

ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES  
IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE  
RESULTING CHURCH GROWTH

by

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## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURAL CHURCH  
DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN  
THE UNITED STATES AND THE RESULTING CHURCH GROWTH

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### The Problem

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a church health paradigm that is being used in Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States as a tool for increasing both church health and growth. One question that needs to be addressed is whether the implementation of NCD within Seventh-day Adventist churches results in church growth.

### The Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish a validation of the NCD process by evaluating the church growth experienced at the Milwaukee Central

Seventh-day Adventist Church and compare that growth with Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States which have participated in taking the NCD survey.

### The Method

An exegetical study of Mark 4:26-29, along with a review of current literature, provides the setting to analyze the effectiveness of NCD within Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the United States. One hundred churches were randomly selected to participate in the analysis, and divided into two groups, depending on whether it could be verified that the church attempted to improve their minimum factor. The two groups church growth factors of tithe, local giving, membership, and baptisms were then compared.

### Conclusions

As Christ spoke of the self-growing seed, so in Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States, once the environment of the church is healthy, God will and does cause His church to grow. In comparing the growth statistics, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in four of the six areas tested. Those areas were tithe, membership, annual number of baptisms, and total number of baptisms.

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

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March 2009

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Dedicated to Pamela Mills  
my loving wife and partner in life and ministry  
for without her encouragement and support  
my ministry would be incomplete.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist church in North America is facing a growth crisis that it can not afford to ignore. Church members, pastors, and conference officials all want to see their churches grow; however, too often the desire for growth is not matched with the reality of church life. Despite the longing for growth, since 1992 the North American Seventh-day Adventist church membership has not even kept up with the generally accepted biological growth rate of an annual 2 percent.<sup>1</sup> At the present rate, this denomination is destined to find more and more of its churches closing their doors.<sup>2</sup> Numerous programs, initiatives, and seminars on church growth have been largely ineffective. Training laity for evangelism, along with innovative efforts for nation-wide evangelism, have yielded inconsistent results as most congregations still are not seeing the desired growth.

In an effort to reverse this disturbing trend and find the right formula, pastors

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed analysis of membership growth in North America compare *Annual Statistical Report* (Washington DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992); *Annual Statistical Report* (Washington DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006); [www.adventistarchives.org/docarchives.asp](http://www.adventistarchives.org/docarchives.asp) (accessed December 3, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Research of various Christian churches indicates that unless the current trends in membership are reversed, predictions are by the year 2050 that 60 percent of existing congregations in America will close their doors. Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 16.

and church leaders have sought answers from successfully growing churches both within and outside the denomination. These sojourns often lead to a duplication of the style of ministry from the growing church. Instead of gleaning principles to use in their local congregations, a model for ministry is cloned without regard for the local situation or environment. While there has been limited success, these attempts often leave the local congregation more frustrated and despondent about its own ability to grow.

Since 1995 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has conducted several “Net” evangelistic campaigns. Thousands of churches have participated in the various satellite meetings hoping they would be the catalyst for growth. However, simply doing an evangelistic campaign repeatedly in the local church has not been sufficient to make a significant impact. In fact, according to research reported by Monte Sahlin, one characteristic of declining churches is to rely solely on evangelistic campaigns, with no community service.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that traditional evangelistic methods should cease; rather there must be something else in conjunction with traditional evangelistic campaigns in order to achieve significant growth.<sup>4</sup> The local church must continue with traditional evangelism and develop a more well-rounded healthy approach to church growth.

In recent years an interest has developed in Natural Church Development (NCD) and its emphasis on providing a healthy environment for church growth.

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<sup>3</sup>Monte Sahlin, *Adventist Congregations Today* (Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2003), 20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 33.

Research done in churches around the world across denominational lines reveals that healthy churches do grow.<sup>5</sup> The main tenant of NCD is that providing a healthy atmosphere in the church will cause it to grow “all by itself.”<sup>6</sup> Still many Seventh-day Adventist pastors and some conference administrators have been reluctant to implement the principles of NCD partly because of a perception that those principles are not supported by Scripture or Ellen G. White. In 2001 Robert Folkenberg, Jr. sought to answer those objections by developing a guide for implementing NCD within Seventh-day Adventist churches.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Russell Burrill authored a more concise explanation of these principles from the Adventist perspective.<sup>8</sup> Yet, while the concerns about NCD principles being biblically sound and supported by the writings of Ellen White have been answered, many pastors, church leaders, and even some conference officials still do not seem to recognize church health as a vital ingredient for church growth.

Instead of seeking to create an atmosphere within the local congregation

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<sup>5</sup>For a thorough discussion of Natural Church Development, the research and the philosophies toward church development and growth see Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2000). See also Christian A. Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2005) along with Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999) and Christoph Schalk, *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches* (Würzburg, Germany: Christoph Schalk, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12.

<sup>7</sup>Robert S. Folkenberg Jr., “The Creation of a Natural Church Development Coaching and Implementation Guide for the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 2001). See also Robert S. Folkenberg Jr., *Health for the Harvest* (Berrien Springs, MI: North American Division Evangelism Institute, 2002).

<sup>8</sup>Russell Burrill, *Creating Healthy Adventist Churches through Natural Church Development* (Berrien Springs, MI: North American Division Evangelism Institute, 2003).

conducive to healthy growth, pastors and church leaders too often attempt to manufacture growth by searching for an ever elusive magical formula. The importance of creating an environment for healthy church growth is perceived as secondary to discovering the latest program, technique, or idea for growth.

### **Purpose of the Ministry Project**

The first purpose of this ministry project is to establish a validation of the NCD principles and philosophy for growth within the Seventh-day Adventist church in the United States. By comparing one-hundred congregations within the United States, this project will illustrate that quality growth occurs not by obtaining the latest program or technique, but rather by allowing God to use the natural growth mechanisms He has established.

Additionally, by establishing the relationship between church health and church growth, a goal of this ministry project is to give encouragement to Seventh-day Adventist pastors and church leaders in their quest for church growth. Recognizing the value of church health, they will be encouraged to establish an environment conducive to growth within their congregations. Regardless of church size or demographics, once the environment for growth is established, Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States will begin to experience greater qualitative growth.

### **Justification for Ministry Project**

The church is called the Body of Christ and the individual members of the

church called “parts of the body” (1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:12). This speaks to the organic, biological nature of the church which emphasizes growth. The church is also spoken of in technical or institutional metaphors which emphasize the aspect of church building (1 Cor 3:10-17). This dual nature of the church can be seen in metaphors such as “living stones” (1 Pet 2:4-8) and “growing into a temple” (Eph 2:19-22). It is clear from Scripture that the purpose of the church is for people called out of spiritual darkness to expand the kingdom of God. The church is the living organism God has chosen as the means of carrying the message of salvation to the world.<sup>9</sup> To accomplish this all important work God has given spiritual gifts to build up His church (Eph 4:11, 12). What is the relationship between the organic nature of the church, its health, and the institutional nature of the church? Schwarz maintains that is not the purpose of the “institutional” church to manufacture growth, but rather to stimulate growth within the organic church.<sup>10</sup> If this is the case, what role does the “institutional” church play in accomplishing its mission of expanding the kingdom? It is vital to understand the importance of the health of the body of Christ and its corresponding relationship to church growth.

A second justification lies in understanding the biblical soundness to the “all by itself” principle of growth critical to the NCD concept of church growth. Is it possible that God intends for His church to grow automatically if certain principles are in place? Could it be that by focusing on developing a healthy environment

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<sup>9</sup>Gene Mims, *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>10</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 20.

within the church, it will naturally grow? Should congregations spend their energy on making the church as healthy as possible, trusting that God will bring about the desired growth? This project will seek to answer these questions and provide support from both the Bible and writings of Ellen White in support of the “all by itself” principle of church growth.

Despite the recent emphasis placed on NCD within the North American Seventh-day Adventist denomination, there has not been a detailed study of a local church demonstrating its contribution to the health and eventual church growth in relationship to the implementation of NCD. Such a study would help to provide a validation for the emphasis of NCD within the Seventh-day Adventist church and its use as a tool for growth regardless of the local church’s size or demographics.

Finally, this study will show whether the healthy growth experienced at the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church is typical of what can happen with the implementation of the NCD principles. Because of this project, church leaders across North America can find encouragement and direction in their quest for healthy church growth by understanding the relationship between church health and church growth.

### **Limitations of the Project**

The scope of this project will be limited to Seventh-day Adventist churches within the United States. It does not address the impact of NCD on Seventh-day Adventist Churches outside the United States, its impact on churches of other denominations or compare growth with other denominations in the United States.

## **Methodology of the Project**

The process followed in this ministry project was to conduct an exegetical and theological study to determine the validity of the “all by itself” principle for church growth. This principle is central to the concept of NCD; therefore a detailed study of Mark 4:26-29, as well as other supporting principles was made. Special attention was also given to determine the usage or support of this principle in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Second, the author reviewed the literature regarding NCD principles and its implementation within the local church. In addition, current literature on church growth principles was reviewed, including books and articles on the principles and characteristics of healthy churches. Special attention was given to selected strategies and programs that have been effective in producing healthy church growth. These strategies, programs, and principles were then compared with the eight qualities for healthy churches as defined by the NCD research.

Third, after examining various methods for evaluating church growth, an objective evaluation was chosen based on the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists’ criteria for determining health and church growth. This includes measuring the local church tithe, total giving, membership, attendance, and number of baptisms. Additionally, consideration was given to those churches which planted new congregations within the period of evaluation. Using the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists’ criteria for church health, an evaluation was made of the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church’s health over the

past fifteen years. NCD principles were implemented in the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church and a careful comparison of the health and growth of the church was done using both the NCD process and North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists' criteria for health and growth.

Next, fifty Seventh-day Adventist churches within the United States which have implemented NCD in some manner seeking to raise the minimum factor of the congregation, were randomly selected to participate in an analyzation of NCD's impact on health and church growth in relationship to the North American Division criteria for health and growth. Fifty Seventh-day Adventist churches within the United States which have taken the NCD survey, but not implemented the program, were also randomly selected to participate in the analyzation. These two groups were compared to determine any significant contribution to church growth made by the implementation of NCD principles in relationship to the North American Division criteria for health and growth.

