ENTREPRENEURIAL EVANGELICALISM:

The Rise of Innovative and Entrepreneurial Church Networks in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries

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On December 19, 2001, theaters across America released the first film of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, "The Fellowship of the Rings." A generation of Baby Boomers who grew up reading Tolkien's classics could now share those stories with their Millennial children. It was in this, the first of the three books, where we find this quote from Gandalf:

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

The story of evangelicalism is the story of the disciples of Jesus Christ who were driven to do well with the time given to them. This idea for them is a theological and foundational one: that the God of creation, the sovereign Lord has called his followers to a mission bigger than them and more urgent than any other calling. This mission has propelled the evangelical movement forward, and has provoked its leaders to innovation, risk, and sacrifice in service to God.

The following is the story of one of the more fascinating periods of change in modern church history. In a matter of three decades (1980-2010), church life in the United States shifted primarily from small churches affiliated with particular denominations to a significant portion of evangelicals worshipping in non-denominational—or only barely connected to their denomination—megachurches. How did this happen? What were the precipitating factors? Who were the key leaders in this change?

Before launching into the narrative and principles lessons of entrepreneurial evangelicals, we need to lay a framework for our exploration. While their story is dynamic and critical to understanding modern religious thought and practice, many of its chief principles and leaders are underappreciated and their impact subtle, though still profound. To lay out this framework, we can best understand the emergence and rise of dominance of entrepreneurial evangelicals as the confluence of five independent ideas, movements, and/or processes. Entrepreneurial evangelicals stand at the intersection of these five elements, weaving them together into a cohesive identity that would have significant influence on religious practice and even leadership principles beyond the world of faith. Moreover, its leaders and networks would expand the reach of initial innovations beyond regional and national diffusions to become a truly global phenomenon.

While it takes patience to untangle these strands and understand each independently, doing so properly contextualizes the impact of these leaders, the legacy of their innovations, and the ways they continue to shape religious life and thought. These five terms are 1) Evangelicalism, 2) Entrepreneurship, 3) Parachurch, 4) Innovation, and 5) Diffusion of Innovation. There are invariably points of overlap between the five elements. Still, each has its own body of literature and is hotly contested in its own right. In exploring each, this report will unpack each term before

contextualizing its importance to the emergence and development of entrepreneurial evangelicalism.

Term #1: Evangelicalism

Even before Time Magazine christened 1976 as "The year of the Evangelical," conflict over the identity and purpose of evangelicalism was heated and nebulous. Scholars, pastors, political theorists, and NYT opinion columnists have opined with increasing frequency in the intervening years on the movement and its range of leaders, organizations, and beliefs. The result is a much more ambiguous and controversial term that is laden with significant baggage and ripe for distortion. Few terms have generated as much discussion as evangelicalism both within academic and popular spheres.

The term *evangelicalism* has its share of varied definitions. While many today think of evangelicals in America in political terms, others adopt primarily a theological lens. In this respect, most identify four central evangelical beliefs:

> *Conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism,* a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.[1]

While this definition remains popular, it fails to recognize the *centrality* of conversion and mission to the evangelical ethos. In this respect, it may prove more accurate to think of evangelicalism as similar to those old tents that housed great revival campaigns like Billy Graham's LA Crusade in 1949. These tents had one center pole that united all the surrounding poles together that, in turn, held the tent up.

Thus, if evangelicalism is a tent, its *center pole*–that is, the belief that serves as the unifying point for the rest–is *conversion*. An evangelical is first someone who has experienced personal salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ's work on the cross. While this experience is personal and individual, it is not isolated: conversion brings an evangelical Christian into the community called the church. The personal experience of salvation is an experienced shared by conversion with other believers, and a reality that must be proclaimed to those who have not yet met their savior.

Surrounding this center pole of conversion are four other poles, all necessary to understanding evangelicals. 1) *Biblical authority* – evangelicals share a belief that scripture is the true and authoritative Word of God. Connected to the central pole of conversion, evangelicals believe that through reading, preaching, and sharing scripture, anyone can encounter God and be saved. 2) *Evangelistic cooperation* – evangelicals share a willingness to collaborate beyong

[1] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 2-3.

traditional denominational, cultural, and regional barriers. Connected to the central pole of conversion, evangelicals are remarkably adaptable in building bridges with one another when framed around shared gospel mission. 3) *Personal devotion* – evangelicals share a belief in the centrality of personal spiritual disciplines as central to spiritual growth and maturity. Connected to the central pole of conversion, evangelicals insist that new faith is marked by a transformative experience spiritual rebirth. 4) *Voluntarist mission* – evangelicals share the belief in the responsibility of all believers serve in church and/or parachurch ministries. Connected to the central pole of conversion, evangelicals insist that spiritual life necessary moves from the Great Commandment to the Great Commission.

Stepping back from this tent, we can summarize an evangelical as a Protestant Christian who has experienced a personal conversion, sees the work of Christ on the cross to be central to their new life, has a desire to show and share their faith with others, and views the Bible as authoritative for life and doctrinal orthodoxy.

Critically to this project is the recognition that this is a broad tent with many groups, denominations, and movements that can – either in full or in part – claim the identity of evangelical.[2] As this work moved to consider a particular group under this tent – entrepreneurial evangelicals – this definition is useful in understanding their motivations and behaviors. These entrepreneurial evangelicals were not the first Christians to innovate. Putnam and Campbell observe that particularly in the American church, "so common have been changes in the American religious landscape that the history of religion in the United States could be written as a history of religious innovations."[3] However, at the center of their innovations was a religious motivation driven by their belief in the *evangel* or Good News of the gospel. They sacrificed, built, stewarded, inspired, and repaired the church because they believed that this organization was God's chosen means of bringing renewal to the individual, the community, and the world. This shared mission is what united evangelicals.

Types of Innovations

Putnam and Campbell cite three primary types of innovations in the church:

- A new **medium.**
- A new **organization**.
- A new **message**.

[2] Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2014), xviii.
[3] Robert D. Putnam, David E. Campbell, and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *American Grace How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 163.

Evangelicalism has been wed to some level of entrepreneurialism from its earliest days. This entrepreneurial impulse often grew out of a desire to return to the heart of the faith and practice of Scripture in contradistinction to the prevailing religious currents of the day. The Evangelical Awakening in Great Britain in the 18th century offers an early example of the innovative impulse of evangelicals.

New *mediums* for evangelism and discipleship

In 1729 at Oxford University a group of young men formed what today would be called a small group. These young Anglicans focused on daily self-examination, Bible study, and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. They cared for the poor and initiated a novel ministry to a prison.

Their innovations brought ridicule from others. They were called "Bible moths" for their devotion to studying Scripture, "Methodists" for their disciplined practices such as fasting, and the "Holy Club" for their desire to pursue holy lives. Members included brothers John and Charles Wesley, William Morgan, and later, in 1732, a young man named George Whitefield.

Whitefield was an early adopter of an innovation that would open a wide door to evangelize the masses. Howell Harris of Wales had seen the hand of God on his work in the 1730s. Because he was not ordained, he wasn't allowed to preach in churches. His zeal led him to share Christ in the open air "to the outdwellers and unchurched."[2]

Harris was the first of Methodism's open-air preacher, but he would not be its most famous. Soon the fervent young evangelist Whitefield would adopt the method, followed by John Wesley and others. Commenting on the practice started by Harris, Richard Evans writes: "When pulpits were closed to Whitefield, who was an ordained Anglican, because of his 'enthusiasm,' he resorted to similar irregular practices, first at Bristol in 1739."[3]

Whitefield struggled with the concept at first because of its novelty. He started "field preaching" as it became known at a rough place where coal miners (colliers) lived. Whitefield's burden for unbelievers trumped his temerity toward innovation. He wrote on February 17, 1739:

> My bowels have long since yearned toward the poor colliers, who are very numerous, and as sheep having no shepherd. After dinner, therefore, I went upon a mount, and spake [*sic*] to as many people as came unto me. They were upwards of two hundred. Blessed be God that I have now broken the ice! I believe I was never more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to preach to those hearers in the open fields. Some may censure me; but if I thus pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.[4]

The next month Whitefield invited John Wesley to preach for him. Wesley also hesitated at the idea at first. A Skevington Wood in his biography of Wesley observed, "For every age God has a program of evangelism. This was His way of reaching the masses in the eighteenth century."[5]

You see here the diffusion of innovation at work. Harris innovated field preaching because he did not qualify to preach in churches. The method was not unprecedented, of course, since Jesus

preached the Sermon on the Mount and many sermons in Acts were outdoors! Whitefield and Wesley were early adopters of field-preaching and it became a diffuser of the gospel message, leading to the beginnings of the Methodist church.

New *organizations*

A master at organization, John Wesley adopted and adapted the common practice of religious societies for his approach, creating societies, classes, and bands. John Wesley's organizational acumen led to the formation of the Methodist church, even though he personally never left the Anglican communion. This led to other innovations such as the development of lay preachers to lead the various groups.

A new *message*

In a sense, a new message was proclaimed. Perhaps more accurately, a *renewed* message. While these young evangelists *renewed* the message of justification by faith taught by both Paul and Luther, this message was novel to churches steeped more in tradition than the gospel. Soon, the ministers of established churches shut them out. When the message of the gospel becomes so entrenched in tradition it no longer communicates to those for whom Christ died, what is needed is not a new message, but a return to the unchanging gospel coupled with novel approaches to communicate that message to those overlooked by the church. In addition to field preaching, John Wesley's brother Charles brought a renewal to corporate worship by his approach to writing hymns (having penned over 6,000). Adopted somewhat from the continental Pietists, songs like "And Can It Be," and "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" were used for evangelism as they sang the gospel to an illiterate population. His songs "introduced an enthusiastic type of hymn singing foreign to the more sober singing of the metrical psalms."[6] Another innovation was seen in his title the "Father of the Religious Paperback" because of the many letters, sermons, and booklets he published.

The history of evangelicalism is one of innovation driven by a conviction on the authority of Scripture and a burden to reach people for Christ. From the Wesley's and Whitefield to the circuit riders on the American frontier and the itinerant work of Charles Finney; from the union prayer meetings of Jeremiah Lanphier and the social ministry of William Booth to the mass urban meetings of D.L. Moody; from the use of sporting arenas to the adaptation of technology by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to the development of college ministry by Campus Crusade for Christ, innovation has been key in the spread of the evangelical movement.

As we think of the particular innovations of the entrepreneurial evangelicals from 1980 to 2010, we must start with the precursors to the dramatic changes that occurred. The following set the milieu out of which this age of innovation began.

Periods of intense technological and commercial innovation and entrepreneurship regularly provoked parallel seasons in religious communities. While they may not garner the attention of other disciplines, religious innovation and entrepreneurship could be just as transformative. In

surveying the flurry of innovation and entrepreneurialism that marked the early American Republic, historian Nathan Hatch has demonstrated a similar transformation occurring in religious thought and institutions. Leaders such as Charles Granderson Finney introduced innovative, and often fiercely controversial, tools for church life and revivalism. Likewise emerging denominations Methodism and Baptists dramatically outpaced their established peers in new churches and converts. In essence, religious leaders who were aggressive in taking adapting innovation to church life prospered while "churches reluctant to compete on the same terms declined." (15)[4]

Term #2: Entrepreneurship

Just like evangelicalism, the definition of entrepreneurship is contested.

The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter famously described entrepreneurship as "the perennial gale of creative destruction." By creative destruction, Schumpeter was attempting to draw attention to the dual nature of entrepreneurialism. On the one side, entrepreneurialism is consumed with innovation and change.

This creative element has animated the bulk of thought on entrepreneurship by scholars and business leaders. Perhaps the most influential thinker in late nineteenth-century business, Peter Drucker argued that "the entrepreneurs see the change as being something normal and healthy. Usually, they do not make these changes themselves. But - and this defines the entrepreneur or the entrepreneurial spirit - the entrepreneur always looks for change, being responsive to it and exploiting it as an opportunity."

However, Schumpeter was quick to point out that such innovation and change inevitably provokes a corresponding cost. If entrepreneurship begins with creativity, it requires destruction in order to take root. While entrepreneurs often generate sparks of intense social and economic progress, this displaces older practices and institutions. This explains why entrepreneurship can often be contentious and entrepreneurs viewed with skepticism.

Yet even as Schumpeter warned, creativity and destruction are neither inherently bad nor good. Rather they depend upon what is being created, what is being destroyed, and the intended/unintended consequences of this change. Recent history is filled with examples where poor innovations replaced excellent products or services with disastrous consequences. A popular example is the ill-fated *New Coke*, introduced to the world on April 19, 1985. Assured of their success, Coca-Cola executives were stunned when the public overwhelmingly rejected New Coke and began to clamor for the original. Eventually pivoting, Coca-Cola revived Coke Classic and eventually discontinued New Coke. While the company ultimately proved successful through restoring what had been destroyed, the lesson cost $4 million in advertising New Coke.

What Coca-Cola realized, and what good leaders understand, is that the inherent power of creative destruction in entrepreneurship can just as easily be corrosive as successful. Throughout the story of entrepreneurial evangelicalism, attention needed to be given not solely to the creation

[4] Reference?

of new systems, organizations, and ideas but to those they were destroying in order to find success. In many cases these were important changes that continue produce spiritual fruit decades later. Early entrepreneurial leaders were often addressing glaring need produced by a religious culture that had become stagnant in their mission and resistant to criticism or fresh insight. At the same time, many of the subsequent challenges and missteps of the movement likely draw their origin from overzealous destruction of existing church life. Evangelical entrepreneurs that have continued to have success often reflect not only an insatiable drive for innovation but allow this drive to be tempered by thoughtful consideration of the destructive costs of their creativity.

The temptation to believe that all *my* creativity is insightful, and all *their* destruction is warranted is a consistent temptation to the entrepreneur. Within the Church, this temptation can prove particularly insidious. When innovation is framed as pursuing spiritual reformation and resistance as the defense of orthodoxy, the resulting conflict can be far harsher than anything in the business world. This is not to say that reformation and orthodoxy are not valuable; rather they are essential elements to the life of the Church. However, effective evangelical entrepreneurs demonstrate the leadership and theological depth to discern when these elements are being improperly evoked.

Drucker (1985) declares that "the entrepreneurs see the change as being something normal and healthy. Usually, they do not make these changes themselves. But–and this defines the entrepreneur or the entrepreneurial spirit–the entrepreneur always looks for change, being responsive to it and exploiting it as an opportunity."

In his foreword to the 2014 edition of *Innovation and Entrepreneurship,* Joseph Maciariello argues that Drucker's was profoundly impacted by the sharp social and political change in the wake of the Second World War. As a result, he dedicated his work to understand features of disruption and develop a theory of social and institutional discontinuity that helped manage change.

Some definitions of entrepreneur/entrepreneurship:

- Bygrave and Hofer (1991): An entrepreneur is a person who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to follow it.
- Kaish and Gilad (1991): The entrepreneurship is first of all a discovery process and secondarily is the process of acting on an opportunity of lack of balance.
- Cole (1968): The entrepreneurship is an activity dedicated to initiation, maintenance, and development of a profit-oriented business.

At the center of Schumpeter's definition is the notion of change. Entrepreneurs are those who bring about change; most commonly in the business world through founding new companies or innovating new technologies.

More recently, David Bornstein has drawn attention to a distinction between business and social entrepreneurs. The former are classic entrepreneurs who found businesses or introduce new innovations into the marketplace. In contrast, social entrepreneurs are leaders who dedicated their

skills in founding, innovating, and leading to social or charitable efforts. While business entrepreneurs continue to garner the bulk of public and scholarly attention, Bornstein suggests that social entrepreneurs can actually have a more significant impact on social change through founding institutions and movements that transcend a single marketplace. Social entrepreneurs, according to Bornstein, are effective in producing change because they are willing to experiment. Bornstein goes so far as to suggest that a primary function of social entrepreneurs is to serve as a kind of "social alchemist." By this he means that they are willing to challenge received norms in an effort to recreate and reconfigure the practices of social institutions.[5]

When we think of pastors and ministry leaders a number of terms come to mind describing their work: shepherd, servant, minister, leader, and preacher, to name a few. But "entrepreneur" doesn't typically make the list. The churches in this book feature pastors who would be considered entrepreneurs as well as shepherds.

Leith Anderson is an example of one of the early entrepreneurial pastors through his leadership at Wooddale Church. Anderson would become president of the National Association of Evangelicals. In describing marks of church leaders in the 21st century he argued: "New leaders must be *entrepreneurs.* Entrepreneurship is more than starting something from scratch. It is the ability to make something succeed. They see the opportunities in the changes and strategize to turn those opportunities into good for God's kingdom and Christ's church."[6]

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Entrepreneurship*, entrepreneurship refers to "a person who undertakes an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk."[7] A broader definition identifies an entrepreneur as "someone who possesses a new enterprise, venture, or idea, and also assumes the accountability for the risk and outcome, or as someone who assembles resources (such as innovations, capital, knowledge) in order to transform them into economic goods."[8] Mostly a product of the post-enlightenment world, entrepreneurship has flourished due to at least three factors: (1) continual change is now normative; (2) progress is to be expected (technically, socially, and economically); (3) individualism has prevailed.[9]

Entrepreneurship thrives in an economic system like American capitalism. More recently it has evolved as a concept applied beyond a strictly economic use of the term, especially as *social* forms of entrepreneurship have been identified and studied.[10] Social entrepreneurship, which includes religious engagement, particularly relates to our study of recent entrepreneurial evangelicalism.

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[5] David Bornstein and Susan Davis. *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), 236.
[6] Leith Anderson, *Church for the 21st Century* (Bethany House Publishers, 1992), 64.
[7] Mark Casson, Bernard Yeung, Anuradha Basu, and Nigel Wadeson, ets., *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.
[8] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 781; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions. Religions 2014, 5, 780–800; doi:10.3390/rel5030780
[9] Mark Casson, Bernard Yeung, Anuradha Basu, and Nigel Wadeson, ets., *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.
[10] Mark Casson, Bernard Yeung, Anuradha Basu, and Nigel Wadeson, ets., *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 512.

At the crux of this report is the relationship between these two movements: entrepreneurialism and evangelicalism. In this book I examine the confluence of the concepts of entrepreneurship and evangelicalism. First, an example of someone who fits both terms. The late Bob Buford (1939-2018) demonstrated exceptional entrepreneurship through his success in the emerging cable television industry. While his life and influence as it relates to this report will be detailed more in the third chapter, I want to illustrate briefly the rise of entrepreneurial evangelicalism through his life.

Buford was not content to be a Christian who succeeded as an entrepreneur in the business world, though he did that; he sought to leverage that success in the church.

Buford represented one of a growing number of entrepreneurs who are followers of Jesus; in his case he intentionally chose to pursue a path of influence to help the church, especially large churches, grow in influence and effectiveness. His generosity and drive created a pathway to influence scores of pastors with a similar entrepreneurial spirit whose churches would help to shape the changes in evangelicalism described in these pages.

Buford developed a list of "Top 10 Values" that would help achieve the goal of transforming "the latent energy in American Christianity into active energy," including Value 7: "The entrepreneurial-style leader is where the leverage begins. "[11]

Bob Buford's Top 10 Values

[11] https://halftimeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Bobs-Top-10-Values-Sheet.pdf, accessed May 14, 2020.

TOP 10 VALUES

1. **Build on the islands of health and strength.**
2. **Work only with the receptive and only on what's trying to happen.**
3. **Go big or go home. Focus; don't do dribs and drabs.**
4. **Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value? What is our business?**
5. **Giving is not a result—changed lives are.**
6. **The fruit of our work grows up on other people's trees.**
7. **The entrepreneurial-style leader is where the leverage begins.**
8. **The essential ingredient for success is a steady stream of innovation.**
9. **"It's your job to release and direct energy, not to supply it."**
10. **Structure follows strategy, and strategy begins with clear desired outcomes.**

To What End?

HIT FROM SUCCESS TO SIGNIFICANCE

While entrepreneurship is typically set in the context of capitalism and driven in large measure by economic growth, the evangelical entrepreneurs Buford influenced and others in the period 1980-2010 were driven by a different motive, one that is consistent with evangelical history: the saving of souls. One of the clearest common denominators of the entrepreneurial evangelicals described in this book is the motivation of the Great Commission to make disciples of those the church was currently not reaching.

The number of Christians in general and evangelicals in particular who are entrepreneurs is impressive. Recent research also reveals a positive correlation between one's faith and the entrepreneurial impulse. A study by Baylor University published in 2014 found that "entrepreneurs

prayed more frequently than other people and were more likely to believe that God was personally responsive to them."[12] While the study looked at entrepreneurs from a variety of faiths, their respondents were overwhelmingly Christian. They discovered:

> In large measure, our sample of Christian entrepreneurs was not conventionally religious, but they did report high religious salience. We argue that this is reflective of the contemporary trend of religious individualism as articulated by Bellah *et al*, and more recently by Madsen. We found that the entrepreneurs, when questioned about their faith and the role it plays in their work, articulate a relationship in which their faith frames their entrepreneurial activity. The entrepreneurs described a tension that existed between their previous jobs and their faith due to conflicting values. In setting up their own businesses they strove to create a work environment which focused upon reflecting and incorporating these values. The entrepreneurial activity is shaped by the need of these entrepreneurs to reinterpret their work in religious terms, ending the tension for them between faith and work.[13]

Faith and work were formerly more bifurcated than today. In one of the few current studies on the relationship between evangelicals and entrepreneurship, Lindsey discovered two paradoxical realities in the elite evangelical entrepreneurs he studied. First, he discovered faith and work are bound tightly together, so much so that their faith drove the business decisions of these individuals. Second, while they are deeply religious in the evangelical tradition personally, reporting the vital role of prayer and Bible study in their lives for instance, they are less active in more institutional religious measures such as active attendance and involvement in one local church.[14]

The Baylor study similarly found the gap between work and religious conviction no longer exists for the respondents. They mention two specific findings in the study by Lindsay[15] of evangelical elites. First, for these elites, faith provided the drive behind some business decisions; second, and paradoxically, the elites were "not active in institutionalized religion, despite being highly religious personally."[16] The Baylor study found similarly that for their respondents' church involvement was less traditional though their faith commitments were deep and personal. That their practice of faith was more of an outlier in terms of religious tradition fit both their entrepreneurial spirit and the individualism of our time. For those studied by Lindsey, faith

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[12] https://hbr.org/2013/10/entrepreneurs-feel-closer-to-god-than-the-rest-of-us-do, accessed May 13, 2020.

[13] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 781; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions.

[14] Lindsey, 210-212.

[15] Elite Power: Social Networks Within American Evangelicalism (Winner of the Robert J. McNamara Student Paper Award 2005) D. Michael Lindsay* Sociology of Religion 2006, 67:3 207-227

[16] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 783; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions.

"becomes about living out these key values, as opposed to following conventional religious behaviors."[17]

The study found being entrepreneurs, such as starting their own business, actually helped these believers to synthesize work and faith:

> In creating new working environments, the entrepreneurs found a way to resolve the previous tension that existed between work and faith. The new environments focused on the values of family, being a good person, and helping others. The entrepreneurs describe these three values as central to their faith.[18]

These entrepreneurs also believed by starting their own business they were helped in "practicing their faith with their work and conveying their faith to others."[19]

The study by Lindsey examined evangelical elites in two categories: they served as a chief executive, major philanthropist, or on the board of at least one evangelical initiative or organization; 2) "they self-identify as an evangelical and hold an elite position within governmental, business, or cultural arenas."[20]

Term #3: The Parachurch

In his survey of late twentieth century American religion, sociologist Robert Wuthnow argues that parachurches – or as he more broadly terms, special purpose groups – have a long history in American religion. While several few early examples date to the eighteenth century, the massive expansion of the parachurch as a movement draws its roots mainly from the range of voluntary societies that sprang up in the wake of disestablishment. That is, once the government no longer sponsored churches or their broader work in society or in missions, churches began to form independent networks and organizations that could continue the work on their own. While many grew out of specific denominations, others were independent and drew from a wide cross section of evangelical Protestants. The massive scope and impact of these networks led contemporaries to call them "a Benevolent Empire." Historian Daniel Walker Howe helpfully summarizes these parachurch organizations as,

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[17] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 788; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions.

[18] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 790; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions.

[19] Jenna M. Griebel, Jerry Z. Park, and Mitchell J. Neubert, "Faith and Work: An Exploratory Study of Religious Entrepreneurs" *Religions* 2014, 5, 792; doi:10.3390/rel5030780 religions ISSN 2077-1444 www.mdpi.com/journal/religions.

[20] Elite Power: Social Networks Within American Evangelicalism (Winner of the Robert J. McNamara Student Paper Award 2005) D. Michael Lindsay* Sociology of Religion 2006, 67:3, 210.

> an interlocking network of voluntary associations, large and small, local, national, and international, to implement its varied purposes. The objectives of these voluntary societies ranged from antislavery to temperance, from opposing dueling to opposing Sunday mails, from the defense of the family to the overthrow of the papacy, from women's self-help support groups to the American Sunday School union, from the American Bible Society to the National Trust Society for the Relief of the Ruptured Poor.[21]

Across social causes, evangelistic projects, education, and publication, these organizations were designed to work in tandem with the church. Parachurches have continued to evolve in the years since, the term itself emerging after World War II to describe a wave of new voluntarist organizations primarily aimed at evangelism and missions.[22] Even as local churches and denominations continue to form the constitutive element of Protestant life, parachurch institutions, leaders, and events are often the primary framework by which Protestants engage each other or broader culture beyond the local level.

In the next chapter, the important roles of men like Fred Smith, Sr., Paul Robbins, and Harold Myra of *Christianity Today* will be described. These men all met in the parachurch ministry Youth for Christ. Fred Smith, Sr. had been president of Youth for Christ before transitioning to *Christianity Today.*

Lindsey's observation about the typically underemphasized role of the parachurch is important here:

> An important, understudied aspect of evangelicalism is the movement's robust sector of non-profit organizations often referred to as "parachurch" organizations and more particularly the boards of directors that run them (Wuthnow 1988). It is this segment of the movement that has provided the institutional scaffolding for new modes of social power through which leading evangelicals interact with one another and undertake strategies for legitimating the movement to a wider public audience through founding, financing, and guiding evangelical organizations and initiatives.[23]

One might ask the question whether or not Leadership Network could have formed as it did had there had not been such a windfall of parachurch movements in the decade preceding its origin. Lindsey identified three roles the parachurch allowed evangelical elites to express social

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[21] Daniel Walker Howe, "Religion and Politics in the Antebellum North," in *Religion and American Politics*, 131.
[22] Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*, 100; Robert Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide*, 15-159; Richard Pierard, "Pax Americana and the Evangelical Missionary Advance," in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880–1980*, edited by Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990)
[23] Elite Power: Social Networks Within American Evangelicalism (Winner of the Robert J. McNamara Student Paper Award 2005) D. Michael Lindsay* Sociology of Religion 2006, 67:3, 211.

power: as a founder or director of an organization or a donor to it. Informants in his study described a litany of examples, from Hollywood screenwriting to political internships in Washington.

The 1940s and 1950s were a time of explosive growth of parachurch ministries. This is important because many of the entrepreneurial evangelical pastors in this study were involved in parachurch ministries, possibly influencing their innovative spirit. In the book *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry,* Andrew Root, though focusing particularly on youth ministry, observed the shift from denominational influence, to the parachurch, to non-denominationalism, all of which helped to set the stage for the wave of entrepreneurialism in churches. Denominational bodies were the chief influences in the 1920s and 1930s, Root observed. But in the 1940s and 1950s he argued a new impulse for evangelism came from a novel source:

> The leadership of this new evangelistic engagement was not coming from denominational bureaucrats but from *grassroots entrepreneurs*, such as the founders of Young Life and Youth for Christ. Nathan Hatch and Michael Hamilton explain, "Para-church groups [had] picked the denominations' pockets, taking over denominational functions, inventing wholly new categories of religious activity to take into the marketplace, and then transmitting back into the denominations an explicitly nondenominational version of evangelical Christianity."[24]

Root added the impact of the parachurch on the looming evangelical movement: "The new and vital movement—evangelicalism—thrived on the free-flowing and creative impulses of parachurch innovation."[25]

To Root's point notice the birth dates of these influential parachurch ministries:

- 1942: Jim Rayburn begins Young Life.
- 1942: Wycliffe Bible Translators founded.
- 1944: Torrey Johnson and Robert Cook form Youth for Christ International.
- 1944: World Relief founded.
- 1948: The first Urbana Student Missionary Conference is held in Urbana, Illinois.
- 1950: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association founded.
- 1950: World Vision founded.
- 1951: Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ International (Cru).
- 1952: Compassion International (was the Everett Swanson Evangelistic Association in 52; name changed in 1963).
- 1954: Fellowship of Christian Athletes founded.
- 1956: Christianity Today was founded by Billy Graham.

[24] Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 48. Emphasis added.
[25] Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 49.Root is actually referring to the Neo-Evangelicalism of Graham and Henry.

- 1957: George Verwer founded Operation Mobilization.
- 1958: David Wilkerson started Teen Challenge in NYC.
- 1960: Loren Cunningham formed YWAM (Youth with a Mission).
- 1960: Christian Research Institute.
- 1960: David Wilkerson founded Teen Challenge.

In a span of 18 years, and particularly the period around the 1950s, a number of parachurch ministries were founded that would shape a generation and impact millions of evangelicals. Parachurch ministries, being free from denominational bureaucracies, had more freedom to innovate and take risks.

Rick Warren made the point while also noting another shift when speaking at a Pew Forum in 2005:

> In the last 50 years, most of what was new and innovative that's been done in Christianity was done by para-church organizations, not actual congregations. Things like World Vision, World Relief, Campus Crusade for Christ, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Billy Graham Organization and on and on. And America in its entrepreneurship has started thousands of these para-church organizations since the 1950s. And in the '70s and the '80s particularly, all of the bright minds were not going into local churches. They were all going into these para-church organizations.
> But all the smart people I know are now working in local churches. They're moving there and the power is moving back to the local congregations. Regardless of size, they just happen to be there. And as a result, the pastors and the priests and the ministers of these churches are, I think, gaining a larger voice.[26]

Harold Myra, whose role will be unpacked more in chapter three, observed how "many of the leaders of evangelical movements came out of the Youth for Christ movements." Their innovation was often about survival as Myra described it:

> The Youth for Christ movement was a survival thing. You had to be really good at a lot of things, uh, to be able to survive as a YFC leader. I think in the evangelical world, there was a lot of that entrepreneurial thing just built into it. . . . I think that the openness of evangelicals to the kind of entrepreneurship that was required was a part of survival.

By the late 1970s, the diffusion of parachurch ministries reached such a degree and their power in over Protestant culture, practice, and thought so prominent that notable church leaders and theologians began to express concern. Stephen Board recognized this importance of this shift in authority and power within American religion, suggesting the slow change in authority As

[26] https://www.pewforum.org/2005/05/23/myths-of-the-modern-megachurch/, accessed May 31, 2020.

Michael Lindsay observes, it is parachurch ministries that provide "the institutional scaffolding for new modes of social power through which leading evangelicals interact with one another and undertake strategies for legitimating the movement to a wider public audience through founding, financing, and guiding evangelical organizations and initiatives."[27] Where this role was historically filled by denominational bodies, Andrew Root notes that beginning in the 1950s, leadership of evangelicalism shifted towards grassroots entrepreneurs. As Root concludes, the growth of evangelicalism was due in large part to the "free-flowing and creative impulses of parachurch innovation."[28]

Despite the success of parachurches in the past seventy years and their current dominance in American religion, this progress can obscure a persistent tension between parachurches and churches. While parachurches and churches regularly collaborate, their relationship remains ill-defined and complex. In *Beyond the Congregation,* Christopher Scheitle captures the abiding the problematic nature of this ambiguity. He notes,

> "The term 'parachurch' hints at some of the underlying tension. The prefix 'para-' could be defined as something existing 'beside' or 'alongside' of a related entity. However, it could also be defined as something 'beyond' or 'aside from' a related entity. The different is subtle, but it represents the crux of the problem. Is the parachurch sector a partner working cooperatively alongside churches and denominations or is it a rogue agent working beyond the reach of them?"[29]

Scheitle's distinction here is critical in understanding the seemingly paradoxical draw to and suspicion of parachurches by churches and denominations. While many envision parachurches as essentially functioning in supportive roles to the church, others see them as entirely independent of any relationship, if not at times, as its foil. Predictably, churches are more inclined to see parachurches in this former role as supportive while parachurches understand their purpose as something wholly different. This distinction is more pronounced in a three-part taxonomy of parachurch relations to the church: alongside the church, renewal of the church, and in spite of the church. We may roughly translate these three postures as *equipping*, *reforming*, and *performing*; the first two suggesting a central object of the church while the third can stand alone. The initial two see the church as fundamental to their identity and mission although in different respects, the third as a possible market or partner but not a necessity.

Despite this diversity of postures towards the church, there are several constitutive elements that are common to all parachurches. In surveying the various elements of parachurch ministries, five general characteristics emerge. First, parachurches are essentially *independent, self-governing* organizations. Where churches have fixed leadership and denominational

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[27] Elite Power: Social Networks Within American Evangelicalism (Winner of the Robert J. McNamara Student Paper Award 2005) D. Michael Lindsay* Sociology of Religion 2006, 67:3, 211.
[28] Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 49.
[29] Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation,* 33-34.

hierarchies connected to their ecclesiology, parachurches operate outside similar authority structures. At its most basic level, parachurches are ministries that exist outside the church with their own leadership and chains of accountability.

Second, parachurches are *specialized* in their mission. One critical element informing the tension between churches and parachurches is in their divergent missions. The mission of the church is simultaneously local and broad. That is, the church is rooted to a specific community but is tasked with a broad range of obligations from evangelism, to missions, to discipleship, to counseling, to worship, to social care, and on.[30] Parachurches, on the other hand, are intensely focused upon a central mission that animates its activities and relationships. Through focusing on one specialized element of Christian life, parachurches can often experience greater success where churches need to split their time among many priorities. That parachurches can thrive where churches historically struggle is often a point of contention; the parachurches criticizing the perceived failure of churches while churches decry the perceived co-option of their authority and people.

Such specialization means that there is always a fresh wave of new parachurches as each successive generation of Christians recognize new areas for activity or neglected areas in need of innovation. Yet this places a corresponding pressure on existing parachurches to adapt to shifts in the priority of their specialization. As Wuthnow observes, by limiting themselves to narrow missions, parachurches are susceptible to their animating purpose diminishing in importance or ceasing to exist altogether. Anti-slavery and temperance societies were once among the most powerful parachurch institutions in American Protestantism but faded due to external factors. In contrast, the American Bible Society has continued to grow to become one of the largest modern parachurches. As a result, parachurches with long histories may have gone through periods of adapting their specialization to adjust to shifts in culture and religion.[31]

Third, parachurches are *entrepreneurial* in their origin. Like entrepreneurial churches, parachurches begin from an innovative response to perceived deficiencies, ineffectiveness, or stagnate institutions and processes within the existing church. Parachurches are therefore often reactive, creating new processes, strategies, or products that address specific gaps that inevitably displace the status quo. Pastor Rick Warren suggests that this quality is largely responsible for their significant rise to dominance in American religion since the middle of the twentieth century. According to Warren in a 2005 interview, "most of what was new and innovative that's been done in Christianity was done by para-church organizations, not actual congregations… America in its entrepreneurship has started thousands of these para-church organizations since the 1950s. And in

[30] In his study of parachurch ministries, Scheitle identified nine sectors of parachurch ministries: (1) charismatic evangelism, (2) relief and development, (3) education and training, (4) publishing and resources, (5) radio and television, (6) missions and missionary, (7) fellowship and enrichment, (8) advocacy and activism, and (9) fundraising and grant making. While a well-rounded taxonomy, Scheitle's 2010 list is already beginning dated by absence of technology and data focused parachurches that do not fit neatly into any sector and whose rapid growth suggest an emerging new sector. Scheitle: 2010, 59-90

[31] Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*, 106.

the ’70s and the ’80s particularly, all of the bright minds were not going into local churches. They were all going into these para-church organizations.” [32]

The seemingly limitless range of parachurches speaks to the prominence of the entrepreneurial quality to parachurches, they have become the dominant tool for enterprising Christian leaders motivated to innovate solutions to pressing challenges. Scheitle notes that at freedom and specialization of parachurches proved fertile grounds for religious innovation, “when it comes to many of the overlapping activities [with the church], the bureaucratic model allows parachurch organizations to produce more goods and services faster, more efficiently, and more predictably.”[33]

In the past few generations, entrepreneurialism of parachurches has become more pronounced as traditional barriers to entry for ministries have declined. Where denominations and institutions have historically exercised a certain degree of authority – either directly or indirectly - over parachurches, few if any such restrictions remain. No longer dependent upon churches and denominations to legitimize or accredit their operation, their success is largely dependent upon their performance in the religious marketplace. That is, how well they are able to accurately diagnose a problem, innovate solutions that address this problem, and craft a compelling message to inspire widespread adoption of their solution. Technology has consistently served as a catalyst in this progression, each new platform enabling entrepreneurs to bypass traditional Christian networks to market their parachurch directly to churches, pastors, and individual Christians. With the recent explosion of social media, the parachurch marketplace has never been more diverse, competitive, and accessible.

Fourth, parachurches are *ecumenical* in their belief and collaboration. As Christian organizations, parachurches exist within a tension between their theological identity that animates the vision and mission against the market pressures necessary for success. While many parachurches may have doctrinal statements, these are often fairly simplistic affirmations of critical theological doctrines of historic Protestantism. Yet more than what doctrines they affirm, parachurches are ecumenical in how they understand their identity and mission. Detached from churches and denominations, parachurches often view their constituency as the broader church and, as a result, their role as a unifier through collaboration. This adaptability means that parachurches run an impossibly broad gamut of theological depth and conviction. Where some have confessionally rooted theological identities connected to their organizational mission, others appeal to a general ethos of Christian convictions that inform their motivations while not limiting their partnerships.

In this respect, the evangelical identity has proven a useful space for parachurches operate within. While the identity has recently become troublesome, for nearly two centuries it has been used to refer to a common theological core of orthodox Protestantism.[34] Indeed, it is important to

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[32] https://www.pewforum.org/2005/05/23/myths-of-the-modern-megachurch/, accessed May 31, 2020.

[33] Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 56

[34] One of the earliest examples of the evangelical identity being crafted as a space for united Christian ministry was the creation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1864. Cf. Ian Randall and David Hillborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001).

note that the growth of parachurches and the religious identity of "evangelical" in the second half of the twentieth century correspond. While many other factors contributed to their growth, the evangelical identity was a critical tool for emerging parachurches to exist beyond the limited spaces of denominations. Instead, evangelicalism provided parachurches with a broad network within which they could forge partnerships across theological traditions while retaining a distinctive theological identity that marked them as within the bounds of orthodoxy.

Fifth, parachurches are *corporate* in their structure and funding. Many have noted how the structure of parachurches represent a dynamic mixture of ministry and business. Independent of church structures, parachurches are similar insofar as they require leaders, staff, and possibly participants/customers to subscribe to a set of religious beliefs and/or faith experiences. At the same time, their structure often mirrors other non-profit charities. The large majority are overseen by one or more executives, leaders that manage the staff and set the strategic goals of the organization. A second common source of accountability is a governing board, charged with overseeing and approving the vision of the parachurch and holding its executive(s) accountable for success and behavior.[35]

The majority of parachurches are governed by a board of directors and managed by a president and/or executive director. Typically, scholars have tended to frame parachurches as independent, self-governing organizations that have narrowly defined missions relating to specific sphere of church life.

