includes a variety of activities that give praise and adoration to God.

¹³⁰ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

P9 declared, “Every Sunday is the Super Bowl. So we wanna do it with excellence.” His church puts a heavy emphasis on connecting with its audience in meaningful ways. The congregation also encompasses these practices with prayer so that the services are “very Spirit-filled.” Both of these participants’ organizations prioritize the importance of the large gathering in both philosophy and practice. For both churches, reaching the lost is very important. The philosophy undergirding the priority of investing maximum effort into the large gathering is to have the largest impact possible. The reason they work toward this goal is because “sometimes you only get one opportunity with people.”¹³¹

Balance

Participant P7 has a contrasting perspective to the focus of P6 and P9. Whereas they are very niche driven, he sees the downside of that ministry philosophy. In his closing comment, he lamented this contemporary practice. In his congregation dominated by retirees, he hears of wounds senior believers experienced as churches marginalized their interests and concerns for the sake of reaching the younger demographic. He stated, “Don’t get out of balance to where you’re heavy into the youth, or heavy into children, and you forget the older folk.”¹³² This issue can easily envelop an organizational approach to ministry in general, but it is most commonly evident in churches’ style of music. For P7, this balance means looking after the interests of everyone involved. For P6 and P9, the priority is who they are trying to reach.

¹³¹ See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P9 on November 6, 2013. P9 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

¹³² See Appendix D for the transcript of the telephone interview with participant P7 on October 31, 2013. P7 is a pseudonym to conceal the pastor’s name for privacy purposes.

Preaching

One traditional element of the large gathering is preaching, which received the strongest comments about its influence on church growth. Most of the participants highlighted the elements within preaching that were important to them. Some of these priorities included valuing biblical accuracy, being relevant, being clear, being practical, and displaying quality.

The participants who commented on the first element or theme emphasized a main concern to maintain a biblical orientation in their preaching. Participant P6 viewed his straightforward biblical preaching method as an essential contributor to his church's growth. He maintained this emphasis in his closing suggestions to pastors. He challenged leaders to reengage with the priority of preaching by constantly seeking to improve this element and making it the best they can.¹³³ Participant P7's comments mirrored P6's. He stated, "I would say one of the reasons a number of people came is they wanted to hear the word preached, not someone preaching from a text book, like Rick Warren or something like that." Like P6, his suggestion to other pastors focused on the priority of preaching. He cautioned, "Don't be afraid to let your preaching be anointed."¹³⁴ Finally, participant P3 attributed his congregation's growth to preaching. He commented that growth comes as he put forth careful attention in developing a communication style that was genuine. He worked to be enthusiastic and well-informed to connect his message with his audience so its content would help and encourage.¹³⁵ All of these pastors recognized the priority of preaching in way that maintained biblical emphasis and yet connected with their audiences.

¹³³ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹³⁴ P7, October 31, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹³⁵ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

In addition to biblical accuracy, participant P9 placed a heavy emphasis on preaching that is “relevant.” While he did not see this practice as a contributor to growth, it was a vital expression of one of his core values. He commented, “The greatest sin that we can commit on Sundays is the sin of irrelevancy.” He wants every attendee to take away practical next steps that can “help them on Monday.” Accompanying these philosophies are the participants’ deliberate efforts at communicating in ways that connect with non-believers in their audiences by using pop-culture references, terms listeners understand, and plenty of media elements while avoiding language geared for insiders.¹³⁶ This value of relevancy also correlates with the idea of clarity.

Participants also pointed to clarity as beneficial, especially for people new to Christianity. Participant P1 was a children’s pastor, and he still continues to make his messages clear for his audience. He stated, “We break it down so that everyone can understand.” For P1, an aspect of clarity is to not assume that the audience automatically understands his content. As a result of this effort, he said he regularly hears comments like, “Wow, I actually understood what you said.”¹³⁷ Participant P6 echoed this practice when he said, “We try and explain things for people, not assuming that everyone has a knowledge of the Bible.”¹³⁸ P9 added, “[We] do a lot of the back story ... with the belief that we’re starting at ground zero with everyone.”¹³⁹ This practice of making the message clear while not assuming audience understanding assists these organizations in making their biblical content connect with their audiences.

¹³⁶ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹³⁷ P1, October 9, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹³⁸ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹³⁹ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Worship (Connecting People to God)

The next aspect of the large gathering that participants mentioned as important was the worship element of their services. Three pastors indicated the worship element of the large gathering influenced their growth. Participant P1 described his church's worship experience as very powerful and significant.¹⁴⁰ P2 placed the element of worship second on a list of three contributors to growth. He pointed to a pervasive "excitement ... to engage in worship."¹⁴¹ For both of these pastors, their churches' worship experiences are so engaging that people come back.

Even though other participants did not point to their worship time as a direct influence on growth, there was a comparable emphasis on its importance. At the root of orchestrating a meaningful¹⁴² worship experience is the idea of congregants connecting with God.¹⁴³ Participant P9 described his people as very passionate in worship as they clap, raise hands, and move around the sanctuary. He said their experience vacillates from celebration that is unapologetically loud to complete silence in reflection.¹⁴⁴ In facilitating this type of environment that encourages the movement of the Holy Spirit, some participants described the priority of making room or having "some white space."¹⁴⁵ For participant P2, making room included giving his worship team the freedom to keep playing and allowing time in services for the altar response.¹⁴⁶ P9 also mentioned a similar practice and added the component of prayer. His congregation's multiple

¹⁴⁰ P1, October 9, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴¹ P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴² P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴³ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴⁴ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴⁵ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴⁶ P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

layer approach includes stationing people up front for personal prayer support during the music time and intercessory prayer throughout the service to make it as Spirit-filled as possible.¹⁴⁷ All of these efforts connect people to God.

Participants identified explanation and instruction as another facilitator for meaningful worship experiences. Explanation was important to several participants, especially for leaders of churches that focused heavily on unbelievers.¹⁴⁸ They viewed this practice of explanation as a vital element of instruction, which several participants highlighted as being an integral aspect of getting people to connect in worship. Participant P1's comments described the clearest reason for instruction when he said, "We have a lot of new ones, and so they're watching." This instruction includes training and teaching¹⁴⁹ the various aspects of worship. Participant P9 mentioned how his church "encourage[s] people to be expressive during worship."¹⁵⁰ P3 highlighted his congregation's efforts to "encourage, gently."¹⁵¹ P7's comment about the "long road to teach this congregation to participate"¹⁵² emphasized the patience and determination pastors need to develop their congregations' ability to connect with God. All of these pastors recognized that people do not naturally worship. They need help.

¹⁴⁷ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁴⁸ P1, P6, and P9.

¹⁴⁹ P1, October 9, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵⁰ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵¹ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵² P7, October 31, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Environment

Extending beyond the functional elements of music and preaching are the efforts leaders put forth to shape the environments of their large gatherings to align with their core values and strategies. Several participants recognized that the environment is an essential contributor to an effective large gathering. Participant P3 attributed people getting connected with his church because of its value as an “experience and experiential culture.” He stated, “They want Him. He’s the only one who can really affect their lives, and so we allow for that.” Through this environment of God’s tangible presence, P3 said he sees lives changed and transformed. He highlighted this experience with a story of a “quasi-believer” receiving prayer and declaring afterward, “God really touched me here today!” Their value¹⁵³ for the presence of God creates a place where people make that vital life-transforming connection.

Another part of participant P3’s environment was the establishment of the priority of mutual ministry. He reported that he consistently admonishes the congregation to find three people and “say the kindest thing you can to them.” He sees this as “really important body ministry” that is an expression of a culture that places a priority on giving and receiving ministry. P3 claimed a vital element of creating this healthy environment is a joyful tone. He stated, “When there’s laughter in the room, people’s hearts and minds are going to be open and ready to receive; even to receive in prayer.”¹⁵⁴ Developing such an environment assists in facilitating the churches’ purposes they cannot obtain merely through the music and preaching elements of their large gatherings.

¹⁵³ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵⁴ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Another important element participants addressed as a contributor to growth is a healthy environment. This idea of healthy churches grows foremost from healthy leadership, but it is equally important for the organizations as a whole. A vital characteristic of a healthy church is that community life is a safe-place. Participant P7 attributed people's attraction to his church because it is a "loving church, a[n] accepting church, and a comfortable church, and a safe church to be in."¹⁵⁵ P3's church has a similar reputation. He commented, "People that maybe have had negative experiences or fearful experiences find that this is a safe-place that they can receive and give ministry." These pastors make it a priority to create a culture "that really emphasizes love and honor."¹⁵⁶ For the hurting hearts, healthy environments open the door to healing.

In addition to providing healthy environments, some of these pastors make other nuanced efforts to shape their large gathering environments for an outward focus rather than the concerns and comfort of insiders. This sculpting process is part of a larger, organization-wide value to develop cultures attractive to those presently outside the fold. For participant P6, he perceived that a primary influence towards growth was his church's emphasis on developing a comfortable, inviting atmosphere. He stated, "We work hard at creating an environment of warmth and comfort-ability." This approach is part of their efforts to shape their culture with a singular focus on their guests. He explained, "I would describe our culture as ... very missional ... we are about the guest." Because of this guest-centered approach, leaders constantly grapple with making sure they "are comfortable from the street to the seat." They also look at every aspect of their organizations to maximize their guest appeal. One aspect of this appeal included organizing for

¹⁵⁵ P7, October 31, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵⁶ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

the most effective children's ministry possible.¹⁵⁷ The congregation's approach to shape its culture is strategic and purposeful. These leaders leave nothing to chance.

Another outgrowth of this idea of being attractational is what some pastors called "big days,"¹⁵⁸ or "super Sundays." Though not based in crafting a culture, these special days attach an attractational aspect to their weekly large gatherings by adding "just a few extra nuances" for inviting friends or neighbors.¹⁵⁹ The participants said these "Everyone Bring One" days serve as an effective tool for people to leverage their relationships¹⁶⁰ to expose more people to their churches. This strategy of developing attractational aspects to the organizations leads the discussion of organizational leadership, another area participants agreed contributes to church growth.

Organization

This section focuses on leadership's ability to develop churches with supportive cultures that facilitate implementation of their vision, values, and strategy. Traditionally, organizational leadership incorporates every aspect of the vision process, from the development of a vision to its implementation to the evaluation of its effectiveness. For the purposes of this study, any effort church leadership extends to influence their organizations falls under this category. Therefore, the specific aspects of this idea may overlap with other priorities the participants identified. For this research project, I explore only the elements of organizational leadership practices

¹⁵⁷ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵⁸ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁵⁹ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁶⁰ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

specifically addressed by participants. The first considerations are the contributors to their growth and the suggestions for pastors seeking to grow their churches. Participating pastors identified three themes as contributing to their churches' growth: culture, structure, and systems.

Culture

The first theme, culture, incorporates the environment from which an organization accomplishes its activities. It is the relational environment, whether toxic or inspiring,¹⁶¹ from which churches facilitate or thwart their leadership's efforts. From this perspective, leadership is the linchpin of culture.

Significant to this analysis of an organization's culture on church growth is its negative side. Participant P10's testimony of being "captain of a leper colony" describes the toxic culture he developed. His observation that "leaders reproduce after their own kind" indicates the snowball effect leaders have on their churches. He acknowledged his "heart issue" contributed to the mass exodus of people from his church. His desire for church growth—an idol he bowed to—was not wrong, but it emerged from a wrong heart. He was a very gifted leader. His previous churches experienced growth, but the congregation's dysfunctional culture stymied growth. That is what happens when organizational culture is at odds with the church's vision and strategy. When P10's heart changed and became obedient, it influenced everything within the church to the point that "people who'd never brought friends to church, started bringing their friends."¹⁶² His comments highlight the importance of a healthy church culture.

Participant P5 also prioritized organizational health (he used some form of the word "health" thirty-three times in his interview). He emphasized that size does not indicate health. To

¹⁶¹ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), location 204, Kindle.

¹⁶² P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

illustrate this, he used the metaphor of the human body. He stated, “A person can be big and can be unhealthy.” Pointing to the importance of health over growth, P5 described his church’s three-year process through which “helping the organization and individuals get healthy” meant setting aside the higher goal of an external or community-oriented focus for a season of time. When he arrived, the dysfunctional environment mandated he adjust his approach based on observations of the congregation’s emotional, spiritual, and relational condition. As he did, the church started “turning-the-corner” and happened to generate “critical mass ... [and] able to have impact.”¹⁶³ This temporary inward focus nurtured the restoration of a healthy environment in which the people shifted their concerns to God-centered priorities.

Strategy

When a healthy church culture exists, other aspects of organizational leadership become effective. Strategy is an element that facilitated participants’ growth. Participant P9 related the importance of establishing a strategy and ensuring all practices align with it. As the originating pastor, he planted his church with a focus to reach people who “had never gone to church before.” With this target in mind, his congregation mapped a strategy that outlined the “DNA of the church.” Part of this strategy included putting tools in the hands of the church members to help them invite their neighbors and their friends.¹⁶⁴ P9 pointed to strategy as a vital element for the church’s growth.

Participant P3 offered a slightly different perspective on strategy. Many of the pastors in this study pointed out a laser focus for their organizations. They knew exactly where they were going and how to get there. P3 did not share this sentiment. Instead, the most important for him

¹⁶³ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁶⁴ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

was maintaining organizational values and culture. He also said he does not go after niches. His focus is theocentric. He said he encourages his congregation to “just honor Heaven and we go after the Kingdom.” With their experiential focus, the church constantly explores ways to discover who God is and what He wants. Participant P3 suggested that he has a loose strategy, but he is very purposeful about his priorities.¹⁶⁵ In contrast to this loose approach, participant P6 observed a predominate gifting of his lead pastor as a visionary. He commented, “He rarely lives in the now.” As such, P3 said his lead pastor is constantly thinking and praying about the church’s next steps to “reach our communities for Christ.” The pastor gives those next steps, focused “six-months to two years out,” to his staff with the responsibility of bringing them into reality. P3 stated, “Implementation of vision ... [is a] very detailed process of assigning responsibilities and following through.”¹⁶⁶ As a G5 church, this organization lives by strategic plans and the resulting processes for success.

Participant P4 expressed a contrary perspective that takes a passive approach when he stated, “All the pastors are telling us relax, God is going to add to the church.” He also said, “We’ll never know the impact ... [we] are having in this community.”¹⁶⁷ For P4 and the pastors he related, ministry impact seems more ethereal than something they can strategize and measure.

Structure and Systems

Vital to the process of organization is the development of effective structures and systems that put feet to vision and strategies. These leaders considered this category a foremost expression of church organizations. The participants made several clear statements indicating its

¹⁶⁵ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁶⁶ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁶⁷ P4, October 21, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

contribution to their growth. These elements include philosophies, strategies, and practices that advance organizational health and effectiveness.

Participant P8 added a cautionary note to organization-centered practices. He reported that he sees the loss of “the personal touch” as church leaders focus on systems and streamlining, falling to the pressure of “doing everything right.” He did not reject these organizational practices, because he uses them himself. His concern was for pastors who get so caught up in the method that it consumes them instead of fulfills God’s best way.¹⁶⁸ For him, systems are a means to an end, not the end itself. P8 admonishes leaders to keep their goals in sight.

Guest Retention

Part of the organizational structure that a couple of pastors pointed to as essential for their growth was the system of retaining guests. Participant P3 emphasized that he would waste his efforts at getting people to visit his church if the congregation did not give a comparable effort in retaining those guests. His guest retention system seeks to “connect with them in a loving and meaningful way,” as personally and consistently as possible.¹⁶⁹ He reported greater fruit through this system than any outreach event. Along this line of thought, participant P8 felt a personal responsibility to follow-up on guests. He said that if God sends them, then personal follow-up is obligatory. For him, this process has two aspects: connecting guests to himself and to other attenders. He said, “I am the best one, because I am the one they identify with.” P8 said that as he ensures those connections, he finds “people tend to stay.”¹⁷⁰ P9 reported that he extends the period the church follows-up on visitors. He said, “Our assimilation process starts from the

¹⁶⁸ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁶⁹ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷⁰ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

moment somebody drives into the parking lot, and we do not stop following up on people until they become members of the church.”¹⁷¹ His process blends follow-up and assimilation.

Assimilation

Assimilation is another system participants referred to as important yet not directly attributed to growth. This assimilation process connects people into the life of the churches. Several participants made references to the importance of connecting people through serving. Participant P2 described how his church’s development of a “Starting Point” tent was the beginning point of this process. They then created a new-comer orientation class that, among other things, outlines their service opportunities. They do this “so right away they can serve in the church.”¹⁷² For participant P8, he said he integrates his assimilation process into his interaction with newcomers through personal invitations to “areas of ministry to get them involved.”¹⁷³ In P6’s final comments, he explained how he incorporates serving through his church’s small-group ministry as a vital ingredient in his basic church ministry model. He stated, “Follow that through with a great groups program and a great opportunity for people to serve their community, you’re really fulfilling the mission of Christ.”¹⁷⁴ All of these participants, including P9, considered their assimilation system essential for getting people integrated into the life of their churches.

¹⁷¹ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷² P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷³ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷⁴ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Outreach

Another aspect of organization that several participants commented as influencing their growth was outreach.¹⁷⁵ While all participants emphasized some expression of outreach, only a couple saw it as a contributor to their growth. As I analyzed participant comments, I identified two distinct philosophical approaches to outreach. One centered on attracting people to the congregations, and the other focused on meeting needs outside the churches. Within the attractional philosophy, the primary motive is to draw people to the churches by providing some type of activity or relationship that appeals to outsiders. One aspect of this approach is the effort to make services attractive to outsiders.

On the attractional side, participant P9 attributed effective outreach as a direct contributor to his congregation's growth. His philosophy was, "We try to provide as many opportunities as we can for our people to be able to invite people, make it easy." These guest-friendly activities create opportunities for people to leverage their relationships, giving his church "a lot of momentum and traction" in the early stages. Within this attractional category, he gave examples of interest or entertainment based activities, such as UFC fight nights and Texas Hold 'Em poker tournaments.¹⁷⁶

Participant P2 shared a different attractional approach he roots in personal relationships. His church rarely did large outreach events; his emphasis to his congregation was to develop relationships with people. These "friend evangelism" relationships incorporated the priority for members to share information about their church. Along this more personal approach, P2

¹⁷⁵ Originally, I narrowly identified outreach as acts of compassion and evangelism. During the analysis phase, I broadened this perspective to include any efforts to connect with people outside the church. This revised definition includes efforts to attract people to the large gathering but are addressed in the Large Gathering section analysis.

¹⁷⁶ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

reported that “word of mouth” encounters have been effective¹⁷⁷ in getting people to come to his church. Another endeavor viewed as contributing to church growth was P4’s the transformation of his church facility through painting and grounds keeping to such a degree that the efforts “really caught the attention of our community.”¹⁷⁸

In addition to these, participant P6 offered another attractional approach as a suggestion to other pastors. Contrary to P4’s avoidance of niches, P6’s church targets the demographic they identify as “thirty-two-year-old Nick.” To reach Nick, P6 pointed to his church’s conviction to reach young adults’ kids. He said, “We have a really strong children’s ministry ... [and] believe that children’s ministry is absolutely essential to the growth of the church.” The congregation adds this effort to their priority of maximizing their weekend service opportunities. He contended, “If you get Sundays right and kids right, there’s few limitations to that growth opportunity.”¹⁷⁹ For P6, church growth takes on a narrow and simple approach.

The second approach to outreach has little or nothing to do with attracting people to churches. Its primary purpose is outward in focus—to bless and serve. Participant P3’s catchphrase crystallized this concept as a “no-strings-attached event.” He said his congregation views it as “an act of love, period!” Their philosophy is to “leave our city better than when we found it.”¹⁸⁰ P8 restated this perspective: “You just love those that are outside your church enough to do something to bless them; and to let em know that God loves them.”¹⁸¹ They have

¹⁷⁷ P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷⁸ P4, October 21, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁷⁹ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁰ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸¹ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

no ulterior motives as they extend their efforts to represent God in meaningful ways. Participant P10 adopted this attitude as well. He described his church's practice of building houses and giving them away, because "Jesus gave us a new house." This form of outreach, though not directly connected to church growth, is important so that people "see the Gospel"¹⁸² in action.

Even though such outreach efforts have no expectation of return, at least one pastor acknowledged significant fruit from these endeavors. Participant P1 indirectly addressed this subject as he pointed to his congregation's outreach efforts in the drug and alcohol recovery community as the "main feedstock into our churches." Through one staff member's passionate efforts, his church made connections at a local treatment facility and in the area's drug court system. She was instrumental in coordinating support groups and guiding interested individuals to the church. Of significance to P1 was the meshing of this member's ministry with his style of pastoring. He related, "She's the point person, [but] it wasn't until she met up with my style of ministry, which is relaxed, relational, and clarity in the message that connected with people."¹⁸³ Efforts like this that come from a needs-based philosophy and those rooted in being attractional have the real potential of tangible and intangible benefits.

Discipleship

Another aspect some participants emphasized was their organization's efforts at discipleship. In exploring participant comments about discipleship, the pastors identified two general areas: formal and informal discipleship. Even though the project categorizes this analysis of discipleship under organization structure, it also includes the informal aspects that contributed to individual Christian maturity, and thus organizational maturity.

¹⁸² P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸³ P1, October 9, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

There were few participant comments attributing discipleship's influence to church growth. The foremost comment came from participant P5. The environment he stepped into at his church required a loving, patient hand to restore trust and health to an organization wounded by the previous pastor's "dictatorial style of leadership." For P5's first three years with the congregation, his internal focus for the church required his leadership and teaching gifts to help it get healthy and learn to trust a leader again. Through formal and informal teaching times, P5 used the art of questions and listening "to help strengthen, to encourage, [and] to educate." Through his purposeful "plodding," he was able to restore the church's health and help the people gain an outward focus as they implement a "strategy of community engagement."¹⁸⁴ For participant P5, moving his organization to health, which includes "reproduction," had its roots in the discipleship process.

The other comment regarding discipleship came from participant P2's observation that giving contributed to his church's growth. He talked of his people's ability "to respond wherever there's a need."¹⁸⁵ On the surface, this characteristic may not seem relevant to discipleship, but it is an important aspect of being a follower of Christ.

In addition to these direct contributions to growth, two pastors used their final comments to suggest the importance of discipleship as vital in the process of growth. Participant P6 combined "a great groups program and a great opportunity for people to serve" with his emphasis on kids' ministry and the weekend service as a recipe for growth.¹⁸⁶ Adding his voice to P6's emphasis on serving, participant P8 said he views "serving of the Lord, [and] serving the

¹⁸⁴ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁵ P2, October 17, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁶ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

body” as “very, very, very important.”¹⁸⁷ Again, this characteristic may not seem relevant to discipleship, but as P6 emphasized, “If there’s a [discipleship] model, it would be the model of Jesus being a servant.”¹⁸⁸ These recommendations highlight the importance these two pastors placed on small-groups and the act of serving as instrumental to discipleship.

Noteworthy for this study are the practices these organizations provide for the spiritual maturity of their congregations. As mentioned previously, the two general areas of discipleship are formal and informal means. The formal systems and structures put in place for corporate-wide participation included classes, preaching,¹⁸⁹ small-groups, and serving.

Out of these four organizational efforts, preaching was the one constant that all participants included. While few of the participants pointed to preaching as a discipleship tool, participant P9’s belief that each message has a life application caused his church to incorporate a “Next Steps” phase at the end of each message. In this step, leaders challenge listeners to fill out the “Next Step” section of the church’s connection card, furthering application emphasis.¹⁹⁰ P9 clearly views preaching as a tool for discipleship.

The second piece in the discipleship picture includes the informal efforts these pastors used to influence individuals’ spiritual maturity. Though normally personal spiritual growth is not dependent on organizational structure, they are nonetheless effective on a personal level. Informal discipleship expressions include mentoring efforts, teaching moments, Bible-reading plans, deliberate use of meeting and personal time, and prayer time at the altar.

¹⁸⁷ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁸ P6, October 30, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁸⁹ Prior to the analysis stage of this project, I placed minimal emphasis on the value of preaching as a tool for discipleship. I corrected this error.

¹⁹⁰ P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Of these, participants observed mentoring as having a noticeable effect on peoples' lives. Participant P1's "loosey-goosey" approach (though not his preference) has worked well for the church as the leaders "hand-disciple people." He highlighted the challenge "of working through different kinds of systems"¹⁹¹ to increase their organization-wide impact. For P1 and other participants, mentoring is an effective tool for impacting lives.

Another practice that impacts discipleship occurs when individuals receive personal prayer. Many times, leaders incorporate this Pentecostal distinctive into their large gatherings. Traditionally, discipleship has been the assimilation of information, but this practice brings healing and renewal that overcome hindrances to maturity. From my perspective, any process or event that helps people conform to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) is discipleship. With consideration of this type of ministry, participant P3 pointed to an encounter with a woman in one of his church's services. While receiving prayer from two ladies in their large gathering, he said this woman encountered God in a spiritually-formative way that "really helped her grow."¹⁹² Her experience emphasizes the importance of connecting people to the life-changing presence of God. Several of these pastors mentioned that the practice of personal prayer ministry and altar time is a priority.

Pentecostal Distinctives

The final subject to analyze is the influence of Pentecostal distinctives on the growth of participant churches. As spirit-filled ministers and leaders of organizations falling under the Assemblies of God fellowship, these participants have a rich ecclesiastical tradition. Those

¹⁹¹ P1, October 9, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁹² P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

distinctives—both within individuals’ lives and in large gatherings—begins with belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Keys points out, “The one great truth of the Pentecostal Movement which distinguishes it from other denominations is the belief that a Christian may today receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit as did the disciples on the day of Pentecost.”¹⁹³ This baptism influences individuals, and thus their churches, in unique ways.

To determine whether these unique ways contributed to any of the participants’ church growth, I asked the preliminary question, “How have Pentecostal distinctives contributed to your growth?” Of the ten participants, only one considered Pentecostal or Holy Spirit focused practices as adding to his congregation’s size. Participant P4 pointed to his church’s “experiential culture in terms of the person and work of the Holy Spirit” as enhancing its “word-of-mouth” promotion. He described an incident in which an older man experienced a powerful healing from cancer, a spine problem, and other issues. As a result, the man testified to people he knew, causing an influx of older people into the congregation. For P4’s church, the members’ fruitful prayer for the sick proved very attractive. P4 found this interesting considering, “our sound system is tremendously too loud.” He said the older people still keep coming.¹⁹⁴ This manifestation of God’s power in healing contributed to P4’s church growth and is a core Pentecostal distinctive.

In addition, participant P4 made an indirect comment that he felt his people’s hunger for the presence of God contributed to his church’s growth. This idea overlapped into P4’s recommendation to pastors, “People are real hungry for something real. Even if it’s not polished,

¹⁹³ T. F. Zimmerman, G. Raymond Carlson, and Zenas J. Bicket, eds., *And He Gave Pastors: Pastoral Theology in Action* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1979), 593.

¹⁹⁴ P4, October 21, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

they want it real. They want to experience God's presence."¹⁹⁵ This pastor admonished other pastors to pursue God's presence as a vital contributor to church growth.

Participant P7 used his final comments to challenge pastors who claim to be Pentecostal to actually embrace the denomination's practices. He encouraged, "Let the Holy Spirit be your helper." He added, "Don't be afraid to let the altars do the altar work."¹⁹⁶ As a seasoned minister, P7's comments offered his perception of what a Spirit-filled minister should prioritize.

Conclusion

This analysis has examined the comments of pastors with relationship to the research question, "What has caused your church growth?" Its intent was to discover the steps sample churches within the Northwest Ministry Network are taking to grow. The primary source for answering this question came from two preliminary questions. The first question sought to discover the participants' perspectives about their growth. Subordinate to specific growth contributors, I sought out participant recommendations for other pastors seeking to grow their churches. Most of the responses to this question related to ministry philosophies, as well as a few with practical applications.

I clustered the resulting comments into themes. From the first question, I identified these seven themes: leadership, large gathering, organization, outreach, relationships, discipleship, and Pentecostal distinctive. Most of these themes carried over to the participant responses to the last question. It asked for suggestions for other pastors looking to grow their churches. Falling off the list were organization and discipleship. The analysis considered the frequency of theme comments and the intensity of any one participant's perspective on a particular subject. These

¹⁹⁵ P4, October 21, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

¹⁹⁶ P7, October 31, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

themes constituted what the participants considered important with regard to their organizational growth. The next section addressed the findings I considered relevant to the overall purpose of this project.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This project outlines a disturbing trend in America—the decline of the Church. A significant cultural shift is causing the marginalization of Christianity, and its emerging post-modern culture does not respond to the same practices once fruitful in a church culture. This requires church leaders to adopt new approaches to fulfill their mission. Two sources of information offer pastors viable options towards developing new approaches. The first is a literature review of contemporary authors, and the second is a qualitative research element.

The literature review highlights contemporary authors' thoughts about stemming the downward slide of the American Church. The main thrust of these thoughts looked at two contributing factors to this decline: dysfunctional disciples and lack of leadership. Addressing these issues, there are nine areas these authors address. They encourage leaders to commit to leadership development, cultivate a culture of change and adaptation, engage in a strategic process, design a discipleship process, pursue spiritual vitality, organize for relational vitality, make outreach a preeminent focus, change from a growth mindset to a mission mindset, and multiply through church planting.

The research element of the project examines ten interviews with pastors of growing churches within the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. These pastors had the opportunity to identify contributing elements to their churches' growth, to give recommendations to pastors who desire to grow their churches, and to comment on how predetermined subjects affected their church growth. The areas these pastors identified as either contributing to growth or suggestions for growth included leadership, the large gathering, organizational practices, relationships, outreach, discipleship, and Pentecostal distinctives.

Pursue Principles over Practices

The first finding from the research encourages ministers to adopt a principle mindset in contrast to a practices emphasis. Participant P10 commented about how Jesus gives leaders the principles; they just take them and develop them into practices. P6 talked about studying other ministries and applying them to his church's context. There are benefits to this practice. The caution is to not lose the uniqueness of context in the process. Stetzer advocates adopting others' principles, but he cautions that practices many times are expressions of the context. Participant P10's organization elements emerged from God's working in his life. P3's loose vision came out of his own identity as he recognized what got him excited. Leaders must exercise care as they consider other organization's practices for adoption.

Deciding which practices to adopt should fall within general parameters. The first delimiter should be Scripture. Its pages contain little information about the actual construct of organized church life, but helpful principles abound.¹⁹⁷ Another delimiter is the Holy Spirit. As a Pentecostal organization, the Holy Spirit's guidance should accompany Scripture's wisdom. P10 talked about capitalizing on the Spirit's input from a heart that yields and is willing to obey. The final delimiter is the church context. Leaders have put forth much effort outlining the importance of considering the unique circumstances and environment in which churches minister. Within these considerations, pastors must always weave sensitivity for the history and the people who currently attend their churches. Efforts at fulfilling the vision and mission cannot ignore God's previous interactions with and through a specific church. Participant P3 melded two churches by being sensitive to the concerns of the people and having a willingness to establish a pace and the communication practices that exemplified honor for people.

¹⁹⁷ P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Develop Relevant Ministry Philosophies

One method leaders can use to let principles guide their practices is developing ministry philosophies. All of the pastors participating in the study stated an adherence to guiding thoughts of one degree or another. Pastors must determine which ministry philosophies should take precedence. The study's interviews identified several ministry philosophies that guided these pastors. Of these, the following are the most beneficial: keeping a mission-centered focus, maintaining an emphasis on relationships, developing a culture of honor, remembering the priority of developing healthy leaders and congregations. Finally, as a Pentecostal organization, the Holy Spirit's role in connecting people to God should take overt expressions. Too often, leaders strategize about connecting people to each other, yet they fail to incorporate strategies and practices specifically designed to let the Holy Spirit transform lives through His gifts and time in His presence.

The Foundation of Love

The first value to motivate all ministry efforts should be love. As obvious as this is, many leaders get caught up in running their churches with all their intricate details and time demands to the neglect of this fundamental guiding principle. My motivation for isolating this value is that leaders can make it tangible. Most churches state the priority to love, but participant P8's insistence that love grew his church captivated my attention. He stated,

So, I guess that the best way I could put it is how do you grow a church: you love God every day; ... you love your family, and you spend time with them; and you love people; you just love people that are coming to your church; and you just love those that are outside your church enough to do something to bless them; and to let em know that God loves them.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ P8, November 4, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

His words exemplify Jesus' command to love God and love people. This priority begins in the hearts of senior leaders and finds expression through every aspect of their organizations.

Maintain a Mission-Centered Focus

As pastors develop ministry philosophies, the beginning point of their efforts flows from a clear purpose for those efforts. With all the good things that organizations can do to help their communities, it is easy to veer off course from what is best. Churches must engage with the fundamental purpose of their existence—making disciples. Though most of these pastors did not indicate this type of mission mindset, most of them still showed a priority to reach people far from God and to grow disciples. Guarding against any movement away from mission accomplishment only happens through purposeful efforts. Several pastors (P5, P9, and P10) pointed to this mission-centered focus as contributing to the health and growth of their churches. The specifics of this focus are the question each church must address.

Align the Organizations Culture

Another lesson derived from the research element of this project is the importance of an organization's culture. Many times, leaders view strategy and vision as the foremost contributors to accomplishing the purposes of their organizations. According to Samuel R. Chand, “Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization.”¹⁹⁹ As this project emphasizes organizational practices—both in the Literature Review and the research section—the voices of several interview pastors point to this relatively intangible expression.

This project cannot overstate the importance of purposeful alignment of culture. Church leaders seeking to steer their churches in another direction must consider how their culture will facilitate or hinder their plans. Leaders so often put their efforts toward changing the externals of

¹⁹⁹ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), location 197, Kindle.

churches, but many times they fail to achieve their goal. They overlook the influence of an underlying culture, which is not seen yet very much affecting the “relationships, values, and other matters of the heart.” Leaders must deliberately align their organizations’ purpose and mission with their culture. Otherwise, they waste their organizational change efforts. As Samuel R. Chand states, “Good planning is essential in creating a positive culture, and it works at all times with all people.”²⁰⁰

Develop a Culture of Honor

Any efforts at culture shaping should not overlook the importance of developing a culture of honor. One reason to consider this value is to manage the potential conflict that accompanies change. Often, the primary reason people leave their churches is conflict or its associated emotion of offense. Any effort to minimize this attrition continues the growth process of churches. Moving forward as organizations requires leaders to be respectful of their church’s past while being sensitive towards their questions and concerns. Participant P3’s efforts to meld two congregations through honor and effective communication minimized the fall-out normally experienced in such an effort. His “against the odds”²⁰¹ success through sensitivity to the people’s issues showed the importance of honor as leaders pursue change.

Large Gathering Priority

A philosophy that manifests itself in practice is the need for “Super Bowl”²⁰² efforts to make the large gatherings as effective as possible. This is probably the strongest tool for growth for any church. As the American post-modern, post-Christian shift progresses, churches focused

²⁰⁰ Chand, locations 2513, 2563, Kindle.

²⁰¹ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

²⁰² P9, November 6, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

on mission-centered ministry must explore what this shift means for their communities and congregants. Business as usual will not produce the fruit they need to stem the trend of church decline. In the research phase of the project, a common consensus among the pastors interviewed was that the large gathering must be the area in which churches put forth the greatest effort. Most pastors would agree with this premise, but they fail to back up this priority with practices. Each organization must determine where to place the priority of its efforts. Participant P6 placed heavy emphasis on guests. P3 placed equal emphasis on welcoming the Holy Spirit. Addressing how the large gathering reinforces the mission is paramount to church growth.

A Priority for Being Healthy

Another finding from this project is the need for the restoration of the theology of church growth. For many, church growth is all about the numbers. It is simply getting people into the building, regardless of how that happens. Donald A. McGavran asserts, “Church growth is faithfulness.” He emphasizes the priority not only of proclamation, but of “faithful aftercare”²⁰³ as well. A proper perspective of church growth incorporates the full spectrum of disciple making in which leaders expend efforts to bring people to Christ and then mature them. Church growth efforts must incorporate practices that nurture healthy churches. Participant P3 emphasized, “I think growth can spring forth from health, but the emphasis being healthy, both personal health and organizational health.”²⁰⁴ For him, health is the foundation of growth. This shift of emphasis places greater priority on creating healthy believers than getting a higher number of people in the door.

²⁰³ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, edited by C. Peter Wagner, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6.

²⁰⁴ P3, October 18, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

Being a Healthy Leader

But healthy believers require healthy leaders, thus the beginning point of any discussion about organizational health must be the health of its leadership. For participant P10, the majority of obstacles with which pastors struggle are internal. He stated, “So whether it’s a heart issue or head issue, the stuckness is primarily inside the leader not inside the church.”²⁰⁵ For him, it boils down to the priorities of the heart and how they line up with what the Bible says. The lesson here is to incorporate regular spiritual checkups and not assume fruitlessness is an organizational cause.

Development of healthy leaders. Another take away from this project is that it is imperative for leaders to develop leadership pipelines. Too often, senior leadership places minimal priority towards remedying the lack of qualified empowered leaders. Several research pastors commented about their various practices that facilitate leadership development. Some were structured, and some were not. Some were an outgrowth of their culture. The important part—whether through personal mentoring or structured classes—is that churches constantly rise up home-grown leaders to expand their organization. John Maxwell’s comment fits well, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”²⁰⁶ The leader’s first task is to rise up other leaders.

Nurturing Healthy Church.

As healthy leaders guide the ship, their organizations follow the example. At the beginning of this project, my main interest was advancing church growth ideas. At the end of the project, my priority shifted to embracing a healthy church philosophy that included reproduction. Leaders must include reproduction with any idea of healthy church life. So often, the idea of

²⁰⁵ P10, December 12, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

²⁰⁶ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2008), VIII.

health requires an inward focus to emphasize the practices of church health. This consideration is important, but it incorporates a mission-focused priority. Participant P5 talked about people becoming functioning as consumers if not given a purpose.²⁰⁷ Leaders must integrate this idea of making disciples into health. Healthy believers produce healthy believers. Each organization needs to implement a strategy related to developing a healthy church. While there are biblical principles that outline what healthy believers, and in turn healthy churches, should look like, generating a conversation that wrestles with anticipated characteristics engages the minds and hearts of leaders desiring to place biblical parameters around their processes.

Incorporate Organizational Practices

Another take away is the priority of incorporating elements of organizational practices permeates contemporary literature, as well as this project's research pastors. Organizations grow within structures and systems established by strategies implementing their purpose. Within the project's five size groups, G1 churches proved to incorporate minimal organizational practices. Participant P5 clearly pointed out the tenuous balance of not becoming overly bureaucratic and the need for structure.²⁰⁸ The critical perspective is for the purpose of each church to guide it through strategies and leadership practices. As the organizations grow, their need for structures and systems increases.

Structure for Relationships

One practice that manifests the biblical imperative to love people (Mark 12:31) is the congregations' responsibility to connect people. Organizational structures and systems must facilitate relationships. Leaders have consistently highlighted small groups as the vehicle for this priority. Most of the interview participants pointed to small groups as a primary tool for

²⁰⁷ P5, October 24, 2013 transcript, Appendix D.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

relationships, but just offering a small groups ministry does not ensure participation. Participants P6 and P9 emphasized that leaders can help people embrace the priority of small groups as a necessary aspect of their church life through constant focus and strategies to assimilate individuals. A better way might be to integrate relational values and organizational expressions in the church culture.