Finally, the experience at the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church was compared with that of the other one hundred randomly chosen churches to determine whether the experience of health and growth was typical with other congregations which also implemented the NCD principles.

## CHAPTER 2

### MARK 4 AND CHURCH GROWTH PRINCIPLES

Christian Schwarz uses Mark 4:26-29 as an integral biblical basis for his theory of NCD.<sup>1</sup> The “all-by-itself” principle forms the basic rationale for considering church health as a priority for church growth. Is this a valid interpretation and usage of the parable? Should focus be turned from the newest church growth strategy to seeking to provide a healthy environment within the church? Is Rick Warren correct when he states that “the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth.”<sup>2</sup> Could it be that Christ was giving an illustration as to the focus His church was to place on health, and allow God to grow the church?

The parables in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark deal with growth and the Kingdom of God. These “seed” parables have been interpreted over the years in various ways. Articles, books, and dissertations debate the different nuances of their meanings. It is impossible within the scope of this paper to adequately discuss all the fine points of exegesis, redaction, and contextualization of these three parables. In an endeavor to understand their meaning, it is necessary to analyze

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<sup>1</sup>Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12.

<sup>2</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 17.

Christ's words within the context of the struggles of modern church growth. Therefore, it is essential to discover within the seed parables of Mark 4:1-32, principles and lessons to help direct a church or pastor in their quest for church growth and its relationship to church health.

### **The Definition and Interpretation of Parables**

In the broadest sense one would consider a parable as any form of speech used to illustrate or persuade by the help of a picture.<sup>3</sup> These word pictures can be figurative, metaphors, a parabolic story, or allegory.<sup>4</sup> Dodd describes parables as a “metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about the precise application to tease it into active thought.”<sup>5</sup> Accepting this notion of a parable raises the question as to how easily one can come to an understanding of its meaning.

Mowry suggests that the meaning of the parables was revealed to only a chosen few. He asserts that it is almost impossible for the church to fully understand the original situation or function of the parable.<sup>6</sup> While Edwards agrees that parables are not easily understood, he maintains that they are given for the purpose of clarification. Jesus' use of parables was to knock the “hearers off balance so that

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<sup>3</sup>Colin Brown, “Parable,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 2:743.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:746.

<sup>5</sup>C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1935), 16.

<sup>6</sup>L. Mowry, “Parable,” *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abington Press, 1962), 3:652.

they must see things in a new light.”<sup>7</sup> It seems clear, regardless of the difficulty in understanding parables, that they are word pictures, stories, or allegories given to illustrate concepts in a way to make them easier to understand.<sup>8</sup>

Christ’s usage of word pictures to illustrate the unknown by the known and to reveal divine truth by earthly things with which the people were familiar<sup>9</sup> has long been the subject of interpretation. For centuries the Church viewed the parables as an allegorical method.<sup>10</sup> Every aspect of the parable was dissected and various meanings given to the minutest detail. However, at the turn of the twentieth century Julicher espoused a view where each parable had one main point.<sup>11</sup> This became popular partially due to the thinking “that only one plot should be developed in the drama.”<sup>12</sup> While on the surface it sounds reasonable, this theory presents some inherent difficulties. To limit a parable to one and only one main point presupposes a limitation that is difficult to support. Today, more and more “scholars have come to recognize that Jesus’ parables often have important details with hidden symbolism, and that the mistake of past interpreters was more one of anachronistic

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<sup>7</sup>James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 127.

<sup>8</sup>F. Hauck, “παραβολη,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 5:756.

<sup>9</sup>Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1941), 17.

<sup>10</sup>C. L. Blomberg, “Parable,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:656.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 657.

<sup>12</sup>Brown, 2:748.

allegorizing than that of allegorical interpretation as such.”<sup>13</sup>

While seeking to discover the meaning of the “seed” parables in Mark 4, it must be recognized that while there may be one principal point in Christ’s presentation, it is necessary to look for other allegorical features as well.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Chiastic Structure of Mark 4**

Before looking at the parables in detail, it is vital to see their connection with each other in this parabolic chapter. The chiasm is a well recognized literary device used to both give importance to the central theme and to show relationships and parallels that might not be so readily apparent. Joel Marcus reveals the chiastic structure of Mark 4.<sup>15</sup>

- A. Narrative Introduction (vv. 1-2)
- B. Seed Parable (vv. 3-9)
- C. General Statement (vv. 10-12)
- D. Explanation of Parable (vv. 13-20)
- C. General Statement (vv. 21-25)
- B. Seed Parables (vv. 26-32)
- A. Narrative Conclusion (vv. 33-34)

The striking nature of this chiasm is not only how the explanation of the

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<sup>13</sup>Blomberg, 3:657.

<sup>14</sup>R. E. Brown and J. R. Donahue, eds., “Parables of Jesus,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (Detroit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2003), 10:867.

<sup>15</sup>Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 289.

parable of the sower is the central point, but also reveals a direct relationship between the seed parables. Rather than being a haphazard collection of parables, explanations, and narration, it is a unified treatise.

The parable of the sower is set against the parable of the self-growing seed (vv. 26-29) and the parable of the mustard seed (vv. 30-32). These three parables need be understood as a unit, each complementing the other and enhancing the underlying meaning of the discourse. Looking more closely at these three parables, one will discover how, while retaining their unique meanings, they also complement and augment each other's lessons when viewed as a unit.

Mary Ann Tolbert illuminates this point by claiming that the parable of the sower is the main parable with the other two seed parables being further explanations of what happens to the seed in the hearing-response when it is in the good soil.<sup>16</sup> In fact, looking at the context of the parables, Tolbert asserts, it appears as though the seed is not the focus of attention as much as the earth.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Parable of the Sower**

In the parable of the sower, Jesus takes a common activity and, with an added twist, teaches some vital lessons for the Christian and the Church. Farming in Palestine was difficult. The Mishnah decreed that farming should be done in an orderly, methodical way, with special care given not to mix the seeds.<sup>18</sup> While it is

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<sup>16</sup>Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 150.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>18</sup>Edwards, 128.

often interpreted that the farmer would plow the seeds under after scattering them on the ground, there is abundant evidence suggesting that ancient farmers plowed prior to sowing the seed. With this understanding, it appears as though the farmer was anything but careful in the sowing process. Actually, a case could be made that the sower in Jesus' parable was almost wasteful in his profligate sowing.

A more careful look at the parable makes it clear that the sower works tirelessly in the sowing process. Mark chose to use the same word for the "going out" of the sower as he used in describing Jesus declaring his purpose in Mark 1:38.<sup>19</sup> The sower is sparing no effort or expense in his attempt to gain a harvest. His effort of indiscriminate sowing does not show disregard for the value of the seed, but rather his desire to see the seed planted and growing wherever possible.

Since Jesus gave the disciples the meaning of this parable in vv. 13-20, one would expect little left to be said regarding its interpretation. That is not the case. Even with the clear interpretation of the kinds of soils, the meaning of the four soils has been extensively debated among theologians. Several have gone so far as to imply that the real focus of the parable should be not on the sower but on the soils, suggesting that it be called "The Parable of the Four Soils." It is true that in each case the sower and the seed are the same. The only difference in the outcome is a result of the soil in which the seed falls. Failure to produce a harvest is not a result of poor seed, but rather the condition of the soil in which it was sown.<sup>20</sup> This fact is

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>20</sup>Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 56.

further illustrated when one recognizes the relationship between the parables.

In a closer look at the word “to hear” in v. 20, one notices a change from the subordinate aorist to a present indicative. This subtle but important shift in the verb describes a people who “really hear the word, listen to it continually, allow themselves to be broken apart and put together again by the word as a growing plant shatters and transforms the earth in which it is sown.”<sup>21</sup> It is this favorable reception of the “seed” which distinguishes the soils. It is the spirit of the hearers that hinders or encourages the growth. The farmer sowed indiscriminately; the differences in growth occurred not because of his efforts or the seed, rather the difference of soil.<sup>22</sup>

Marcus shares the view with many who focus on the soil that “the soils are what they are. People are who they are, they can not change. The ground can not change its nature.”<sup>23</sup> It is hard to argue against the fact that the soil cannot change itself. It is biblically accurate to acknowledge that people can not change themselves either. Jeremiah asks the rhetorical question, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leper his spots? Then may you also do good, what are accustomed to do evil?” (Jer 13:23) While individuals cannot change themselves, there is no reason for the wayside, stony, or thorny ground to remain as such.<sup>24</sup> To believe that there can

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<sup>21</sup>Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 313.

<sup>22</sup>Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St Mark*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1955), 83.

<sup>23</sup>Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 312.

<sup>24</sup>Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 56.

be no change discounts the power and influence of God in the individual heart and life. Therefore, while the characteristics of the different soils dictate the outcome of interaction with the seed, no one should use the soil as an excuse for not obtaining a harvest.

In linking the Kingdom of God to the actions of the sower sowing seed, one needs to address the ultimate duty of the sower in preparing the soil before sowing the seed. While the soil cannot change itself, the sower, with proper cultivation, can change the nature of the soil from wayside, stony ground, or thorny ground to good productive soil. Through a focused effort the soil can be made productive. Once the seed is sown in this good soil, there will be an abundant harvest.

This understanding is crucial when speaking of church health and its relationship to church growth. For lasting, bountiful growth to occur in the church, the seed must be sown in good soil. The latest gimmicks, marketing, and flashy programs may attract a crowd for a time, but lasting, quality growth can occur only in good soil. Therefore, just as the farmer prepared the soil for the reception of the seed, so the pastor and church must focus on developing an environment that will foster growth.

### **The Parable of the Self Growing Seed**

Like the parable of the sower, the parable of the self growing seed has been referred to by many different titles. Each title belies the emphasis in which the interpretation is placed. Some titles include “The Patient Husbandman,” “The Confident Sower,” “The Unbelieving Farmer,” “The Seed Growing Secretly,” and

even “The Farmer and the Harvest.” Despite the differences in emphasis placed on the sower, seed, growth process, or harvest, there are some clear lessons for the church looking for answers to a biblical philosophy for church growth.