In addition to their structure, parachurches function similar to other non-profits in their dependence upon a combination of sales, fundraising, and grants. All three avenues produce corresponding pressures upon parachurches that can shape their mission and relationship to individuals, churches, and denominations. The majority of parachurches offer a service or product for sale, the profits of which are enough to sustain and expand the organization. Like for-profit companies, parachurches driven largely through sales need to be active in marketplace by continuing to refine their product and marketing in order to secure and retain customers. Parachurches that rely upon fundraising need to recruit and retain a donor base while grant-based funding necessitates an ability to be selected from among similar non-profits. All three avenues of revenue can be highly competitive not only between parachurches but in relation to churches/denominations who may perceive parachurches as siphoning their funding.[36]

Despite this considerable influence, the parachurch remains an understudied phenomenon. Many have focused on one sphere of parachurch ministry – for example, foreign missions – but few have addressed the nature and genesis of parachurch ministries itself. Untethered from the daily obligations and doctrinal precision intrinsic to local churches and denominations, parachurch ministries are able to demonstrate both considerable flexibility in their collaborations and focus in addressing narrow concerns.

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[35] Christopher Paul Rice, *Toward a Framework for Practical Theology of Institutions for Faith-Based Organizations*. Thesis, Duke Divinity School, 2014. Pg.27

[36] Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 91-112.

A period of time around the 1950s, over a span of about 18 years, saw a number of parachurch ministries founded that would shape a generation and impact millions of evangelicals. Parachurch ministries, being free from denominational bureaucracies, had more freedom to innovate and take risks.

Term #4: Innovation

"If I had asked people what they wanted," Henry Ford one said, "they would have said a faster horse."[37] Leaders and organizations who lead into the future begin with something bigger than merely maintaining the status quo on the one hand or merely tweaking things on the other. Those who break though the tendency toward institutionalism and lethargy—including churches and their leaders—do so boldly, bound more by the mission than the pull toward maintenance.

Evangelicals have a paradoxical relationship with culture, in particular with its more popular forms. Aware of the biblical injunctions against "worldliness," or capitulating to the world system, evangelicals nevertheless believe understanding culture is critical to reaching it. Gromley observed how "American Evangelicals consistently have been quick to embrace the media, technologies, and cultural forms of contemporary society as a way to evangelize the masses."[38] This desire flows from the Great Commission. It is a fundamental reason for the rise of the contemporary megachurch and its adoption of contemporary cultural innovations.

I've been interested in innovation throughout my ministry. In 2007, for instance, along with Elmer Towns and Warren Bird I wrote the book *11 Innovations in the Local Church*, which recognized a number of innovative churches happening around the turn of the millennium, many of which intersect with innovations described in this book.[39]

In the years following World War II the United States emerged as a military and economic superpower. The country also became "the undisputed global leader in innovation" according to the Aspen Institute: "From transistors to personal computers, from the development of the Internet to the evolution of the smart phone, America was at the frontier of the world's technological transformation."[40]

Both inventions and innovations have marked the U.S. for the past two generations. That spirit is seen in those who paved the way for new approaches and models in church life as well. "The essential ingredient for success is a steady stream of innovation," Bob Buford argued.[41]

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[37] Sinek, Simon (2009-09-23). Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action (p. 60). Penguin Group US. Kindle Edition.

[38] Eric Gormly, "Evangelizing Through Appropriation: Toward a Cultural Theory on the Growth of Contemporary Christian Music" *Journal of Media and Religion* 2 (4), 2003: 252.

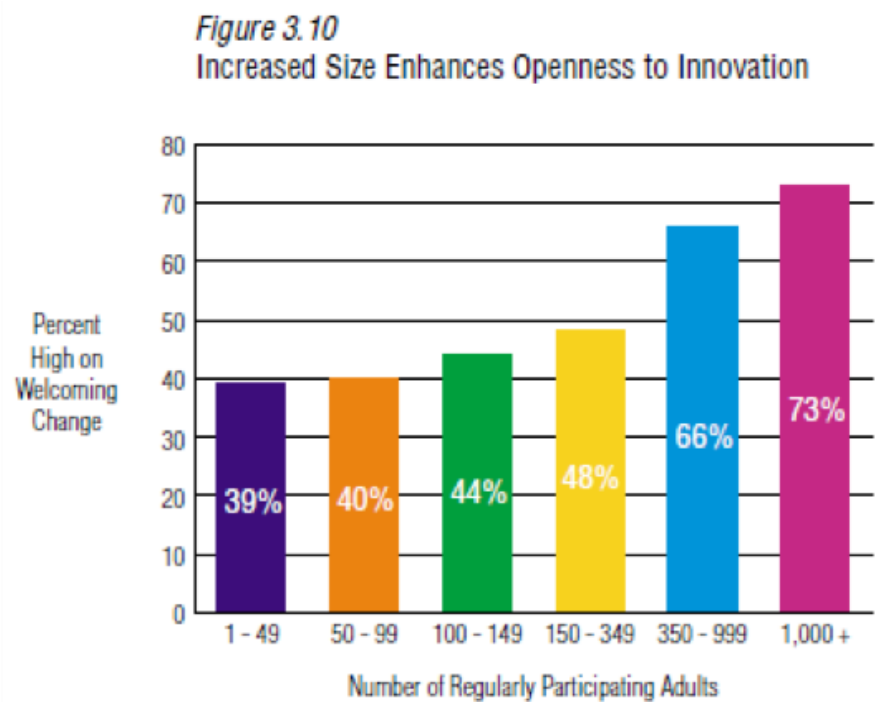
[39] Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders Can Learn, Discern, and Move into the Future* (Regal, 2007).

[40] https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/an-innovation-challenge-for-the-united-states/, accessed May 14, 2020.

[41] https://halftimeinstitute.org/bob-buford-tribute/, accessed May 14, 2020.

In recent years research shows that large churches tend to be more innovative and correspondingly more open to change. This is more the case in evangelical churches growing in suburban areas or in Western states. In addition, younger congregations welcome change more than churches with older memberships. Evangelicals are more likely to have changed in their worship style in recent years, while more liberal or Mainline churches are less likely.[42]

The Larger the Church the More Open to Change



What do we mean by innovation? How does innovation differ from invention or discovery? The *Oxford Handbook of Innovation* explains: "Invention is the first occurrence of an idea for a new product or process, while innovation is the first attempt to carry it out into practice."[43] Further distinction between the two terms follows: "It follows that the role of the innovator, i.e. the person or organizational unit responsible for combining the factors necessary (what the innovation theorist Joseph Schumpeter called the 'entrepreneur'), may be quite different from that of the inventor."[44]

Innovation comes with a price. As Nicolo Machiavelli famously observed, "There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things . . . Whenever his enemies have the ability to attack the innovator they do so with the passion of partisans, while the others defend him sluggishly, so that the innovator and his party alike are vulnerable."[45] Mark Chaves observed the tension between a desire to change and a keen sense of history: "Religious movements and religious entrepreneurs partly

[42] Source: Fact 2001, 31-33.
[43] Fagerberg, Mowery, and Nelson 2011, *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation,* 4.
[44] Fagerberg, Mowery, and Nelson 2011, *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation, 5*.
[45] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 1.

innovate, but they also partly seek continuity with major existing traditions in their cultural field."[46]

Lyle Schaller made the point that should be obvious, namely, that more conservative, evangelical churches, while more theologically conservative and unwilling to change convictions, are more likely to embrace or lead in innovation in practice. Their "stability and predictability in ideology" allows them "to advocate change in practices and institutional life."[47] A religious person who is more liberal is the opposite. He or she "is more open to new ideas and innovation in ideology and thus looks for continuity, predictability, and stability in practices and institutional life."[48]

Term #5: Diffusion of Innovation

Good leaders recognize that innovation by itself is not enough. There are many transformative innovations that died in relative obscurity, often to the confusion and frustration of those who grasped its potential. For if innovation is not broadly adopted across regions and organizations, it will inevitably fail to generate lasting change. As a result, good leaders are often just as driven by the *diffusion* of innovation as they were with the innovation itself. This is because they recognize the central truth that makes diffusing innovations so challenging. Where innovation demands expertise in structures and systems, diffusion demands expertise in people. Successful leaders are those who quickly move on to considering of how the innovation can be discovered, desired, and deployed by others.

This idea was most forcefully advocated by Everett Rogers in his 1962 book *Diffusion of Innovation*. Rogers argued that by diffusion of innovation, we mean "a theory concerning how, why, and at what pace new ideas, technology, or other discoveries spread." This was not simply diffusion Rogers observed. "Diffusion is a special type of communication, in which the messages are about a new idea."[49] He defined an innovation as "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption."[50] At the center of Roger's conception of the diffusion of innovation is four main elements: *innovation*, *communication channels*, *time*, and *social system*.

Innovation

Predictably Rogers begins with innovation itself. The successful diffusion of ideas, processes, or technologies is dependent upon an initial adaptation that changes the status quo in significant respects. While we have already noted that innovation involved "the first attempt to

[46] Mark Chaves, *Congregations in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 155.
[47] Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 30.
[48] Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 30.
[49] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 6.
[50] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 11.

carry [a new idea] out into practice."[51] Rogers offers his own five-part definition. (1) **Relative advantage**: The degree to which the innovation advances and/or improves the existing status quo. Does the innovation offer significant benefits to justify change? (2) **Compatibility**: The degree to which an innovation is integrates with existing social norms, values, and habits. Does the innovation cause little to no disruption in the change? (3) **Complexity**: The degree to which an innovation is – or perceived to be – inaccessible to a target audience. Does the innovation cause people to be intimidated by the change? (4) **Trialability***:* The degree to which an innovation can be learned and understood prior to commitment. Does the innovation offer people a means of experimentation throughout the process of change? (5) **Observability**: The degree to which the value of the innovation is readily apparent. Does the innovation have clear benefits that people view it a necessity to change?[52]

Communication Channels

Rogers described mass media channels, including radio, television, newspapers, and other forms of transmitting messages via mass media as one key channel. Another was interpersonal channels involve "a face-to-face exchange between two or more individuals."[53] Among entrepreneurial evangelicals, the latter proved to be critical in the adoption of innovation.

According to Dave Travis this statement of Rogers had a huge impact on Leadership Network. "In the 1970's, diffusion scholars began to study the concept of reinvention," Rogers wrote, "Defined as *the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation*."[54] Often these evangelicals given to innovation didn't come up with something totally new, but at times did what some call "twisting the ordinary," like turning fried chicken into chicken tenders or nuggets to be eaten more easily in the car. Evangelicals didn't have to come up with concepts; Scripture provided the substance for their work. *Reinventing* approaches to be more effective was crucial, however.

Rogers' research revealed an important aspect of DOI that would come into play with the rise of LN and the entrepreneurial leaders among evangelicals:

> Diffusion investigations show that most individuals do not evaluate an innovation on the basis of scientific studies of its consequences, although such objective evaluations are not totally irrelevant, especially to the very first individuals who adopt. Instead, most people depend mainly upon a subjective evaluation of an innovation that is conveyed to them from other individuals like themselves who have previously adopted the innovation. The dependence on the experience of near peers suggests that *the heart of the diffusion process*

[51] Fagerberg, Mowery, and Nelson 2011, *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation*, 4.
[52] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 15-16.
[53] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 18.
[54] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 17. Emphasis added.

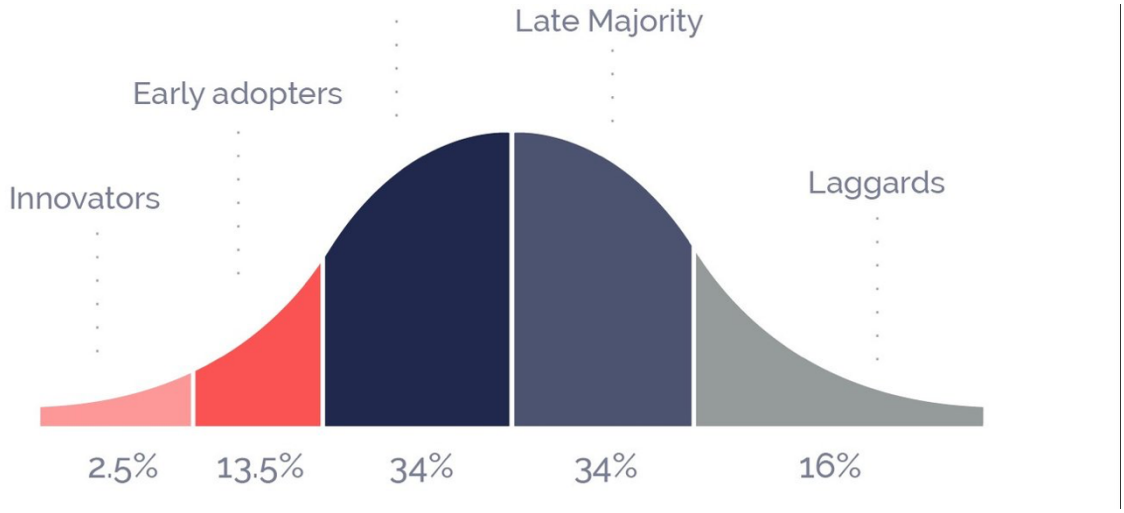
consists of the modeling and innovation by potential adopters of their network partners who have adopted previously.[55]

Individuals are typically homophilous or heteorphilus. Homophily, or "love of the same," is the idea behind sayings like "birds of a feather, flock together." It describes why people enjoy one another's company or see the value of social media. Heterophily or "love of differences" describes individuals who enjoy company with those who value diversity. While Rogers found that "more effective communication occurs when two or more individuals are homophilous," he also found that a problem that the diffusion of innovation faces "is that the participants are usually quite heterophilous."[56]

Time

Diffusion of innovations takes time, occurring in various stages of adoption. The rate at which innovations diffuse depend on a wide range of variables but at the most critical relate to what Rogers terms the Innovation-Decision Process. By this, Rogers means the process by which individuals move through initial knowledge of the innovation, being persuaded of its benefits, deciding to make the change, implementing the innovation, and confirmation of the innovation's value.[57] Yet Rogers astutely observe that this process was not uniform across society. While several moved through this process rapidly – either innovating themselves or quickly adopting new innovations – many others were more cautious and some even resisted innovation well after it had been broadly accepted. Surveying the responses to innovation, Rogers hypothesized that all individuals in society fit into five categories in how they moved through the Innovation-Decision Process. The five adopter categories: "(1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority, and (5) laggards."[58]

[55] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 18. Emphasis added.
[56] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 19.
[57] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 20.
[58] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed,* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 22.



At the outset of the paradigm, Rogers maintained that only 2.5% of any given social system are *innovators*. The critical attribute of innovators is, according to Rogers, *venturesomeness.* That is, A prevailing willingness to take daring and even risky action in rethinking processes, needs, or technologies. Critically, Rogers distinguished opinion makers from innovators. The former may be innovators but often times they are early adopters that are gifted as diffusing the innovations of others.[59]

Today, with the rise of the impact of social media this allows connectivity to happen at a faster rate and across geographical boundaries. There is a relationship between resource and the potential of innovation. This is why large churches could experiment more with innovation, just as a larger farm might plant a new seed in one field and not risk his whole farm in the test.

The most important people in DOI are the *early adopters.* On average 13.5% are in this group. These are the people who take what they learn from the innovators and apply them to their context. The highest number of opinion leaders are early adopters. Opinion leaders are "leaders within the first two categories," Travis observes. "These leaders are the ones most closely watched by the rest of the system to determine the validity of an innovation."[60]

The *early majority* represents 34% of the system. It and the next group, the late majority which also makes up 34%, are the largest groups. This group is more deliberate in adopting an innovation. This is the most important group concerning adoption because they are the largest group before reaching the mean in the curve. Key leaders are in the previous two categories, but this group is the core of the first followers.

The *late majority*, also about one-third of the system, are skeptical toward innovation. They value preservation of what is already working or in existence more than innovation. They need to be shown an innovation is in sync with current practice to the highest degree possible.

[59] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 5th Edition*. (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2003.
[60] Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 11.

Finally, the *laggards* represent the final 13.5%. These are the last to adopt an innovation, if they ever do so. Rogers observed, "The point of reference of the Laggard is the past."[61] They are also "the most local in their outlook and the most disconnected from the system as a whole."[62]

In the sixty years since Rogers outlined these categories, they have a proven popular tool in understanding social change and adaption. In his bestselling book, *Start with Why*¸ Simon Sinek went so far as to dub it the "Law of Diffusion of Innovations." Building on Rogers, Sinek argued that companies and leaders often failed in introducing new product or ideas because they were unable to generate compelling reasons why slow and hesitant adopters endure through the DOI. Likewise, bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* expands on Roger's thesis in arguing that innovations that are able to diffuse beyond early adopters generate enough momentum to win over the rest of society.

Social System

Diffusions take place within social systems. This is why DOI often takes a very long time to make headway. Rogers offers the fascinating example of the issue of scurvy among sailors in the past. Scurvy killed more sailors in the early period of lengthy voyages than war, accidents, or any other cause. In 1497, Vasco de Gama lost 100 of 160 sailors on his voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. In 1601, British Captain Lancaster discovered by experimentation that lemon juice taken daily greatly reduced incidents of the disease. But the cure was not adopted until 1747, almost 150 years later. "Innovations do not sell themselves,"[63] Rogers observed.

This is part of the explanation for the role of Leadership Network and other parachurch ministries, along with megachurches, as being the leaders in innovation in the church. Organizations outside a local church structure have more freedom to innovate; likewise, younger, newer, rapidly growing megachurches by their very existence and growth show a predilection toward change.

Everett Rogers studied the diffusion of innovation as it applied to various contexts from cures to diseases to improvement in crops. However, considering at its heart that diffusion is "the spread of something within a social system," it's no surprise that the realm of religion "is a fruitful conceptual area in which to study diffusion processes."[64]

As Burge and Djupe put it:

> Religion, especially denominational religion, might be thought of as a vast communication network, with links developed at local, regional, and national levels. However, the literature has been notably sparse in its description of how religious ideas diffuse in the subculture as well as in the larger society. A few notable exceptions can be found, with

[61] Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation*, 265.
[62] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 16.
[63] Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation*, 7.
[64] Burge, Ryan P., and Paul A. Djupe. 2016. "Emergent Fault Lines: Clergy Attitudes toward the Emergent Church Movement." Journal of Religious Leadership15 (1): 6.

> some work using the concept of diffusion to explain how church membership patterns are dependent on the composition of churches in close proximity. Diffusion helps explain how denominations changed organizational policy in systematic ways to allow women to be ordained as clergy. Moreover, the degree to which issue positions are diffused by clergy is driven by their national/denominational ties conditioned on the environment in which they preach.[65]

In fact, they argue that diffusion of ideas is more vital to the growth of religious groups. In a doctoral dissertation on innovation in the church, Travis Paul Drake asks:

> Just as passing information on to others in discipleship includes prayer and Bible study, should it not also include innovation? If Jesus was both revolutionary and innovative in His earthly ministry for reaching past the status quo, shouldn't churches be following that example today? Instead, it seems that many churches have become satisfied with doing church as usual, instead of being unusual, vibrant, and creative in methodology. If the example of Jesus is taken seriously, then there is no other alternative but to conclude that this is no longer an acceptable attitude.[66]

Chuck Smith chose to exercise grace over rules in allowing hippies into his church. This included gifted musicians (like Love Song) who encouraged innovation in worship music and church structures (coffeehouses, communes, etc.). Through his influence and leadership his rapidly growing church became a diffuser of the new music through the encouragement of many new bands and the establishment of Maranatha! music. Chuck Fromm, who came to Calvary Chapel to help organize and utilize the many musical groups and to get Maranatha! going, had a saying that "Any pig can fly in a hurricane." In other words, when a new idea meets a need at the right time, the diffusion of innovation happens rapidly.

A bit later other innovative ideas were utilized by Rick Warren, who was followed by a host of early adopting pastors. Rick had from his earliest days established good will among pastors as one who sought to help them fulfill their ministries. When *Purpose-Driven Church* and *Purpose-Driven Life* came out, he already had a system in place for the rapid spread of his new ideas.

There remains yet a fundamental difference between a researcher seeking to find a cure for a disease or a new kind of corn and those who seek to be effective in gospel ministry. The former seeks to discover something new or different as its primary mission. Researchers frantically searching for a vaccine and/or cure for the COVID-19 coronavirus were seeking a novel way to save lives in the midst of a pandemic. For the minister of the gospel or Christian leader we already

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[65] Burge, Ryan P., and Paul A. Djupe. 2016. "Emergent Fault Lines: Clergy Attitudes toward the Emergent Church Movement." Journal of Religious Leadership15 (1): 6-7.

[66] Drake, Travis Paul. 2009. "Innovation Matters: The Use of Innovation in Ministry Strategies for the Local Church." Lynchburg, Va.: Liberty University. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/282, 17.

have the cure—the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sin. We don't need to improve on it or change it. We don't need a "fuller" gospel or a more "relevant" gospel. Our interest in innovation has more to do with the delivery systems or approaches for that cure.

Because of that we have a tension between taking risks to pursue innovation on the one hand, and the dilution of the gospel into pragmatism or other forms of declension. We seek to innovate without losing our essential message.

While we want to discover innovative ways to be more effective in serving the Lord, we need to remember two things about innovation. First, most heresies and cult leaders started out trying to be innovative. Second, in Scripture, it seems most of the novel approaches taken were done so out of necessity rather than curiosity or a desire to be innovative.

In business, marketers hope to find ways to diffuse innovation for profit. For most, if not all, of the early entrepreneurial evangelicals, they were primarily seeking ways to be both effective for and faithful to Christ, not to be innovators. "I never set out to see how innovative I could be with drama or music, or how many cultural codes I could crack," Bill Hybels said. "Those were simply a few means to an incredibly valuable end. What motivated me . . . [was] the priceless goal of seeing redeemed people become the church."[67]

That said, Maciariello argues: "Diffusion of innovation is the purpose behind the work of both Leadership Network and the Willow Creek Association—and thus the importance of Everett Rogers's work and his expert advice."[68]

When Paul came to Ephesus as recorded in Acts 19, he came to preach and plant the gospel in that city. After initial success in the synagogue, he faced mounting opposition. Paul made two strategic changes at that point. First, he left the synagogue and moved to a secular venue, the School of Tyrannus. Second, whereas he had focused on the weekly synagogue meetings (verse 8), he now focused on daily teaching. What was the result? "All Asia" heard the word, including Jews and Greeks (verse 10).

Paul didn't come to a city to see what new innovation he could try. He came to share the gospel. But when necessary, he innovated, as in Ephesus. And verse 10 seems to summarize a pretty significant diffusion of that innovation as the gospel spread throughout Asia. Like Paul, we seek to innovate as the effective proclamation of the gospel requires it.

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The chapters that follow in this report will show how these factors were played out in church life during the entrepreneurial evangelical era of 1980-2010.

[67] Lynne and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 13-14.
[68] Maciariello 2014, *Year with Peter Drucker*, 299

Chapter 2 - Precursors

Church Growth
Jesus Movement

Evangelicalism has been wed to some level of entrepreneurialism from its earliest days. This entrepreneurial impulse often grew out of a desire to return to the heart of the faith and practice of Scripture in contradistinction to the prevailing religious currents of the day. From the Evangelical Awakening in Great Britain in the 18th century to the present day, evangelicalism has never been far afield from either entrepreneurialism or innovation.

"American evangelicals have always been innovative entrepreneurs as they reach out to save souls, and that was surely true in this period,"[69] Putnam and Campbell observed in *American Grace.* They listed examples including the shift in contemporary music and its effect on liturgy, small groups, new facilities built where Americans were resettling (particularly in the suburbs), and applying marketing techniques from the business world. All of these and more were utilized to help reach the newer American generations. They also observed how mainline Protestants and Catholics tried to do the same, but "like Sears belatedly mimicking Walmart, they were playing catch-up."[70]

That said, the past generation has witnessed an unparalleled diffusion of innovation through entrepreneurial evangelicals. This proliferation is most pronounced from 1980-2010, the period where Bob Buford's shadow spread through Leadership Network across American church life to change the landscape of American Christianity.

The acceleration of an entrepreneurial spirit began in the 1970s that paved the way for the years to follow. Certain precursors influenced the future innovations, particularly the Church Growth Movement and the Jesus Movement. Even before those movements the rise of the parachurch created a context where innovation was not only allowed but was required for survival. These movements in particular gave impetus to evangelism, church planting, leadership in areas such as preaching and worship, and formed networks across denominations as the shift from denominations as central to influence to the rise of non-denominational megachurches.

The Church Growth Movement

Donald McGavran and Movement Beginnings

Donald McGavran served as a missionary in India for several decades. His 1955 book *The Bridges of God* would be considered the inauguration of the modern church growth movement.

[69] Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Simon & Schuster, 2010), 112.
[70] Putnam and Campbell, 113.

McGavran was influenced by Roland Allen's *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (which would also impact Rick Warren) and J. Waskom Pickett's *Christian Mass Movements*. McGavran studied and employed church planting and ways to reach people in his context in India.

In *The Bridges of God* McGavran introduced ideas considered novel in his time. He argued evangelism must move from the proclamation of the gospel to including a new convert's responsible involvement in a local church, so that "numerical evangelism could be measured by numerical church growth."[71] The most controversial issue he emphasized was people movements: most people, he observed, come to Christ collectively with others within a family, tribe, or village. He recognized the desire of people in social settings to preserve community life. Instead of seeing people as "aggregates of individuals" to be converted one at a time, McGavran argued the social factor in the conversion of people should not be underestimated.

He wrote: "To Christianize a whole people, the first thing not to do is snatch individuals out of it into a different society. Peoples become Christians where a Christward movement occurs within that society."[72] This led to the controversial concept of the Homogeneous Unit Principle: "Men like to become Christians without crossing social, linguistic, or class barriers."[73]

McGavran started the Institute of Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon, beginning in 1961. In 1965, he moved the Institute to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he also became founding dean of the School of World Mission.

Pasadena became the epicenter of the emerging Church Growth Movement. Along with McGavran, Allen Tippet, Ralph Winter, Charles Kraft, Arthur Glasser, John Wimber, and the most influential diffuser of all, C. Peter Wagner promoted church growth at Fuller. By 1971, there were six on the faculty and over 80 students, many of whom were missionaries.

Other key figures and entities included Win Arn and the Institute of American Church Growth (1972); Kent R. Hunter and the Church Growth Center in Corunna, Indiana (1977); Dennis Oliver, founder of the Canadian Church Growth Center in Regina, Saskatchewan (and one of the first D.Min graduates from Fuller's School of World Mission); Paul Benjamin and his National Church Growth Research Center in Washington, D.C. (1974); and Elmer Towns of Liberty University.

The Fuller Evangelistic Association would eventually launch the North American Society of Church Growth (NASCG). The NASCG defined church growth in a way that recognized McGavran's influence:

> Church growth is that discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, and health of Christian churches as they relate to the implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all peoples." Students of church growth strive to integrate the eternal theological principles of God's word concerning the expansion of the

[71] Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 25.
[72] Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, 324.
[73] C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 198.

church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as the initial framework of reference the foundational work by Donald McGavran.[74]

The Movement Goes Mainstream

The Church Growth Movement, according to C. Peter Wagner, "entered North America in the fall of 1972."[75] Why 1972? That was the first "conscious attempt to apply church growth philosophy" at Lake Avenue Congregational Church where Wagner and McGavran team-taught "a pilot course in church growth for American Church leaders."[76]

These movement leaders sought to distill the most important principles to aid churches in growth. An example of this is Wagner's principles from his book *Your Church Can Grow:*

- A pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth.
- A well-mobilized laity who has discovered, has developed, and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth.
- A church big enough to provide the range of services that meet the needs and expectations of its members.
- The proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation, and cell.
- A membership drawn primarily from one homogenous unit.
- Evangelistic methods that have been proved to make disciples.
- Priorities arranged in biblical order.[77]

Influence Peaks and Wanes

Fuller Theological Seminary would become the epicenter of the movement through McGavran, Wagner, and others. In what Wagner called the "Magna Carta of the Church Growth Movement," he and McGavran outlined guiding principles:

- Church growth could be studied as a science through the application of the scientific method. This led to a strong focus on social sciences as part of the CGM.
- At the center of this method were McGavran's three guiding questions about church growth:
    - When a church is growing, why is it growing?

[74] Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 20.
[75] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1976), 11.
[76] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 15.
[77] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 187-188.

- What barriers, obstructions, or sicknesses prevent the natural life, vitality, and growth of churches?
- What reproducible principles operative in growing churches be used elsewhere?

Church Growth as a discipline was described under four headings completing the idea "Church growth is..."

- An academic discipline aimed at understanding the science of conversion.
- A philosophy of ministry that prioritizes a distinct homogeneous unit.
- A populist theology focused on mobilizing laity for ministry.
- An integrative missiology open to learning from key insights of other disciplines and leaders.

The height of the influence of the Church Growth Movement through Fuller was in the 1980s to about 1991-92. During that time, they offered a number of seminars and training events. Often these featured a theoretician like Peter Wagner or Carl George teamed with a pastor like Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, or John Maxwell. According to Doug Slaybaugh, who worked with the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, things changed around 1991-92, when he moved to work with Saddleback and the beginning of the Purpose-Driven era.

Molly Worthen points out the Church Growth Movement's origins and issues:

> The Church Growth movement began as a critique of Western individualism: Donald McGavran chastised missionaries for overemphasizing individual conversions rather than plunging into indigenous culture and bringing entire "people groups" to Christ. Yet critics––especially non-Westerners—have pointed out that Church Growth morphed into a rationalistic cult of social science with an emphasis on evangelism over justice. It has encouraged Christians to think solely in terms of souls won or lost, ignoring society's larger structures and inequalities. Many megachurches—Church Growth's great success story—have fallen prey to the prosperity gospel, seeking signs of God's favor in material wealth.[78]

Despite all the good the Church Growth Movement provided, its influence waned in the 1990s. Gary McIntosh noted that the Church Growth Movement transitioned in the latter 1990s as church leaders shifted from looking to professors, who were the early church growth writers, and consultants to the growing number of megachurch pastors like Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, and Steve Sjogren.[79]

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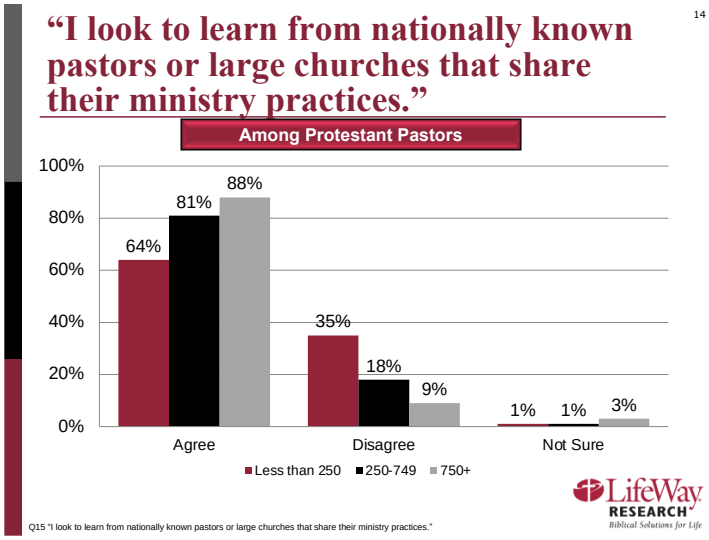
[78] Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 254.

[79] See Gary McIntosh, "Thoughts on a Movement," *Journal of The American Society of Church Growth*, Volume 8, Winter 1997, pages 11-52.

Leadership Network would arise in the 1980s and continue to grow in influence especially among entrepreneurial evangelicals through the new millennium. There was some overlap between the CGM and LN early on but in the words of Dave Travis of LN, "they were really two different movements." Carl George of Fuller and a leader in the CGM attended some of the early forums as a resource person, and his "metachurch" approach was engaged somewhat by Willow Creek as they developed their small group structure later. "I have no complaints about [the CGM]," Travis offered. "[It] had its people who were attracted to it and repelled by it. And our deal at Leadership Network was just different." Unlike the CGM which offered training and technique, LN in that early era was not about those things. The CGM would offer models for effective church growth, whereas LN was always "model agnostic." The CGM was focused on more of a lowest common denominator approach, "trying to do very similar things in very similar ways" to use Travis' words. LN was and is more about getting the right people in the room and letting them figure things out.

Today, pastors are more likely to look to successful pastors of larger churches to understand more effective ministry practices. This is particularly true of larger churches, where 88% go to other churches/pastors and 85% go to the latest books, compared to only 59% who go to their denomination (see below):

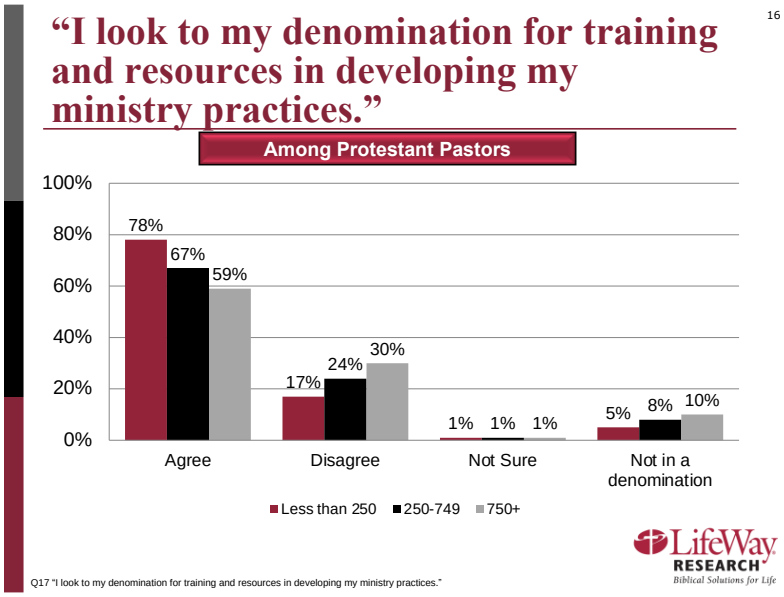
Where pastors go to learn:



Yet despite the growth of resource and collaboration networks like LN, seminaries continue to be the dominant resource for pastors looking for aid in succeeding in ministry:

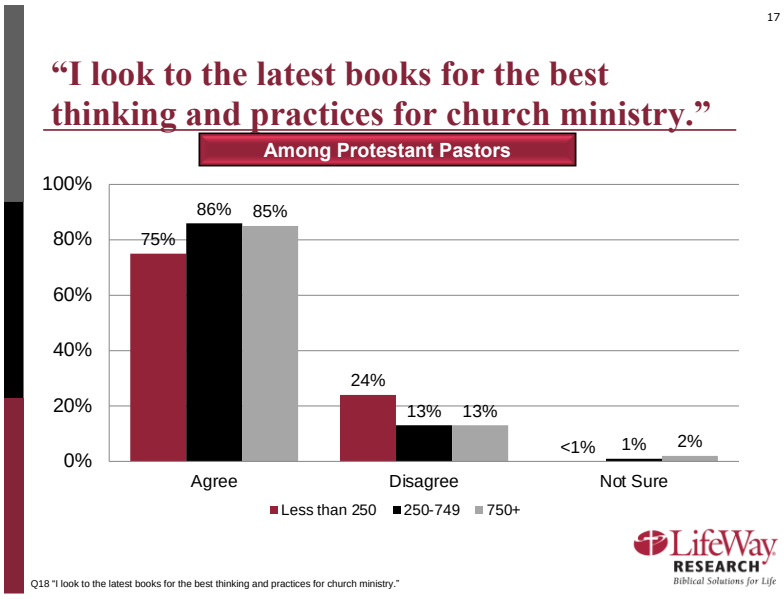
This is likely due to a wide range of factors, including the continuing premium Western culture places upon formal education. That business and society recognize the importance of degrees as credentials for influence likely plays a role in importance of education to church leadership and influence. Moreover, while seminaries have been slow to learn the lessons of leadership at the center of the story of Entrepreneurial Evangelicals, this change has begun to take effect. While few seminaries offered courses in leadership in the 1980s, today most offer whole degrees. As seminaries continue to grow in teaching leadership principles, it is not surprising to see pastors turn to their training as resources for developing ministry practices.

In contrast to seminaries, larger churches are significantly less likely to turn to denominations for help in developing ministry practices:



Again, this is likely due to a wide range of factors including the general decline of denominations and the emergence of independent evangelical churches and networks. Large churches who exist outside of traditional denominations (10%) have none to turn to in developing ministry practices, thus having to rely upon one another or general publications. This may also be due to the restrictive nature of denominational hierarchies that can often rely upon large churches to stimulate innovation in other churches rather than serve as resources for their own ministry needs. It is worth noting below how many of the early Leadership Journal and Leadership Network pastors in denominations reflected this attitude of dependence rather than resource.

Instead, large and medium churches are overwhelmingly ready to access the marketplace for ministry ideas. That 85% of larger church pastors look to recent books for help reinforces the growth of leadership and ministry publishing as a core influencer in church life:



In essence, there was a general agreeableness among all pastors to make use of any available resource in thinking through their best practices in ministry. Leaders of large churches differed slightly from their peers, demonstrating a willingness to move outside of traditional structures and more open exchange across denominations and institutions.

The Jesus People Movement

Another important precursor was the Jesus People Movement (JPM). The JPM saw great numbers to Christ in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It also introduced a number of innovations to the evangelical church in evangelism and worship. Mostly a youth movement, it began on the west

coast around 1967-68[80] in a time of national crisis: Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, drug abuse, environmental concerns, campus dissent, and the sexual revolution marked the age.

Origins

The Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, the "mecca of the counter-culture"[81] saw "flower children" turn from drugs to Jesus. Acid user and sailmaker Ted Wise became dissatisfied with his life and read the New Testament, experiencing conversion. In 1967, Wise began a coffeehouse ministry backed by area pastors called The Living Room.[82]

Christian communes began popping up serving as an impromptu drug rehab center, a refuge for homeless youth, or both.[83] Kent Philpott, a student at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary opened communal houses Soul Inn and Berachah House.[84]

In Southern California the JPM exploded through the ministry of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa. Chuck Smith, a Foursquare Gospel pastor, saw the church experience dramatic growth starting in 1970 as they began to reach hippies in large numbers. It was Chuck's wife, Kay, who initially had a burden for the broken lives of the hippies. Plowman described the results:

The ensuing population explosion at Calvary was unbelievable. Within two years or so, the church's attendance skyrocketed from 150 into the thousands. Most of them were young people touched in some way through the ministry of The House of Miracles. In 1970 alone 4,000 prayed to receive Christ, and more than 2,000 were baptized in the Pacific Ocean.[85]

Lonnie Frisbee moved to Costa Mesa from the Bay area where he and his wife Connie opened The House of Miracles under Calvary Chapel's sponsorship. Frisbee's influence in reaching hippies early at Calvary Chapel would be hard to overestimate. By1971, Calvary Chapel held three weekly youth nights with as many as two thousand attending. The services included gospel rock music, prayer, and Bible study.[86]

Calvary Chapel was a key innovator in new music that continues to shape the church today. Members of the band Love Song, pioneers in JPM music, were converted at Calvary Chapel and played a huge part in the rising music that eventually birthed Maranatha! Music and eventually, Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and the modern worship movement.

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[80] Enroth, Ericson, and Peters, *The Jesus People: Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 12; Duane Pederson, *Jesus People* (Regal, 1970), 34. Robert S. Ellwood, *One Way: The Jesus Movement and Its Meaning* (Prentice-Hall, 1973), 59, said it best when he noted that "Everyone in the Jesus movement tells a different story about who started it and how."

[81] Edward E. Plowman, *The Jesus Movement in America* (Pyramid Books, 1971), 43-44.

[82] Ibid., 13. *Time* published a report that said the Living Room was the creation of three area ministers: John MacDonald, First Baptist Church, Mill Valley; John Streater, First Baptist, San Francisco; and Edward Plowman, the prolific chronicler of the movement, Park Presidio Baptist Church, San Francisco. See "Street Christians: Jesus as the Ultimate Trip," *Time,* 3 August 1970, 31.

[83] Enroth, Ericson and Peters, *The Jesus People,* 13-14.