Transitioning People through Assimilation

Another organizational practice that correlates with this relationship emphasis is the necessity of effective assimilation processes. Integrating guests into the life of the church is every pastor's desire, although not their priority. Participant P8's practice of trying to connect personally with each guest may not be possible for leaders of larger churches; however, they can develop processes that facilitate that goal. A dual focus by some of these pastors provides a twin channel for connection. Since he determined developing relationships and serving are both important motivators for many guests, P6 combined the two in his church's small group format. Participant P2 integrated opportunities to serve in his new-comer orientation structure. The means varied, but the end goal was the same—getting people involved in the life of the church. Pastors need clear, effective processes to accomplish this priority.

Outreach

Another finding of this research is that outreach is an imperative. The Literature Review emphasized the importance of making outreach a preeminent focus, but I found the shape these participants' efforts took interesting. The two forms of outreach identified in the analysis section (i.e., draw people to the church and meet people's needs outside the church) have strong biblical precedents. The strongest growth contributor of the two was the development of attractional elements to draw people towards churches. The second, meeting people's needs, is critical to

keep believers focused on God-honoring practices that encourage looking past the short-sighted interests of the local churches.

Prioritize Pentecostal Distinctives

The lessons with specific value for spirit-filled ministers are on one hand encouraging, yet on the other hand disconcerting. One interesting perception uncovered during the interviews was that the participants felt the dominant Pentecostal distinctives centered on tongues with interpretation and prophecy used in large gatherings. It appeared some of these pastors overlooked the reality that Pentecostal distinctives contain so much more than this. Relevant Pentecostal distinctives specifically described in the book *And He Gave Pastors: Pastoral Theology in Practice* include a warm atmosphere, spirited singing, and flexible prayer time.²⁰⁹ Most of these pastors described similar expressions, but they did not identify them as unique to Pentecostals.

Considering tongues and prophecy used in the large gatherings, several of the participants expressed avoidance of these practices. They emphasized abuses and a concern that new believers would misunderstand the practices (i.e., P1, P6, P9, P10). They saw no value or benefit in practicing the distinctives. A couple of these pastors saw the smaller context of small-groups as the place for church members to use these distinctives. Perceived as the preeminent Pentecostal distinctive, it was not a contributor to their churches' growth. Some people would say this practice betrays the uniqueness of being Pentecostal. For others, being Pentecostal means empowerment to accomplish the mission of their churches. They do not need any practices that do not accomplish that end, regardless of sentimental value or church tradition.

²⁰⁹ Zimmerman, Carlson, Bicket, 602-03.

There are several lessons leaders can draw from these interviews. First, Pentecostal distinctives can contribute to growth, but they do not necessarily have to be tongues with interpretation and prophecy. This perspective is too narrow. One alternative is seeking the manifest presence and power of God. Even though several participants indirectly expressed this desire, few mentioned notable fruit from any associated practices. In contrast, participant P3's church draws people in from other states because of God's powerful presence.

Although it may seem contradictory in nature, the third lesson is that tradition should not be the motivation for pursuing Pentecostal distinctives. Leadership must keep the end in sight—making disciples—and not tradition for tradition's sake. If no fruit comes from a practice, then leaders consider why they are doing it. For example, leaders must examine tongues and prophecy used in the large gatherings. Leaders should question the practice, not with a predetermined goal but for sincere disciple-oriented outcomes.

The fourth lesson concerning Pentecostal distinctives is the need to revisit a Bible-oriented perspective. The process begins with questions about scriptural precedent. For example, in Acts 15:32, the prophetic anointing is used to build up the church. This and many other examples should challenge Pentecostal leaders to explore how God developed disciples in Scripture and the Holy Spirit's role in the process. The Bible and the Spirit, not tradition, should guide these practices.

Finally, churches should use the gifts of the Spirit outside of the large gatherings, as well as in them. One comment by a couple of participants accentuated the use of the gifts of the Spirit outside the large gathering. Participant P2 stated that he viewed the gifts as mission empowerment. I agree while maintaining the benefit of the gifts in large gatherings. Scriptural comments in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 were in the context of a group gathering. The Church's

mission encompasses the full spectrum of discipleship, not just bringing people to the point of conversion. A full spectrum use of the gifts would occur both in the main worship services and outside of them. Any place where people meet is the perfect place for the Spirit's empowerment.

Topics for Further Study

This project focuses on a small slice of the church growth pie. It stirs the waters in relation to the use and benefit of Pentecostal distinctives in regards to church growth. Leaders should address many more questions to get a better grasp of the importance of the Holy Spirit's role in building churches. Organizations outside the Pentecostal/Charismatic stream of Christianity acknowledge the Spirit's aid, but they do not see the Spirit as a leading force in the discipleship process. Participant P3's story of a woman dynamically touched by God while receiving personal prayer ministry is one example of the Spirit's work. Divine healing is another. Leaders need to understand why some ministries have greater success in this area than others. Another area is the researcher's narrow use of Pentecostal distinctives as defined by tradition, not necessarily Scripture. Believers need to understand how the Holy Spirit empowers people in Scripture and how He wants to accomplish the same goal today. Another issue raised by participant P10 was that the Holy Spirit was shifting the emphasis away from tongues and prophecy used in the large gatherings. Pentecostal leaders must discover if this is true. They must consider the possibility that modern believers are hindering this gift, because they constrict the Holy Spirit to work within the limits they allow. Obviously, all these potential research issues directly relate to Pentecostal/Charismatic theology and practices. For this project, I make the assumption that researchers from other streams of Christianity sufficiently address church growth issues, including discipleship.

In the final analysis, church growth comes through people getting excited about their relationships with God with a willingness to share the experience with others. The challenge for leaders is to facilitate that intimacy and excitement and to structure a means for it to grow. Leaders must seek the Holy Spirit's counsel and empowerment, using biblical principles and considering the practices of others, melding them into a unified whole that expresses God's will for His people at that time. Participant P9's final comment emphasized, "And if you do the little things right, God will bless the church; it will grow." He added, "It's not rocket science at all." It may not be rocket science, but too many churches are not growing. Christian leaders need to put forth the effort to discover why.

WORKS CITED

- Barna, George. *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999.
- Blanchard, Ken, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph. *The 3 Keys to Empowerment: Releasing the Power within People for Astonishing Results*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 1999.
- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- Chand, Samuel R. *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011. Kindle.
- Clegg, Thomas T., and Warren Bird. *Lost in America: How You and Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2001.
- Crabtree, Charles. *Transformational Discipleship: Experiencing the Life-Changing Power of His Spirit*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2007.
- Creps, Earl G. "Moving Target: Reframing Discipleship for Postmoderns." *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 71.
- Ehler, Alan. "Preaching to Reach: Seven Characteristics of Effective Evangelistic Preaching." D.Min. diss., George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2007. Accessed May 30, 2013. https://discovery.northwestu.edu/file.php/10885/Preach_to_Reach.pdf.
- George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1992.
- Good, Jon D. "Missional Preaching: The Forerunner to Kingdom Growth." D.Min. diss., Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2008. Accessed June 12, 2012. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Goodall, Wayde. *Why Great Men Fall: 15 Winning Strategies to Rise Above It All*. Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2005.
- Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

- Heuser, Roger, and Norman Shawchuck. *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving Others*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Hofstede, Geert, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2010.
- Hurst, Randy. "Biblical Principles and Practices for Effective Personal Witness." *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 86-91.
- Hybels, Bill. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Johnston, Graham. *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-first Century Listeners*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001. Kindle.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advance Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005.
- Malphurs, Aubrey, and William F. Mancini. *Building Leaders: Blueprint for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004. Kindle.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- McGavran, Donald A. *Understanding Church Growth*. Edited by C. Peter Wagner, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- McNeal, Reggie. *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003. Kindle.
- Newbigin, Leslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.
- Niebuhr, Richard H. *Christ & Culture*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.
- Olson, David T. *The American Church Crisis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
- Rainer, Thom S., and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011. Kindle.
- Rance, DeLonn L. "Exegeting Your Audience." *Enrichment Journal* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 97-101.

- Rendle, Gil, and Alice Mann. *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. Herdon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2003.
- Reynolds, Glenn. "Let My People Go: Releasing Your Team to Lead, Not Just Follow." *Enrichment Journal* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 21-23.
- Roberts Jr., Bob. *Transformation: How Glocal Churches Transform Lives and the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Roxburgh, Alan. "Navigating the Changing Waters of Leadership." *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 42-48.
- Satyavrata, Ivan M. "What's So Special About Jesus? Responding to the Challenge of Religious Pluralism." *Enrichment Journal* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 64-69.
- Scazzero, Peter L. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church. Vol. III, Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity, From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600*. 5th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910.
- Stetzer, Ed. *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church That's Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.
- _____. "Writing on the Wall." *Enrichment Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 36-41.
- Stetzer, Ed, and David Putman. *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Mike Dodson. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Thomas Rainer. *Transformational Churches: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010. Kindle.
- Sweet, Leonard. *AquaChurch 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2008. Kindle.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

- Wagner, C. Peter. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.
- . *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Rev. ed. Ventura, CA: Regal Book, 1994.
- Wilkes, C. Gene. *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the Secrets of Leadership from the Life of Christ*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1998. Kindle.
- Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.
- Zimmerman, T. F., G. Raymond Carlson, and Zenas J. Bicket. *And He Gave Pastors: Pastoral Theology in Action*. Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1979.

APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter for Potential Participant

You are invited to participate in an interview exploring your church's growth. The interview is part of a thesis project to culminate my Northwest University's Master of Arts in Missional Leadership degree.

As you well know, America is engulfed in a cultural shift that greatly affects the effectiveness to the church accomplishing its mission. Church growth today looks significantly different than twenty years ago. Within the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, 40 percent of the churches showed growth for 2012. That seems encouraging compared to the General Council of the Assemblies of God growth rate of 30 percent. The flip side of the statistic shows 60 percent of NMNAG churches in a plateau or declining. Narrowing the criteria for growth to three of the reported five years with a 10 percent overall increase and the churches that are growing is reduced to 15.2 percent. Your church has been highlighted as falling within that growth margin.

Your input is vital towards the success of this project. The interview is less than an hour and explores what you think are the contributors to your church growth. If you are willing to participate a few things need to happen:

1. Consent to the process by reading and signing the attached Informed Consent Form and mail the form back to me at this address: 1020 Fox Ridge Road, Medical Lake, WA 99022. I must receive the form prior to proceeding with the interview.
2. Once received, a recorded interview can be scheduled and completed.
3. Once the recorded interview has been transcribed, the transcript will be sent to you for your response to its content and accuracy.

The interview centers on your perception of your church growth. Also, this list of questions that forms an outline of my perception on church growth elements should be addressed to whatever degree applies to your situation:

1. What factors do you believe have contributed to the congregational growth listed on the 2012 ACRM?
2. How has community outreach contributed to this growth?
3. How have Pentecostal distinctives contributed to this growth?
4. How has loving God as a church contributed to this growth?
5. How has the church loving people inside and outside the church contributed to this growth?
6. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth?
7. How have the senior leader's gifts contributed to this growth?
8. How has the worship service (i.e., preaching, music) contributed to this growth?
9. How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth?
10. Do you have any advice for pastors seeking to grow their church?

Thanks for your consideration for involvement with this research project.

Phil Beier
MA in Missional Leadership Student
Northwest University
Medical Lake WA
beierp@gmail.com
509-299-2620

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

As a part of my thesis project, I am conducting a research study on growing churches in the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. The study involves a phone interview asking questions about your church growth. The interview will last less than an hour.

This study involves minimal personal risk. All your responses will be kept confidential. You will not be referred to by name during the interview. The interview will be recorded and kept locked in a secure file that is only accessible by me. A transcript will be made from the interview that will also be secured as above. No name will be stored on the data and only a coded identifier (e.g., participant #1) will be used with all material except a list linking the names and coded identifiers. This list will be stored separately from the other files. The recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed after the research process has been completed. Please note that the interview transcript or portions of it can be contained in the final thesis. Any identifying references (e.g., context or specific activities) that could be linked back to you will be changed on the transcript.

If you participate in this study, your story will aid this research that seeks to determine practices and important information relevant to church growth. This information can be beneficial to other church leaders looking to develop a growing ministry.

Taking part in this study is up to you, and you will not be penalized in any way if you choose not to participate. If you agree to participate and then decide otherwise, you may withdraw at any time without adverse effects.

This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Review Board at Northwest University. Prior to the interview, I need a signed copy of this form returned to me. The address is: 1020 Fox Ridge Rd., Medical Lake WA 99022. If you have any questions or comments, you may contact me at (509) 299-2620 (home phone) or email at beierp@gmail.com. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Dr. Kevin Leach, at Northwest University at (425) 889-5248 or Kevin.leach@northwestu.edu.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Thanks!
Phil Beier
Master of Arts student in Mission Leadership
Northwest University, Kirkland WA

I have been made aware of my responsibilities as a participant. Furthermore, I am at least 18 years of age and legally able to enter into this agreement. I have also been made aware that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, the interview will be recorded, and portions or the entire interview transcript can be documented in the thesis.

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

APPENDIX C

Research Interview Questions, Initial and Revised

The initial interview questions were as follows:

1. What factors do you believe have contributed to the congregational growth listed on the 2012 ACMR?
2. How has community outreach contributed to this growth?
3. How have Pentecostal distinctives contributed to this growth?
4. How has loving God as a church contributed to this growth?
5. How has the church loving people inside and outside the church contributed to this growth?
6. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth?
7. How have the senior leader's gifts contributed to this growth?
8. How has the worship service (i.e., preaching, music) contributed to this growth?
9. How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth?
10. Do you have any advice for pastors seeking to grow their church?

During the first interview, the researcher recognized problems with the wording and structure for many of the original questions. Questions four and five were deleted for being too broad and vague. Questions six and seven were added. Also suggestions were added to many of the question to give participants specific ideas that the researcher thought might avert any confusion. The following questions became the adjusted preliminary questions used throughout the interview process:

1. What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth listed on the 2012 ACMR? What attracts people to your church?
2. How has community outreach contributed to this growth, both as an organization and individuals (e.g., acts of compassion, evangelism)?
3. How have Pentecostal distinctives, including supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth (e.g., gifts expressed in service, altar calls, prayer for the sick)?
4. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth (e.g., focus on alignment of mission, values, and vision with strategies, practices; systems/processes/programs)?

5. How have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they (e.g., personality, leadership charisma, administration)? How have they contributed?
6. How has a leadership development process contributed to this growth?
7. How has an emphasis on prayer contributed to this growth? What shape does it take?
8. How has the worship service (i.e., preaching, music) contributed to this growth?
9. How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth (e.g., mentoring, classes, clearly defined steps)? Is there an emphasis in this process on being baptized in the Holy Spirit?
10. Do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

These questions served as a general guideline and at times were not asked by the researcher for various reasons.

APPENDIX D

Transcripts of Research Interviews

Interview #1 – October 9, 2013

G3 senior pastor, P1²¹⁰

Researcher – [in progress] ... you guys were one of those, and so we're excited about what's been going on in your church, and was wondering if you'd just share a little bit about it?

P1 - Sure, I'll just tell you the story. I've been here for eleven years. Our church is, was a church plant, I believe they started in 1998. The original pastor was here for about three-years, and then left, and then we came in. At that time were in a very small older building. It's a 1940s style, I think it was originally the Baptist Church, but it's been around in this town for quite some time. We, the facility, while we try to take care of it, it's not a model for church growth. We don't have, everything is on-street parking. I believe I have more bathrooms in my house than our building does. So, we're, our growth has come against the odds of what our facility is.

So, long story short, when we started eleven-years ago, we just came in and with the idea of just building community and family. And my kids were teenagers active in the church at the time. The church began to grow. I think about every three years, we added another service until we got up to three. And then from there we looked at other facilities, but honestly, because of who a lot of the people that come to our church, there's, financially, there was no way to do it; and so we ended up adopting another church. So we went multi-site about two years ago, and with another church, a small AG church, that was failing financially, about seventeen miles from us. And so, we just had to adapt to whatever has been laid out to get to our growth. And so that's just the overall picture. We've actually grown every year in the last eleven years. And so I think when we got here, it was around fifty-I don't remember. But now I think we run over two-fifty with all the different things that we do. And so that's a brief overview of just that.

Specifically ministry wise, probably our main core ministry, that we, or people that we deal with, are people that are in drug and alcohol recovery. And so one of the ladies, one of the gals, her name is Joan, is on staff with us. She has a church service that she actually runs Sunday mornings at a local treatment facility-county facility. And then she's active in what they call the Drug Court Program, which are people that have felonies that this court system says, "Hey, if you can make it through this program, and it takes them a couple years, then we'll get rid of the felony, and hopefully you'll become a productive member of society." So she goes there, connects with people, and so we have support-group meetings here. And a lot of the people we deal with, they're pretty much down on their luck, and they've destroyed their lives. And they get Christ in their life, and they begin to piece everything back together again. So, that's a brief story, and specifically, the kinds of people that we deal with. We have people who haven't struggled with drugs and alcohol to. This area is a military area and we, so we have military families that are also a part. But again, that I'm just trying to keep it brief and give a general overview so.

Researcher – And I appreciate you, what you're sharing, and giving me this opportunity. Now I had a list of questions, and I'd like to touch on em. But really, what I wanna make sure that I get

210. P1 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

your story; because, obviously, each area where God is ministering through the church is unique. With your community outreach, you mentioned, with that it's mostly for drug and or you highlighted drug and alcohol. Are there any other ways that you reach into the community?

P1 - It's basically that is the main one, again, into the, because of the military families, we usually have some groups that mainly appeals to that younger age. Our group, we call Retrospect, and basically it's like the eighteen to thirtyish age group. And they just get together mainly for social events; and just pull them together. Again, on the weekend, we do in two towns, we do five different services. So, most of our gatherings are relatively small in the big picture, and so we try and have outlet group activities where they can just come and see what age groups also attend their church. So ...

Researcher – Ok, so I'm hearing that there's really not a specific focused outreach, say to the military community or any others, but this, but the drug and alcohol, that's your primary focus.

P1 - Yeah, it really is. Again, as far as outreach is concerned, that's where the majority of the new converts come through; and so I would say that is the main. Along the way, we do get people that, through friends and family of those that have struggled, come along and join with us, and so, but yeah the drug and alcohol aspect. And for us, we work alongside of, it's another non-profit that they have their offices here at the church called HAD Ministries. Which is hope for addictions slash dependencies, and that's of, that's the main feedstock into our churches.

Researcher – Ok, excellent. Now, how do you think Pentecostal distinctives in, if you have any, have contributed to this growth?

P1 - We have people—we're an Assembly of God church; we believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit (the leadership) we're all filled with the Spirit—but we understand the group of people that we deal with are fairly new to Christianity, and we liken our church to a spiritual nursery. So the gifts of the Spirit mainly happen outside of our services. If it happens in the service, in any manifestation or anything, we just simply explain what it is, and where it talks about it in the Bible. But as far as that being directive in our growth, other than the fact that, we pray in the Spirit; we believe in the Spirit, it's just not a regular active part as it would be in a traditional Assembly of God church. If that makes any sense?

Researcher – Sure, so do you limit it at all? Is there any, is it just a, is it that you don't highlight it? Is there

P1 - [interrupting] I just don't highlight it. I tell people what it is. We don't shy away from it. We tell people what it is if people ask me directly. Honestly, for me, I think that is better in a smaller group setting than it is, because it's too, many people they don't understand it. And honestly, I've seen it misused enough that that is a lot of the problem. But again, it's not at all, banned [chuckle] or anything like that. It's just, it's not evident; you wouldn't see it. And I don't do anything to promo it. As far as saying, yes, we're not speaking in tongues in service; we're not a good Assembly of God church, no. We're looking for what the power that the gifts of the Spirit bring us, and then how that works in our outreach, to go out into the world.

Researcher – Ok, how do you think loving God has contributed to this growth? And I know that sentence may seem weird that question. I guess what I'm looking for is tangible expressions of loving people. Ok, no, let me, ok, that's the next question. Maybe more with intimacy with God; worship, that that would probably fit in that question a little bit better. How has that been for you guys?

P1 – Again, that's interesting. A lot of the people that come to our church the first time, many of them, they've not stepped foot in church in their life. We have, this is one thing, music wise, that God has always blessed us with very gifted musicians and leaders. And so a lot of the songs we sing you would hear on just regular Christian radio. So a lot of em it's a familiar thing. But a lot of what we do is we're training and teaching the value of worship, worshipping God, and then why we worship God. It's not for a feeling we get, even though sometimes we get feelings, but we worship God because he deserves it. And so that's the way we try to direct people. And I'm not sure if I answered it exactly, but that's in a nut shell that's what I'm thinking.

Researcher – Ok, would you say that it has contributed to your growth? Or that it's just been more of a peripheral aspect of the growth of your, of the church?

P1 – No, I think it's been significant. I really do! Again, when they come in, and the worship service is very powerful; and again we give explanation of what it's about, and what they're to do; and again, we have a lot of new ones and so they're watching, and they're learning. But that's the worship part of the service, I think has been very significant for us.

Researcher – Ok, and next one is probably fairly similar. How do you think loving people, inside the church and outside the church has contributed to your growth? I know that you mentioned, you highlighted the, reaching into the drug and alcohol community. Are there other expressions of loving your people in a way, is there a family attitude? If you can elaborate on just the emphasis on loving people inside and outside the church.

P1 - And for us again, it's the attitude of the church that we see ourselves like a spiritual hospital. Where we invite people to come in wherever they are. And our job is basically to love them into the Kingdom; to accept them where they are. Knowing that when we have a relationship with God, who we are will change because we're going to become more Christ-like; and so, those kinds of expressions. We deal with very practical needs, because, practical needs of love. Such as, for example, we had a gal that had to move out all by herself; and she had nothing for her apartment. So really quickly through the congregation, we just said, "Hey, if anyone has any kitchen things, to help her." And boom, just in literally, in three days, we had enough to fully stock her kitchen, so those examples. And this is a gal that didn't go to our church, but her friend did. And so she came to church this last week. And again, that was our way to reach out, and just show basic human love. We have a food closet, the same thing, and if people need food, they're invited to come; and we'll give it to them, no questions asked. And so, we try to, again, thinking about those basic expressions of love and teaching people; love God and love people.

Researcher – Absolutely, excellent. How do you think organizational leadership practices or philosophies have contributed to the growth?

P1 - I think they have. We lead by example, and so I tell people that you should be able to, while I'm human, and I'm not perfect, but yet I intend and our leaders need to be good examples. Because honestly, what we do is obviously what we feel is important. And so if what we do and what we teach, that does not match up, then that's a terrible example. And so we've tried to, again, from leadership, reach out to people. Do what we can, love them, even if it's just a hug when they come to church the first time.

Researcher – Ok, maybe I should clarify a little bit more, by what, by organizational leadership practices. If you've gone through the Cohorts, the organizational leadership, foundation of mission statement, a vision statement or a vision, values. An emphasis on those types of elements to give the organization clear structure and systems; and I'm curious if there's much emphasis in your ministry on that aspect of your organization.

P1 - It's there, but as far as a main thing that we, we're very strict on? No, it's not. Yes, we have a mission statement; we have values; we have all of that. And if you read it, it does match what we do. But as far as with every decision that we make, honestly, we're not going back to those. I think it's something more that we feel.

Researcher – It's a part of your culture?

P1 – Yeah, I really think it is. And so I don't ... I've never ... people haven't memorized our mission statement, but they do know what we stand for as a church. And so I'm looking less for statements and those things and more for the realistic how we operate and what we do.

Researcher – Ok, how do you think the senior leader's personal growth practices have contributed to this growth?

P1 - Oh [big exhale], that's a good question, especially since I'm the senior leader. I've always ... I did not ... while I attended Northwest—college at the time, but university—I never graduated, and so I finished through Berean. But one thing that I've taken with me is I'm a lifelong-learner, and so I buy books all the time; I read leadership books all the time; went through the Cohorts. Just, last year, we went through; Don Ross has a Turn-around Church Coaching Network; we, specifically invested in that. So we invest in our leaders because we want, we wanna move forward. If that is what you are asking?

Researcher – I think that includes it, and just your emphasis on growing and maturing. One thing, you did really highlight is the modeling aspect, and that is so critical for leadership. And I think that would play into, that personal growth. But not only asking your people to do it, but you're leading the way. You're truly leading them in that process.

P1 – Right, right, and what, for me, one thing that I really push is that, as leaders, this is what I look for when I hire people, I'm not always successful at, but I'm looking for people that are passionate about what they do. If you think ministry is a job, don't come work for me, because if you treat it like a job, you'll fail, but when you're passionate about God, passionate about people, and willing to do whatever it takes. Because I'm big on building community; our church is very relational; and we know each other. I regularly have people in my house. And so those are the

leadership qualities that have to stand out. My life is an open book. And so, there again, while we continue to learn, and try to better ourselves, my number-one leadership push that I have has been that you've gotta be passionate about this. This has to drive you in everything you do.

Researcher – Amen. How do you think your preaching style has contributed to this growth?

P1 - [laughs] Interesting, before I came here I was a children's pastor, and one of my ... I didn't go into ministry until my mid-thirties; I'll be in fact, I'll turn fifty-three tomorrow; so I'm in my fifties now, but I was a children's pastor up till the time of about mid to later thirties when I felt God give me the push to become a senior pastor. And so my preaching style is I make sure that everything is clear. So clarity is important to me. Do I preach everything simple? Well not necessarily simple, but any terms, and we break things down. And the, because honestly, the best compliment I ever get, and I get it on a regularly basis is, "Wow, I actually understood what you said." And so I don't, my style is I don't talk over people's heads; I don't assume that they know something. And that has really resonated with people that come here because they want to learn, but they want to understand. And so I think my preaching style, at least for who we deal with, I think has been pretty important. Because we break it down so that everyone can understand.

Researcher – Ok, excellent, how has the discipleship emphasis or what you place, put into place for people to grow as Christ-followers contributed to this growth?

P1 - We can always do better. And we're working through different kinds of systems to honestly try to get better, but it has been significant. Most of the leaders, they, we hand-disciple people. We'll pick out two or three every year and walk with em throughout the year, and with the instructions that when they get to a certain point that they need to do the same thing. So we try to make that one-on-one mentoring to be our focus.

We also do small-groups, which would be a discipleship focus, but we haven't been overly successful, honestly, in getting high percentages of people. But we've just tried to concentrate on who comes in and just walk with them, and so progressing; always room for improvement. And our system for discipleship is probably more loosey-goosey than I would like, but it, for now, it is what it is. And last year, we tried a one-on-one mentorship thing. I think we called it Life Line, and honestly, not a lot of success. And so we might retool that, but just, we're working on things, always trying to find out what's gonna work. And so I guess it's an ever changing, process. Because we don't have a traditional Sunday school, and so it's through our weekend teaching; it's through home-groups. And our home-groups is basically getting together, praying for any needs, taking a section of Scripture. We just read it, and talk about it, that; so there's no deep questions. It's just basically trying to get people, in the regular habit of reading God's word, and then we push that too, daily Bible reading. It's something that if you come every year we offer new reading plans. So again, it is loosey-goosey, less formal, but it's worked pretty good. But we're working on it to get it to work better.

Researcher – I understand. Ministry should be constantly working at it, and we are risking and changing; and that's one of the things that's very difficult in the church. Our, even though we should be the people who that look forward and are anticipating change the most because we're conformed, we're being conformed to the image of Christ, we don't do it better than anybody else.

P1 - Right [chuckles].

Researcher – I'd like to reflect back on your outreach to the addictive lifestyle. How much of that is an expression of you or that point person that you have?

P1 - Probably more of the point person and she is passionate about it. She started it with her husband years ago—he passed away—always struggled in the ministry. While she had an impact, the best impact she's ever has since she joined our church. And the reason why the churches that she, at least this is my observation, the reason why before many of the churches that she went to, they were more of a formal, dress up kind; very strong Pentecostal churches that she couldn't get people to stay at. Where we're very relaxed and so, it's that, for people that have never gone to church, that can be intimidating. Because here it doesn't matter what you wear. I tell people, "It doesn't matter what you wear as long as you wear something." but so, what we try to do it's a very laid back relaxed atmosphere. And so, not that this is ground breaking, but in the sanctuary we've got doughnuts at the back; and we've got coffee. You can just bring it in; if we make a mess, we just clean it up. We don't worry about that. There's no, there is no dress code as far as implied or stated. Because there are some churches that don't state it, but it's implied. And I think in the Northwest we are getting more away from that,

But the idea is while she's the point person, it wasn't until she met up with my style of ministry, which is relaxed, relational, and clarity in the message that connected with people. Because again, they're welcomed, it doesn't matter what lifestyle they're in. They walk in the door. Again, we speak the truth, and we have homosexuals regularly here. They know that, yeah, God loves them, but here's what his standard says. And so, as we grow we have to work through these issues just like everybody does; because everyone has a sin issue; and so they understand that. But yeah, she's the point person; she's the passion behind it, but I think it's that the two ministries meshing together that worked. Our style of church met, and resonated with the style of people that she brought in. It was just a partnership that worked.

Researcher – Excellent. Now do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P1 - For me, it is just be passionate about what you do. I can't state that enough. I see so many people that just, it feels like, they're just there to run a church service. And after the service is over, they wanna go and resume their life. And for me, it's always been relational, and so be relational. Invite people over to your house; be a part of their life. We use social media a lot, just because I'm, I can get to know people. They can get to know me. And I just, man, love people; be a part of their lives, don't be afraid. In fact, I publish my cell phone number. Which is, it can be a dangerous thing, because you get some interesting calls, but I wanna be an accessible person. And so that would be my thing. Be real, be open and honest about who you are, and what your strengths and weaknesses are. And truly love people by your actions and don't treat it like a service that we do on the weekend. But no, this is the lifestyle we all have to do. And so that has to be evident when someone looks at you, by what you find to be important; what you laugh at; what grieves you. All those things have to be genuine, but passion is the word that I harp on all the time. You have to be passionate about God and his people.

Researcher – Excellent, well P1 thank you so much for your time.

Interview #2 – October, 17, 2013
G4 senior pastor, P2²¹¹

Researcher - I was curious what factors do you believe have contributed to the growth of your congregation?

P2 - Factors?

Researcher - Yeah, what do you think has contributed?

P2 - Well, number one, I think, it's because of the small-groups that we have actively in the church; where we give our people to connect, even the guests, who have connections with people in the church. Number two is the Sunday-worship service, which is every Sunday is exciting. I feels excited; my wife feels excited; my daughter feels excited to come to church for worship on Sundays. Even the people, I see the excitement in their hearts to engage in worship and engage with people. They get to see each other every Sunday. And then, the third growth factor, I believe is our giving, the people in the church, somehow, they're able, and are still able to respond whenever there's a need. And yes, some, most of the people, although not all, have learned how to give, at least proportionally, and some of them generously. Although, honestly, there are still some people in our church who doesn't give. And although they give, it's not really the tithe.

Researcher - Can I ask you specifically about that giving? Is it to the congregation? Is it to the organization? Or when you talk about giving, is that they're meeting, is it more of an Acts chapter five, where they're meeting each other's needs or towards the organization; just the excitement of what, just being, partaking in what God is doing in the organization and touching people's lives?

P2 - Yeah, they give to the church, and when there's a special need. For example, responding to a disaster, or just a matter of blessing a poor community, here or abroad. They really respond to it. It's easy for them to give when it comes to missions.

Researcher - Ok, so what I heard you saying is that community is important and the way that is expressed for you guys is in small-groups; and also your intimacy with God expressed in worship, and then giving. So you highlighted those three factors.

P2 - Yes.

Researcher - Ok, and I'll probably come back to, well, two of em, but I like to continue on with the questions. My second question is, How has community outreach contributed to this growth?

P2 - In what specific area?

211. P2 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

Researcher – Ok, and I was gonna say in acts of compassion and evangelism.

P2 - Mostly, what we do is, in terms of community outreach, is individual; individual members who would reach out to their neighbor, to their friend. And there was one time when we did a big community outreach that we, when we were still at the mall. I think it was 2012, we did this outreach. Our goal is just to reach, gather at least a maximum of five-hundred people that year by providing fun, games inside the mall. We, from the church, we converted it into a mini carnival. We have different games all around the area and then we give away candy. And what happened during that time is that was that the mall stores, they run out of candy; so all of those people who went to the mall, turned to us. So we end up having long lines of people coming into our stage. I think we had about twelve-hundred people showed up. That was the biggest community outreach that we did when we were at the mall. And as a result, we have some of those people came back, attend the church.

Researcher - Excellent. That's neat. Now with, you mentioned that individuals are reaching out in various ways. Does the, do you highlight that as in telling stories; having testimonies; or do you emphasize that; do you remind them or in some way encourage them to be doing that on a weekly basis?

P2 - Well, yeah, on a daily basis, in fact. And I would encourage the people to do friendly evangelism, friend evangelism. Most likely they won't share their faith directly, right away, but they would win them by befriending these people until they would like to ask our people about where they go for church. And they attend our church; and they begin to open their mouth; and share whatever they will share about the church.

It's like word-of-mouth that mostly is effective in our church; yes, the word-of-mouth. They tell the people. We had this experience when we were at the mall I just heard about. One of the attendees in our church, riding a bus, she happened to meet with someone that she didn't know in the bus, and she told this lady, "Hey, there's a church in the mall," blah, blah, blah. And then this lady that shared with came to our church. And then when I met with her personally, she said, "There's a lady I met in the bus. She told me, there's a church in the mall. So I am here." Now she is a very consistent member in our church.

Researcher - Hmm, neat. Now obviously, you, how much do you feel the ethnic leadership and has contributed to your growth? Maybe providing a different expression of faith or just have had inroads into multi-ethnic groups in contrast to maybe a Anglo leadership team.

P2 - Well, in that area, we are still navigating that, on how to encourage more Anglos in the leadership. Most of the leaders around me, right now, are actually Filipinos. We have some Anglos in some of our ministries, and they're entering leadership. We have some Anglos; we have some Samoans; and some Hispanics, serving in the ministries, right now. I think that one thing that helps us is finding the ministry that fits them. In a particular ministry, for example, there's this one Hispanic family, who came to our church from Florida, and then they started attending our church. So we see them consistently attended the church until I think after three months, they decided they wanna be, to become part of the family. So they engage in the

membership class. After that, right away, we were able to connect them to a ministry that speak to them.

Researcher - Do you a structure for that or is it just

P2 - [interrupting] Yeah, number one of course, from being a guest, starting as a guest. When you come to our church for the first time, we would encourage you to fill out the connection card. And then after the service we have a blue tent, we call the Starting Point, and to make it visible, we put up a blue tent behind everyone. And as soon as the guy who has been asking about that at the end of the service, I'll just point out those guest to go to our Starting Point are, where they will be encouraged to find out if they would like to hear more about the church. It's just thirty minute, a quick orientation for the new people in our church, first time; first timers in our church. And then if they would sign up with that, then they would come back the following Sunday and attend the orientation for thirty minutes. And after that, in there, they will be of course, everything will be explained to them, even the different ministries, even the volunteer, ministries that they can be plugged in. So, they would know, right away if there's something, available that they can fit in or can fill in. So, right away they can serve in the church. And after that, Starting Point, of course, the membership class will also be introduced to them. And then we do our membership class every quarter, and then we do a four weeks membership class.

Researcher - Ok, now my question about the ethnicity of the leadership. I guess centers more on the type or the ethnic groups that are attracted to your ministry. Do you feel like a larger portion of your, the people that you attract are multi-ethnic, and that you're doing, maybe. I'll rephrase it this way: do you feel that you're doing a greater, a better job of attracting a multi-ethnic congregation than your average AG Anglo church, because most of them are Anglo?

P2 - Well, in the attenders that we have right now. Aside from being a Pilipino, I think we're more attractive to the Anglos than to other Asian nationalities, Anglos and Hispanics.

Researcher - Ok. I guess I had made an assumption in my mind that you had a minimal Anglo congregation, but ok. My next question is, has to do, I'll just read it, "How have Pentecostal distinctives, including a supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth?" And my example, or, would be gifts expressed in the service as in traditional Pentecostal churches, altars, prayers for the sick or maybe any other expressions that might apply.

P2 - Well, our church is very much well oriented when it comes to our altar calls, almost every after the service. Although I understand, that now days most of the churches have limited time for the altar call, especially most, for most the Pentecostal churches around us, but we stick to that. We decided that our church would stick to giving some time for the people to respond to the message by calling the people to the altar. And then from there we allow a, like words of knowledge. We allow people to express their gifting in that turn. We allow people to express their hearts out in speaking in tongues. And that's just fine, we are not afraid about that.

Researcher - Ok, and something, another question is, what percentage of people do you find who get connected with your body of believers are unsaved, and another category is unsaved without any prior religious experiences.

P2 - I would say, at least there's, I would say, in the unsaved category, I would say we have at least, at least forty percent. And then unsaved with orientation of a religion, I would say there is about thirty percent. And of the remaining percent would be people who are already saved, transfer to us. So

Researcher - [interrupting] Ok, I'm, I heard you say those who are already saved, but I didn't get the words after that.

P2 - At the first category you mentioned is unsaved, without really any orientation is forty percent. And then another category that I heard from you is unsaved, but they have some orientation about different beliefs. Is that right?

Researcher - Yes, yes.

P2 - So I would say thirty percent; and another thirty percent that are committed, by Christians from other churches.

Researcher - Ok, transfer growth.

P2 - Right.

Researcher - How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to your growth? And you've addressed some of em, but I going to bring others up. For example, focusing on the mission of the church, the values of the church, vision and practices associated with that and also systems, processes, and programs.

P2 - Well, we have already made our organ, organizational structure. We have that. We have a structure that's going on in the church right now; that we follow. But I would start by saying that we all start with the mission of the church. Number one, I see to it that all of those who would be entering the ministry, or involved in the ministry, or volunteering a ministry, or leading a ministry, to really engage into the vision of the church and own it. Not just memorizing the one-sentence mission statement, but to put in their hearts; to really believe into that; to really expressing it in their hearts. And then, we encourage them to also put in the values. We have values and culture that we try to inculcate in the mind of everyone that's in the ministry. And do want me to mention that to you?

Researcher - What they are?

P2 - Our core values and you can also find it there on our website is: passion, pursuit, and platform. Passion, meaning we are passionate. We encourage them to be passionate in seeking God, in submission to God, in servicing God. So those are the passions that we believe in. And then our pursuit; the second value is pursuing God's calling as individuals and as a whole, as a church. And then number three is our platform, our, we encourage everyone to pick the platform and use it to shine and utilize God's given potential in their lives. That's our values that we plant in the hearts of everyone who serves in the ministry. And then the culture that we try to explain

to them, and that we try to really live, the church is; there is three: a culture of honor, a culture of discipline, and a culture of excellence.

Researcher - What was that last word? A culture

P2 - A culture of excellence.