The parable begins with a man sowing seed on the ground and then doing nothing. The description of the man rising and sleeping appears to disassociate the sower from any further direct activity with the seed until the harvest. This does not, however, negate the normal cultivation process. While the parable seems to ignore all the human activities normally required for a successful agricultural venture,<sup>25</sup> it should not be seen to “repudiate human effort in favor of divine.”<sup>26</sup> Gould asserts that just because the man does not know how the seed grows does not exclude the processes of cultivation; rather, it refers to the fact that the process of growth is beyond that of the sower.<sup>27</sup> The manner in which the crop grows is beyond the power of human power to control, manipulate, or influence. Once the sowing process is done, once the human effort has been accomplished, the harvest is left in the hands of God.

Often theories, programs, and procedures are studied, with the hope of arriving at the magical formula for success in building up God’s church. The emphasis is placed on human efforts, technology, innovation, and prowess. Christ, however, in this parable debunks that theory by clearly stating the man does not

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<sup>25</sup>Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 326.

<sup>26</sup>Robert A. Guelich, “Mark 1-8:26,” *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 34a:242.

<sup>27</sup>Gould, 80.

know how the seed grows. It is beyond his control. While this “intrinsic divinity in life is no encouragement to sloth, it rebukes a feverish trust in human agency.”<sup>28</sup>

Today too much confidence is placed in what humans can accomplish, too much reliance on human inventions over a simple trust in divine working.<sup>29</sup>

This parable is not giving pastors and congregations the right to sit back and wait for God to work mightily on their behalf. It does not absolve involvement in the process. It simply is trying to put all the pieces in the right perspective. Without fully understanding the internal process of growth, the farmer sets out to work. In the same manner, pastors and churches seeking growth realize there is a work to be done. Pavur asserts that “if there is an implication here, it might very well be that this person springs to action, having been ready and aware of the stages of the crop all along.”<sup>30</sup> Accepting this premise, just as the farmer knows when and how to sow and reap, so the Church today needs to be active in the process, while maintaining a balance of reliance upon the divine.

Christ continues the parable in Mark 4:28 by saying that the “earth by itself” brings forth the crop. This seems to augment the philosophy of growth occurring apart from human activity. The Greek word *αυτοματη* is frequently used in the Septuagint to refer to that which is worked by God alone.<sup>31</sup> It is the same term that

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<sup>28</sup>George A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 18.

<sup>29</sup>Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 82.

<sup>30</sup>Claude N. Pavur, “The Grain is Ripe: Parabolic Meaning in Mark 4:26-29,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 17 (1987): 22.

<sup>31</sup>Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 328.

is used for the vegetation which grows up during the Sabbatical year in Lev 25:5, 11, again emphasizing the growth occurring apart from human involvement.<sup>32</sup> The farmer sows the seed, goes about his daily rounds and neither fusses or loses sleep over the growth process.<sup>33</sup> He recognizes that God is at work. Despite the farmer's absence and ignorance of the growth process happening underground, the soil brings forth "all by itself" the harvest.<sup>34</sup> Guelich summarizes this by stating that the point of comparison lies in God's role behind the seed's growth and therefore "paints God's role in effecting His Kingdom and thus giving assurance that God would bring it all to harvest apart from human efforts."<sup>35</sup>

With the pressure for success placed where it truly belongs, Christ is telling pastors and churches to go about their proper work. Congregations today must be active in doing the work of the farmer, both in preparing a healthy environment, sowing the seed, and harvesting the crop. Theirs is not to generate the harvest or manipulate the plants into producing fruit; their duty is to "cast the seed into the waiting ground, not to dictate in what way or at what pace it will bear fruit."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Joel Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 173.

<sup>33</sup>John G. Strelan, "For Thine are the Statistics," *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 22 (1988): 34.

<sup>34</sup>G. Theissen, "Der Baruer und diw von selbst Frucht bringend erde" *ZNW* 85 (1994): 167-182, quoted in Edwards, 142.

<sup>35</sup>Guelich, 241.

<sup>36</sup>Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 326.

Neither can churches expect that simply having good soil will automatically produce a bountiful harvest if there has not been indiscriminate sowing and a timely harvest. To simply focus on the church's health and expect the harvest to be gathered by itself is not cooperating with the divine plan for the growth of God's Kingdom. A balance needs to be maintained between the responsibilities of the church and the power of God. Again, by using the common earthly event of planting and harvest, Christ shows that it is the duty of the sower to prepare the soil and sow the seed; however, it is the power of God alone that produces the harvest.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

The third and final seed parable in Mark 4 continues the description of what happens when the "seed" is sown in good soil. It is the least disputed of the three parables and has only one title, The Parable of the Mustard Seed.<sup>38</sup> The point of the mustard seed is similar to that of the self-growing seed, except that the emphasis is not on the process of growth but on the contrast between the small beginning and its final fruition.<sup>39</sup> As the disciples looked upon the small beginnings of the Kingdom, they would realize that the present insignificance would in time be transformed into greatness.

Here the Kingdom is likened to a very small seed. While botanically the

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<sup>37</sup>Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 63.

<sup>38</sup>Guelich, 249.

<sup>39</sup>Edwards, 144.

mustard seed is not the smallest, according to Jewish folklore it stood for the smallest seed.<sup>40</sup> Contributing to the idea of smallness and insignificance is the usage of the mustard seed in other portions of Scripture. In both Matt 17:20 and Luke 17:6 it is used to indicate a small amount of faith with the phrase “faith as a mustard seed.” This gives a general negative or minimal ring to its usage. It is clear that Christ is pointing out the small beginnings of the Kingdom. Christ’s Kingdom did not have the power and glory which the people had expected. It is this unexpected modesty which is being emphasized by the mustard seed.<sup>41</sup>

By using the image of the mustard seed, Christ is acknowledging the small beginnings and encouraging His followers by making it clear that He understands their feeling of insignificance.<sup>42</sup> Yet, Christ also sought to illustrate that though the small beginning was less than spectacular according to human standards, He was offering hope and realization of greatness over time.<sup>43</sup>

We can also see this hope and encouragement when we realize that the parable of the mustard seed begins with a seed sown in the ground, ends with a grown plant, and stresses the inevitability with which the former becomes the latter.<sup>44</sup> The parable shows that the “kingdom is the very thing sown, not something

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<sup>40</sup>H. Hunzinger, “Mustard Seed,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) 7:288, quoted in Guelich, 249.

<sup>41</sup>Herman Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 37.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Guelich, 253.

<sup>44</sup>Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 211.

that results from sowing other than itself.”<sup>45</sup> It is the Kingdom that grows to immense

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<sup>45</sup>Robert F. Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

proportions. It is the Kingdom that though small will gradually grow to become “greater than all the herbs.”

The eschatological view of the Kingdom of God shows a contrast between the present period of the church and the parousia.<sup>46</sup> The growth of the mustard seed to a herb that is large enough “so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade” is reminiscent of the promised future state of Israel in Ezek 17:23. Here Israel’s future would be a stately cedar providing shade and nesting for the birds of the air.<sup>47</sup> Israel, God’s people, though small among the nations, would be the source of hope, strength, and salvation to the world. This would be the grand climax of God’s working with His people as they become shade and shelter for the whole world.

The point of the parable must be that the Kingdom of God, beginning as a very little insignificant mustard seed, could and would grow to become God’s glorious Kingdom.<sup>48</sup> The “minuteness of the mustard seed compared with its relatively vast growth, made it an excellent figure for the expansion of the Kingdom.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Principles and Philosophies for Modern Church Growth**

The kingdom, referred to in these parables, by extension applies to the Church. While the last two parables refer specifically to the Kingdom, the parable of

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<sup>46</sup>Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, 214.

<sup>47</sup>Guelich, 251.

<sup>48</sup>Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Parables of Growth,” *Studia Theologica*, 5 (1952): 148.

<sup>49</sup>Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, 20.

the sower is explained in terms of the individual experience. However, as demonstrated by the chiasmic structure of these three parables, the last two parables expound on the result of sowing in good soil. Therefore, there is room for interpreting the Parable of the Sower in light of the church in general as well as the individual.

Understanding the meaning and relationship of the “seed” parables in Mark 4, clarifies some principles and philosophies for church growth in the twenty-first century. These biblical principles can be applied to any church regardless of its size or demographic.

### **Sow Profusely**

The Parable of the Sower emphasizes the principle of sowing profusely. The sower is indiscriminate in his sowing practices, sowing the seed in all kinds of soil, knowing that when it falls on good soil he will reap a harvest. Within the Church today, the gospel seed needs to be sown indiscriminately regardless of race, economic status, education, or social standing. Instead of targeting specific audiences, the seed must be sown in all kinds of soil, knowing that the good soil will produce fruit.

Just as the sower went out and did all in his power to sow, regardless of what happened to the seed; so Christians today are called to sow. “Every seed has in itself a germinating principle. In it the life of the plant is enfolded. So there is life in

God's word."<sup>50</sup> The duty of pastors, leaders, and church members is to sow the seed profusely and indiscriminately, taking seriously God's call to sow, realizing there can be no harvest without indiscriminate sowing.

### **Inevitable Growth**

The second principle comes in the form of hope given to every small congregation struggling to grow and become a vibrant force within its community. The parable of the mustard seed illustrates the contrast between the beginning and final growth of the Kingdom of God. It offers to each pastor, congregant, and church the hope that one day seeds planted in the good soil will grow to fruition. When tempted to doubt the effectiveness of witness and potential of community, it must be recognized that "the work of grace in the heart is small in its beginning. A word is spoken, a ray of light is shed into the soul, an influence is exerted that is the beginning of the new life; and who can measure its results?"<sup>51</sup>

Looking at the eventual growth of the smallest of seeds to the "greatest of the herbs" we can know, regardless of the current size of our congregation, ministry, or community that growth is not only possible but promised. We can cling to the assurance of the harvest, and in cooperation with God know that in His timing, that which might now seem small will grow to immense proportions.

### **Results Left with God**

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<sup>50</sup>Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 38.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 78.

The third principle is found in the Parable of the Self-growing Seed. Here the role of human effort in cooperation with the divine plan is made plain. Once the seed is sown, it is not up to the farmer to be responsible for its growth. After he has done his work, the earth of itself brings forth the crop. As in the realm of Kingdom growth, it is not up to human devising or manipulation, but rather the working of God on the hearts and minds of the hearers. True growth will through the influence and working of the Spirit of God, not occur because of modern programs or technology. The result of the harvest is in God's hand. The harvest will come naturally in God's timing.