[84] "Street Christians: Jesus as the Ultimate Trip," 31. Philpott eventually became overseer for a construction business, several farms, rehabilitation centers, a bookstore, and a counseling center as various forms of ministry. In "The Jesus Evolution," *Time,* 24 September 1973, 80.

[85] Plowman, *Jesus Movement,* 45.

[86] Betty Price and Everett Hullum, Jr., "The Jesus Explosion," in *Home Missions,* June/July 1971, 14.

In 1967, Hollywood Presbyterian Church opened the Salt Company coffeehouse.[36] College minister Don Williams was introduced to the street culture by a pregnant street youth named Cheryl who wandered into First Presbyterian on a Sunday morning. Cheryl showed Williams the thousands of youths on the streets.

The Salt Company music group performed at the coffeehouse, as did Larry Norman, a leader in Jesus Movement music. Duane Pederson received help in the layout, printing, and distribution of his *Hollywood Free Paper* from the Salt Company and First Presbyterian. A young artist named Lance Bowen helped with the layout and cartoons for the *Free Paper*. Williams credited Lance with the origination of a key Christian symbol of the Jesus Movement:

It was a take-off on the Harvard University strike symbol which had a red clenched fist and the word "Strike" stenciled beneath it. Lance had one finger now pointing to heaven with a small cross above it and stenciled beneath, the slogan "One Way." This was to travel nation-wide as the symbol of the "Jesus Movement."[87]

Church on the Way with pastor Jack Hayford was another church that exploded in the JPM. The band 2nd Chapter of Acts, another pioneering band in the JPM, and Pat Boone were part of this church.

Jack Sparks, a Ph.D. who formerly taught at Penn State, founded the Christian World Liberation Front (CWLF) at the University of California at Berkeley in 1969.[88] Modeled after the radical left, the CWLF soon began the underground paper *Right On.* He began his organization with a commune in his home; by 1971 some thirty-two communes with six hundred Jesus People had spread around the Bay area.[89]

Linda Meissner, who had worked with David Wilkerson, came to Seattle in 1968 and set up the Teen Center. She also opened The Ark, a place for kids to come and "rap," and a coffeehouse entitled The Eleventh Hour. She later moved the coffeehouse to a larger building and renamed it the Catacombs. It became, by 1971, possibly the largest coffeehouse in the JPM. Other accomplishments included the underground paper *Agape* and the formation of the evangelistic Jesus People's Army.[90]

Arthur Blessitt, a Southern Baptist from Mississippi, started a ministry called His Place on Sunset Strip for runaways and addicts. From there he launched a global ministry of cross-carrying and soul-winning. David Hoyt first worked in the Haight and helped to spread the movement to Atlanta. Jim Durkin led a ministry in northern California called Gospel Outreach that spread to several nations from the Lighthouse Ranch in Eureka.

Jim Palosaari directed the Jesus Christ Power House in Milwaukee. Sammy Tippit led a street witnessing ministry in Chicago known as God's Love in Action. Danny Flanders in Washington, D.C., began Maranatha, "a Jesus-Movement ministry aimed at Washington's underground."[91] Southern Baptist pastor John Bisagno brought youth speaker Richard Hogue to

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[87] Don Williams, *Call to the Streets* (Augsburg, 1972), 44-45.
[88] "The Jesus People," *Newsweek*, 22 March 1971, 97.
[89] Erling Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion: The Jesus Revival in America* (Augsburg, 1972), 53-55.
[90] Plowman, *Jesus Movement*, 51-53.
[91] Plowman, *Jesus Movement*, 60.

the First Baptist Church in Houston, where a massive campaign led to the largest number of people reached by a single church in SBC history in 1970. First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, started the OneWay House led by Minister to the Generation Gap Fenton Moorhead with 800 youth attending nightly at one point.

Impact on Corporate Worship

The most significant long-term impact of the Jesus Movement was its effect on corporate worship. While Jesus Music exploded in the early 1970s, the central innovators for applying this music to church discipleship and evangelism was Calvary Chapel under the leadership of Chuck Smith. Chuck Fromm, Smith's nephew and founder of *Maranatha,* suggested in his interview that Smith's ministry philosophy was driven by his commitment to church innovation. Fromm argued that long before pastors were prioritizing leadership and innovation, Smith was constantly seeking out other churches that were succeeding in some element of discipleship or evangelism and learning how their innovations could be applied to Calvary Chapel.[92] This impulse for innovation was most significant in Calvary Chapel's worship program where their support of fledging worship bands (such as Love Song) fostered a culture of innovation in worship music that transformed the congregational singing. Gone was the slow-paced singing of past generations that felt inaccessible to not only outsiders but even those in the church. Instead, Smith looked for those who understood the ways music was revolutionizing culture but had the vision to adapt these tools to platform the gospel to the church and broader society.

Yet the true exponential impact of Calvary Chapel and Chuck Smith came not as innovators in worship but through their role as diffusors with the founding of *Maranatha!* as a Christian recording label. Far earlier than anyone else within the church world, Smith and other Calvary Chapel leaders recognized the power of not only creating new songs but empowering churches across the world to take hold of these new songs in their own communities. Fromm observed in his interview that Smith recognized the power of cassette tapes to expand the reach of their worship innovation far beyond anything previously. Fromm noted that where Luther capitalized on the printing press, so Smith capitalized on the cassette tape. The result was not simply the diffusion of Love Song or other Calvary Chapel worship teams but a list of replicable songs and a belief that this model could be successful in churches across the country. Historian Michael Hamilton captures this shift in philosophy to broader impact well in observing:

> It is no accident that Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel, one of the first congregations to welcome the counterculture, was one of the first to welcome its music. And it is no accident that in 1973 Calvary Chapel started Maranatha! Music to spread the new music to other

[92] Chuck Fromm Interview; Fromm gives an example where Smith heard of a Baptist Church across town that had a vibrant Sunday school class. Not only did Smith engage the church to learn how they were successful but helped amplify their success by donating busses from Calvary Chapel to the church. The result was an ongoing partnership between the two churches that benefited both rather than framed them as competitors.

> churches. As baby boomers moved into the churches, this music came along too. It soon acquired a new name—"praise and worship"—but it began as baptized rock 'n' roll.[93]

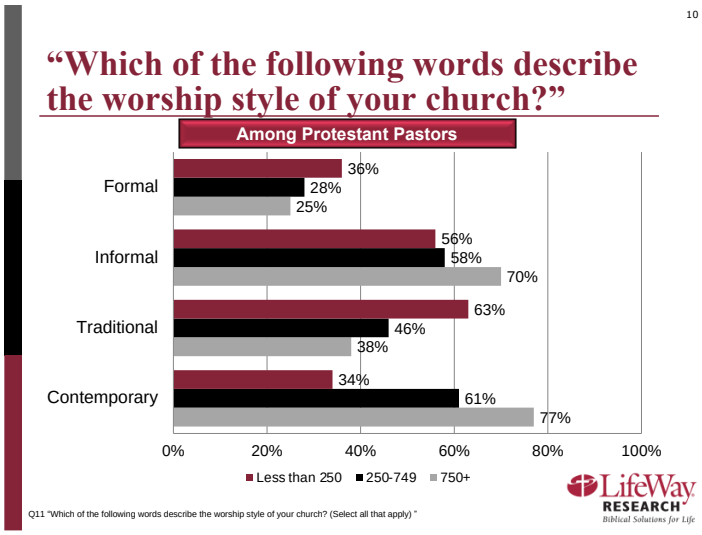
This diffusion broke the entries to barrier for later churches to recognize the attractional power of worship. If worship was a source of drawing people into church rather than an obstacle to their participation, it had the power to transform the ways churches moved people from outsiders to members. This was the central insight of later church entrepeneurs when the looked to the JPM influence on their own models. In considering how to reach "Saddleback Sam" or "Unreached Harry's and Mary's," Hybels and Warren repeatedly cited the models of contemporary worship pioneered through the JPM. These songs were evangelistic not simply because of their gospel focus but through speaking in the vernacular of contemporary music they connected worship to the lived experience of the communities churches were trying to reach. In a study on a "Decade of Change in American Congregations (2000-2012)" David Roozen observed:

> On the one hand, and most visibly, we were introduced to the jam-packed arena sized sanctuary of the seeker-friendly mega-church, complete with concert quality music and large screen video. On the other hand, and more numerically dominant because of its accessibly to typical congregations, the contemporary worship movement swept from its West Coast origins north and east, along with its less formal style and California praise music backed by electric guitars and rock-style drums –decidedly more Pentecostal than Presbyterian.[94]

A third impact was the notable rise of megachurches that coincide with the JPM and the rise of new worship styles and openness to new approaches, not to mention the model of churches like Calvary Chapel that exploded both in growth locally and in church planting globally.

In the study conducted for this report, it was clear that larger churches in particular have been open to newer worship approaches:

[93] Michael Hamilton 1999, *The Triumph of the Praise Songs*, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1999/july12/9t8028.html , accessed May 12, 2020.
[94] A Decade of Change in American Congregations 2000-2012 (David Roozen) http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/default/files/Decade%20of%20Change%20Final_0.pdf, accessed April 4, 2019.



Features

Evangelism and Baptisms. Those involved in the movement shared Jesus with others in innovative ways. Meissner rented an airplane to drop ten thousand issues of the paper *Agape* on the attendees at a pop fest while infiltrating the participants with personal witnesses through the Jesus People's Army.[95]

Pederson's *Free Paper* was designed as an evangelistic tool to counteract all the radical underground papers propagating sex, drugs, and revolution. His first editorial began as follows:

Hollywood Free Paper supports and seeks to propagate the teachings of Jesus Christ. The only reason we do this is because we have already tried almost every means to reach God that man has thought of and at the end of this search turned to the One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."[96]

The first New Year's Day issue in 1971 had a printing of 100,000, nearly all of which were passed out at the Rose Bowl parade. Over six hundred people wrote Pederson indicating they had trusted Christ as a result of that day. The next year, 200,000 were distributed, and over two thousand people wrote indicating they had become Christians as a result of this. Billy Graham, grand marshal of the parade that year, was impressed by the youth sharing Christ.

The Salt Company was established as an "evangelistic facility."[97] The purpose of Explo '72 (see below) was to train the 80,000 attending in personal evangelism. Unique baptismal services marked the movement. Mass baptisms were common. As noted above, Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, baptized thousands in the Pacific Ocean.[98] At the same time, Fenton Moorhead at First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, was baptizing scores in the Atlantic.

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[95] Plowman, *Jesus Movement*, 52.
[96] Pederson, *Jesus People*, 12.
[97] Williams, *Call to the Streets*, 30.
[98] "1,000 Baptized in Calif. Ocean," *Indiana Baptist*, 23 June 1971, 6.

Don Matison baptized almost fifty new converts in an irrigation ditch after an evangelistic meeting in Enslen Park, Modesto, California. Denny Flanders, who led the Jesus Movement ministry called Maranatha, was featured on the front page of the Washington *Daily News* with a photograph of a baptismal ceremony in the reflecting pool at the Lincoln Memorial.[99]

Unique Ministries. Coffeehouses were a common phenomenon around the country as the JPM spread. Jorstad described a typical one:

> At the beginning, each leader would generally follow the same pattern: rent a store in the inner city; turn it into a counseling center and coffee house with free sandwiches, coffee, and Kool Aid; and invite anyone interested to come in. During the day the preacher would spread the word that those on drugs, runaways, or others with serious personal problems were especially welcome. Most evenings the store was turned into a center for Bible discussion, group counseling, and almost always, a revival meeting. Invariably there would be plenty of group singing of old-time gospel hymns backed by either a guitar or two, or a small combo which often added some rock gospel melodies.[100]

These houses differed from other rescue missions because they sought to reach young street people for Christ and because they often lacked ties with other churches or agencies. Coffeehouses were a key innovation, spreading across the country, with names like The Fisherman's Net in Detroit, Agape in Columbus, Ohio, and Powerhouse in Las Vegas.[67] The largest collection of communes in the JPM was the Shiloh movement. Birthed initially out of communes related to Calvary Chapel, Shiloh Youth Revival Centers founded formally by John Higgins eventually reached 175 in number, spreading across North America.[101]

Festivals or rallies also began to emerge. Jesus rock concerts began to develop as the movement progressed. Eskridge noted the proliferation of festivals by 1975, including: Knott's Berry Farm; Valencia, California; Howell, Michigan; Ohio; Vancouver; East Texas; Wichita, Kansas; and Lancaster, Pennsylvania.[102]

Aberrant groups developed including the Children of God (COG), Tony Alamo's Christian Foundation, and the Way International.[103] Leaders including Linda Meissner and David Hoyt were caught up in the COG for a season. In the early days of the movement separating true fruit from false was not easy. Apologetic groups including the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP) of the CWLF—founded in 1973—and Cornerstone from the Jesus People USA in Chicago—founded in 1971—were birthed in part to respond to aberrant groups.

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[99] Plowman, *Jesus Movement*, 55, 67.
[100] Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 55.
[101] Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (Oxford University Press), 103, 110.
[102] Eskridge, *God's Forever Family*, 272.
[103] For further information on these and other groups see Michael Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus: An Investigation of Pop Religion in Britain and America* (Mowbrays, 1972), 22, 23; and Enroth, Ericson, and Peters, *The Jesus People*, 21-66.

Evangelical Connection

The movement reflected "the Jesus of the evangelical tradition."[104] *Time* observed:

> If one mark clearly identifies the majority, it is their total belief in an awesome, supernatural Jesus Christ, not just a marvelous man who lived 2000 years ago but a living God who is both Saviour and Judge, the ruler of their destinies. Their lives revolve around the necessity for an intense personal relationship with that Jesus, and the belief that such a relationship should condition every life.[105]

Campus Crusade for Christ International (now Cru) was involved in the Jesus Movement in several ways. Billy Graham credited Cru with playing "a major role in sparking the new 'Jesus Revolution.'"[106] Jack Sparks was a Cru staffer when he started the CWLF. Some former staffers became leaders in the movement, including Jon Braun, Bill Counts, Gordon Walker, and Hal Lindsay, author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsay and Counts also administered a commune in Southern California called the J. C. Light and Power Company.

In June of 1972, Crusade held Explo '72 in Dallas. Called "the most massive gathering of students and Christian laymen ever to descend on any one city,"[107] 80,000 delegates came to the week-long training conference. A crowd estimated at 150,000-180,000 attended a Saturday Jesus music festival that lasted eight hours. Explo's focus was "the evangelization of the world in our generation."[108]

The JPM was prevalent on college campuses. Ellwood observed: "The opening wedge and the main vehicle of cultural assimilation for the Jesus Movement on the campus has been evangelical groups independent of denominational ties."[109] Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship reported more additions by conversion in the early 70s than in any earlier time.[117]

In 1970, Asbury College experienced a powerful revival which spread to many other campuses. It started with a chapel service Tuesday, February 3, 1970. The dean of the college was scheduled to speak but instead shared his testimony, then opened the floor for others. A mass of· students responded to a call to prayer while others continued to testify. The revival spread to Asbury Seminary the next day. For 185 continuous hours students met in the college chapel to pray, sing and testify.[110] Henry C. James noted the national response to the revival:

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[104] Ellwood, *One Way,* 70-71.
[105] "The 'Jesus Revolution:' Miracle in Young America?" *Reader's Digest,* December 1971, 136, condensed from *Time*, 21 June 1971.
[106] Billy Graham, *The* Jesus *Generation* (Zondervan, 1971), 141.
[107] "Baptists Among 80,000 Attending Explo '72," *Indiana Baptist*, 5 July 1972, 5.
[108] "Baptists Among 80,000 Attending Explo '72," *Indiana Baptist*, 5 July 1972, 5.
[109] Ellwood, *One Way,* 112.
[110] Howard A. Hanke, "God in Our Midst," in *One Divine Moment,* ed. Robert E. Coleman (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), 17-25. Coleman included many student testimonies and faculty appraisals in this book.

Before long, appeals began coming from other campuses for Asbury students to come and tell the story. This intensified the burden of prayer even as it heightened anticipation of what God was going to do, . . .With the dispatch of these witnesses, the local revival began to take on the dimensions of a national movement. By the summer of 1970 at least 130 colleges, seminaries and Bible schools had been touched by the revival outreach.[111]

[111] Henry C. James, "Campus Demonstrations," in *One Divine Moment*, ed. Robert E. Coleman (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), 58.

Chapter 3 Era One:
Leadership Network Origins and Growth (1980 to 1990)
Creating Space to Address the Pastoral Leadership Crisis

Leadership Journal, Christianity Today, and the Formation of Thought[112]

Fred Smith, Sr., Paul Robbins, and Harold Myra worked together in the parachurch ministry Youth for Christ prior to coming to *Christianity Today.* Harold Myra became CEO and Publisher at *Christianity Today* in 1975, when CT was in Washington, D.C. and had been hemorrhaging financially. The magazine lost one million dollars in 1973 and was bailed out by Billy Graham. Keith Stonehocker came to CT in 1975 as an editor. In 1977, CT moved to Wheaton. In that period many saw CT as more of an academic magazine. Patterned after the Harvard Busines Review, what was first called the *Church Management Quarterly,* several factors led to the formation of what became *Leadership Journal*.

First, Myra had researched the magazine publication world and found that profitable magazines had multiple offerings to survive. He began to search for ways to add more titles. Next, Stonehocker observed Paul Robbins was "the mastermind behind the leadership concept."

Campus Life magazine of Youth for Christ was in terrible shape financially in those days. For instance, they owed their printer one million dollars according to Paul Robbins. Youth for Christ was about to shut the magazine down when then president of YFC, Jay Kesler, asked CT if they would be interested in it. Smith, Robbins, and Myra approved this move, but the CT board declined because of the debt. Robbins, Kessler, and Philip Yancey formed a small corporation that took on the magazine. YFC retained the printing debt, and the new corporation took on current debt. Fred reached out for help; one of the men from whom he received financial help was Bob Buford. Buford gave a sizeable grant to help them to get on their feet and begin accomplishing Myra's goal of adding more magazines.

Third, Duncan Brown was a very successful businessman in Pittsburgh who served as chairman of the executive committee of CT when Myra was hired. Brown conducted pastoral conferences aimed at pastors. He impressed on Myra the struggles pastors faced. Paul Robbins then travelled across the country interviewing pastors. As he asked what they needed, he returned with voluminous information from the pastors. Myra wrote a fundraising letter describing the needs of pastors, eventually leading to *Leadership Journal*. Because CT was in the minds of many a more academic magazine, Myra believed a magazine like *Leadership Journal* (LJ) could be of more practical help for pastors, many of whom were hurting.

[112] Information taken from interviews with Harold Myra, Paul Robbins, and Keith Stonehocker, all conducted in 2021.

A fourth factor was the research that went into LJ. In addition to the interviews conducted nationally by Robbins, Myra's background was in marketing. This facilitated an effective way to check the pulse of pastors. A final factor was the approach, as Stonehocker observed:

> [W]e were not writing articles and pontificating, what should be done. We were recording what churches were actually doing and finding successful or not finding successful. We were mirroring thoughtful and effective church leaders to other church leaders. And that's resonates with people. It's not somebody in an ivory tower telling you how to run your church. It's somebody who is struggling the same way you are, you know, down the road or across town or across the country. And so, what better way to learn than from your peers who are struggling with the same kind of issues?

The conclusion after a lengthy listening tour across the nation of pastors was this: "There's a great need for a publication on LEADERSHIP, one that provides not superficial 'how-to' formulas, but discerning articles that don't shy away from critical issues and hard decisions."[113]

At that time, Myra argued, seminaries were not effectively training pastors to face the real, daily issues they would encounter. They effectively taught theology, biblical studies, and more technical matters. "There was a vacuum largely, that you had to learn on the job," Stonehocker said. "You got thrown out in the church world and learn to swim, and a lot of pastors were drowning." This was pre-Internet, and LJ became a unique resource when it was started. It had its own identity as did CT, *Campus Life*, and others like *Books and Culture.*

They projected the magazine would break even in three years, but remarkably it did so in the first year because of the response. It had a number of unique features, one of which was cartoons. Cartoons offered a humorous way to look at the intimate details in a pastor's life. These became a popular feature of the journal.

LJ struck a nerve with a vast array of pastors. Pastors from Robert Schuller to Gardner Taylor began promoting LJ independently, as did many other pastors and leaders. An example of a feature where LJ appealed to pastors was its forums. While not creating the kind of community Leadership Network would with its forums later, they featured a leader wrestling with a challenge pastors normally faced. Readers could be a "fly on the wall" as they read of the way the leader dealt with the issue. The first featured an interview with Fred Smith, Sr., Myra and Robbins each spent 20 hours editing it to get it in the best form possible for publication in LJ. Stonehocker spoke of the linkage from this early forum approach to the work of LN:

> So, it was not direct or immediate community with them, but I think there was a feeling of community because they could identify with what was being said and what the issues were that people were struggling with. But I do think if we get into a leadership network and the gatherings that CT helped them start that's where you really began to see the sparks. I mean, the good sparks, the electricity between these large church pastors, who I think felt fairly

[113] "Leadership Journal Listening Tour," PDF, October 26, 1979.

lonely. There was nobody they could, they could really sit down with and talk, really because their issues and interest were even broader.

"We wanted in one sense for *Leadership Journal* to be a network for pastors, talking to each other in positive ways and informative ways," Myra observed. They researched constantly to find the pulse of pastors. Keith Stonehocker was a researcher who produced a lot of readership studies for CT and then for LJ.

Fred Smith Sr. was the contact through which Myra and Robbins would meet Bob Buford. Buford helped with funding in the rescue of *Campus Life* magazine. At that point, CL had a separate board and they sought to raise money for it as a separate nonprofit. "Fred Sr. supported that, and Bob Buford came up with some money for that," Myra recalled. This was the late 1970s. As they got to know Buford, they discovered his interest in helping pastors.

Leadership Journal would provide the context to help in the early stages of forums for what would become Leadership Network. Because CT was expanding from one to 13 magazines––including LJ—over the twenty years LN was beginning and flourishing, LJ did not have a huge involvement after the early years. "We were [mostly] just encouraging them," Myra recalled, adding, "We had a lot of hands in the fire, [so] we were just basically blessing [the] effort."

Bob Buford's Background and Influence

Bill Hybels once commented that Bob Buford was one of the most "dangerous Christians I've ever known." In Hybels' thinking, this was due to Bob's "street fighter's competitiveness that has been redirected for the advancement of the Kingdom of God on this broken planet." Few What captivated Hybels and many other pastors and church leaders who came entered Buford's orbit was his singular devotion to the idea of significant impact.

As an adolescent Bob Buford moved with his mother from Oklahoma to Tyler, Texas. His father died when he was in the fifth grade. His mother ran a radio station she purchased in Tyler. She became quite effective as a media business executive. Against the odds both of the competition and due to her gender, in the 1950s, she persevered to purchase the first television station in Tyler. She taught Bob about the business even as a young man.

It was in the ninth grade that Bob, whose ambition at the time was to enter the ministry, had a revelation. "I suddenly knew instantly that preaching, baptizing, marrying, and burying were out, and making money as a TV executive was in."[114] The interest in ministry never completely waned, however. In fact, the document "Leadership Network Founding Summary recognized that although Buford had become a successful executive, he reached out to Paul Robbins and Harold Myra in part because of " his own desire as a young man to enter the ministry and also to a series of local support meetings with pastors."[115]

[114] Bob Buford, *Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance* (Zondervan, 2015), 42.
[115] "Leadership Network Founding Summary," PDF.

Buford told Robbins when they first met about his call to ministry, but that as his father had died when he was young, he felt an obligation to help his mother with the business, which he took to remarkable heights in his adult years. This was in the early 1980s. When Buford saw copies of LJ, he was eager to help them. Robbins' first impression of Buford: "Here's somebody who is a really good entrepreneurial businessman, but he really does have a tender heart to help the kingdom. And we found that impression to be true the entire time we knew him."

Fast forward three decades, and Buford took what his mother began and grew it from one station to a number of cable television systems across the country. Buford, Television, Inc., enjoyed a 25 percent rate of growth for some years. He ultimately moved completely into the cable television business where profits continued to grow.

While his business, his marriage, and his faith were flourishing, life brought trouble as well. Bob and Linda lost their son Ross, their only child, in a swimming accident in the Rio Grande River while with friends. Bob was already beginning to wonder about the second half of his life when this calamity hit. His subsequent grief and reflection shifted his focus from *success* he had long enjoyed to *significance* he desired moving forward. That led to the writing of *Halftime*, which has now sold well over half a million copies.

Ross's death proved a pivotal turning point in Bob's life, serving to mobilize his earlier vision around church impact. In his diary Ross wrote about how he "so valued having a relationship with Christ that none of his friends had because they thought church was a boring place." As Sue Mallory observed, Buford turned this central idea into LN. Put off by the stagnation and coldness of many churches where people were often too afraid or intimidated to engage, Buford wanted to find church leaders who countered this trend. More than helping churches who were slowly fading, Buford believed success lay in finding churches who were innovating and building.

It was this desire of significance that also led him on a journey culminating in the establishment of Leadership Network, which would have arguably the most significant impact in accelerating the diffusion of innovation found in the key entrepreneurial evangelicals and their innovations which followed.

Buford's leadership and funding helped to facilitate a shift from consultants and denominational experts to pastors as chief influencers for effective churches in the modern world. This may seem like a Captain Obvious moment—why wouldn't pastors look to effective pastors for insights into how to do ministry well? But what you may not realize is that behind this very obvious shift where "teaching churches" and their pastors became prominent, they never started with a pastor at all. It started with this quiet philanthropist named Buford and his mentor, Peter Drucker. Buford sought to find a way to use the money he'd made for the Lord's work. "He was a different breed of cat," as Myra put it.

The Young President's Organization

Buford's paradigm for starting a ministry to help pastors was the secular Young President's Organization (YPO). Buford sent a letter to Paul Robbins and Harold Myra on July 9, 1982, which

included questions used by the YPO from a man named Mike Kami, along with the YPO brochure. He wrote Robbins on November 11, 1982, describing the YPO and their "university" approach. In a memo from Buford to Craig Ellison, Bob Gilliam, Phil Hook, Fred Smith, Harold Myra, Stephen Olford, and Paul Robbins dated September 28, 1983, Buford cited the YPO model as one of two agenda items for their forthcoming meeting at the Hyatt, Chicago O'Hare. To be a part of the YPO one had to:

- Be CEO and president of a $4 million-dollar corporation with no less than 50 employees.
- Be recommended by two members of YPO.
- Be approved by a committee of a group selected from the Board of Directors.

At the time of the memo the organization was over 30 years old and had over 4,000 members. The purpose of the YPO was idea exchange and education. Members are placed in "retirement" at age 50. The YPO offered three annual, national "universities," weeklong seminars along with cultural and social activities. Beyond that, local groups met monthly for a day.
It is the Core of the YPO that most influenced the formation of Leadership Network:

> The ongoing maintenance of YPO rests in its local boards or "forums" which are comprised of 10-12 members of the chapters. These forums meet on a monthly basis to critique, share plan and address problems faced by different businesses.
> The forum groups actually act as advisors for the different members of YPO.[116]

Later in the memo Buford gave this as the ministry goal for the "University of Ministers" as he called it at the time:

> The main purpose of the organization is to expose ordained ministers to ideas from resources, people, organizations, and other ministers which wil1 be helpful in their vocational and personal development.
> He proposed doctrinal requirements to be minimal.

The Early Influence of Peter Drucker

As Buford influenced the reshaping of American Protestantism, he leaned heavily on the corporate and philanthropic philosophy of Peter Drucker. Drucker's interest in the megachurch is seen in this fascinating quote from *Forbes* where he recognizes the "pastoral megachurches that have been growing so very fast in the U.S. since 1980 and that are surely the most important social phenomenon in American society in the last 30 years."[117]

[116] Bob Buford Memo, September 28, 1983.
[117] Peter Drucker, "Management's New Paradigm," *Forbes*, October 5, 1998.

Bob Buford, in his typically humble fashion, said the two "founders" of Leadership Network were Lyle Schaller and Peter Drucker. Schaller provided insights into churches, while Drucker gave wisdom related to management. The impact of Everett Rogers and the Diffusion of Innovation played a vital role as well. Buford had met Rogers through the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) forums, which also informed Buford as he founded LN.[118] Carol Childress of Leadership Network declared, "The diffusion of innovation model was foundational to Leadership Network."[119]

According to Dave Travis this statement of Rogers' had a huge impact on Leadership Network. "In the 1970's, diffusion scholars began to study the concept of reinvention," Rogers wrote, "Defined as *the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of its adoption and implementation*."[120] Evangelicals didn't have to come up with concepts; Scripture provided the substance for their work. *Reinventing* approaches to be more effective was crucial, however.

Peter Drucker himself commended Buford's crucial role in a letter following the Estes Park gathering in 1986. In a 13-page, extremely detailed follow-up letter dated September 22, 1986, Drucker told Buford: "You have emerged as a leader of a group that has very high standards and makes very high demands. This needs to be said and needs to be taken into account."[121] Later in the letter he reiterated this, saying that building important relationships and developing mutual confidence, as well as creating a community, "is something only *you* can do.. . . . something only *you* can do."

Drucker believed the Evangelical churches were doing something new:

> But there is no doubt that the Evangelicals are creating a new mode. They are making the Church available to the modern world. And they are creating a Church that fits the reality of our society in which a majority, or at least a leading minority, consists of highly educated and highly professional people who, at increasingly conscious of the fact that they need more than this world and, more than material possessions and more than worldly success. Increasingly, precisely because we have successful people, they feel a need.

Drucker astutely noted that the success of the very large Evangelical churches brought its own problems. On more than one occasion in the letter, however, Drucker argued that the best way to help these leaders was not to dwell on the problems (he warned of the "danger" of that) but on the opportunities. He acknowledged Buford was asking the right questions for these leaders. He exhorted Buford to focus his efforts in specific ways rather than trying to do too much for too many. His focus should be primarily on the large Evangelical church pastors. "For the time being, the focus of concentration, the target of opportunity is the large Evangelical Church and their key people," he wrote, naming "the Senior Pastor, the rest of the professional staff, and the volunteers

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.[118] Dave Travis Interview. Also Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 1.
[119] Carol Childress, Interview.
[120] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Ed*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 17. Emphasis added.
[121] Drucker letter to Bob Buford, September 22, 1986.

among the Congregation." That would keep Buford and his team busy for at least a decade, he said.

Drucker did observe as well that his definition of "Evangelical" was more loosely understood than many would affirm. Rather than using the normal theological categories like Bebbington's Quadrilateral, Drucker saw Evangelical as commitment to "the pastor as the center" and the "cure of souls." This includes theological parameters, but no specific dogma. His definition is interesting: "'Evangelical' in that sense means basically a pastorate aiming at making a difference to the way the individual lives and not just only a pastorate that makes a difference to the way the individual dies."

The Formation of Leadership Network

Buford sought out Fred Smith, Jr., a Harvard Divinity School grad, for a one-time consultation in 1977. From this singular meeting would develop a relationship that would prove integral to the founding and flourishing of what became Leadership Network. In this initial consultation Smith went to Southern Methodist University for Buford to ask the question, "what would you do with a gift of $100,000,000?" Based on the response of people he met at SMU, Fred gave Bob this less-than-enthusiastic report: "There are deeper, darker holes to throw money at; if you can't find anything else, fine."[122] For the next five years Smith kept in touch with Buford while in Charlotte teaching at a private school. When Buford called Smith to talk about starting a foundation, Smith spent a day with him in Tyler. In December 1984 Fred, his wife, and small child moved to Tyler, soon founding with Buford what would become known as Leadership Network.

Buford wanted to help churches innovate and become more effective. Peter Drucker had planted the idea in Buford that large churches was the place to go for influence.[123] Fred Smith's father wrote for *Leadership Journal* whose role is noted earlier. Where LJ specifically helped at the beginning was in providing an initial list of pastors of large churches to contact for the initial forums through CT.

It was not easy at first finding the pastors for the meetings that would ensue. Pastors of large churches didn't really know other large church pastors. Smith set up 10-12 people in cities across the country with a simple plan (this is pre-Internet, remember): get out the yellow pages, find the churches with the biggest ads, and call them to see whether or not they had 1,000 or more attending. From there they started building a list. By 1985, they began having far more forums as they invited more to be involved. By 1987, Rick Warren and Bill Hybels were involved.

The conveners for the most part didn’t lead; in Buford’s words, “we just poured the coffee.”[124] These pastors didn’t know each other and had many differences, but one observed, “I’ve never been in a meeting like this, I don’t know anyone in this room, and it is so helpful.”[125]

[122] Fred Smith Interview.
[123] Dave Travis Interview.
[124] Dave Travis Interview.
[125] Dave Travis Interview.

On August 3, 1982, Harold Myra wrote Bob Buford in response to Buford's ideas about forming a "university" for pastors. Myra mentioned that Keith Stonehocker of CT would help with research on the possibility of seminars growing out of Leadership magazine (later *Leadership Journal*). "Your ideas are very stimulating and I very much like the creative and yet pragmatic way your mind runs," he wrote.

Bob Buford asked Fred Smith, Jr, to assess his idea of a similar idea of the university approach of the YPO for pastors. Smith wrote Buford on November 22, 1982. In the letter he affirmed the idea, agreed that *Leadership Journal* could be useful in this, and offered practical help and resources.

Plans were made for a small advisory group to meet in Chicago at the Hyatt O'Hare Airport on October 6, 1983. In a memo on August 15, 1983 to Craig Ellison, Philip Hook, Harold Myra, Paul Robbins, and Fred Smith, building off an article by Malcolm Muggeridge on "stay behind agents," Buford advised the need to gather around a small group with impeccable Christian credentials. These in turn would select one hundred people who were "the most innovative spiritual thinkers and doers of our time." This would include doctors, businessmen, college presidents, writers, or ministers, all of whom "are infused with God's spirit and with a profound need to serve God by helping others."

This memo did not specify pastors, but Christians who were innovative spiritual thinkers. He went on to emphasize a conference for these leaders could be held with a "really transcendent speaker," naming Solzhenitsyn, Mother Teresa, Drucker, and Muggeridge as examples. One of the outcomes he sought was a university for Christian leaders.

However, Buford sent a memo on September 28, about six weeks later, to the same group while adding Stephen Olford and Bob Gilliam to this correspondence. In this memo the audience was clearly ministers. The stated goal was for a university for ministers following the YPO model: "The main purpose of the organization is to expose ordained ministers to ideas from resources, people, organizations, and other ministers which will be helpful in their vocational and personal development."

The memo called for minimal doctrinal requirements "as the purpose is to teach and minister through the program, not convince any member of any certain persuasion." It also mentioned the term "network" which for obvious reasons would be important in the years to come. Building off Muggeridge's description of "stay behind agents," the document employed the idea of pastors as "stay behind agents" for the work of God in service to humanity. Creating a network for such "agents" was a goal Buford and his colleagues sought to do.

Following the October 6 meeting Paul Robbins wrote a memo on November 30 summarizing the meeting and offering a plan of action. Addressed to Craig Ellison, Bob Gilliam, Philip Hook, Colin Jackson, Stephen Olford, and Harold Myra, Robbins noted the tremendous frustration facing pastors. Following the YPO model, he proposed a university for ministers built on these presuppositions:

1. Start small--25 pastors would be invited to participate by invitation only.

2. Cross-denominationa1--we would need a neutral sponsor that effectively crosses denominational lines.
3. Tight focus--develop few objectives for a limited group of peers. We would start by aiming at the pastors of large churches.
4. Emphasis on the individual pastor/person.
5. Networking--the creation of peer relationships that will allow for a comfortable examination of common problems and proven solutions. We would hope this event would be the starting place of new lifelong friendships.
6. Emphasis on peer help--very few. "headliners" or specialized research people would be invited to participate.

Robbins suggested the parameters of pastors who served large churches (over 1000 members) be invited "for 48 hours of relaxation and peer interaction, i.e., spiritual inspiration, information gathering, idea exchange, the 'comparing of notes,' and the opportunity for building solid friendships with each other." Robbins understood the weightiness of the burden large church pastors and their loneliness, speaking about it to Buford, Smith Sr., and others at the initial October 6 meeting:

> They feel very lonely because if they're in a denomination, they're considered to kind of be the ministerial stars. So, whenever the denomination has a convention, they tended to be the headliners, and all the other pastors flock in to hear what they're doing and how they're doing it. But they don't interact with other larger church pastors. The independent, larger church pastors are even in worse shape. They may go to an NAE meeting or to the religious broadcaster's convention, or to various Bible conferences. But most of the time they go, they're expected to speak, but they want to learn. They're going to go back to this big church and it's not pastoring or shepherding anymore. It's ranching. It's got a whole set of problems, quite different from the middle-sized church or the smaller church. And I heard pastor after pastor say, I'd give anything. If I could just get to know my peers somehow some way. So, I said, why don't we learn more? And maybe we could create some sort of pastor's forum thing and limit it to ministers of larger churches.

Smith and Robbins agreed that they should have this meeting without any agenda and without any recording of the meeting. "We want to promise people that they can come and just be who they are and interact with a pure peer group," They decided, as Robbins recalled. "And *they* establish the agenda. And we talk about what they want to talk about. Bob loved the idea." They moved from the original idea of a pastor's university to pulling together pastors who would help us see how we could make a greater impact. They decided *Leadership Journal* would sponsor it and Buford would fund it.

Robbins followed up this memo with a letter to Buford on December 3. He reported on the enthusiastic responses of large church pastors, indicating "we're on the right track." In this letter

Robbins also argued that pastors should only be expected to pay for travel expenses. He included suggestions to that end in the letter of invitation to be sent to pastors. Robbins then asked Buford to fund expenses beyond travel. Within months, letters (see below) were sent to a preliminary list of fifty pastors identified by Robbins and others at LJ.

Letter of Invitation to Pastors

Dear First Name,

On several occasions we, the editors of Leadership Journal, have been asked to host seminars for pastors. We have always resisted and probably will continue to resist, for our expertise is in magazine publishing. There are a number of very good seminars already in existence that provide valuable help and information.

However, a group of our close readers/friends have urged us to be the catalyst for a special gathering of 25 pastors of large churches- -men who need to know one another. Our friends feel that pastors of large churches are se1dom given the opportunity to informally interact with one another about common problems and concerns.

So, we have agreed to host such an event. There will be no brochures, announcements, or ful1-page ads. We just want to quietly draw together a small group of men 1ike yourself for 48 hours of interaction. We are committed to a relaxed, positive environment, a minimum amount of structure and scheduling, and a maximum amount of dialogue and discussion.

Total attendance wil1 consist of our Leadership editors, a couple of our regular columnists (men 1ike Fred Smith), one or two trusted resource people, and 25 pastors of large churches.

We cordially invite you to join us for what we think will be a very unique experience.

We plan to begin Tuesday evening (dinner) April 24, and conclude by noon Thursday, April 26.

Tentative locations are Denver, Colorado Springs, or Dallas. A final decision regarding 1ocation wil1 be made in the next 30 days. We anticipate that each participant would pay his own expenses.

Would you be able to join us? If so, please record these dates on your calendar and drop me a note indicating that we can count on your participation. We are working from a 1ist of 50 names, so we need to hear from you as soon as possible. Ful1 details on the event will be sent to you after the first of the year.

I 1ook forward to hearing from you.

And with that the first meeting was set to be held at the Navigator's retreat center at Glenn Eyrie April 24-26, 1984. No one knew then the impact that meeting would have on shaping the era of entrepreneurial evangelicalism, but history tells the story. They invited 50, and 34 responded. That was too many (they wanted 25). So, they did a second invitation and created a second forum. In Robbins reflection, the success of those two forums launched Leadership Network. For those who were present, it was impossible to not notice both the untapped potential of these innovative leaders and their desperate need for support, community, and collaboration. It was as if these forums had unexpectedly struck oil. Robbins went on,

> It was a pure open hearted, very honest, almost confessional, kind of an experience where people said often, "I've never told anybody this before, but" and then they would tell of an experience they had that was very painful, or they would talk about a situation they were dealing with in their own church that was causing them to wonder, "Is my time up here? Should I be moving on?" Or they were talking about a moral failure of another staff person, and that they were dealing with this. And nobody really knew that. Or they would talk about the difficulties they were having in their marriage. It was transparent.