Researcher - Excellence, ok.

P2 - And you can find it in our website for you to understand better.

Researcher - And obviously a lot of organizations put their values, their mission statement, and possibly their vision statement, or excuse me, their vision statement on their web site. But how do you engage on a weekly basis with those things? How do you continually bring it before em and remind your congregation?

P2 - Its part of my sermon. I mix it with, whenever I make a sermon, or drive the sermon to the people. I see to it that I would put in a piece by piece, some of these items that I mentioned to you into my message. It's always supporting the mission, or the core values in the culture of the church. And even when, for example, we're creating an event in the church, particularly that it follows the values, the mission, and the culture of the church.

Researcher - When you're creating a what?

P2 - An event or

Researcher - [interrupting] An event.

P2 - Or a program; yeah, event or program. We see to it that it's not just because we want to create a program, but it all supports the mission of the church. And practically speaking, sometimes I would remind people by just asking them, like while I was at the pulpit, asking them, "Who remembers the mission of our church?" Or "What are the values of our church?" And then, I would say that everyone, without looking at the website of the church through their cell phone, they can answer my question.

Researcher - Ok and you ask that?

P2 - Yeah, I asked that. I ask those questions in the pulpit.

Researcher - Oh, and my next question is, and I'm not fully understanding the relationship between you and your wife, but it sounds like she plays a greater role. So obviously, both of you, if that is the case, this question would extend to both of you. But here's the question, "How have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they? An example is personality, leadership charisma, administration. And then how have they contributed?"

P2 - Oh, between me and my wife, I am a personable person, a person-oriented person; my wife is task-oriented. So, it really, it's a very good mix of our different personalities. Because when I'm a personable; she, she's not, she's more, do the work, she does the work, I'm happy. But I am a person that even if you don't do the work that really good, it's ok, you're still my friend. So, personality wise, even the mix that we have, we complement with one another. Does that answer the question?

Researcher - It does. And so what I heard you say is that your focus is, your gifting is, you are very personable and does that come out in your messages, in your leadership [participant chuckles], your worship service?

P2 - Like here's what happens every Sunday: when I'm the one preaching, everybody is relaxed; some people even stand up goes to the restroom, and they laugh, most of the time, they laugh. But when my wife is preaching, like last Sunday, nobody stands up, everybody's serious. But all of them at the end would say it keeps me straight. So, although we have different personalities when it comes to preaching on Sunday, but still we have the same impact at the end of our preaching.

Researcher - Do you share that responsibility fairly equally? Or does it lean more in your direction, where you're filling the pulpit more often than your wife.

P2 - Yes, you are right. I preach most of the time. It's, our system is: I preach in series and maybe after three weeks or sometimes one month of doing a series, she would fill me up in one or two weeks. So that I can prepare for the next series in the church. Although sometimes I would ask her, join me in the series. I would preach three, and then she would preach one.

Researcher - Ok, now you mentioned a part of your personality is that you like to make people laugh; there's a lot of lightheartedness. Do you think that's something that attracts people to the church?

P2 - I think so, yeah. They like it. And that's one thing they, that they really appreciate when I preach, that they are able to understand the message, so practical, yet they can easily apply it in their everyday life.

Researcher - Okay and my next question, you've addressed some of it, like we just did with the preaching, but here it goes, here it is, and then I'll ask, I'll further clarify. How has the worship service, i.e., preaching and music contributed to this service, to this growth? And I'm going to clarify, and focus it more on the music part. Do you feel like your, the congregation connects in a deeper way through the music than your average worship service? And do you put a lot of emphasis on having, you mentioned one of your values as excellence, and I'm sure that probably manifests in the worship service to. So I guess there's two aspects to that, the worship service contributed to your growth.

P2 - I would say yes. In fact, in our Sunday program, the two major things in our program are worship and the message. So, and in terms of excellence: number one, as much as possible, we start on time, we end on time. But then, we sure do believe that we don't remove the moving of

the movement of the Holy Spirit in worship. Especially, one of my big advice is this to the worship team or whoever is leading, is that when and that the Spirit is moving, don't stop just go, and continue with. So yeah, I would say with one-hundred percent criteria we have, I would say, 40 percent for the worship, 45 percent for the message, and the other 15 percent are for the welcoming, announcement, and offering, and closing.

Researcher - Ok, the next question is, What, How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth and e.g., mentoring classes, mentoring, classes, or clearly defined steps? And I know that you've addressed a little bit of this.

P2 - It's a mandatory for me in our church that if you are leading a ministry, you have to go through a leadership team development. I call it Leadership Team Development or LDP. All, everyone who serves in the ministry, whether you're leading or just volunteering, you are, strongly encouraged to get into team development time. We do that every Wednesday for once a week, we do that three semesters every year. I would give them some training and refreshers about leadership and connecting it to their individual ministries.

Researcher - With that, is it? If I remember, if I heard you right, you said it was on Wednesday night that that is a strong focus? Do you take the entire Wednesday-night time or just a small segment of it?

P2 - Like two hours.

Researcher - Okay, so you focus the entire evening teaching on that?

P2 - Yes, we do some team work activities, or I would teach, or we would watch leadership videos. Something like that, something that we can learn from.

Researcher - Do you have any other activity at that time? Are there other people, other adults, specifically in other classes or other participating in other activities during that time? Or is this just specifically isolated to leadership training?

P2 - Yeah, we isolate that in just one event on Wednesday, and that's just leadership.

Researcher - Ok, so you don't have other teachings. So do, what is your primary vehicle for discipleship? Other, you've got your Sunday-morning service, which focus obviously is worship and so, and then you've got a discipleship component really in your preaching. But it really ... Ok, I'm going to step back, because I hear ... I'm gonna remind myself because you mentioned small-groups. Is ... would that be your primary vehicle for discipleship?

P2 - In general, yes, in general that's correct. That's a way for everyone in our church to really learn something; because we don't ... we never had a Sunday school teaching in the church. What we have available is, in general, is the small-group that we have. And we do it in a year, we have three semesters. We do it that way so some, we can have some rest, so we can have some breathing area, and then we can engage again to another semester.

Researcher - Does your leadership training program, is it an expression of your small-groups or is it ... are there some small-group components to it, or is it strictly just teaching?

P2 - It's strictly teaching.

Researcher - Ok, now do you have any steps? When you think about encouraging people to become a stronger follower of Christ, do you have steps that you might highlight? Or do you have like a simple model of what a Christ-follower looks like?

P2 - Well, I strongly encourage apprenticeship in the church. Everyone who leads a ministry should at least disciple or apprentice. They should have at least three apprentices in every area of ministry. And that's where the lines of leadership are coming from.

Researcher - It sounds like you put a heavy, heavy emphasis on leadership training, leadership development, leadership ... bringing up other leaders. And I'm trying to think about a question, but it sounds like that just is a strength and a strong contributor to your growth. Would you say, would you agree to that?

P2 - Yes.

Researcher - And so as you

P2 - [interrupting] Actually, my wife always gives me some confirmation that one of my biggest strengths is leadership.

Researcher - Certainly a vital need in the church. And my last question is, do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P2 - Well of course, number one, you have to have a very strong relationship with God. Meaning, course there's spiritual disciplines must be there, visible and you apply it in your life every day. As a minister, as a leader there are ... you have other spiritual discipline practices and I think that's it. And then the rest of, the things that would happen is just the result because of your relationship with the God that you are serving.

Researcher - Amen. Well, thank you P2, I appreciate the time.

Phone Interview #3 – October 9, 2013
G3 senior pastor, P3²¹²

Researcher - What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth?

P3 - Ok, now because I understand that this is academic, I have to be candid with you.

Researcher - Ok.

212. P3 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

P3 –I cannot ... You would ... Neither ... You can't afford me to demure and just try to be self-deprecating, when you're trying to get real answers, right?

Researcher - Yes.

P3 - Ok, so here's the deal. So what factors have contributed to our growth? We, I am trying to say this as tactfully as I can Philip, because it's, what it can sound like is I think a lot of myself. And that's not the case at all. I'm, because you don't know me, I'm almost sunk. But we do, I do my best to try to be, to try to communicate in as genuinely and enthusiastically ... I try to have our communication style or my communication style is an informed enthusiast, or if you will an educated enthusiast. So there are people that come and are attracted to the fact that messages are well thought out and well researched. And there is ... I do talk about the syntax and the grammar of a passage, but never to, never simply for the purpose of trying to sound smart. Always with the purpose of how is this going to help or encourage. How is this going to help connect this thought more deeply to my audience and to do so with a sense of real enthusiasm? Charles Stanley once said, he was really ... He never preached a sermon that he didn't feel was the most important thing he ever said. Now obviously that is a bit of a hyperbole, but approaching a message and never, never, never releasing a message until you've come to a place where you, where this is really alive in you and this must be said. This is important. It's not just fluff. I'm not just trying to get through a Sunday.

So, the shorter answer is, this isn't necessarily of importance, but one thing that has led to our growth is careful attention that has been placed on an enthusiastic and well informed communication style. See and like you, I have seen the reports and the research that ... From Philip, from Thom Rainier that ... And that people connect with that. That's a big deal for why people come and why people stay. Is, are they enjoying? Can they connect with what's being said? And of course that's a big risk too, but we go after that. So that's one thing is the attention, the effort that we've given, I've given to my own communication style. It's not that I have to connect with everybody, but it is what it is. That's the feedback that we get.

Secondly, and this probably is more important, is we have found that people come, and stay, because they hear, generally (I know this can be taken in different ways), people come because they hear that our church values the experience and experiential culture in terms of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. That it's not a ... Our services are not purely programmed, they're not scripted to the minute. We have a plan, but everyone knows, we talk about it openly, we affirm the person and work of the Spirit, and we recognize that no matter how much we prepare, and when we put the pass ... When you put in the same room, a passionate people in the presence of God, you've got to make room for some white space; to make room for something that you didn't plan and just be ready.

And so I realize that my answer could sound, you could interpret that from a frame of reference, "Oh, you ..." That is some sort of a cultural Pentecostal form. No, it has nothing to do with that. We have blue jeans and shirts or whatever else too, but it's ... We have a genuine interest in the welcoming, the living acting right now presence of the Spirit. And people have not been, people, I feel, are drawn to that, and they stay for that. And they ... That's ... Philip, you and I both know that is what people want. People want the experience of the presence of the Lord. They want him. He's the only one who can really affect their lives and meet their needs, and so we allow for that.

We encourage, gently. Now we encourage and teach carefully that you've, that people can participate and minister to one each other, both in utterance gifts and laying of hands, but we do so in a culture that really emphasizes love and honor. We can be polite. We can have great passion and really good manners in the same room. Does that make sense?

Researcher - Yes it does.

P3 - Ok, so we go after it that way. Like really great passion and really good manners, and we emphasize honor and respect and all those kinds of things. And again ... But even that works to our advantage, because people that maybe have had negative experiences or fearful experiences find that this is a safe-place that they can receive and give ministry.

And then I would, I have to also speak, and then again this is of course, this goes back to our culture is we are deliberately, I mean everyone wants to be a friendly church right? I just think that, well for us, I'm not comparatively speaking because ... But for us, I know that we go after that. It's just sometimes like when we are starting the service, we'll make sure and take time and let people enjoy each other. But even the small thing like the standard meet and greet time, for us in particular, that is not just part of a, that's not filler. We stop and on purpose, I even give instructions. Sometimes, well actually every time, I say, "Well look, I want you to find three people, I want you to say the kindest thing you can to them, right now." And we have people ... our home-group leaders and deacons make sure that they know that they are looking around for people that are maybe isolated or sitting by themselves. Well, we count that time as really important body ministry, where people are connecting and visiting. And when there's laughter, this is true, when there's laughter in a room that increases people's, the potential, the probability of receptivity. They will receive from the Lord. They will receive from instruction. Their hearts and minds are going to be open and ready to receive; even to receive in prayer. When they're laughing and when people feel like there's the atmosphere is, has a joyful, tone to it. So we go after that.

So in terms of things that have worked for us, in terms of in-house: we emphasize the clearest and yet enthusiastic teaching; we emphasize, and honor; we recognize the Holy Spirit is real, and we love him and we welcome him best we can. And we're still learning, we always will. And then thirdly, we really emphasize a relaxed and interpersonal atmosphere of kindness and encouragement and affirmation to the other people in the house.

Now externally, we just ... Hopefully word of mouth, and hopefully ... Generally how it works, people will invited their friends and they invite people. We have a New Life luncheon that we do and I always have there ... "Well why, what brought you to our church? What do you expect here?" And so a lot of times people are invited, but they hear ... A lot of times people come because they heard from somewhere about the culture that we have. And we've done all kinds of things. We've done every mailer. We've done actually about a, out thousands of direct mail pieces. And I understand I rarely see any real results from that. We are on, we use Facebook and social media as much as we can. I don't know how much results we get from that, but we believe in it anyway.

We do outside outreaches, but we don't ... But here's the thing, Philip, I'm just ... we don't do ... Like for instance, the last thing we did just in August, and we went to one main big park in our city, and we rented like half a dozen huge jump houses, and a bunch of little booths; games booths things. And we brought in a bunch of school supplies and stuff, and we set next to this big park, and we put advertisements out. So, there were families and children everywhere;

playing in the jump houses; and recreating; and having fun; and then leaving with a bunch of new, school supplies and stuff. But we go into that telling ourselves on purpose, this is a no strings attached event. We are not doing this to trick people into coming to church. This is an act of love, period! We only want to leave our city better than when we found it. And it's been if people come, and they often do, they'll often come. And we wear our church shirts, and we welcome them to come. So, in terms of what we do, I wouldn't say ... Well yeah, people come because of what we do, maybe they do, but that's not even the direct reason why we do stuff. We try to just keep a, really examine our motives in terms of what we do outside the church.

And then we do other stuff, kind things and stuff, especially during the holidays, and outreaches and service to the poor and stuff. I'm not entirely sure that, I mean, we have a huge apartment complex next door that we have gone to several times and delivered food and presents to every single place. I don't know if we have even a handful have ever come and stayed. We've done some canvassing to apartments for the little kids. And one family, we think one family come from that, but the best thing is probably follow-up.

Now I'm switching subjects in terms of outreach now. Maybe not ... But once people come and if we can reconnect with them in a loving and meaningful way; like my children's pastor will go over and leave their kids candy and say, "Thanks for coming," or "Missed you" and "Come back again." That tends to resonate with people. At a minimum, a hand-written card or a phone call will help, but if following-up with people, as personally as possible, and as consistently as possible. I think it has been the most effective, in terms of retaining a guest, for us.

Researcher - And that's wonderful. Now there

P3 - [interrupting] Are we ok so far? Am I talking too long or too much?

Researcher - Oh, not at all. You're touching on several of my questions, so I'm going to half to modify them a little bit. My second

P3 - [interrupting] Do whatever you need to do.

Researcher - Ok, my second question and I'm going to modify it is how has community outreach contributed to this growth? And I had, e.g. acts of compassion or evangelism? Do you train your people at all in evangelism, sharing their story, anything like that?

P3 - Not like, not in the formal sense. We encourage people to do two things: to share their testimony, or to share any good news of what they hear happening, and we encourage people specifically to serve people and be kind. But also, actually, we'll, we encourage people to go after, whether it's people who are hurting or sick to just go ahead and pray for sick wherever they are, and go after things that way. And to be as Christ-present in the name of Jesus as they possibly can. And ... But we haven't so no, we haven't done formal evangelism training.

We have, we give people invitations. We tell people to invite a friend. Well, ok, what we are, what we do we started doing what is like a Super Sunday thing, and that's just my terminology. I think it's cheesy to say it out loud, but for me, I understand what it means, and for my staff understands. A Super Sunday is: let's assume that everybody in the church and most people have in the church, have friends, or neighbor or colleagues that know that they go to our church and have been invited to come, right. And ... But it's like they know it's there and so

they say, “Yeah, I’ll come with you sometime.” Well, what we do is we try to say, Ok, well let’s have specific Sundays, where there’s just at least a little bit of nuance that will give that friend or neighbor or colleague a specific reason to come this time. It’s like a my metaphor I use with my staff is, it’s like when ... if we own a movie, and I know it’s on the shelf, then I won’t watch it because I know I just have it for any time. But if it’s on TV and it’s like its own ... this is a whatever. It’s that limited or special availability gets my interest.

So like last time, we rolled out a new sermon-series. We had special food available. And we were supposed to have a bunch of jump houses for the kids, of course the jump houses didn’t work because of the pouring down rain, but that did help. We did see a surge in attendance and a couple of new faces-a few new faces. We’ll do that again. We’ll probably do that three or four times a year. We’ll do it as, for our big our Christmas reveal; when we reveal our Christmas theme; when we reveal our Christmas outreaches. We’re gonna have, We usually have hot cider and spiced lattes in the lobby. And just if ... Again, it’s not, it’s just a few extra nuances added to the day to say, “Hey ...” So that person can and will say to their friends or neighbors, “Hey, why don’t you come this Sunday.” Instead of, “Come with me sometime,” “Come this Sunday, because we’re doing this and that.” And that’s just something to help our people, and it’s, it works easy for em. It does work for us.

Researcher – Excellent. And a lot of what you have said dovetails into this question. But I guess what I’ll be looking for is maybe some specifics. How have Pentecostal distinctives, including supernatural emphasis contributed to this growth? And I said, e.g. gifts expressed in the service, altar calls, prayer for the sick, and maybe anything else that you might think of.

P3 - Specifically, I would say the fact that we, that there’s a, that we have a place where people feel like ... In fact, I’ve got a few that say, “Wow, this is great! This is a place where people ...” We have a microphone set up that if people feel like they have something to share during the worship service. They’re supposed to come, and wait, and ... Or what works better is when I will, if I’m, if I have the mic and I’m in front of the congregation, and I actually start engaging individuals that I have, that I make eye contact with or they raise a hand, or walk around, that tends to help people feel even more liberty. So, the answer to your question is, “How have Pentecostal distinctives added to our growth?” It has significantly. I think that might be one of the most, one of the single, one of the top two or three things that have added, that have made a difference.

And that is people have come to our church because they have experienced real things; real, the real presence of God. One, I can tell you; like one gal, who came with her husband, but was a ... I wouldn’t say a total unbeliever, but I would say a quasi-believer. And she was just at the front receiving prayer and a couple ladies praying with her. And she told me after service. And she was visibly moved upon by the Lord (and she said I could share this), “I have never experienced that in my life. Man, God really touched me here today!” So she ... In whatever way the Lord met with her, it was genuine. We would say supernatural. It was beyond supernatural in time. And it was something that was a spiritually-formative experience in her life. It really helped her grow from where she was to where she wanted to be. So those are important.

People have ... Word of mouth, genuinely, word of mouth, that, “Oh, we’ve heard that you people pray for the sick here.” “Yeah.” “And we have seen results here.” “Yeah.” That genuinely has helped us. People that are hungry for that, or you just need ministry, have come. We’ve had people that have actually driven from other parts of the state to come and be a part of

our services. One person drove up from California, who had cancer, just to be a part of our services, looking for the Lord to touch their body. Now that particular person I don't remember whatever happened. But I can, I could tell you. Like one older gentleman who came to us with, who was sight impaired, hearing impaired, and he had a vertebrae that was, his spine, was sticking through his vertebrae in such a way that he had a, he wore a plastic collar on his neck. And also because of all of that, he had balance issues and couldn't really walk. Well, I'm saying it quick, Philip, and just say that he used ... When I say when he was sight impaired that he always saw two of me. Well ... But he—I don't think he was eighty or whatever—but the, he no longer wears hearing aids. He only sees one of me. His cancer is gone. And in one of our services, he actually just took off his neck brace, and the Lord totally restored his neck to perfect order and restored his balance. And then, this last year, he was, he has been, he has had terminal cancer for years, and he is totally free from all the cancer in his body. Now that is worth, that's worth it all by itself.

But as a collateral benefit: he has shared with tons and tons of his friends and former friends from different places and from, that he has known. And so as a result, it's crazy, but I guess we've had this influx of actually older people that are friends of his. Come to our church because of how the Lord has touched his life. And we rock out. We do Jesus culture and Bethel church songs. And our biggest problem is that our sound system is tremendously too loud, but these people still keep coming [chuckles]. They endure it. So yeah, I would say that those Pentecostal distinctives have, people have responded well to them, and they want to stay. And they have heard about it, word-of-mouth and wanted to come. Is that specific enough?

Researcher - Yes it is and that's excellent. And this next ... I have two questions, just so I don't forget because I have not got it written down in my notes. But the first one is did you plant the church or is there a long history in this church?

P3 - Neither. How about that?

Researcher – Ok.

P3 - This is even worse [chuckles]. This is a result of a merger of two small congregations. And this was, this happened about five years. And then, without any disrespect to anyone, we were cautioned against it at the time. The Network at the time said, "Look, statistically these things don't work." And one of my professors—I was at AGTS at the time—said, "Ah, what? We have found that when churches, when two small churches integrate that within a few years, they basically reduce back to the ... They find themselves at the attendance of whatever the smallest church used to be." So what we did was, we ... There was ... We had one church that was smaller with younger people and then one church that was smaller with mostly very senior citizens. And then ... And this is ... We took about a year and a half to walk through it carefully, and lovingly, and with lots of communication, but there was a unanimous ballet. What's that called? Ballet, private or what's that called? Now I just lost it, but hidden ballet, private ballet.

Researcher - Sure.

P3 - Whatever it was, whatever that was. Where the ballets are individual and they are private. And they were unanimous that, for the merger and to ... They re-elected me as their pastor and

everything. And so we started off. I don't know if it was fair to say ... We started off with a little over a hundred or with [murmurs]. I don't know if it's true or not; somewhere around there, plus or minus depending. And we just ... And so we ... And then there was some attrition from some folks that didn't, weren't sure, but it was very small attrition. But most of it was very consistent growth. We remodeled the building four-times in four-years to accommodate for either more babies, or more kids, or more adults.

Researcher - With that merger, did you find yourself bringing, having more freedom? Not bringing along the baggage, so to speak, the encumbrances of a more seasoned congregation; the sacred cows and things that hinder.

P3 - Boy, well, there is a ... I have about two rows of very senior people that have actually been meeting in that building for probably thirty-years. And they are with us. Some things we have changed, but I'll just be candid and say that when we had to change things that are worth changing, like sometimes ... Like when we didn't need, we no longer needed to have an organ on the platform, not that we don't like organs, it's just we didn't have room for it. We took out the baptistery because it didn't hold water or heat, so it didn't make any sense to have it; and we expanded the platform; we took pews out and put chairs in. But with every change that we've done, we don't, we haven't done it without honor. And I can't emphasize that word enough. We have honored people. We have answered questions. We have explained. And nothing ... And everything is sold rather than pushed. And we've said this is what we are going to do. This is why it's important. This is why it's going to be good for you and for everybody else." And so we ... And then when you stick to the script and by that to the Scripture. When you stick to ... Like hey, and you ... And you're ... Even like in terms of charismatic experience, or expression in the church, or how we're going to do things, or why we are going to empower women leaders or whatever. Everything we've needed to do we tried to not just be careful not just do them without really teaching and explaining what we're doing.

I have found, Philip, that if people feel like they're heard and their questions are answered, for the most part, they can, they will buy into whatever change needs to happen. And I'm not trying to sound ... I know that can sound very self-serving. But we statistically have pulled it off. We have pulled off what we're not supposed to have been able to do. And that is to bring two generations into a building and the new guy, me, come in and take over and change all, change things right off the bat. But we've done that successfully, because we haven't run over people. We've treated them with honor, and really communicated well all the time, I think.

Researcher - And that will probably flow over to a question that I'll come up with, to in moment. And that's really organization, which organizational practices, which includes communication. But the second part of that question I had before was: Can you break down the new folks that are coming to your; the new people that are coming to your church. Specifically, whether they're transfer growth, new believers who have a history in, of Christianity and those who have absolutely no background with Christianity?

P3 - I would say there's a pretty good blend. I have to be candid, there's ... When I say there's not a lot of transfer growth. Like, "Oh, we just left this church and came to this church." What we have found is, I have, we have a lot of, I would call them, prodigals, but that's not the best definition. We have found ... Like this family that just comes to mind, a family that just has

come since the summer time. Used to be a part of church, used to go years ago, but got ... All kinds of things happened, and they stopped going. And they were just isolated. But it ... They have been ... They're one of the families that came because we had canvassed and we invited their kids to our revival camp, which is our VBS, where kids just learn to enjoy the Lord and practice the ministry of the Spirit. Well, so that's a great example. We, I see a lot of those kinds of people that have used, that used to be. The "used to" ones, that's what I would say, we have a lot of "used to bees," but now come and find, a sense of rebirth and renewal in their lives.

Then people will come that are on the outskirts. I'm not, I'm sure some of the people we have coming right now even understand if they're saved or not, but they're coming because they like hearing that God loves. I can think of a guy who's bringing his girl friend and ... to church. And I'm sure I don't think either one of them, I don't think they've ever made a concrete decision or not, but they sure like to come; and they nod with me when I'm speak, so that stuff. And then ... So I wouldn't ... Not a lot of transfer like directly, "Oh, we're here, but now we go here." Not that I know of. Most of the transfer is usually, "We used to be somewhere, we haven't been somewhere for a while [and because of disappointment] but we really like it here now" and their worshiping and stuff. And with that, people that are friends or relationships of those on the outskirts. I don't know.

Researcher - Hmm, and that's the way we wanna be because, unfortunately, as you probably well know that only one in twenty are growing by conversion. And most of our growth is through transfer, and that's unfortunate.

P3 - Yeah.

Researcher - My next question is organizational related. Just listening to you, I hear that it seems you are very strategic and so I'm going to read my question and then just spring board wherever you want to go with it. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to your growth? And then the example that I give is, focusing on alignment of mission, values, vision with practices, systems, processes, and programs.

P3 - Hmm, I would say the emphasis is more organizationally. The emphasis is far more on lateral organization. We don't put a lot of emphasis into a lot of isms, but we try to just really emphasize values and culture. What these are ... What this is ... What these are ... things that we value and just the culture that we're pursuing. And this ... And then beyond that we almost are not ... We just will ... Like new ideas, or whatever; we'll try new things or do new things. But there's not a lot of ... When people say, "Well, what's your vision?" Well, actually, it's pretty broad. We actually just develop ... We just honor Heaven, and we go after the Kingdom, and whatever that looks like, however that looks like. And it makes it easy for us just to apply it as a single plumb line, plumb line of the kingdom. What's it like in heaven? What's the nature of God? Now how is that ...? Then we take that plumb line and you go after whatever. What's that look like in people's marriages, with people's money, or whatever else? And so it's pretty broad. And that might fly in the face of some, but we don't have a super-focused articulated vision. It doesn't work, that doesn't work for me; my heart doesn't get excited about that. I feel like that's just too ... I'm not ... I don't go after niches. I don't go after niche demographics. I don't go after any of that. Our ... It's very theo-centric, in terms of our vision. Like, who is God? What's He like? And what's He want us to do? And let's do that.

And beyond that, we just try to be real specific. Alright, I am very protective of our church culture, even organizationally. All my ... Our staff-meetings always begin with good news and gratitudes. "Ok, what, what's going on? What's some good news? What's some testimonies you've heard? What breakthroughs are people having?" And we start with that. And then I also try to encourage them to be very specifically grateful, "Ok, who are you grateful for around the room?" and that thing. So I would say, organizationally, just ... We exercising with real ... We emphasize the soft skills of organization: of communication, of honor, of showing, real honor for each other and going out of our way to serve each other, people in leadership. And that really helped us. I don't think we've tried to be overly strategic in terms of practices, those things. We are still very experimental. I think we always will be. We experiment with different things all the time and, but we don't experiment with our culture. We wanna be ... We're pursuing a better one, but we don't want ... We're not changing that. And if you need to follow-up with question more specifics go right ahead.

Researcher - And ok, I appreciate that liberty. And the next, it goes into what you were talking about first on. It's going to focus on ... specifically to you is, how is the senior leader's gifts and passions, how have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they (personality, leadership charisma, administration) and how have they contributed?

P3 - Well, my dad is my senior associate pastor, and we were just talking the other day about planting another campus somewhere and how we would do a satellite. And he said, "Well even if we did that son, you'd have to go speak there; we'd have to work it out where you would speak at both places, because," (I have to use his words otherwise I feel uncomfortable.) But he said, "Obviously the Holy Spirit, God is our strength and God is our focus, but the strength of church right now is in you, in your ability to communicate and to preach; that's the strength of the church." So, now that may sound super haughty and Philip, I'm only saying that to you. Because you're the real deal. You will not hear me saying that out in public, or some blog post [chuckles]. Ok.

Researcher - Ok.

P3 - But I know that that's important, that has been effective. The senior leader's gifts, my gifts? Ok, so my gifts are primarily in communication. And then, the other soft skills, like my public life, all public communication, but also just, being optimistic, and committed to being an encourager and to walking in awe with all kinds of people. Everyone that comes in our church, begin their interaction with me. My goal is not to confront. I know ... My ... It's not my objectives to control them, or, even to correct a lot of things, but to be the primary ... I have to be the primary encourager on campus. And ... Which means, I value joy, and I value encouragement, and I practice those.

So I think that ... So that may not ... Now, I do understand and my ... All my undergraduate stuff has been in organizational leadership. So I'm not ... There is very much an undercurrent or a foundation of ... I understand the five sources of power; I understand communication theory. I understand and we do. I understand different theories, really solid leadership theories. And I have about two or three of em that I value the most, and I really live by. And when I've done leadership workshops, we've implemented those kinds of things. These are the things ... These are some ... A hand full of specific theories and models have worked the

best, I think, in terms of leading people, including things like situational leadership, and those kinds of things. Probably, I would lean more towards specific communication strategies and sources; and the proper sources of power; understanding love languages; understand motivational theory. So that ... How when we are working with people ... That I think, that goes beyond specific ... Just ... Like public communication; interpersonal or organizational communication, strategies and skills have worked to our advantage.

Researcher - Has leadership development contributed at all to you growth?

P3 - Yes.

Researcher - And specifically how do you ... What formats or if you can give me an overview of your leadership development.

P3 - Two different ways: we've, I've done several different workshops. I think they have been beneficial. I think far more beneficial is the relationships. I really ... I develop leaders through ... via relationship. I bring people close to me, and I spend time with them. And as I earn their trust they are open to encouragement, advice, instruction, modeling; that thing. And so it's a slow process It's not ... I don't ... I can't mass produce leaders that way. But I bring people close and over time, they become key and instrumental, transformational leaders in our church.

I feel like the best example would be the vice president of our Deacon Board. When he first came, he was a total backslider, mad at God; his dad had died sadly, and he was bitter and he had lost ... One of his marriage had failed and everything was just stymied in his life. He walked into our church lobby and I was interacting with him a little bit. And I said to him, "Hey, I hear a whisper over your shoulder, there's a call of God on your life." That had to be God, because I've never done before. And then ... That's when, that's how he came to our church. And five years later or six years later, because I have been in his life consistently, I've befriended him, I've built relationship, now he's the vice-president of our deacon board; he handles hospitality stuff; he did a missions trip; just has taken over our youth ministry. And that is stronger than it ever has been. It's growing.

But that's, so you say, leadership development. Yes. How have we done it? We've done some workshops. We've done some training. I will do more because I like them. I think people enjoy them. But no workshop can take the place of relationship; relationship, impartation, that thing. But that ... I think that's where real leadership is formed.

Researcher - So true. How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process contributed to this grow, either, mentoring, classes, maybe any clearly defined steps?

P3 - We have ... When people come, they're supposed to go to a New Life workshop. Which is just Our Church 101. I actually just wrote this workbook back in the day, and it still works pretty good. It's really good; very, very good for: here's what it means to be a believer; here are some habits that you should form. I try not to make it only for the [murmurs]. Here are some new life principles. Here are some new life habits. And we talk about different things. And that helps some people who ... fill in the blanks; where in their life there is some Swiss cheese holes and stuff, in areas ... some habits that they should probably pick up, but they're not, it helps them. But again I will go back to relationship. I think our small-group ministry is ... in the last year and

a half has really begun to surge; and people are really beginning to be mature, and find [recording stopped].

Researcher - Ok, on the subject of small-groups. What ... And it'll be, I guess, more than one question. But what is your emphasis on small-groups? Is it on fellowship? Is it on discipleship? What is that focus?

P3 - [chuckles] Love. Now you think, oh come on P3, that's a ... You've given me the Sunday school answer. Nope, that really is it. That we train our leaders and our hosts to have an atmosphere of love, to love on people, to ... and whatever that needs to look like. Which it's far more about ... So yes, so here's our home-group pattern is basically this: we have ... we try to have monthly, trainings, or roundups with the home-group leaders with me. So that I can just give them some tips or some encouragement, or even some attaboys. Then they get a ... They get an e-mail from a small-group leader every week, encouraging them and following up on them. In that e-mail also is a Reader's Digest version of my sermon notes and some specific questions I'd like them to cover. All of our small-groups, almost every week, there's a ... the ... there's a ... The discussion is no more than two or three questions, but it's always connected to what I was saying on Sunday. So that way our home-groups are like bon ... are like campfires. Then Sunday mornings is like the bonfire. So that way it keeps people connected to what's going on and they're fleshing out. So, by discipleship, they are supposed to be talking out, and feeling out, and working out. What ... Ok, what are some aspects of the message that either matters most to them; or what most encourages them; or most challenges them. They work that out.

But the form, that they're also really encourage ... They don't have to sing, but they're also supposed take time and just pray with and for each other. Like one of my small-group home-group leaders said, "We had forty-one prayer requests last year and forty-two answers to prayer. So they record those and they go after them. So there's not a ... The emphasis is on love and love finds expression through healthy encouraging study of Scripture. And people, a lot of people, eat together. They start by having a meal together-it's up to them. Now it's ... I leave it up and I'm just fine with that, but a lot them just find that that just really works well. They eat together, then they pray a little bit; or they eat together, and then they study and then pray. But basically it's about food, and some study, and then praying for each other. And that's what our home-groups is like. One ... I just got an e-mail from one guy that one home-group is larger than the church, has more people than when we first started on the other side of town. We had ... So I think, I actually, I hyperbole, but I think the home-group is probably over twenty-five people now or so. So now what are we gonna have? We're gonna have to encourage them to form a separate one, another one, but they're working.

Researcher - Hmm, and finally, do you have additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P3 - Yes, God is not in the business of remaking snowflakes.

Researcher - Remaking what?

P3 - Snowflakes.

Researcher – Snowflakes. Ok.

P3 - Yeah, in other words, they should ... Don't ... They should ... The only thing that they need to photocopy is paper. They should not ... They should ... They need to be themselves. They need to be as authentic and genuine and not apologize. They can learn a lot from a lot of other people. They should learn about what works. They should learn good things. But I would say that a healthiest thing for a church is for the leadership not to be afraid of just being themselves, be unique; having their own personality. They can share values and principles of other ministries. They can share values, they can share core principles. But in the end ... But they've got to be themselves and be happy about it. People know when they're ... when there is ... when it's pretentious; people know when it's ... they're being sold something. People know when they are being treated like cattle. I would say, by-and-large, people are real hungry for something real. Even if it's not polished, they want it real. They want to experience God's presence. So I would say: number one, be themselves, but not a [mutters], be themselves. But maybe even more important than that is realize, that there is a ... that people want to connect with a God who is, who lives, and loves, and acts in the now. And that's why they even wanna come to church. They want to be loved and they want, they wanna experience God.

Researcher - Ok, well thank you P3, I appreciate so much your time.

Interview #4 – October, 21, 2013

G1 senior pastor, P4²¹³

Researcher - What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth?

P4 - Well, one of the things that I appreciate is people that have been on the peripheral, they're now beginning to become a part of the church and that happens just because of our faithfulness to the Lord. I don't think that there is too many secrets there, other than, just that faithfulness and our commitment as a minister to what the Lord has called us to do.

Researcher - Ok, well, with that, you said, people becoming faithful. So are there key folks that you have there, that are becoming point people for ministries, for reaching whomever you're targeting, whether it be the lost, unchurched, or believers, non-believers?

P4 - Well, now because of us, we are in the neighborhood of forty in attendance, on a pretty regular basis now. We have people that are beginning to pick up the slack. Like with the women and like with the children. We're having people that are beginning to see the need of ministering to them. And it's coming about just because, again, the faithfulness of my wife and I to the ministry here. And we believe that there is opportunity for more growth, for sure. But all three churches in our area are running about the same. And all the pastors are telling us, relax, relax, God is going to add to the church.

213. P4 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

Researcher - So I'll just go through my questions. The second question is, how has community outreach contributed to this growth, and the example I give is acts of compassion and or evangelism?

P4 - Yeah, one of the things that I believe is becoming a part of the community as much as possible. I'm a part of the White Swan Coalition that is dealing with drugs, domestic violence, suicide, bullying, and also now marijuana; and how it is affecting our Indian population out here. And now with the Indians been given close to eighteen-thousand dollars apiece, I mean it's awful close to that. It is posing quite a problem out here with alcohol and with domestic violence. So we are just trying to keep ourselves in the forefront of what is going on, and the community knows this.

Researcher - Do you find that, while being in the community, and in certainly becoming, in developing relationships with people in the community that that has influenced as, it has highlighted the ministry you are involved in, and you've developed relationships as a direct result in people coming and being ministered to and transforming their lives?

P4 - Well, right now, the people that we are ministering to have been here now for about five years now that we've been here. And we're seeing just a very little growth, but we're still seeing that growth. And we'll never know the impact that Assemblies of God is having in our community here. Because of all the involvement of other people as well, that are a part of the church. We're just hoping and praying that we're going to see even a greater spurt of growth here.

Researcher - Ok and I wasn't sure if you maybe had some sort of structural organization or some ministry that was ... be out in the community, of some sort.

P4 - While, I've taught here anger management in the community. I'm doing that with one individual right now, and we have about three people that I'm spending time with on anger management. Now that's outside of the church, and some of it is within the church; and so, there again, it's too early to tell the growth that is going to come about because of even that.

Researcher - My next question is, how have Pentecostal distinctives, including a supernatural emphasis contributed to this growth, an example would be gifts expressed in the service, altar calls, prayer for the sick?

P4 - See now, since we have been here, the Holy Spirit is present. Ok. We hear people talking in other tongues. We hear people magnifying the Lord. We have not yet had a gift of prophecy in our church. And here, growing up in this church, it has been in the past, yes; it has been there definitely. And we're not close to that and we sure are making it available if anyone is felt led to do so. Because I'm the type of a minister that wants God to intervene regardless of what type of service that we might be having.

Researcher - Absolutely. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this? And then my specific or some examples I give are focus of alignment of

mission, values, and the vision that are expressed in practices, systems, processes, and or programs.

P4 - Yes, one of the things that I appreciate is that we have continued to have a very strong mission's emphasis in our church here. And we are supporting several missionaries. And I know that the missionaries that we are supporting, personally, and our reputation among the missionaries is just very positive. For which I thank the Lord for. But we're not at that place, yet, where we are slacking at all in our support of the district and our support of the missionaries.