This does not excuse human involvement. Just as the farmer still had to "thrust in the sickle" the church must be ready to do its part in securing the harvest. To ignore the harvest when it is ripe, to reject the notion of reaping, will not bring about growth. The church must not lose sight of the need to harvest the fruit that God is growing. Church growth will not occur without the proper attention. The focus on church health cannot be allowed to eclipse the need to reap the harvest that God has provided.

The farmer has his part to act in promoting the growth of the grain. He must prepare and enrich the soil and cast in the seed. He must till the fields.<sup>52</sup> A balance must be recognized in efforts to "prepare the soil and sow the seed, but it is the life

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 63.

from God that causes the seed to germinate.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 367.

## **Focus on Soil Not on Crop**

The final application of the “seed” parables illustrates a vital philosophy that is too often overlooked in modern church growth seminars. Too often the focus is on providing a better program, appealing to a specific demographic, or having the latest and greatest facility. However, looking at the parables as a unit, compels one to notice that it is the duty of the farmer not only to sow the seed but to prepare the soil for its reception. Simply sowing without proper preparation of the soil will not provide the bountiful harvest that is possible to achieve.

As with the soil, so with the church. Unless the church is healthy, and the environment fertile, the growth of the gospel seed will be stunted at best. It is not the job of the farmer to manipulate the growth of the seed, but rather to provide an environment where the seed will grow naturally. It is his duty to change the texture of the soil. So it must be the focus of the pastor and church to provide the best environment possible for the nourishment and growth of the gospel seed. Instead of seeking to have the latest and greatest program, the church must concentrate its endeavors on the environment necessary to provide a growth experience. When this happens, as illustrated in the parable of the sower, the result will be growth on the corporate level in expanding the kingdom of God.

The most important thing a pastor or church can do to enhance church growth is to recognize their proper role in the growth process. If they focus on providing an environment for growth, the end result will be that the “earth of itself” will bring forth fruit.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN ANALYSES OF HEALTHY CHURCH PRINCIPLES

#### **Ellen White and Church Health**

The importance of health in relationship to the church growth is not new. Throughout her years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Ellen White wrote about church health. In 1886 she was concerned about the church not being in a healthy condition.<sup>1</sup> She also recognized that the health of the church was directly related to its spirit of vitality.<sup>2</sup> In making a plea to the youth she counseled them to make Christ their Pattern for this would keep the church from becoming sick.<sup>3</sup> Writing about the lack of personal devotion and commitment, Ellen White stated that she did not see the consecration to God and the disinterested labor for the building up of the cause of Christ needed for a prosperous and healthy church.<sup>4</sup>

Not only did Ellen White speak of the sickly conditions of the church, in 1887 she also admonished each member to take personal responsibility for building up

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, "Labors in Christiana," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 19 October 1886.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 2:139.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, "Words to the Young," *Youth Instructor*, 22 December 1892.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:354.

the health and vitality of God's church. As the members would do their best, God would work with them so that "churches that are small may be living, healthy, strong churches."<sup>5</sup> Nearly one year later, she wrote in the same paper, "Put intelligence into your work, and seek to bring the church of God into a healthy condition."<sup>6</sup> When speaking of her hope for a new church plant she urged that God would have His way with the people involved so that a healthy church would be raised.<sup>7</sup>

According to these references, a healthy condition will be maintained when the members of the church are earnest and devoted in their walk with God, when they seek to pattern their lives after Christ, exhibit an uninhibited commitment to building up of the body of Christ, and are unafraid of the work and sacrifice that such a devotion would require.

### **Current Views Regarding Church Health**

Volumes of literature have been written extolling the virtues of various health principles and their relationship to church growth. Some authors have synthesized church health down to no more than five major principles.<sup>8</sup> Others have created

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<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, "Closing Labors in Switzerland," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 September 1887.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, "The Work at Fresno, California," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 19 June 1888.

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Collection of EGW Letters* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1983), 103.

<sup>8</sup>Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*; Ron Gladden, *The Seven Habits of Highly Ineffective Churches* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2003), vii-x. and Thom S. Rainer, *Eating the Elephant: Bite-sized Steps to Achieve Long Term Growth in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman

detailed lists containing nineteen or more essentials to measure a healthy church.<sup>9</sup> Each has sought to illuminate the essential ingredients for maintaining church health. Some differences in the stated principles are simply semantic; others offer additional and complementary principles to Christian Schwarz's NCD eight essential characteristics. A selected comparison of various authors can be seen in appendix A.

This focus on health is important for all sizes of congregations. While larger congregations may appear to have an advantage in health,<sup>10</sup> it is imperative that all congregations look closely at their health before attempting to grow. The reality for congregations both large and small is that the fundamental issue is health, not growth.<sup>11</sup> Only after dealing with the systemic issues related to health should the pastor/leader of the congregation make growth a goal for the congregation. It is true that a church will never be totally healthy, just as in life there is a constant threat of disease-causing germs. However, the pastor and congregation must seek to make health a priority.

The debate rages regarding the best way to build up the health of the church. While Christian Schwarz maintains there is a need to work on the weakest characteristic,<sup>12</sup> there are others who believe that a church must build on it

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Publishers, 1994), 39-44.

<sup>9</sup>Bill Scheidler, *Growing Strong Churches: 19 Keys to a Healthy, Growing Church* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 2005) and Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007).

<sup>10</sup>Russell Burrill, *Waking the Dead* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 65.

<sup>11</sup>Kevin E. Martin, *The Myth of the 200 Barrier* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2005), 33.

<sup>12</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 248.

strengths.<sup>13</sup> These authors ignore the truism that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and believe that focusing on the strengths will enable the church to find its unique niche in the community. In contrast, using the analogy of a farmer growing his crops, Schwarz illustrates the need to supply the lacking ingredient for growth in order for the field to reach its full potential.<sup>14</sup> Even though Gene Getz and Joe Wall do not agree with all the implications of Schwarz's growth forces, they too maintain that attention should be focused on developing qualities needed for church health.<sup>15</sup>

### **Review of Selected Church Health Principles**

Often pastors and church leaders hear of successful growth in another congregation, and given their desire to grow, they seek to duplicate the work of the successful church within their own setting. This "model" method has some inherent problems and limitations. It encourages leaders to imitate the experience of the successful church instead of implementing the underlying principles which helped to make the church successful and healthy.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Hemphill stresses the fact that anyone interested in church growth must recognize that the context, gifts, personality of the congregation or pastor, and the time needed to bring the

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<sup>13</sup>Kennon L. Calahan, *Small Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 23; Dennis W. Bickers *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for Big Issues* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>14</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 129.

<sup>15</sup>Gene Getz and Joe Wall, *Effective Church Growth Strategies* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000), 97.

<sup>16</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 238.

successful congregation to fruition cannot be transferred from one congregation to another.<sup>17</sup>

Getz and Wall agree that wise leaders will “avoid mimicking other churches.”<sup>18</sup> As pastors become aware of the various qualities of a healthy church delineated in Scripture, they will lead their congregations in the way they believe Christ is leading at the time. The most valid principles, according to Schwarz, are those which are a “distilled result gained by abstraction from hundreds of models.”<sup>19</sup> When referring to a principle of NCD, Schwarz maintains that the principle is a characteristic only when it meets four criteria—being universally valid, proven by research, focused on the essentials of the church and needing individualization.<sup>20</sup>

Since the focus of this project is on NCD, the comparison of the various authors will be made in relationship to the quality characteristics of Schwarz’s research. Many of the characteristics of other lists can be incorporated into his eight quality characteristics. For example, it is easy to see how MacNair’s training and implementing of servant leadership, Foltz’s healthy leadership and discipled ministry, Macchia’s servant leadership development, along with Getz’s biblical discipleship and leadership all parallel and expand on Schwarz’s first quality characteristic of empowering leadership.

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<sup>17</sup>Kenneth S. Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 16.

<sup>18</sup>Getz and Wall, *Effective Strategies*, 118.

<sup>19</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 238.

<sup>20</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 82.

At the same time, there are others which do not qualify as a principle according to the criteria developed by Schwarz for the definition of a principle. While many authors acknowledge the need for biblical stewardship, this cannot be a stand-alone principle. This practice is universally valid, but there is little room for individualization of this characteristic depending on specific circumstances. Additionally, the emphasis that Werning and others give to the centrality of the Scripture and sound biblical preaching cannot be tailored for each individual congregation.

The only case that could possibly be made for an additional characteristic within Schwarz's eight essential qualities, is the practice of church planting. Many authors have correctly pointed out that church planting is a valid sign of a healthy church. J. R. White states that "all healthy organisms are blessed with the capacity to multiply."<sup>21</sup> Neil Cole agrees, stating that every local church should not just keep getting bigger and bigger. Just as warm blooded animals reproduce, so the body of Christ is meant to grow.<sup>22</sup> The true sign of a healthy fruit tree is other trees. Thus it is with the church.

Schwarz does not discount the need for church planting, but states that "it could be proven that church planting has a positive correlation to both quality and growth; but it is not, in the light of the research, an indispensable essential for any

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<sup>21</sup>J. Robert White, *Healthy Kingdom Churches: Ten Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Friendswood, TX: Baxter Press, 2002), 90.

<sup>22</sup>Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 9.

healthy church, as the eight quality characteristics are.”<sup>23</sup> Schwarz chooses to include the concept of “multiplication” as one of the natural growth forces to be considered in the interplay of a healthy church. Church planting, along with the multiplication of ministries and leaders, is a natural outgrowth of a healthy congregation, but Schwarz does not consider it an essential principle.

### **Empowering Leadership**

The first quality characteristic in NCD is that of empowering leadership. This attribute is abundantly clear in Eph 4:11, 12, where Paul states that the purpose of pastoral spiritual gifts was to prepare God’s people for ministry, and thereby building the body of Christ. Later Paul would write to Timothy, telling him to choose as leaders “reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). Empowering leadership is not the pastor being a superstar and doing everything alone. Rather, it is taking the time and energy to guide, equip, empower, and multiply members in realizing their full potential. It occurs as the pastor empowers others through modeling, vision-casting, mobilizing, equipping, coaching, and multiplying leadership.<sup>24</sup>

Ellen White also wrote of the importance of this characteristic within a healthy church. “The time and labor of our ministers have not been spent in the manner best calculated to keep the churches in a healthy, growing condition. If less

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<sup>23</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 171.