Other leaders echoed the impression Robbins had. In a memo from Keith Stonehocker to Harold Myra, Paul Robbins, and Terry Muck dated October 5, 1984, he noted that Buford "was careful to mention that he did not expect CT to be taking any particular initiative from here on. He simp1y saw us as valuable resource people. I confirmed our willingness to share our experience, moderate one or two more forums to help them train other moderators and lend our identity to them in some way in the launch phase to build their credibility."

In the letter from Bob Buford to Paul Robbins August 20, 1984, referenced in the Stonehocker memo, Buford could hardly contain his enthusiasm over the possibilities that lay ahead:

> Paul, I am really convinced in my heart that this ministry is needed and ordained by God. It has been thoughtfully and prayerfully conceived by sincere, dedicated and mature Christians whose hearts are in the right place. The pilot conference was an 11 on a 10 scale -- perhaps the most successful thing I have ever been involved in. I have a real burden for this personally and have had it since Fred mentioned it to me over lunch. If God has something else in mind, I am sure that He will make it plain, but right now the signs indicate we should be bold and go ahead.

This enthusiasm was solidified with Fred Smith Jr. being hired as LN President, writing a memo in early 1985 that the priority of the organization must be capitalizing on the success of its “fellowship of ministers.” A plan was set for "Year 1" featuring five "retreats" like the one held in Glenn Eyrie the previous year. Goals were set for participants: 130 by end of the first year, 375 by

the second, 875 by the third, 1,375 by the fourth, and 1,875 by the fifth. The plan stated that by year six the organization should be capable of funding itself.

In a memo from Fred Smith, Jr. to Paul Robbins, Haddon Robinson, Fred Smith, Sr., and Frank Tillapaugh on April 17, 1985, Fred Smith said the following:

> What we desire is to help create a flexible network of innovators which will generate the energy and agenda instead of a rigid and vested hierarchy which dictates direction . We are needs centered and not facility or program centered. Thus, the staff will be minimal, and the leadership will rotate regularly. The Fellowship will evolve and not be fixed - except in the adherence to flexibility, education and idea exchange, personal growth and ecumenism. These characteristics must color the who le enterprise from its inception.

By that year, the following statement described the emerging Leadership Network:

> Leadership Network is a catalyst for putting the best and the brightest together with their peers in ministry. It serves to help them find ways to meet and exchange ideas, practical help and get beyond the superficial. These Forums have developed out of the need for leaders to learn and grow in ways that are not available elsewhere.[126]

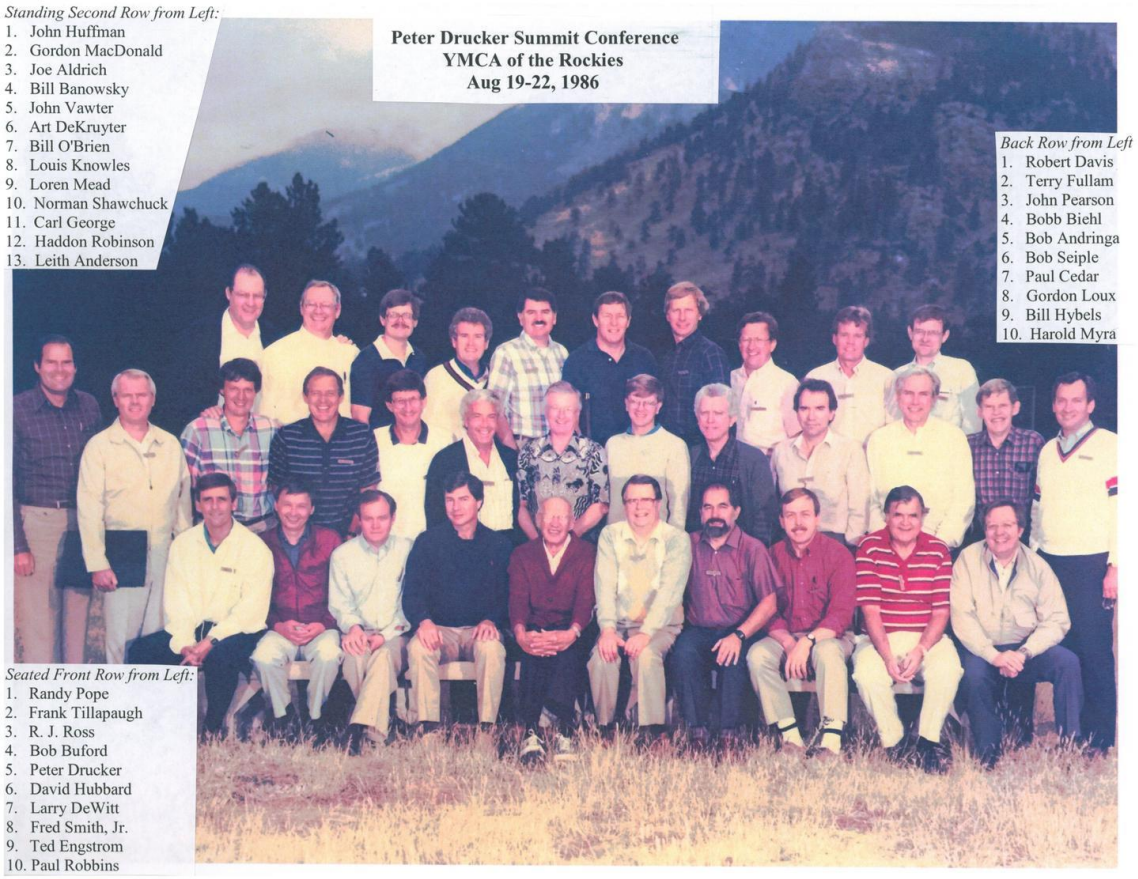
The response from pastors in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. Dr. Robert R. Davis, pastor of the Old Cutler Road Presbyterian Church, a large church in Miami, wrote Fred Smith, Jr., October 10, 1985, gushing about the impact on his life and ministry:

> The mutual problems that all ministers, regardless of denomination and age, share was fascinating. The answers to many of the problems that I had I have now brought home and put into practice…The results that this seminar had on me are staggering. I honestly had planned to phase out my ministry at age 55, or in three years. I was so bogged down in time-consuming details that I saw no way to escape, and yet be a pastor of a larger church. The bottom-line results of the seminar were to me that I cancelled my planned retirement in three years…All of this as a result of a teeny-tiny little seminar? Yes!

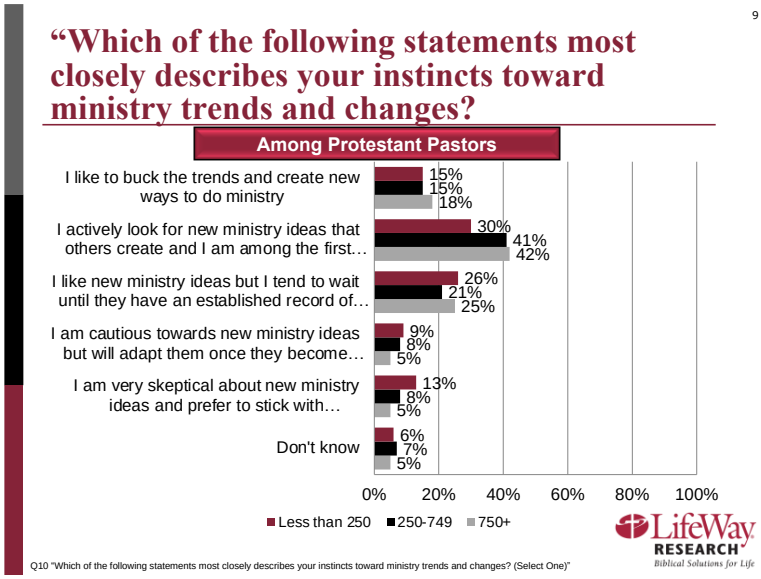
The August 19-22, 1986 meeting in Estes Park, Colorado, would have far-reaching implications for Leadership Network and by extension, the larger evangelical movement. Peter Drucker spoke to a select gathering that included large church pastors, parachurch leaders, and denominational or educational institutions.

Participants at Peter Drucker Summit Conference

[126] "Leadership Network Founding Summary"



Larger churches also had a greater proclivity toward change and innovation, as shown in the 2017 survey of pastors by the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center. In the survey, churches with 750 or more members clearly showed a greater openness to trying new ministry ideas as seen in this chart:



After the initial success of the Leadership Network forums, Buford wrote a lengthy letter to Peter Drucker on September 2, 1986. He sought Drucker's advice as he worked through a sense of calling, he had. After noting the remarkable financial success, he experienced as a businessman he told Drucker: "I think I can contribute in a unique way to the church." His advisors told him of a "considerable gap in leaders between Bill Hybels age 34 and the Ted Engstrom/Billy Graham generation." He felt particularly called to working with church leaders:

> I feel a sense of calling and destiny about this work. I would feel unnatural and adolescent to stay where I am and not go on to "the next phase." I have worked 23 years now in the business…Our efforts so far with senior pastors of large churches have been well received. They say the Pastors Forums are useful. We don't have unique an agenda except to help them be more effective.

Then, Buford offered this assessment of evangelicals and entrepreneurialism:

> It's far from certain that evangelicals will become a predominant cultural force, but the opportunity seems there. This time I sense it is going to be the entrepreneur/activists who are going to be most capable of meeting people's needs rather than the establishment fortress keepers or the contemplatives or the theologians. But that's just a hunch.

The Development of Leadership Network Culture

Buford began to look for “Islands of Strength” in the church for his investment. He would establish LN which would discover those islands, including key churches and pastors, invest in them, leading to an exponential return not only financially but also for the Kingdom.

Leadership Network, reflecting Buford’s humility, never sought to be the leaders of anything. Instead, it sought to help create pathways and onramps for the pastors, leaders, and churches the stars, or as he put it, “to be the platform and not the show.”

These churches and their leaders, encouraged by Buford, addressed an issue pastors faced: the growing divide between what seminaries taught and what pastors faced. LN recognized that some things were beyond the calling of seminaries.

Dave Travis, chief executive and encouragement officer currently at LN, said they define entrepreneur as "someone who gathers resources and deploys them in such a way to get a higher impact than they would otherwise."[127] He observed that at the earliest Leadership Network gatherings "you saw old hand leaders who pastored established churches. And then you saw, uh, a number of those leaders who had started planted and were essentially doing church in a different way. And, uh, part of that became kind of a new entrepreneurial leadership mindset."

[127] Dave Travis Interview.

They did three of the forums in 1985, and soon scores followed. All were pastors or staff from churches over 1,000 in attendance. At first there was little screening: Catholics, mainlines, a lot of Church of Christ ministers, and others were a part. The common denominator then was a feeling of isolation. After one Forum a Southern Baptist pastor confided in Fred, “I’m safer being seen with a Presbyterian than with the wrong Baptist.”

The next Forum, as they were called, came in 1985, and many would follow. Many of the attendees at the early Forums became recognized innovative leaders. These included Leith Anderson, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, Randy Pope, Paul Cedar, Robert Lewis, among others. It was a mixture of older men who had been building their churches a long time and younger men who were seeing explosive growth. Most of them had no one else to talk to about what they faced in their churches. Robert Lewis observed, “Suddenly we felt we were in a room where we felt safe.”

What did they do in the early forums? They started with questions that avoided ego-driven discussions about their churches. They answered: 1) where did you grow up? 2) who other than your father was your most significant influence? “This way they got to know each other as people,” Fred said. After that each one would go to a board and write issues he wanted to talk about. Fred moderated some of the early meetings, sometimes others did.

There were no trans-denominational gatherings happening then; parochialism marked denominations. Leadership network wanted to "be the platform not the show," and whereas most denominations had methods they considered priority for their churches, LN was "model agnostic." Interestingly, Dave Travis observed how Leadership Network didn't connect as much with the new paradigm churches like Calvary Chapel, Hope Chapel, or Vineyard. They developed a little earlier than Leadership Network and being their own "proto-denominations" were pretty insular, other than their important work diffusing worship style as noted in the previous chapter. Travis believed the reason many of the early churches that latched to Leadership Network were independent was because it was harder at the start to step away from denominational — or in the case of these newer churches, proto-denominational — ties.

Carol Childress said, "Leadership Network became the place for the sudden explosion of large church pastors and other staff members like executive pastor and others. Large churches in this era went from 20% of church population in large churches to now 80%." She said these churches included the most evangelical (most conservative) in the mainline denominations.

"Denominations didn’t know what to do with these leaders, and they didn't know who to go to in their denomination," she observed. These were early adopters, mavericks, those who tried new things. Leadership Network became a safe place for them to gather and talk. They connected on all levels, to their souls. “It was a meeting of the minds and the hearts and the souls,” she believed.

Buford's influence through LN was recognized more in some ways outside the evangelical world than within it. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, said Buford created one of the largest and most sophisticated networks in the world, talking about the large church network LN formed.[128]

[128] Bob Buford Interview.

Beyond lessons of leadership and innovation, a distinctive emphasis laced through the LN culture was the quality of entrepreneurship that needed to be discovered, taught, sustained, and celebrated in a pastorate that had long diminished its importance. In the vision of Buford and Smith, pastors were hungry to learn, to create, and to lead but had been taught that these organizational and business principles at the center of entrepreneurship were somehow incompatible with their calling as ministers. In truth, LN maintained that entrepreneurship emphasized many of the same qualities and habits that pastors had long prioritized but applied them in slightly different ways. This is most clear in Buford's successful book, *Halftime,* where he outlines the nature of entrepreneurship:

> True entrepreneurship is not foolhardy; nor does it require particular courage. It merely seeks to gather and examine as many of the facts as possible about the market and the environment that might impact a decision. And then a decision must quickly be made.[129]

While not explicitly about pastors, Buford made this connection in the epilogue as he reflected on the work of Leadership Network:

> Leadership Network serves as a resource broker that supplies information to and connects leaders of innovative churches. The emerging new paradigm of the twenty-first century church calls for the development of new tools and resources as well as the equipping of a new breed of twenty-first century church leader, both clergy and laity. Leadership Network serves the leadership teams of large churches, as well as leaders in the areas of lay mobilization, denominational leadership at the middle and regional judicatory level and the next generation of emerging young leaders.[130]

Today, many scholars and church leaders suggest that our current pastoral culture of leadership is simply the product of a long history of religious innovation and entrepreneurship that has marked American religion dating back to the Great Awakening. In a sense, these thinkers maintain, our pastoral leadership culture was inevitable. However, this fails to grasp the state of affairs in the mid-twentieth century as pastors were stagnant and/or overwhelmed in their work largely due to a lack of knowledge, support, and community. Pastors knew what to believe but not how to lead, taught by seminaries and denominations that the one would naturally flow into the other.

In this sense, it is critical to understand the magnitude of generating a leadership culture within the American pastorate where before there was only need. The dedication, vision, and empathy in equal parts to teach pastors not only how to lead but to dream bigger about what could be done in their churches and communities. Carol Childress captured this well in reflecting upon

[129] Buford, *Halftime*, 36.
[130] Buford, *Halftime*, 220.

this aspect of Buford and LN's legacy: "Bob was a man of remarkable talent and vision. He was a good steward of the resources God entrusted to him. He was relentless in his pursuit of making a difference." Greg Ligon struck a common note in observing, "don't know anyone who has made this kind of investment of his life and leadership for this length of time with that focus." Similar comments permeate each interview from those who understood the before and after of the American pastorate. The leadership culture revolution was subtle but it remains one of the more significant shifts in American church identity and practice of the twentieth century that continues to bear fruit today.

Leadership Communities

Leadership Communities, which were gatherings of "like-minded ministry and thought leaders," were essential to Leadership Network's rise and influence. LN brought together pastors and leaders to meet by affinities (which expanded greatly in the years following) to meet for the purpose of "collaborative learning and development."[131]

Teaching Churches

Beyond the immediate and remarkable impact of the pastor forums and communities, one of the more influential approaches early on was that of Teaching Churches. This accelerated the diffusion of innovation as some of the early churches participating in the forums became teaching models for other churches. LN gathered a group of teaching churches across the U.S. for a number of years to learn from one another and to perfect those skills useful in teaching other churches and leaders. In an article about Teaching Churches, Andy Williams reported that from 2000-2005, nine churches in the pilot group for Teaching Churches served nearly 17,000 churches and over 61,000 people. In 2005 they added the Christian Communications Network satellite broadcasts to extend that reach to millions. The nine teaching churches shifted their goals and practices from mostly large conferences to more specialized and contextual training.[132]

Churches like Wooddale and pastor Leith Anderson were early leaders in this emphasis. His church was one of the teaching churches, employing coaching and mentoring as well as larger group teaching. Others cited in Williams' article included Wayne Cordeiro in Hawaii's New Hope Christian Fellowship, Robert Lewis and Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Michael Slaughter of Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church in Ohio, Newsong Church in Irvine, California, Vineyard Church of Columbus, Ohio, Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona with pastor Walt Kallestad, North Coast Church in Vista, California, and Fellowship Bible Church

[131] "Strategy Statement," Leadership Network, No date, PDF.
[132] Andy Williams, "How Teaching Churches Add Influence to Information: From Exploration to Deep Drilling," Leadership Network, 2005, 3.

North, Richardson, Texas. The Teaching Church Network was based on the following five premises:[133]

- Healthy churches communicate their health to churches that have the potential to be more effective in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- Churches that have been blessed by God seek to share those blessings with churches that are not as blessed.
- Developing churches have an expanded array of models from which they can learn and be mentored.
- Teaching Churches interact with those seeking change at the peer level in a mentoring context which increases learning and change.
- The opportunity for change and growth increases in Developing Churches when evaluation and assessment precede new information and when accountability to promote change is required.

The Ongoing Impact of Drucker

As noted earlier, Peter Drucker was a vital influencer in the rise of entrepreneurial evangelicalism. Warren Bird said of Drucker: "If your ministry has been impacted by Rick Warren and Saddleback Church, Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel, or Bill Hybels and Willow Creek Church, then you've also been influenced by Drucker, who developed a significant mentoring relationship with each of these leaders and organizations."[134]

In 1982, Bob Buford met with Peter Drucker for a consultation at Buford's home. This would be the beginning of a relationship that would have profound impact on the American church.

At the time Drucker's influence helped encourage Buford and Fred Smith to start Leadership Network in 1984, there were about 500 Protestant churches in the U.S. with over 1,000 in weekly attendance. Leadership Network began to develop many of these pastors and younger leaders who would grow even larger churches in the ensuing years. They leveraged leadership and management principles as they helped to create communities for interaction and encouragement. By 2012, over 7,000 megachurches could be found in the country (churches with a weekly attendance of over 2,000). While there are certainly other factors in this expansion, Leadership Network's involvement, and particularly the use of some of the early churches to become teaching churches for others, played a vital role in this growth.

Buford gave Drucker great weight in terms of influence. "Other than [his wife] Linda and Jesus, through his words and example in the Bible, no one has had more of an influence on me than Peter," he wrote, adding, "His authority was almost scriptural for me. By that I mean there

[133] "Teaching Church Network: An Overview," Minneapolis, Wooddale Church, accessed May 2, 2020.

[134] Warren Bird 2015, Leadership Network Blog.

was something liberating about pushing off from my two great sources: I chose to trust the Bible for my spiritual reference and to trust Peter for my organizational reference."[135]

In the 1970s, Peter Drucker was very interested in making an impact. He came to believe that of the three sectors of government, business, and nonprofit, the one that held the most promise for impact was the nonprofit sector. In the nonprofit sector, the faith-best segment held the most promise among nonprofits. Of the faith-based segment, churches could make the greatest impact. And, of all churches, the large churches were the strongest in promise.[136] Thus, Drucker's interest in and influence on the rising movements of megachurches grew out of his conviction as to their importance: "While all traditional denominations have steadily declined, the mega-churches have exploded. They have done so because they have asked, 'What is value?' to a nonchurchgoer."[137]

Drucker also influenced individuals who were a part of Leadership Network in particular, such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. The staff at Willow Creek at one point spent a year and a half going through Drucker's The Effective Executive. Hybels credits a dinner meeting with Drucker in the 1980s for helping clarify Bill's vision. Drucker himself was a committed Christian. Hybels recalls a particularly transformative exchange: "He asked me, 'Bill, what is your unique contribution to Willow Creek?' I said, 'Well, I'm the pastor,' Hybels recalls. He said, 'I didn't ask you what your title was. What is the unique contribution God is asking you to make?' I said, 'Maybe you should order another glass of wine and let me think about it.'"[138] Hybels determined from that encounter that a unique contribution could be for him to help resource pastors who didn't have the access he had to thinkers like Drucker.

Jeff Chu in an article for *Fast Company* quoted Hybels explaining the impact of Drucker: "I think the local church is the most important institution on the planet because of its transformative potential, so---- why should we limit the learning that pastors and faith-based leaders are exposed to?" Hybels says. "We try to find the people with the most thoughtful ideas about leadership, and we ask them to take their expertise and learning and spread it out over our audience."[139]

The 2017 Wheaton College Billy Graham Center survey of pastors shows the impact of secular business and management practices like those championed by Drucker, particularly on larger churches:

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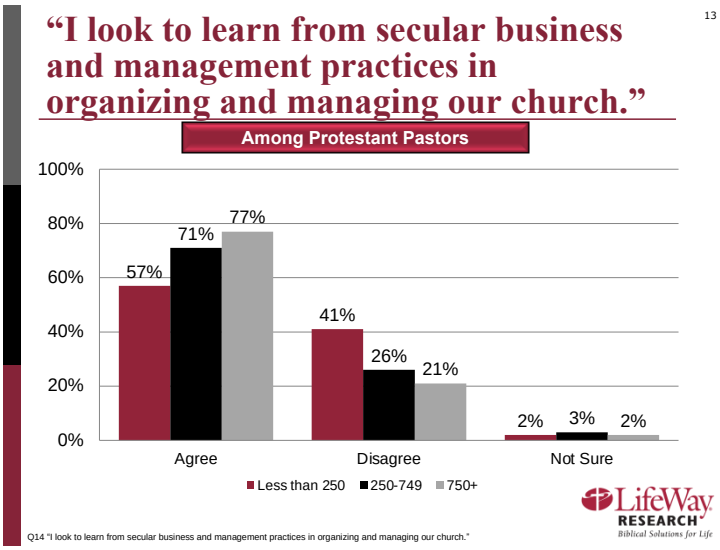
[135] Bob Buford, *Drucker & Me: What a Texas Entrepreneur Learned from the Father of Modern Management* (Worthy Books, 2014), 7, 28.

[136] Brad Smith Interview.

[137] Peter F. Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* (HarperCollins, 2009), 29.

[138] Jeff Chu, Fast Company, 2010: https://www.fastcompany.com/1702221/how-willow-creek-leading-evangelicals-learning-business-world, accessed May 10, 2020.

[139] Jeff Chu, Fast Company, 2010: https://www.fastcompany.com/1702221/how-willow-creek-leading-evangelicals-learning-business-world, accessed May 10, 2020.



Warren had met Drucker through seminars about the time Peter showed a growing interest in the impact of large churches. "We were one of the close ones," Warren recalled, "And I just forced myself up to him."[140] Drucker would spend much of his last twenty years helping pastors of large churches and parachurch organizations specifically with a view to improve "their processes of management; of developing people; and of building community."[141]

Large churches have been criticized for operating more like a business than a ministry, but this was never Drucker's aim. Buford argued: "I know that some have criticized larger churches for becoming more 'businesslike' by adopting modern management principles, but Peter was adamant that the function of management is to make the church more churchlike, not make it more businesslike."[142] In an interview with *Christianity Today* in 1989, Drucker observed:

> All nonprofits have one essential product: a changed human being. This is a different approach from business. In business, your goal is not to change the customer; it's not to educate the customer; it's to satisfy the customer…But nonprofits aim for change…I would say the church's aim is to make a difference in the way the parishioner lives, to change the parishioner's values—into God's values.[143]

Drucker met with Jim Mellado and Bob Buford in 1996 to consider how Everett Rogers' work on the diffusion of innovation might apply to the megachurch movement generally and the Willow Creek Association particularly.[144]

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[140] Marciariell's Interview with Rick Warren (in his draft to the book *Doing for Others What Peter Did for Bob*, 276.
[141] Maciariello 2012, 22-23.
[142] Buford 2008, *Halftime*, 200.
[143] (CT 1989, Managing to Ministry: Interview with Peter Drucker). https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1989/spring/89l2014.html, accessed August 19, 2020
[144] Maciariello 2012, 199.

The Innovation of Megachurch Leadership

As will be shown in the coming pages, two founding pastors and their churches emerged as Exhibit A of the impact of LN: Rick Warren and Saddleback Valley Community Church in Southern California and Bill Hybels with Willow Creek Community Church in Chicagoland.

Warren and Saddleback

Rick Warren was in high school in northern California in the early 70s when the Jesus People Movement erupted. For three summers he worked at a Christian camp. He had heard about the hippies coming to Christ in Southern California. At the camp he had a significant moment in the Redwoods on his knees at the camp. "I said, God, whatever you want me to do, I'm yours. If you're really there, I want a better life than I'm living right now."

He went back to his high school that fall and over the months to come led around 100 of his friends to Christ. Warren is nothing if not a hoarder of specific, formative artifacts. He still has the Good News Bible with the list of friends, girls on one side, guys on the other, and he marked them off as they came to Christ.

Evangelism was his focus early in ministry. He preached around 120 revival meetings before age 20, preaching three days at one church and four at the next one. He developed discipleship studies to help youth to grow during those meetings.

Warren went as a short-term missionary to Nagasaki, Japan, in 1974.[145] He saw some magazines at the home of a missionary there that caught his eye. He read an issue of *Christianity Today* on Key 73, which was a national evangelism program many denominations joined in for that year. He noticed all the articles were written by professors at the Fuller School of World Missions. He was introduced to people like Winter, Tippett, McGavran, and Peter Wagner. As he read those, he thought, "A lot of what we're doing in the church is not necessarily biblical. It's not even necessarily effective. It's cultural. It's American from the 1950's carried over into the 60's and not working in the 70's."

Another magazine he read was published by InterVarsity and had McGavran on the cover with the caption: "Who is this man and why is he dangerous?" Warren read the article and McGavran's principles made sense to him.

A voracious reader with over 40,000 volumes in his library, Warren discovered as a child he was natural at taking information and synthesizing it.[146]

Through the influence primarily of Roy Fish, Professor of Evangelism, Warren enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to earn his M.Div. He ran into Wayne McDill, then

[145] The following information is taken from Warren, Interview.

[146] He observed: For instance, when I was a kid, I collected coins and I collected stamps, and National Geographics, and rocks and a dozen different things. And, it wasn't the stuff that I liked to collect, it's that I liked to sort it.

an evangelism specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). McDill was offering any student free books on church growth if they would read it and write a summary of the book. Warren volunteered. He was apparently the only student out of thousands who did so. He read maybe 20 of them and was asked to create a church growth seminar. McDill used that to make a church growth course. Warren finished it and learned that for completing it he won a free trip to California to meet Donald McGavran. "They paid my all expenses for my trip as a poor seminary student to Fuller for a week," he said. "That was actually the first time I met Donald McGavran in person." Later, over 120 dissertations would be written on Saddleback at Fuller.

While at seminary Warren's professor of missions was Cal Guy, who introduced him to Roland Allen's classic *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church.* This book profoundly impacted him. He wrote a 25-page summary of the book which he still has.

As he transitioned to Southern California to start Saddleback, he put together a list of the 100 largest churches in the U.S. He wrote them all in January 1980 with a series of questions, and requested bulletins, any building program info, and so on. Every morning for a while he would get packets from these churches.

He determined a goal of 20,000 people attending the church he would plant by 2020. At the time it seemed like an astronomical goal, but they reached it by 2000. "I just made [the goal] up," he said. "I actually have the charts where I figured out how many people I'd have to lead to Christ each month and how many small groups I would have to build."

Key events 1980s for Saddleback

On April 6, 1980, the first official service was held at Easter with 240 attending. Warren had mailed letters to 15,000 homes in the Saddleback Valley. In 1982, Saddleback formed its first statement of values. In 1984, Warren enrolled in the D.Min program at Fuller Seminary to study with McGavran, Wagner, and others.

Hybels and Willow Creek

The story of Willow Creek starts with two anecdotes from Bill Hybels while just a youth. The first: a conversation with his father. His dad talked to Bill about his desire to invite an unchurched businessman to their church. Bill's response was sudden and surprising, because he begged his dad not to invite him because their church was not in Bill's mind a welcoming place for someone outside their fold. The second came in high school when a teammate on the baseball team hit rock bottom after frivolous living. He asked Bill to take him to his church, and Bill did so. After that, the friend became distant until Bill asked him about it. "What you took me to was not normal," his friend said. "I've just been wondering why a normal guy like you goes to a place like that."[147]

Later in 1973, Hybels thought:

[147] *Rediscovering Church*, 32.

> The typical traditional church is no place for the unchurched. To anybody but the already convinced, the average church service seems grossly abnormal. It makes no sense to those who haven't grown up in it, to those who don't know the drill. The music we sing, the titles we choose, the way we dress, the language we use, the subjects we discuss, the poor quality of what we do — all of these lead the average unchurched person to say, "This is definitely not for me."[148]

How did Hybels go from a youth pastor at an established church to pastor of one of the most influential churches of our time? Part of the story is timing. Similar to the stories of Bill Joy, Bill Gates, and Steve Job driven to utilize computers in new and innovative ways, an older Boomer like Hybels would become driven to reach the unchurched in his generation. A confluence of music, evangelism, unchurched youth, and a professor's influence all fanned the flames of innovation in his life and ministry.

Bill had gotten to know a musician named Dave Holmbo while working at a summer camp called Camp Awana. Holmbo was older than Hybels. In 1972, Holmbo began working with the South Park Church in Park Ridge, Illinois, where Bill was youth pastor. The Jesus People Movement was flourishing across the country at this time, and its influence reached to Dave and the musical group he led. The church saw the potential for reaching youth and started a contemporary service, which was pretty unheard of at that time. Holmbo's group was called the Son Company and soon began singing across Chicago. They sang original songs and some of the better-known songs from the Jesus Movement written by pioneers like Michael Omartian, Larry Norman, and Chuck Girard.

Bill's wife Lynne and he were dating at the time. She recalled a particularly touching, evangelistic song by Girard's group Love Song called "Two Hands." The song could have been the theme song for the ministry at the time, she observed. It said,

> 'Accept him with your whole heart
> And use your own two hands
> With one reach out to Jesus
> And with the other bring a friend.'

"That's what these kids were doing," she recalled. "God honored their sincerity with a steady stream of conversions. Baptism services in local park district swimming pools were the highlight of each ministry season."[149]

Son City was "created during the height of the 'second phase' Jesus People movement, when evangelical teenagers were adapting elements of the countercultural Jesus People persona as

[148] *Rediscovering Church*, 32.
[149] *Rediscovering Church*, 35.

their own,"[150] Eskridge observed. They decided to plan a big outreach event on Wednesday nights. John Ankerberg spoke the first three weeks. They started with 125 the first week. Hybels started leading the fourth week. Within six months, 300 youth came weekly.

In May 1974 Son City had a major outreach focus. Almost 600 attended. After the message, almost half professed their faith in Christ. Bill wept, asking, "Where would those kids who received Christ tonight be if there hadn't been a service designed just for them, a safe place where they could come week after week and hear the dangerous, life-transforming message of Christ?"[151] That night Hybels committed to be part of a ministry where the irreligious could come to hear the gospel.

One of the key encouragers for Hybels at this time was his Trinity College professor Gilbert Bilezikian. A defining moment came when Son City grew to 1,200 young people. Some of the youth attending were from Pallatine, some 20 miles west. They decided to start the church there. They began with about 150 youth.

Hybels spoke at a conference on youth ministry at Garden Grove Community Church (Schuler); while there he sketched on a napkin what became the 7-step strategy for Willow. He later took about 25 members of the core to Schuller's leadership conference. Pritchard noted why the influence of Schuller was not highly touted by the leadership: "Schuller's attempt at theology was met by many evangelical theologians with anger or condescension. It was this condemnation and disrespect of Schuller and his message within the evangelical community that probably caused Willow Creek staffers to hesitate to acknowledge his influence."[152]

In the early years both Hybels and Holmbo worked 80 hours a week, which took its toll on the newlyweds. They experienced what they call the Train Wreck, when strained relationships collapsed. The church continued to grow, moving to its present campus in South Barrington.

In February 1981, Willow Creek moved to its current property in South Barrington, Illinois. In August 1986, Hybels attended the Peter Drucker Summit with Leadership Network at Estes Park. Willow Creek was built on a seeker-sensitive strategy. Leaders adopted these statements for the church:[153]

> "**The Mission** of Willow Creek Community Church is to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.
>
> **The Vision** of Willow Creek Community Church is to be a biblically functional community of believers so Christ's redemptive purposes can be accomplished in the world."

At the center of both were a phrase Hybels' continued to instill in his staff and the flood of other pastors who would arrive at Willow Creek wanting to learn what to do: Holy Dissatisfaction.

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[150] Eskridge, *God's Forever Family*, 2013, 275.
[151] *Rediscovering Church*, 40.
[152] Gregory Allen Pritchard, "The Strategy of Willow Creek Community Church: A Study in the Sociology of Religion," Ph.D., Northwestern University, 1994,199.
[153] https://www.willowcreek.org/en/about/beliefs-and-values, accessed June 26. 2020.

Critically, the importance of Hybels and Warren was primarily felt in their networks of diffusion among other pastors unfamiliar with resources of leadership. Just as LJ and LN had stepped into a vacuum by meeting the need for resources among megachurch pastors, Hybels and Warren translated those early insights into replicable church systems/movements that others pastors could grab hold of. Reflecting on the influence of Hybels on his ministry in the 1990s, Andy Stanley remembered being completely unaware of any resource on church leadership. Stanley noted, "I had never heard a talk on leadership, nobody ever told me there was a leadership book." Instead, Stanley had begun reading corporate/business leadership, completely unaware any pastors would dare to learn from these sources. Against this backdrop, Stanley found Hybels as an oasis in the midst of desert. Beyond Hybels' system, he served as a conduit for thousands of other pastors to engage the emerging resources on church leadership within the Willow orbit and beyond that to other Leadership Network.[154]

For Stanley, as with thousands of others, the example of these pastors innovating created a template that liberated them to see innovation as a tool rather than a heresy. Walking away from his first encounter with Willow, Stanley reflected, "Everything about it was a complete paradigm shift."[155] With Leadership Network having laid a foundation of forging channels of communication between pastors around leadership and innovation, the stage was set for the next generation of Entrepreneurial Evangelicalism. Now as driving influence began to shift to the pastors themselves, the floodgates of diffusion would open.

[154] Andy Stanley, Interview

[155] Andy Stanley, Interview; Interestingly, Stanley would then become a similar influence on the next generation of church innovators through North Point. Just as he and his staff had toured Willow to learn ideas in the mid-90s, other pastors would tour his own church building in the early 21st century to understand how they were innovating. This story drove home in Stanley's mind that each generation had to re-learn innovation. Those who learned needed to foster a culture of teaching to then help those who needed to learn next.

Chapter 4: Era Two

Transition to Diffusion of Innovation

(1990-2000)

The 1980s witnessed a definite sea change in the evangelical church movement in America. Central to this shift were *Leadership Journal* and Leadership Network as they created spaces for large church pastors to encourage and challenge one another, and to diffuse their influence and innovations to other churches.

An example of this is seen in the ministry and leadership of Steve Stroope, founding and current pastor of Lake Pointe Community Church in the DFW area. In the late 1980s, Stroope heard about LN. His church was not one of the larger churches at the time, with an average of about 400-500 people. He received an invitation to participate in his first forum then. He immediately experienced a helpful "cross-pollination" outside his tribe of Southern Baptists. Between that and being exposed to people like Drucker and Jim Collins, Stroope found immeasurable help through LN. Years later he said, "I've been at my church for 38 years, almost four decades. And there is no other organization, no individual, no single book that has impacted our ability to make disciples than Leadership Network." Stroope testified that Lake Pointe started with seven families in 1979 and saw almost 70,000 adults attend his church on nine campuses and their approximately 40 church plants in 2016.

Ongoing Commitment to Innovation and Its Diffusion

Moving into the 1990s, LN continued to grow in influence and to focus more on diffusing the innovations it was hearing from pastors in the forums. Carol Childress was a knowledge expert who came to LN in December of 1990. During this season of LN, conferences became one emphasis of LN. Childress had been introduced to the organization by attending their Church in the 21st Century conference in Denver in August of that year. Childress had been on staff at the Baptist General Convention of Texas (SBC). She flew back from the conference with Buford and Fred Smith. They invited her to sit with them, and that conversation led to their offering her a job at LN.

Leadership Network continued to find the innovators in the church and to encourage them. Because the innovations in diffusion of innovation theory tended to come from larger organizations, “we would be more likely to find innovators in larger organizations and among leaders within and with large networks,” Dave Travis noted. They also found: “These leaders would not be averse to traveling to meet with other leaders.”[156] This speaks to the success of the early large church forums.

[156] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 9.

The *early adopters*, the most vital group in the categories regarding DOI, were given much focus by Leadership Network. Opinion leaders, who were key among both innovators and early adopters, have certain marks: they consume information through mass media and other channels; their networks tend to be wider in extent; they have more contact with people who are change agents; they tend to be more extroverted; and, they have a higher socioeconomic status than on average. Travis commented about this group: "This is why at Leadership Network we should not be averse to working with churches from more wealthy areas. It is not that an innovation cannot start in a poor area, but for it to spread it needs some sort of opinion leadership from a higher level of status."[157]

Leadership Network discovered the importance of innovators who were not too far ahead in their ideas: "Opinion leaders have to be one or two steps ahead of their followers but not miles ahead."[158] Travis gave as an example the initial Multisite Conferences hosted. The presenters chosen were more typical pastors and not the rock stars of the movement, to demonstrate "normal leaders" could do multisite.

The large group, comprising the *early majority,* represented for Leadership Network the most likely group to attend more broad-based conferences. This is also the group most likely to engage with consultants. "The early majority need to 'get it, see it,' and then be told how to do it,"[159] Travis found.

In contrast, the *late majority* was a group LN sought to avoid. Travis is unambiguous here: "We never want to get into a situation with our organization where we are dealing with anyone in this category. It is not that they are bad people, it is just that it is someone else's calling, not ours."[160] Travis was careful to point out the late majority are not universally traditionalists. They aren't opposed to innovation, but they are "risk averse." This is one of the ways Leadership Network was distinct from someone serving in a denominational role, whose task is to work with all churches within their tradition.

The same is obviously true for the final category, the *laggards.* LN referred to them as the "nevers." Still Travis disputed the idea that laggards were the most conservative theologically compared to early adopters:

> The categories have nothing to do with these belief systems. In our context one can have a very fundamentalist type of church adopting many innovations very quickly, even serving as innovators. In fact, I have seen more "liberal" churches in the later categories than in the early adoption categories.[161]

Travis pointed out that Rogers' work in the diffusion of innovation focused on systems rather than individuals. He continued, "While we can say that a leader is innovative, but their organization is

[157] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 11.
[158] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 12.
[159] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 14.
[160] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 15.
[161] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 16.

not, we are really fooling ourselves."[162] Yet Andy Stanley remembered the importance Peter Senge's quote as instructive in considering what true innovation looked like in concrete form: "The system causes its behaviors." Innovation in the church begin with identifying those who were producing the right behaviors in their people and then working backwards to understand their systems.[163]

Leadership Network's influence is seen most clearly in the United States, but their reach extended to other continents. For instance, a series of papers by LN from the European Church Planting Network reported on church planting efforts across Europe.[164]

A timely example of how LN diffused innovation came in the early 1990s when the fax machine was still king. Carol Childress began producing a Monday morning fax sent to pastors in their growing network which became a vital document for many leaders. She would take all the information she gathered and ideas from her reading and distill them into a one or two-page memo. Eric Swanson commented on the impact of those on staff meetings: "Imagine you go into staff meeting and share one or two of those little gems. You sound like a genius, right?" This was before the day of blogging, so these faxes provided timely and robust content for leaders.