Researcher – Ok. And I wasn't specifically referring to missionaries, which is an outward expression and is normally foreign missions. But I'm talking about the mission of Christ in relationship to forming a mission statement and aligning; having an organizational foundation of the mission, the values, the vision, and then instituting processes and programs that align with those organizational philosophies and practices.

P4 - Yes, see we were a sovereign church when we first came here, a Home Missions church, and we got back on that solvency as soon as possible. For the simple reason that we wanted to control what we were doing here and we didn't want ... We wanted to teach our people the value of missionary type activity. And so we do have a strong missionary program here, and we teach it.

Researcher - Ah, good. How have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they? And the examples I give are personality, leadership charisma, administration and then how have they contributed.

P4 - See now, we have my wife and I. My wife is the person that people really depend on. She's the women's missionary leader too—we call them the Busy Bees. So my wife and I take the predominate role. Our board is right behind us. And they do all that they possibly can to assist what we are doing here within the church. We don't have a large organizational structure yet, its pastor, his wife, and the board. And that's what we operate from. Then we have others that are working, boy, right alongside, that are ready to take that responsibility that we have, which I really, really appreciate.

Researcher - In alignment with that last question is why would you say people are attending? Is it because of who you are and how you love people? How you preach? What do you think is the draw?

P4 - What I hear, ok, is that people love the ministry that we are giving to the people. I also have on my website from 1200 to 2400 hits a week, and that even contributes to what is going on in the community relative to the church. Because the three churches work really close together now—like we used to back in the sixties and seventies. And so, we'll never know the impact that we're having even within the other three churches here in town, which I really, really appreciate.

Researcher - I understand. How has your worship service contributed to this growth? And I'm specifically looking at the preaching and the music.

P4 - Yes, yes, the music, the music is, is delicate. We have not adopted the new type of musical program. We sing hymns yet; we sing choruses; and there are some of the more relevant choruses, the newer chorus. And we're incorporating new choruses as often as we possibly can. And so there's always that anticipation of going into worship; going into the ministry, so I appreciate that, looking forward to what's going to happen next.

Researcher - Ok, how about your own preaching? It is said in much contemporary literature, that it is the preaching that draws people. That's really the number-one attraction to a church. How would you respond towards your own preaching?

P4 - Well, I listen to myself every once and a while. I teach out of the Bible. When we first came, we started with Hebrews; and then we went into Romans, in Roman's the eleventh chapter right now. This next Sunday we are going to start Romans the twelfth chapter and how it relates to the current situation that we find ourselves in the world is just amazing to me, and it's certainly amazing to the congregation because we're just leading up to the Lord's return, it seems.

Researcher - Ok, with

P4 - [interrupting] There's that anticipation; there's that want; there's that desire to be in the service; which I am just so thankful for.

Researcher - Yes. How has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth; either mentoring, classes, if you have any clearly defined steps, in your disciple-making process?

P4 - Yes, I taught for a number of years at the prisons here in California and ten years here in Yakima. And one of the courses that I taught was "Achieving Your Potential." And so we went through that course as a church here not too long ago. And the people really appreciated the indepthness of that class. And so, it had a lot to do with maturing the people to want to become what God wants them to be. So we're becoming stronger and stronger in relationships with even other people.

Researcher - Now one of the things you mentioned early on was that people are stepping up to the plate and filling different roles in the church and its different ministries. Now are you doing anything to develop leaders?

P4 - Yes, we have a youth leader right now that we are working with. And our youth is struggling, and so we're trying to get back on track. And we make sure that we're sending out invitations and trying to get back on track again with attracting the youth. Because without the youth, we are not going to have a church of tomorrow, and so we're just really, really putting some emphasis and training someone to take over for the youth. Because I worked with youth most of my life and now that I'm an older individual; my youth expertise is not what it used to be. So we just got to keep on working at it.

Researcher - I understand that. And do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P4 - One of the things that I am so impassionate about is study, pray, study, and then maybe pray, study, pray, study, because our words have to anointed of the Lord. And when you're in a small area, now when I say small area, a town of three-hundred with a population of nine-hundred in your school, you've gotta be ready for whatever might happen. And I took four of those FEMA classes on crisis management. And so anytime that we would have a crisis here, while we're going to be called upon. And I appreciate the fact that we're always studying, always preparing ourselves for what lies ahead because we know what's going on right now. But boy, there is a lot of stuff that is coming down that we need to be ready for, I think.

Researcher - Ok so

P4 – [interrupting] I try to prepare people even for that. You know what I mean? Be prepared for the unexpected (passionate emphasis).

Researcher - Yes! Just a ... sort of a last question is: how would you perceive yourself as ministering or pastoring your community?

P4 - Well, we've ... I'm involved in the community here: I go down to the restaurants; I visit with people; and I am very passionate about making sure that I represent. I'm an ambassador for Christ. And so, you never know when you're called upon, you never know when somebody wants you to pray for them and with them. And so I'm always trying to make sure that I'm out in the community and doing what we can: baseball games, basketball games; whatever else is going on. We just feel very much a part of this community. We love this community.

Researcher – Hmm, cause I remember, I'm remembering your story a little bit now, that you first sent me. And yes, it sounds like you've got a lot of history there and a lot of emotional attachments there.

P4 - Yes, yes, yes. Brother, I think that anyone that is in the ministry, we don't have to worry about that church or growth because sometimes you can get so bogged down because you're not growing, and you wonder what in the world's going on. When your God is my God, when your God sees things that are impossible, and so I believe that the Lord will take us as ministers and give us that spirit to relax, but yet work and work hard. That's my feeling about ministry.

Researcher - And I appreciate that, because you're right, we can get so tense and so wrapped up in continually doing, instead of first and foremost that intimacy with God, which the outflow of ministry comes from that intimacy with God; and we can so sideline that so much and that's sad.

P4 - Yeah, yeah. See I knew Brother Welk, Les Welk, when he was youth pastor, working with the youth there at Anacortes, up there. And he came out here to our church with a group. And hey, look his uncle brought him down here, and they were out at our pool. So I've known Les for many, many years. And I appreciate the emphasis that he's given to our district. And I think of what you're doing, it enhances the ministry. And I believe in making sure that we have all the tools that we have in the trade, making sure that we get them all.

Researcher - Amen, well P4, I appreciate your time very much.

Interview #5 – October, 24, 2013
G2 senior pastor, P5²¹⁴

Researcher - What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth?

P5 – Yep, I listed three for that. First one, I listed leadership infrastructure. And what ... By that is when we first got here (which has been over four and a half years ago now) there was a leadership vacuum. And so the first thing I started to do was establish teams of lay leaders. There's an actual structure in place, that ... and to enable them to make decisions, to have vision, to be able to train, equip, and move forward. So anyhow, I have what I call twenty L1 Leaders (level one leaders). And these are the make it or break it people. This group of twenty, they're the team leaders; they're the ones that carry the weight of ministry. They are all lay leaders. So, first of all, leadership infrastructure was established or has been established and is still being tweaked.

The second piece that I answered or said was what I would call functional systems. Because in my thinking, usually, you can track down, to a large extent, track things down to a systemic problem; a broken system or a missing system. So whether its communication, coordination; whatever shape it takes. But there's usually a system; there's a system at play in it. And when it starts dysfunctional or becomes irrelevant. So maybe at one point in the past it worked, but now we're at a different place so the old system is antiquated; and it's no longer effective. So we looked at systems. We looked at what was currently in place, and we tweaked, we dropped, we added [chuckles], we revised, and that's an ongoing process. And then, one more piece on the first question.

The third contributing factor, I believe, is just teaching. And we'll talk more about this. That's a strength of mine we'll get to on number five. But ... So teaching, both ... there's two sides: a formal teaching; which is anything from a Sunday morning, or a board meeting, or leadership team meetings. So there is a formal side to the teaching, but then there is the informal side. And which would be what I call: the water-cooler conversation, in the hallway conversation, or in the men's restroom conversation, and those are ... or a lunch time, or a coffee time. Those informal settings are as valuable and as beneficial many times as the formal settings. They tend to be one-on-one. They're usually casual. A lot of times they're spontaneous and so you're literally ... But it's an opportunity to really teach, to help strengthen, to encourage, to educate. So those are my ... those are three factors: leadership infrastructure, functional systems, and teaching.

Researcher - Now with the functional teachings, do you see it as more discipleship oriented or vision, organizational. Uhm

P5 – [interrupting] Yeah, good question, both-and.

Researcher – Ok.

214. P5 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

P5 - Yeah, they're a both-and. To that a good, probably a 50-50 split on that because there are definitely moments to do, what I would call, functional, or structural, or systemic teaching, organizational teaching. But then there are also discipleship, spiritual growth, encouragement; teaching pieces as well. And both of those happen both formally and informally. So it ... whether it could be a spiritual growth teaching moment that is on the phone, or in the office, or at the water cooler. Or it could be a formal time, like a structured moment in a board meeting, or a Sunday morning, or in a ... or structured meetings with teams of leaders with an intentional agenda to teach this piece. So we have both; we do both-and.

Researcher – Ok and we'll probably look at that a little bit more with question six. With question two, how has community outreach contributed to this growth, both as an organization emphasis and individual? And obviously with ... an expression of that might be acts of compassion, evangelism.

P5 – So just a little bit of back ... a step back. Historically when we first came here the church was in a very bad place, in fact, it was, almost shut down. It was under Network supervision. And it was a very, a very tension-filled exit of the previous pastor. So when I got here, literally for the first three years, it had to be helping the organization and individuals get healthy; catch their wind; get their feet back on the ground; learn how to trust a leader; drop their defensive guard. So literally, there wasn't opportunity, initially, to think so much externally or community-oriented; it had to be for a season-of-time, it had to be more internal, just for health reasons. We weren't positioned at that time to be able to begin to think ... We were, but it was just very organic. It was very ... just people on their own at work. There was no structured intentional, push.

Now we're there; we're positioned; we've turned-a-corner. Like I mentioned we've been here four and a half-years, but literally by about the third-year mark, I felt the turning of a corner. We actually hired Monty Hip to come in a year ago. He's with the C4 group, and he specializes in community engagement. We brought him in, and we hired him. He took us through a very intensive process with the board, with the top-tier leaders, those 20 leaders. And we did a really in-depth assessment of the community, of the church. The end result of that was a community engagement strategy, which we are implementing now. We just started it in September. So, it was a year process just to get to the point of pulling the trigger of implementation. So we're literally on the front edge of the process we've done with Monty. We're seeing some good results. We're seeing ... We're trying to meet felt needs.

The other piece I talked about initially, the need for healing: organizational healing and individual healing. I see now the community engagement as the next step in the organizational health. Because here's the deal, if ... so there's a season of time that needs to be internal for health; and focused to get people back on their feet. But if you stay there then it becomes ... then it starts to become unhealthy that inward focus. So there's gotta be discernment, and hearing, watching and hearing. Ok, so we've turned-a-corner now. We've been internal now. We've gotta go outside thinking, because if we don't, we'll just become a bunch of consumers. We'll consume a sermon. We'll consume worship. We'll feel good. And we'll go out and have no impact on-the-street. And so, anyhow, we are on the front edge of the intentional strategy of community engagement, but I do see it as the next step in spiritual health.

Researcher – With that moving forward, were there any indicators that you were looking for? Was it incremental or a distinct, as you mentioned, a turning of a corner?

P5 – Yeah, and I think, I'm just processing ... I'll come back to some of those settings, those formal and informal settings. So whether it's an actual leadership meeting, or a water-cooler moment, or a lunch with someone, when you start to realize, yeah, ok, the ... What you're hearing, what is being said to you is not framed through a past; with a past lens. It's not a past reference, "This is what we used to" or "This is what happened." It's not ... It goes from a past tense to a current and future tense. So, you literally hear a change in language. You hear a change in attitude. You see a change in perspective. You start to feel a change in culture. And the culture shifts from a hurting dysfunctional reference to the past, to a celebration of, "We're at a new day." So it's current language with anticipation for and, "This is what we see God is getting ready to do." That ... Those are the indicators, those all play in, "Wow, we have turned; we are turning a major corner." So I don't hear reference to the past, as much. I don't hear, that lens seems like it's been set, surrendered, it's been laid at the cross. And now the language, the perspectives, the attitudes, the expectations, they're present slash future.

Researcher – Do you find a large [exhales] ... Was there a larger ... Was there a proportionate, amount that you would look ... that you would use as an indicator because it seems like there would be some that would be moving at different stages or is this ... you see that this is just a corporate, a voice that was showing it?

P5 - Yes, a cumulative, corporate. Obviously there are some individuals who will ... Everybody progresses through healing at different tempos or at different paces. So you'll have some early adapters. Some who are quicker to release the past and move on. And then you have others who are a little bit ... who take a little bit longer. But overall in a ... from a corporate ... See this is another thing; this again is my wiring; I'm a big picture thirty-thousand view guy, so I'm trying to look at corporately across the board, general, in the big picture of things. Where are we?

And so that's not ... There are still some individuals who may have certain things that they just still haven't surrendered. And you'll hear em maybe surface in a board meeting in the form of a question, or a concerned look, or all of that stuff. But ... And it's not that you ignore that, I deal with those or work with those one-on-one, or I'll flesh those out, but corporately, you'll start to hear where the general tone.

I'll give you an example. Let's say for example, here are some health factors, or some health indicators that let me know we've turned-a-corner: when I hear people laugh, literally laugh in service; when they stand, and they talk, and they laugh, and they engage, and they interact. And secondly, they linger; they're not in a hurry to get out the door. They actually want to be together. They enjoy each other's company. In fact, it's almost difficult to get them out the door because they like to be together. So laughter, lingering, those are just some off the top-of-my-head, two good health indicators. So and then when I see another healthy thing is when we're attracting young couples with little kids. And so that tends to be in a lot of places; that tends to be the missing group is the 20-something's; the mid to upper 20's, early 30's maybe, with the real little guys, babies and little kids. So there is a health ... There's a good diversity of ages. But that younger group bringing in, that brings life and energy and passion and pursuit and their seeking and their hungry. And it's just a huge boost. But I think there has to be ... So when you

have laughter; when you have lingering; when you have relationships; when you have community, when you have connection; it's exciting, people wanna be a part of that.

So those are some visible signs, some cultural signs that stand out to me in my mind. As I'm on any given Sunday looking at the crowd, or talking to people on the phone, or going to coffee ... I do a lot of meetings before the meeting or meetings after the meeting [chuckles] a lot. I do a lot of coffee times; a lot of lunch times; a lot of just hanging out times, get in the truck and ride with somebody; just sit in or just standing in the hallway. Those times are incredibly valuable in this assessment process. Because in that spontaneous moment, they're not, it's not preplanned, it's just, a lot of times, it's just talking from the heart, it's just sharing, and it's just ... And you and I were in the coaching piece, so it's a coaching moment to where you're literally, you're actively listening and asking a question, which sparks more dialogue in a deeper revealing of what's in the heart. And it's very casual; it's very informal; it wasn't planned for. It's just hanging out. It's just ... It's none threatening.

Those are the things that over the years I started, I just noticed. And so I say around that three-year mark, it became evident that the culture had shifted; the laughter, the linger, the community, the younger couples those all started to feed into my assessment of, "Hey I've think we've turned-a-corner here."

Researcher – Ok, how have Pentecostal distinctives, including supernatural, a supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth? And obviously, you see their gifts expressed in service, spiritual gifts, altar calls, prayer for the sick, any other supernatural manifestations or emphasis.

P5 – Well, we do have ... Sometimes we will have ... So we do have the moving of the Spirit, that's not necessarily every single Sunday. It's not forced or made to happen, but it's enabled or allowed if there's opportunity, and we encourage that to happen.

The other ... back a little bit of a step, I actually draw from a good old Baptist pastor [chuckles] Henry Blackaby, who wrote *Experiencing God*. And he talks about finding where God is at work and joining him. And so from the very beginning, from day one, when I got here, I literally started talking about that vision; and actually using as the definition of success. So it's not that we want to start something, and then pray real hard about it, and ask God to come over and bless it and ... But what we wanna do is, we wanna pray real hard for the purpose of discerning where God's already at work and then going to where he is and joining him. And so I preach a lot about that, I talk about it, I try to model that, and I talk to the leaders about that. I try to put flesh ... So what does that look like? How do we know when we ...? How do we ...? Is that a God thing or not? So that's a big part of me and of what I've been sharing here. And then also, then just emphasizing on the individual level, each person. Jesus said, "You have eyes to see, but you cannot see. You have ears to hear, but you cannot hear." So encouraging all of us to have the Holy Spirit develop within us the ability to see where God's at work; the ability to hear where the Holy Spirit's moving.

So anyhow, we have gifts of the Spirit; we have tongue's interpretation. We have where someone sometimes will maybe in the worship time, will come up and sit by me and say, "Hey Pastor I feel like God's maybe saying. What do you think?" Sometimes that will be shared as "Hey, this is what we feel God is saying to us today," and that can be confirmed. Obviously, altar times, definitely preach about healing. Healing, both physical and spiritual, emotional, relational, in all ways. And we make those an ongoing part of our services. We believe in anointing with oil,

and so all of the scriptural backing to those pieces. So they're all present. Well, I don't want to get ahead of myself, but as we go on down the questions.

We have a broad, broad, broad group of people who come from a variety of backgrounds. So they don't even understand, "Oil? What are you doing with the oil? What's that about?" Or what ... whose ... that has to be nurtured; it has to be explained. There's a teaching moment. So for example: when tongues, tongues and interpretation happen, it's an opportunity to teach. It's a ... So you're encouraging those to move in the Spirit, who understand that. But then those who are new and don't understand that it's a teaching moment. To be able to say here's what we believe just happened. Here's what Scripture says about that and on and on and on, so, yup.

Researcher – Ok, I'm going to stray a little bit from my question, but I want to explore the spiritual aspect, supernatural. With your ... Do you have any corporate prayer times and how, what's the pervasive prayer attitude?

P5 – Yeah, we do have corporate prayer times. We have an ongoing Sunday-evening prayer group that meet every week. We have a group that meets every Wednesday night as well. We just started that, an intercessory group. The Wednesday-night group is connected with our community engagement. So that group is meeting to pray about community needs; the outreach pieces that we are starting, and praying for kids, praying for families. I've also done, oh you can call them different things, but basically special times on Sunday nights where we'll get together, and I may go to the piano, and just lead a little worship, and pray a little bit, and then move into a guided intercession prayer time. And those tend to be ... I'll lead that in everything from, say: prayer for leaders in the community, educators, administrators, business owners, other churches. So it's just helping people walk through. And then there's opportunity for individual prayer; if someone wants to come and have prayer for specific needs that they have.

And so one thing that I ... and this is a side note, but we're bumping up against it a little bit here, is I actually have, oh, not a lot of people, but some who are pretty interested into Bethel, down in California. I don't know a lot about Bethel, but what I hear and what I've heard and have seen, I think there can be some good things in there, and I think there's some cautious things in there. And so what I try to do, here again through teaching and example and modeling it is: we're true to being ... We're an Assembly of Church, that's who we are, so here's what comes with this is what we mean by that. I have, again, formal classes designed to teach, literally to teach the Sixteen Fundamentals of Faith. That happens every week. We go through one at a time. I also have the membership process involves giving them a copy of the bylaws and it, which list the fundamentals. So trying to help people understand, well, what is an Assembly of church about. But for me personally and for us here, I don't have any interest in becoming a Bethel, I think that's God ... Whatever God is gonna do there for them, but we're not Bethel. And sometimes I have some of the people who have a strong leaning that way. They actually go down and visit the church. They go for special services and conferences and all that. They listen to podcasts every week. So I hear these kinds of reports and things. So I just try to be true to the Assemblies of God doctrine, but yet everything be done decent and in order. And so I emphasis that. I talk about 1st Corinthians 14. I talk about what that looks like in a corporate setting. And so I think boundaries are important, parameters, safeguards? Does that make sense?

Researcher – Oh, yes.

P5 – Yeah, I’ve been

Researcher – [interrupting] And this next question, it aligns with Pentecostal distinctives. We’re probably a little unbalanced in the AG with this. But what ... How do you put any emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit that’s not necessarily speaking in tongues but just being filled with the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

P5 – Oh, absolutely, yeah, in fact, that’s coming up this coming Sunday is gonna be to a large extent, what I’m gonna be preaching on. A major part of my sermon this coming week is an overflowing, a fullness to overflowing straight ahead AG doctrine. It’s a subsequent experience. It’s an empowering for ministry. It does include and involve tongues. It’s not only about tongues, but it, that’s part of it. But it empowers us for living for Christ. It helps us to ... It doesn’t ... It’s not needed to go to Heaven. Ok, all those pieces. So that’s in fact the first of this year in my first sermon series. I actually designated this year as a year of the Holy Spirit; a year for a greater in filling; a year of overflow. A year of just pressing into another level of God’s Presence and Spirit; his Spirit in our corporate settings; his presence in and overflow in our individual lives, in our families, in our workplaces, in the marketplace; all of these things. So that I’ve continually pushed and touched on that throughout the whole year or from January on. And it’s just something, I gut level felt to say, hey, this is what I feel is we’re just gonna, go after the Holy Spirit this year. And I don’t know if ... Help me with ... Ask me another question there. Is that ... Help me if I’m making sense there.

Researcher – Yes and I think you’re right on track with that and that’s so, so important. Let’s move on to the fourth question; you’ve already responded to this one, I think, in a significant way. You seem very strategic in your thinking, very organizational orient ... Realizing the importance of the organization yet not letting it become, burdensome or cumbersome. But I’ll just go ahead and ask it and you can respond in the ways that you might feel: How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth, e.g., focus on alignment of mission, values, and vision with strategies, practices, any systems, and you talked about systems, processes, programs?

P5 - Yeah a few things. So I’ve emphasized ... Here again, it all ties together, but from day one I’ve emphasized, I guess, what we would refer to as empowering leadership; an empowering leadership philosophy. So ... But I also talked to all the leaders about what I call the Ephesians 4 model: equip the saints for the work of the ministry. And so I tell them and I’ve told them from day one—I think I even said this in the very first weekend that I came down, for the interviewing process—I said my job description is stated in Ephesians 4, that I am to equip you for the work of the ministry, that’s my job; that’s what I am to do here, and so I see myself as an equipper, as an empowerer.

And so, that question also talks about alignment. Without alignment ... We can have a mission statement, worded and put on the wall or on a bulletin or wherever. We can say what our values are. We can say here’s our vision. But really it does come down to the key issue is alignment. Because if our resources are going, resources being of course, finances, but time, energy, passion, effort (where the people are putting their time, their energies), and all of that. In our programming, what we’re doing intentionally, they have to be in alignment to who we say we are.

Now the interesting thing about that, and this is a little of a history thing, and it goes back, so there are ... How can I say this? There was an intentional reason I didn't come in the door saying: Here is where we are going ... it going; this is the vision, this is the mission, we're gonna go here, and it's gonna be like ... I didn't do that because of a historical fact. And because of where the church was at when I first arrived here. I could ... If I would've arrived here and done that, I would have dug myself in a hole; alienated myself, enforced the defense ... the defensive posture they were already in. So I had to come in very, very casual, very laid back, very ... I had a vision. In fact, I can tell a vision for the next eight month, the next twelve months, and the next three to five years, but that just unfolds naturally, I share those vision pieces.

And then, what I do is I work with leaders in a way to strategically bring in alignment and to say are we on track? Let's evaluate. Let's talk that. What did you just see happen? What did you like about what just happened? What do you think can be done better with what just happened? And we talk about those. Those conversations bubble, and they bring to the surface. So I do that every week with my staff, in staff-meeting. I do it every month with the board. I do it quarterly with the L1 leaders in the leadership team meetings that we have scheduled. We do an event, we do an ... this ... For the sake of alignment, are we on track? Are we still pressing in the right way? Are we still discerning where God's at? Are we still with God? Are we still working where he is, or have we drifted and now expecting him to come to us? And so, there's been things that have been dropped. There have been things added. There have been things that have been redirected, restructured. And that's ... A lot of that is just a learning process, really, week to week, month to month, and year to year.

Uh, there has to be a mechanism. Jim Collins in *Good to Great*, talks about putting teeth. It's gotta have teeth to it to ensure alignment. And so what are the teeth that we can put so that times of evaluation, honesty, transparency; asking for input, giving people ownership, enabling them to have a voice. Because unfortunately, what was present here before, the previous pastor, it was a very dictatorial style of leadership, which resulted in the District removing him. So when I say it was very tension-filled, that's an understatement. And so ... But people were very gunshy to even knock on the pastor's door because of that previous lens. So here again, I didn't ... I intentionally adjusted an approach based on what I saw in their positioning: emotional, spiritual, relational; all those pieces.

Researcher - Ok and what you're talking about seems it overflows into the next part, is how have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? Specifically, what are they; personality, leadership, charisma, administration and how have they contributed?

P5 - Well I'm an odd duck, Phil [chuckles at length]. I say that in laughing but seriously, because literally I've done a bunch of ... I just love that analysis; I am very analytical; and I love to evaluate. But anyhow, so I've taken a series of temperament test and strength test and all those. So here's what I am: according to Myers-Briggs, I am an INTJ.

Internal, so I get strengthened internally. I've gotta have time to myself. So I'm in a people business, but I've gotta carve out time every day to have me time; just time with God. So I do that. I'm intuitive, so that plays in when I use ... The spiritual word is discernment. You could use ... They could equate a little bit. So in tune, discern, you're ... but there's antenna up that are picking up on. And sometimes they're hard, it's hard to describe to you. It's sometimes you just know when you're talking discernment, or intuition. You're just picking up, and you just gotta have a confirmation in your spirit that, ok I've ... And you confirm that you don't just run

with that in an isolated place. So I have a group of people around me who are very important in ... who I bounce ... I say, here's what I'm feeling. Here's what I'm seeing. Does that sound right? And I listen to make sure my intuition is working for me and not against me. Thinking, so I'm very cerebral, head oriented. So I'm just constantly in my head; constantly thinking, constantly analyzing, constantly reflecting; so very, very heavily oriented in the head.

And the judging is just routine, consistent, very practical, very functional. Of looking ... Of make decisions, stick to the decision, plan the work, work the plan, that kind a thing, that's me. I like consistency. I like dependability. I like reliability. I like efficiency. Now [chuckles] that brings strength to me; like strategy, systems thinking, all of those. Those are strengths just built in naturally in my temperament. It can also work in ... and they do ... can work against me if I don't balance those out. And that's why I have key people around me. Obviously my wife, pastor friends, people, guys that I can call and say, Am I seeing this right? Help me with this. And I respect and trust them.

Other gifts, spiritually, on my spiritual gifts, the three top for me: administration is the top; exhortation, second; and then teaching, third. And so I think you can start to see a pattern in me of all I've talked about; everything from systems and leadership infrastructure, and teaching (both informal and formal), all of those pieces. It really does ... Honestly, it's springing from who God has made me; and how He's poured into me.

Not to make this call three hours long, but I was an associate pastor for 23 years before I became a senior pastor. I was 46 years old before I became a senior pastor. As a result of the 23 year run, I've worked with, who I believe are key top of the notch leaders across the nation. And I had the ability to be alongside of them and see how they walked through in difficult situations; how they worked with their Board; how they worked with their leaders, how they developed people. I experienced a lot of things with great leaders and was able to just be a sponge and learn from them. And so that down inside. The Holy Spirit brings back to our remembrance of those training pieces.

Here's the funny thing, my degree is in education. I wasn't trained to be a pastor. I'm a pastor's kid. I grew up in the church. My dad's been a pastor for 54 years. So I learned a lot from him; grew up seeing his style, and his strengths, and his weaknesses. Went out and worked for pastors for 23 years and now a senior pastor. And just pulling from a lot of those things that God put into me over the years. One of the things ... But I went through Mel Ming's process. Which I loved! He did the leader, Leader Intensive piece. So we did temperament. We did life experiences, we mapped those out. We did Strength finders 2.0. And my strength finder piece is future oriented, intellectualism, learning, connection, and strategy. I was just off the charts. All of my pieces were in the strategy piece. On the side, he came up, looked behind me and said, "Hmm, ok" [chuckles].

And it's just ... So I started out by saying I'm a strange duck, because on the temperament thing alone, supposedly, the Meyers/Briggs thing says that only 2 percent of the population has the temperament that I have. I don't know if that's good or bad, but none-the-less, that's how God's wired me. And it's been tremendous help for me to understand those pieces about me, and learn how to work with them, and be me, I'm still learning, but just to let God to flow in, through me as he has made me. But boy, just all that we're talking about. Number five, it really does shape a lot of what the answers to these questions are for me. It really, for me personally, it really, really does; that number five is a very key issue for me. So and I love to learn, wanna grow. I'm just not content; always wanting to stretch; wanting to find out; wanting to see new connections; wanting to hear new ways to do it, new ways to think, new ways to try.

That's another way to say that one of the things I learned from the pastors that I worked ... One of the pastors in Ohio, one of his main strengths was he developed a safe-place to fail. It was a safe-place to experiment; it was a safe-place to try. And if you fell flat on your face, you weren't ridiculed or reprimanded or threatened with firing. It was safe; it was good; it was healthy. And I never ... I remember walking away with that, "Man, that I wanna be someday; I wanna be like that. That's awesome! I want ... And so I'm trying to do that. I'm trying to give people a safe-place. And there's all kinds of tensions with that. When ... Because wow, as you're walking that out ... I just talked about a minute ago about boundaries, parameters, and things done decently and in order; and then we think about spiritual gifts; and we think about giving people a safe-place to try and a safe-place to fail. What does that look like? How do you do both-and? There's the tension. You've got to have decency; decent and in order, but the ability to try, and experiment, and stretch. And so sometimes it's an art. It ... There's not a book necessarily that you can read as much as it is just literally everyday getting on the floor by my desk. Here at my little chair here. And bowing and praying, saying, "Oh Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, ya gotta help me. Help me see this right. Help me to know how to do this." So, yeah.

Researcher - I appreciate you sharing. And I'll make a comment afterwards just because I want to keep going. And you've made some comments about this. But ... And how has leadership development process ... How has a leadership development process contributed to this growth?

P5 – Yeah, again, I just keep referring to the ... We're in a different place now than we were initially. At first, I would call it more of an organic individual process. It was very informal. It was the lunches, the coffee times, those. Now, we're getting into more of a formalized. Now that I have their trust and we've turned this corner. And in all honesty, we're just on the front end of that. So I don't have the formalized leadership development process. It's in ... It's being done, but we're just in the early stages of that. So there's all of these things are just spinning simultaneously. So you've got community outreach, and then you have this turn-the-corner. And they're at different places of healing. And now they've got their wind, and now they're wanting to spread their wings.

And so I'm on the front end of ... That's probably ... That's a big prayer request for me is for this wisdom to know how to help everybody grow to the next leadership development piece. And I do, I would say, I see my primary investment: time, energy, all those resources, going to those 20 L1 leaders. That ... Those are my ... They're ... That's exactly what they're called; they're the top tier. They're the ... They carry the weight. They make ministry happen every week.

I'm actually in the process of restructuring that. So what is now 20 L1 leaders will probably turn into more like 10 or 12. With ... and so I'll have L1 leaders, L2 leaders, and L3. L1's are department leaders, point people; L2s are team players; L3s are helpers and workers. So I'm gonna take some of the L1s and reposition them to L2s and broaden the administrative responsibilities of the L1s. Because what I'm finding now with ... It's very difficult for me to really invest properly into 20. That's really on the outer edge of what one guy can probably do well. So I think half that number ten to twelve is probably ... is more realistic. So I'm in a restructuring process right now. In fact, I've got the paper work on the table right next to me. To enable a more intentional formalized leadership development process, but it's gonna have to be fewer leaders, key leaders, key, key leaders. So I'm just in the ... I'm in the beginning stages of

thinking that through. So when I sit in my chair and look out the window, and it looks like I'm day-dreaming, I'm restructuring that system [chuckles].

Researcher - And it sounds like, I've been reading a book *Leadership Development* by Malphurs, and it sound like similar, what you talk about the different levels of leadership. You did mention you didn't have much of a structure, but it does sounds like you do have a structure. Now do you have within each of those levels a certain criteria for characteristics? Expectations?

P5 – Yeah, I do in my head. And that's why I haven't ... I've just talked it out with them, casually and not to be too heavy handed. And what I'm ... Some of that there's a timing issue. Because I know some have been asking for more thoughts on paper, or more formalized, or even job descriptions, formalized. So that's where I'm at. We're in that process of starting to do those things. Yeah, I just lost track again. Ask me that question again.

Researcher - Well I think you answered it, I think what's pertinent about the LDR, LDP process. Are you ... Is there a point where you're multiplying your efforts, you're asking other leaders to mentor, too?

P5 – Yeah, absolutely! Yeah, there has to be. I think any healthy organism will reproduce. That's a ... That's also a sign of health, so there's a reproduction; which has been the theme of the Conference. For the last ... multiplication, multiply, or reproduce. That's just a natural by-product, if you wanna say it, of health. Is there's a multiplying or a reproduction. So that's in everything from leaders reproducing, looking for someone to bring alongside of them to do the Ephesians 4 model. So what I've been doing for them the last four and a half years now, they're to do with someone else; bring somebody alongside give them the ability to have some ownership, to learn, to stretch, to fail, to try. So we're in that place. Some of my pastor buddies, over the years, I remember them saying more than one said to me, "P5, it usually takes about seven years before you get to the place to where you really can, so to speak, make a difference.

So we've been here four and a half, the first three it took to turn that corner. Now we're in a middle, a phase, I would call it, where we are restructuring, regrouping; going to another level in community engagement. And so then, you get around that seven-year mark, it's like that seven-year, seven-inning stretch, seven-year, seven-year itch thing; where now you have enough, in Mel Ming's language, critical mass [chuckles] to be able to have impact. To be ... to really have ... and in my ... what I would call being a regional church. So you start community local in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, outermost parts of the world. So it's this concentric circles spreading out. So I think we're getting in position right now to grow into, vision wise, what I would refer to as a regional church. And I've been sharing that vision, just casually with board members, and key leaders, and different ones.

But it's gonna take an intentional leadership development process to get there. And so that's where the restructuring comes in, and the intentionality of the process. So it's gonna ... it will involve job descriptions. It will involve all these pieces that have just been informal. There's ... Boy, that's a real delicate thing to massage. You don't want to become over bureaucratic, but as an organization grows ... So we've more than doubled. I think when I got here we were right at a hundred and we've been right around two, in the two-forties. And so, it is an interesting dynamic because we're right at the place ... I have no other, no paid staff. I have some part time, but no other paid pastors; some administrative staff and some ... but mainly all

lay people. So ... But I see now for us to get positioned for another ... for a greater impact, this leadership piece, this question number six is, that's where we're putting our finger at right now; that's where we're living and breathing right now today. With the vision of cause ... Here again, future oriented, my tendency is to see where I think God, not only where God's at work now, but where (so to speak), where he's moving or going to be. And that might sound weird, but work my way back from that, and then ask myself, what's the next step I can take today to get one step closer to that place? It's what Stephen Covey would say, "Begin with the end in mind." It's those kinds of thoughts, principles, but I think you get what I'm saying. So, yeah ...

Researcher – Yes I do and with the next question, how has the worship service, i.e. preaching, music, contributed to this growth?

P5 – Yeah, well our little—I call it more of a motto, instead of vision statement or a value, or a mission statement—but I think our mission statement has already been said by Jesus to go and make disciples. So we're commissioned to do that. But ... So we have our little motto that I try to emphasize each Sunday. I say, "Hey, we're a church who we wanna grow in our faith; we wanna connect with God; and we wanna serve others." So it's that little three piece. So when we talk about Sundays, and we evaluate with the staff, or we think about how are we giving opportunity for people to truly connect with God in a worship setting?

My style of ... I'm more of a teacher. In fact what we're doing right now is really what I do on a Sunday morning. I really ... I just share, and I talk, and I express, and I think loud, which is dangerous sometimes. Sometimes it's ... people laugh, and sometimes people look at me sideways, but just try to be very transparent. Very ... What you see is what you get. Just ... And sometimes, I'll literally just sit on the edge of the platform, or I'll sit on the step, and I'll just say, "Hey, let me talk with you just for a minute, here's what's in my heart. This is what God has been stirring in my own life. And if ... Take from it what you can get; if ... maybe it's just for me. But ... And I'll just start talking, and I'll share. And like I said, they'll laugh, and we'll cry and but I think just being that genuine. Let em see you cry. Let em hear you laugh; the frustration, the real life, that.

So when I say connect and when I say grow, I think there has to be multiple ways for people to connect. So worship does that help them? The preaching, does that help them connect to grow, the visible, the growth in spiritual maturity; the fruit of the Spirit? Am I still trying to break the same things in life? Am I still or is there a growth here?

And ... But then the third piece, the serving. I think the best way to grow and the best way to connect is, honestly, is through serving. And I think, sometimes, we may stop short of that, but sometimes you won't grow; we don't grow as much as we could until we have to [chuckles]. My goodness, so I'm sitting in a senior pastor's seat for the first time. And it's not to say that I didn't grow before, but I've had to grow in ways over the past four years that I just wasn't faced with those issues. Because I was the second; I wasn't the first in command; I was behind somebody. And so, there's nobody for me to say, "Yeah, go talk to pastor." I'm the one, and so you're required to grow. It's just not an option to not. And I think that's a good tension; I think that's healthy because when we have to depend on God; when we have to pray. If he doesn't come through and give wisdom, I don't know what to say to you right now [chuckles]. So those are scary places and tension-filled places, but they're really, really good places, because those are the places that we can grow.

So coming back: the worship service specifically. I've worked so much with ... and I'm so proud of them, but for example, like the worship team. And we ... I have a young lady, whose the L1 leader of the worship ministry, and talking with her, and leading, and coaching, and helping anything from just practical pieces of worship ministry, getting everything from sound, and lighting, to song choice and flow. Not telling her what to do or how to do it, but literally coaching, pulling out of her; asking questions; being a sounding board; listening. Of course that for twenty-three years, I was an associate slash worship pastor, so that is a huge strength of mine. So I had to be careful not to be ... to come and intimidate her. Say it's not ... I'm saying it has to be done this way. What do you think about? What do you think if? Or if she'll ask me, "Well pastor, tell me what would you do?" Well, ok, here's some thoughts. I might do this; or I think I would do this. Or—I learned this from Mel—instead of giving em one answer (and this is what I would do) give em two or three and say, "Now which of those do you think you would like? Which of those would be best?" So it's another coaching, it's putting it back. It's giving them an ability to have ownership, and to have wisdom and discernment on their own. So you're not telling em. You're just saying, "Hey, well what comes to my mind, you could do this, or you could try that. Or which of ... what do you think? And so just, boy, there's been so much growth; and just so much; and just from where we were when we first started to where we are now.

And in all honesty, it was all hired staff before. It was paid people that led worship; and paid people who worked with the kids; and paid people ... And so when the pastor left, they all left with him. And so, now you've got a church of people who they've ... they don't ... they didn't know. It was the hired person that did it. And so, "You want me to do that? You want me to say that? Well, try it, what do you think? What do you think?" And just encouraging and helping, and it's just been really, really fun. And so Sunday mornings are a real highlight of the week [chuckles]. Sometime it drives you crazy, because, in all honesty, if you had paid people, they either would do or you could do. You feel the tension. Come on, paid positions, there's leverage there. And so, you can have an annual review. And if you don't hit your marks, you could be fired; and we hire somebody else. But with lay volunteers, you don't have the money leverage for sure. You have pure influence, active listening [chuckles], pulling it out of ... encouraging them, and so.