<sup>24</sup>Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church’s Potential: A Natural Church Development Resource Kit* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 2-1

time had been spent in sermonizing, and far more in educating the people to work intelligently, there would now be many more to enter the broad field as missionaries, and much more talent to be put to use in the various branches of the work.”<sup>25</sup> She also wrote that ministers should teach members how to do the work of the church rather than doing it themselves.<sup>26</sup> She further counseled that the best thing ministers could do for their members was to plan work for them, especially those who were new in the faith.<sup>27</sup>

When the focus of the pastor’s ministry is on educating the congregation in ways that they can be of service to God, the work of ministry is multiplied. The pastor can then find fulfillment as the members discover the joy of cooperating with God in the unique and varied ways that He has for them to build up the church. These pastors invest the majority of their time in delegation, discipleship, and the multiplication of ministry.<sup>28</sup> George Barna agrees, stating effective pastors “articulate vision, mobilize the people, motivate focused activity, consistently provide strategic direction and resources to get the job done efficiently and effectively.”<sup>29</sup>

Ebbie Smith suggests that the growth of a church is directly tied to the leadership of the church. He states that servant leadership is about equipping others

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<sup>25</sup>Ellen G. White, “Laborers Together with God,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 24 August 1886.

<sup>26</sup>Ellen G. White, “An Appeal,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 12 October 1886.

<sup>27</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 6:49.

<sup>28</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 188.

<sup>29</sup>George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 32.

rather than performing ministry functions; equipping ministry leads to more lasting and reproductive growth.<sup>30</sup> As church leaders take seriously the task of equipping, motivating, and mentoring others to be all that God would have them to be, certain things may occur. As leaders seek to grow and mobilize a body that is both spiritually alive and culturally relevant, they will develop compassionate workers who are sensitive to the needs of all people.<sup>31</sup>

There may be times when some members are led in a direction other than their leaders. When this occurs, it is not a sign of disloyalty or rebellion, rather an evidence that God is wanting to expand the reach of the congregation. Empowering church leaders will “invert the pyramid of authority so that the leaders assist Christians to release the spiritual potential that is already in them.”<sup>32</sup> Rather than becoming defensive when new ideas or ministries are suggested, the empowering leader will accept and rejoice with his members that God is directing in new ways to expand His kingdom. Harold Percy is correct in stating that “the true measure of congregational strength and vitality is how many people are being sent out - week by week - inspired, committed, and equipped to live to the glory of God and to do the work of the kingdom wherever their lives take them.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Ebbie C. Smith, *Growing Healthy Churches: New Directions for Church Growth in the 21st Century* (North Augusta, SC: IICM.net Press, 2003), 309.

<sup>31</sup>Waldo J. Werning, *The Seed-Planting Church: Nurturing Churches to Health* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 53.

<sup>32</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 187.

<sup>33</sup>Harold Percy, *Your Church Can Thrive: Making the Connections That Build Healthy Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2003), 28.

Schwarz maintains that the three essential ingredients of empowering leadership are “explanation, motivation and liberation.”<sup>34</sup> In order for a church to be balanced and fully implementing empowering leadership, all three areas will work in concert. The ability to explain the complicated in simple terms is a true gift, but explanation without motivation will yield little result. Empowering leaders will motivate the laity and then be willing to liberate them for ministry.

### **Gift-Oriented Ministry**

As with all the NCD quality characteristics, the emphasis for health needs to be placed on the adjective instead of the noun. Churches cannot exist without some kind of ministry. However, ministry is not always conducted according to the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Too often individuals groan under the strain and stress of fulfilling a task, considering it such a “burden to bear” that they do not gain fulfillment in accomplishment.

Gift-oriented ministry recognizes that the Holy Spirit gives to every Christian spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ. It also sets forth that it is the responsibility of church leaders, to not only help the members discover their gifts, but also provide means for them to develop and then use those gifts in appropriate ministries for building the Kingdom of God. As well as gaining an understanding of spiritual gifts, and discovering one’s own giftedness, this process must include implementing that giftedness in ministry.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 106.

<sup>35</sup>Logan and Clegg, *Releasing Your Church’s Potential*, 3-1.

Ellen White frequently commented on the value of spiritual gifts. God knows just where a person is best fitted to serve Him and equips him/her accordingly, molding and shaping him/her like the potter does the clay.<sup>36</sup> She counseled the church declaring that God has placed within the church different gifts, and in using these gifts all may act a part in preparing for Christ's soon return.<sup>37</sup> It is through the labor of members and pastors alike that God has entrusted the work of bringing lost souls to Christ. No one should feel insignificant or unimportant in this work, each are called to merely use the gifts that God has entrusted to them.

While numerous writers have extolled the virtues of understanding and implementing spiritual gifts within the church,<sup>38</sup> others do not agree that the application of spiritual gifts is necessarily a sign of health. Gene Getz declares, "When measuring a church we must avoid evaluating spirituality by the manifestation of spiritual gifts."<sup>39</sup> He goes on to cite the example of the New Testament Corinthian church and their misuse of the many spiritual gifts present within the congregation. Given the problems Paul discussed with the Corinthian church, Getz maintains that "spiritual gifts and spiritual maturity are not

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<sup>36</sup>Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 65.

<sup>37</sup>Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 481.

<sup>38</sup>Some noted works include: Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993) along with Dan R. Dick and Barbara Miller, *Equipped for Every Good Work: Building a Gifts-Based Church* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2001).

<sup>39</sup>Getz, *Healthy Church*, 86.

automatically synonymous.”<sup>40</sup> While Getz does not reject the concept or value of spiritual gifts within the church, he asserts that the New Testament writers place their priority on building our maturity in Christ.<sup>41</sup>

Schwarz agrees with the need for becoming more mature in Christ; however, he also upholds the value of gift-oriented ministry by declaring that “God has already determined who should assume each ministry within the church. The role of leadership is to help members identify their gifts and to find or create a matching ministry.”<sup>42</sup> Foltz also insists that “a healthy church which reaches out to its community will help its members to discover their gifts, and will teach them how to use them for God’s glory, and will offer and even delegate opportunities for ministry.”<sup>43</sup>

Russell Burrill discovered in recent research within the Seventh-day Adventist church an apparent disconnect of individual members knowing their gift and utilizing them in ministry.<sup>44</sup> Church members have too often attended various spiritual gift seminars and determined their gifts, but then failed to match their gifts to work within the church. This oft repeated scenario must change.

## **Passionate Spirituality**

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>42</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 108.

<sup>43</sup>Howard Foltz, *Healthy Churches in a Sick World* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2002), 145.

<sup>44</sup>Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 73.

Jesus admonished His followers to “love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt 22:37). This is passionate spirituality. It is a spiritual maturity and growth which translates into a strong conviction to live out that experience with commitment and passion. It is developing a form of spirituality that is based on the Bible, guided by the Holy Spirit, and focused on a dying world. The church’s style is not important, but rather the extent to which faith is actually lived out with passion and commitment in the lives of the congregants.<sup>45</sup>

Comparing Schwarz with other authors, it is this quality characteristic that is most often dissected or expanded. Scheidler names nineteen keys to a healthy, growing church, yet emphasizes aspects of passionate spirituality in at least nine of the nineteen keys.<sup>46</sup> Gene Getz breaks down passionate spirituality into at least eight different measurements of the healthy church.<sup>47</sup> Gary McIntosh delineates nine essentials for healthy church growth, and specifies four of these essentials which could be classified under passionate spirituality.<sup>48</sup> Stephen Macchia names ten characteristics of a healthy church, and after close examination one can easily see how four of them are clearly included in the concept of passionate spirituality.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 110.

<sup>46</sup>Scheidler, *Growing Strong Churches*, 23-35.

<sup>47</sup>Getz, *Healthy Church*, 188-197.

<sup>48</sup>Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 36-92.

<sup>49</sup>Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 27-39, 59-93, 197-214

Additionally, White also specifies ten qualities of healthy churches three of which could be classified as a part of Schwarz's passionate spirituality.<sup>50</sup>

Passionate spirituality is all about growing and developing a vibrant relationship with God. It involves translating that relationship into a deepening commitment and passion to serve God dedicating one's heart, soul, and mind completely to Him. As Mims correctly asserts, it includes not only developing a relationship with God, but growing in Christian discipline and seeing that translate into relationships with the unsaved.<sup>51</sup> He correctly states that "spiritual transformation is God's work of changing a believer into the likeness of Jesus by creating a new identity in Christ and by empowering a lifelong relationship of love, trust and obedience to glorify God."<sup>52</sup>

The quality of passionate spirituality is often perceived as simply prayer. Even if a positive connection between prayer and church growth could not be found, the mandate of prayer itself would require participation.<sup>53</sup> A church can have the best programs and methodologies at work, but if not immersed in prayer, all efforts will prove fruitless. It is true that "one of the clearest signs that a church is a healthy church is that the church is deeply committed to the power of prayer as it

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<sup>50</sup>Robert White, *Healthy Kingdom Churches*, chapters 1, 3, and 7.

<sup>51</sup>Mims, *Kingdom Principles*, 76-79.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>53</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Charles E. Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth* (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle Publishers, 2003), 68.

goes about its Kingdom business.”<sup>54</sup>

Non-praying churches are often mis-focused and have not been challenged with God-sized tasks; therefore they do not see the need to pray or have been diverted from prayer. At the same time a praying church is willing to admit it is powerless to get out of any ruts, without its focus on God.<sup>55</sup> The point is not that prayer should replace everything. Strategies, plans, or programs should not be substituted for prayer; these must all be bathed in prayer. “Prayer is not inactivity; it is intense supernatural activity. It must be our first activity, not our last.”<sup>56</sup>

Yet, passionate spirituality is not simply to pray more or even read the Bible more.<sup>57</sup> In fact, according to the research, the amount of time that people spend in prayer has only a “minor correlation to the quality of the church and its growth.”<sup>58</sup> What is significant is whether the prayer experience is inspiring. Is the prayer life something that motivates and inspires the believer? It is when the individual member’s experience with God is inspiring to him/her that it “has a significant relationship to the quality and quantity of the church.”<sup>59</sup>

Passionate spirituality consists of much more than just prayer, embodying all aspects of commitment and dedication to the service of God. Many writers point out

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<sup>54</sup>Robert White, *Healthy Kingdom Churches*, 73.