Childress described her role:

> My role was essentially that of a knowledge broker. In my thinking there are four levels. There is *data,* which is just facts. You aggregate that data [which] becomes information and it becomes useful; it becomes interpretive. But the level that you want to want to get to is *knowledge*. And so, you have data for information, knowledge for its *application*. The last level is *wisdom*. Only God can give you that, but informed knowledge can be extremely critical. And so, my job was to survey the culture, to understand what was happening in the culture and the world, to broker that information to pastors and networks and people that we would engage with to help build the individual learning communities that we'd formed, and to help plan these big national events and conferences.[165]

As a seminary grad herself, Childress recognized the lack of training in leadership and management in that era in seminaries as well as the inability for denominations to know what to do with the explosion of large churches. We were "kind of the advanced post-graduate school of leadership development for pastors who found themselves leading [churches] on a very much larger scale than had been previously known," she observed.

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[162] Everett Rogers Diffusion of Innovations - Dave Travis notes Nov2010, 17.
[163] Andy Stanley, Interview.
[164] Joanne Appleton, "After the Wall Came Down: Church Planting in Post-Communist Countries," European Church Planting Network, 2009; Joanne Appleton, "Good to Great Church Planting: Accelerating Growth and Effectiveness in Church Planting," European Church Planting Network, 2009; Joanne Appleton, "European Snapshots: Models of Multi-Site Church in Europe," European Church Planting Network, 2010; Joanne Appleton, "Supporting Church Planting in Migrant Communities," European Church Planting Network, 2010.
[165] Carol Childress, Interview.

Change in Leadership at LN

After serving as president of Leadership Network for about a decade, Fred Smith resigned in 1996. In reflecting on the impact of Smith, Carol Childress reinforced the foundational role his leadership played in giving the organization is credibility to operate in the ministry space for future generations of success:

> [Bob and Fred] were the perfect team in the beginning. Bob had money [and] business connections, Fred had relationships, and it was a very powerful combination. The foundational part of Leadership Network from 1984 until the time Fred left, and Leadership Network ultimately moved to Dallas, cannot be over emphasized. It was crucial to its success. Fred had a whole different set of relationships within the religious world and evangelical world through his *Christianity Today* ties and he had street cred because he has a degree from Harvard Divinity School.[166]

As Fred stepped away, Bob would turn the direction of LN in a significantly different direction in hiring Mark Sweeney as president in 1997.

Mark Sweeney and Publishing

Leadership Network developed a series of resources including white pages, their website and blogs, and eventually, books. Mark Sweeney's background was in publishing, and he helped in two ways. First, he brought the various, and at that time pretty disparate, areas and leaders in the organization together into a more fluid workforce: “My major contribution was in bringing the team together. There were a number of new people trying to figure out who they were and why they were here. Leadership Network at that time was more of a think tank. In my 18 months I brought organization to the operation.”[167]

Second, his publishing acumen helped Leadership Network to become established as a provider of books that pushed the margins and introduced innovative ideas, some better than others. For instance, the first two book that were also wildly popular and controversial were *A New Kind of Christian* and *Generous Orthodoxy* by Brian McLaren. They later did a series with Zondervan, then one with Thomas Nelson called Next. Next looked specifically at multisite and ethnic church. These latter two series were more how-to. Sweeney said, "The Jossey Bass series was more theoretical and propositional. It established the thinking behind the movement.”[168] These other series were also important, but they are duplicated what others were doing.

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[166] Carol Childress Interview.
[167] Mark Sweeney, Interview.
[168] Sweeney, Interview.

The list of books published under the LN imprimatur is impressive. As of September 2020, the number of titles and categories represented books in 39 categories, including these key examples and total books:[169] These books would be significant shapers and thought leaders for evangelical entrepreneurs.

- Administration (17)
- Church Planting (11)
- Culture (19)
- Externally focused (13)
- Leadership (20)
- Leadership Development (12)
- Missional (26): the largest category
- Multisite (8)
- Outreach (11)

Brad Smith Becomes President

Brad Smith came to Leadership Network in the early 1990s. He became president later in 1998. During his time, LN started the Learning Adventures for pastors, taking them to places like Southwest Airlines and Dreamworks to show them a different look at leadership and creativity.

Smith insisted Leadership Network didn't invent anything. But, he believed it made these specific contributions: (1) It created a space for leaders to meet, build relationships, and corroborate, and (2) it accelerated innovation. He believes the innovations would have happened, but they got early adopters together, which sped things up.[170]

Beyond these contributions, Smith steered the organization in two important transitions that laid the groundwork for future success. The first was a geographical transition as LN moved from Tyler to Dallas in 1997. The result moved the organization out from its intimate connection to Buford to a more central hub through which it could engage pastors throughout the country on an ongoing basis.

The second was a theological transition as LN moved in a far more evangelical direction under Brad Smith's leadership. In the early days of LN, a great number of the churches involved were from mainline denominations, a majority perhaps. These were mostly "first churches," county seat churches, or the ones with the largest steeples in the area. But over time evangelical churches became far more numerous, though mainline churches still constitute about 30% of those served (and more on the conservative side of mainline). As long as Fred Smith, Jr. was president he was never led by a theological grid. In fact, his a-theological stance is seen here in a comment about the forums, "They sometimes lapsed into discussion about theology, but we would shut that down."[171]

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[169] https://leadnet.org/books/, accessed September 2, 2020.
[170] Brad Smith, Interview.
[171] Fred Smith Interview.

In the 1990s under the influence of Brad Smith and other Leadership Network leaders as well as the pastors who rose to the forefront, LN became less a-theological and far more evangelical in its focus.

The Shift to Leadership Training Network

Sue Mallory came to LN in the 1990s from the Brentwood Presbyterian Church where she was director of lay ministries, a new position in church life. Essentially her role was to "equip the people in the church to be the church, to serve, to train them, to involve them, to invite them into things." When she started there in 1986, they could find no church with a comparable position. She found a woman named Marlene Wilson, a Lutheran who had reached out to her church to serve and never got a call back. So, she became involved in nonprofits and eventually wrote a book on mobilizing the laity. Mallory heard Wilson speak at a conference and found a mentor in Wilson. Wilson was an innovator who was invited to a conference at Glenn Eyrie hosted by Bob Buford. She called Mallory and invited her.

Mallory had a keen interest in spiritual gifts. She attended workshops by leaders who spoke on gifts but even this frustrated her. She knew from her work in church that 90% of the people who volunteer for service in a church, or a nonprofit don't do so on their own, but are asked to serve by another. At the conference Mallory presented an idea for creating a sister organization to seminaries to train pastors, staff, and lay leaders in effectively equipping their congregations for ministry. The next day she sat at lunch with Bob Buford. Buford asked Mallory and a few others to come up with a plan. Around 1993, they presented it to LN. Brad Smith was on staff and was passionate about equipping.

Buford invited Mallory to come and create a national training organization and she turned him down twice. She recalled his persistence and encouragement. She said because "this man [was] believing in me with no credentials. And that's how [Leadership Training Network] LTN was born."

LTN marked a new approach for LN. The forums continued, now involving pastors of differing church sizes, executive pastors, and others. LTN offered training for church leadership (governing boards, vestries, sessions, and so on). Mallory and Don Simmons would teach a weeklong training which church leaders would attend. Then many of the churches engaged in LN would invite them to train their leadership. Pastors were being taught to exegete the Scriptures but didn't know how to work with volunteers, or manage a budget, or do a strategic plan. "I sat with many pastors who had no training in this at all," Mallory observed. Princeton Seminary invited her to teach on this through their continuing ed program. She found two responses from pastors. First, anger: "Why do I have to wait to get to Continuing Ed to learn this stuff and suffer through it in my church for two or three years?" Second, pastors in tears said, "I thought I was just a failure because I didn't know how to do this." She would go on to teach for

years in Continuing Ed at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and taught a DMin course with Greg Ogden at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The Leadership Training Institute had an impact on the innovation of spiritual gifts. While the focus on spiritual gifts goes back to the 1970s and was popularized by the Church Growth Movement, Brad Smith argues that LN and the work of Mallory helped to accelerate this. He noted three things emphasized in helping churches to be intentional in moving people from membership to mission. First, churches have to be intentional on being welcoming when people come in the door. However, many churches were already doing this, so this was not the innovation. Second, the development of new members classes was key. Third, help people to understand their gifts and calling. This includes a matching system to connect them with a ministry in the church where they can exercise their gifts.

Rick Warren demonstrated this innovation as it played out through the baseball diamond introduced in *Purpose-Driven Church.* Churches like Saddleback, Willow Creek, and others became focused on engaging believers in service through their gifts and temperaments.

Decline of Denominations

Mallory came out of a mainline Presbyterian church. When asked about the decline of denominationalism and the rise of non-denominational churches, she was pointed in her thoughts on mainline churches. The biggest issue in these churches is the absence of leadership; another is the use of the "wrong book": "It's all about the book of order and this rule and that structure instead of the Bible." She also decried what she called "rigid denominationalism" that is so structured. "They can't get out of their own way," she said, "They're not interested in innovation and they're not interested in doing things differently."

Willow Creek and Saddleback Become the Twin Towers of Influence Seeker-Sensitive and Purpose-Driven

"In a 1990 survey of the five hundred fastest growing Protestant congregations in the United States," theologian Alistair McGrath wrote in *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, "89 percent were found to be evangelical."[172] Over the two decades following this discovery there would be two churches and their corresponding approaches that would have more influence than any others on such growth: Willow Creek and the Seeker Driven approach, and Saddleback with the Seeker Sensitive approach encapsulated in Rick Warren's Purpose Driven terminology. Rick Warren and Bill Hybels became in Carol Childress's words the "poster boys" for the rise of the megachurch and the diffusion of innovations they discovered.
Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church became perhaps the two most influential churches in the 1990s. In 1992, the Willow Creek Association formed, creating a

[172] Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (InterVarsity, 1995), 10.

network of churches that expanded globally. In 1995 the annual Global Leadership Summits became one of the most influential leadership events one could attend.

In 1992, Saddleback relocated to current 72-acre campus. The church started Celebrate Recovery in 1993, a 12-step program that addresses various addictions, compulsions, and dysfunctional behaviors. Then the most significant impact to date came in 1995, with the release of *Purpose-Driven Church.*

Buford's Relationship with Warren and Hybels

Early in the history of Leadership Network, Buford recognized the organizational leadership giftings of Warren and Hybels amongst others who participated in the forum. In the reflection of Sue Mallory, "Rick [Warren] and Bill [Hybels] were Bob's protégés." Along with Jeff Jones, Randy Pope, and others who were innovating around evangelism, discipleship, and organizational structure, Bob was drawn to pastors who were "outside the box." Yet these two filled a particular role, Mallory maintained, not only in Bob's vision but in the loss of his son.[173] As Ross' death had launched Bob on a spiritual journey towards LN, so these two young leaders filled a relational need in looking to Bob for support and encouragement. Paul Robbins later recalled an early forum where Bob specifically highlighted the work of Rick Warren in Saddleback. In front of the group, Bob commented on how he had been impressed reading Saddleback's early strategy and asked if Rick would walk the group through his ideas. Standing in front of the group, Warren prefaced his talk saying the church was still in the early stages of the innovation so he would welcome feedback. He then proceeded to write the name of the idea on the board: "The Purpose Driven Church."[174]

It is fascinating to note the similarities and differences in the leaders as a testament to LN and Buford's drive towards innovation rather than a single model or leadership style. Mallory again keyed in on this difference, noting the two leaders were a study in contrasts. Hybels was a "drill sergeant leader. . . If you aren't a leader, you aren't worthy and if you couldn't learn it, get out of the way." Rick on the other hand was more pastoral. "Rick was better at empowering people in my view," Mallory said, "Bill built an incredible organization, solid biblically, through teams, but his champion issue was leadership." Bill was never warm and fuzzy; Rick would give you a big hug. Bill admired Bob, "but Bill wanted the success to be his success."[175]

Precursor to the Seeker Movement: Robert Schuller

As early as the 1950s forces were beginning to be in motion that would lead to the seeker-driven approach. On December 12, 1951, Bill Hybels was born. In 1955 Robert Schuller planted

[173] Sue Mallory, Interview.
[174] Paul Robbins, Interview.
[175] Sue Mallory, Interview.

the Garden Grove Community Church in a drive-in theater. These two would later come together in a key string in the tapestry of this movement.

When it comes to innovators, few compare in terms of innovation and influence to Schuller. While his "possibility-thinking" theology is subject to criticism, and disapproval of some of his methodology was common, "no one has shaped the way pastors relate to the unchurched more than Robert Schuller."[176]

Schuller's innovations included: [177]

- Pioneering the use of marketing to reach the unchurched: "It would not be overreaching to say that without Schuller and the Crystal Cathedral, there would likely be no Willow Creek Community Church, no Saddleback Community Church, or the thousands of other seeker-oriented churches around the country."
- The first denominational church to call his a "community church," because he believed the unchurched didn't relate to denominational terminology.
- Rename a sermon as a "message."
- Use a nontraditional setting for church worship—in his case, a drive-in theater, followed by a drive-in church.
- Conduct door-to-door research, asking, "Why don't you go to church?" and "What do you want in a church?" (which Schuller describes in his book, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities)*.
- Train pastors in leadership (Institute for Successful Church Leadership, 1969, which was later named the Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership).
- Televise a weekly church service, the "Hour of Power," starting in 1970 and not missing a week for decades, a program which experimented with a variety of formats, like interviewing well-known guests.

At his death in 2015, Schuller was remembered by his grandson Bobby for his love for the broken and those who were afraid of church. He observed his grandfather's focus "was the beginning of the seeker-sensitive movement.**"**[178] Schuller's mantra "find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it" predated the rise of felt needs preaching as well. He also promoted innovation, saying, "Don't imitate; innovate. An amazing amount of energy in Christian ministries is repeating what has already been done."[179]

Lynne Hybels recalled the influence of Schuller's book *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* had on Bill. They were vacationing in Florida at the time they were considering starting a church

[176] https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1997/spring/7l2114.html:
[177] https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1997/spring/7l2114.html: Includes a list from a Leadership Journal article.
[178] https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/april-web-only/died-robert-schuller-forerunner-of-seeker-sensitive-movemen.html?share=8Bqp3U0sRkikYakj%2btwCeu4eh0Iriw%2b7, accessed March 22, 2020.
[179] https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1997/spring/7l2114.html, accessed March 22, 2020.

from what they were learning in Son City. Schuller's book "affirmed Bill's belief that one could reach unchurched people through the local church."[180]

Hybels, Willow, and the Seeker Movement

Bill Hybels described the idea of seekers: "In 1975 a group of friends and I began to call these people 'seekers,' and we decided to start a church that would reach them—a church that would answer their questions, address their needs, introduce them to Jesus Christ, and give them a taste of His kingdom on earth."[181]

According to Brad Smith of Leadership Network, Bob Buford was enamored with the seeker model and all it represented, particularly as evidenced at Willow Creek. "It was his Exhibit A of Innovation in the late 80s," Smith said, "So whenever he would say, let me tell you about innovation,' he would talk about Willow Creek."

Smith also added an insight about the seeker services most miss. Willow Creek held their seeker-driven services on the weekends and had services for believers not on Sundays but mid-week. According to Smith, Hybels often told him the purpose of the seeker services was not only for evangelism, but also to confront consumerism so rampant among Baby Boomers. Christians felt entitled to "be fed" on Sundays in worship, so Hybels put the seeker services on Sundays "to destabilize consumerism."[182] Most people thought the seeker services were only about evangelism, but they were also about discipleship in an effort to grow Christians past their consumerism.

Brad Smith observed both from his experience from working with singles in his church in D.C. and from Willow the importance of communicating with seekers. Changing jargon was critical, he observed. For instance, Christians talk a lot about joy, but when seekers heard the term, their first thought was of a brand of dishwashing detergent. In addition to the language used, tone was vital. Seekers expected the judgmental tone, but when they heard the message of grace it was compelling.

In an interview recorded in 1998, Hybels, Lee Strobel, and Nancy Beach talked about their biblical basis and rationale for seeker services. They looked to the model of Matthew in his Gospel: he invited his friends, who were obviously outside the religious establishment, to a party. Hybels wanted to create a church where seekers could come and "investigate" the church in a non-threatening environment.

Nancy Beach observed "unchurched" is too vague of a term, so they specifically sought the 25-to-50-year-old educated, professional male. They tried to consider every aspect of the experience from when a person drove onto the property (traffic control, landscaping, friendly but not overbearing greeters, protecting anonymity). For Bill, the first 30 minutes prepared people to hear the message, utilizing visuals, drama, music, and so forth.

[180] Hybels and Hybels, *Rediscovering Church,* 51.
[181] Hybels and Hybels, *Rediscovering Church,* 16.
[182] Brad Smith, Interview.

Rather than the more traditional public invitation given in evangelistic services (think Billy Graham) or in weekly services at many evangelistic churches, the seeker services only had a call to commit about four times a year. Strobel recalled coming as a skeptic in January 1980 and needing time to process before making a decision.

The seeker approach affected the small group ministry at Willow. In *Building a Contagious Church,* Mark Mittelberg details how Garry Poole and he developed a ministry of groups aimed at "unsponsored seekers," or those who came to their seeker driven services without a relationship with anyone in the church. This approach is described further in Poole's book *Seeker Small Groups.*[183]

The seeker-sensitive approach was adopted in churches across the U.S. and internationally. For example, from 1993-97, 30,000 Germans were engaged with Willow Creek conferences, seminars, and ministries. The first major conference in Hamburg (1996) drew 4,500, while the second in 1998 drew 7,000.[184]

The impact and influence of Willow Creek and its seeker-sensitive paradigm led to the creation of the Willow Creek Association (WCA) in 1992. Jim Mellado, president of WCA from 1993 to 2013, described the influence of Leadership Network in general and Peter Drucker in particular on them. Mellado migrated from Harvard to the WCA through the influence of Drucker, Bob Buford, and Leadership Network. "And because of Bob Buford I did get a chance to meet Peter Drucker on a couple of occasions and have some conversations with him," Mellado said. "And then I would go to various Leadership Network events over time, which Drucker sometimes conducted. The role they have played in WCA has been very significant and informative…"[185] Mellado observed how Leadership Network served others while staying at the "tip of the innovative curve," while the WCA was more in the early adopter category. For years, churches by the thousands globally looked to the WCA for innovation.

Kimon Sergeant's University of Virginia dissertation "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism" argued Willow Creek's example led in "the 'paradigm shift' within evangelical circles regarding new forms and methods of outreach."[186]

Seeker churches like Willow Creek were able to "accommodate to the pressures of pluralization by offering a religious product that is readily available for mass market consumption," Sergeant observed.[187] He added:

> The seeker church movement's commitment to meeting the needs of seekers shows that church leaders understand how the 'new volunteerism' has profoundly changed the

[183] Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (Zondervan, 2002), 217. See also Garry Poole, *Seeker Small Groups: Engaging Spiritual Seekers in Life-Changing Discussions* (Zondervan, 2003).
[184] CT, Jan. 6, 1997, p. 61.
[185] Maciariello 2014, 300.
[186] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 22.
[187] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 309.

> religious environment. Churches must 'sell' their religious products to a populace that is free to choose from a diverse array of spiritual and religious goods, as well as secular cultural products. In particular, seeker churches strive to provide the most appealing products to seekers today — while also preserving the integrity of the Gospel message.[188]
> However, Sergeant added that such an approach although desiring to remain true to the gospel runs the risk of redefining the church in unintended ways:
> The seeker church movement offers a revealing portrayal of how a religious orthodoxy may attempt to preserve its traditions in the modern world. As an evangelical movement – – an orthodoxy defined by its adherence to eternal truths and doctrines revealed in the past — the seeker church movement is remarkably committed to 'throwing out tradition' in order to stay tuned to the unconvinced. . . . the willingness of seeker churches to design their forms, practices, and strategies in order to appeal to the felt needs of the unconvinced suggests that what is involved her is less a return to the pristine early church (e.g., the New Testament as depicted in the book of Acts) than a transformation of the tradition itself.[189]

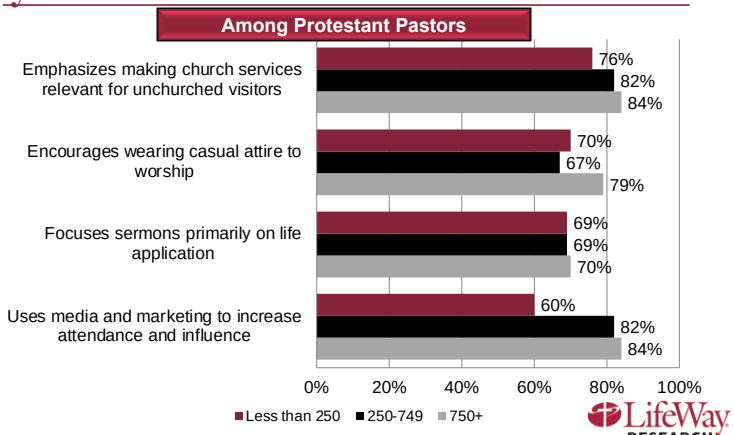
Critics don't always accuse seeker churches like Willow of intentionally selling out the gospel. Instead, they wonder whether there is subsequent discernment that protects against more dire long-term consequences of the movement even while it enjoys short term impact. Again, Sergeant observed "that the growth of religious institutions may not be due to their 'strictness' or even their rational efficiency, but instead to their remarkably high degree of consonance with the norms and values of the secular world." He quickly added, "To be sure, seeker church leaders still proclaim the evangelical Christian message. Their commitment to orthodox theology remains firm. But how they understand and proclaim that orthodoxy is evidence of the profound worldliness that has reshaped the nature of the evangelical tradition itself."[190]

These charts from the 2017 Wheaton College Billy Graham Center survey of pastors shows the continuing impact of the seeker model:

[188] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 308.
[189] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 304.
[190] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 305.

18

"Which, if any, of the following describe your church?"

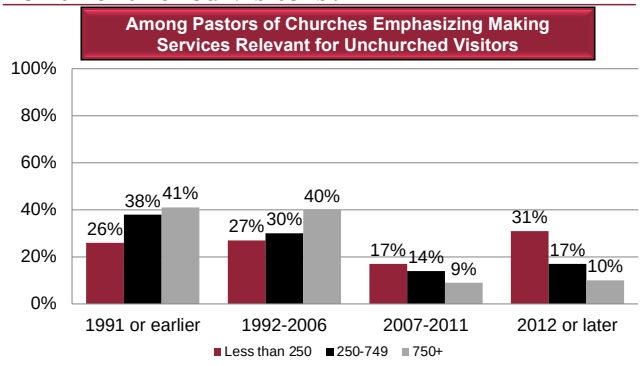


LifeWay RESEARCH Biblical Solutions for Life

Q19 "Which, if any, of the following describe your church? (Select all that apply)"

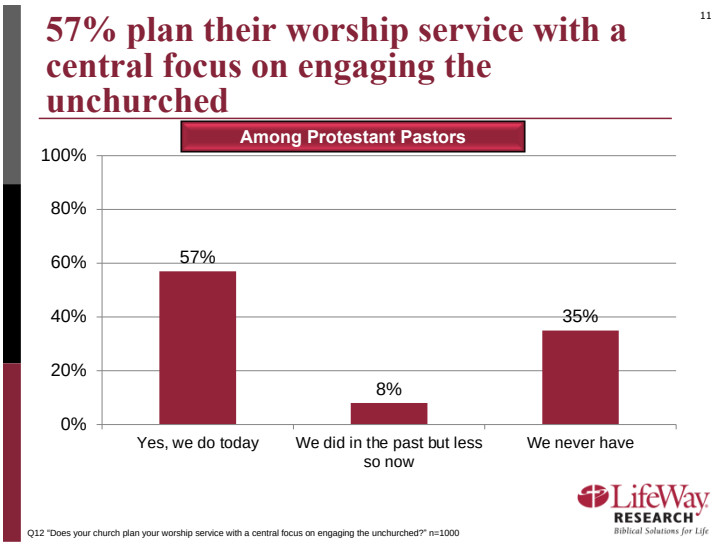
26

"What year did your church begin emphasizing making church services relevant for unchurched visitors?"

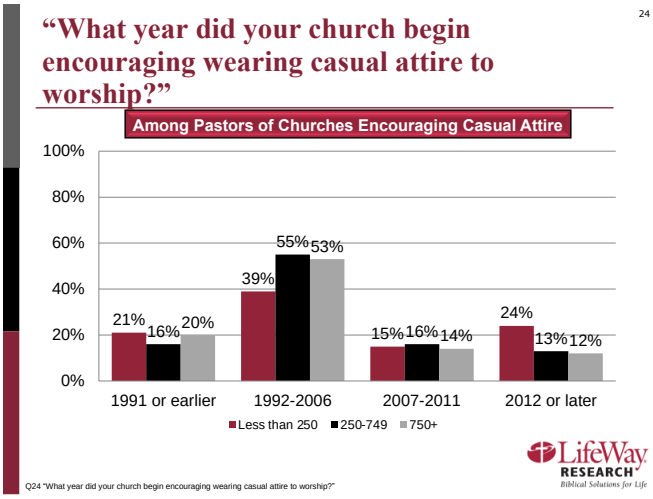


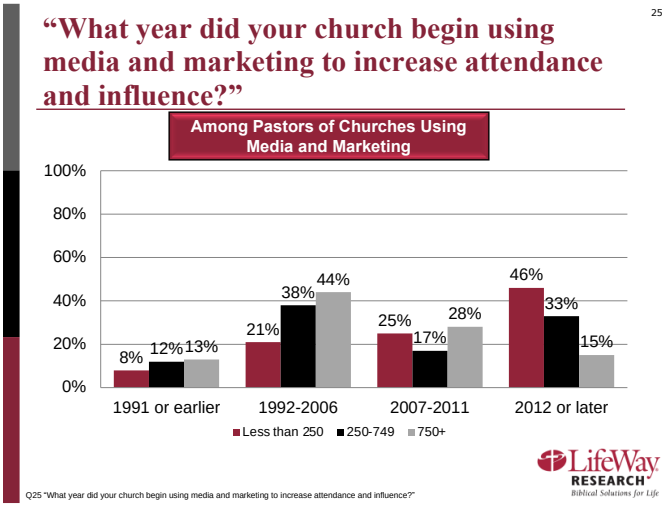
LifeWay RESEARCH Biblical Solutions for Life

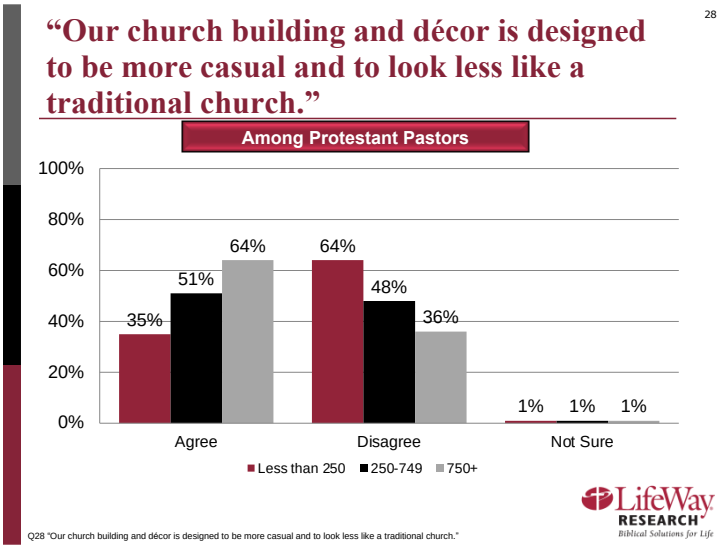
Q26 "What year did your church begin emphasizing making church services relevant for unchurched visitors?"



Contemporary worship, dress, and branding marked these churches.







In his dissertation on Willow Creek, Sergeant observed:

> The seeker church movement's stress on the fulfillment of faith provides seekers with an individualized, portable faith that addresses the concerns of the private sphere. Such a privatized faith may encourage the continuing presence of the sacred in our society, albeit in a highly personalized and anti-institutional form. This is precisely why small groups have been so popular within the seeker church movement.[191]

Rick Warren and Purpose-Driven

Warren sketched his idea for what would become purpose-driven at a LN forum in the late 1980s. He explained in his book *Purpose-Driven Church* what he called a Biblical Paradigm: Purpose-Driven Churches: "This book is written to offer a new paradigm, the purpose-driven church, as a biblical and healthy alternative to traditional ways that churches have organized and operated."[192]

Warren summarized his conviction about the purpose-driven church with the five purposes, taken from the Great Commandment (Matthew 27:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). His slogan was "a great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church!"[193] The five purposes had a word (alliterated: he is a Baptist after all!):

- *Magnify (Worship)*

[191] Kimon Howland Sargeant, "Faith and Fulfillment: Willow Creek and the Future of Evangelicalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 311.
[192] Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church*, 80.
[193] Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church*, 102.

- *Ministry*
- *Mission (Evangelism)*
- *Membership (Fellowship)*
- *Maturity (Discipleship)*

Warren used the concept of concentric circles to display levels of commitment: From the community (unchurched) to the crowd (regular attenders), to the congregation (members), to the committed (maturing members), to the core (ministers).

The process for all this was illustrated in his famous baseball diagram. First base is membership, second is maturity, third is ministry, and home plate is committed to mission.

Warren begins with the presupposition that God is at work to accomplish his mission in our world, and he will do so with whoever is usable: "When God wants to do something, if the church isn't doing it, he'll raise up someone else,"[194] he said in an interview. He is also committed to the view that the five purpose of the church on which he built Purpose-Driven are so vital to the Lord, he raised up parachurch ministries like Navigators and others when discipleship was overlooked. He raised up Campus Crusade or Cru and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association when the church ignored evangelism; Faith at Work and Laity Lodge when ministry by the body was neglected. He argues the Jesus Movement and the Charismatic renewal brought worship in a fresh way when the church was stuck. With Purpose-Driven Rick tried to create a process to help a church, starting with his, that intentionally fulfilled all five purposes.

Like Hybels and Willow Creek, Warren received a great deal of criticism, in particular from his own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. Warren had the audacity of taking "Baptist" from his church name, a practice that is normal now. His response to the criticism:

> [At the beginning] there was literally a pushback on everything. It's hard to go back to what it was like the first year of the church in 1980 because we've won so many of those battles. In that day, people were still fighting over can you have a guitar and drums in the church.
>
> Now, we won that battle years ago. Do you have to have your denomination in your name without selling out? Well, that's ... That was a battle. We didn't give a come forward invitation. Now, here's a guy who had given a come forward invitation in 120 revivals who started a church and doesn't use it. It wasn't because of theological issues; it was because there was no place to come forward to in the first building we were in. And, I actually had to think up how to use a card to register decisions because all of the chairs in Laguna Hills High School theater were welded together. There was no aisle. . . .
>
> And so, I had to come up with an alternative. But, that's one of those things where you back into a theology. We started that for a practical reason, but after we did it, I thought, "Well, wait a minute." Nowhere in the Bible does it say you have to walk from Point A to Point B in church service to proclaim your faith in Christ. In the scripture, baptism is your public profession of faith. And, for many of us who had used a come forward altar call, we

[194] Warren Interview.

had almost de-emphasized baptism because, "Did you get saved?" "Oh, yeah. I walked the aisle."

They didn't say, "Did you get saved?" "Oh, yeah. And I was baptized as my profession of faith." So, by de-emphasizing the come forward altar call or invitation and really emphasizing baptism, Saddleback's baptized more than anybody. This year, we'll pass 50,000. Our 50,000th baptism in 38 years. Well, that's unheard of. It, it, it's just unheard of. Why? Because we emphasize it rather than, you know, the come forward.

Warren was ranked the most influential pastor in America in consecutive years. When asked why, Warren gave two key reasons. The first was the system: "I simplify everything. It's 'add water and stir.' And the classes, courses, campaigns, they are all things anyone can do."[195] He observes most conferences primarily offer inspiration, but Purpose Driven had a system that put 40,000 people in small groups, 20,000 into ministry, and 26,000 missionaries sent to 197 nations. The simplicity of the system is critical. "We know how to explain it," he states. "We have the tools, we have the training, and we have the love."

"The love" relates to the second thing he believes is as important as the first. Warren genuinely loves pastors. If you've ever spent time around him, you know that. He is famous for the emails and texts he has sent to thousands of pastors over the years.

He observes there are many pastors who faithfully preach the Word and who love their people, but they still don't reach a lot or grow. They need help with strategy, and PD gives them that.

There is a third factor that has helped to grow PD exponentially: "We never tried to build an association or a denomination, which allowed me literally to minister all across the denominations because I'm not forming an organization."

The Rise of Small Groups

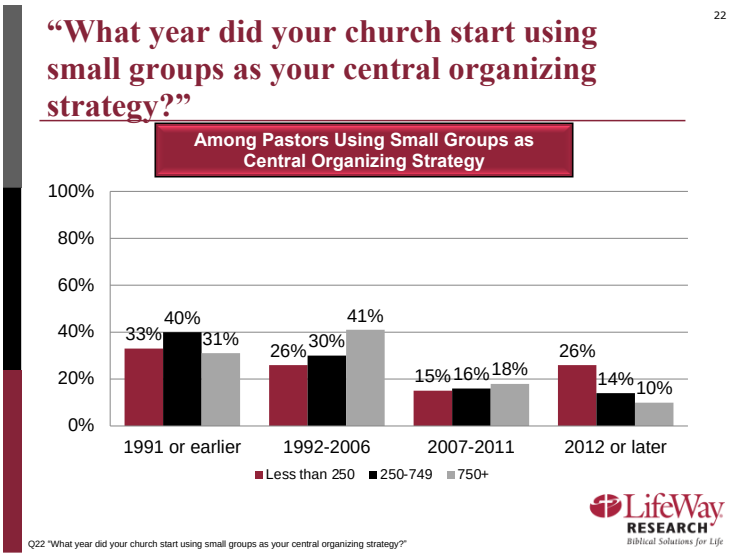
In the 1990s, small groups became an important emphasis and practice of churches and a focus of LN. Key books were published including: Jeff Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (1992); Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey* (1994); and Gareth Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations of Small Group Ministry* (1994). In 1996, Willow Creek produces *The Willow Creek Guide to Life-Changing Small Groups.* In 1999, Willow Creek's first conference on small groups was held.
In 1994 Robert Wuthnow wrote *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community.* A commissioned study of adults found that 40 percent of adults claimed to be involved in a small group. He commented, *"***This is an extraordinary figure. It does not include all the children and teenagers who are also in groups.***"*[196]

"The small-group movement is a major social trend that reflects the micro-segmentation of American society," Leith Anderson observed. "Americans are seeking meaningful relationships

[195] Warren, Interview.
[196] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey* (NY: Free Press, 1994), 45.

out of deep-felt loneliness. Decades of mobility, divorce, blended families, and individual isolation have multiplied the list of legitimate felt needs, driving people together into groups to help one another meet these needs."[197]

Pastors on small groups strategy:



Small groups, Wuthnow added, are "effecting a quiet revolution in American society."[198] He sought to explain reasons for the rise of groups:

> Ours is a highly fluid society. Many of us lead anonymous lives. We no longer live in the same neighborhoods all our lives or retain close ties with our kin. The small-group movement clearly is rooted in the breakdown of these traditional support structures and in our continuing desire for community...But small groups, as we know them, are a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. There are good reasons for the way they are structured. They reflect the fluidity of our lives by allowing us to bond easily but to break our attachments with equivalent ease…We can imagine that they really substitute for families, neighborhoods, and broader community attachments that may demand lifelong commitments, when, in fact, they do not.[199]

In *The Big Book on Small Groups*, Jeffrey Arnold defines small groups as "an intentional gathering of three to twelve people who commit themselves to work together to become better

[197] Anderson, *Church in the 21st Century*, 34.
[198] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey* (NY: Free Press, 1994), 2.
[199] Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey* (NY: Free Press, 1994), 5-6.

disciples of Jesus Christ."[200] He adds: "the goal of small group ministry is discipleship; the foundation is leadership, and the structure of small group ministry is community."[201]

Gareth Icenogle wrote in his 1994 book *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry:* "We may be entering a 'golden age' of small group life and action."[202]

Church "of" Groups, Not Church "with" Groups

Fundamental to the shift in small group ministry is how one sees them. Early on, most churches saw adding a small group ministry was just that: adding another ministry to the church. But the innovation that made the leap was adding to the innovation the concept that they weren't a ministry in the church, but they became the identity of the church. The shift is seen in the idea of moving from a church *with* groups to a church *of* groups.

In *American Grace,* Putnam and Campbell cite groups pastor Steve Gladen of Saddleback Community Church saying, "small groups are the lifeblood of Saddleback." They quote Gladen further: "There are churches *with* small groups and churches *of* small groups," he argued. "Saddleback is decidedly the latter."[203] Pastor Rick Warren described the large Sunday worship services as a funnel, but not the most important aspect of the church. Instead, most important is "what happens when members take the step from anonymously attending a service to joining the church, and then joining a small group."[204]

In his foreword to the 2011 Saddleback small groups book *Small Groups with Purpose* by Gladen, Rick Warren said:

> Small groups are at the heart of Saddleback Church. They are the source of our church's health and growth. Small groups are the center of our discipleship, the structure of our ministry, the launch pad of our evangelism, the enrichment of our worship, and the network of our fellowship…Like most churches, we began as a small group. Today, thirty years later, Saddleback members meet weekly in more than 3,500 small groups. From the start, groups have been our strategy for assimilation and discipleship.[205]

Warren first learned about groups in the 1970s primarily from several churches in South Korea. Cho's church was of course one of these, and Cho wrote *Successful Home Cell Groups* in 1981, just as Saddleback was starting. Warren also observed Billy Kim's church which was Baptist, and the Yung Sung Methodist, among others. The largest churches in the world are there, so they also pioneered groups.

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[200] Arnold, Jeffrey, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 9.
[201] Arnold, Jeffrey, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 11.
[202] Gareth Weldon Iconogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1994), 10.
[203] Putnam and Campbell, 64-65.
[204] Putnam and Campbell, 63-64.
[205] Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 7.

South Korea predated some of the innovations in America. Warren went to Explo '74 in Korea while he served as a missionary in Japan. At that time Cho's church "only" had about 60,000. While there he gathered all the information possible about small groups. Churches there were already doing multi-site as well with videotapes of sermons.

Warren was not completely convinced small groups would work in the United States because of cultural differences between the states and Korean culture. He learned 80% of what he knew about groups from Korean churches and the other 20% from the Lay Renewal Movement and people like Keith Miller and Bruce Larson.

He learned several things about groups at Saddleback.[206] First, small groups don't work well in churches until they get large enough that people don't know everyone else in the church. A small church where everyone knows each other doesn't really need them. But with the rise of many large churches in a short span of time groups became vital. That's why they developed earlier in South Korean churches which grew earlier and expansively.

Second, Warren observed what you call them matters. "Cell group" for the most part didn't take off in the U.S. Saddleback went through a trial-and-error phase before they landed on the best terms, especially in terms of leadership of groups. At first, they used the term "lay pastor" like Dale Galloway in Portland, who used groups extensively. But Warren found his people didn't feel they could meet the standard of "pastor." Then they tried "shepherd" which was worse. Who in urban Southern California understands what a shepherd does?

When they started using the term "host," it took off. To be a host you simply needed a heart for God, open your home, serve tea or something to drink, and turn on your DVD player. That's when it began to explode.