Anyhow, the worship service, it's been a key, key place. We honestly believe that people are connecting with God; we believe they're growing in their faith; and we believe that they're, stretching; and they're serving, stretching to a new level. So, it's been a huge contributor. [recording interrupted]

P5 – [in progress] ... I was literally taught to be a school teacher. And here I am pastoring a church. So [chuckles] ... A lot of it is literally jumping in and learning as you go.

Researcher – Well, you've got those giftings. And then I'll ... I've started my recording again. And so we'll probably just pick that up after I get my questions done. But and this one's gonna go off the page a little bit, but what attracts people to your church?

P5 – Yeah, I think, the people ... First of all, that just the ... It's ... So we're in a small community, eight-thousand people. And it's a rural, farming, for the most part, community. And so you have extended families. And you have some people who have lived here for many years. But then ... or who are deeply committed and connected in the community. And so ... And here's an interesting, I'll say it this way, I think every church has a narrative. We can call it

culture. But when I say narrative, there's a story. There is a story on the street that's being told. Now that narrative sometimes it can become negative, and it can have a negative momentum; where, "You don't wanna go to that place. They're a bunch of hypocrites," Oh and blah, blah, blah, so it can be. But when the narrative on the street is positive and exciting and passionate and "Man, you've gotta go check this ... I mean you never know what this ... We've got the goofiest pastor, you never know what he's gonna say from week to week. You never know what he's gonna do" or what ... "There's just so many kids there, there's ... They're gonna have something for your kids. You just ... You need to get Johnny and Mary there because ..." Once that narrative starts to take shape and there's ... and that starts hitting the coffee shop, and the grocery store, and Wal-Mart in the peanut butter isle, and all of these places ... They're starting ... this community, this narrative starts to stir, and it starts to build inquisitive momentum. Now, I'm not trying to just talk about promotion and marketing, but there's a spiritual side, obviously to that narrative. Because I think the Holy Spirit's smack in the middle of that. Because, first of all, I think, he's brought in ... bringing healing to the people who are saying the narrative, and he's drawing the person who's hearing the narrative, and putting within them the desire to want to come and check it out. So I think there's a lot of Holy Spirit motion stirring in that narrative that hits the street.

So having said all of that, we have not done any formalized promotion and marketing campaign, at all. We've literally grown, like I said, from a hundred to a little bit less than two-hundred; pretty consistent, steady, over the last four and a half years. And it's been what I would put my finger on as this healthy Holy Spirit narrative that hits the street; goes in the coffee shop; goes to Wal-Mart; goes to Safeway. And all of a sudden you start seeing, so you see people and they have a new family sitting there with them. "Ah, man, whose your ... whose with you today? How long you been coming? Oh, today's your first day, wow." and so just hearing that. Now the tension of that [chuckles] and the challenge of that can be, and this is, oh, I guess if you want to call it an assimilation process. I don't know if I'd ... if that word ... when I say that word reminds me of Star Trek in "The Next Generation," "We will assimilate you and resistance is futile." Anyhow [chuckles], so we can't make people be part of the community, but we can sure welcome them, and sure want them.

That affects the language we use. So am I using language on a Sunday morning and this goes back to a previous question: seven, the worship service. What's the language? What are we saying? How are we saying it? Is it ... Does it alienate? Does it make people feel uncomfortable? Does it push em away? Does it welcome? Is it inclusive? Is it exclusive? And so, these are the kinds of thing that I work with my leaders, and my board, and the staff, and everybody. Just ... These are those teaching things to get em to think about it. What are you ... How are you saying it? What are we saying? Why are we saying it that way? What might that sound like to someone whose in the church for literality the first time? And I know I'm already, I'm leading down. In question nine, you're gonna ask me about the orientation of new attendees, so I'll wait till we get there to answer that. But I'm already going there in my head. And so I'll stop right there [laughs].

Researcher – Ok, how has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process, contributed to this growth? What type of mentoring, classes, clearly defined steps? Is there an emphasis in this process on being baptize? Ok, now that goes back to where I was before, the emphasis on the baptism? Could you respond to that please?

P5 – Yeah, so the discipleship piece. So here again, it was informal in the beginning, in that ... We had some ... We had class opportunities. We had Sunday-school classes on a morning or a, we used ... had Wednesday-night class settings. And we had ... But what we're doing now is we are restructuring and shifting to more of the small-group. A setting to where there's opportunity for interaction, relationship, connection, growth, strengthening, encouragement. And so we're in that front. Here is another plate that's spinning [chuckles]. So we've ... we restructured Wednesday night to be the community engagement piece. And then, simultaneously structuring; putting a greater emphasis on small-groups. So we're starting. It's very, very incremental, but it's in the very beginning stages right now. We are starting small and growing. But the small-group format is going to become our primary intentional discipleship piece. We just see that that seems to be at least one of the best methods for people to stay connected to grow. And here again, that's gonna ... that requires leadership development training, and facilitators, and all of that. So we are in the front end of that.

Holy Spirit baptism. I do, for example, this Sunday, I'm gonna preach on Holy Spirit baptism, being filled, and so I will give an opportunity for that to happen at the end. There'll be a chance for a response; to come forward, to pray for, and to pray with. And I've done that, oh, man, several times through the past four-years. So there's, I would say, there's a pretty good healthy strong emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism. So you might say, well P5, have you seen? Has it happened? Has anything ... What have you seen? So, we haven't had a mighty rushing wind or any really demonstrative visible things, but we have had people filled with the Spirit and lives impacted. So we do feel like there's fruit there. I have some people who would say we should place more emphasis on that, and I have other people who it scares em to death. And here again, I'm crowding in on question nine. But we do have a lot of people from a varied of backgrounds: Presbyterian, Nazarene, Baptist, Methodist, you name it, there's just such a wide ... And so, just trying to help incrementally. When we talk about discipleship, I just find it interesting that Paul talks about, for example, walking in the spirit. He did also say run the race that's set before you and fight the good fight and all that.

So not to get hung up on words, but I'm just saying: I'm a walker; I'm a plodder. Step-by-step, day-by-day [chuckles], consistent. Now here this is tying into temperament, its tying into strengths, and all that stuff I've already talked about. But I know some ... for some people that drives them crazy. That we need to just ... we need to go faster, or we need to farther in it. Well, let's just keep walking. If you were to ask people in this church, what phrase they've probably heard me say more than anything else in the last four and a half years, it would be this phrase, "We just have to walk it out. Well we're going to have to walk that out. I'm not sure, we'll walk that out and see. Let's take the next step and then see what God shows us after that. We have to do what we know to do, and then I believe God will show us what to do after that. Have we taken the steps that we know to take?" So it's in that metaphor and that analogy, that language of step-by-step, walking in the spirit.

I see that that's been a, to a large extent, that that really shapes discipleship. When we say discipleship I really think that the disciples of Jesus walked with him every day through his earthly ministry and continue to walk in the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Spirit after the resurrection of Christ. The Holy Spirit is sent; they are baptized in the Spirit. They continue to walk out the development, the growth; the first of all the pieces as they come through. They face tensions. They have to have council meetings. Widows aren't being fed. People are upset. What are we gonna do? We've gotta get somebody else to help. Step-by-step-by-step they walk it out. And God unfolds his plan as they continue to take steps. That's discipleship to me [chuckles].

Researcher – What is the Christian orientation of your new attendees; and then Christians transferring from another church; out of fellowship believers; or unbelievers with religious background or no religious background?

P5 – Yeah, it ... So yeah, all the above. I've already mentioned that we've definitely have a very, very well ... I'd almost say that probably the majority of our congregation have not come from an Assemblies of God background. I can think of a handful of families who have grown up, and they've been Pentecostal slash Assemblies of God their whole life. But the majority by far are from a variety of backgrounds. So, now some of that is transfer growth; some of that's "We like your style, P5, better than the pastors, the other pastors style." So sometimes it's that. Sometimes it's, "Hey we have kids, and we like what you have to offer better." Yeah, ok, I hear that, it's not who were going after. It's not the motivation that really ... That's a whole other piece for me. It for ... What I struggle with sometimes is a consumerist mindset, "Well, I'm gonna go to this church because they have programs or methodologies, or something, or even style of preaching" That starts to become to me, real quick, the Burger King have it your way philosophy. So ... And I say that straight; I preach about that. What I just said comes in my sermons a lot. I said, what ... we're not Burger King [chuckles], we can't always have it our way." We need, in fact, I think Paul even said, "We're supposed to be crucified with Christ, we're supposed to die to self." So, anyway, that all just runs into sermons.

But ... so a broad, really broad spectrum, Presbyterian, Catholic. How do I know this? Well, because some of these doctrine classes I've taught myself personally. When you're going through the Sixteen Fundamentals of Faith, here's what the Assemblies of God is about. And I'll say to them, "I want you to ask me questions, I don't want you just to agree with me just because I'm saying it. I want ... Look it up for yourselves. Study it, reflect on it. Bring your questions back," and they did, and they do. And they'll look at me and then when they'll say, "What, man? We never have been given that opportunity before. We weren't allowed to ask questions before. Wow! That's ok to do? We can ask questions? You're saying it's ok to disagree? Well, yeah, let's, let's process it and see what you ... when you read it. Let's talk it through and so anyhow."

In addition to Christian broad denomination, we have a very, very strong Mormon presence here in town. In fact, as of right now the Mormon Church is the biggest church in the community. A lot of the businesses are owned and operated by Mormon families. My daughter, some of her best buddies in town are from Mormon families. They come over spend the night at our house. She goes over to their house. The interesting dynamic, we have several who have come from the Mormon Church here to our church, and they're in process. They're in process every ... any place from they have asked Christ to be their Savior, and they wanna be baptized now. To others, where I just had a coffee time with a young man last week; sat in a local coffee shop, and spent an hour or more with him. And he said, "Well, I come from a Mormon family." I said, "Awe man really, how was that growing up?" And just talking and listening and just interacting and dialoguing. And this young guy; he's in his late twenties, newly married, little baby, first baby. Come in here, hanging out, he in process. He's not quite sure where he lands. But I'm happy that he's here. And he's still here; he's still coming.

And we ... I've had several, believe it or not, literally come to me at the end of a service, at the altar area and say, "I'm an agnostic. I don't know if I agree with what you just said, and I don't know what I feel about that. I'm not even for sure what to think if there's really a God or what or any of that." "Oh, really" "Yeah, I came with my friend, they said, they like it here and

they invited me to come.” So I’m happy to say that there’s just a really good mix of all of the above and honestly from my heart it’s the young twenty-eight-year-old Mormon, newly, new husband, new baby. It’s the nineteen-year-old agnostic. It’s the, literally I’m gonna cry, it’s a couple of two ladies, one was twenty-two, one was nineteen, and they came to me and said, “P5, we’re lesbians, we live together. Can we come to church here?” “Yes, you can.” That’s whose showing up on a Sunday morning. And it’s a pretty ... It’s a huge responsibility to preach the gospel, and to be faithful to the message of Christ. But to be honest, to be transparent, to cry, to just to say where I’m struggling; what God’s helping me with. It just helps bring the defense down.

Another thing, if you were to come and visit; or if anybody were to come and sit. It just [chuckles] my family, it drives em crazy, my wife and my girls, but a lot of times when I say things it comes out in a funny way and people laugh. Well, and it’s not ... I’m not even planning on it to be that way. Or it’s not even in my notes. And that’s when I get in trouble and I hear about that at home over lunch. But when that happens ... I’ll give you a big for what. For example, one Sunday, I was preaching about taking a leap of faith, and jumping. Taking a jump for God and I jumped on the platform. And ok, I’m fifty years old, and I have man boobs. What can I say? I don’t like em; I don’t wish ... I wish they weren’t there, but it’s the truth. So when I jumped they moved and all of the sudden my attention went there, and I just reflexively grabbed my chest and said, “Ooh, I’m fifty-years-old, I probably shouldn’t do that cause things move now.” I just made a comment, it was funny; everybody ... now everybody laughed. To this day they will not let me ... And then I said, “What ... Don’t you dare buy me a jogging bra for break, for my birthday.” And people laughed, and they roared. And they’re ... And sure enough, when my birthday came around, I did get a jogging bra. And so ... But what that does is it’s just so human that when people ... when we laugh ... Somebody said—I probably read it or heard it—that laughter is the most direct line between two people. It just really brings down.

So if somebody does come in ... I’m even aware that there ... We’ve had some atheists, not a lot, just a couple, come in. And I’ve heard, “Yeah, I’ve invited; they’re here.” And something about ... It’s just the laughter, it just helps bring down some of the defenses and maybe to open a willingness to hear and consider. I have ... So anyhow that new attendees ... anything, agnostic, Mormon, non-AG, all kinds of denominations, you name it. It’s here [chuckles] in a small-little community.

Researcher – So it’s across the board. You’re not really ... it’s not transfer from other organizations.

P5 – Some of it is, for sure, absolutely; some of it is. So the community church, they ... the pastor moves and goes to the mid-west; and so some of those people come over because they’re in transition; and then they go back when they get a new pastor. And so some are from the Methodists. And some of our people go from here, and they go over there. The fun thing is that I have a good relationship with the pastors in the area, and so I just call-em-up for coffee; or I check on them; or I just hang out with them at the coffee shop. And try to be courteous, like if somebody shows up here, and I know if I find out or if I hear that they’ve come from the Four Square church, I’ll call Pastor Rory and I’ll say, “Hey, what ... I just want you to know somebody so-and-so’s here. I just wanted you that in case you were wondering, that they’re here. Don’t know how long they’re going to be here for. And if he may say, “Well, what ... just a heads up, just be careful or just here’s what was stirring and just wouldn’t want that to happen

for you. And so, we have that ability to just talk and interact. And so that's a healthy safety net as well. But yeah, we absolutely ... there's ... I think there's transfer growth. Any church is gonna have ... You're gonna have a certain number of people that are floating in-and-out from another place for whatever reason, but so that's part of it. But yeah ...

Researcher – Ok. Do you have additional comments [participant chuckles] for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P5 – I think I've probably about talked your ear off [researcher chuckles]. So I put two things. I really think I probably would emphasize health over growth. And I'm not just trying to say semantics, but I think there is a difference. So health, I think growth can spring forth from health, but the emphasis being healthy, both personal health and organizational health. So personal, I'm talking for me; I need to stay healthy with my temperament, my strengths, my weaknesses, all of the pieces that make me who I am; past, present, and what I'm hoping for tomorrow. I've gotta stay healthy in Christ, surrendered to him. Have people in my life that can ask me questions, and look me in the eye, and which I do thankfully.

Organizationally, then to work towards health. Just because something is big doesn't mean it's healthy. A person can be big and can be unhealthy and actually have to lose weight. And sometimes that can happen organizationally where we can grow big, but in the process maybe lose health. And so we may need to go back and address health issues, which may for a season reduce size for the sake of health. It's so ... I equate what would happen in a physical realm has to happen organizationally and spiritually a lot of times.

Second thought and last one additional comment. I would say for leaders and pastors and all to develop collaborative partnerships, both in the faith-community and in the non-faith based community. So I've already commented my relationship with other pastors and the faith-community here in town. We ... I have a coffee time set up with two pastors next week. A brand-new pastor to the community church just got here in town, and the Nazarene pastor that I haven't met with for a while. So that's ... I try to continue to nurture those.

But the non-faith based: philanthropists, business owners, educators, government people, those. So when I say collaborative in partnership; in other words when we come to the table with the attitude and expectation that I can learn something from you; you can hopefully learn something from me. We can share; we can partner. What are you doing? For example, when we did our C4 process with Monty Hipp last year, we discovered that there were initiatives in the community already started through like mayor and his office and by the, educational system. That instead of us trying to reproduce and recreate our own version of that, we look for partnership and ways to link arms with momentum that is already stirring.

So that ties into my thought of, so to speak, seeing where God is at work. Could God be at work in a non-believer, in a non-believing organization, as they try to reach out, as they're identifying needs; they're seeing hurts; and they're trying to be a part of the solution. So, instead of fighting, and competing; to compliment, to collaborate. And there's all kinds of tensions there, and we're walking those out. Because obviously, non-faith and faith there's totally different world views at play with that; there's belief systems, there's attitudes, there's priorities, blah, blah, blah. But it can be done with God's help; and we're seeing it done; and that's what's fueling our forward momentum right now is these collaborative partnerships that have come out of the process with Monty and the C4. So it's exciting.

We're getting business owners, philanthropists; we getting educators, we're getting government people. It pretty cool and you have your own strength come to the table; and you start linking arms on these pieces that are stirring and at play; and all of the sudden you have where the church becomes positioned right in the middle as a solution provider to community needs. Now that's a pretty awesome, impact and potential there. When the church starts to be seen as, hey, this is someone we can partner with? Wow, really, never thought of that before. That's an interesting conversation, and we're having those now. And it really positions you in ... when we talk about community engagement and impact, it takes it to a different level.

Here's what I'm finding: not everybody makes the journey with you on that. Some of the faith community will say, "If they're going to be at the table, I won't be." Ok, I have to choose that at that point, am I willing for that trade off? And sometimes I am, sometimes I'll say, "Yeah, man, sorry to hear that; sorry that you feel that way. I respect it. Absolutely, I understand your convictions." I gonna go head and process ... take a step with this person and then they choose whether they're gonna be at the table or not. But so anyhow, we are on the front end of that. And it's pretty cool, and as God starts to spin that out.

Researcher – Hmm, well P5 thank you.

Interview #6 – October 30, 2013
G5 executive pastor, P6²¹⁵

Researcher - Why do people attend the church that you are ministering in, why do they attend?

P6 - What's the attraction?

Researcher - Yes, what's the attraction, thank you?

P6 - Ok, I believe there's several reasons: one is just good, straight-forward biblical preaching; the other is warmth. We work hard at creating an environment of warmth and comfortability. So we have a statement that we talk about is called making sure everything is quality from the street to the seat. And so as people arrive, the first thing they experience is a person waving at them, smiling, welcoming them, as part of our parking team, and then they're given guidance to their parking space. And so we try and make it as uncomplicated as possible to allow for people to just get to their space. And as soon as they are getting out of their car, they're walking down a path where there is more people welcoming them. And when they walk into the building, they are immediately greeted. They're offered a free cup of coffee, there are people there, they can take advantage of our Hebrews coffee area for Lattes, or they can go and get free coffee. And then they walk into the main auditorium and they experience another usher there handing them a bulletin, as well as other ushers there to lead them to a seat if necessary.

Researcher – Ok. Any other thoughts along that line?

P6 - Yeah, we have contemp ... Two different styles of music. We have contemporary and traditional, and we try and meet those two needs. I think that we keep our messages not only,

215. P6 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

straight-forward biblical, but simple. We try and explain things for people, not assuming that everyone has a knowledge of the Bible, or a knowledge of Scripture.

Researcher - And you've certainly touched on a couple of the future questions, but I'm gonna go out of order. Which ... If you could describe your culture and how you facilitate it? And I know that you've touched on it.

P6 - Yeah, I would describe our culture as one of ... I would say it's very missional in the sense that we're about the guest. We're about the thirty-two year old. We call them the thirty-two year-old Nick; the guy that is just starting a family, settling into his career, and that's our approach. So when we use language ... Most of our culture is developed with language. Language like: we're a hospital for sinners not a museum for saints. We wanna make sure that our guests are comfortable from the street to the seat. We ... There is just a lot of different ... I'm trying to come up with language pieces. Do for one what you wish you could do for all. Keep it simple. We preach only thirty minutes, which again is a part of keeping it simple. Let me see, what other cultural things? We develop culture of warmth by encouraging our staff and our volunteers to walk slowly, so we're not walking so fast we miss people. We are constantly reminding ourselves that we are ... our mission, our purpose is to lead people into a growing relationship with Christ. So that's what drives us and motivates us. And then we use that language all the time. We ... The way we infuse our culture is we just simply use our language all the time. Whether we're meeting with a volunteer, or whether we're meeting with a staff member, we're constantly reminding ourselves. Hey, we're about this mission. We're about doing one what we wish we could do for all. We're about making sure that the Bible is our authority. We're about warmth; making sure that everyone is comfortable from the street to the seat. We're ... Our first impressions are always being ... emphasizing the importance of a smile, and a hello, and a hand shake; of those kinds of things; just constantly using language to create culture.

Researcher - Ok. How has community outreach contributed to this growth, both as an organization and individuals? And I gave examples of acts of compassion and or evangelism?

P6 - That's a great question. The way we facilitate community involvement is through our groups. So when we do ... When we have growth groups or what most people call small-groups, we encourage every group to engage in a service project. So we want every single group to organize a service project all throughout the year. So what we do to facilitate that is we partner with twelve different community organizations, local community organizations that enable and encourage volunteer help. And then we make those organizations available to our group leaders. And we give them a list. We give phone numbers and contact information. Then they are encouraged to either come up with their own service idea or to connect with one of those organizations. And then those organizations facilitate the volunteer's involvement. And so that's the way we facilitate community involvement. And what comes out of that ... And you're calling it community outreach, we assume that just by connection. But once we engage those people in connecting, then what is the outcome of that is relationship, encouragement. Whether it be through single moms, or the Salvation Army, or the food bank. There's lots of different options. Those connections then communicate the love of Christ.

Researcher – Ok. How have Pentecostal distinctives, including a supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth, and e.g., gifts expressed in service, altar calls, prayer for the sick would be some examples?

P6 - Right, well as we've had in conversations at our church, we believe that the gifts of the Spirit are identified as well through things like serving, administration. The other sets of gifts that are listed in Scripture. And when we talk about being engaged in the Spirit, we encourage everyone to have a dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit. The distinctive, speaking in tongues, which I would consider probably the most significant distinctive, is not something that's radically, or emphasized in our services. We do encourage and talk about the, I would say, the verbal gifts of prophecy, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, speaking in tongues, those kinds of things. We have a six times a year service we call, "Simply Worship" in which that is all about worship, and just experiencing God in a fresh and new way. And it's not always, but it's not uncommon to have a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, a prophecy. Rarely do we see tongues. We do ... We don't discourage and we actually encourage people to pray in their, in tongues, if they choose to, but appropriately, and in order. And so would, could I tell you that the distinctives, as spoken of in the context of the Assemblies of God, I would not call them the catalyst or a catalyst part of growth at our church. I would certainly encourage, say that the Holy Spirit is functioning in a very unique way in our church through the heart ... through the giftings of people. And those giftings are unique; and either through service or administration, or all kinds of different ways, that people are using their giftings. And as a result, it warms up the church, and it shows Jesus to the community. And then we see a great result in lives being changed and lives encouraged by what's happening, by the genuine serving of people.

Researcher - So you would say that with your church that service really is a prominent characteristics and very attractional.

P6 - Yes, I would say service is very attractional. And that it is the expression of the Holy Spirit within our context.

Researcher – Ok. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth (e.g. focus on alignment of mission, values, and vision, with strategies, practices, systems, processes, programs)? And I know that you did touch on some.

P6 – Right, so that's a great question and we believe in the simple church philosophy. And so no organization, no department, no area of ministry has a different mission than what we have as a whole as a church. And so everybody's role and mission is to lead someone into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. If you're not doing that, you're not a part of the system. And then from there, everybody is part of the strategy. Our strategy is to gather, grow, and go, again, very, very simple. We gather on the weekend; or in the case of a youth ministry, we gather, maybe on a Wednesday night or whatever, but there is a gathering for every ministry. Then there's a grow, and so we expect everyone to promote groups. So from children all the way to senior adults, grow, everyone grows in groups. And our value there is that we want everyone to grow in circles not in rows. And so it's ... that's where the relationships hit. We want every group to pray together, share Scripture together, and share life together, and serve together.

Researcher – Ok. How have the senior leader’s gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they (personality, leadership charisma, administration) and how have they contributed?

P6 - I would say that our pastor number one ability is vision. He is a true, probably one of the most pure visionary leaders I know. And he just ... He rarely lives in the now. He most often lives in the future. So he’s always seeing the next step; always seeing the next opportunity; always asking God for that, what’s the next thing that we need to do to continue to reach out and reach our community and world. And in doing so he, his strength is that he has realized, “I’ve got to staff for my weaknesses.” So he ... That’s why he has a business pastor; that’s why he has an executive pastor who has a management gift and not a leadership gift; that’s why he staffs around ... staffs for a very clear worship context. And he just knows how to staff for his weaknesses. And he also has, as it relates to his giftings, he also understands the difference between long-term vision and short-term vision and what really is a catalyst for growth. And long-term vision is healthy, but short-term is really the catalyst for growth. So ... And when I say short-term, it can be anything from a six-month preferred future to a two-year preferred future, but rarely are we ever thinking anything beyond that; other than buildings, and in some cases staffing. But in most cases, we’re thinking six-months to two-years out. What are the next steps to grow the ministry at our church? And how can we better reach our communities for Christ? And in doing so, then, he establishes the vision, establishes the dates for those visions to be accomplished, and then expects the staff to implement that vision.

Researcher - And that points me back to organizational practices. How do you take those visions, that vision, and establish strategies for it? And do you also do evaluations? Do you have evaluations that is integral to your organizational practices?

P6 - Yeah, we do. So the first key vision is setting a day for it to be accomplished and that’s what we do organizationally. We do that throughout what we call our Strategy Team Meeting. So our strategy team, which consists of all of our full time pastors, that group is given the deadline for when this vision should be accomplished or at least implemented. And then, from that point on, what we do as a strategy team is we set, we get, we assign everyone the responsibilities. Whether it be marketing; whether it be new information on the web; whether it be a youth ministry emphasis, or whatever, everyone is assigned a responsibility. And then a list is made of what those responsibilities are and when those responsibilities need to be accomplished. And then we weekly go through that list. And every week everyone is asked, “Have you ... What progress have you made?” And that way we know everyone’s on track; everyone’s on time. And our expectations ... We find out when the bumps, what bumps we’re hitting. We find out what resistance we might be finding in the change process. We find out what financial challenges we may be facing, or unexpected expenses that come up. And that allows us the privilege of making adjustments as we go. But the implementation of vision requires a date and then a very, very detailed process of assigning responsibilities and following through with those.

Researcher – Ok. How has leadership development, a leadership development process, practices, philosophies, contributed to this growth?

P6 – Leadership development is ... Our philosophy is we expect progress not perfection. And so we expect that they're ... We have a young staff and we expect that a lot of the staff are gonna grow as we go. And so the challenge with conferences and those kinds of things, which we think are valuable, is that much of that is good information, but not necessarily usable information. And so we spend a lot of time studying other churches, studying other ministry models, and then make sure we're adapting them to our context, and our values, and our mission. The leadership development, I think, is huge in the sense that our pastor values the young leader. And we're constantly trying to put those young leaders in con ... In places where they can grow, mature, learn ministry; while at the same time, not hurting ministry or limiting it. And so we spend a lot of time with our young guys just working em, coaching em. Our pastor is a huge coach. He is just always coaching young leaders; challenging their paradigms; helping them with their practices; all those kinds of things.

Researcher - And obviously with our pastor, such a large staff, his ability to influence is rather limited, do you have like an apprenticeship or some type of a structure for raising-up leaders, not only with your staff, but other leaders throughout your organization?

P6 – Yeah, great question, we have the leadership college and it's actually through Northwest University. So, right now, we have fourteen students in our leadership college. They're all working towards, on a degree at Northwest, and they're all part of the ... they have ministry practicums. So they all get involved in the different areas of ministry in the church. And they live right next to the church campus; and so they eat, drink, sleep, and dream about church. And that's how we develop young leaders. Our ministry team leaders that are sometimes, a lot of times, volunteers. Those are all grow-as-you-go thing; as you are working out your ministry, ask questions because you're on-the-job training.

Researcher - Ok, so what percentage of your staff would you say have come, been grown from within?

P6 - Good question. I would say right now it's about fifty-fifty.

Researcher - Ok, and you've addressed this, but if you could think of any other thoughts. How has the worship service contributed to this growth? You've mentioned, you touched on the preaching, and also you touched on the music, are there any other thoughts with that?

P6 – I would just say that one of the biggest values we have is that Sunday is first. It's our primary ... We realize that Sunday is the optimal time for optimal amount of people to come and be here at church. And so we focus all of our energy on making Sundays or the weekend, in our case, a huge, huge emphasis. So most people who spend their time on Wednesday-night Bible studies, or Rangers and Missionettes, or all kinds of midweek services, or anything like that, or even a Sunday-night service where it's different from your Sunday-morning service, we've largely set aside most of those things to focus on what is going to be best for our entire ... for the weekend. So we focus every ounce of energy, before we focus on something else, on our weekend environment. And when we do that, we have found that has made a world of difference. The simplicity of our weekends it sounds like, after saying all that, sounds like we have really complicated weekends, but we don't. We preach and we worship, and, but the whole

environment is a really, really healthy environment for guests and for people to be attracted to. I wouldn't say that we're super special in one thing; we just keep it really simple, and keep it focused, and give all our energy to it.

Researcher - When it comes to organizing or preparing for your weekend services, how do you approach that?

P6 - We have ... Our pastor sets the agenda for our preaching schedule. He sets the agenda for how many times we do communion; how often we baptize; how often we do baby dedications. Those are the three mains that are additions to services on the weekend. And so he sets the agenda for the preaching. So right now we're involved in a two-year, Jesus Story series. And he has set the agenda for that. And then, once that agenda is set, and it's often changed depending on how he's feeling the Lord is leading him, we will meet in what we call the Service Planning Meeting. In that meeting we go over service flow. What's happening in worship? What's happen, where's the offering happening? What's happening in announcements? Are there any video announcements that need to happen or, or be filmed? How are we gonna end the service? What song is going to end the service? Those kinds of questions we ask in that Service Planning Meeting. And then if we are doing communion on that particular weekend, or if we are doing baby dedications or baptisms. Then we're preparing for those as well and making sure the service flow adapts to those things.

Researcher - With your disciple-making process, you mentioned that it sounded like your primary vehicle is the small-group format. So is there any other steps or any other aspects to your disciple-making process in addition to your small-groups?

P6 - We have for a guest, for a new comer to our church, we have what's called our church 101. In our church 101 is where we introduce the new comer to our church and our beliefs, our, foundational philosophies of ministry; and just the heart and vision of what our church is all about. And then, for the new believer, we have a class or group called, First Steps. And that's just a simple process of explaining what just happened to their lives, or if they have questions about faith, they can come in and ask, Who is Jesus? What is Jesus all about? Who is God? Those kinds of questions. And it's an environment in which we wanna teach people the basics about faith, but also allow them the opportunity to ask any question they like. And it's just a great program for new believers. We also encourage, in our bulletin every week we have a Bible reading plan that's associated with the sermon series. We encourage, of course we believe that through the group's process, we encourage everyone to have a level of study that happens in them. Not all of them are purely Bible study, some are activity groups, but we do expect them to share Scripture. And make sure that people are focused on Bible; make sure they're familiar with Bible; and what's going on in the Word of God; and make sure they're having healthy discussions; able to ask questions in their group's contexts about faith; what they're learning in our services on the weekend. And then, we also have our leadership college, which is another discipleship tool that we use, but primarily everything is, happens through groups.

Researcher - With the example of Christ being our, who we are to aspire to be like, do you, with your disciple-making, do you have a model for what a Christian is or steps to, what helps to develop the maturity of a believer?

P6 - That's a good question and I wouldn't say that (I'm trying to think) we really don't have a model other than that Jesus serviced people. And so we see it when we talk about gather, we realize that gatherings are very important and significant, but they don't go deep. Then Growth Groups go deeper. And then the outflow of our salvation and expression of faith is to serve others and to reveal Christ through our servicing. And so if there's a model, it would be the model of Jesus being a servant. And then we serve our community and such, sharing the love of Christ through our serving.

Researcher - With your small-groups, and I had a question I should have written it down. How do you assimilate people into your small-group?

P6 - Yes, we have three semesters: we have a fall semester, a winter semester, and a summer semester, and so we have. And then we put out a catalogue at the beginning of each semester that we call a Fill Month, and we take a month to fill our groups up. And so what's nice about that is there's on-ramps and off-ramps for everyone, so they're, they don't feel stuck in a group, but they can re-up in a group as many times as they want. And we encourage and push groups all the time. It's in our language constantly. When we are speaking and preaching and when we're teaching; when we're meeting with our group leaders; when we're meeting with our staff; we're always talking groups. "Get people in groups. Encourage people to get in groups. Fill Month is coming up, make sure you've got leaders," so on and so forth. And so we're constantly, promoting and encouraging involvement in groups. And then when we try and assimilate people into them; we have what we call Fill Month, three times a year. And that's when we encourage everyone to join a group.

Researcher – Ok, do you have any additional comments about leaders who are seeking to grow their church?

P6 - From our perspective, I think that there are two high values that we believe in very, very deeply, and that is: one, we have to have a really strong children's ministry. It's a huge commitment, if not probably better said a conviction about who is, what your children's ministry is. How good it is? I just ... We believe that children's ministry is absolutely essential to the growth of the church. And if you don't take care of people's kids, they're not going to stay. And you're not going to reach the up-and-coming generation of young adults and their kids, if you don't have a great children's ministry. And I think a lot of people put that second to their adult ministries, and even their youth ministry. At our church, children's ministry is first, and you see that by our building.

And then, the second thing I would say is simply a focus on your weekend services, rather than a focus of energy on everything else. I think there's so many pastors that—and I was guilty of this myself when I pastored, when I was a lead pastor—focused on, focus their energy on all of the other things and not on making my message the best; improving my preaching; improving the environment for kids; improving the environment for adults on Sunday morning; and making that the best it possibly can. And when you do that, then your church is gonna grow. And then when you follow that through with a great groups program and a great opportunity for people to serve their community, you're really fulfilling the mission of Christ. And I think it's

just really huge. If you get Sundays right and kids right, there's few limitations to that growth opportunity.

Researcher – Ok. Well I appreciate so much your time.

Interview #7 – October 31, 2013

G1 senior pastor, P7²¹⁶

Researcher – What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth and then I put it a little easier; why do you think people attend? What is attracting them?

P7 - I believe the attraction here is this group of people have found the church to be a loving church, a accepting church, and a comfortable church, and a safe church to be in.

Researcher – And that is something that you have brought to the equation with your pastorate there?

P7 - Yes, I would say yes.

Researcher – Ok. Now are you doing anything significantly different? Or is it just an expression of your personality and who you are?

P7 - I'm sure a lot of this has to deal with me, but we are an Assemblies of God church as far as our constitution and bylaws and doctrine, and I make no apologies for that, but in a way we're also a community church. And so we have a lot of people here of our congregation, who are not of Assemblies of God, or Pentecostal background. But they have found that, for the most part, that this is a comfortable experience for them.

Researcher – When you say a community church, what expressions do you see with that type of a church that's different than your, if I can use it and say it this way, your traditional Pentecostal Assembly of God church?

P7 - I would say it's been a long road to teach this congregation to participate in our praise and worship. Our songs are more of traditional songs than like the contemporary ones you'll find in a youthful church. And that doesn't mean either good or bad, but that's a brand we use. And this group of people know those songs and they're beginning to learn to like, for example, shut their eyes and worship the Lord, or raise their hands, or just drink in what the message of the song is being said. And so, the Pentecostal people know how to do that, but the non-Pentecostal are finding themselves more and more comfortable to do that.

Researcher – And how long have you been there?

P7 - The third Sunday of November will mark our fifth year.

216. P7 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

Researcher – Fifth year. And prior to you being there, was it a healthy growing church?

P7 - No, it almost died.

Researcher – Ok.

P7 - Yeah, it was, I think there were about ten or twelve people when we first came on the third Sunday of November in 2008. And the district asked us to come just to fill the pulpit, because the Sunday prior the pastor in discouragement announced that this would be my last Sunday and will not be back. So it was a shocker, in fact, it was a shocker. And I've known the district leadership a long time. And we had just moved back from Alaska after retiring from the ministry; and was taking care of my wife's mother in Olympia Washington. And thus, I had to transfer my credentials from the Alaska district to the Northwest Network. So this, they knew where I was, and they asked that week if I would give out and fill the pulpit the following Sunday. I said, "Yeah, we'll go." And they said, by the way, when you go, look it over, and if you're comfortable, we'll appoint you as interim pastor. They didn't define what that meant. But I thought it meant just getting through Thanksgiving and Christmas, but that's not what they had in mind.

Researcher – And how has community outreach contributed to, both as an organization and on an individual basis, and I'm defining community outreach as acts of compassion and or evangelism? How has that contributed to any growth that you've experienced?

P7 - Well, one of the things we did is the building itself is on a nice location, but there was brush and foliage and trees. There's a lot of that undergrowth stuff on the coast here. And it was growth all around the church, and people just did not know we were here. Even though we're on a main road, we were isolated. And we would hear those reports, "I don't know where you are." And so, we just started a work party on Saturday's to cut down some trees that need to fall down and clean up the brush. We got the men and women out there to have a morning a Saturday-morning work party then fed em lunch. So that was sweating together, working together, then having lunch together. So that started to build a camaraderie. And before long we had our six lots looking like a park. And so people would drive by and see how we took care of our building, and had really caught the attention of our community, our city fathers. Our city councilmen have made numerous comments of how they appreciate how we take care of our place. And then after that we just had a church, a bigger church, bless us by coming down to do some maintenance we needed. And then also that youth group came and helped us paint the exterior. So in a couple years there was a real transformation of that property and of our appearance. So that's one thing I would say. We're continually working on upgrading the landscaping and so on to where it's a very attractive campus.

The second thing is, we would host, at least two-times a year, a gospel concert. Like the, Southern Gospel quartets and trios. And so we would open that up to the community. And then, there are times we've had like a big barbeque afterwards, and sometimes we didn't ... but so it would be bringing a group in.

And then the third thing we did was to start a community sing-along or Singspiration, a hymn sing. And that got churches to come together, and we would host it. So those would be the three major outreaches we would do.

Researcher – With the people that you find coming to your fellowship, are they prior Christians, or are you seeing people who have no or minimal experiences Christians coming to your church and accepted Christ?

P7 - I would say as far as first-time conversions that would be pretty minimal, because we are a retired community. I would say a number of our folks, who have been nominal Christians and who have gotten real cold in their walk with God, and they needed that Revelation 3 experience of not being lukewarm, but stirring things up in their hearts.

Researcher – So there is not transfer growth, people who have been attending other churches, but those who have become cold, as you mentioned. Now would you say that you're, the demographic of people who you are reaching are consistent with the community? It's not like you're just reaching a isolated segment, but that m ...

P7 - [interrupting] no our town, our town is known to be a retirement community. About 65 percent, maybe seventy, but at least 65 percent are retirees that live here, but we do have three elementary schools. We have one elementary school here in town, and then there are two up the coast that are a part of us. And then we have a middle-school, high-school, so there's about five-hundred and fifty students that attend school around here, but we're still primary retirement.