<sup>55</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 86-89.

<sup>56</sup>Hemphill, *Antioch Effect*, 40.

<sup>57</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 111.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

the need for healthy churches to have a focus on biblical stewardship.<sup>60</sup> Yet, responsible financial stewardship, as well as stewardship of time and energy, is a part of passionate spirituality.

Ellen White wrote, “A healthy church is composed of healthy members, or men and women who have a personal experience in true godliness.”<sup>61</sup> She also counseled that a healthy church must continue in the journey of growing in harmony with the will of God.<sup>62</sup> Passionate spirituality does not elevate one devotional style over another. What is important is that the members live their faith filled with passion. In their spiritual walk they are committed to press higher and higher. It has been found that the “concepts such as an intensive prayer life, love for the word of God, and encouragement of spiritual maturity are hallmarks of these (growing) churches.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Effective Structures**

Without structure in the local church chaos will reign. However, the question of health focuses on whether that structure promotes or hinders the mission or vision of the church. Do the structures help the congregation experience God, do

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<sup>60</sup>Waldo J. Werning, *Twelve Pillars of a Healthy Church* (Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1999), 54-59; Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 197-212; and Robert White, *Healthy Kingdom Churches*, 119-130.

<sup>61</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 130, 1901 Ellen G White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, quoted in Ellen G. White, *Mind Character and Personality*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 2:710.

<sup>62</sup>Ellen G. White, MS 91, 1899, Ellen G White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

<sup>63</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 124.

they strengthen the fellowship of the church, or are they focused on ministering to the world?<sup>64</sup> In order to be effective, structures must promote not only the upward focus to God, but also the inward and outward focus of the church. If the structure is not

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<sup>64</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 112.

helping the church to meet its goals, objectives, and mission, it can not be considered an effective structure.<sup>65</sup>

Some might ask what is the most effective structure for the local church. The truth is there is no single structure for the church in the New Testament, neither is there one single effective structure for modern churches today. One needs to determine what is right for their particular church and situation. It is only as each church takes the time to develop its own effective structure, tailor-made for its specific situation, goals, and denominational identity that it can become and remain a healthy congregation.<sup>66</sup>

Kennon Callahan agrees with Schwarz as he asserts that in small healthy congregations there needs to be a balance of just enough committees to be helpful but not so many that the mission of the church is compromised.<sup>67</sup> Ellen White also wrote concerning the effectiveness of the structures within the church. She warned that often so much care and labor is given to keep the “complicated machinery” of the church in motion that the greater work and mission of the church withers and dies for lack of attention.<sup>68</sup> She did not believe that the structure and organization

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<sup>65</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 159.

<sup>66</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 112.

<sup>67</sup>Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations*, 94.

<sup>68</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:602.

should be done away with, rather that it must not be so complicated as to hinder the work of the church.<sup>69</sup>

It must be recognized that it is not the structure or organization itself that is the obstacle to ministry and growth. Programs or structures should not be kept in place, simply because they were relevant at one time. They may be no longer functional.<sup>70</sup> When the structures cease to foster the vision of the church, they must be reevaluated and possibly eliminated. If the church structure has ceased to fulfill its purpose, the time has come for it to be changed or laid to rest.<sup>71</sup>

Galloway declares that the purpose of the organization and structure must be to mobilize and organize God's people to accomplish what He is calling them to do. "Healthy churches streamline whatever level of organization they have in order to get the results they're after."<sup>72</sup> Gary McIntosh agrees with the importance of this concept in declaring "churches grow as they develop an organizational structure that allows them to take advantage of ministry opportunities."<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, the exact opposite occurs with the majority of churches. According to George Barna, the

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<sup>69</sup>Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 29 January 1893.

<sup>70</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 44.

<sup>71</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 112.

<sup>72</sup>Dale F. Galloway, *Making Church Relevant* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1999), 35.

<sup>73</sup>Gary Martin and Gary McIntosh, *The Issachar Factor* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 81, quoted in Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work With God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 162.

average church is structured in ways that actually prevent effective ministry.<sup>74</sup> No matter what form the structure and organization of the church may take, for it to be effective it must release the members for ministry, instead of raise unnecessary road blocks and obstacles to the performance of ministry.

Often, after a period of growth, the traditional church settles into a “rut” of status quo. It becomes more concerned about preserving procedures than experiencing evangelism. It is more focused on survival than on expansion. At this time the organizations and structure become an end in themselves instead of a means.<sup>75</sup> While at one time the structures were formed to help carry out the mission and vision of the church, they now exist because “we have always done things this way.” In order for the unhealthy, traditional church to again experience health, it must get out of its rut. The church needs to ask the hard questions about structures that may no longer be relevant. Do they exist to carry forth the mission and vision of the church? Have their purposes long since outlived their usefulness?<sup>76</sup>

This does not mean that one should begin with the structure in an attempt to bring a church back to life. Too many pastors and church leaders perceive that the primary problem is with the organization and the structure and therefore focus all their attention in this area. However, “such action is premature and perhaps

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<sup>74</sup>George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 130, quoted in Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church* (Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1999), 33.

<sup>75</sup>Rainer and Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 40.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 44.

unhealthy for the church.”<sup>77</sup> One needs to address what Rainer calls the vision cycle of the church and that structure is the last of the five steps. Before changing the structure one must first develop within the congregation an outward focus, followed by unleashing the church, rekindling the vision, and experiencing ministry and growth. It is only when the pastor and leaders have removed the obstacles that inhibit growth in these area that the congregation should consider changing its organization and structure.

### **Inspiring Worship**

The concept and importance of church worship has been the burden of many writers over the past decade. Most authors agree with Carl Dudley that “uplifting worship has an unparalleled impact on congregational growth and vitality.”<sup>78</sup> Ellen White admonished the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the importance of providing inspiring worship. She urged the necessity of keeping up the interest in the worship service so as to preserve a healthy, growing church.<sup>79</sup> She warned against allowing the service to degenerate into a dry form. It must be permeated with the atmosphere of heaven.<sup>80</sup> She also counseled that all connected with the church should work to the utmost of their ability to strengthen the church

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>78</sup>Carl Dudley, *Effective Small Churches in the Twenty-first Century* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2003), 113.

<sup>79</sup>Ellen G. White, “Work for the Church,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 15 May 1888.

<sup>80</sup>Ellen G. White, “Love for the Erring,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 30 November 1886.

and make the meetings so full of life that outsiders will be attracted and interested.<sup>81</sup>

The problem that arises with the topic of worship is closely related to the concept of following a “model” or “principle” for a healthy church. Pastors and church leaders attend a healthy, successfully growing church and believe that they must have the same kind of worship service in their home church. Too often they adopt the practices and style of worship from the other church rather than applying the principles of worship to their unique setting.<sup>82</sup> When this occurs, especially with smaller congregations, the leaders and members may begin to focus on their lack of resources. It is then that “discouragement, fatigue, and a sense of entrapment can haunt the small church.”<sup>83</sup> This is unwarranted: according to the research it is not whether a worship service targets believers or non-believers, it is not whether they have a high liturgical service or less formal, it is not whether they are more traditional or seeker-sensitive that has an impact on the church’s health or growth. What matters is whether attendance at a worship service is an inspirational experience.<sup>84</sup>

Mims not only agrees with Schwarz but seeks to define and clarify true worship. “True worship is not form, whether traditional, liturgical, contemporary, or any combination of the three. Form may very well help people worship, but worship

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<sup>81</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 6:85.

<sup>82</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 114.

<sup>83</sup>Peter George Bush and H. Christine O’Reilly, *Where 20 or 30 Are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church*, Vital Worship, Healthy Congregation Series (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 23.

<sup>84</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 149.

is an activity in which believers experience God in a meaningful, spiritually transforming way.”<sup>85</sup> It is this kind of worship that is truly inspiring, that calls people back week after week for another encounter with the transforming God. “Real worship is a unique encounter with God that people can not experience anywhere else.”<sup>86</sup>

People today are starving for this kind of inspiring worship experience. Longing for relief and strength from their week of stress, they are looking for the worship service to be a time to connect with God. They desire to have the opportunity “to allow God to restore order to their lives after spending the past week in the rat race of life.”<sup>87</sup> Not wanting to sit back in uncomfortable pews passively observing what is going on around them, they long to be involved and engaged in a worship that demands full attention and response. According to Macchia, “The key to effective worship in the healthiest settings is, engaging people’s hearts, minds, souls and strength.”<sup>88</sup>

As worshipers leave the service, they know whether the worship they have experienced has touched their hearts and given them hope for the week ahead. They can feel whether it has stirred longings within their being for a wholeness. These are all areas that contribute to the feeling of inspiration during the worship

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<sup>85</sup>Mims, *Kingdom Principles*, 57.

<sup>86</sup>Galloway, *Making Church*, 77.

<sup>87</sup>Dennis W. Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church*, 43.

<sup>88</sup>Macchia, *Healthy Church*, 44.

service.<sup>89</sup>

However, for people to truly experience this type of inspiring worship in the corporate setting, something must take place during the week. Russell Burrill correctly states that “the weekly worship service is meaningful only if hearts have been touched by God during the week. Otherwise it is just ornamental trimmings added to the church, and there is no vibrancy. Just changing the worship style without changing the hearts of the worshipers will do no good.”<sup>90</sup> The concept of inspiring worship extends beyond what happens with the church body to what happens in the individual life. “Both personal and corporate worship must be infused with the presence of God resulting in times of joyous exultation and times of quiet reverence.”<sup>91</sup> An inspiring worship service must also create a sense of fulfillment within the heart of the believer so that they are anxious to invite their friends. “People must be proud of their church and genuinely believe that their friends will enjoy it, or they will not invite them.”<sup>92</sup>

Worship services in healthy congregations will be seen as times of joy and celebration. This does not mean that they will be filled with levity and entertainment, but neither will congregants be served a weekly dose of lemon juice either. God will be shown His due respect because encountering Him is what

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<sup>89</sup>Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations*, 174.

<sup>90</sup>Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 95.

<sup>91</sup>Logan and Clegg, *Releasing*, 6-1.