Third, he discovered how it's easier to start groups in larger numbers rather than one at a time every week. Now, it's normal for large churches to have a big launch of groups two-to-three times a year for a period of time.

Speaking at a Pew Forum on The Myths of the Megachurch in 2005, Warren said, "If there is a second Reformation in the Church and a third spiritual awakening in the world or in America, it will come through two words – small groups."[207]

Icenogle agrees with Warren:

> We have come through a significant period of history—the industrial revolution—where hierarchy and power pyramids seemed necessary to gain productivity though established chains of command…We are beginning to catch a glimpse of an emerging new world, “a new paradigm,’ where power is shared, and work is accomplished through partnerships and networks of colleagues and coworkers. The key words of this new world are “leadership” and “empowerment"...We appear to be at a catalytic junction in human history when the small group demand of the culture and the creation mandate for humanity to

[206] This information is all taken from Rick Warren, Interview.
[207] https://www.pewforum.org/2005/05/23/myths-of-the-modern-megachurch/, accessed May 31, 2020.

> flourish in small groups seem to be converging in all arenas of life. We may be entering a "golden age" of small group life and action.[208]

Gladen observed the impact of small groups: "Saddleback may possibly be the only church in America that consistently has thousands more people attend weekly Bible study in groups than attend our weekend services."[209]

Similarly, Willow Creek Community Church turned to small groups when they realized about 1991: "The people that we had worked so hard to win to Christ were having an increasingly difficult time making the church a part of their life and making themselves a part of the church's life."[210] At that time only about 10-15 percent of the congregation were in smaller groups. Leaders saw the need to move from basically a collection of parachurch ministries meeting at the same place and where small groups were only an option to seeing groups as essential to growth and relationships.

Carl George's book *Prepare Yourself for the Future* was an essential source during this transition. George referred to the "metachurch" model. Willow did not embrace the term, but they definitely followed the model, as Donahue and Robinson note the shift to a church *of* groups: "We began moving from a church where small groups were optional to a church where small groups defined the core organizational strategy."[211]

The shift over the next decade resulted in over 18,000 people being engaged in 2,700 small groups by the time they wrote their 2001 book *Building a Church of Small Groups*. In this book they report learning five practices that "are absolutely necessary for any group to build authentic relationships: self-disclosure, care giving, humility, truth-telling, and affirmation."[212]
They argue a church serious about small groups will need leaders equaling 25-30% of the people in groups, regardless of church size. They note four keys for this shift to small groups: (1) the need for more volunteers than ever; (2) invest in volunteer leaders; (3) continually give away ministry to a growing corps of lay ministers; (4) the ownership of the congregation's life will expand.[213]

This also became a key component in their seeker strategy. Garry Poole, evangelism director many years at Willow, wrote the book *Seeker Small Groups* to equip group leaders to lead groups aimed at reaching spiritual seekers. Poole himself had been introduced to small groups (as many future evangelical leaders were) by the Navigators. He was a student at Wheaton College when Larry Jones persistently invited Poole to join a group. "To my surprise," Poole remembers,

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[208] Gareth Weldon Iconogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1994), 10.
[209] Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 8.
[210] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Zondervan, 2005), 11.
[211] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Zondervan, 2005), 12.
[212] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Zondervan, 2005), 60.
[213] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Zondervan, 2005), 168-69.

"That small group experience made an enormous impact on my life."[214] He went on to attend the Navigator's group training.

After transferring to Indiana University, Poole sought out parachurch ministries in hopes of leading a group. He found a tepid response from most until InterVarsity took a chance on him, with a catch: he had to start a group from scratch. That experience led him to develop the idea of seeker groups.

Spiritual Gifts

Peter Wagner, whose book *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow,* was an early advocate and diffuser of information focused on spiritual gifts in the 1970s: He wrote:

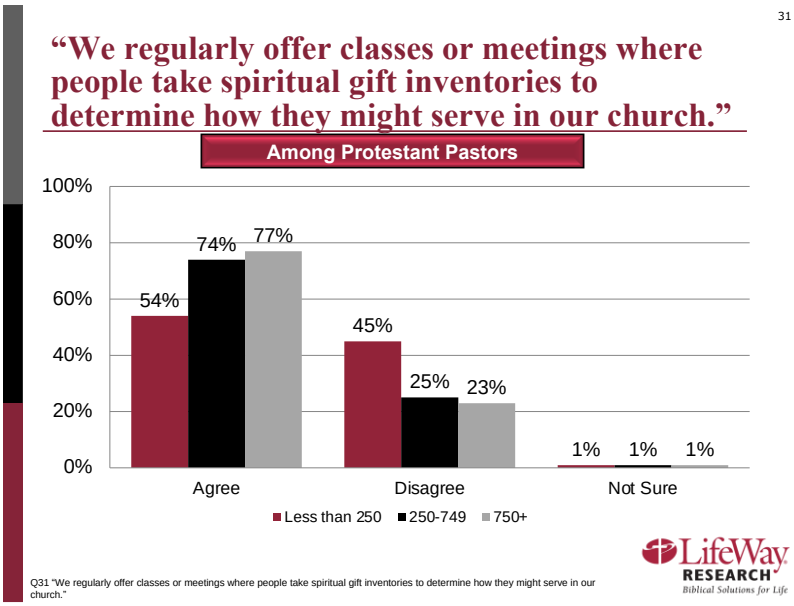
> A relatively new thing has happened to the church of Jesus Christ in America during the decade of the seventies. The third Person of the Trinity has come into His own…rarely, if ever, in the history of the church has such a widespread interest in moving beyond creeds and theologies to a personal experience of the Holy Spirit in everyday life swept over the people of God to the degree we are witnessing. The most prominent facet of this new experience of the Holy Spirit is spiritual gifts.[215]

He added the shift in seminary education as a result:

> Previous to 1970, seminary graduates characteristically left their institutions knowing little or nothing about spiritual gifts. Now, only a few years later, such a state of affairs is generally regarded as a deficiency in ministerial training.[216]

Pastors on the role of spiritual gifts in their churches:

[214] Garry Poole, *Seeker Small Groups: Engaging Spiritual Seekers in Life-Changing Discussions* (Zondervan, 2003), 14.
[215] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow,* 19.
[216] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow,* 20.



Wagner himself had been on a journey concerning gifts. Raised in an Independent Fundamental Church with a cessationist view toward spiritual gifts, he began to moderate from that view on the mission field in Bolivia. He studied the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches in the country. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* came out of that study.[217]

History of Spiritual Gifts

Many evangelical traditions held to a cessationist view of gifts when the Charismatic movement and subsequent Third Wave brought changes in many leaders and some traditions. Wagner commented on the impact of the Third Wave:

> The impact of all this began to be felt among Christians who were neither classical Pentecostals, nor Neo-Pentecostals, nor Catholic Charismatics in the seventies. While most of these Christians still show little interest in experiencing the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," the main distinguishing feature of the three charismatics movements it that they are appropriating the dynamic of spiritual gifts to themselves in a new and exciting way. Through their discovery of how the gifts of the Spirit were intended to operate in the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is being transformed from a doctrine to an experience.[218]

Wagner identified Dallas Theological Seminary as the intellectual center of cessationism, with John Walvoord and Merrill Unger as the spokespersons; "For years there was a kind of cold

[217] https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/october/origin-of-spiritual-gifts-profiles.html, accessed May 12, 2020.
[218] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 22.

war between the Pentecostals and the seminaries. But now this, for good or for bad, has largely been resolved."[219]

Wagner defined a spiritual gift: “A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God’s grace for use within the context of the Body of Christ according to God’s grace for use within the context of the Body."[220] Wagner advocated for the discovery of gifts while noting leaders like Gene Getz who argued against seeking to discover them. Wagner respectfully disagreed, arguing "Plan A" (from Romans 12:1-6) was for Christians to seek to discover their gifts and exercise them, though he admitted many believers were following "Plan B" and exercising their gifts without having sought them.[221]

Willow Creek's *Network* and Saddleback's *S.H.A.P.E.*

It is interesting that both Willow Creek and Saddleback each embraced the concept of spiritual gifts and yet each had a caveat. For Willow, leaders believed a spiritual gifts inventory needed more. Bruce Bugbee founded the Willow Creek Network program and led it from 1987 to 1993. He believed teaching on spiritual gifts should be coupled with teaching on temperament.[222]

Network was the title of the approach taken at Willow Creek. In the participant's guide to the 1994 resource *Network: The Right People...In the Right Places...For the Right Reasons*, Hybels wrote in the Foreword: "I consider the development of Network materials to be one of the most significant breakthroughs in the history of Willow Creek Community Church."[223] For Network spiritual gifts were one of three main components for believers to help them find where to serve in the best place, along with their passion and their "personal style." The materials included assessments for each of the three areas.

Rick Warren approached the subject differently from the status quo, aware no doubt of the criticisms previous inventories had received. Saddleback developed S.H.A.P.E. as their approach to gifts. "Most spiritual gift tests are based on the assumption that if you learn your gift then you'll know your ministry,"[224] he observed. "At Saddleback, we teach the exact opposite, that you learn your gift by doing your ministry." He described taking a spiritual gift test as a youth and learning the only gift he had was martyr. " Oh, great. That's a gift you get to use one time, and it's over, and you only get to use it on the last day of your life," he quipped.

He continued, "I could have taken 100 spiritual gifts tests and never knew I had the gift of teaching because I had never done it. All the tests in the world were never going to tell me that I had a gift that I had never done." As he began to teach, others affirmed that gift. And it was only as I began to actually teach people and they'd go, "Hey, you're good at that."

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[219] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 23.
[220] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 43.
[221] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 45-48.
[222] James Macklin Postwaite, "A Descriptive Study of the Network Program at Willow Creek Community Church," Ed.D., Seattle University, 1996, 30).
[223] Bill Hybels, "Foreword," in Bruce Bugbee, Don Cousins, and Bill Hybels, *Network: The Right People...In the Right Places...For the Right Reasons* Participant's Guide (Zondervan, 1994), v.
[224] Warren, Interview.

Affirming what we see in others is one of the more important ministries of the church Warren believes. Many believers when they find they are good at something just assume everybody is good at that, but the church can help to point out ways that believers are uniquely gifted. This is part of what led Saddleback to create S.H.A.P.E.

S.H.A.P.E. is a more comprehensive approach:

- Spiritual Gifts
- Heart
- Abilities
- Personality
- Experiences

Warren describes what this looks like at various stages for believers:

> SHAPE really has more to do with the E, the experiences. That helps you discover your SHAPE. We do a SHAPE test. But we tell people if you haven't done anything and you're a new believer, you're probably not going to know your gift at all. The opposite is also true: if you've been a Christian for a long, long time we're called to manifest all the gifts basically as fruit. In other words, I may not have the gift of giving, but hopefully I'm more generous the more mature I get. And, I may not have the gift of service, but hopefully, I have a bigger serving heart the more mature I get.[225]

Warren believes the growth of interest in spiritual gifts goes back to the 1970s and Tim LaHaye's book *Spirit Controlled Temperament.* Testing for giftedness arose at that time. Warren does have some reservations about how this is done. He told me two specific issues. First, these tests are standardized, one-size-fits-all, and people just aren't standardized. Second, definitions for the different gifts are hard to come by: "The problem with explaining spiritual gifts is you have to make up some definitions because there's not that much in defining them in scripture. It, they're there, but you have to kind of make some guesses."[226]

Warren and his staff looked at everything they could find but they continued to be frustrated by the complexity or the datedness of the material. Warren wanted something simple, applicable, and replicable. Reflecting later, he remembered his thought process: "If I'm trying to turn this into a class that's add water and stir, that the average pastor in a church of 75 people can do it can't be an Art Miller or an extensive network, or whatever thing like that," he said. "So, I was always trying to make stuff simpler."

With S.H.A.P.E. you have more than an inventory. You take into consideration a person's personality, and abilities, and experiences all together. And you take the needs of the church as part of the mix.

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[225] Warren, Interview.
[226] Warren, Interview.

Doug Slaybaugh, who worked with Purpose Driven for many years, speculated that the increasing size of churches and number of those churches contributed to the need for inventories.

Chapter 5: Era Three
Emerging as Leadership Resource Creators

Entering the new millennium Leadership Network had established itself as "the premier leadership collaborative for pastors and churches."[227] Through the churches it gathered and the emphases launched, LN shaped much of church life through its influence. This influence would explode particularly through its emphasis on church planting, multi-site church, the externally focused church, and corresponding ministry roles such as the executive pastor.

Leadership Communities

Over the years Leadership Network developed a vast number of emphases, forums, and learning communities. Leadership Communities are gatherings of "like-minded ministry and thought leaders" LN brings together "in collaborative learning and development."[228] These communities aim to develop long term, meaningful relationships for the kingdom. These various groups meet generally two times a year. Leadership Communities are not to be confused with a think tank: "They are focused on areas where clients are already undertaking projects and experiencing challenges in those undertakings."[229]

For instance, the Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community in a 2005 report described these churches as having a multi-faceted approach towards addressing and meeting needs in their communities beyond the church campus. Their focus is to bring to their communities "the good works and good news of Jesus Christ with the result being a community that is a better place to live."[230]

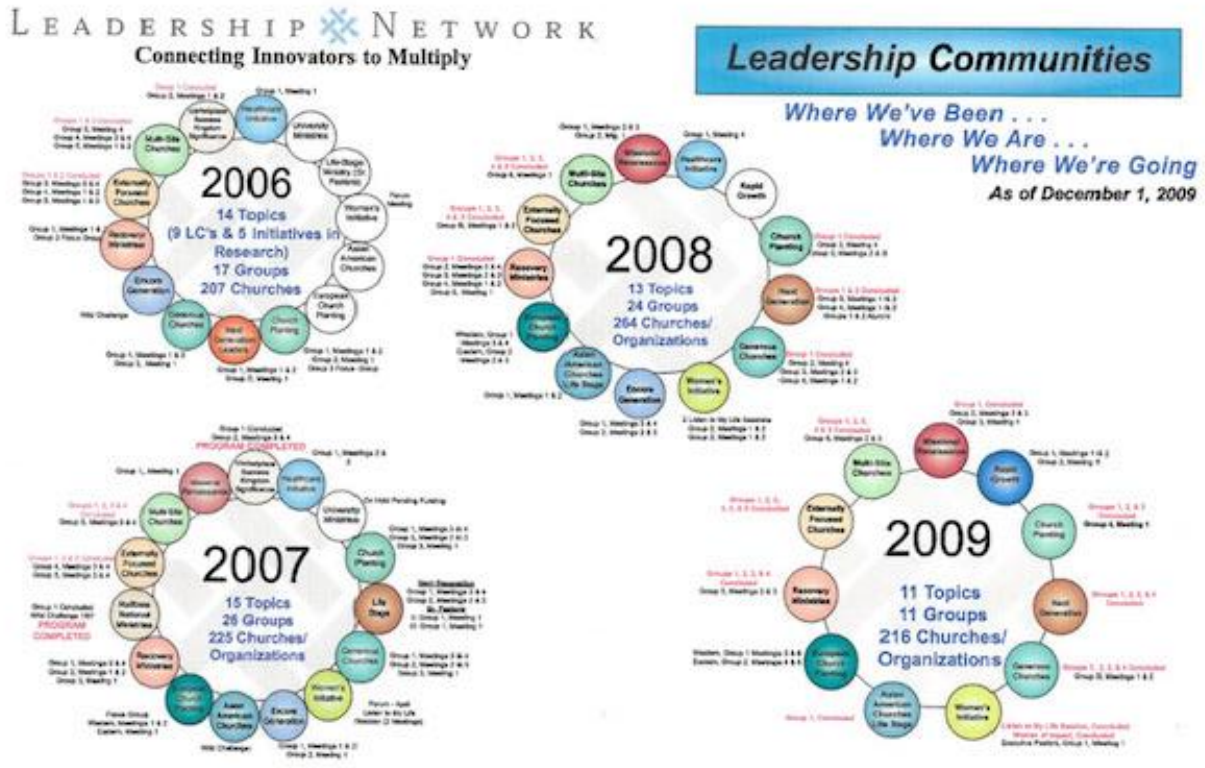
In 2006, there were nine Leadership Communities and five Initiatives in Research, made up of 17 groups and 207 churches (see chart below). The nine Leadership Communities were: Halftime, Marketplace Success, Multi-Site Churches, Externally Focused Churches, Recovery Ministries, Encore Generation, Generous Churches, Next Generation Leaders, and Church Planting. Research Initiatives included University Ministries, Life-Stage Ministry, Woman's Initiative, Asian American Churches, and European Church Planting.[231]

LN produced a number of papers on these various emphases, often filled with examples of churches implementing a given focus.

In the years 2007-2009 the number of various topics dropped from 14 total in 2006 to 11 in 2009.

Leadership Communities 2006-2009

[227] As states the website https://leadnet.org/, accessed April 6, 2021.
[228] "Strategy Statement," Leadership Network, No date, PDF.
[229] Dave Travis, "Innovative Practice Leadership Communities Processes," Leadership Network, 2005, 4.
[230] Dave Travis, "Innovative Practice Leadership Communities Processes," Leadership Network, 2005, 11.
[231] "Strategy Statement," Leadership Network, No date, PDF.



Leadership Network's attention to entrepreneurialism continued through this entire era. "We value innovative entrepreneurs because they are game-changers," Dave Travis wrote to Leadership Network's clients in 2012. "They create movements of ideas and actions that galvanize those around them."[232] He then adds the goal of LN "to help the entrepreneurial change agents refine their ideas into solid plans, then drive them to impact." He cites Rogers' work in their desire to diffuse innovation, including collaboration, "so new ideas can be adapted to other places and other local contexts."[233]

Leadership Network, reflecting Buford's humility, never sought to be the leaders of anything. Instead, it sought to help create pathways and onramps for the pastors, leaders, and churches the stars, or as he put it, "to be the platform and not the show."

[232] Dave Travis, *What's Next? A Look Over the Next Hill for Innovative Churches and Their Leaders* (Leadership Network), 10.
[233] Dave Travis, *What's Next? A Look Over the Next Hill for Innovative Churches and Their Leaders* (Leadership Network), 11.

Church Planting and Burning Bush

Through Leadership Network Bob Buford and his team convened meetings for innovative church leaders. But he did more; he funded the impact he longed to see. He carefully selected places to invest that would create exponential return for the Kingdom. As an example, he and Colorado billionaire Phil Anschutz financed the Burning Bush Fund.

It came about when a couple of churches asked Bob Buford for a grant to help with planting. Buford asked Dave Travis to look into it further. Anschutz and Buford set aside somewhere in the neighborhood of $2 million per year for the effort.

Anschutz agreed with Buford on the concept of finding "islands of strengths" to support, and church planting fit that. Anschutz talked to Buford about how his children were overseas and had a difficult time finding a church, which helped him to see the importance of planting. They invested strategically in these leaders while expecting a successful ROI.

Burning Bush One started in 2000. Their approach allowed people who had been unknown who became successful at planting churches and developing networks, helping them to leverage their influence. Bob Roberts at Northwood Church in Texas, Mark Driscoll at Mars Hill in Seattle, Tim Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian in Manhattan, Wayne Cordeiro of New Hope Christian Fellowship in Hawaii, and Geoff Surratt of Seacoast Church in South Carolina were some of the early pastors involved.

Linda Stanley had a role in this work. She witnessed the impact of Burning Bush on planting, saying, "They got so much better and more effective as a result of meeting with other churches and talking with other church teams." She gave specific examples of innovations. First, few had any form of assessment of church planters before the project. By the end of the project networks developed who cooperated and collaborated, which including sharing approaches of formal assessment. This produced far better candidates and reduced the failure rate.

A second innovation was the role of a full-time church planting director: "Rather than piecemealing a few hours from 10 different people at a church to try to get it done, they could be incredibly more effective at church planting if they had a full-time person devoted to that."

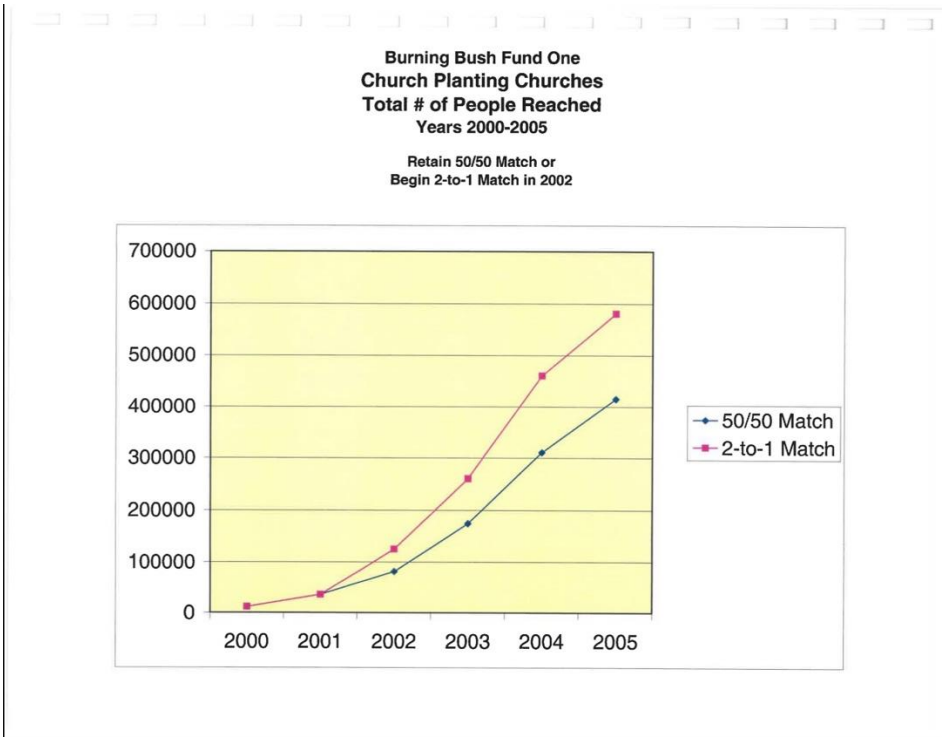
She gave specific examples:

- Northwest Church in Vancouver, Washington was a pacesetter in assessment
- Bob Roberts at Northwood in Keller, Texas, developed what he called a turbo-training program that wed church planting theory and hands-on experience.
- Greg Surratt and the late Billy Hornsby created a practical program that structured financial support and accountability that became the remarkably successful network Association of Related Churches (ARC) which has planted 843 churches from 2001-2019.

ARC formed in 2001, many other networks formed in the 2000s included Orchard, NewThing, Redeemer Church Planting, and Exponential. Exponential started in 2006 out of the Christian Churches with Dave Ferguson as president. It hosts one of the more influential annual

church planting meetings in the country today. Dave and his brother John were involved with LN and were one of the early multi-site churches on their radar, according to Stanley.
With the rise of entrepreneurial evangelicals, church planting has been reborn. It's not coincidental or incidental that the four most expansive models of entrepreneurial evangelicalism in the period covered (Willow Creek, Saddleback, Northpoint, Lifechurch) represent churches planted by their founding pastor.
Sue Mallory noted the link between the culture of innovation and church planting: "Only the innovative, bold leaders have it in them to plant a successful church."

It should come as no surprise that Leadership Network was involved in the rise of entrepreneurial church planting. This not only includes the obvious impact the Network had (and vice-versa) on early church planting entrepreneurs like Rick Warren and Bill Hybels, but in particular through the Burning Bush One and Two emphases.



Burning Bush One

The Burning Bush Fund One was a partnership between the Buford Foundation and the Anschutz Foundation. It focused on two ways to expand local church's ministries: First, "to plant new churches modeled after current effective congregations;" second, "To have the current, healthy churches teach other congregations the new ways of today's ministry."[234] Carol Childress noted how men like Roberts got it that church planting was the most effective way to evangelize the most people over a length of time.

The goal of Burning Bush One was to have 1,324 new church plants. From 2000-2005, Burning Bush surpassed that goal, with a result of 1,687 new church plants through the leaders it influenced and the funding it provided.

Leadership Network in the Burning Bush project gathered 12-15 of the top church planting organizations and "really helped them accelerate what they were doing," Greg Ligon said.[235] This represented another of Buford's tenets: "Hunt elephants, not squirrels."

[234] Burning Bush Fund One Executive Summary, Leadership Network, PDF.
[235] Ligon, Interview, 2017.

The Network spent a year at the end of the 1990s listening to candidates without promising any funds.[236] They gathered them all in a room for them to share what they were doing. The following year, 1999-2000, they invited pastors to make proposals.

Bob Roberts said, “We already figured out how to double up plants by listening to" Leadership Network. They brought together leaders from groups like Acts 29, Redeemer, Fellowship Associates, New Hope, and North Woods Church (Roberts). Leadership Network gave grants in part to hire a church planting director. The CMA did so with Neil Cole, for instance.

This was invitation only, and you could continue year to year only if you hit or came close to your goals. Linda Stanley went to every church every year and convened them twice a year.

Travis argued that “this helped catalyze the next wave of church planting in the US.” He observed how teaching churches were critical in the 90s, planting churches in the 2000s, and the emerging church focus was more in the later 90s.

In an interview in 2009, Dave Travis spoke of the impact of Burning Bush. He argued the project "actually seeded the overwhelming movement now of new church plants" by gathering "the leading church planting churches." And what was the impact? "For many evangelicals, you aren't a player unless you are a church planting church, Travis concluded, adding, "That's a big change since 1998. It used that 'the bigger the better.' Now the ethos is to multiply and spread."[237]

Church Planting as of 2007

In 2007, near the end of our focus of 1980-2010, I was the lead researcher for a Leadership Network research project called "The State of Church Planting in the United States." This qualitative study included:

- 200+ church planting churches
- 100+ church planting leaders from 40 denominations
- 45 church planting networks
- 84 organic church leaders
- 12 nationally known experts
- 53 colleges and seminaries
- 54 doctoral dissertations
- 41 journal articles
- Over 100 church planting books and journals.[238]

[236] Travis Interview.
[237] https://www.benarment.com/history_in_the_making/2009/12/leadership-network-hosts-backroom-meetings-for-influential-church-leaders-ive-heard-rumors-of-osteen---hybels-stanley-war.html, accessed May 22, 2020.
[238] Ed Stetzer, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Church Planting Entities," (Executive Summary) Leadership Network, 2007:1.

In the executive summary of the report, I noted several conclusions. First, energy and enthusiasm for planting was at an unprecedented high. Second, a spirit of collaboration and cooperation existed across networks, organizations, and denominations. Third, planting momentum was shifting from denominations to hands-on churches and networks. Fourth, church planting leaders in the study were committed both to the multiplication and survivability of plants as well as the evangelistic effectiveness of those plants.

The study discovered a significant increase in church planting efforts across various denominations. However, although denominations reported "a marked overall increase in church planting and in parent churches" only "a small percentage of already established churches account for the church-planting growth within a given denomination."[239]

A specific feature in the study teamed with researcher Stephen Gray to look at the trends among fast-growing plants (those who reached 200 in less than three years).[240] Some of the findings from these plants compared to plants that struggled:

- 88.3% planted with a team, while only 11.5% of struggling churches were team plants.
- 63.3% of fast-growing churches had 26 to 75 in their core group, while almost 70% of struggling churches started with less than 25.
- Over 80% of struggling churches had less than 100 at their first service, while 75% of fast-growing churches had over 100.
- 75% of fast-growing plants were contemporary in worship style, while struggling churches spread across contemporary, traditional, and blended styles.
- 80% of fast-growing plants committed 10% of their budgets toward outreach and evangelism, while 42.3% of struggling churches did.

A conclusion of the study:

> The interviewers observed that local churches traditionally place a value on planting churches similar to themselves and tend to do so through direct “mothering” or sponsorship. Denominational agencies (whether national or regional) place a value on reproducing common denominationalist churches. In contrast, many independent church planting organizations were started by catalytic leaders (mostly pastors) who think beyond local church planting and think differently than denominations.[241]

Networks

[239] Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Church Planting Entities," 2007:26.
[240] Ed Stetzer, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Church Planting Entities," (Executive Summary) Leadership Network, 2007:13.
[241] Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Church Planting Entities," 2007:27.

In 2010, at the end of the timeline for this specific report, I wrote about the rise of networks, including a number of *intradenominational* networks. This came mostly from the book *Viral Churches*.[242] These networks work among denominations to further planting efforts.

A second type of network is *interdenominational*. This approach formed around a common ministry paradigm. Vision USA (visionusa.org) is an example. There are also churches like Redeemer Presbyterian and GlocalNet from Northwood Church who formed networks.

From 1980-2010 there was an explosion in church planting networks which varied in theology, methodology, and ecclesiology. The networks share a passion for planting churches with a similar DNA. In the 2007 Lifeway study of church planting, we surveyed a total of 45 church planting networks, with many of them starting since 2003. In my presentation of this study at the Exponential Conference in 2008 I gave the definition of a network: "A group of churches that have publicly acknowledged that they are intentionally working together for the purpose of church planting and have a cooperative strategy to accomplish that goal."[243]

Some 90% of the networks had budgets well under $1,000,000 with an average of $182,000; the 10% over $1,000,000 averaged 1.775 million.

David Dockery captured the shift in this period toward networks and away from traditional denominations. "Evangelicalism today has recaptured the importance of local churches," he wrote, "But often more so across denominations and within cooperating networks, rather than within the denominations themselves (examples include 9Marks, Saddleback Church, the Willow Creek Community Church and Willow Creek Association, the Christ Together network, and more)."[244]

Dockery added the impact of these network markers on younger leaders.

The Continuing Influence of Willow Creek and Saddleback and the Rise of North Point and Lifechurch

Willow Creek and Saddleback continued to be arguably the two most influential churches in the United States in the early 2000s. Willow Creek's influence expanded through its Global Leadership Summit and the Willow Creek Association, while Saddleback's impact came through resources like *Purpose-Driven Life* and the emphasis 40 days of purpose.

Willow and Global Leadership

In 2010, at the end of the era considered in this book, Jeff Chu wrote the following in *Fast Company: "*Evangelical Christianity proudly has no pope, and given its predilection for splintering, it can hardly be considered a single church. But if evangelicalism does have a global power center, it would have to be Willow Creek, thanks largely to the [Global Leadership] summit." Chu quoted

[242] As quoted in https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2010/june/intradenominational-church-planting-networks.html, accessed May 22, 2020.
[243] https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2008/april/church-planting-presentations-and-research-from.html, accessed August 13, 2020.
[244] David S. Dockery, "Evangelicalism: Past, Present, and Future," *TRINJ* 36NS (2015), 16.

Bob Buford, who played a key role in the summit's development, "Willow Creek is the most influential Protestant church in the world — one might even say the most influential church in the world save for the Vatican."[245]

The rise of Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago represents the explosion of megachurches beginning particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Like others, its beginnings came through a visionary young pastor deeply burdened to reach the unchurched. Unlike most, it was not planted in the warm climate of the South or Southwest, it employed uniquely secularist approaches including secular music and drama, and for some most scandalous of all, it moved its evangelistic or "seeker services" to the apex of evangelical corporate worship, Sunday mornings. If that weren't enough, Willow as it is often known employed without apology business practices of leaders like Peter Drucker and Jack Welch.

It was Welch who told Jeff Chu about a man named Bill who signified a leader of a company or a nation in the mind of the former head of GE. In his article "How Willow Creek Is Leading Evangelicals by Learning from the Business World," Chu identifies Welch's "Bill" not as a CEO but a pastor, the pastor of Willow. When he wrote this article in 2010, Willow averaged 23,000 in attendance every weekend and hosted an annual Global Leadership Summit aimed at church leaders but attended also by many in the business world. That year the Summit featured 7,000 leaders on campus with another 62,000 watching globally, including pastors T.D. Jakes, Craig Groeschel, Andy Stanley, whose churches along with Willow were four of the ten largest in the U.S.

In 2000 the attendance at Willow was 20,000. By 2007, it was called "the most influential church in America."[246]

Rick Warren and Saddleback

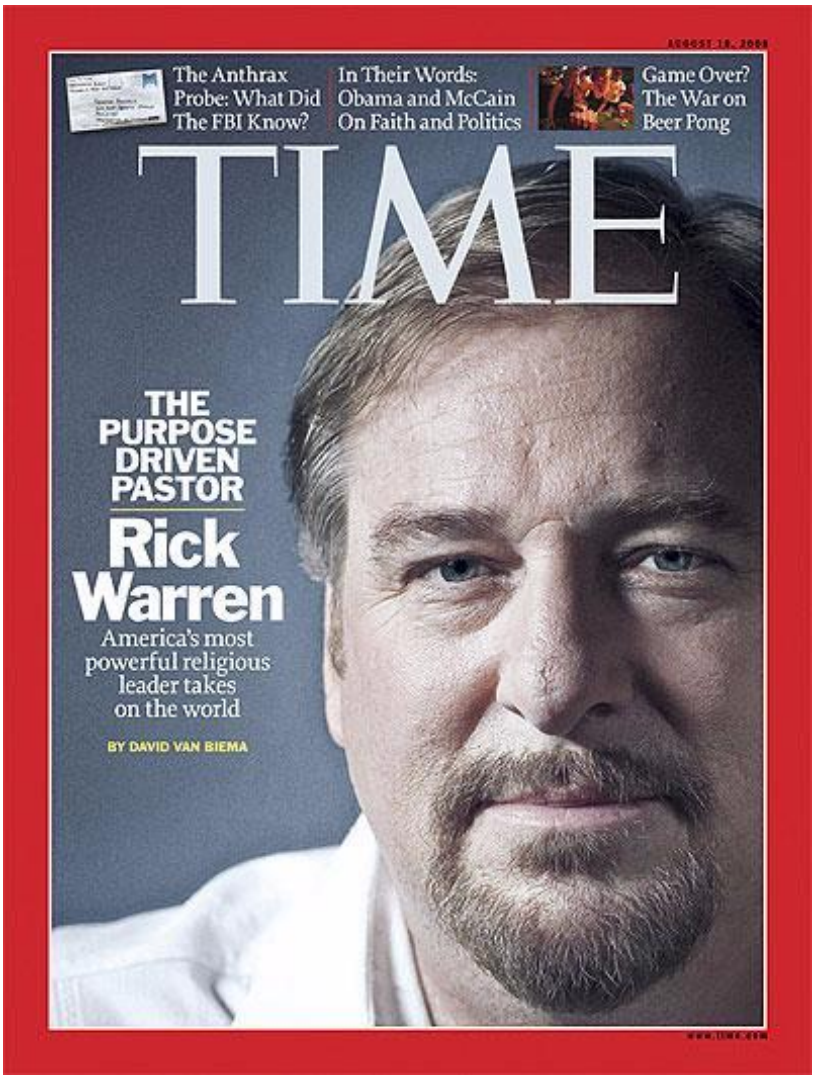
Rick Warren emerged as the flagship post-Christian Right evangelical, eventually rivaling President Bush himself as the paradigmatic evangelical of the 2000s,"[247] wrote Steven P. Miller. Miller illustrated this with impressive stats: By 2010, *The Purpose Driven Life* had sold thirty-five million copies; Saddleback Church had 100,000 members; and the Purpose-Driven Network had over 100,000 members. On August 18, 2008, Warren graced the cover of *Time*, who called him "America's most powerful religious leader."

Bob Buford helped to bring Doug Slaybaugh to work with Warren on Purpose-Driven, investing initial funds to help, and Lifeway (SBC) helped immensely with registration. The response to the early PD events was huge. "I could see he was a pastor's pastor," Slaybaugh said of Warren. Slaybaugh recounts the fascinating rise of both *Purpose-Driven Church* and *Purpose-Driven*

[245] https://www.fastcompany.com/1702221/how-willow-creek-leading-evangelicals-learning-business-world, accessed April 14, 2020.
[246] https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/october-online-only/willow-creek-repents.html, accessed March 12, 2020.
[247] Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (Oxford University Press), 146.

Life. When the latter was released, 30,000 churches or almost 10% of churches in the nation used it from 2002-2006.
By the 2000s scores of megachurches exerted their influence across the nation. Two more examples of churches led by innovative leaders rose to prominence in particular: North Point and Lifechurch.

Rick Warren on the Cover of Time



Andy Stanley and North Point

One of the most successful megachurch pastors of the 21st century, Andy Stanley had significant exposure leading large ministries and churches through watching his father, Charles, pastor First Baptist Church of Atlanta. When Stanley became a leader in the youth ministry, he quickly learned a central lesson that had animated many of the leading innovative pastors:

"Environment is everything." If he could understand what kind of environment was conducive to evangelism and discipleship and then generate that environment in a ministry, it would foster a health culture. Central to this were three principles: 1) Appealing Setting – the room needed to be set up in a way that drew people within the community. Not foreign or cold but welcoming and pleasing. 2) Engaging Communication – any form of communication whether it was worship, preaching, or announcements needed to be quality in execution and spoken in the vernacular of the culture. 3) Helpful Content – it could not just be true but it needed to have "handles" or application for people in how to live.[248] The underlying principle of all three was the importance of understanding their people (what did they find appealing, engaging, and helpful?) and a commitment to innovation (adapting models and structures to uncover and implement the answers to these questions).

The struggle for Stanley was then how to apply these same principles in youth ministry to the larger role of church leadership. While his experience as a youth minister was formative, it was not until a visit to Willow Creek in 1993 to learn from Hybels that things began to click into place as a broader approach to ministry. Reflecting in his interview, Stanley remembered that it was transformative to see someone doing on large scale what he had been doing with a single ministry. In Stanley's mind, the experience "ruined me." Returning to Atlanta and given authority over a downtown campus of First Baptist where he had the liberty to innovate, Stanley set to work. Leaving his first service in the new church with the principles he'd learned from Willow, Stanley remembered telling his wife that he wanted to do *that* for the rest of his life, "I wanted to communicate in that environment for the rest of my life."[249]

In recent years this approach has led to pointed criticism, often centered on the "juvenlization" of church thought and practice by centering the audience's need for performance.[250] While often criticized, Stanley has been clear from the beginning about his focus: "I never thoughts in terms of, 'How do we help to grow the church?' but how do we strategically reach young people, the unchurched, and so on." To those who charge Andy with being anti-seminary he counters that no one has provided more scholarships for students to go to DTS than Northpoint. "To do what we do you have to be smart," he argues. A consistent message in all these entrepreneurial leaders was a passion to reach people, especially those not touched by established churches: "We wanted to reach people no one was reaching." [251]

In *Deep and Wide,* Andy talks about the difficult transition from serving with his father, to starting North Point. Andy had gone to lead the north campus of First Baptist, Atlanta. This was

[248] Andy Stanley, Interview.
[249] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDVcnj_hqXE, accessed June 26, 2020.
[250] Thomas E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012).
[251] Andy Stanley, Interview.

before multisite campuses were a thing, so in 1992 when they began it was beyond novel. They started Easter Sunday that year.

Soon after Andy's parents filed for divorce, Andy resigned from First Baptist in 1995. With a pregnant wife, two small kids, and nowhere to go, Andy was confronted with the story of Peter's denial. Steve asked Andy what he would do if he were one of the twelve and heard Peter denial of Jesus. Rather than excommunicating Peter, Jesus had "put him in charge of the entire enterprise."[252] Hit by his own hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and judgmental attitude, this moment became a defining one when Andy felt called to start a church.