Researcher – Ok. And how have Pentecostal distinctives, including supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth; and I use the examples of gifts expressed in the service, which are traditional Pentecostal distinctives, altar calls, prayer for the sick; been a contributor?

P7 - That is something I highly desire, and we're slowly beginning to see that happen. The altar call, I don't see a lot of our folks responding to coming to the altars. And so I've modified that to where, like if you had a need, an illness, or whatever and need prayer, would you stand where you are, and I'll have the church go to them and pray. So they're not all like that, but at least we get people praying for them and they do like the fact that we're praying.

We are seeing some tongues with interpretations or prophetic words given. And that is a little unsettling to some of our Baptist people, but I work hard to explain what's happened; and they can't deny it. They do feel the presence of God. I don't go overboard on that because I'm sensitive to not being; I like to see more of the gifts, but we're not that developed yet. We have had some remarkable stated healings in the body, and that's due to lying on of hands and praying in faith and people can't deny that.

Researcher – Ok, so you see a vital, vital part of the people who have not, don't have a Pentecostal background as your explanation that really helps them to become more comfortable with that. Now you said, if I can just fixate or key in on your phrase, “You don't go overboard with that.” can you clarify what you mean by that?

P7 - Yeah, yeah, we have family here, a retired family. He's a retired engineer from Boeing; so he has that mind set. And that complimentary, but he's always analyzing stuff. But his wife's, they're remarried people, and his wife attends an Assembly of God church back in Kentucky. And when they go back there to visit, course out of politeness, they'll go with the kids to church;

and that would be more of a hyper-type of Pentecostal church than we are. Not saying it's right or wrong, but this crowd, I don't think can handle that. And so there would be prophetic words given in the service and this family from the Baptist background is waiting for interpretation. And sometimes it comes, and sometimes it doesn't. So that would bother them. Or there would be a prophetic word given in the congregation on a previous service, and then they would be written down for, and put in the bulletin, giving the impression that it is equal to the written Scriptures. And my view is that a prophetic word written down and prolonged is not necessarily the same as the written word we have, but a prophetic word is given for that time and that moment.

Researcher – Ok, m ...

P7 – [interrupting] Do you understand what?

Researcher – [interrupting] Yes, yes, the rhema word as compared to the logos, they're elevating the rhema word.

P7 - Yea, and then some of these dear folks will watch some of these broadcasts on Christian TV, and see the extremes of emotions; and I'm not saying they can't loosen up, but [chuckles] that does frighten em and so that's what I'm mean about not pushing the extremes.

Researcher – Ok. Now how have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth; and then I mentioned, like focus on alignment of mission, values, vision, with strategies, practices, processes, any programs, but just the organizational focus on

P7 - [interrupting] Well, part of the assignment of pastoring a missions church is I had to develop a membership role of twenty adults or more, mature adults; have a advisory board in place; establish a budget that we would operate and people would know about it. And develop up upcoming leaders for the church. So that was part of my assignment. And we just, about a year ago, accomplished that and went sovereign. So in the organizing, I've had to hold membership classes, and bring people together and talk about our values, and that has been accepted. In the area of the budget, I think our people have done a great job to get a working budget so we can track our monies and expenses.

We are developing leaders, in fact, this, our ministry year is September one through August 31st, like a school year. And so we start our new adult classes in the fall and go winter and spring. And so this year, I have three new Bible teachers that I've not used before, three men. My other Bible teachers are retired pastors and Bible school students, seminary trained, and great teachers, but they're up in years, and their health is really failing them. And they could not commit to teaching for a term. So I had to find younger guys, and these guys are doing a good job; so then, that.

And then you develop, like, a quarterly calendar, a yearly calendar that gets people involved in that. And then begin to set some goals. Like this year, we're working on our annual Thanksgiving event; and to start with we made that a all church Thanksgiving meal. We had the morning service at 10:30, then we'd go right into a Thanksgiving meal. And you let these gals cook, and they do a great job. And so we transformed the sanctuary from rows of chairs into round tables. It's like a dining room thing. And so the fellowship, it did fabulous. Well, I've been

wanting to change that a little. So this year we're calling that our Friends Day, where I am asking each family unit to in ... to give an invitation to at least one not-churched family. In other words, you have a neighbor that doesn't go to church, and prayerfully, pray over them and invite them to come to church, and invite them to our Thanksgiving service. And we're making that our Friends Day. So that's gonna be a little more targeted outreach for our people. But so that takes organizing; it takes planning. And then also when it comes to decorations of the church, I just release gifted people who know how to do that. And give them a parameter with a budget and amazing what they do.

Researcher – Now how has prayer been a part of your growth?

P7 - Not real good. Not real good. I tried to have, I tried to follow the Brooklyn Tabernacles model of a, of once a week prayer meeting. They're ... I'm not sure what they're doing now, but in Pastor Cymbala's earlier books, he talked about a Tuesday-night all-church prayer meeting. I've tried to have an all-church prayer meeting here, and that was like on Saturdays. And that just didn't go well. So it was basically me praying, and I might get someone else to pray with me, but this summer we've shifted to, we would go to a Sunday-night service for a while or then a Sunday-night Bible study for a while. So this summer, I shifted to a Sunday-night service where we start at six, and I would have just like two songs. I would have a short exposition from the Scriptures. And so that would take about fifteen minutes for those two items. And then I would just encourage the people to find a place to pray. And we'd take about thirty minutes to get the church into prayer. And we'd give out specific needs. And we'd conclude it by coming together in a big prayer circle. So we are seeing the church in the discipline of praying corporately. And then we're seeing results of prayers. I've been pleased.

Researcher – [interrupting] Do you mind sharing some of the results of that prayer?

P7 - Well, part of that is we've been praying for new families that would come in that would be a blessing to us; and we'd be a blessing to them. Blessing, I am defining as they would come and attend. They would find a place where their talents and giftedness could be used. Obviously, we need their financial support to keep going, but at the same token, our blessing to them is to provide them a safe environment, a loving environment, a friendly environment, and also give them a chance to use their talents. And so we've seen about three new families come in this summer.

Researcher – Ok. How ...

P7 - [interrupting] In that we know of another family, retired family, who's moving from north of Spokane, moving here to our town. They have bought themselves a house over here. And just this last week, they sold their house. So I would say we've had a part in praying for them.

Researcher – With that focused effort on prayer, do you see anything different in your corporate worship time?

P7 - Oh, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah, there's more of an intensity. And two weeks ago, we had one of our missionaries home on furlough, and come to visit us. And they're always a blessing. They're

always a source of inspiration. And so that elevates our group participation in worship and praise. We have another missionary coming in December. And I see that just keep helping us, but I'm also thinking it's about time to bring in an evangelist to preach.

Researcher – Ok, so ...

P7 - [interrupting] And have a target of praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, praying for healing, and praying for miracles to happen.

Researcher – Okay. How have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? What are they and how have they been ... How have they contributed, in personality, or excuse me, gifts and passions might include personality, leadership charisma, maybe administration?

P7 - I have five fellows now called an Advisory Board, no, Board of Directors; they were advisory before, but now Board of Directors. In the adopted Constitution and Bylaws that the Northwest Ministries gave us, I like the way they've worded that. I don't ... If I can be real candid, I don't place a lot of authority on these guy's hands yet because I don't think they're there. But part of my goal is to bring them along to take on authority, if and when I leave, and they have to bring another person in, ok.

And so in doing that, I'll go alphabetically, I have a fella named Fred that ... in his eighties, and he was in my father's church—my dad pastored in Spokane, in Wenatchee Washington. And so he has the knowledge of the Pentecostal church, and he has the love for the things of God, the Holy Spirit, and his, he married a woman out of the Baptist church and she is new to Pentecost, but they have good discussions at home about the things of God. This dear woman feels God's presence, and she senses his love, so she's growing. So Fred is working on his wife. Plus they have Baptist friends that question tongues, and so he has a chance to answer their questions, and it's interesting to watch him grow in that conversation.

The second board member, alphabetically, is a traditional Baptist guy, but he has been in an Assembly of God church when his job took him to California, and they attended an Assembly of God church there. And the pastor is a guy I knew, when I lived in Alaska, for quite a few years, so we had that connection. And so they're knowledgeable of the Word, he is not too expressive in praise and worship, but his wife is. So he doesn't hinder us.

The third fella, alphabetically, is raised in an Assembly of God minister's home and he's there for my prayer meetings. And he's very supportive. And so he has a good influence. I've had him preach a couple times and he's been helpful, especially in our spiritual gifts.

The third fella is an ex-marine, has lousy health due to Vietnam, but he knows the touch of God, and he's quietly a supporter.

The fourth fella is been radically saved from sin, and he's pretty vocal and his personality, just saying we need more of God. And so I don't know if that answers your question, but in their personalities and experiences that's how they have been helpful.

Researcher – And I appreciate your sharing about your leadership team. Now how about you? And I'm talking specifically about, since you're the senior leader, your gifts, your passions. How has that? Obviously that is the strongest influence of an organization is the senior leader. How have what is your personality, your giftings contributed to this growth?

P7 - Well, over the years I've been a strong fan of Maxwell, John Maxwell; been to his classes; read a lot of his books. And one of the things that has impressed me is his statement about, "Everything rises and falls with leadership." So I do realize that I play an important role here as far as the direction of the church, administratively, physically, spiritually, and all that. But I've been raised in a Pentecostal home all my life, and I've pastored about forty-two years, all total, in Washington and Alaska. So I have valued over the years the spiritual gifts, and I try to exercise them in my life. Although I've not done prophetically, prophecy, as we know it, or tongues and interpretation. That's more of my devotional time. But I sure encourage people who have those outward gifts to use them, and try to cultivate that in other people. I'm very much involved in praying in the Spirit and getting my board members up there to pray with me, as we lay on of hands for people's needs. I am not bashful about letting the Holy Spirit have full direction of our service. By the same token, I need to make that a teaching tool to where our church understands what's going on. And so I don't know if that's helped you or not answer your question.

Researcher – Well, part of it will dovetail into my next question, but what I hear you and what I've heard you said is that your community, your church is a loving community that is attractive. That was one of your responses early on. Now would you say that is an expression of who you are?

P7 - Oh, yes, oh, yes, yes, yes. Do people come? They come from different backgrounds, and they wanna silently slide in, and check things out. No, I've got greeters out there, greeting people with bulletins, and shaking hands. And no, I'm looking for the more gregarious type of people, and then I have them training others to do that as well. And then I encourage folks to take time to go and greet one another and visit. So, yeah, that's very much how I feel. Plus, as a retired community, these folks, many of them, have come to us because they got burned out or tired of the churches they attend, who wanted to promote the youth program or the children's program, but the music changed towards that, the style of service changed towards that. And they began to feel left out; and that highly offended them; and they didn't like it. And so I'm sensitive to make sure the seniors feel like they're important and this is their church and they have a part in this.

Researcher – And also the other part that you mentioned about being a student of Maxwell philosophies, and this question is, how has leadership development, how has a leadership development process contributed to this growth?

P7 - Well, first of all, I've got a number of talented retired people, men and women. So it's not like I'm teaching them leadership 101. Verses, I see myself like corralling them, taking them from the big prairies and bringing them into a corral, and then slowly working them into the chute, to where when they come out the other end they have a job to do. They have an opportunity to do, so release them to a new direction of service. I've got a guy that manages, has done the financial managing for Blue Cross, Blue Shield in King County; and had quite a few employees under him; and so he oversees our book keeping system. I've got a fella, who is an ex-marine that was on the battle field; and knows how to run people, manage people; and I just step aside. When it's time to set up tables and take down tables for our meals and they get it done. I've got a guy that works for the state now, and oversees abusive children and families. And he knows where needs are. I step aside and let him do that. I've got a lady who's a retired nurse and gifted in caring. And even though she is almost ninety years of age, she's as spry as a spring chicken. And so I

get out of the way and let her do her ministry. And it goes on and on and on. Of people that had leadership experience, that had responsibilities under them, and managed large budgets. And I just gotta provide a large parameter for them to operate in.

Researcher – And it, so it sounds like what your emphasizing is that you're, that your empowering them; you've given them a vision, and because of their maturity there isn't that need for a development. It's just there's that need to, as you mentioned, guide and guide them and establish boundaries for them to work within.

P7 - Right, right, yeah, yeah,

Researcher – Ok, and how has the worship service contributed to this growth? And then the worship service is obviously being broken into preaching and music.

P7 - In the area of worship, the praise and worship, we have a gifted gal, an organ player. So that prevents, that provides a vitality to our service. On occasion, we'll get some instruments like a base-guitar, a violin. We have a lead-guitar that's now coming to our church. And so we give them a chance to play. And I call them our worship band. So they'll do pre-service music. They'll do accompaniment during praise and worship. They'll do offertory and stuff like that. For the longest time, I've had to be the song leader slash worship leader, and I can do that, but that gets to be pretty tiring as well as everything else in the service. So I've raised up two other people three other people to be worship leaders. And have gone through some training as to what I want done. I want them to prayerfully pray over their song selections, and then put a flow to it to where the praise is first and the worship is second; let one song build into another. We have a several books of songs they can select from or go online to CCLI and get materials. Then I've trained them to make sure they've come prepared with music for everyone on their worship team on worship night so that has helped alleviate the load. They all have their different styles, but they do a good job. And you do feel God's presence in the service.

Researcher – And in relationship to the praise and worship music time, you mentioned that you're also going after or sensitive to the needs of your congregation, the desire of your congregation. Your main focus is on the style of music that will minister to them, to the older demographic?

P7 - Yeah, songs like, "Because He Lives," and the Gaither song is great. We sing in a worship time, "Bind Us Together, Lord." We definitely work a hymn or two in each Sunday. And so we'll try to keep those peppy as we can, not drag them out. We don't always sing all five verses, but we like to keep the hymns in there. And then we start to work at some of the newer songs. "Shout to the Lord," that's new to us. We know the song, but it's new to our repertoire. And so we try to keep introducing some the new worship songs that this crowd will get a hold of. When I say that some of these newer songs have some unique and intricate rhythm styles, and this crowd doesn't buy into that real well yet. But some of the newer songs like Hillsong and vines, a vine song, and so on, Vineyard and Maranatha. They've got some great worship songs out there. And we try to keep teaching that to our people and bringing that envelope a little more forward.

Researcher – And how about your worship; your preaching? How do you see that has contributed to your growth?

P7 – My preference in preaching, of course, I would say one of the reasons a number of people came is they wanted to hear the word preached, not someone preaching from a text book, like Rick Warren or something like that. Our Baptist friends here would use a lot of Rick Warren stuff, and that offended them and then. So they like to hear me, hear me preach the Word. So I preach expository quite a bit. I've gone through Genesis verse by verse, and that took me awhile. And then, after I finish a lengthy expository, I'll probably go into some topical things. Like at Christmas time, I would probably look at the Synoptic Gospel's overview of the birth of Christ, and so bring that sequence out. And right now, I'm preaching through the book of Mark and a verse by verse. And last Sunday, I was in Mark 4, verses 26-29, dealing with the good soil, And, I didn't plan it this way, but I felt in my heart this summer to have Friends Day on Thanksgiving. And now in my preaching, I'm talking about the soils [chuckles]. And so I'm just tying this all into, "Friends your neighbor have a heart that has soil, and let's plant the seed of God's love there, and watch the gospel grow. So it just amazes me how that's working out, and I didn't plan it that way. But I'm more expository.

Researcher – I: With that expository style of preaching do you find your ... I'm gonna back away from that. What comments you're receiving about your preaching? A lot of times, we can tell what is meaningful for the people by the type of feedback we get from folks.

P7 - Well, like in this message Sunday about the Parable of the Good Soil, and in that story it talked about, the soil being planted. And no matter what the sower did, the seed would be planted; it found good soil, and what was in the seed was gonna come up. And then you would see the sprout; then you would see the stalk; then you would see the branches; then you would see the fruit. And my point was when you plant the seed, we don't know exactly when that's all gonna blossom and grow and develop. Sometimes seeds are planted in conditions, and it takes a while for there to be a, to see the evidence of that seed. Well, we have a newer family that's come to us, from a different background, and she's definitely a German lady with accent and all. But she said, "Pastor, that message meant a lot to me because the seed of the gospel was planted in my heart years ago by my father who's a pastor, but it's just recently that I've begun to see myself grow in my Christian walk. So that's one example.

Researcher – Ok

P7 - [interrupting] That seed laid dormant for a long time, then it finally germinated.

Researcher – How has a discipleship emphasis, including possibly a disciple-making process contributed to this growth? And I use the example of mentoring, classes. And you did mention classes, maybe any clearly defined steps that Christians do, should take, possibly a model. And is there an emphasis on the process of being baptized in the Holy Spirit? So if you could break it down into two questions, the first one, obviously discipleship emphasis in your growth.

P7 - The discipleship emphasis, I would probably I've done several things. One is I've done some one-on-one with men for a season of time. And then, second of all, I would use some of my

Sunday-night Bible study sessions of teaching some discipleship fundamental Christian growth type classes in a class setting. So there was an individual setting, a tutoring, and then a class setting. So that would be a start time and a stop time. And again, I'm dealing with people, by and large, who have a knowledge of the Bible and do know Christ, but they need to be stirred up. So that's one thing. What was the second question?

Researcher – The second part or the second question: Is there an emphasis on being baptized in the Holy Spirit in your process? And I think you touched on it earlier, about wanting to emphasize the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

P7 - I would say I'm at the beginning of that emphasis now, of talking about the baptism. You sees our Baptist friends from their theology, will refer to the Holy Spirit quite ... We need the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit, but they're missing the subject of the, of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. So I've some teaching on that, and I've done some modeling on that. When we've ... when not long ago, about a month ago, we had one of our dear sisters give a powerful prophetic word during our prayer time. And I was not leading worship then, and our worship leader wasn't quite sure how to handle that, so I just navigated them through bringing that worship time to a close. I set the congregation down, and I said, "Now let's come back and revisit what the Spirit spoke to us." And it was a pretty profound word for our church, an encouraging word. And so I said, "Now friends, what you heard in this service this morning, that prophetic word, did that speak to your heart, and if so would you stand." Over half that congregation stood saying that definitely spoke to my heart a work of encouragement. But what I did is I modeled for our non-Pentecostal people that people are listening to see what the Spirit's saying to us. And they heard the same message like everyone else, but they sat there in amazement like wow. And then, I led them to pray to apply what we heard the Spirit say to people's lives.

Following that service, one of our gals was a recent widow and said, "Pastor, I'm sorry that I got emotional in this service." She was crying. I said, "Don't worry about that, the Spirit of God was ministering to you. And you need to just let the tears come because He's bringing healing to your heart." She says, "Is that what's happened?" I said, "Yes." And she walked away with a whole greater appreciation for that. So right now is taking opportunity to model what the Lord said to us. But with the evangelist I have in mind, I definitely wanna work on having an encounter with the baptism, the experience.

Researcher – Ok. And do you have any additional comments for leaders who might be seeking, who are seeking to grow their church?

P7 - I would say, if you're a Pentecostal church, do not minimize our distinctiveness. I've been in the ministry a long time; I come from a long-standing ministerial family, and I've seen all the trends [chuckles] come and go. If you're gonna be an Assembly of God pastor let the Holy Spirit be your helper, not your enemy. And that means don't be afraid to let your praise and worship honor him. Don't be afraid to let your preaching be anointed. Don't be afraid to let the altars do the altar work. Recently, I took our people through a series by Reinhard Bonnke on "Church Aflame." Of course, he's a heavy hearted evangelism, but one of the things he said in that message, that series, that really spoke to me was. He said, "Let the gospel do the gospel work."

In other words, it's not my job to explain the gospel; it's my job to share the gospel and let the seed of the gospel touch people's lives. And he will do it.

Researcher – So true.

P7 - So I would say that, and I would say, when you look at a church, don't get out of balance to where you're heavy into the youth, or heavy into children, and you forget the older folk. I'm still a Sunday-night altar guy, and I like to see my older folks at the altars praying. And I like to see them praying with the younger mothers and fathers and those kids. I like to see a family of three or four generational emphasis at the altars, if we can.

Researcher – Hmm, any other comments?

P7 - Now, I must say, I don't see that altar time like I would like it here at this church. But at my previous assignment, I was on staff up in Alaska, and that was a multi-generational congregation, and the Sunday night slash Sunday-altar time was very powerful.

Researcher – Well, thank you.

Phone Interview #8 – November 6, 2013

G2 senior pastor, P8²¹⁷

Researcher – What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth, and possibly, maybe answering, well, why do people attend?

P8 - Well, I'll just give you a brief history of my ministry. Well, I'll just let I'm from New Orleans, Louisiana; and I was born and raised Catholic. And when I transferred up to LSU in Baton Rouge, walked away from the Catholic Church, and walked away from God. But then I was born again in 1983, as a senior in college, and felt called to the ministry. And so I started attending a huge church down in Baton Rouge. I don't know if you are old enough to remember a guy by the name of Jimmy Swaggart. So I was on staff there. And went to Bible College for about a year, but then I got all of my credentialing through the Berean School of the Bible. And that's how they did it for most of us back then. Because most of the guys trying to get in the ministry were already working and they were older and stuff. So anyway, I did that and got on staff. I got my license, ministry license, and then got on staff at Swaggart's. And of course, the church at that point was eight-hundred people, and they grew to ten-thousand. It was just huge. But then our youth group, I worked in the youth ministry, and our youth group was, it grew to two-thousand youth. And we started putting out. And we started having youth pastor conferences with three and four-thousand youth pastors coming from all over the world. Wrote manuals on youth ministry; probably a lot of what you see; or if you've seen a lot in youth ministry, a lot of that stuff. They have the basic principles that we probably worked those up, at least some part of it and stuff and ... So I spoke around the country and stuff.

And anyway, so I stayed there until the big debacle. And then we went with another guy, and started a church, and that grew to about a thousand in about a year, course a lot of that was

217. P8 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

transfer growth, and stuff. But anyway, so I'll speed it up and say that I've been to three or four different states. And youth ministry; I was in youth ministry for seventeen years. And then, about, oh, thirteen years ago, I took a little church in Kentucky and a small town in Kentucky. And tried, let's put it this way, that's where I had my wilderness experience and [chuckles] so I was there a couple years. But then I moved out here to help a buddy of mine, who was at a ... he was pastoring a church in north of here. And his church was about seven, eight-hundred, right there, and came to help him, and I was his assistant. And then, I stayed there about seven years, and we, my wife and I, did the children and the preschool and nursery and then we did the couples and the Sunday school.

And something I really learned from all of that, that's what I'm getting down to this is that we realized that people, if you are good at developing relationships, and investing in people, that's what contributes to, what I would feel is, would be church growth.

And so we've done ... After seven years there, a church, right there in this town, the church I'm at now, called me up to see if I wanted to consider pastoring there and so we went and spoke and they offered us the position. We prayed about it. We felt like the Lord would have us go there. So we started pastoring there five years ago last, in October, the past October. And they had about forty, fifty people there and so. But it just, it takes a pastor and his family, they say, about seven years to really get acclimated into it, for the church to really say, "Wow, this is, now at our church, necessarily, this is the pastor's church." I'm a face [words indistinguishable]. This is their church. You become the face on the church, and not the name so; because people relate to leaders, and so.

Now how does it happen? There's a lot of hard work; and when I say that a lot of relationship work. I was in ministries that, and I appreciate mega-church ministries and all that. But there's a difference that I recognize when I started pastoring this church. It took me a few, a couple years. But what I know we see a lot of things of, like how to grow your church, and church growth principles. And I've been to maybe two or three-hundred of these [chuckles] conferences so to speak, or read the books and all that. They're all great; they're all really good. But I think what we've done in the last, I don't know, ten, fifteen years is gotten away from the ... I think we focus more on growing the church than growing relationships. And I think that's, what we have with this church, have really focused on. Because we wanted to make sure that we didn't just say, Hey we wanna have a lot of people come to our church. Because in every other aspect of our lives, we are a number; just about in every other aspect, we are a number. And I never want anybody to feel like they're a number. I wanted them to feel like, "Hey, I know your name. I love, I care for you; I'm going to pastor you, if you let me."

And, I just thought it was important that relationships would be the driving force behind any church growth. Because it, anything short of that is just, I don't know, I just, if you're just a great speaker and you can get a great band up there and with the right atmosphere and lights and stuff, we can attract a crowd. But Jesus didn't say attract a crowd, he said, "Go and make disciples." And so I wanted to be, to start the church off from a foundation of ... I don't wanna become a mega-church. I don't even really honestly, I don't even care if we grow big numerically. What I wanna do is grow depth wise. So ... Can you hang on one second? [recording paused, restarted]

Researcher – You were talking about relationships.

P8 - Yeah, and I wanna give you a little foundation of my philosophy before I actually continue on as far as church growin and stuff. Because years ago when I first got into the Assembly of God, it seemed like the emphasis was not necessarily a big church, but it was a healthy church. And the numbers did not really have a lot to do with it. And so, and then, I know a guy [name indistinguishable], he wrote a book about numbers, and stuff, but it seemed like, back then, thirty years ago, when they, our leaders in districts were, (I'm not mocking any leader in the districts now, I'm just sayin, it just seems like there's just been a shift, in philosophy. Is that years ago, it was more like, "Hey, we don't care if you have ten people in your church, as long as you are preaching the gospel, and reaching out to your community, and you're not compromising the Word of God," then and not in an offensive way like that. But really, they were more into being doctrinally sound, because it was important to them, and, because, "Yee shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." But if you're not preaching the complete word of God, the whole counsel of God, your picking and choosing, and cherry picking, and then getting off into just one aspect or a couple aspects of the Bible, just to attract a crowd. Then that, they considered that to be taboo or don't do that because, that's how you get in error and off. And people, they end up coming to church, and they don't even, really when it boils down to it, they don't even know why they're coming, except for the fact, "Oh, man, this guy's a great speaker, he makes me laugh, talks about Jesus every once in a while; and how I can be blessed financially and this, that, and the other." And so I might be a little different than your normal typical preacher because I've been doing it for thirty years; and I've been a part of some of these movements; and I've been a, I've seen it from the inside out. I've seen the Benny Hinns—not that he's an AG guy, he was at one point—but, yeah, I've seen all stuff coming through the church.

So I came to this church, I really wanted to make it a point to not try to grow the church numerically, that idea, to make that my goal. I wanted to grow the people that were there spiritually, and then, and reach out to our community. And ... But I didn't want to compromise the gospel, I didn't wanna. And when I say compromise just skirt around it, don't offend anybody. Because the big seeker sensitive movement came about and stuff, and you were hearin, "You don't wanna say Jesus all the time. You don't wanna talk about ... You don't wanna say the word sin," and all that stuff; because people have these concepts and all this stuff. The problem that I had with a lot of that stuff was that the Word of God says it. And so I'm like, "Ok, well [chuckles], how do you get around that?"

And I'm, I got saved, born again, radically changed. I was a big time partier. I was into drugs and everything and I'm telling you, it wasn't some soft-soap. And when I'm talking about this, when I'm preaching, I'm very lighthearted of course I get serious and stuff. But I'm not, condemning anybody, or anything like that. I'm just really lifting up the Lord, and what he can do in our lives, if you let him, and stuff. So ... But I'm not, I'm just not into soft-soaping it. I'm not into sugar-coating it or being milktoast. I think we have come to the point in our denomination, fellowship, and even in Christianity in America, in a lot of ways, to where we have just basically sold out, and said what, "Let's just include everybody." And, "Let's not say anything that's going to divide or make people feel bad about their lives or what they're doing. Don't they have enough struggles? Why can't they just come to church and say, wow that made me feel good?"

Well, I know what it took for me to get radically saved, and it was not that. It was realizing that, man, I am a sinner. And I'm on ... I'm gonna split hell wide open. I'm going to hell in a hand basket. And it finally took me going to a church that the guy didn't say it in a terrible way, but he just told his life story, and he had to realize, "Man, I'm in sin, and I am not

giving my ... I need to give my life to Jesus, and ask, repent of my sins.” You don’t even really hear of repentance any more. We don’t wanna hear anything that’s going to upset the apple cart at all. So, whether I’m true to my growth ... the church growth to ... I tell you what, I really am more focused on discipling and keeping people in the truth, and preaching the Word, the full council of God on a Sunday, and then discipling them throughout the week.

And just ... and people have problems, man, they got ... They need real solutions, man, and the only thing that can set them free is the Word of God. And the Word of God is powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword—I just read it today in Hebrews 4—and it divides the soul and the spirit, and it really cuts you when you need it. If you’re ... If there are areas in your life that you’re not serving the Lord in. And so I try to give a word that is uplifting, that has hope to it, but yet they know, “Hey, if you have sin in your life, you don’t wanna sit around and play with sin, because the wages of sin is death. Even if you’re a Christian, it will destroy your life.” And so I do that; and that’s how I go about it.

And I just think that nowadays we’re too focused on tryin to get a crowd, tryin to have a big church. I have buddies of mine who ... And I’m talking about people who came up when I was at Jimmy Swaggart Bible college. I taught at Jimmy Swaggart Bible College, and I had three-hundred interns under me, and I have several of them that served directly under me that have churches of ten, fifteen thousand. And some of them, and are—I have high hopes for—but there’s a couple that just fell into immorality, and all this stuff, and all. So I just think, it’s so important in pastoring to, first off, take care of your family.

And how does my church grow? What I’m ... I’ll say it like this: I pray every day; I read the word of God; and start my day off like that. I spend time with my family. I love my wife. I have five kids. I just yesterday, sat through a graduation ceremony for my fourth child. Who’s gonna be, he is a firefighter now. He went to the academy, graduated yesterday. And my ... And all four of my oldest kids, they are all serving the Lord. They come to church; they are in the, on the worship team and all. And I think people see that. And of my twelve year old, she’s a, just as sweet as can be, she loves the Lord. And I think people see that.

I think we’ve gotten away from that, to where, you don’t even see the pastor’s family. If you get too big or whatever; people don’t even know who they are. They don’t even really know the guy up there speaking; they don’t know his personal life. And I think we need to get back to just getting back to basics; what the Bible talks about. I don’t want to have a big church; I really don’t. Because when I get to a certain three or four-hundred, whatever, I’m gonna plant another church. I don’t wanna ... I’ll break off, and I’ll stay about three, four, five-hundred at the max. But I think that once you get bigger than that ... I’ve seen it happen to my buddies. I’ve seen it happen at Swaggart’s. I saw, I’ve seen it happen just too much. I don’t think ... I know Billy Graham’s having his ninety-fifth birthday coming up. And ... But he didn’t have a church; he didn’t pastor a church. When you’re pastoring a church, man ... I was on the staff where I was pastoring twenty pastors, so I never really knew anybody in the church hardly, but I was pastoring pastors. I think at some point we gotta realize, hey, God made it the way he made it because most men or women cannot handle that much fame and fortune. They just can’t.

And so, what my goal, and I think the reason my church is growing is because when someone walks in that front door, I go and see them. I say hi to them. I grab them by the hand and connect them to somebody in the church. And I think that when ... And then they get up there and they see me; or when they are sitting down in the congregation, they see me preach, they hear me, they see my life. I go take em out to coffee. I spend some time with them. I really pastor them. And ... Is it a lot of work? Yes, it’s the hardest job anybody could have is pastoring

people because people have problems. And where there is sheep there is sheep mess. What I'm saying [laughs]. And you gotta clean it up. A buddy of mine says, "My philosophy of ministry is: say yes and carry a big shovel." Because what, whenever you give people stuff to do, they wanna do it, they are gonna make mistakes. But if you carry a big shovel because you're going to have to be cleaning up messes, and you just gotta be that person.

If you wanna be a famous speaker, you can go on the speaking circuit, but when you're pastoring a church, I think it really, really ... I'm not ... trust me (I know this is all being recorded and all), but I'm not knocking any big church, or any pastor that has a big church. I'm not knocking that because, thank God, we do have people that are spokespersons for Christianity and all, going around the country and everything. But I'm just saying, I don't know if this statistic, but the Assembly of God put out through their ... Oh, what's the name of the magazine, the quarterly magazine?

Researcher – Enrichment.

P8 - What is it?

Researcher – Enrichment.

P8 - Enrichment, yeah, and it said, eighty-five percent of the people who go to church in America, go to a church of a hundred or less. Eight-five percent! So when you're seeing or what I've seen over the years, and I've actually seen a poll of it, and teaching these poor youth pastors that if your youth group isn't growing, and it's this size. We had two-thousand kids in our youth group, and that's in church of ten-thousand. But we say to this kid, "If you don't have, that your youth group is growing, and is this size and all this stuff. You're doing something wrong." I think there are more frustrated pastors in the ministry because of this whole philosophy of you gotta have a big church or else you're doing, you're not doing something right. I'm gonna tell you what Jesus went to the cross alone. Where was his church? If we were to judge his ministry at that point, off of the attendance of the people in John 6:66, when he said, "If you wanna follow me, you must eat my flesh, and drink my blood, or else you have no part with me." It says from that point many people left him, and did not go back to follow him. Then he turned to his disciples and said, "What about you guys? Are you going to leave me too?" And Peter was the only one that really knew what it was about, he said, "Where shall we go? For you have the words of eternal life." And I'm saying is if we would encourage pastors in their gifting and encourage them in their ministry and say, "What, don't worry about the numbers of people you have coming. You just take those people that are come to your church, and love on them, love them."

Kids, your family, love them first; spend time with them. Don't sacrifice your children on the altar of ministry. Because God knows I have done it. And my first three kids, I did it and I regret it. And I've had to apologize a hundred times, not because they wouldn't forgive me, but because I had to relieve my own soul of leaving them for the sake of ministry. And what's happening to pastor's kids, and what's happened for many, many years, is that pastor's kids end up resenting God. Because God, the church took their father away because they're absentee dads.

And so I wanna say this, I would say my church has grown because my church ... You can come on any given Sunday ... Last Sunday, we had pastors appreciation ... I tell you what, people felt as if they are my family. I love them. They are my family. And they, we have a

relationship and they are my friends. And so I might never have a church of five-hundred or a thousand or whatever. But I'm gonna tell you what, I'm gonna pastor these people that God has brought into my way, into my church. And every week, we have two, three new families that come, and so what I do is ... We're small enough where I can go there. What? Maybe the guy down the street can preach better than me. Maybe he's got a TV ministry. Maybe people are following him on Twitter, and all this stuff. And I'm not knocking any of that. But I'm saying this: I can get to the hospital faster than he can. I can get to the hospital. I can go visit that person. I can go visit the people that visit my church, personally. Because I have ... I can do that. I don't have a thousand people coming.

And I'm not knocking anybody that has a bigger church; and I'm not saying that out of resentment because actually, I've talked to, I've been a part of mega-churches, and I've talked to my buddies who have had churches that grew from a hundred to eleven-thousand. And what they told me was, "Just enjoy your time now because the bigger it gets the bigger the problems; the bigger the challenges; the more they come at you." And honestly, and I'll just say this, like I said, I'm not against a big ministry, I just don't think that ... I think that a lot of pastors get into it for the right reasons, and then they end up staying in it for the wrong reason. The right reason is because you love people. You wanna people, to see people saved, and to come to Christ.

We do a Rock-the-Block backpack give away; we have food; and we do it all on one Saturday. We had fifteen-hundred people come to our little church, to the, to our little thing, our little event. People were in tears. People were weeping. We had people giving their hearts to Christ on that day. We had a week long Mega-Sports Camp; a hundred and fifty kids coming; very day teaching them about Jesus. What? Our church is not that big, but we see the need to reach out to the community.

And I'd say, if you just love people. You've got all these great conferences, and people giving you all these little hints and tips and stuff. And it's all good and I've done em. I've written the books. I've done all this stuff. But like what I realize, what it comes down to is you gotta just love God, and love people, love your family. And if you do that, and make every decision you make when you get up in the morning time before you do anything say, "God, show me what you want me to do with my family, with my church people, with the ministry." Because I wanna, like in Proverbs 3:5-6, trust in the Lord with all your heart and in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path.

I think we've gotten so much down to these systems and all that and I'm not knocking them. I'm just saying, I think we've gotten so focused on doing everything right; everything like streamlined, that we've lost the personal touch. We've lost the personal touch. It's like the Obama Care thing, and it's like you lose your personal touch. And what your intention was all good, but the method ended up consuming you. And you don't fulfill the purpose that God has for you the best way possible.

So I guess that the best way I could put it is how do you grow a church: you love God every day; you pray; you read your Word; you get your messages, to get what to preach on Sunday; you love your family, and you spend time with them; and you love people; you just love people that are coming to your church; and you just love those that are outside your church enough to do something to bless them; and to let em know that God loves them.

And as far as organizing it and everything, it's all out there. I don't need to rewrite any manuals. I've wrote em already. I've read em already. People have written and rewritten em a thousand times. It's all about setting up your small-groups, having your Bible studies, and one of my big things is a follow-up. I think if God sends you one person on a Sunday, and you don't

follow-up on them ... And what is follow-up? Call, send em an email, call em, and of course you don't wanna come off too strong or whatever. But you know what? Call em up, talk to them. Send em a card. Invite them to coffee. And then when you do, when they come back, see if you can connect em to somebody their age, or their ... once you talk to them a little bit, and stuff.

Yeah, what we're seeing, half the people, they're just looking, but the other half are looking for relationships, they're looking for friendships. And if I can connect them with somebody, me the pastor can connect them with somebody. Because I'm the best one to do it. Because that's what ... I'm the one they identify with, because they come to hear me preach every week. If I can connect them with somebody, and then just check up on them every once and a while, then what I find, I find people tend to stay. And then, they tend to get involved. And you have areas of ministry to get em involved in, and you invite to get involved in ministry.

So, is there a perfect church? No. Do we have the biggest church? No. I do have this, that I would like to say, though. Is that I think the mentality is that we have, in the Assemblies of God, and really in Christianity across the board, is that bigger is better. And I would say, I appreciated the Assemblies of God putting out that Enrichment magazine on small churches, they did do that, and man, I tell you what, it did me so much good. I think we need to ... I tell you what, I think the ones we need to put up on stages, to tell people how to do, how to tell pastors how to pastor churches, I think we need to get small church pastors, up there; hold those guys up as the real heroes.

Because, I tell you what, if you've got some administrative skills, and you can talk good a little bit, and this and that. Yeah, you can get people to follow you. You can get a big ole organization going. But if you are really a pastor, and I'm not saying people that have big churches are not real pastors. I'm just saying that, to me, it seems to be—not just my opinion, but statistically—what people want more of is they want to, at least be able to get close enough to that person up in that pulpit to where the church is not so big to where they don't even know the guy. They can't talk to the guy or whatever. Because, statistics show eighty-five percent of the people that go to church, go to a church of a hundred or less. And that really spoke to me.

So it confirms what my thought is, and I'm from the south, I'm from the Deep South. We're all about being on the front, sitting on the front porch sipping tea in the afternoon, people coming by visiting, and stuff, and just everybody's part of the big family and all. You can't get that in a bigger church. You get that in a ... You can't get that ... It's just more or less going to hear the guy speak; having some great music; and you might connect with some people, if you get a little group going there, and stuff. So, anyways, I might be right, I might be wrong; I might be part right, part wrong. But that's just, as for me, that's all I want. I don't wanna have a big church. When we get to a certain size, I'm just gonna split off and let someone else take a portion of it. So ...