<sup>92</sup>Harold Percy, *Your Church Can Thrive*, 81.

worship is all about. The balance of joy and celebration in the midst of awe and transformation makes for a truly inspiring worship service.<sup>93</sup>

### **Holistic Small Groups**

Holistic small groups are more than just a few people getting together to study the Bible. Relationships are formed in a safe growth environment spiritually, mentally, and physically. These groups are “disciple-making communities which endeavor to reach the unchurched, meet individual needs, develop each person according to their God-given gifts and raise leaders to sustain the growth of the church.”<sup>94</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has received abundant counsel regarding the importance of small groups in the life of the church. Using the term “small companies,” Ellen White wrote:

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others.<sup>95</sup>

This one quotation clarifies the value and importance of holistic small groups within the context of healthy church.

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<sup>93</sup>Bickers, *Healthy Small Church*, 51.

<sup>94</sup>Logan, *Releasing*, 7-1.

<sup>95</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 7:21-22.

This value has also been borne out by the research done with NCD. Though all of the eight quality characteristics are important and interrelate with each other, Schwarz states that “if we were to identify any one principle as the ‘most important,’ then without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups.”<sup>96</sup> Holistic groups are safe havens where members and non-believers can find nurture and encouragement for their head, hands, and heart, providing growth potential in a stable healthy environment. If the small group does not nurture the mental, physical, and spiritual it is not a “holistic” small group.<sup>97</sup>

Although this characteristic has been determined to be one of the most significant healthy growth contributors, few of the authors surveyed included small groups in their qualities of a healthy church. Some include the aspects of discipleship and spiritual growth in a safe environment. However, only Werning, who reviews the NCD characteristics and adds four of his own, and three other authors, specifically mention small groups or house to house meetings.

Macchia makes the observation that in the healthy church there is an environment of acceptance. He states that people can enter just as they are, allowing the Holy Spirit to do the refining work within their hearts.<sup>98</sup> He asserts that this happens because it is in the atmosphere of acceptance that “broken people felt safe because these churches exhibited authenticity and transparency in their

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<sup>96</sup>Schwarz, *Natural Church*, 32.

<sup>97</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 116.

<sup>98</sup>Macchia, *Healthy Church*, 19.

relationships.”<sup>99</sup> He maintains that “the healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment.”<sup>100</sup> While he does use the term “covenant groups”<sup>101</sup> the main focus of his discussion is not on the element of the small groups but rather on the environment of acceptance. This is important, because a holistic small group must provide this atmosphere for its participants; however, there is so much more to the holistic small group than just a nurturing environment.

Schwarz clearly agrees that although one of the benefits of the small group is to provide a nurturing and safe environment; they can fulfill a variety of other tasks.<sup>102</sup> Small groups are a suitable place for believers to discover and learn how to use spiritual gifts. This is a place where they counsel and encourage one another, as well as provide accountability in their Christian walk. Holistic small groups can match spiritual gifts to appropriate ministries as the group clarifies a definite evangelistic aim. In the holistic small group leaders can be recruited, developed, and nurtured to fulfill future roles within the church.

Galloway agrees with Schwarz and synthesizes the work of the small group to that of evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, community, and leadership development.<sup>103</sup> One of the biggest challenges facing leaders is helping congregants

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>102</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 172.

<sup>103</sup>Galloway, *Making Church*, 38.

experience connectedness. It does not matter the quality of the program, the inspirational nature of the service, the creativity of the children's classes, if the worshipers do not feel connected with the church, they will not assimilate. Small groups are a way to help people connect with the church and with their Lord and Savior.<sup>104</sup>

Scheidler also sees small groups as playing a vital role in the pastoral care and discipleship of the body. He recognizes that building relationships in small groups helps people to stay connected and keeps them from being alone in the midst of a larger body of believers. Additionally, since the small group offers a way to help new people feel they are a vital part of the local church, it is an excellent method for assimilating them into total church life. There are multiple ways in which the small group can be effective in evangelism. Here new people can be introduced to Christ and develop friendships with believers in the church before ever attending a worship service. Additionally, within the setting of a holistic small group accountability and personal growth can occur as believers establish an openness that is not available during the corporate worship service. It is here that more mature believers can coach and mentor others, serving as a pattern and encouragement to live up to all that God would have each person to be.<sup>105</sup>

The reason that holistic small groups are so vital to healthy church growth is found in the growth principle of multiplication. Multiplication will only happen when

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Scheidler, 223-225.

it is deliberately planned. Each group must make a conscious effort to reproduce new groups.<sup>106</sup> A holistic small group is not only interested in the growth and development of its members, but also in the expansion of the Kingdom of God. If the small group is actively reaching out to neighbors, friends, and other acquaintances, it will grow. If the small group is finding new ways to evangelize, it will grow. If the small group is providing a safe environment for spiritual and emotional healing, it will grow. If the small group is serious about developing leaders to take on new ministries, it will grow. As it grows, there will come a time when multiplication will be necessary.

### **Need-Oriented Evangelism**

One could hardly expect that any church would grow without some type of evangelism. There must be a method and means of sharing the gospel of Christ. While some churches may experience transitional growth as believers shift from church to church, true expansion of the Kingdom of God will only occur through telling the gospel story. Research reveals the best and most effective mean of evangelism is “to share the gospel in a way that answers the questions and meets the needs of non-believers.”<sup>107</sup> Need-oriented evangelism intentionally cultivates relationships with non-Christian people so they can become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ, actively participating in the life of the church and community.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 172.

<sup>107</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 118.

<sup>108</sup>Logan, *Releasing*, 8-1.

For those within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this concept should come as no surprise. In 1905, Ellen White counseled the church that

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.<sup>109</sup>

It is clear that she places importance on ministering to the needs of others in reaching them with the gospel. As one follows the example of the Master Teacher barriers will be broken down and individuals will become more receptive. This can only be done by mingling with people, reaching out to them where they are, for they will seldom seek out the church on their own accord.<sup>110</sup>

There are several aspects of this quality that have particular application for the healthy church. Thom Rainer, in discussing the problem that often faces the traditional church, writes, "The problem is a focus that is inward instead of outward."<sup>111</sup> In further commenting about the lack of priority given to growth, Rainer and Lawless quote a study by C. Peter Wagner of 5,000 pastors in which less than half put a high priority on leading their churches to growth. Too often the focus

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<sup>109</sup>Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 143-144.

<sup>110</sup>Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, 152.

<sup>111</sup>Rainer & Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 62.

is centered on maintenance rather than reaching the lost for Christ.<sup>112</sup> Even though there is a need for meeting the needs of the members, “the mere health of the body of Christ is meaningless unless it blesses all humankind.”<sup>113</sup> It is this outward focus and understanding of reaching out to others that Ellen White referred to when she stated that the “church will be healthy and prosperous whose members are putting forth active, personal effort to do good to others, to save souls.”<sup>114</sup>

There is a difference of opinion as to what constitutes evangelism. Some may categorize everything the church does as evangelism. Others believe that Christian evangelism is the process by which a person shares the gospel with lost people, winning them to Christ, and thus expanding God’s Kingdom.<sup>115</sup> Some look at evangelism as merely convincing people to attend their church. Others maintain that is not proselytizing nor should it be equated with merely creating decisions and forcing people into one’s own ecclesiastical mold.<sup>116</sup> The truth is that need-oriented evangelism has three aspects which encompass the various spectrums of opinion. Need-oriented evangelism consists of relying on the power of God at work in individual lives caring for people and ministering to their needs. It also includes the

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<sup>112</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 44, quoted in Rainer & Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*, 144.

<sup>113</sup>Thomas G. Bandy, *Road Runner* (Nashville, Abington Press, 2002), 94, quoted in Bickers, *Healthy Small Church*, 97.

<sup>114</sup>Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, January 12, 1882.

<sup>115</sup>Mims, *Kingdom Principles*, 35.

<sup>116</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, *Ripe for the Harvest: The Role of Spiritual Awakening in Church Growth* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 109.

sharing of the full gospel message.<sup>117</sup> While some churches may emphasize programs caring for people and others may emphasize sharing the gospel, neither are complete alone. Churches must encourage members to intentionally network with nonbelievers building friendships, then when the opportunity arises to share Christ they have the necessary credibility and trust to effectively communicate the gospel.

A healthy church will make it a priority to orient its services and ministries to the felt needs of the potential congregation. Instead of focusing on what the members feel is needed by the community, the healthy church will discover ways to meet the needs of those who potentially could become a part of the body of believers.<sup>118</sup> The potential congregation includes those who are already well known by the congregation. They may include relatives, work associates, neighbors, or fellow hobbyists. It is believed that the potential congregation is six times larger than the number of active congregants.<sup>119</sup>

This model of ministry seeks to take the church to the ordinary aspects of life, recognizing that church is not something done once a week, nor is evangelism something activated intermittently. Church and evangelism become all encompassing. They become a way of life.<sup>120</sup> Every day the Christian is looking for ways to minister to someone else's need in a way that will allow them to share the

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<sup>117</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 118.

<sup>118</sup>Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 211.

<sup>119</sup>Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1982), 24-40. See also Schwarz, *Paradigm*, 211.

<sup>120</sup>M. Scott Boran, *Making Cell Groups Work* (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, 2002), 73.

gospel of Christ. Instead of being like the foolish farmer who stands in the doorway of his barn calling all the crops to come in, the healthy congregation realizes that it is time to “get her hands dirty in the soil of lost people’s lives.”<sup>121</sup>

If a church shuts itself away from outreach and bearing the burdens of others it will soon suffer spiritual feebleness.<sup>122</sup> Churches which make evangelism a priority discover that they remain strong by keeping active in the labor for the lost. False teachers and wayward doctrines have less effect when the focus of the church is on reaching the lost.<sup>123</sup>

### **Loving Relationships**

While all the other seven characteristics of a healthy church are important, without a strong, loving Christian fellowship the atmosphere could be caustic. Mims asserts that anyone who chooses to believe the essential nature of worship, discipleship, and evangelism must also recognize that loving Christian fellowship is the “incubator for their success.”<sup>124</sup> It is the loving relationships developed with both congregants and guest that provide the nurturing, safe environment necessary for growth. It is the authentic love lived out in the lives of the members that makes a church “magnetically attractive.”<sup>125</sup> Schwarz maintains that no matter how one may

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<sup>121</sup>Cole, *Organic Church*, 35.

<sup>122</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 2:22.

<sup>123</sup>Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 23.

<sup>124</sup>Mims, *Kingdom*, 49.