Andy told his dad about his dream of starting a church. That next Sunday evening at First Baptist, Charles told his church, "Some of you have been wondering what Andy is up to these days. Well, we had lunch this week. He is planning to go north of the city and start a church. And he has my blessing."[253]

Andy met with the people who had been the core of the north campus for three years. He told them the last thing Atlanta needed was one more church. However, Atlanta did need a different kind of church: "a church where church people are comfortable bringing their unchurched friends, family members, and neighbors. . . . We've come together to create a church unchurched people will love to attend."[254]

Acknowledging it was more of a restart than a new church plant, from November 1995 to 1996 they continued to meet and grow, when in December of 1996, the newly created North Point Church purchased 83 acres in Alpharetta, fifteen miles north of Atlanta. They had a nomadic experience for almost three years, meeting every other week for a time, not meeting at all the nine weeks of the Olympics, and improvised as much as possible. The church moved into the facilities there on September 27, 1998. Before the first service they feared they had overbuilt with a 2,500-seat auditorium when they had only had up to 900 before. Over 2,000 attended the first service, and by the end of the first year on the campus over 4,000 attended weekly.[255]

Leaders of the church decided to do some experimenting in response of the space issues caused by the rapid growth. They explored multiple worship environments rather than meeting in the large auditorium exclusively. By 2001, a second auditorium was built behind the original one where services could be held for over 5,000. North Point added a campus in Buckhead in 2001, as well. An early adopter of the multisite approach, campuses at Browns Bridge Church and two other locations were added in the ensuing years. A sixth location was added in Decatur in 2014.

According to the church website, North Point as of spring 2020 had over 23,000 adults participating at six campuses each Sunday, along with 14,000 children and students meeting in small groups while adults gathered for worship.

Stanley is "a conservative but he's not a culture warrior in the pulpit," John Blake wrote for CNN, adding, "Most of his sermons revolve around personal growth, not politics."[256]

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[252] *Deep and Wide*, Kindle Loc 454.
[253] *Deep and Wide*, Kindle Loc 461.
[254] Deep and Wide, Kindle Loc 477. Also found at https://northpoint.org/history, accessed May 3, 2020.
[255] https://northpoint.org/history, accessed April 28, 2020.
[256] https://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/17/a-new-challenge-for-andy-stanley/, accessed June 20, 2020.

The mission of North Point is to "lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ."[257] Small group ministry became an integral part of the church. In 2010, over 2,000 small group leaders led groups of all ages across the region.

North Point partners with churches in over a dozen countries and strategic partner churches across the United States. In a 15-year celebration in 2010, Stanley said:

> There is no limit to growth, there is no limit to influence, and there is no limit to impact as long as we think multiplication that's exactly what Jesus had in mind when he launched the local church, and now, because of technology and what we've experienced the past fifteen years, we have an opportunity we have the opportunity to influence untold numbers of people. And as we do that, and as we raise up more and more leaders, my goal is to become less and less indispensable, and more in a coaching role.[258]

Craig Groeschel and Lifechurch

"To reach people no one is reaching, we have to do things no one is doing." This statement represents well the approach of Lifechurch and pastor Craig Groeschel.

In 1996, Groeschel planted Life Covenant Church in a two-car garage in Oklahoma City. Groeschel says he and his wife Amy wanted to start "a different kind of church."[259] They visited a church in California. At the church Christian artist Crystal Lewis, before she was well known, was singing her song, "Come Just as You Are." As they watched many coming to Christ, Groeschel resolved to plant a church where people could come just as they are. Driving along in a 1989 Honda Accord, the song came on the radio.

Their first service in the garage it snowed. Groeschel wondered if anyone would show up. At the end of the service he shared the gospel and an offer to follow Christ, as he committed to do. Seven people responded to the gospel. "That was the beginning of something special."

They moved to an elementary school, to a bike factory, their third home in six months. In March 1998, they moved into a 600 seat-building on their own property. "Some people call us a megachurch; compared to other churches that might be true. But compared to the need it's not true at all." Groeschel, like other entrepreneurial, large-church pastors, is to grow smaller while growing larger. "When you have a group of people you're doing life with the church becomes very small," pastor Sam Roberts observed.

January 14, 2001 was a "breakthrough moment" in the innovation of what was now called Lifechurch. Craig's wife Amy delivered their son Sam early that morning between the Saturday night service and the Sunday services. They decided to run the video from the night before. "We were shocked that people didn't seem to mind," Groeschel observed, adding, "They even liked it." That broke through the wall to allow for multiple locations.

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[257] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDVcnj_hqXE, accessed June 26, 2020.
[258] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PC7nWdRxgXA, accessed June 26, 2020.
[259] https://churchonline.life.church/20-years-and-counting-the-life.church-story, accessed March 31, 2020.

This led them to ask about doing church in more than one location. “Is that even legal?” Groeschel thought. Soon they had another service at a movie theater. After that, they merged with MetroChurch in OKC. They began to ask about overcoming limits of location. They tested it 90 miles away in Tulsa, in a home on a television. From there, Stillwater, then south OKC, other mergers happened: Nashville, in Florida, in Texas, and online.

On how they stumbled into multisite: “After praying and brainstorming, someone suggested we consider meeting at a second location. To our knowledge, that had never been done before. (We were unaware that the practice was far from new and was being done around the world.) Armed with passion, we approached a movie theater and asked if we could hold worship experiences there on Sundays. This is common practice today, but at the time, the theater had never considered such an option. They said yes, and overnight our greatest limitation became the catalyst for what we considered a great innovation: the multisite church."[260]

In 2006, church leaders began to consider what to do about all the massive number of resources they had amassed over the years. They had to decide whether to sell the content, particularly given that they were essentially month-to-month on finances, or to give it all away. After that, they developed Network Churches, and gave away their online platform. For instance, they developed the Bible app Youversion. Since 2008, over 450 unique devices have downloaded the Youversion app. “We want to leverage technology in every way we can to push the message of Jesus forward,” Groeschel observed.

From then, till now, till the day he dies, Groeschel states, “We will do everything short of sin to reach people who don’t know Christ.”

In his book Groeschel speaks in greater detail on his conviction about why innovation is a key value for Lifechurch:

> If there is any group in the world that should be motivated to make improvements, reflecting God’s creative nature, it should be Christians. . . Since we’re made in the image of a creative creator, we too can conceive creative ideas. . . At our church, we encourage people to do anything short of sin to reach those who don’t know Christ. With increasing passion comes increasing creativity to reach people. . . .With-it ministries are filled with people so passionate, they’re driven to become innovative. They’ll become like others or do unusual things to reach those who are far from Christ or to help those who are hurting. Like the four men who broke through the roof to get their crippled friend to Jesus, motivated believers don’t see obstacles. They create opportunities.”[261]

Groeschel noted the influence of Peter Drucker. “Leadership guru Peter Drucker said, ‘An established company which, in an age demanding innovation, is not able to innovate, is doomed

[260] Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 97.
[261] Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 93.

to decline and extinction.' Though he was referring to businesses, I'd argue this quote applies to churches as well."[262]

In their 2018 "Year in Review" video, these stats were given: 20,000 students, 5,500 small groups, 12 million guests online, two million resources given to leaders, 42 million dollars given to global missions. 24,000 volunteers, 6,791 baptisms, and five new campuses that year from Tulsa to Omaha.[263]

Multi-Site

One of the more significant innovations diffused in the latter part of our time period is the multi-site explosion. From a handful of churches 30 years ago, a 2008 article in *Slate* stated that according to Leadership Network, there will be 30,000 multisite churches in a matter of a few years.[264] While that has number not been reached, there are thousands of multi-site churches today, including most of the largest churches.

Greg Ligon came from campus ministry at SMU to Leadership Network in 1997 just after they moved to Dallas from Tyler. In an interview in 2017, Ligon argued that "many of the movements that happened in the church over the last 30 years, Leadership Network's fingerprints have been all over them." Network's focus on innovation and its years of working with the large church made for a perfect space to study and learn about the growing practice of multi-site.

On the infamous date of 9/11/2001, LN scheduled the first Multi-site, Multi-Campus Forum. A total of 125 multisite pastors were scheduled to come for this first LN Forum. About half made it before flights stopped. From 2003-05, LN Multi-Site Churches Leadership Community met regularly.

Multisite Leadership Community 2003-05

[262] Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 98.
[263] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuTism6IEYA, accessed June 26, 2020.
[264] https://slate.com/human-interest/2008/08/how-video-venues-are-helping-megachurches-franchise.html, accessed June 20, 2020.

Brian Frye's dissertation research affirmed the impact of Leadership Network on the acceleration of the multi-site movement. "In short," he writes, "it would not be an overstatement to say that Leadership Network is both the catalyzing agent and the accelerant for the establishment and brisk expansion of the multi-site church movement."

Multi-site is here to stay.

Ligon spearheaded the work on multisite for Leadership Network. It may be that other than its original impact diffusing the innovation of the megachurch in the late 1980s, Leadership Network's influence with the multi-site movement has brought its most profound impact. "We've been about the business of discerning where God is at work, then creating environments for the churches doing that work and already having success, putting them in the room with one another so they can learn from one another and accelerate the impact," Ligon observed. He added, "Our role has been listening, seeing down the road, and convening."[265]

Dave Travis of Leadership Network said Warren Schuh, who was leading the large church network, had begun hearing about churches going to a multisite approach.

Ligon said around year 2000 they began hearing repeatedly about churches using some form of multiple venues. They found about 100 churches using "satellite campuses" as they were called at that time. Leadership Network convened their first Multi-Site Multi-Campus Forum on September 11, 2001. If you noted the date, you know that was the day terrorists flew planes into the twin towers in New York City and Washington, D.C. Of the 125 leaders scheduled to attend, about half made it to the meeting in Chicago.

[265] Greg Ligon Interview.

Dave Travis wrote a paper about this first gathering. Of the 65 leaders who made it to the meeting, their churches were either already using the multi-site concept or planned to implement it in the next year. Dave Ferguson and Community Christian Church there in Chicagoland had two campuses at the time of the meeting with about 2,400 combined in attendance. The most evolved church in the approach at that meeting was New Life Christian Fellowship in Chesapeake, Virginia. New Life began multiple venues in 1994.

Travis argued four reasons showed why the time was right for the multi-site movement.[266] First, it addresses the issue of property. When a growing church was landlocked in the past, relocation was the inevitable and extremely costly route. Second, leadership development is aided as leaders are raised up in newer, smaller venues. Third, some congregations have a better use of finances through this approach. Fourth, it allows diversity of ministry approaches in one church.

"The churches in the early learning communities were kind of the hall of fame," Ligon said, naming Lifechurch with Craig Groeschel, Community Christian with Dave Ferguson, Seacoast and Greg Surratt, Larry Osborne at North Coast Church, and North Point and Andy Stanley were some of the key churches that were involved in the learning community beginning in 2003. Willow Creek and Saddleback were also invested in the early multi-site work.

In a 2004 paper by Warren Bird of LN the term "multi-site" was not yet the term of record for churches "where geography is no longer the deciding factor"[267] in church growth and life. Bird cited Leadership Network's identifying and convening 12 "pacesetters" in this new movement.

In their book *The Multi-Site Revolution* Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird provide a definition: "A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations—different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership, and board."[268] At its release in 2006, the authors noted that 7 of 10 fastest growing and 9 of 10 largest were multi-site.[269] They note further that multi-site is not a vision, but a vehicle for the church's vision.[270]

Multi-Site Timeline:

2001, on 9/11, Multi-site Multi-Campus Forum: 125 multisite pastors were scheduled to come for the first LN Forum. About half made it before flights stopped.
2003-05, LN Multi-Site Churches Leadership Community met.
Numbers of Multisite:
1700s less than 10
1800s less than 20

[266] Dave Travis, "Multiple-Site/Multiple Campus Churches," Leadership Network, 2001, 11.
[267] Warren Bird, "Luanch Factors: Where to Start Your Next Venue or Site," Leadership Network, 2004, 2.
[268] Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church . . . in Many Locations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 18.
[269] *Multi-Site Church Revolution,* 9.
[270] *Multi-Site Church Revolution,* 66.

1900-1970s fewer than 50
1980s fewer than 100
1990s about 200
2000 300
2001 400
2002 600
2003 800
2004 1,000
2005 1,200
2006 1,500
2007 2,000
2008 2,500
2009 3,000
2012 5,000 (Wikipedia)
2014 8,000 with 5 million worshippers. If a denomination, multi-site would be the nation's fourth largest.[271]

Evangelistic Motivation

Most if not all multi-site pastors described the importance of evangelistic impact as the most or one of the most important factors in deciding to go multi-site. In one study, 69% of multi-site pastors said the approach has made their churches more evangelistic.[272] Bill Easum and Dave Travis in *Beyond the Box* observed: "The key to understanding the multisite movement is to remember that fulfilling the Great Commission drives these churches, not a growth strategy."[273]

Steve Stroope, founding pastor of Lake Pointe Community Church outside Dallas, was one of many pastors helped by the diffusion of innovation through Leadership Network. One of these areas was in multisite. In early 2000, Lake Pointe had run out of space. The options were:

- Relocate, which is like starting all over.
- Buy adjoining property, but it was not available.
- Build a parking deck, but that would cost $10,000 per car.
- Shuttle people, but that was also limited.

As they were trying to figure out next steps Leadership Network put out a position paper on 1200 churches engaged with multisite. "I thought, that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in

[271] https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/february/multisite-churches-are-here-to-stay.html, accessed May 1, 2020.
[272] *Multi-Site Church Revolution,* 27.
[273] Bill Easum and Dave Travis, *Beyond the Box: Innovative Churches That Work* (Group, 2003), 85.

my life,"[274] Stroope said about the idea. But after attending a forum on the topic, it went from the worst idea to the best idea in his mind:

> We had 500 families driving who were all congregated in a particular community outside Dallas, in Mesquite, Texas. We said to them, "Would you be willing to stay in your community and not have to drive to Rockwall if we provided video for your service? We will provide did live worship, student ministry, and everything else." We had 200 of those families say yes. So, in 2004 we planted our first campus.
> In the process we discovered it wasn't just solving the space problem. We found something more valuable, and that was the people were driving out of their community, away from their friends, to come to a church that was meeting their specific needs weren't being salt and light in their own communities.

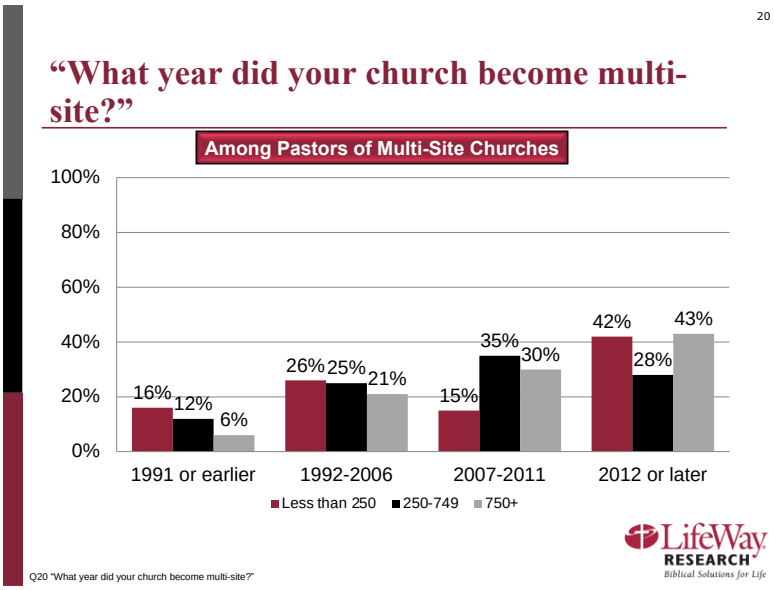
Dave Ferguson of Christian Community Church (CCC) describes how they came to practice multi-site through reaching people. When CCC was a new church, Ferguson went door-to-door meeting people (it worked for Rick Warren, so I did it, he said). He met a man named Nick. Nick also had a friend named Bruno, whose secular counselor said maybe he needed some spiritual component to his life. Bruno, like Nick, started coming to CCC. Ferguson invited him to a small group, then to host it (even though he wasn't a believer). CCC has saying: "Treat them like they're Christians until they realize they're not." They were going through the Gospel of John and were at the passage in chapter 3 about Nicodemus when Bruno's wife said, "Born again? Hey, that's what's happening to me." Nick and his wife and Bruno and his wife become believers.

Nick was in real estate. He wondered how to get their sense of community into real estate. His company built a community center, which became their second site!

As the following shows, the overwhelming majority of multisite churches started in the new millennium.

Year the Church Became Multisite

[274] Steve Stroope Interview.



Brian Frye's doctoral dissertation "The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon in North America:1950-2010" offers an extensive look into this novel movement. He notes how Elmer Towns was the first to offer a definition of what he called the Extended Geographical Parish Church (EGPC).[275] Frye argues that three factors were essential to the dawn of the multi-site church: (1) economic advancement, (2) accelerated mobility, and (3) technological innovation.

Frye's research affirmed the impact of Leadership Network on the acceleration of the multi-site movement. "In short," he writes, "it would not be an overstatement to say that Leadership Network is both the catalyzing agent and the accelerant for the establishment and brisk expansion of the multi-site church movement."[276]

Surratt, Ligon, and Bird write, "Fifty years ago, the one-venue option was the norm. Fifty years from now, we believe multi-site and multi-venue will be the norm."[277] Frye reported on the most comprehensive multi-site study to date in 2010 by Warren Bird and Kristin Walters. Frye noted four particularly important insights:

- Multi-sites now outnumbered megachurches.
- The most common (median) size is a church of about 1300.
- Two-thirds are connected with a denomination, leaving one-third non-denominational.
- Multi-site churches report a 90% success rate with many planting new churches.[278]

[275] Brian Nathaniel Frye, "The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon in North American: 1950-2010," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011, 2.
[276] Frye, Page 108,109.
[277] Surratt, Ligon, and Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*, 10-11.
[278] Frye, 116.

In a LN study completed in 2003 of 1,000 churches Warren Bird described a dozen key findings:[279]

> 1. Why do churches go multi-site? Evangelism is by far the main reason, 53% in this study. No other answer had more than 21%, and this second one was to reach a target area, so it also was evangelistic in focus.
> 2. What approach do these churches take? 48% said a mix of the franchise model (all campuses very similar) and the licensing model (variation is encouraged). Franchise (21%) and licensing (25%) were also important.
> 3. Size of churches: 51% were under 1,000 with the typical church averaging 850. But this is skewed somewhat because of some extremely large churches that responded.
> 4. Churches maintained the identity of one church by a number of ways: same vision (20%), leadership structure (17%), similar name (15%), same primary preachers, similar message and teaching (13%), similarities in worship (10%).
> 5. Where do they tend to meet? 55% in schools, most of them public schools.
> 6. How preaching and worship are done: 67% has live worship on site, 60% mostly do live on-site preaching,
> 7. Youth, children, and preschool: when taken together, 60% have these ministries at most sites.
> 8. Funding: 76% funded through normal operating budget.
> 9. How money is tracked: 76% centralize their budget.
> 10. Where do they get new leaders: 58% in house from most experienced leaders.
> 11. How do they do church governance? 80% have one church board for all campuses together.
> 12. Most positive surprise when moving to multi-site? Extremely varied. More common: increased number of people willing to serve at all sites, people re-engaged because the church is near them, increased evangelism at main site, off the chart's response to video teaching, etc.

In 2007, another LN study of multi-site churches found that the midpoint for the beginning of new sites was 2003; fully half of the respondents had started a second campus from 2004-2007, showing how novel the approach was in the 2000s.[280] Like the previous survey the main reason for starting a new campus was evangelistic. Other findings:

- Conversion growth was similar to that of the original campus, while attendance growth was slightly faster in the new campus.

[279] Warren Bird, "Survey of 1,000 Multi-Site Churches: A Dozen of the Most Significant Findings," Leadership Network, 2004.
[280] Stephen Shields, "2007 Survey of 1,000 Multi-Site Churches: Latest Lessons on a Growing Movement," Leadership Network, 2007.

- 87% of responding churches were in urban (24%) or suburban (63%) areas. New sites in cities tended to reach a significantly different demographic through a new location.

There were differences between this survey and the previous one:

- In the 2003 survey, 60% of churches used live preaching; it declined to 46% in the 2007 study.
- In 2003, 67% of respondents used live worship teams, but the 2007 respondents reported a significant increase to 82% of live worship.
- In 2003, 37% reported youth ministry at most off-site campuses; in 2007 that increased to 63%. Children/preschool ministries also grew from 55% to 87%.
- In 2003, schools marked 55% of the locations for new sites; in 2007 it expanded to three out of four.

Executive Pastors

Throughout the history of the church various staff positions have come and gone depending on the era, context, and size of a given church. There was a time when many churches had a minister of music and youth, but you almost never see that today. For a season the minister of education was a key role, especially in traditions and churches focused on the Sunday school. More recently, small group pastors, discipleship pastors, and mission pastors have become more common.

Jerry Johnson claims the origin of the title "executive pastor" dates to the year 1977 and pastor Ray Ortlund of the Lake Avenue Congregational Church. Johnson had served in that type of role previously at Rolling Hills Covenant Church, though his official title was student pastor. While at Lake Avenue, Ortlund changed Johnson's title to executive pastor as he recognized that title fit what Johnson did.[281]

According to John Hawco, the first text to use the title Executive Pastor was a book on church staff/administration by Kenneth Kilinski and Jerry Wofford in 1973.[282] Hawco wrote, "Their work may have been one of the earliest to use the title 'executive pastor' in any church staff/administrative text. In charting staff acquisitions, they suggest adding a full-time associate (usually a pastoral generalist) in a congregation of approximately 900 parishioners."[283]

It's clear that between the 1970s and 2000 the position of executive pastor rose to prominence, paralleling the rise of the megachurch. Hawco summarized the previous fifty years in terms of church staffing, arguing that "the 1980s saw further specialization in ministry assignments to include activities and recreation, volunteer overseer, and *executive pastor*." Further, he observed: "The 1990s brought even more specialization that were further influenced by the

[281] Jerry Johnson, email correspondence through Warren Schuh.

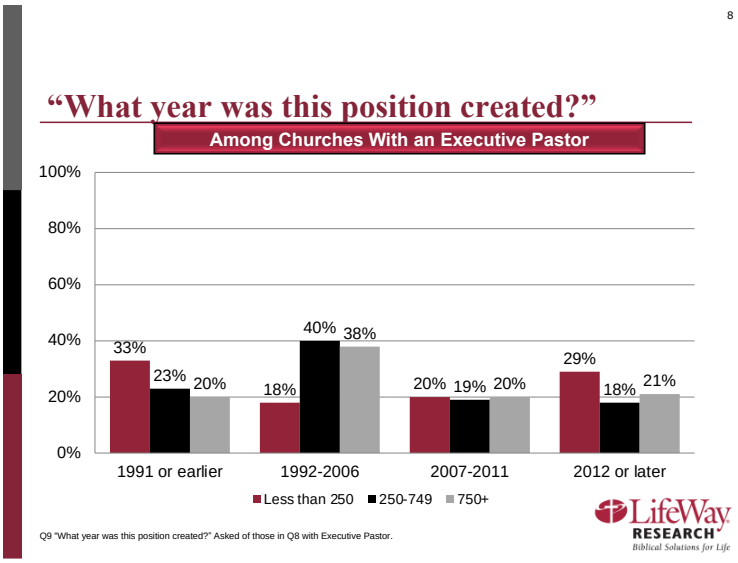
[282] Kilinski, Kenneth K., and Jerry C. Wofford. *Organization and Leadership in the Local Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1973, 176.

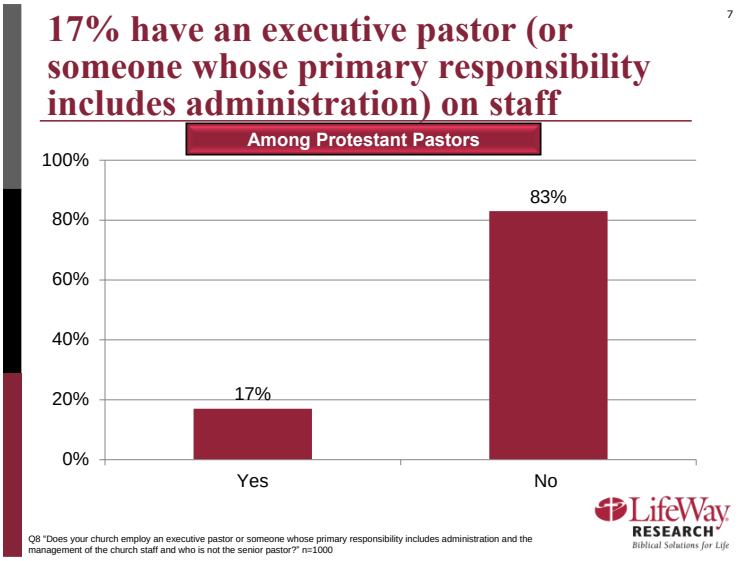
[283] Cited in John T. Hawco, *The Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor Team: A Contemporary Paradigm For The Larger Church Staff*, D.Min 2005, 19.

corporate model, including media/communications, senior adults, and brokers. The last term may or may not be considered ministry staff. In addition, some parachurch organizations have created financial planning ministries."[284]

The timing and rate of this diffusion of the Executive Pastor role was confirmed in our WCBGC 2017 survey, revealing that nearly three quarters (75%) of American Protestant churches of 750 members or more had an EP. Of these churches, 80% created the position 1992 or later, with the largest number (38%) coming from 1992-2006.

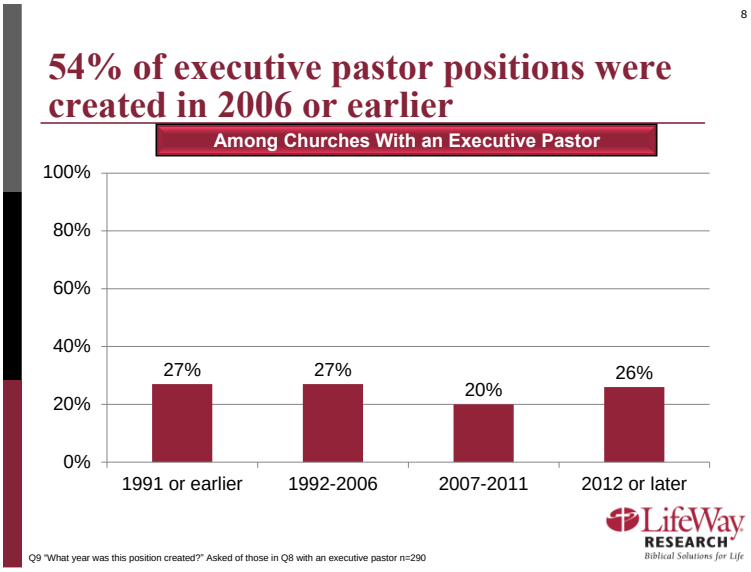
Pastors on the executive pastor role:





[284] John Hawco 2005, 18-19.

The following states that 54% of executive pastor positions were created in 2006 or earlier, but this could be misleading. It also shows that 73% of all executive pastor positions were created after 1992.



Leadership Network staff and leaders interviewed were quick to note the correlation between this diffusion and their prioritization of the innovation in the late nineties and early twenty-first century. While addressing the rise of megachurches, Brad Smith made the critical insight that the evolution of the executive pastor was a necessary secondary effect of the growing complexity of their organization.[285] In order for churches to expand their staffing and structure, pastors would either need to grow exponentially in their managerial and leadership skills or to delegate this sphere to a different leader. The inherent challenge for megachurches was carving out a role that was simultaneously managerial and pastoral; holding in tension the unique vision of the megachurch model of interconnected relationships of mutual ministry with the organizational skills to keep up with the demand of an increasingly complex web of ministries and oversight.

In this sense, LN leaders and other entrepreneurial evangelical networks purposefully connected their concept of the executive pastor as an evolution of Drucker's work on non-profit leadership. In Drucker's estimation, management in the church was not intended to make the church more businesslike but more churchlike. In other words, to not diminish the intimacy and inter-dependence at the center of church life but simply to bring efficiency to these processes. Using and analogy LN leaders would make use of in various publications and interviews, as the church was the body of Christ, so the body had systems that managed its life (i.e. nervous, circulatory, skeletal, or lymphatic systems). Often behind the scenes, these systems helped the body perform the way it was designed to work. Thus, as large churches necessitated more systems,

[285] Brad Smith Interview.

it needed leaders who understood the unique qualities, contributions, and efficiencies of each system. Moreover, it needed a leader who understood the idea of systems as a whole, helping the church bring each into alignment so that the church/body could work in unison towards a common goal. Recognizing that this individual needed simultaneously to be gifted in systems management and have deep theological and pastoral clarity on the mission and nature of the church, the position of the executive pastor was born.

The executive pastor did tasks formally done by the senior pastor but in a larger setting, those tasks of administration and oversight often took most of the pastor's time, while the vast majority are wired toward preaching, vision, and shepherding. Fuller Seminary colleagues David Luecke and Sam Southard illustrate this with a study of 690 ministers by sociologist Samuel Blizzard:

> As these ministers told Blizzard about the various roles of their work, they tended to attach the most importance to their role as preacher, followed by pastor, priest, and teacher. Their roles as organizer and administrator were least important to them. Likewise, they felt most effective and satisfied in their preacher and pastor roles, with organizer and administrator again at the bottom of the list. Yet, it was these least preferred roles where they reported spending the most time.[286]

Leadership Network provided a space for pastors to learn about and commiserate about the new role of executive pastor. Brad Smith believed the position came to prominence in a mindset shift in the 1980s somewhat facilitated by Leadership Network and its work with large churches. He argued the innovation was not in having a management gifted person in the church, but the innovation was giving *authority* over all the programs of the church to that person. The senior pastor could focus on vision, values, and communication, while at the same time the systems of the church wouldn't fall apart. The executive pastor could give attention to creating and managing systems, something senior pastor was either too busy or not gifted to do or both.

Different size markers were used by different authorities. Ditzen's *Handbook of Church Administration* (1962) gives an early "recommended church staff" listing according to church size in terms of members:

> At 300 members: one minister, one part-time sexton, and possibly a part-time music leader.
> At 600 members: the same, plus a part-time secretary and part-time treasurer.
> At 800: the same, plus a part-time student assistant, and the secretary and sexton become full-time.

[286] David S. Luecke and Samuel Southard, Pastoral Administration (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 11. Cited in Hawco, 45.

At 1200 members: add a Director of Religious Education, a part-time parish visitor and another secretary.

At 1600: Two ministers, Director of Religious Education, two secretaries, two sextons, full time organist/choir director and a part-time financial secretary.[287]

About a decade later, in 1973 Kilinski and Wofford suggest these pastoral roles:

1-200	Sr Pastor				
2-300	Sr Pastor	Education			
3-400	Sr Pastor	Education			
4-600	Sr Pastor	Education	Youth	Music	
6-900	Sr Pastor	Education	Youth	Music	Intern
9-1000	Sr Pastor	Education	Youth	Music	X Associate
to 1500	Sr Pastor	Education	Youth	Music	XXX Associate/Children
1500-2000	Sr P	Education	Youth	Music	XXXX Associate
					Child, College, Adult

Their recommendation includes a substantial upgrade in the number of support staff as well, from a secretary at 1-200, to three secretaries, two custodians, and a business manager by 1500-2000.[288]

About every month for about five years Brad Smith led a forum for Leadership Network. At those, he lost count of how many times a senior pastor would come to him with an issue to which Smith would reply, "If you had an executive pastor, you could resolve this issue." Many senior pastors feared giving up power to an executive pastor, so Smith would regularly introduce a pastor with an executive pastor to those without one, and the innovation spread. The key was to hire someone capable in systems but who didn't have the gift and calling to be a preacher. Effective executive pastors have complementary gifts as they are wired to manage the church. Thus, the executive pastor has no desire to become a senior pastor, unlike what happens with an associate pastor position. Effective executive pastors don't mind the fact that the senior pastor typically gets the credit from the congregation both for their work and the work of the executive pastor. They are great leaders but have a servant heart.

Carol Childress observed that Warren Schuh, who led the Large Church Networks for Leadership Network, had as much to do with the growth of the executive pastor as anyone. Schuh himself had grown up in a pastor's home. He saw his dad do so much behind the scenes that no one in the congregation had any idea he was doing, so Warren recognized as a child that if someone could do a lot of that background work, pastors like his dad could be freed up to do what he loved to do like preach and pastor. He went to college at Wheaton believing God called him to do this. He joined Wheaton Bible Church and became friends with the pastor with a role like that. As the

[287] Lowell Russell Ditzen, *Handbook of Church Administration* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 185. Cited in Hawco, 53.

[288] Taken from a table from Kilinski and Wofford, *Organization and Leadership*, 176. Cited in Hawco, 53-54.

position of executive pastor grew, Schuh could relate well to those in that role. He has served as an executive pastor for many years in addition to his work with Leadership Network.[289]

Campus Pastor

In an importance sense, the campus pastor was a natural outgrowth of the multi-site model and an evolution of the executive pastor role. The instigating need that fostered the innovation was the demand for pastoral leadership over church campuses, recognizing that these leaders could not function as independent pastors. The entire purpose of multi-site model was to decentralize church attendance, membership, ministry, and outreach across a broader geographical area *while maintaining a centralized leadership, teaching, and administrative core*. If each campus were independently pastored, the connection between each site would be too transient.

At the same time, however, campus leaders could not simply be deputized executive pastors. They were the leading pastor over a distinct body of believers that worship, served, and witnessed together within a distinct community. As the leading representative of the larger church, these leaders needed to be more pastorally attuned to the shepherding needs of their people Thus, leaders involved in multi-site innovation recognized early the need for a middle-ground role that operated as a pastor of a small to medium sized church in every respect except regular teaching.

As Thomas Friedman observed, "In the world of ideas, to name something is to own it. If you can name an issue, you can own the issue."[290] This is particularly true in LN's role in the innovations surrounding multi-site churches. When Leadership Network launched the multi-site focus under Greg Ligon's leadership, the term "campus pastor" didn't exist. "One of the ways you know you are part of an innovation is you create the language," Greg Ligon said, echoing Friedman. They came up with the term as part of the leadership community. More recently some churches are changing the term campus pastor to community pastor. This is driven because these churches are so committed to serving their communities and is accelerated by the rise of online church; the community pastor seeks to minister to those in the online community who have never attended physically any campus.

Geoff Surratt of Seacoast Church described how the campus pastor role is unique:

> The role of campus pastor is unlike any other staff position at a church. Campus pastors lead an entire campus, but they aren't free to make their own decisions in the same way a solo pastor would. Their job is to spread the vision of a senior pastor, whom they may talk with in-person only about once a month. In a video-driven ministry, the campus pastor is

[289] Warren Schuh Interview.
[290] Tim Ferris, *Tools of Titans*, 276.

expected to cast vision, touch hearts, and cover the announcements in perhaps 240 public seconds or less each weekend. That takes a special set of gifts![291]

In the book *A Multi-Site Church Roadtrip* Surratt gives characteristics of an effective campus pastor and then traits not conducive to the role:

1. Catalytic Leader: The campus pastor should be a high energy, self-starter who not only gets things done, but is able to make new things happen.
2. Multi-Tasker: A high-capacity player who is able to juggle a lot of balls simultaneously and love it.
3. People Magnet: A relational "animal" who draws people like flies to honey.
4. Team Player/Builder: Should not be a lone ranger but is able to work within the system and turn followers into teams.
5. Communicator: The campus pastor doesn't have to be an exceptional Bible teacher but is comfortable and articulate when speaking to a room full of people.
6. DNA Carrier: Should bleed the vision and default to the mission and values that align with the senior leadership of the church.

There are also some traits that are not conducive to a campus pastor:

1. A person who feels compelled to preach (unless you put them on the teaching team).
2. An independent-spirited entrepreneur.
3. Someone with an agenda other than reaching people far from God and growing a congregation. So where do you find campus pastors? Often, it's best to start by looking internally, within your existing church.[292]

As the church adapts to advancing the gospel in new cultural realities no doubt more staff positions will be created for those realities.

[291] Surratt, Geoff. *A Multi-Site Church Roadtrip* (Leadership Network Innovation Series) (pp. 123-124). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.
[292] Surratt, Geoff. *A Multi-Site Church Roadtrip* (Leadership Network Innovation Series) (pp. 150-151). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Chapter 6: Post EE Entrepreneurship and Innovations

Whenever a movement occurs there is an inevitable counter movement. The Protestant Reformation witnessed a subsequent Counter-Reformation. The entrepreneurial evangelical movement saw this as well. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the pushback that came was opposed to entrepreneurialism, innovation, or the desire to reach people. And it would be a mistake to think the pushback was aimed at organizations like Leadership Network that helped advance the entrepreneurial spirit.

The pushback came more toward specific emphases and trends, while also recognizing the innovations employed to reach Baby Boomers were not as effective for reaching Baby Busters or subsequent generations. Many of the same impulses promoted by Leadership Network were engaged by other groups—rejection of cultural stagnation, racial homogeneity, and evangelistic lethargy, for instance.

An example of the pushback was the shift from process to more organic approaches. Doug Slaybaugh observed, "After the Boomer stage there was pushback to anything that was process." Slaybaugh himself was not impressed with the pushback, however: "When you have someone formerly unchurched, and extremely broken, and chooses to come to church, and if they do receive Christ, to think that they are going to find their own way by themself is just ridiculous."

Pushback Emerges

Some of the pushback came from churches and leaders that represent smaller yet influential networks of church life today. Others, like the Emerging Church Movement, for a time captivated much attention.

Hyper-Contemporary

One more recent example is what I call hyper-contemporary. This would include Elevation Church and Steven Furtick, which he planted in Charlotte in 2006. Another is Perry Noble, who started Newspring Church in 2000 in Anderson, South Carolina, and later Second Chance Church. Ed Young at Fellowship Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is another. Fellowship started in 1998 and became a multisite congregation in 2003. These churches push the envelope on contemporary. For instance, Noble once began Easter services with the ACDC song "Highway to Hell." Noble, who was removed from his church years later because of alcohol and family issues, later said he regretted that decision, because "shock jock" ministry always has to be trumped.

Furtick, Young, and others did series on sex, with a focus on things like "How to Have the Best Sex" which for obvious reasons attracted crowds. Hyper-contemporary built on the earlier Boomer models but did it with more volume and by living often on the edge of propriety.

New Reformed

Another stream in the innovative expansion would be identified with a renewal of Reformed theology. Collin Hansen's book *Young, Restless, and Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* in 2006 helped to popularize this phenomenon.

These younger pastors, from Mark Driscoll who reached the unchurched in the Pacific Northwest, to Matt Chandler reaching the dechurched in the Bible Belt of DFW, these men looked to the three Johns: Calvin, Piper, and MacArthur, but moved to a more contemporary worship approach while remaining centered on expository preaching and Reformed theology. The Acts 29 Network related to this stream.

Missional/Incarnational

This stream reacted to the business and marketing focus on the Boomer predecessors. Neil Cole was an early advocate of this group, as was Alan Hirsch later. Hirsch's book *The Forgotten Ways*, while not as influential as Warren's purpose-driven books, nevertheless influenced a large host of church leaders weary of technique and hungry for a return to a more primitive approach to mission.

I called Neil Cole the "anti-attractional leader for the anti-attractional church."[293] Cole's organic house church approach focuses on smaller churches that multiply rapidly instead of much larger congregations that don't. His approach can be summarized: 1) what we're doing isn't working; 2) what's happening globally is seen more often in house churches; 3) for multiplication to happen it needs to be simple, ordinary, and transferable.

The Emerging Church Movement

The most significant pushback apparently came from the Emerging Church Movement. This movement was in no small way spawned out of the work of Leadership Network.

Leadership Network formed the Young Leaders Network in 1996. The first invitees "looked like the older leaders with different clothes," Brad Smith recalled. So, they asked senior pastors in their network not to recommend people like them but pastors they were fighting with. Linda Stanley, who at the time was Smith's administrative assistant, said the YLN was for pastors under 40 whose churches were over 500 in attendance. As with other networks they formed they found these pastors mainly by referrals from pastors already engaged with LN. These younger pastors were doing things new and differently with their churches that attracted a younger generation.

That's when names like Mark Driscoll began to surface. Smith spent time traveling to meet with these leaders. He spent two weeks at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, and another two with pastor

[293] Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders Can Learn, Discern, and Move into the Future* (Regal, 2007), 25.