Researcher – And you've touched on almost all of my questions that I had listed. Something that did come to my mind was when you talk about relationship, you as a pastor can only impact a certain number of people, to a certain extent. Do you have any type of structure or any type of leadership development or means by which can extend your impact?

P8 - Yeah, well I have my elders. I have five of those, four of those, I'm sorry, four elders. And they function as my right-hand guys, as far as, keeping the spirituality of the church on course, and all. Helping me with the, just the financial side. I know I don't have deacons, but typically deacons would take the finances, and elders would do the ministry, but these guys function as

both. But I have a staff, some are part time, some are, one or two, are full time. And I have volunteer staff that we meet weekly or every other week for sure, and stuff. And I'll go through like John Maxwell stuff. I'll focus on some ministry stuff, as far as methods and things and stuff like that. But I focus more on being, instead of doing. And so I try to focus on ... That's why I like Maxwell stuff, because he shares how to be a person of integrity; a person that is ... how to be it. And I think that's really what happens is that you'll see that if you are a person that ... like Christ, Christ-like. People, namely your kids and those on your staff will, they'll follow after that. So you really, as the pastor, you're up setting an example and a standard that even though you may not recognize it or see it; people will tend to go the way you go. And it starts on the top.

So of my structure that I do have, my small-group leaders, we have some like women's Bible study. We have actually two women's Bible study. We have a men's Bible study. We have a couple's, class, group or whatever. And so we also have a Celebrate Recovery, and all. And so ... But I do have Growth Tracks that I have four. This is like the bases. I just teach people about being a member of the body of Christ, in the church, and then spiritual. Membership is first base; spiritual maturity is second; ministry is third; and mission is home. Just like ... We do that from Rick Warren and stuff. So we have those things going on throughout the year, and people can get in em and stuff. And they can get on to what I call our Dream Team, which is they sign a covenant sayin, hey, I'm a member of this church, but I wanna be a part of this serving part, serving team, and stuff. And so they are the people that I have to ... they'll either lead a Bible study, or they can take on a ministry like the parking lot, or somethin like that. And so we just do that. And I try and help them recruit people and stuff. And get people involved and all.

So ... And we've just been transitioning into this new building, which we still have our main campus, but when we meet on Sunday mornings, right down the street at this elementary school. So ... And it's so much better as far as space wise. And it's really a brand new school and its beautiful and all. My son leads the worship, and he's got, like, twenty something people on the worship team, and they rotate in and out. Now ... So we have a lot, I'd say, percentage wise, we have a majority of our people are doing something, and serving of the Lord, serving the body, in a way, in some way, that, to me, is a very, very, very important. So ... But we do have the Growth Tracks and we have our Dream Team. And that's ... And of course you can come on staff, if you take on a ministry like Celebrate Recovery or whatever. So that's like the steps there ... Oh yeah and baptism of course, and the membership classes is really part of. It's the first base of the Growth Tracks. So ...

Researcher - Now one of the things you mentioned is that you have similar model towards, or have elements of what Rick Warren has at Saddleback. Now do you have an assimilation process? If you tryin ... And I'm not sure which base it is, but it's getting people from being a pew sitter to actually engaging in the ministry. Do you have a process for that?

P8 - Well they ... Well that's what the bases are. And then there would be more the just sitting and being an assistant or an intern in a small-group or in a ministry. And then ... And so at whatever point they can do it, then we'll let them do it. But it's based off of the ministry leader's recommendation, and stuff. So ... which is like discipling; to me it's discipleship. So it's not only just going to class. Ok, I getting a diploma for a class. Ok, now I can do all this stuff. Yeah, because ... Yeah, you can know a lot of stuff, but not really be good with people. So ...

Researcher - Sure, sure, and P8

P8 – That’s why ... What’s that?

Researcher – Oh, I was gonna let you continue, and then I had a thought.

P8 - Oh, ok, and so go ahead, tell me what you wanted to say.

Researcher - Well most of ... You’ve touched on most of, really all of my questions. And with your community outreach, you do it as an organization, inviting people along or do you approach people to do it on an individual level? How do you approach the community outreach?

P8 – Well, we have several different things that we do. We have individual things that people do. Like, just Saturday we had, we have a, not a team, but it’s a group of guys and of ladies, who know of a need in the church, or of someone outside the church has a need or needs meals or whatever. People off the meal team, people off the moving team, and stuff and so individual needs that people have, we try to meet those. And then, whether they go to our church or not, and so we try to do that. We just had a lady come last week that she wasn’t a part of our church, but she lived next door to one of our church people and she needed some meals. She was just going through hard times. And so we had some meals sent to her, and then she came to church. So that’s all individual basis.

On a group or like an event basis, we have our Mega-sports camp. We have ... which takes up about twenty-five, thirty, forty people to actually pull it off for a week. And we have our Rock-the-Block, which takes about a hundred people to pull it off, but that’s a one day event. But that takes a lot of preparation getting all the backpacks. We, every year we give more and more backpacks. First year we started off, we gave away about three-hundred; the next year four-hundred; and this past year we gave away five-hundred plus backpacks, so ... filled with stuff, school supplies. And people, I just can’t tell you, people would just come up in tears just thanking us. So we gave away hot dogs, hamburgers. We had jump houses for the kids. All this stuff and so, but ... [recording paused per participant’s request]

P8 – ... with a friend of mine, and got a moral challenge, and lost his church, but he’d written this book several years ago. And it’s all about serving the community around you, and stuff. And he grew his church from a hundred people to eleven-thousand, but just by serving them and stuff. And Joyce Meyer was a big time supporter of his and stuff. But since then he had to take a sabbatical. And now he’s on staff at another friend of mine’s church, Chris Hodges at Church of the Highlands in Mobile, not Mobile, in Alabama somewhere. Oh where’s it? Birmingham. So yeah, those. And then the ARC, Association of Related Churches.

Researcher – Did you have the name of the book, that resource that you mentioned?

P8 - It’s called Servolution.

Researcher – Servolution. Ok.

P8 - Servolution, yeah.

Researcher - It sounds like with most of my questions ... Ok, what about ... Here's one that you really haven't touched on is, How have Pentecostal distinctives including supernatural emphasis contributed to this growth? And I gave an example of possibly spiritual gifts expressed in the service, altar calls, prayer for the sick.

P8 - Well, we have prayer for the sick every, just about every week, come up, and stuff. And of course, I've been doing this for thirty years, and I've gone round and round, not round for round, but people have said, "Oh, we don't, have people come up, we have people go to the back," and do all this stuff. I think it's more that's just style or whatever. Of course, there's part of some ministries where they lined you up, and pushed you down and all those ... Sometimes it felt like it was pretty much hype and stuff. So I'm very careful because people, we ... Most people are smart and that they don't just ... You ... We've seen the abuse of it and everything. And I try to not give it any feel like that. I try to make it to where people come down, and we don't have people falling on the ground, but we do have people getting healed. We have some miraculous healings that take place. And I just give testimony to that and people model it. We believe in prayer. We believe God heals.

The Holy Spirit, I talk about the Holy Spirit. I don't try to emphasize the tongues on Sundays as much. I don't mind doing it. I will when I'm preaching on it, but I don't try to make that the major thing. We ... I know ... I'm a firm believer in the initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of speaking in other tongues. I believe that 100 percent! But I don't try to just throw it out there all the time. Because I feel like if, it just brings more confusion. And people that don't understand it, they're afraid of it to begin with. They would probably ... Just I don't wanna give em a wrong reason. Because Paul even said in Corinthians, "people are gonna think you're crazy." Which is true! That's basically what has happened, and I think it's been because of the abuse of. We ... The baptism of the Holy Spirit with the tongues, and the fact of ... I just think people are ... I'd rather teach it to them in a smaller setting, which we do and stuff.

But I do teach it from the pulpit. It's not like I'm afraid of it. I just don't try to ... I try ... I don't try one way or the other, I just, I tend not to constantly talk about speaking in other tongues, and having everyone praying in tongues right now and stuff. And ... Because I just ... I've been a part of stuff like that for years and I've just seen what happens is that you have maybe the weaker Christians. They're just wanting to be uncomfortable, they're ... and feelin inadequate, and all this stuff. So I tend to just do that more on a smaller level. The way we teach it in our Growth Tracks ... So when they want to get involved ... We actually ... That's when we really talk about the baptism in the Holy Spirit to be empowered for ministry and stuff. So that's more my, the way I do it. So, in other words, I'm not into, "Ok everybody standup, come on up to the front; holiness, holiness, holiness, holiness, holiness." Man, its fine if someone does that; that's just not my style. So ...

Researcher -I understand.

P8 - And I tend to think in our culture today, the average ... I mean, let me put it this way. I was raised in the Catholic Church. If that ... If tongues had been the first service that I had gone to outside the Catholic Church, I would've been so focused on that, that I would've, I don't know. I would've rushed out or ran out of there, probably [chuckles]. Not that I didn't want to know God. But like dude, I'm gonna find out somewhere else because these guys are crazy. Man, I don't get

it; I don't understand it; it's freakin me out. And so I try and think of how I was before I was a believer. And on a Sunday morning, yeah, I wanna be seeker sensitive, but I just don't wanna be seeker driven. So I don't wanna stop talking about it in the sense of just never mentioning it, but I wanna make sure I explain it if I do mention it. I guess that's the best way to put it. So, yeah.

Researcher – Ok, with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, do you have a means by which you encourage people to do that? Is that a part of your growth groups, your teaching process, giving people an opportunity to be filled?

P8 - Yeah, the Growth Tracks, yeah. Like when we mention, when we mention about the Holy Spirit in the Growth Tracks, yeah. And we do have some Bible studies that are very oriented that way, and so people talk about that stuff and do that, so yeah. Think ... I'll tell you this, I think that as a fellowship, we've gotten away from the importance of this. I feel, this is my opinion, I feel like we have gotten away from the importance of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. And from what I've seen around the country is that we just focus more on being, having faith or being a believer or whatever, that thing.

So I would say that what made us Pentecostal is [chuckles] is Pentecost. And we gotta stick to that, even if ... See that's what I'm talkin about, we sacrifice the doctrine, and stuff. But it's been, actually, it's been because people ... Pastors know that has been so, on TV, so abused and people think you're crazy before you even start. So it's like overcoming a cultural mindset. Of how do I relay this in a real way, in a practical way that's gonna be received and not immediately turned away from. Because ... anyway, but yeah, it's been a big challenge I tell you. And its, the reason it's been a challenge is because of the abuse of it. And just like Paul the Apostle talked about.

Researcher – Ok, no doubt. Now could you describe your culture, and whether you do anything to facilitate a particular culture or is your culture more of an expression of who you are?

P8 - Say that again.

Researcher – Your culture, the environment of ministry that is your church, is ... Are you strategic about developing a culture or is it more, just an expression of who Pastor P8 is? And it just flows from there. It sounds like you've got strategies. It sounds like you've got organizational aspects. You can't grow to the size that you are and not have those things. But when it comes to culture, are you strategic about it, and can you describe it?

P8 - Yeah, I'd say we are very strategic about it. It's hard doing it up in the Northwest because our whole thing is hospitality, and that Southern Hospitality. And that it ... In this culture and it's just the way this culture is. It's a Northwest culture. It's very ... It could be stand offish, not trusting. Way down south, yeah, you walk down the street, and people just say, "Hey, how you doing," waving, shakin hands, doin whatever. They don't even know you. So we're trying to bring the hospitality here, and people are, they react one of two ways: they're either ... Some of the people in my church, in the beginning were like, "Why are you going through all this trouble to just have all this baked goods for people on Sunday mornings?" Or we had a breakfast or whatever for people on Sunday mornings. "Why are you going through all this trouble to do all this? How much money we're spending? And I was just like, "What?" [chuckles] So some

people didn't get it. And I'd say 99 percent of em get it. There are a few that still don't get it, but they've, they just do it because we know them, we do it.

And so I'd say that, yeah, I'd say we really try and focus on hospitality, being kind to people, not just the people walkin in the doors, but being kind in our leadership, because I've served under pastors that are tyrants. I've served under other pastors that are manipulative in very controlling and very, let's see, manipulation, intimidating, and stuff. And I think that's what I've seen with several of the larger churches that I've been a part of, and have been a, or have just known the pastors. Their personalities, they tend to be ... they almost forget how to lead in a Christ-like manor. And they tend to just, I don't know, just ... they don't treat you like a brother in the Lord. They tend to be very ... just a get-the-job done and stuff. And they just ... their ... they've ... So any way, we try to not do that. We're tryin to consider everybody on our staff as family. And how do you treat your family? And so, yeah ... I don't know where I was going with that. But any way that's how we talk. Oh yeah the culture. The culture is very hospitable, friendly. We want people to feel that we care about them, value them, and that thing.

Researcher - And so how do you develop that? What is the means by which you

P8 – [interrupting] Once again, you gotta lead by example; you gotta be it, you gotta be it. And people there, a lot of times, they don't get it. They're just, "What? What? Why are you being so nice?" Actually my wife has been accused of being too nice. I didn't know you could be too nice. I didn't know that was a sin in the Christian culture. And so, that's why ... Ok, and so ... But what I've found is that up in the Northwest, you have it ... people tend to be a little bit shorter when they say things; just tell it like it is, all this stuff. They forget that, hey, people have feelings, people have hearts, and stuff. And I'm not saying everybody, I'm just saying that that's a cultural thing that we've had to develop in our church because it just is not here in the Northwest as much as it is, say in the South. So ...

Researcher - Ok, well P8, I appreciate so much your time.

Interview #9 – November 6, 2013

G5 Senior pastor, P9²¹⁸

Researcher - What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth?

P9 - Like what type of things are you wondering about?

Researcher - Well, I do have a list of questions, or a list of areas with my other questions that I think contribute to church growth, but I'm wondering what you specifically attribute your growth to.

P9 - I would say the first thing I would say is God has to bless what you are doing. And I believe that's a huge part of it. You have to have supernatural favor. So, I would say that, probably, first and foremost is God blessed our church. The second thing is we planted at the right time. So timing is always important. It was just there was a huge need in the community. There was a gap

218. P9 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

for a church like ours and we met that need. I'd probably also say we were very ... And if I'm going too fast you can tell me to slow down.

Researcher - No, I'm recording this, so it's not an issue.

P9 - Oh, no problem. And I also would say we were ... we refused to compromise our convictions with the church. That we had a strategy, we had a type of person we were trying to reach. And we refused to compromise that [audio cut out].

Researcher - Are you still there?

P9 - [audio back] To what God had called us to, and God honored that. [audio cutting out] We knew about that, and we'd be tempted [audio cutting out].

Researcher - P9, P9.

P9 - Yes.

Researcher - You are fading in and out. I don't know if it's your phone or my phone.

P9 - Alright, I think it's because I need my head up here. You got me up here.

Researcher - Well, it appears that it's ok. I don't know, but

P9 - [interrupting] Let me just talk into the mic. How's that? That's just easiest.

Researcher - Ok, if you could start all over. I know that where you began to fade in was, "not compromising," and didn't get much after that.

P9 - Yeah, I think refusing to compromise what our convictions were with the church. And we just stayed true to what we set out to do from the beginning, and even though there were those times, and there were people that were trying to get us to modify maybe what our target was. We just refused to do that. We stayed really true to what we felt like our mission was. So I think that was a part of it. And then I think a willingness to release people into leadership. And the more we got people involved in leadership, the more I let go of leadership. Just the more people that that just brought around. And then the more leaders you have, the more people that they attracted, and it just went from there.

And then I would say, on a less leadership, less spiritual standpoint, we did a good job marketing the church. We did a good job placing tools in our, in the hands of the people in the church to go out and invite their neighbors and their friends. And we tried to be creative with outreaches that we would put on. That we thought were, we thought they were very guest-friendly. So, they allowed people to, with the church, and build relationship with us and with Jesus. And I just built from there. And so I think it's a, there's not any one major thing, but I think it was all of those pieces combined, gave our church a lot of momentum and traction.

Researcher – And it, you’ve touched on several different areas of what I’m gonna ask about, but predominately, could you describe your culture and how you’ve developed it.

P9 - Yeah, at the very beginning when I decided to launch the church, and again, I started this church. So that’s part of it. So the DNA of the church, we mapped it out, set it. So I didn’t inherit anything. I didn’t inherit a building. I didn’t inherit people. We started ground zero, nothing. And we made a decision that we wanted to build a church, from the get-go, that was built [audio cuts out] non-negotiable, would be our core values. It ... We didn’t have a mission statement initially. In fact, it wasn’t even until year three we had one. But we built the church on being real, relational, rousing, and reproductive. A major part of it, and our strategy was we really wanted to reach people that had never gone to church before.

And I got, I started going to church when I was in high school; I had no church experience whatsoever. I’m forty two now, and so that was in the mid-eighties when I got saved. And I remember how difficult it was. It was like a ... It was total absolute, radical culture-shock. And if you remember the eighties or even the early nineties, everything was Christian, secular non-Christian. There was like this huge divide, there was no gray area whatsoever; everything was black and white. And so, being a kid who had no church context whatsoever, and being thrust in [audio cuts out] or in ... was one of the most difficult experiences ever for me [chuckles]. But Jesus changed my life, and so I was committed to plowing along, even though I was very rough around the edges.

And we wanted to start a church where, from the get-go, it was guest-friendly. That people ... That you didn’t need any church experience. We didn’t talk a language that people wouldn’t understand. We used normal language. We would use references that people would understand, and we tried to make the Bible something that was relevant for people today. I wouldn’t teach on things like I wouldn’t use phrases like propitiation, or transubstantiation or ... Yeah, I wouldn’t argue pre-millennialism, pre-tribulation. Just those things that really don’t help somebody survive a job they don’t like, or help them in their marriage. Or ... Yeah, we just did not ... We made a decision that those were not a priority, that our priority was sharing the gospel in a way that everyone can understand it. So that was really what our mission was to begin with. We wanted a real, relevant, relational, rousing, reproductive church.

Researcher - And so how did you strategically accomplish that? One of the things you mentioned obviously was your, the language that you used. Were there other ways?

P9 – Like are you saying initially or all along?

Researcher - Well, obviously, as you have all along, as you planted the church, and certainly as you've grown and developed, and certainly at maintaining it right now.

P9 - Yeah, I would say we do that in several ways. We, we’re very intentional on what we say from the platform. Like the terminology that we use. And so we coach people, and we train people and we follow-up with ourselves. We evaluate every service. We talk about what went right? What went wrong? What was missing? What was confusing? And really, the thing that we try to not do is be confusing. And so part of it was language that we used, and that’s a really simple part of it. We don’t call it a sanctuary because the person whose never gone to church before doesn’t know what a sanctuary is. We call it an auditorium. They understand, hey, an

auditorium is where a group of people gather, and there's a service; a production; whatever it is. We don't call it a foyer, we call it a lobby. We don't call it a bulletin, we call it a program. The little things like that. We ... Whenever I hire staff from the outside, we retrain people to say things that the average person understands.

Other things that we would do, ongoing, is when and we do expository teaching, so we're pretty much verse-by-verse, section-by-section through the Bible when we teach. And where a lot of people, when they preach, they would say something like ... they would just refer to somebody in the Bible, Paul, in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, just assuming that their entire crowd knew what they were talking about. We would pause, take the time, explain who the person was, do a lot of the back story, the history and we just, we try to do everything with the belief that we're starting at ground zero with everyone. And what we discovered is, even people with church experience, appreciated it. So part of it is training of our staff.

And then initially, I tried to be very intentional on hiring staff that they weren't third, fourth, fifth-generation believers; that they were first-generation believers; that they actually remember what it was like to be lost. And then they remember what it was like to have Jesus intersect with their life and how it changed. So we were just, we were very intentional about the initial staff to begin with; to really set our culture, and our demographic. And then, from the get-go, of when we started the church, it was just training people, that were a part of our church initially, that had grown up in church, that their paradigm was different than most peoples. And helping them understand people that are coming in from the outside and other phrases like, I just created clichés the guys used. It's ... We made ... We were very intentional at looking from the outside in, and just everything the way we designed the church; the way the terminology we would use on our website. Everything was meant to be understood by people that did not have church experience.

Researcher – Ok.

P9 – I would say that other stuff that we did, we used cultural references all the time, as illustrations. So we tried to be up on what was going on in the news and what's going on in pop-culture. And we do those references, just because it's part of, is the language that everybody understands. And I can ... I'm trying [call ended].

Researcher - I lost you. [call reinitiated]. Ok, well I remember you mentioning about being cultural, and then I lost you right after that.

P9 - Oh, my goodness. Ok, was it my phone or was it yours?

Researcher - Boy, if it happens again, I will call you in on a different line.

P9 – Ok, The ... I don't know how much dept I went into, what you got, but we ... Had I already gotten to the point where I was explaining the intentionality about where I, we hired a bunch of people initially that weren't third, fourth, fifth generation Christians, but were people that remembered their salvation experience?

Researcher - Yes, and then you went and mentioned about how you addressed your congregation using cultural, pop cultural references.

P9 - Yeah, we try to do things that are familiar with people. The example that I would use is what we did on Sunday. There is this ... that, "What Would a Fox Say?" song that it's become that YouTube sensation. It's had a 600 million views or something. My kids watch it over and over, and over again. So we are doing a big huge Thanksgiving basket drive. That we wanna give away over two-hundred Thanksgiving baskets to people in the community. And so to let our church know about it, we went into the studio, and we redid that, "What Would a Fox Say?" and did this thing, "What Would a Turkey Say?" So we played this video everyone was familiar with it, because they'd seen it on YouTube. And we did it to share the message of this compassion effort that we're going to do for the community. But ... And so we try to do things like that. We try to communicate and use references that people understand, and analogies they get. We're very media driven. We're very social media driven, technology driven. And we try to think through those things really well. We try to speak the language of the culture.

Researcher – How have ... You mentioned early on some community outreaches, how, what type of community outreaches have you had? And it sounds like it was on an individual level. Could you describe those a little bit, and really how that has contributed?

P9 - Well and this was different for me initially, because when we started the church, we had this strategy that everything was built out of relationship. And so like I had to ... I had worked in a mega-church in California, and we would put on these huge citywide events; like a harvest carnival on Halloween. And we do the big Christmas events, the big Easter egg hunts, but everything was built around a stage and an altar call. And I just ... So when we started, we thought, What if we put on events like this, but we did it just as a service to the community? Just to show it to tell the community, "Hey, we love you." We wanna provide a safe environment for your kids and setting in certain things. So, really two months after we started the church, the area where we were at, didn't have a citywide Easter egg hunt, and we put on this huge Easter egg hunt for the city. And it's still going on, it's been going on for ten years, and we introduced to our community, Trunker Treat. We were the first church in Washington that did a Trunker Treat, cause it's a California idea. Now everybody does em, but we did that. We do that in conjunction with our city. We actually do it at city hall. And we do it just ... We do it for fun for the kids, and it's become just a great service to the community. We don't ... They, we put banners up for our church, and we invite people to our church and things, but we don't give an altar call. We're not preaching the gospel at it. We're showing them the gospel by serving. So we do big events like that. And then we do individual things like we do the Thanksgiving baskets. For Christmas, we're doing this huge toy drive. We're asking our church to donate five-hundred toys, like go to the store buy five-hundred toys. And we're gonna go take them to the children's hospital, and different toy drive things. There is this thing called, Casino Drive Ministries; we're gonna be a part of. And then other things we'll do is, we have fifty families that we adopt every Christmas. And we provide Christmas from beginning to end for families that wouldn't otherwise have it. So we try to do, we do those things too. We do those nationally, and we also do that stuff internationally. So ...

Researcher – Ok. And that's as an organization. For ... On an individual level do you encourage ... How would you or do you encourage your individuals to be connected with their neighbors? Do you do anything like that?

P9 - Yeah, it's ... And now it's become a rather over-used word. But we tell everybody in our church, we want them to be missional. And what we mean by that is that you see yourself as God's called you in the ministry, and it just happens to be where you are. That's your mission field, that's your ministry. And for some people it's the PTA; for some it's Boeing; for some it's Microsoft, but you're not where you are by accident. But we want you to view yourself as you represent Jesus in whatever culture, whatever environment you're at. And so ... Yeah, we challenge people to be missional.

And part of that is invite your neighbor to church, serve your neighbors, love your neighbors, and all those things. And my ... We see it in ... That's what we would teach the church and really challenge everybody with. And in addition to that, to support that we would provide events that are easy first invites. We call em, Big Days. So we try to have six to eight Big Days on the calendar. Where, as people have been building relationship, they are looking for the right opportunity to be able to invite their friend to church, or some ... or co-worker, neighbor, or whatever it would be. So we want everyone to be missional in their everyday life, and then there are those certain points where they leverage their relationships, and they invite them to church.

Researcher – Now are those big days your Sunday gathering times?

P9 - Yeah, we have other entry points in addition to that, but Big Days would be Father's Day would be a huge deal for us. Obviously, Mother's Day is big everywhere, but we really try to hammer Father's Day, Mother's Day. We just came off of a Big Day, which was Daylight Savings Sunday. We call that Everyone Bring One. Don't come to church alone that day. We do this big huge kids Christmas thing, every year; and so that's one of our Big Days. Things like that. Easter is a big day. Psalm Sunday's a Big Day for us.

And then in addition to that we'll do other events that are meant to just introduce people to relationship with us, so that. For a lot of people that have never come to church before, they have all these preconceived ideas of what church is. And we want them to feel comfortable being here. And so we've done things like ... we'll do ... I'd don't know if I want to be quoted in a project with this. But we'll use

Researcher – [interrupting] And I don't know. I guess I wanted to clarify, we, with this project, we will do not use any names, and

P9 – [interrupting] Ok, we'll do, we would do, we've done poker nights. We'll do Texas Hold 'em nights. It's a great friend invite for people. We'll do fight nights where we'll have a UFC pay per view event. We'll buy the licensing fee, and show it at church, and it's a great friend invite opportunity for people. We just try to be really creative of what we do. If there's a Christian celebrity that's in the area, we might bring them in for a special night, and have them do something. We try to provide as many opportunities as we can for our people to be able to invite people; make it easy.

Researcher - Ok, how have Pentecostal distinctives, including a supernatural emphasis contributed to this growth, and I give an example of gifts being expressed in the service, maybe altar calls, praying for the sick, anything in relationship to the supernatural?

P9 – Yeah and this was part of our values from the very beginning. One of our core values is we are arousing, and that's like our Charismatic distinctive. But we wanna be, we wanna have demonstration with explanation. And what, what's gotten Charismatic and Pentecostals in trouble in the past is there'd be all these crazy things that would happen, and we just assumed everyone got what was going on. And so for us, if there is any sort of demonstration of the supernatural, we have provided an immense amount of explanation for it. When we pray for the sick, we'll explain what the Bible says about laying hands-on people, and praying for the sick, and believing that they'll be healed. We will explain those things.

So we would be very ... Our people are very passionate in worship. And I give altar calls every single Sunday. And there, I give altar calls for salvation every Sunday. And I explain it every single Sunday; why I'm doing what I'm doing; what this means; why I'm having you pray this prayer. I explain all of these things. So if you've ever been around our church, even for a year, you've heard all of these explanations over and over again. And part of it is intentional that if our people hear it, then when they get asked questions about it, they can explain it really simply so that people will understand. So we absolutely want the presence of God in our services. We want the power of God in our services, but we want it with explanation.

And we're really not looking for weird stuff. So if ... I don't know how to say this other than there's, I call them Holy Ghost groupies; there's the Holy Ghost groupies in every community. Where they float from church to church, and they wait for what's the real hot happenin speaker, or the hot happenin worship leader, and whatever. They're always just looking for the new move of God. And we encourage those people to not to come to our church. Because we don't let them gain any traction. And we do not want weird stuff happening. And the thing that I always remind our church is that we're called by God to represent Jesus, and we wanna represent him well. And we don't want people trying to draw attention to themselves by acting weird during the services or trying to high jack the services with a quote unquote word from God; whatever. And so we have practiced the way that these things should happen; we have protocol. That if someone feels that God is speaking to them, they have a prophetic word, They would, I have some staff that are positioned at certain points in the auditorium, and they would come up and say, "Hey I really believe that God is saying this to me that I should share this with the church. And if it's in the line of what the leadership of the church feels that the service is heading that direction, we will let them share. If not, we'll just say, "Hey, the message from the prophet is subject to the prophet, and there is timing, and this isn't the right time for that." And so we absolutely believe in the power of God, and want, we want the Presence there. But we don't want it; we don't want weird people to high jack the service. If that makes sense. So we're very careful.

Researcher - And I do understand that. How have organizational leadership philosophies and practices contributed to this growth? You mentioned something ... that you didn't have necessarily a mission statement early on, but it sounds like you have incorporated some aspects; and so alignment with mission, values, vision with strategies, practices, processes, systems, programs.

P9 - Yep, we are, you would refer to as a systems driven church. So we don't have your typical church structure. We have, my staff is hired around the systems of the church, and we believe that every church organization has eight systems. And that if you're, if every church has these

systems, we'd rather do really well. So every church has an assimilation system. So we have an assimilation person. Every church has a stewardship system; we have a stewardship person. Every church has a small-group system; we have a small-group person.

So, I would say we are very structured, very organized, very systematic. And we want the systems of the church to support and fit the mission. And what we don't wanna be is so haphazard that we don't have any systems. And then we can't fulfill the mission that God has given us. So, yeah ... We didn't have a mission statement initially, but we have one now. So we are very much, I would say, we would model a ... I think we would have a corporate structure, a bit. Like I guess some people, they've come in from the outside, they would say, "Wow, you guys run this like it's a business." That would be the system aspect of it. We don't run it by the seat of our pants.

Researcher - Ok, how have the senior leader's gifts and passions contributed to this growth? And you did mention them. Certainly about your history, and the ... your experience becoming a new believer, and I mentioned personality, leadership, charisma, administration.

P9 - Yeah, I would say we spend a lot of time, when we hire staff, doing personality gift assessments, and all these things. Really, you ... the line that we use, "We want the right people on the bus, in the right, on the right seat in the bus." And so we try to really utilize people within their areas of giftedness, and expertise, and calling. And we are very intentional with that. And a couple times a year we actually do a study on this to constantly remind ourselves, and make sure that everybody's flowing in their area of giftedness. And one of the things that I say to my staff all the time is if you're working in the area of passion, and you're working in an area of giftedness, you don't consider it work. And the nature of being a minister is that we don't have your typical nine to five job. We have a lifestyle job. And if you have a lifestyle job, and you don't like it [chuckles] that means you are not happy with your life. But if you're working in an area of passion and giftedness, it doesn't seem like work, and we're pretty intentional with that.

Researcher – And you mentioned

P9 - [interrupting] To be honest with you, if somebody is not a good fit culturally with our church, we won't, it won't take us three years to figure that out. We'll encourage people to transition sooner, because we want people to really, that believe in the mission, love the people, love the community. And then in addition to that, they feel like they fit in what they're good at out here.

Researcher - And I'm assuming ... because the question is really meant about you. More so than your team, but I really think it seemed like you're expressing those things, but if you wouldn't mind commenting about how you're specific giftings and passions have contributed.

P9 - Yeah, I would say it's easier to explain it by what I'm not good at. I am just well aware of what I am not good at. And I try to staff what I'm not good at. I am, I have a passion for the lost. So we have a very evangelistic church. My, I would say my primary giftedness is vision; ability to communicate. And my staff has done a great job in releasing me to be able to cast vision, develop leaders, and preach. And I would say that is what my role is, my main role is: I lead leaders and dream for the church and preach and try to win the lost. And that's what I'm

passionate at, passionate about. And it's what I'm good at. I would say, if you're looking for more hobby-type interests: I'm into sports. I'm into ... I have a Harley, and I'm into mixed Martial Arts, and so we, those things always come out in my teaching and in different events that we'll do. But yeah ...

Researcher - Ok, and then you

P9 - [interrupting] I always tell people that, and I don't mean this with false humility at all. This is just absolutely transparency; I am not a five talent guy. There are those certain people who are good at everything, I'm not. Man, I'm good at, like, three things. And I only focus on those three things. If I start getting involved in those other things, it doesn't go well. And so I try to find people with passion and gifting in everything that I'm not good at and there's long lists of it.

Researcher - And you did touch on the next question. How has a leadership development process contributed to this growth?

P9 - Yeah, fortunately for me, one of my passions is developing leaders. And I've always been able to attract sharp people, around me. And so it's just, we're just intentional, we do it, person-by-person. But let me use me. Every year, I take ten guys under my wings, and I mentor ten guys. And their ten guys that I feel like have lots of leadership ability, and I pour into them. And my goal is I want to ... the end result of pouring into them is I wanna see them become key leaders in the church. Maybe it's elders, maybe its pastors, maybe its department heads, whatever it is. But it ... I want to do that. And in the end, some end up not having key roles in the church, but they'd say it's made me a better business owner. It's made me a better manager and different things like that. So we're very intentional at raising-up leaders.

And in addition to that, the, we try to create a really good pipeline. So that there's constantly people that we're pouring into, that we're developing to be pastors and church planters and youth pastors and worship leaders. And I think one of the things our church has a great reputation for is we have lots of solid good people. So my people in my church and on my staff are constantly getting hired other places. In fact, I just had, in the last two months, five people from my church have either gotten senior pastoring jobs or executive pastoring jobs at churches, and we do it ... we're very intentional about it.

Researcher - So do you have an expectation with your, the various levels of your leadership that they, that that will happen? And is it done on like a mentoring, as you described or is there some type of a structure?

P9 - The biggest part of the expectation is, we ... our job is to equip people to do ministry; we are not just the ones that do it. So I expect that my youth pastor is gonna have a large youth staff, and they are people who he is mentoring; he is pouring into; rising up to do that. That my campus pastors always have three or four people around them that they are mentoring; that we are to be training people to do that. So that's what the expectation is.

I'll be honest and say it isn't necessarily a natural gifting of all of my key leaders to be able to train leaders. But it's an expectation that I didn't hire them to do the ministry themselves. I hired them to raise-up people to do the ministry with them. The example I use, we have an outreach guy on staff, and he is one of those guys; he has a heart of gold; he is all heart and he

would spend hours of the day just talking to people, and praying for people. And I tell his all the time, I say, “Your job is not to walk up and down the street and praying for people.” I said, “That is incredibly admirable, and that is a valuable thing to do, but your job is to rise up an army of people that will walk up and down the street praying for people. So it, its ... Yeah, that’s an expectation that we want guys and gals that will raise-up leaders.

Researcher - And then, my next question is

P9 – [interrupting] Some people do a better job than others though, to be honest [chuckles].

Researcher – And I do understand that. And is there a part of the evaluation process that you have for your leadership ... is that incorporated in it? Is

P9 – [interrupting] Yes.

Researcher – Ok. How has the worship service

P9 – [interrupting] Evaluated from the get-go. That and it's probably the thing that if you were to ask my staff, “What is your pastor’s ... Is there any pet-peeves that he has? And they will say, “Our ability to raise-up leaders. We have to raise-up leaders.” So it's probably the number-one thing that I evaluate their job on.

Researcher – Ok. What about ... How is the worship service, i.e. preaching and music contributed to this growth? And I know this, I remember that you mentioned your three strengths, one of them being preaching.

P9 - Yeah, with our services, our services are about an hour and fifteen-minutes long. We do about twenty-five minutes of worship; the teaching segment is about probably thirty-five, forty minutes. And then there is the peripheral stuff around there. We say that we want services that are relevant; that the greatest sin that we can commit on Sundays is the sin of irrelevancy; that I want somebody to be able to come to church on Sunday, and be able to leave with something that will help them on Monday; that will move them forward in their spiritual life right away. So we do something called Next Steps that every time anybody teaches; and we actually we do team teaching. I don’t preach every week. I have my staff preaches a lot too, but everybody ... We have next steps. And so at the end of the message we say, “I want you to grab your connection card, flip it over, you’ll know ... there’s four next steps, so how are you going to take this message, and practically apply it to your life?” So, yeah, our services on Sunday morning, we call every Sunday the Super Bowl. That we want ... The Super Bowl is the one game of the year you wanna win. And we ... Every Sunday is the Super Bowl. So we wanna do it with excellence; we want there to be smooth transitions. We do service run throughs on Thursday. There’s lots of media elements with the message. So the message would be written on Monday. The media elements, everything is done by Thursday. And we want the service to be done really well. We want it to be prayed up, very Spirit-filled, so, and meaningful.

Researcher – And that

P9 – [interrupting] Sometimes you only get one opportunity with people.

Researcher - Very true [chuckles]. And in relationship to that, as we transition to the music part, with (since you touched on it) prayer, do you have a ... What is your prayer ... Do you have a structure for praying? Do you ... What does that look like for you?

P9 - On the, at the services on Sunday?

Researcher - Well if you have a team that prays for the service, if you have a ... different aspects of your prayer ministries.

P9 - Ok, yeah. A couple different ... there's a couple different levels of it for us. I guess levels is a bad way to put it. Let me say layers. Sunday morning we do prayer during worship that ... we have ... The way that our service is structured, really three people are up front. We have the worship guy, the guy whose preaching, and then a host. And the host is up there the most. He's in there. So after the first song, the host comes up, welcomes the people, and invites our prayer workers up. So we offer prayer in the middle of worship for the rest of worship. We do prayer at the end of the service, like when I give an altar call depending on the direction of the service; things like that. So that would be the prayer during the service.

We also ... We're trying ... We disciple people in prayer through this thing we call, One Voice. And so, once a month, in fact its tonight, we do this big huge prayer and worship night. And one of our, my pastors on staff, it's a gal, she oversees One Voice and that's where people come, and we teach them how to pray. We have them really dig in deep to prayer, and pray for the services, and all these different things. And then in addition to that we have intercessory prayer that goes simultaneous with the service. There's a group of people that meet in a room, and they're praying for the services while they're happening. And then we do other, like a couple times a years, we'll do a month of praying and fasting, and we'll focus the church that way. In fact, this Sunday I'm preaching on prayer.

Researcher –And do you do that very often during your preaching schedule?

P9 - When it fits within the flow of the text, absolutely. I would say I probably do a message on prayer probably four times a year. But again, when you do expository preaching, you're driven by the text. And we're teaching through the life of Elijah, this fall cause I'm at that point where Elijah just defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Caramel, and then he heard from God that there's the sound of heavy rain, and then he prayed. And so I'm talking about he prayed. Sent his servant to go see if, what he sees. And seven times he sent him to go look, and so we're, the theme of that is: "Hey, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened." If it doesn't happen the first time ask again, seek again, knock again and such. Just challenge people in prayer.

Researcher – Ok. And then with your worship service, you did mention something early on that your people are passionate about worship, could you describe that a little bit.

P9 - Our worship style is very contemporary, I guess, and we encourage people to be expressive during worship. We want em ... We tell em to clap, raise their hands, move around; things like

that. Our worship is loud; unapologetically very loud; band driven, it's typically led by a dud on an electric guitar.