Tim Celek, who planted one of the early "Buster churches" in California and cowrote *Inside the Soul of a New Generation* with Dieter Zander. Another leader was Dan Kimball of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California, who wrote *The Emerging Church* (2009, with Forewords by both Rick Warren and Brian McLaren). These younger, edgier pastors weren't impressed with churches like Willow Creek.

Another church was University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, with pastor Chris Seay and worship leaders including David Crowder and Chris' brother Robbie. Seay would become a key leader in the YLN. Unlike the focus on excellence to reach Boomers, these churches were far more laid back and relatable to the Gen X culture. Bill Hybels in his efforts to reach Boomers gave great focus to excellence, whereas Chris Seay seeker to reach Gen X went out of his way *not* to focus on excellence, in order to be more accepting to his context.

Leadership Network, as it had with the Boomer church leaders before, created a space for these young leaders to meet. At the big event in 1996, Smith had Zander welcome people. Mark Driscoll was asked to speak as "a prophet to blast them," Smith said. "Mark made everyone angry in a good way."

Over time, however, Smith saw pastors with a more liberal theological bent show up at these. Smith stopped having anyone his age or older engaged in the conversation. These younger leaders had different conversations than the older megachurch pastors: "At same time megachurch pastors were meeting, talking about millions of dollars for freeway ramp, while young leaders were trying to survive as churches."

Linda Stanley described a shift when Doug Pagitt took over as leader of the YLN. It "kind of went off into a different direction under Doug's leadership," she said in an understatement. According to Smith, these YLN wanted to take the name Emergent, but he refused. That was a name used on the European continent. We have to make a distinction between "Emergent" which was tied to an organization, and "emerging" which was more a descriptor.

Scot McKnight summarized the difference between Emergent and emerging:

> To prevent confusion, a distinction needs to be made between "emerging" and "Emergent." Emerging is the wider, informal, global, ecclesial (church-centered) focus of the movement, while Emergent is an official organization in the U.S. and the U.K. Emergent Village, the organization, is directed by Tony Jones, a Ph.D. student at Princeton Theological Seminary and a world traveler on behalf of all things both Emergent and emerging. Other names connected with Emergent Village include Doug Pagitt, Chris Seay, Tim Keel, Karen Ward, Ivy Beckwith, Brian McLaren, and Mark Oestreicher. Emergent U.K. is directed by Jason Clark.[294]

It was through Leadership Network that Brian McLaren became a major voice, albeit a controversial one. Christian publishers wouldn't publish his book, so Leadership Network found Jossey-Bass, a secular publisher in the Bay area, who loved it. “The innovators and distributors of

[294] http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html, accessed May 3, 2020.

innovation in one generation may actually be the ones who reject it in the next," Brad Smith observed.

McLaren's book, *A New Kind of Christian* (2001), and his next, *A Generous Orthodoxy* 2004), served as focal points, or lightning rods, for the growing movement. Mark Driscoll's *Confession of a Reformission Rev: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (2006) served as a more balanced and biblical view of the growing movement than McLaren's controversial books. That is, except for Driscoll's chapter on alcohol, which was less than favorably received by many groups including most Southern Baptists.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger defined nine practices of emerging churches:

(1) identify with the life of Jesus,
(2) transform the secular realm,
(3) live highly communal lives.
Because of these three activities, they
(4) welcome the stranger,
(5) serve with generosity,
(6) participate as producers,
(7) create as created beings,
(8) lead as a body, and
(9) take part in spiritual activities.[295]

Steven Miller called the emerging church "an energetic, if somewhat amorphous, community of young evangelicals who sought to break away from the modern evangelical establishment."[296] He added:

> Their eclectic and innovative worship styles explicitly repudiated the sentimentalist trappings of contemporary Christian culture. Like mid-twentieth century neoevangelicals, emergents sought to evangelize the world by way of engaging it. Like the evangelical left of the 1970s, they questioned the shibboleths of their spiritual elders.[297]

Categories

I summarized the emerging church "conversation" as they like to call it in three broad categories.[298] Here is how I described it in an article for Baptist Press:

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[295] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Baker Academic, 2005), P???
[296] Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (Oxford University Press), 148.
[297] Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (Oxford University Press), 148.
[298] http://www.sbcbaptistpress.org/bpnews.asp?ID=22406

- **Relevants**

Yes, I made up the word. Sorry about the grammar. However, it expresses an important idea. There are a good number of young (and not so young) leaders who some classify as "emerging" that really are just trying to make their worship, music and outreach more contextual to emerging culture. Ironically, while some may consider them liberal, they are often deeply committed to biblical preaching, male pastoral leadership and other values common in conservative evangelical churches.

They are simply trying to explain the message of Christ in a way their generation can understand. The contemporary churches of the 1980s and 90s did the same thing (and some are still upset at them for doing so). However, if we find biblical preaching and God-centered worship in a more culturally relevant setting, I rejoice just as I would for international missionaries using tribal cultural forms in Africa.

The churches of the "relevants" are not filled with the angry white children of evangelical megachurches. They are, instead, intentionally reaching into their communities and proclaiming a faithful biblically-centered Gospel there. I know some of their churches -- they are doctrinally sound, growing and impacting lostness.

- **Reconstructionists.**

The reconstructionists think that the current form of church is frequently irrelevant, and the structure is unhelpful. Yet, they typically hold to a more orthodox view of the Gospel and Scripture. Therefore, we see an increase in models of church that . . . are often called "incarnational" or "house" models. They are responding to the fact that after decades of trying fresh ideas in innovative churches, North America is less churched, and those that are churched are less committed.

. . . . So, if emerging leaders want to think in new ways about the forms (the construct) of church, that's fine -- but any form needs to be reset as a biblical form, not just a rejection of the old form. Don't want a building, a budget, and a program? OK. Don't want the Bible, scriptural leadership, covenant community? Not OK.

- **Revisionists.**

Much of the concern has been addressed at those I call revisionists. Right now, many of those who are revisionists are being read by younger leaders and perceived as evangelicals. They are not -- at least according to our evangelical understanding of Scripture. We significantly differ from them regarding what the Bible is, what it teaches and how we should live it in our churches. I don't hate them, question their motives, and I won't try to mischaracterize their beliefs. But, I won't agree with them.

Revisionists are questioning (and in some cases denying) issues like the nature of the substitutionary atonement, the reality of hell, the complementarian nature of gender, and the nature of the Gospel itself. This is not new -- some mainline theologians quietly abandoned these doctrines a generation ago. The revisionist emerging church leaders

should be treated, appreciated, and read as we read mainline theologians -- they often have good descriptions, but their prescriptions fail to take into account the full teaching of the Word of God.

I went on to argue we should partner with the relevants, dialogue with the reconstructionists, and speak prophetically to the revisionists.[299]

Tony Jones observed the role of LN:

> We gathered in 1998 and 1999 and 2000, at conferences under the imprimatur of Leadership Network, an evangelical organization out of Dallas. The electricity at those events was palpable. We spurned speakers like Peter Drucker, an organizational wonk whom the megachurch pastors loved, and turned instead to theologians: Stanley Grenz, Rodney Clapp, Stanley Hauerwas.
> "We've gotten it all wrong!" we claimed. "We need to rethink the gospel!"
> Rick Warren reached out to us. "The methods change, but the message never changes," he admonished.
> "The medium *is* the message!" we countered.
> For theological reasons, we were ushered out of Leadership Network in 2001.[300]

Dave Travis of Leadership Network said as the Young Leaders Network transitioned into the Terra Nova project, the group went in three different direction:

- The Reformed Camp, with leaders like Mark Driscoll, which became the foundation of what would be called the "young, restless, and reformed."
- The Evangelical Mainstream, with leaders like Chris Seay.
- The Liberal Stream, who were more experimental, like Pagitt.

Pagitt began ministry as a youth pastor, working at Wooddale Church with Leith Anderson in the 1980s. He became senior high minister about 1991-02. As Anderson was very involved in Leadership Network, Youth Specialties, Group, and similar youth ministry organizations didn't fit the growing large church context, so Pagitt created a larger church network for youth pastors, and Leadership Network helped. The focus was on reaching GenX youth and postmoderns.

Leighton Ford's son Kevin and Andy Crouch became involved. By the mid-90s, Leadership Network was focusing on reaching the next generation. They created the Young Leaders Network,

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[299] Scot McKnight in an article for *Christianity Today* identified five groups: Prophetic (or at least provocative), Postmodern, Praxis-Oriented, Post-Evangelical, and Political. See http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html (accessed January 13, 2020.

[300] Tony Jones, July 4, 2018, Eagle Lake, Minnesota (Preface to the 10th Anniversary Edition of THE NEW CHRISTIANS)

with leaders including Chris Seay and Dieter Zander. From 1996-98, some in the group like Pagitt thought the focus should be on cultural issues and not only the next generation.

About this time, the emerging church conversation was hitting full steam, and Pagitt left his involvement with Leadership Network to start Emergent Village in 1999. That's when Leadership Network transitioned to the Terra Nova Project. Pagitt believes there would never have been an emerging church conversation (or movement) without the work of Leadership Network.

Leadership Network saw a shift coming that was less about the practice of ministry and more about ideology, which didn't fit LN. "We want to be about fostering innovation movements that activate the church to greater impact by helping our clients more from ideas to impact,"[301] Travis argued. LN would later add the Lausanne Covenant to their theological position around 2009-2010. Terra Nova wouldn't last long as it too did not really fit the aims of Leadership Network.

The emerging church conversation showed up like a meteor on the horizon and flamed out about as quickly. Tony Jones, a key figure in the movement, said this in his Preface to the 10th anniversary edition of *The New Christians:*

> When *The New Christians* came out in 2008, they were heady days for those of us in the emerging church movement (ECM). In November 2004, we rated cover stories on the flagship magazines of both the Protestant Left and Protestant Right. . . .
> We had arrived. Evangelicals loved us and mainliners were discovering us. We had book deals and speaking gigs. We put on conferences that were attended by thousands. We had over 100 cohorts around the country—monthly gatherings in bars that were part book club, part support group for burned-out pastors. We started a nonprofit, and I was hired as the first employee of a movement that was going to revolutionize the church in America.
> It had all happened so fast—just five years from our first meeting. And in another five, it would be all but over.[302]

Jones offers a fascinating, brief history, from the rise in influence of Brian McLaren to the "fierce" response of conservative Calvinists and others to their theological ideas. "In 2005, *Time Magazine* declared McLaren one of America's leading evangelicals;" Jones said, adding: "by 2010, Scot McKnight expelled him from evangelicalism, writing in *Christianity Today*, 'Brian McLaren has grown tired of evangelicalism. In turn, many evangelicals are wearied with Brian.'"[303]

Multi-Ethnic Movement

[301] Dave Travis Insterview.
[302] Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (Fortress Press, 2019), xiii.
[303] Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (Fortress Press, 2019), xv.

Evangelicals have never been known for their aggressive leadership in matters of race. During this period, however, voices began to be raised calling attention to this fact. An innovation growing out of this era was a shift of focus on churches that were multi-ethnic.

The ground-breaking book *Divided by Faith* (2000) by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith served as a catalyst for many in the rise of multi-ethnic focus. The authors argue that white evangelicals hold tenaciously to "accountable free will individualism,"[304] interpreting matters like race as problems of the individual more than society. While many would see sin as affecting both individuals and societal ills, "For most white evangelicals, however, sin is limited to the individuals," They discovered in their survey. "Thus, if race problems—poor relationships—result from sin, the race problems must largely be individually based."[305]

On the other hand, the authors found white evangelicals "often find structural explanations irrelevant or even wrongheaded."[306] The authors argue that with views like this, evangelicals have been more of a problem than solution to the issues of race in our country.

But the issue didn't end with the publishing of this book. A number of evangelicals in the years following have worked tirelessly to bring about change.

Years later, in 2013 Michael O. Emerson argued for a 20 percent number as a critical marker for diversity:

> Research on a variety of organizations has shown that it takes 20 percent or more of another group to have their voices heard and effect cultural change on an organization. Short of that percentage, people are largely tokens. Part of this 20 percent or more rule is mathematics. At 20 percent of another group, the probability of contact across the groups is 99 percent.[307]

Thus, the target for those advocating on behalf of greater diversity in churches uses Emerson's figure of a multiracial congregation being one with less than 80 percent of one specific racial group. Since 1998, he noted "an explosion of materials, networks, and organizations has appeared claiming the need for, rightness of, and necessity of multiracial, multi-ethnic, multicultural churches."[308]

Leadership Network played a vital role in raising the focus on multiethnic ministry, especially through the work of Mark DeYmaz. Raised Catholic and influenced by the Jesuits, that we were "meant for others" was ingrained in DeYmaz from childhood.[309] Later as an evangelical he became a youth pastor at Fellowship Bible Church, a megachurch in Little Rock, Arkansas. From 1993-2000 the church grew from 2000 to 5000, with youth growing from 150-600 during

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[304] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 76.
[305] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 78.
[306] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 78.
[307] https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/new-day-multiracial-congregations, accessed March 12, 2020.
[308] https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/new-day-multiracial-congregations, accessed March 12, 2020.
[309] The following is taken from DeyMaz, interview.

his time at the church (1993-1997). The church was experiencing many wonderful blessings. Yet, DeYmaz noticed the only people of color in the church were janitors, which troubled him. He saw this was typical across his city, and then observed it nationally.

After two years of studying the New Testament on the issue, he became convinced that outside of the Jerusalem church every church in the New Testament was intentionally multi-ethnic, which "propelled a credible and compelling message of God's love to all people because all people could actually see it." He wondered why there couldn't be such a church in Little Rock.

In 2001, he went into the urban center of Little rock to create what *Christianity Today* called "the big dream in Little Rock" three years later. He launched Mosaic in June 2001. He discovered the difficulties of launching such a church. "There is a 100% chance you will be offended in these environments," he learned. Maybe 97 out of 100 pastors he knew thought he was crazy to do this. Over time he learned others were doing a similar thing in other cities.

He determined with others he'd met to start a network. They held their first Mosaix gathering in 2004. They started small and continued to grow through the 2000s. Their first national conference was in 2009 with 400 people. By 2016, over 1,200 hundred gathered in Dallas.

DeYmaz was influenced by Leadership Network, through whom he wrote *Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them* as part of the Leadership Network Innovation series. He recognized Leadership Network's willingness to "advance disruptive innovation"[310] helped this movement to grow. They published early books like Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church by DeYmaz and George Yancey without being sure they would be profitable in terms of sales.

He believed that by 2020 the movement would be in the early adopter stage in the U.S., and by 2030-35 it will be normative. Now, denominations like the Wesleyans have a multi-ethnic department. What has been the impact of this and others?

Recently DeYmaz offered an update of the current realities in a July 2020 article for *Christianity Today.*[311] He reported how the Mosaix Global Network had enhanced the 20% diversity figure with this definition in 2018:

> A healthy multiethnic church is one in which people of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds will themselves to
>
> a) walk, work, and worship God together as one to advance a credible witness of God's love for all people;
>
> b) recognize, renew, reconcile, and redeem broken relationships, both interpersonal and collective;
>
> c) establish equitable systems of responsible authority, leadership, governance, and accountability within the congregation;

[310] DeyMaz Interview.

[311] https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/july/growth-of-our-multiracial-and-multiethnic-churches-honest-a.html, accessed August 12, 2020.

d) advocate and advance justice, mercy, and compassionate work in the community; and
e) embrace the tension of sound theological reflection and applicational relevance in an increasingly complex and intersectional society for the sake of the Gospel.

Further, in the article DeYmaz observed these three groupings and their percentages gleaned from a presentation by Michael Emerson at the National Multiethnic Church Conference in November 2019:

- Catholic: from 17% (2006) to 24% racial diversity (2019)
- Mainline Protestant: from 1% (2006) to 11% (2019), down from 12% in 2012
- Evangelical: from 7% (1998) to 23% (2019), up from 15% in 2012

While evangelicals still have much work to do in terms of racial equality and multi-ethnicity, as a group they have shown more progress in recent years, while mainline Protestants have actually declined.

In his book *Ethnic Blends,* DeYmaz gave a long-term vision:

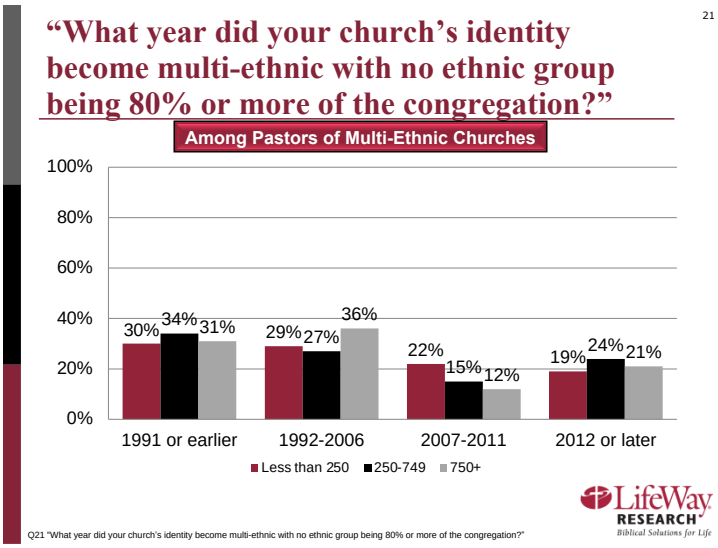
> My personal hope, and the goal of many of my colleagues within the movement, is that 20 percent of churches throughout the United States will achieve 20 percent diversity by the year 2020. If we are successful in both encouraging and achieving that goal, I believe the movement will be well into the Early Adopter Stage. Following this stage, our belief is that multi-ethnic vision will be embraced by the majority of North American congregations and soon go mainstream. Indeed, our hope and prayer are that we will see 50% of churches achieve 50% diversity by the year 2050![312]

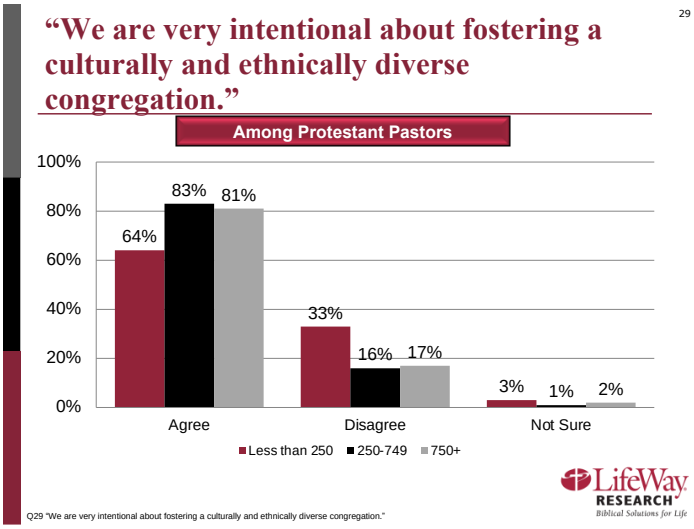
In 2003, *United by Faith* was written by Emerson, Sociologist George Yancey, Curtiss Paul DeYoung, and Karen Chai Kim, also a sociologist. A response to *Divided by Faith*, the authors argued that the local church is the solution to the racial divide. Others were doing work in this field including Pete Scazarro, Erwin McManus, and Sun Chan Rah.

A biblical foundation for the multi-ethnic church was set forth in *United by Faith* from the book of Acts. In Acts 11, the new church in Antioch—the third largest and ethnically diverse city in the Roman Empire—"selected a diverse leadership team in the early stages of their formation. Both Paul and Barnabas were Jews raised outside Palestine and immersed in Greek culture, yet they were fluent in the traditions of Jerusalem."[313]

Pastor responses to the multiethnic movement:

[312] DeYmaz, *Ethnic Blends PAGE*
[313] https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/april/22.33.html, accessed August 1, 2020.





Key dates:

2003, *One Body One Spirit* by George Yancey
2003, *United by Faith* by DeYoung, Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim gave a more optimistic view than *Divided by Faith.*
2004, George Yancey and Mark DeYmaz host the first local multiethnic church conference in Dallas, TX (Mosaix Global Network); attended by only 30 people
2005, Mosaix's second conference in Dallas (100 people in attendance)
2005, *Against all Odds* published
2005, CT Cover on Multiethnic Churches
2005, Marti *A Mosaic of Believers*
2007 *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* by DeYmaz, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*
2007-09, Multiethnic tracks offered at National New Church Conference

2008, Purpose Driven Network Summit, Willow Creek, denominations began hosting multiethnic emphases, denominations hired staff for this focus.
2010, first national Mosaix conference, 400 attending.

Missional Movement

Origin of the Term

Finding consensus on the term "missional" has proven difficult even as usage of the term has grown significantly in the past 20 years. I summarized the origins of the missional movement here:

> The GOCN surfaced in North America in the late 1980s as an expansion of the Gospel and Culture conversation inaugurated in Great Britain in 1983 with the publication of Leslie Newbigin's short monograph, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches*. Newbigin publicized the growing consensus among missiologists and theologians that what had once been a culture of Christendom was now unmistakably post-Christian-- and in many ways, anti-Christian. Out of this awareness, the previously ecclesiocentric notion of mission became exchanged, according to Guder, with an overpoweringly theocentric rethinking of Christian mission.
> This missiological reframing could be summarized with the concept of missio Dei-- "mission of God"-- that is, as Guder defines it, "the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation."
> God's nature as a "sending" or "missionary" God also led to a new vantage point on our understanding of the Trinity. Borrowing from David Bosch, Guder positions the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit. This Trinitarian point of access inevitably modifies ecclesiology, as the missio Dei institutes the church as the "instrument and witness," rather than the intent or "end" of the gospel. Guder states, "This does not mean that the church is not essential to God's work of salvation-- it is. But it is essential as God's chosen people..."[479]

With the widespread adoption of the concept of missional by leading pastors in the early 21st century, the term had become an essential part of the church lexicon. Yet this newfound popularity came at the cost of clarity and precision. As the idea of "being missional" expanded to include anything that was broadly evangelistic or culturally engaging, the term lost its potency. As this ambiguity grew, two important works. By the end of 2008, Alan Hirsch observed that the popularity of the term was hurting its potential impact on shaping church philosophy, structure, and leadership. Hirsch argued, "as church leaders continue to pile onto the missional bandwagon, the true meaning of the word may be getting buried under a pile of assumptions."[314]

Central to Hirsch and other's criticisms of the movement's trajectory was its collapsing of all ministry strategies with the idea of missional. To be missional was not an overarching concept under which subsets of emerging, seeker, purpose driven, etc. fit under as particular contextual strategies. At the same time, it was not synonymous with a renewed emphasis upon social justice.

[314] Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional." *CT Pastors.* https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/fall/17.20.html.

Rather, Hirsch defined mission al as “recovering a missionary understanding of God. By his very nature God is a "sent one" who takes the initiative to redeem his creation. This doctrine, known as *missio Dei*—the sending of God—is causing many to redefine their understanding of the church.[481]

The second work was a series of books and articles I (Stetzer) wrote beginning with *Breaking the Missional Code* in 2006 and capped by a series of articles defining missional in 2007 through *Christianity Today*. In these articles, I distinguished missional from preceding eras of church growth and church entrepreneurialism yet demonstrated the ways it built on their success while addressing their blind spots:

Church Growth	**Church Health**	**Missional Church**
Members as Inviters	Members as Ministers	Members as Missionaries
Conversion/Baptism	Discipleship	Missional Living
Strategic Planning	Development Programs	People Empowerment
Staff-Led	Team Leadership	Personal Mission
Reaching Prospects	Reaching Community	Transforming Community
Gathering	Training	Releasing
Addition	Internal Group Multiplication	Church Planting Multiplication
Uniformity	Diversity	Mosaic
Anthropocentric	Ecclesiocentric	Theocentric
Great Commission	Great Commandment	Missio Dei

I addressed the common caricature of the missional movement that reduced its meaning to merely a local expression of global missions. In their summaries, *missions* refers to the global element of the church mission where *missional* is its local application. As I have written in numerous books and articles, this fails to grasp the larger philosophical and organizational principles that inform the strategy and vision of the movement as a distinct theology of cultural engagement and evangelism.

Years later I would add, “being missional conveys the idea of living on purposeful, biblical mission. Mission is the reason the church exists and the church joins Jesus on mission. And this mission is from everywhere to everywhere.”[315]

Instead of seeing the church having a mission, he argued in the language of Moltmann that the "mission has a church." Missional churches are different; this is seen most clearly in their posture toward the world. This is contrasted with the attractional model which had been the staple approach of evangelistic churches for generations. With the growing post-Christian makeup of the west, this model is decreasingly effective.

Being missional, Hirsch continues, is not only about the posture of the church, but of all believers in that fellowship. "Every disciple it to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture."[482]

A year before, in 2007 I wrote a series on the meaning of missional where I observed the prevalence of the term in denominations as the term *du jour* of the early 21st century.[483]

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[315] Ed Stetzer. “Why Defining Missional Matters.” *The Exchange | A Blog by Ed, Christianity Today.* Stetzer.https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/july/why-defining-missional-matters.html.

Miller observed the relationship between the emerging church and the term: "Their open-ended blend of word and deed, faithfulness and worldliness, was captured by the expansive term 'missional.'"[484]

Rick Warren was talking about the missional idea three years before Guder's book was published:

> Understanding the demographics of your community is important, but understanding the culture of your community is even more important…No missionary to a foreign land would try to evangelize and minister to people without first understanding their culture. It would be foolish to do so…One of the major barriers to church growth is "people blindness" --- being unaware of social and cultural differences between people. (Warren, 165-166)

Reggie McNeal offered an overview of the term from the context of the emerging church movement:

> First, the emerging movement becomes missional by participating, with God, in the redemptive work of God in this world. In essence, it joins with the apostle Paul in saying that God has given us "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).
>
> Second, it seeks to become missional by participating in the community where God's redemptive work occurs. The church is the community through which God works and in which God manifests the credibility of the gospel.
>
> Third, becoming missional means participating in the holistic, redemptive work of God in this world. The Spirit groans, the creation groans, and we groan for the redemption of God (see Rom. 8:18-27).[316]

Its origins go back to 1983 in Great Britain the Gospel and Culture Network conversation over Lesslie Newbigin's book *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches.* Newbigin publicized the growing consensus among missiologists and theologians that the West had moved clearly from what could be described as Christendom to a post-Christian culture. In many ways, anti-Christian would be an accurate description. Thus, the more ecclesiocentric idea of mission shifted to a rethinking of Christian mission from a theocentric perspective.

The term used to describe this missiological reframing was *missio Dei*, or the "mission of God". Missiologist Darrell Guder defined the concept: "the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation."

The perspective of God as a "sending" or "missionary" God led to a nuanced understanding of the Trinity. Borrowing from David Bosch, Guder describes the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit. In this concept the church is the "instrument and witness," rather than the intent or "end" of the gospel. Guder states, "This does

[316] http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html, accessed May 3, 2020. DeYoung's marks were: Prophetic/Provocative, Postmodern, Praxis oriented, Post-evangelical, and Political.

not mean that the church is not essential to God's work of salvation-- it is. But it is essential as God's chosen people..."[317]

Missional as anti-"Traditional" (Entrepreneurial)

From the early years of entrepreneurial evangelicalism (1983 with Newbigin), to near the end in 2010, the term *missional* became one of the more common expressions in the lexicon of church life in the West. Alan Hirsch noted that the missional movement was not synonymous with purpose-driven, emerging, or evangelistic:

> A proper understanding of *missional* begins with recovering a missionary understanding of God. By his very nature God is a "sent one" who takes the initiative to redeem his creation. This doctrine, known as *missio Dei*—the sending of God—is causing many to redefine their understanding of the church.[318]

In their influential work, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Hirsch and Alan Frost added to this definition by positioning the Missional Movement as a reaction to the past entrepreneurial models. In their belief, the now "traditional church" had grown stagnant because it had relied upon standardized tools for managing and leading the church as opposed to placing the mission of the church at the center of their philosophy. They identified three central mistakes flowing from this past model. First, churches had become "clones" of one another rather than unique expressions of specific communities and people. Second, they had undervalued the spiritual component of church leadership that defied standardized principles of entrepreneurial leaders. Finally, they traditional churches had overemphasized the role of pastor as central leader. This had created a division between pastor and people, hindering the congregation's ability to realize their role in the church's mission.[319]

The Externally Focused Church

The missional focus was influenced by the emerging church conversation and the Externally Focused Church emphasis of Leadership Network. Brad Smith said the term "Missional Church" was for them at Leadership Network a theological phrase, so they used the term "externally-focused church" instead. Those who led this focus were mostly African American churches. LN got the name from Kirbyjon Caldwell in Houston, whose church reaching out into their community. Their conference was called E Church, which is where the externally focused idea came.

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[317] This is taken from https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2010/april/monday-is-for-missiology-missional-voices.html, accessed June 22, 2020.
[318] https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/fall/17.20.html, accessed July 20, 2020.
[319] Hirsch and Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come,* Kindle location 770

Eric Swanson led the Externally Focused Church Leadership Community. He traveled to churches on behalf of LN like Mariner's in Southern California with pastor Kenton Beshore, Imago Dei in Oregon, and Perimeter Church in Atlanta. "These were churches that were measuring their effectiveness not by how many people they could bring into the sanctuary at a given time, but on the transformational impact they were having on the community," Swanson observed. When he talked to each church, their pastors thought they were the only ones doing this, so in typical LN fashion they began to connect churches together. The first time a group met for a forum they said, "I guess I'm not crazy after all."[320]

He and Rick Rusaw, a pastor in Colorado whose church exemplified the externally focused concept, wrote *The Externally Focused Church* to explain the idea. It's not that complex to grasp what an externally focused church looks like:

> They are inwardly strong but outwardly focused.
> They integrate good deeds and good news into the life of the church.
> They value impact and influence in the community more than attendance.
> They seek to be salt, light, and leaven in the community.
> They see themselves as the "soul" of the community.
> They would be greatly missed by the community if they left.[321]

Externally focused churches change the scorecard from the three B's: buildings, budgets, and bodies to give equal or greater attention to tracking their impact outside the four walls of the facility. In the perspective of Swanson and Rusaw, this tended to focus on two groups. First, those who had been ignored or marginalized by previous church models or strategies. In addition to biblically specific categories such as orphans, widows, prisoners, and the poor, modern contexts highlighted issues of poverty, immigration, disability, and racial injustice. These churches either start ministries in their communities to care for the marginalized, partner with existing organizations, agencies, and ministries, or a combination of both.

While in many ways connected to the first group, the second focused on the importance cities. After years of emphasis upon church ministry in suburbs and skepticism at the entry-barriers to urban church planting, the mission movement emphasized cities as critical mission fields that often required adaptive church methods.[322]

The Expanding Applications of Missional

Leadership Network published a number of papers documenting examples of churches serving their communities outside the church walls. One looked at six strategic approaches

[320] Eric Swanson, Interview.
[321] Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2004), 12.
[322] Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2004), 24-27.

churches were using to serve their communities, replete with stories of churches.[323] Eric Swanson, who led the externally focused church area for LN, wrote a paper on "Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation". Swanson outlined the broad implications of the movement as it expanded beyond the simple external-internal dynamic. Having led the Externally Focused Church campaign, Swanson highlighted ten practical shifts churches could embrace as aligning with the missional innovation including: from building walls to building bridges; from measuring attendance to measuring impact; from condemning the city to blessing the city; from ministering to the congregation to ministering to the region or parish; and from teacher to learner.[324]

Beyond the initial Externally Focused Church term, Leadership Network poured significant resources into a broad range of missional resources that served as guiding works in the movement:

- Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future, Missional Renaissance* and *Missional Communities;*
- Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making;*
- Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom;*
- Neil Cole, *Organic Church;*
- Mark Driscoll, *Confessions of a ReforMission Rev;*

Yet beyond resource production was Leadership Network's drive to generate collaborative initiatives. A central example during this period was "The Urban Plunge," which examined a group's immersion into urban Memphis to see how the gospel was both shown and shared in difficult circumstances by Street Ministries, Hope Presbyterian Church, and others. The article described what an externally focused ministry in a specific urban context looked like.[325] Volunteerism in general received an emphasis, as highlighted in a report on the volunteerism in churches serving their communities. As in other, similar reports, a number of churches are profiled in relation to the LN Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community gathering in Sacramento in 2005 which met around the theme of volunteerism.[326]

One emphasis in the Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community of LN was called Fast Fire. In one example of that community, twelve churches involved gave summary reports of their previous six months' engagement in externally focused ministry at their March 6-8, 2007 gathering. The summary for the churches responded to these questions:

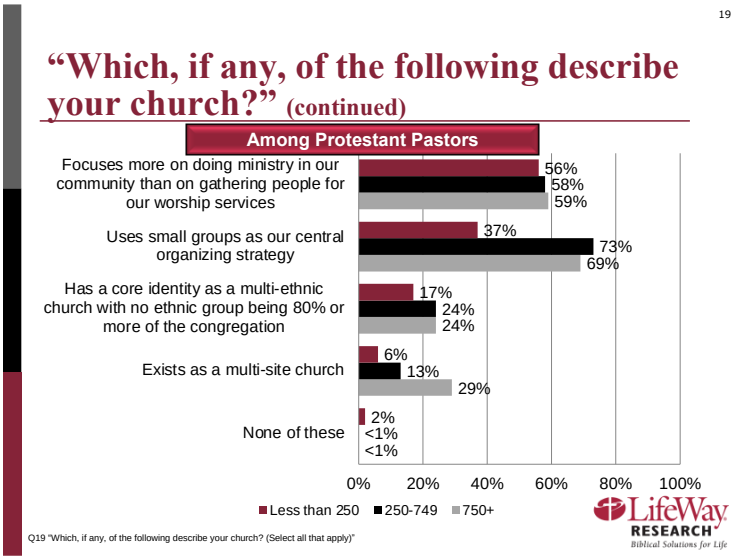
- What is your greatest success?
- What has worked well?

[323] Krista Petty, "Six Catalytic Service Approaches: Taking First Steps Through Great Days of Service," Leadership Network, 2006.
[324] Eric Swanson, "Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation: How Churches Are Impacting Their Communities with the Good Deeds and Good News of the Gospel," Leadership Network, 2003.
[325] Alexadra McNabb, "The Urban Plunge: A First-Person Taste of Inner-City Renewal," Leadership Network, 2005.
[326] Krista Petty, "Transforming Volunteers from Social Workers to Kingdom Laborers: Tapping into America's All-Time High Volunteerism," 2006.

- What is "stuck"?
- What was your biggest surprise?

The enthusiasm for the effort is clear in all the responses, most of which focused on either the significant "buy-in" by church members and success in a number of specific ministry areas, or both.[327]

Pastor responses on community outreach:



This shift towards a missional identity among U.S. by pastors was driven in large part by a burgeoning recognition are recognizing they are each on a unique mission field—right in their own neighborhoods. They began to see themselves not solely as leaders of a single institution isolated from society but as catalysts for a mission that had broader community and societal ramifications. With this transition from strategies of church health to strategies of church mission, the focus changed from understanding the dynamics of your organization to understanding the "code" of your mission field. As with any good missionary, pastors needed to study what made their communities and cultures tick, the habits and beliefs that made up their unique world. Only then could they begin to engage in those communities in a missional sense.[328]

Discontinuity of the Challenge of Innovation

[327] "Fast Fire Update," Leadership Network, March 6-8, 2007.
[328] Stetzer, Ed. 2005. "The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church: An Overview of the Church Growth Movement From, and Back to, Its Missional Roots." presented at the American Society for Church Growth. Innovation: Church Growth, Church Health and Missional (Stetzer, Page 15-16).

While a narrative of criticism of past generation emerged, it is critical to note that many of the previous generation of leaders were not only receptive to critique but encouraged the underlying spirit of innovation and creativity at the heart of the missional movement. Just as several leading voices in the Church Growth Movement had supported the early innovations of the Entrepreneurial Movement, these leaders recognized the necessity of criticism to the innovative process. Going back to the economist Schumpeter, innovation is inherently a process of creative destruction. At the forefront of this effort was Buford himself, modeling the necessary humility in reflecting on the criticisms of the Missional Movement.

At its core, Buford recognized that innovation was necessary because the task of the church was never complete. There were always challenges left to be confronted; particularly those previous generations may have been completely unaware of. It was up to each generation to recognize what these challenges were in their context and build the church to meet these needs. In Buford's thinking, if the body is an image of the church, the innovations of Entrepreneurial Evangelicals were primarily aimed at improving its mouth. That is, through worship, teaching, proclamation, leaders need to help the church relearn how to speak in a new culture. "A lot of our innovations," Buford reflected, were "for the church gathered, not the church scattered." While important at the time, this had created blind spots in external elements of their discipleship: "in terms of engaging community, in terms of making a difference in culture, the strength of our Sunday experiences and programs has actually gotten in the way of making disciples at the level where it is needed." [329]

This same line was echoed by Reggie McNeal, suggesting that such intense focus on the internal dynamics and health of the church had left leaders with little framework for measuring success in transforming communities. Traditional scorecards of success that had defined much of Leadership Network for 25 years were proving unsatisfactory in light of broader cultural and political problems. McNeal observed that it is tone-deaf to claim success because a church had over a thousand members across 12 new sites while the opioid crisis was ravaging the same community. Rather, scorecards needs to account for ways to "do collaborative mission that involves us working with whole other domains. It's a whole new game, and one we need to learn to play."[330]

In this sense, this shift marked the natural evolution over half a century of church leadership rather than successive rejections of past church models. From an emphasis upon Church Growth to Church Health to now an emphasis upon Church Mission.

> The missional church builds upon the ideas of Church Growth and Church Health but brings the lessons learned from each into a full-blown missions focus—within their local mission field as well as the ends of the earth. To be missional means to move beyond our church preferences and make missional decisions locally as well as globally.[331]

[329] Bob Buford, Interview.
[330] Reggie McNeal, Interview.
[331] Stetzer, 2005, p. 16, 18.

McNeal offered similar reflections on the importance of this paradigm shift to missional focus. "Ideas and conversations have lives and they morph," McNeal observed, "so I think what was known as the missional church conversation is morphing back to more biblical language, like Kingdom, and I think that's pretty healthy."[332] The externally focused church focus helped promote both the showing and sharing of the gospel. "Good deeds bring good will, becoming a catalyst for good news," as one leader observed.[333]

Conclusion

In his 2020 book *The Innovative Church*,[334] Fuller professor Scott Cormode explored the ways modern churches have pursued innovation and how pastors today can learn from these examples. The book was well received, being generally regarded as a useful tool for pastors to consider the ways innovation in their ministry philosophy and strategy can make their leadership and outreach more effective. Yet throughout the book there is not a single reference to Bob Buford or Leadership Network. Even as many of the central innovations and leaders they diffused and/or platformed are central to the story, these two remain just outside the picture frame, demonstrating their desire to "be the platform not the show."

Reviewing the era from 1980-2010 through the lens of history it is clear the period was one of the more dramatic periods of innovation and entrepreneurialism in church history. Focusing in more closely to see the influences of this period, the careful eye can see the impact Leadership Network and thus Bob Buford played in this process. Leadership Network never sought to create the innovations. Instead, it created a space where entrepreneurial church leaders could cross-pollinate their ideas to form a honeycomb of innovation. Their success in doing so accelerated changes in church life that led to multitudes being reached for Christ, new churches being planted by the thousands, the spread of both the megachurch and the multisite church, and a healthier focus on the multiethnic church.

And this story, to the glory of God, is still being written.

And here is the grand irony: Leadership Network only sought to be a diffusor of the innovations discovered by church leaders. Yet the novel approach of gathering large pastors into forums with no preset agenda for mutual community and learning, which paved the way for accelerated entrepreneurialism and innovation, may well have been the most important innovation of all.

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[332] Reggie McNeal, Interview.
[333] Alexandra McNabb, "Widening the Funnel in Externally Focused Churches: Good Deeds Become Good Will, Becoming a Catalyst for Good News," Leadership Network 2005:1.
[334] Scott Cormode, *The Innovative Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).