Researcher – Is there time for, during this worship, for intimacy in the sense of just connecting with the Holy Spirit on a little-bit deeper level?

P9 - Yeah, and a lot of it. I guess there would be two points where that would happen. And it, part of it is driven by the worship pastor. And most of our guys, they do a really good job or gals, whoever's leading. They do a good job at having times where it's just celebration, and having times where it's calm and reflective. And the, they will usually do that in conjunction with where the teaching is going for that Sunday. And if the teaching is more conducive to celebrate, worship's going to be a little-bit louder. If it's ... like this Sunday, it's going to be way more conducive for reflection, so most of the songs are gonna be slow songs, there'll be points probably where it's just totally quiet, but we try to have a lot of continuity that way; and then in addition to that, at the end of the service, when we give the altar response. Most of the time it's softer music meant to be more reflective and personal and things.

Researcher - Ok, how has a discipleship emphasis, including a disciple-making process contributed to this growth? And then I gave examples of mentoring, classes, defined, clearly defined steps of Christian maturity, and I guess it's broken down into two because I've added this one: is there an emphasis on the, in this process, on being baptized in the Holy Spirit?

P9 - Can I come back to that one?

Researcher - Yes

P9 - Let me answer the first one. We do all adult discipleship through small-groups. So our small-group attendance is as important to us as our Sunday-morning attendance. And our goal is 100 percent participation in small-groups. And we've never hit it, but we have about 75 percent participation in small-groups. So, say for example, we average fifteen-hundred on Sundays, we have about, I would say, over a thousand people that are involved in small-groups. And that's where we do just about all of our adult discipleship.

And our assimilation process starts from the moment somebody drives into the parking lot, and we do not stop following up on people until they become members of the church. And you cannot be a member of the church unless you've been involved, until you're involved in small-groups, and all the above. So my development guy on staff, my small-group guy is incredibly intentional at getting people involved in the discipleship process. And then also, in addition to that, the way that we do our teaching on Sunday mornings is it's very discipleship thoughtful too. So that would be a huge part. It's ... Now the baptism in the Holy Spirit, ask that question again.

Researcher - Is there an emphasis in this process on being baptized in the Holy Spirit? Or in your own, well, preaching, and just the emphasis of the church that this is a part of the maturing process as a believer?

P9 - Ok this is where I'm gonna get in trouble [researcher chuckles]. We teach people, and part of the discipleship process for us is we want people to live Spirit-filled lives. We might not always define baptism in the Holy Spirit exactly the way that my denomination does. So my goal isn't that everyone speak in tongues. My goal is that people have evidence of living a Spirit-filled life. We're doing a ... This Elijah series that we're doing, it's called Supernatural, and the whole thing is, "What happens if you live a supernatural Spirit-filled life? What does that look like?" And so I used Elijah as an example and nowhere in the life of Elijah do you, do we see him speaking in tongues, but we see him praying for the sick and them being healed. We see this massive divine miracles of provision. We see him praying for the dead, and seeing them resurrected. And praying down fire from heaven, very much a Spirit-filled life. So that's what we really train people to do. We don't focus on just one gift of the Spirit; we try to focus on them all.

Researcher - Ok. And finally, do you have any additional comments for leaders who are seeking to grow their church?

P9 - Yeah, I would say the biggest thing that if ... Whenever I'm encouraging young leaders is just be yourself. That if you are convinced that God has called you in the ministry, and you believe that, be yourself. Don't read a book and try and be the dud that read a book. Don't go to a seminar and try to be him. And in Western Washington, don't try to be Judah Smith. Don't try to be Mark Driscoll. Don't try to be Casey Treat. You really just be who God made you to be and talk with your voice and be you. And I think one of the challenges, I would say, over the last probably ten years with young leaders has been they try to model everything they do and duplicate someone else, and it's not them. And they're not comfortable in their own skin. But if God called you, he has given you the dynamics you need to be able to fulfill his call. And be yourself. The number-one thing I would challenge young guys with.

Researcher - Ok, though, and maybe

P9 – [interrupting] If you're you, God called you, and you're faithful, and if you do the little things right, God will bless the church. It will grow. Growing a church is not, it's not rocket science at all.

Researcher – Well, for not being rocket science, there's not, you guys are not in the majority in the Pacific Northwest, and certainly across the United States.

P9 - Yeah, your ... It's true.

Researcher - And so I bless you.

Interview #10 – December 12, 2013
G4 senior pastor, P10²¹⁹

Researcher - What factors do you believe have contributed to your congregational growth as listed; that was identified in the 2012 ACMR?

219. P10 is a pseudonym. Pastor's name was concealed for privacy purposes.

P10 - Intense humility.

Researcher – Intense humility. Ok, would you

P10 - [interrupting] Do you want me to extrapolate on that?

Researcher - Please.

P10 - Yeah, right. Let me put the humility in two categories. Well, first of all, a couple precursors to that. I don't think anybody ever chooses to humble themselves. I don't think we wake up in the morning, in our personal time with God and say, "How can you humble me today?" or look for opportunities to humble ourselves. There's two ways to get humble. We humble ourselves when we're confronted with circumstances or God humbles us when we ignore the circumstances. And what happened for us is that we humbled ourselves when we saw the circumstances. You ... It's an interesting thing about humility because if you do humble yourself, God exalts you. And we're all trying to exalt ourselves in one way or another. We like to lie and say we don't. No. We're going to walk humbly. But my goodness, we all ... [chuckles] there's this jockeying and positioning that goes on. It's just part of human nature. It can't be avoided.

So our church in the late seventies, early eighties was the largest church in the city of Seattle. There's no doubt about that. Perhaps even the state of Washington. In those days, any church over a thousand was an amazing church. Amazing! And our church was running over two-thousand. So we were rocking the city. People were driving from a long distance to attend the church. We were the cat's meow. We were number one. We were ... Now I was just a student at Northwest University at that point attending the church. And I didn't even attend very regularly because college students don't attend. Well, how they attend; they attend when they attend, thing. So, but when I went to church, this was the one. You had to work to get over here from Kirkland, but I did come on a reasonably regular basis; went to the class for the college age and all of that. And I remember it just being absolutely packed out. It was just an exciting time. So on the church's part, we were pretty up there. We were ranked and noticed and influential. Had a lot of politicians, high influential people from Seattle, during that period of time.

So, in the late eighties then, the church began to decline; largely because of the leadership that we had. But when we began to decline, people left literally in hundreds, by the hundreds. There'd be a block of a hundred people that would go, and then another two or three-hundred people that would go. It was just very, very painful. And when I joined the leadership team in 1995, we were only three-hundred-fifty people. So we had to admit reality. And the reality was we didn't have any money, and the money that we did have we were spending wrong. Literally, had five-gallon buckets set up in the sanctuary to catch the rain during the services. You'd hear plop, plop, plop. Mold in the nursery. It was just a deplorable situation. Morale, I describe our years as that as a leper colony. We were with each other; we didn't dare invite anyone else to join us. And we were all decrepit and decaying, but we pretended that we were doing ok. So it had that leper colony mentality. And it wasn't until we came to a point where we realized and openly stated that we were in trouble. And I can put a date on it. In November of 2004, we came to that point where we realized we could no longer afford our precious campus. We had a four-acre campus with a hundred-thousand square feet. It was pretty poorly laid out. I wouldn't say it was an asset, but anyway God ended up leading us to sell that. We relocated, but it was in, very

clearly in November of 2004, when I stood up and said to the congregation, “I think we’ve come to a point where we have to sell our campus in order for us to even survive and move forward. That was like a punch in the gut to a whole lot of people. It was true. Everything I said was true, but it was incredibly humbling. So that’s the corporate humbling story of intensity.

For me personally, for me personally, I was a bit, I don’t know, I was born with a silver spoon. My dad’s a pastor. My grandfather’s a pastor. My first two churches grew. My first church, in a small little town, only three-hundred-fifty people, grew from fifty to two-hundred, and we even hit heights of the middle threes. So it was rockin. Our, my next church grew from three fifty to about a thousand. So I was in my own doctrinal program at that point. I was rockin the world so to speak. I was really up. And I had a series of humbling situations that started in my second church when the board asked me to resign. There was a major philosophical difference. The church had strong ties to the Word Faith movement. Are you familiar with that?

Researcher - Generally, yes.

P10 - And that’s not me. That’s just not me. And so I found myself trying to hold it together with having three or four major factions in the church and no common mission; which is what holds a church together, that common mission. And so I ended up resigning at their request; and then serving in a couple other churches just to survive; and then ended up traveling as a full-time consultant; and then this church brought me in 1995. And I rode it down and had ... Which is very humbling. To have pastored two churches that were growing, and then your third one, you get to ride it down. That’s just ugly, but that wasn’t where I bottomed out at. I bottomed out in about 2005, 2006, maybe even seven; somewhere around in there, that twenty-four month period.

What happened was: we sold our building; we’re moving to a new campus from four acres to ten acres; and we had sold our building on contract. It was supposed to be finalized in six months, and it went closer to three years, excuse me, five years. And that was very, very painful, very painful to have that happen. And so we couldn’t move forward. And I was just absolutely stuck. And when we sold our congregation, another third, or excuse me, sold our building, another third of our congregation left us. So our church of three fifty had dwindled down to about two-hundred and fifty. And then when we decided to sell it dropped off to about a hundred and fifty, a hundred and seventy-five people. And this is just not what I signed up for. My goodness it was just like now I was the captain of the leper colony. It was just awful.

And one day I was sitting in a restaurant, studying for a sermon or doing something, and there was this encounter with Jesus. And he basically said, “If this church never grows any more, and you knew that taking one-hundred and fifty people to heaven would put a smile on my face, are you willing to do that?” Well, what do you say? There’s only one thing you can say. But I said it in tears. I was trying to hide my face. I was embarrassed in the restaurant, and I came to that point. And I said, “I’ll serve you, if this is what you want. You’re the Lord of the universe. You’re the One that wants your church to grow more than I do. It’s your church. And if this is what you’re really asking me to do, I’ll do it.” Well, obviously what it did, Philip, is that it revealed the prideful craters in my own heart. Because I’d been fired from my previous church, I wanted this one to grow, and I wanted it to grow, not for God’s glory, not even to reach lost people. My motive was exposed in that moment before Jesus, because I wanted the church to grow so that people would think better of me. I was propping up my own god, myself. And even though it may sound odd, I had church success as my idol, and it just got exposed in that moment.

And as soon as I said yes to Jesus, of course it crumbles. Because you don't know, you might really be pastoring this church of a hundred and fifty people.

And I'd like to tell you as soon as I said yes, it began to grow immediately, but [chuckles] that ain't what had happened. But what did happen is my heart changed. I started taking better care of the hundred and fifty. I started listening to them. I would get early to the service, and of course, the older saints would be there. And so I would stop, and talk with them, and shake hands with them. I really ignored them before, honestly, because they didn't bring anybody. Older people do not bring ... Their notorious for staying in their own clicks, their own friends. And they never invite anybody new. So why would I want to invest in somebody that is not trying to help move the mission forward, so I said. But it was really growing the church. So in that moment, I was confronted with my own pride, bottomed out. My own heart began to change. I read, John Eldridge's book, *Waking the Dead*. Which is really all about the heart, and that had a profound effect on me. So that's a long answer to your first question brother. Did you get it?

Researcher - I did. Now in several, I think, pertinent themes were touched on. One thing that comes to my mind though, I believe there are many pastors out there who are humble yet are not growing. And you certainly highlighted the fact that you got so fixated on growing that you neglected your congregation that God had entrusted to you. And if I remember right, you are a consultant, or you've got a Turn-around Church Ministry.

P10 - Right.

Researcher - Now, how do you balance, or when you look at your own experience, and it was certainly your experience that seemed like it, that you highlighted the fact that pride and humbleness was two key elements to your growth? But generally speaking, as we look at characteristics, as we look at things that bring about church growth, and ... Ok, moving forward from that point where you identified, ok, your pride was a hindrance. It was hurting the mission, what you were called to. You weren't just called to grow the church, you were called to care for the church too. Ok, so can you share as you began to move forward from that point of brokenness what you perceived to be the things that brought growth? [participant chuckles] Was it just the ministering to the congregation or were there other aspects?

P10 - Yeah, absolutely. Here's what you need to understand, from my perspective, and this is part of what I train pastors. I've had the honor of training over sixty pastors, and church leaders in the last three years in the coaching network that Jesus asked me to start for them. This is all about the heart. There are two critical elements that are alive in your body: your brain and your heart. Which one do you prefer to live without? If you had to prioritize, which one is the most important? Well, you can't. They're both important. And when we start looking at how a church grows. I can talk to you about our evangelistic systems, how we have four focused outreaches every year. I can talk to you about our small-groups systems, how we've broken it down into quarters, and how we train our leaders. I can talk to you about our stewardship system, how we've grown by about forty-five percent in giving in the last thirty-six months. I can give you all the data; all the raw materials, and we'll get to that.

But before we get to that, it's very important to me that you understand that the foundation is the heart. Out of the heart proceed the issues of life. And here's why when my heart is messed up, I miss the practical signals. I'm not able to exploit the ideas that the Spirit

brings to me, because I don't even see em. I'm not even aware. They're not even important to me. For there's not a, there's no way that we would have a major single mom's outreach in our church, or tied in with a local elementary school for after-school care for kids who have no reasonable parental care between three and five. I wouldn't have been open to that at all. Why would I want to bring kids? They don't give anything. They're not gonna bring anybody. Single moms, my goodness, they're just baggage. That would have been my attitude. So all of this ties back to the heart.

And after this is what happened, after my heart changed, because leaders reproduce after their own kind. We all do, parents do, churches do, leaders do. And after my heart changed, then my leaders began to change. And about six, eight months after my intense ugly tearful restaurant experience, we began to see visitors come for the very first time in years. And it ... I can't explain exactly the connection, but I do know that people were picking up. People began to come me and say, "Your different." Which now meant that they felt comfortable bringing their friends. I honestly believe that declining churches, that plateaued churches, most of them, not all of them, but many of them are not stuck; the churches are not stuck; the pastors are stuck.

So I'm willing to talk specifics and metrics and measurements, and honestly brother, we do all that. We're very clear on our ministry model. We have focused purposes and strategies. And I can give them all to you in about ninety seconds, and extrapolate details from that. But honestly, in this interview Philip, if you don't get that there has to be a major heart change. Why would Jesus trust me with the most precious commodity in the universe that he died for, if I can't take care of them? Why would Jesus put sick people in a hospital with a sick staff, sick doctor, sick nurses? He wants those healthy. So my heart breaks for pastors, right now, who are trying to fix it. It's like waking up in the morning and saying, "I stink" and putting on fresh clothes. No, you need to take a shower. You gotta wash the stink away. The Russians have a saying that says, "If your feet stink, changing the socks won't make any difference." And it's the same thing in Christian leadership. If our hearts are not right, Jesus talked about it he said, "A good man, out of a good heart, brings forth good things." And so my heart, once I come to Christ, my heart is good. He makes it good. Salvation changes my heart. I just have to pursue that. So I think it's the internal workings of the Spirit. Between, Jesus builds his church, not church-growth principles. And I'm not against church-growth principles. My goodness, Chip Arn, Win Arn, were friends of mine; I know these guys. But it, it's in addition to that, it still goes back to the heart. Because Jesus has been training yahoos like me for twenty centuries.

Researcher - So you're saying the foundation from which any effective ministry comes from, begins in the heart.

P10 - Yes, that's exactly right.

Researcher - Because obviously, I do, my questions do consist of those things that you highlighted, the different aspects of growth.

P10 - And that's fine, that's fine. And there's nothing wrong with that. That's the head part. That's the head part. Let me tell you a quick story on how I ended up with John Eldridge's book, *Waking the Dead*. Ok?

Researcher - Ok.

P10 - I'm sitting, in the morning, and this all happened before my breakdown. My breakdown really happened as a result of reading John's book. But I'm meeting with this missionary, who our church supports, and he's been praying with me and for me, because he knows we're really in a stuck place. And he says, "P10, you one of the most gifted guys that I know, when it comes to leadership; statistics, and ratios, percentages. You have quotes, and diagrams, and lists. You've got so much. But it's in your head. And I feel like your head, and your heart are disconnected. And I've watched you. We've done conferences together. And I think Jesus wants to talk to you about your heart and your head being connected." And I said, "Well, yeah." And then he said, "Would you consider reading John Eldridge's book, *Waking the Dead*?" And I went, "Yeah, well, if I read every book that everybody is suggested, I wouldn't do anything but that." Then he goes, "Well, I just felt prompted to make that ..." And that was the end of it. That was the end of the conversation, alright. That was about eight-thirty, eight o'clock in the morning.

Four hours later, I'm meeting with our church real estate agent, who's helping us to buy and sell our property. And it was a long arduous process. He's a godly man. He looks across the table and says, "Before we get started P10" he says, "God's put somethin on my heart." He said, "You and I have done seminars together, and I've watched you. And you are one of the most strategic leaders I've ever seen. You understand leadership statistics and ratios and quotes, all of that." He said, "But I just gotta say, it's like your head and your heart are disconnected. Have you ever considered reading John Eldridge's book, *Waking the Dead*?"

Now I kid you not, Philip, these two men have never met. To this day, they have never met. And it was almost a verbatim quote between breakfast and lunch. It was spooky twilight-zone right there. I got up out of the chair and, after lunch, and I told my real estate agent what had happened; and I went directly to the book store and bought the book. It was clear Jesus is trying to get through to me.

When your heart changes you open to every other area. That's why God wants to connect your heart and your head. Almost all studies like you are doing right now, like I did myself, my own doctoral dissertation, was on reengineering the large declining church. Hardly had anything on it about the heart. Nothing! It just showed where I was at that point. It's not wrong. It's just needing more. So Jesus gave me a head; he wants me to think. Think on these things. Jesus teaching, Paul teaching in the New Testament, there's nothing wrong with thinking. We should think, but the heart is also critical. So what I'm challenging you in your thinking, and in your writing, that the two are inextricably connected. Jesus does not say, the Word doesn't say in Proverbs, Out of the issue of the mind flow life. It says, "Out of the heart flow the issues of life." So I think, if I had to put a priority, I would put priority on heart first and head second, but I think you need both.

Researcher - Sure. Let's stay with heart for a minute [exhales]. It's, I'd be really challenged to say with, that churches that are plateaued and declining that, with a broad paintbrush, say that it's a heart issue for all of em. I

P10 - [interrupting] Right, and I'm not saying that. I didn't say that. My comment to you was (I didn't, I hope I don't come across too strong here, brother) but my comment to you is, of the churches that I've worked with (most of them not all of them) the churches aren't stuck, the pastor's are stuck. So whether it's a heart issue or head issue, the stuckness is primarily inside the leader not inside the church. Now I will go one step further and say, of the guys that I've

worked with (now granted it's a small sampling, sixty pastors isn't a huge sampling), but of the pastor's that I worked with, I think most of them had severe heart issues. I'll even go a step further and say it was the same thing I dealt with, and its fear. Because in order to move forward, you've gotta make a courageous decision. So you risk failure; you risk rejection. There's huge things that happen inside that point. Does that make sense?

Researcher - Ok, so you've identified, your pointing to fear as a

P10 - [interrupting] Heart issue.

Researcher - Ok, and that's one aspect of it. And I think we all struggle with the fear aspect and it manifests itself in different ways.

P10 - Correct.

Researcher - But what it seemed like, what you were highlighting before Ok, what is the connection for you when you talked about not caring for the people that God had given you, and almost being too fixated on growth? Where was fear in that aspect, in that scenario?

P10 - It wasn't that I was almost too fixated on growth. I was fixated on growth. I had to grow this church in order to be looked at as someone who had worth and value, because in my last church, I had been publicly fired, and all my friends knew it. All the people knew that. It was something I had to live with at that point. And it was not comfortable at all. So my big fear was not being respected. Not being cared for. Proverbs says it like this, "The fear of man has a snare to it." Ok, I was more concerned about people's opinion than Jesus' opinion, that's idolatry. That's where my fear was.

Researcher - Yeah, I think our culture, church culture, breeds that, unfortunately.

P10 - Course it does. Course it does. And that's why I have so much compassion for pastors. Man, I start praying for these guys. My eyes get a little weepy. I don't lose my composure often, but sometimes I do. And it just [exhales] ... cause they really have a desire to do the right thing. They wanna see lost people come to Jesus. And I don't know. It's not always this case (and I don't wanna make broad sweeping statements) but often, again, I know I was my own worst enemy. I had a sixty-six year-old pastor look across the table at me in one of my coaching networks and say, "This is totally inside me. I have been the one stopping myself." It was just this aha moment that he experienced. That I said, "Yeah, that's exactly right; I know what that feels like man. I am not pointing my finger at you; I am standing right next to you, because I know what that feels like. I did the very same thing." Is this adding a new aspect to your study?

Researcher - Well [exhales], of the other pastors that I've interviewed, there have been a couple that have certainly fixated or ... My last question is, "Do you have any additional comments to leaders seeking to grow their church." And a couple of them have pointed towards the heart issue more so than what my questions contained more the organizational aspect

P10 - [interrupting] Right and that cannot be ignored. It absolutely cannot be ignored. What, where I'm coming from is getting your heart squared away. When Jesus gets my heart squared away, he actually becomes my partner in helping me lead towards the organization; towards the restructuring of that. I can honestly say that Jesus' coaching in my life through prayer came much more clearer after his confrontation with me than before. It's like a parent. Do you have kids?

Researcher - Yes

P10 - And you can see your kids; they get a little defiant, and the next week they're a little more defiant, and a little more defiant, and then you discipline em. Or however you do that, spanking, scolding, corner, whatever it is that you do. What the difference is, discipline is effective when it's painful enough that they remember it. Boy, they just click their heels and salute, and they're a great kid for a while. And then they push against that again. Well, I'm his kid. That's exactly what happened to me. When he got my attention, man, I started listening closely. That's when, actually, that's when we moved to establishing our ministry model because he could test me; he could trust me with the next knowledge.

Jesus talked to a group of Jews in John chapter eight, and we always like to quote the statement that says, "The truth shall set you free." Which is true, but that's the conclusion of former remarks. Jesus said, "[If you are my] if you hold to my teachings;" which is obedience, "Then you're my disciples;" which is discipline, "Then you'll know truth," then he gives knowledge. Then, "The truth sets you free." So first thing for me was obedience, because obedience opens the door to discipline; which opens the door to knowledge; which opens the door to freedom. And I'm not giving you a sermon here I just want you to understand a principle that changed in my life that when he got my heart he got my obedience. Jesus said himself in John fourteen that, "If you love me, you'll obey." Well honestly, I had to repent from being disobedient.

Well, if I'm a leader that reproduces after my own kind, and I'm being disobedient, what's going on in my heart? What's going on in my people's hearts? It was after this period of time that my own heart opened up, that one of our elders was exposed in an adulterous relationship. We had to do public discipline. Boy wasn't that fun. But it cleaned house. People, who'd never started, never tithed, started tithing. Now we had more resources. People, who'd never brought friends to church, started bringing their friends. There was just this spiritual release, quote "freedom," that started happening corporately. But I pinpoint that back in my own heart. So I don't know if that is making any sense or not, but I hope so.

Researcher - And it is. I have changed my questions since I began this process, and one of the questions early on was, "How has loving God contributed to your growth?" And that's a vague abstract idea, but it seems to me that you're really fixating on that, that is the foundation. Again, the heart issue flows from loving God first and foremost.

P10 - Yes, so clear.

Researcher - But how that works out [exhales], because so often we look at service as loving God, but you're looking at it; you're identifying a different aspect, essential aspect, but different.

P10 - Yeah, for me, the first thing that comes to my life would be obedience. Because I think serving flows out of obedience. But to me, the key leadership stuff is what happens secretly. What I choose not to watch on TV. How I choose to spend my money. Who I spend my time with. What I talk with. If I'm with an elder that's sideways, do I have the courage? Let me be very direct here. Are you actually recording this as in

Researcher - [interrupting] I am. But it will be anonymous, and I will take out any aspects that might identify anybody.

P10 - Ok, let me be real direct then. Do I have the balls to ask the hard questions? Can I look at my own neighbor, and express Christ's love for them? Can I talk to a church leader, and ask if their purity is ok? Well, if my own isn't, I'm not going to. The reason David never confronted Solomon with his sexual behavior is because David had never dealt with it in his own life. He didn't have the moral authority to deal with that. Well, when I am walking in obedience, I sense God's love, and it's not he and I against the world. It's he and I helping the world. Because I'm no longer alone, he's constantly adjusting me. Then he can flow through me unhindered, and people sense that. I sense it. I'm, I honest, I don't know how else to say this, but for the last five-years, since this experience happened, probably six-years ago, there's been a new level of ministry. I've am no longer doing this alone. And it's very reassuring.

Researcher - You said you're no longer doing this alone? As in with

P10 - [interrupting] No longer doing ministry alone.

Researcher - As in help with, from God or help

P10 - [interrupting] Yeah, exactly.

Researcher - Ok.

P10 - Exactly! Before, I sensed, I could sense Jesus in my life talking with me. And I would go to him on a regular basis, in my devotions, and that thing, but it wasn't like a twenty-four seven coach whisperer in your ear, "No that's not the way to go," that thing. There were intense moments when you could sense the Spirit guiding you. What is it? Galatians 5:25, "If we live in the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit." So there is this leading; this next step.

For example, one of the challenges that we're up with our church right now is we've grown, and we're running five services, and our giving has reached a point now, where our giving just in sheer volume has outstripped out financial systems to manage it. So, I'm praying about that all-the-time. And I'll see a little something. The other day I saw something on Facebook. I was just cruising through, and my friend said, "Prayed for so and so church's financial team." And I went, "Team, yeah, we could have a team." What would the team members be made up of? What would they do? All that. Now see that's all head stuff. But I felt this prompting in my heart to then call somebody who knows more about it than I do, so I could put together the strategy. So there's this constant mingling of head heart, head heart, head heart.

Researcher - And what I [exhales]. You've already got the aspects of this, the head down so well. For you, it was a heart issue. Now, for other pastors it could be the opposite of that.

P10 - Exactly, and that's why I say, it's not exclusively a heart issue. But often, honestly, I would say it's probably about a seventy-thirty (that's a loose estimate). That's for most the guys, because most the guys, we're going to be drawn to a book. What are the six steps to breaking your plateau or how to do effective outreach or whatever, all those stuff; servant evangelism, and how to bless your community, and all those kinds of things. It's all valuable stuff. And we do that, but the heart's the foundation. You got it. I don't need to keep repeating myself. You're getting it.

Researcher - Sure, and as I looking at my questions right here [exhales]. You will substantiate what's already, what I'm already seeking to find out. In fact, you've already done that. The third question I have is how have Pentecostal distinctives, including a supernatural emphasis, contributed to this growth? And even as I ask that question I think about the external. And what you have been expressing is the internal intimacy, responding to the wooing, responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

P10 - Right, right, so let me make sure I understand your question. Did you say Pentecostal distinctives?

Researcher - Yeah, because obviously, we see a [exhales] almost a dichotomy in the Assemblies of God right now, where too many of us are following the model that Willow Creek, that Saddleback is doing, using those principles, those practices. And then there's certainly the old emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal roots of our organization that some people gravitate towards. And so my, in forming this question, I was just wondering what growing churches, what aspect of it do they embrace of Pentecostal distinctives. And I know that is rather truncated, because I know the Holy Spirit's involvement is more pervasive. Just as you were talking about the heart issue for the pastor, but if you wouldn't mind responding to that.

P10 - Yeah, no problem. Yeah, it obviously (I am gonna say what you already know), it's not just the heart issue of the pastor; it's a heart issue period. It just starts with the pastor. It's through the whole church. The whole church has to have ... We just had a heart adjustment in our church. So it's important on that. Ok, Pentecostal distinctives. So, the two categories, the two camps, that you just described, where one is the standard AG, three hymns, worship chorus, quiet down, shondonakea moment, three messages in tongues, perhaps one prophecy, prayer, offering, sermon, dismissal, altar call, thing. All right, so that's one camp.

The other camp is Willow Creek, Saddleback, where the Holy Spirit is alive, but he manifests himself in another way. Not so much with tongues, or interpretation, or prophecy. The tendency for us is to always put God in a box. And I'm not saying I don't do that [chuckles]. I'm as human as the next guy, alright. But the box for the traditional Pentecostal is if there's a message in tongues God was here. And there's really no practice of the gifts of the Spirit being used outside the box. And as I look at the New Testament, I think that's the primary place they were used. Healing was used in the street. Serving, leadership, all of that was used in the street. There the whole idea of having the spiritual gifts primarily manifesting themselves in a ninety-minute expression or an experience on a Sunday, Peter would have laughed at that. It's just so

boxed in. And it's also very manipulative because it's about me. I want to feel God so that I feel good about myself. And I only feel good about myself when there's a message in tongues or a prophecy, and I get godly goose-bumps. That's just pure selfishness. There's no mission involved in that. The Bible doesn't say, For God so loved the world that he gave us all the ability to speak in tongues so we can all feel good about ourselves. The AG focus on tongues is so lopsided.

That being said, it shouldn't be excluded; it shouldn't be thrown out. I just think there is a higher priority. And the higher priority is his mission; Jesus' mission to reach lost people. "I was sent to seek and save the lost. Go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing them, teaching them. Ok, I'm going to be with you always in that." Yeah, do we need the power of the Spirit? Absolutely! That's what Jesus said. The purpose of the Spirit is to equip us to be witnesses; that's Acts 1:8. I think that's the primary focus.

So all that to say, if you are to show up at one of our services (my goodness, I can't remember the last time we had a tongues and interpretation). Does it happen once in a while? Yeah, it's been at least a couple years. It's very, very rare, very, very rare. And often when it happens, it's a little contrived. And you can sense that the whole atmosphere of the church just tenses up a little bit. Now is that because we don't have it happen very often or that because the person that's blurting it out is contrived? I don't know. All I know is that it raises the tension level.

Here's what I see happening. Again Galatians 5: 25, "If we live in the spirit, let's keep in step with the Spirit." It's not just my church that is seeing this change, and it's not just Assembly of God churches that are seeing this change. So I raise the question to your question, "Is it possible that Pentecostal distinctives should not be as distinct in light of the mission of God?" Is it possible that the mission of God to reach lost people is more important, right now, so the Spirit's putting a focus on that right now? History ... What happened around the turn of the century. The AG's barely a hundred-years old. Next year we'll be a hundred-years old. And back at the turn of the century, Azusa street, the out-pouring, all the holiness movement, with Four Square, and Church of God, Assemblies of God, all of that. The out-pouring of that happened because the Spirit was doing something new. And people resisted that. Is it possible that right now, he is also doing something new? But the new thing that he is doing be excluding the old thing that we were comfortable with?

Researcher - Is that a rhetorical question?

P10 - Well it is a rhetorical question. You're welcome to answer it.

Researcher - Well, I'm

P10 - [interrupting] Because I've come to the conclusion that it is.

Researcher - And then obviously you're, how you feel and what your insights are certainly what is most important with this interview. If we could go back to what you were commenting on about the Spirit's work outside of the church. How would you say that has contributed to your church growth?

P10 - Oh, people are now trained to pray for people in the bus stops. They're trained to invite people to church; be prepared to share the gospel. They're trained to pray for people on the spot. And then, they will say things like this, "I was talkin to this person in line at Fred Meyer, and I just had this thought that I should pray for them, so I paid for my food, and I followed them out. And I said to them, Thank you for talking to me, would it be ok if I prayed for you for just a moment?" Well, am I to stop em and say, "Wait a minute, did you realize that when you prayed for them, that that was the gift of exhortation? Wait a minute, when you were in line, and you felt the prompting to pray for them, did you realize that was spiritual discernment happening in your life?" Do I have to point out all of the gifts? No, because when they understand what the mission is, they will do whatever they need to do to accomplish the mission, and they automatically access their heart to the Spirit.

Researcher - One of the things I hear you saying is that (maybe it's what I'm surmising in my mind) is that the imbalance, what you talked about, where we're very self-focused about the Holy Spirit goose-bumps is a aberration of where we as the Assemblies of God have come from. The emphasis of our forefather, our, of the folks who were the original party or the early, the pioneers, that it was for empowerment for ministry; to accomplish the mission is what you talked about, and we've changed that.

P10 - We got fixed on the hand-tools. We love the saw. We love the hammer. We love the table. We love the blue-prints. We love the nails. We love the lumber. And we forget that we're to be building a house.

Researcher - Yeah.

P10 - Those are spiritual gifts for the purpose of doing the mission. Now am I a tongue talker? You bet! Do I talk about it on Sunday morning? Of course! Have I had people baptized in the Holy Spirit? You bet! Absolutely! But it is very organic. It happens in the context of a small-group. It happens in the context of a prayer gathering or a personal conversation. That's the way that it happens. That's the way the experience happens. Now do I believe the Holy Spirit is using people whether they speak in tongues or not? Absolutely! Of course! They come to Jesus, they start bringing their friends.

Researcher - And I'm just trying to think in wrapping up this. Because really, what I've heard you say is loving God, first and foremost, out of an intimate sensitive relationship is foremost. And then secondly, the leader, his or her, not only intimacy with God, but also the use of the organizational, the leadership practices and philosophies.

P10 - Yeah, sure, sure, sure. Absolutely! You have captured the core essence of my ramblings. Now with that in mind, I can take the last few minutes, and I can walk you through our ministry model, and tell you how it worked for us. But ... And I'm happy to do that. You tell me what I can do to serve you.

Researcher - I wouldn't mind that, if you don't ... wouldn't mind walking me though your organizational, your emphasis on [exhales] ...

P10 - Sure, I'm happy to do that. By the way, I've written a book that identifies a lot of what I actually told you. It's called *Turnaround Pastor*. Did I tell you about this already?

Researcher - No.

P10 - Ok, you can get it on. Are you a Kindle or paper guy?

Researcher - I am a Kindle guy.

P10 - Ok, yeah, just go to Amazon, and type two words, "Turnaround," that's one word, "Turnaround Pastor," And my book will pop up, and it's six-bucks. And it will identify our ministry model, the struggle that I went through. All of that jazz. You don't have to read the whole thing unless you get interested and wanna do it. But it was ... It'll give you ... You might find some quotes for your paper if you want; worthwhile.

Our ministry model came, again, out of my heart. I tried to be Christ the King in Bellingham; I don't know if you've ever heard of that or not?

Researcher - I've heard, yes.

P10 - Ok, I helped plant Christ the King, back in the eighties, and was on their leadership team for a number of years (actually two different times). So when I moved out to Seattle, I tried to take those principles, and it just didn't work. So then I switched over to Rick Warren, and I became the baseball diamond guy, and that didn't fail, didn't work. So then I became the Andy Stanley front room, back room, bathroom, kitchen guy. All of the doors, the house parts, and that just didn't work. And one day my wife said, "Honey, this has gotta flow out of you. It's gotta come out of you." And I was in my office just praying realizing that we needed to take the next step. We had a mission statement, "Helping people discover, trust, and love Jesus Christ." And I looked up, and I saw this ship's wheel. Well, I love off-shore fishing. I have a boat, and I spend a lot of time off-shore fishing for Salmon, Halibut, all that stuff. I just love it. Well, the ship's wheel just spoke to me. And I saw that in the same way that Warren had five things, worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism, and serving. I saw that serving and ministry are really to be split. So that serving focuses on the needs of the church, excuse me, on the needs outside the church, but ministry focuses on the need inside the church. So that model fit the ship's wheel perfectly.

So our mission statement, "Helping people discover, trust, and love," has our core values of discover, trust, and love, embedded. So imagine a ship's wheel, and the arena of discovery is on the outside of the ship's wheel. People circulate, asking questions, that's what discovery is all about. I'm asking questions: What church is this? m. Can I come to church here if I'm gay? Can I come to church here if I've had an abortion; or been divorced; or don't believe the Bible; maybe don't even believe there's a God? Can I do that? And I'll tell you, Philip, that probably twenty to twenty-five percent of everybody in our church on a Sunday morning are not committed to Christ. They sit out communion. We have communion every Sunday, and they ... and that's ok. They are not the only ones. And that's awesome to be able to preach to people who are not committed to Christ. So that's the discovery mode.

Well, once you have enough questions answered. Then they begin to trust. Well, trust is when you make decisions. Now I'm gonna be involved in one of those six purposes. I'm gonna

serve other people. So we regularly take unsaved people with us on mission trips. The double benefit of that is that the Christians behave [chuckles] and the unbelievers see the gospel. So this year we're gonna build. We build houses for the working poor. Jesus gave us a new house, our new campus. So He told us, "I want you to give houses away." So we give away two new houses at Christmas every year. We raise the money. We help the people build the house; buy the material, all of that. And we've had unsaved people ... Well, what happens is they go down an unbeliever, and they come up, either a believer or at least a seeker. That's powerful!

So the third core value is love. Discover, I ask questions. Trust, I make decisions. Love, I enter into a relationship, and that's the core of our church. All we are a, an organization, a church, that helps people have good relationships with God and a good relationship with one, with other people. That's it, that's the cross. We have a relationship with God, points upward. We have a relationship with one another. That is the cross-bar on the cross. It's like communion, the cup, you and God; the bread, you and one another. That is all we do. So our core values; helping people discover, trust, and love are embedded in our mission statement, and illustrated by the ship's wheel. That make sense?

Researcher - Yes it does. I appreciate your sharing, and I wanted to ... I do want (if you don't mind) I'd like to finish out with the last question I have. Just because, when it comes to structurally, and looking at the thesis as it's written up it. Some people might actually just go to that aspect. Ok, do you have any additional comments for leaders seeking to grow their church?

P10 - You don't really need to worry about growing your church. Jesus does that. He promised that he would, he's the one that takes responsibility. Really, I don't think you need to take [exhales] ... I shouldn't say that, because there's two sides to every coin. So, primarily, you shouldn't take responsibility to grow your church. Jesus will do that. You stay close to him; that's John 15; you stay plugged into the vine, and fruit will naturally be produced in your life. Ok?

Now on the other side of the coin, Paul talks to us in 1st Corinthians thirteen, "No other foundation can be laid other than Jesus Christ." And the wise builder (every man builds, and that's architectural language for a church builder), so of course we do take responsibility. He wants it to be my church as well as it's his church. But in the ... What, when I say, it's primarily Jesus' church, and secondarily my church, right? So it's primarily Jesus building his church; it's secondarily me building it. Because I get to ... Our mission model, our ministry model came out of my heart, not everybody else's heart. So there is this personalized aspect of leadership, where I do take responsibility. The problem is that's the head part. The heart part is when I get involved with Jesus and he takes the lead.

So, to put it in plain language, I think Jesus wants to tell me what to do as well as how to do it. And my head kicks in, and I figure out in more detail; the how, and the why, and the when, all of those kinds of things. He wants wise leaders. For example in his church, but there's no clear illustration of biblical church government in the New Testament. There's lots of different ways to do church, but he wants us to have good leaders; that, we know. So Jesus establishes principle, and we're gonna identify some practices. That make sense?

Researcher - Yes it does. Thank you so much. I appreciate the vital input.