<sup>125</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 120.

dislike the term, research has demonstrated that “growing churches display a higher ‘love quotient’ than stagnant or declining ones.”<sup>126</sup>

This concept is not new. Ellen White counseled that “if we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one-hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”<sup>127</sup> The establishment and maintenance of loving, authentic relationships is at the heart of this characteristic. It is when members develop relationships characterized by such things as grace, forgiveness, transparency, honesty, and hospitality that those on the outside will take notice of something not often seen in the world around them.

Campbell writes that fellowship needs to be much more than believers getting together to have a good time. Fellowship happens when one believer gets under the load of another, walking beside in a way to share the burden.<sup>128</sup> This is a vital aspect of loving relationships. Members and non-members sense the acceptance and support regardless of their personal struggles and issues. They know that at least at the church they will be appreciated for who they are and will be encouraged to work through their problems.

Often the concept of loving relationships focuses on the issue of unconditional love and acceptance that is shown in the life of the church. Macchia

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 9:189.

<sup>128</sup>Campbell, *Smaller Churches Healthy & Growing* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1998), 83.

claims the reputation held within the community regarding the basic dynamic of love and acceptance is often cited as attracting new people.<sup>129</sup> This feeling of acceptance can be felt even in the parking lot, where effective hosting begins for a healthy church.<sup>130</sup> However, Schwarz maintains that loving relationships consists of much more than a simply romantic secular feeling of love for all no matter what they have done. A healthy church will also understand and implement the concept of loving relationships based on the biblical themes of justice, truth, and grace.<sup>131</sup>

Justice and truth are vital in authentic relationships. In the healthy church members must be willing to care for each other even to the point of intervention and confrontation.<sup>132</sup> There are times that the most loving thing to do within the church is to bring discipline or censure upon a member who is in need of correction. While truth and justice must be balanced with grace, unconditional love, and acceptance, ignoring the need for church discipline is equally unbalanced.

Scheidler speaks of some of the reasons why churches fail to administer discipline. Among the reasons that he cites are fear of the confrontation or of the results and impressions inside or outside the congregation.<sup>133</sup> There might be concern over dividing the church or even being sued due to the disciplinary action.

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<sup>129</sup>Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 100.

<sup>130</sup>Galloway, *Making Church Relevant*, 80.

<sup>131</sup>Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 120.

<sup>132</sup>Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 193.

<sup>133</sup>Scheidler, *Growing Strong Churches*, 165, 166

This must not stop the healthy church from carrying out its God given duty regarding necessary church discipline. Another reason Scheidler gives for some lacking discipline is a “lack of covenantal love.”<sup>134</sup> Covenantal love is willing to do whatever it takes to bring a person into a right relationship with God realizing that there are times when confrontation is necessary in order to bring reconciliation between an individual and God.

Dever cautions that corrective church discipline should never be exercised with the mindset of the church being the final word on the eternal judgment of the erring individual. Nor should there be a spirit of vindictiveness associated with the actions taken by the church.<sup>135</sup> Instead biblical church discipline needs to be administered in an attitude of humility and love if it is to produce ultimate good. As a loving parent will discipline a child, so a healthy loving church will recognize its God given duty to discipline its members.

### **Reflections on the Seventh-day Adventist Perspective of Natural Church Development**

Since 1999, hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist churches have taken the NCD survey to determine their state of health. In his forthcoming book *How to Grow an Adventist Church*, Russell Burrill shares some findings regarding trends that have been established within the denomination.

It has been noted that Adventist congregations score highest in the areas of

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>135</sup>Dever, *Nine Marks*, 187.

Need-Oriented Evangelism and Passionate Spirituality. In fact, these are the only two areas in which the Adventist average is above the norm of fifty, with both only a fraction apart with a score of fifty-one.<sup>136</sup> Conversely, congregations consistently score the lowest in the area of Holistic Small Groups, with an average score of only thirty-nine. Two other areas that often score low and are almost tied in their average are Inspiring Worship and Gift-Oriented Ministry.<sup>137</sup>

Burrill points out that among those whose health scores improves over time, there is a corresponding rise in attendance. While this is most markedly seen in congregations with an average score over sixty-five, it is in clear contrast to those with declining health scores. These churches see a marked attendance decline of over 10 percent.

The scope of this project does not address the questions about why some characteristics are consistently higher than others. Nor does it seek to find the reasons for some areas to be consistently low. Instead, an objective evaluation will be conducted regarding the growth of those churches which sought to work on their minimum factor.

It must be noted that at the time of writing his book, Russell Burrill found only thirty-one churches that had taken the survey at least three times.<sup>138</sup> Because some of their scores rose and others plateaued or even declined, questions must be

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<sup>136</sup>Russell Burrill, *How to Grow an Adventist Church*, unpublished manuscript, 62.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 63.

asked about whether the congregations were intentional in working on their minimum factor. Realizing that so few churches have taken the survey at least three times, raises issues about the lack of continued emphasis on church health.

Gary McIntosh states, “In most instances, two to five years of intentional ‘removal and releasing’ activities must be invested before a lasting and measurable reversal of trends can be observed, and the church can begin to soar.”<sup>139</sup> One must therefore wonder why churches are not committed to following a long term process toward health. Have the churches bought into the value of church health? Are they simply doing what the pastor wishes and letting the program die when there is a change in pastorate? Do pastors become frustrated when they do not see the anticipated results and go on to another idea for growth? Are conferences and churches so concerned with immediate growth that they are not encouraging a long term, healthy approach to growth? These questions must be answered for there to be systemic changes in the way pastors and church leaders approach church health and growth in the future.

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<sup>139</sup>Gary L. McIntosh and R. Daniel Reeves, *Thriving Churches in the Twenty-first Century: 10 Life-Giving Systems for Vibrant Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publications, 2006), 41.

## CHAPTER 4

### AN EVALUATION OF NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND THE RESULTING CHURCH GROWTH

Given the prevailing view of the importance of church health, one is led to believe that the healthier the church, the more it will experience growth. This is the main tenant resulting from the research supporting NCD. The clear correlation between health and growth has been shown in churches of various denominations around the world; however, there has yet to be a detailed study comparing Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States with a local congregation's experience. Further, there has not been any study comparing Seventh-day Adventist churches which tried to implement a program to improve their minimum factor with those that simply took the NCD survey and did nothing further. If NCD is to be seen by church pastors and leaders as a viable tool in achieving church health and growth, such a study is necessary.

Even though questions have been answered regarding the Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy support for NCD's principles, other questions remain. Does working on the health of the church correlate into measurable growth within the Seventh-day Adventist Church? There are unique life-style expectations and changes expected of those uniting with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There is an adherence to

particular beliefs, such as the Sabbath, that require a more concerted effort and commitment to the church than is required in the typical evangelical congregation. Do these realities come into play when comparing churches that seek to improve their minimum factor? Does growth occur naturally in a healthy Seventh-day Adventist congregation within the United States?

### **Methods of Measuring Church Growth**

Before one can determine the correlation of church health to church growth, there must be clarification as to the measurement used to determine church growth. Multiple aspects of growth have been espoused, each carrying a degree of validity. Dever claims that a healthy church will be concerned with church growth, however, not simply growing numbers but also growing its members.<sup>1</sup> He further states that often pastors and church leaders reduce growth down to manageable statistics such as membership, attendance, baptisms, and giving, because these are tangible and easily comparable. He maintains these statistics fall short of the true growth and maturity that God desires in areas of faith and love.<sup>2</sup> Other authors also make a plea to recognize the spiritual growth and maturity of the members when measuring church growth.<sup>3</sup> One can readily concede the importance of spiritual growth within both the life of the individual and the church body as a whole. However this kind of

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<sup>1</sup>Dever, *Nine Marks*, 214.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>3</sup>Loren B. Mead, *More Than Numbers: The Ways Churches Grow* (Herdon, VA: Alban Institute, 1993), 42; Mangal Man Maharjan, *Equipping Laity for Church Growth* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 26-27; and Smith, *Growing Healthy Churches*, 247.

growth is very difficult to quantify and measure.

Maharjan enumerates four different kinds of growth,<sup>4</sup> each valid but incomplete on its own merits. Numerical growth and qualitative growth are very similar to Dever's concept of what constitutes growth. Maharjan delineates two other kinds of growth: biological growth relating to the natural growth of the church through growth of the children and expansion growth where the church expands its reach for the Kingdom of God through church planting. A definite case can be made for each of these aspects of church growth.

Loren Mead defines the areas of growth to be numerical and maturational along with organic and incarnational.<sup>5</sup> Organic is explained as the congregation's ability to function as a community, its ability to maintain itself. Incarnational takes a different look at church growth by measuring the congregation's ability to convey its meaning and values to the real world and society outside of the congregation.

Smith begins with the internal growth of the congregation, but then describes the other growth areas relating to the extent to which the congregation reaches out into the community and beyond. Expansion growth is defined as evangelizing and incorporating unchurched people into the local church.<sup>6</sup> Extension growth occurs when the mother church plants another congregation among the same socio-cultural people group, thus extending the reach of the church. Finally, bridging growth

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<sup>4</sup>Maharjan, *Equipping Laity*, 26-27.

<sup>5</sup>Mead, *More Than Numbers*, 12-13.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, *Growing Healthy Churches*, 248.

occurs when a new church plant that crosses cultural, linguistic, or ethnic boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

Simply looking at the numerical size of the congregation is not a true indicator of church health. Speaking of Christian churches in general, Barna points out that less than 20 percent of all numerical church growth comes through conversions. For most congregations their growth consists of merely transferring people in from other churches and biological growth.<sup>8</sup> These churches could hardly be considered as truly expanding the Kingdom of God.

Smith raises questions of his own in regard to simply relying on numerical growth. He maintains that healthy church growth occurs when a congregation increases in ways that “both add to the size and maintain wholeness and soundness.”<sup>9</sup> He further explains his position by stating that more people worshiping in church is not the only guide in determining a healthy church. A large church could have lost its focus on mission and turned inward. A super-church might end up maintaining its status resorting to methods that do not exhibit integrity to Scripture. Overemphasis on numerical growth can lead to ignoring other aspects of church growth. Some pastors may begin to feel like failures for not having a large congregation, when in fact, their small church may be more healthy and effective in

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>George Barna, *Grow Your Church from the Outside In: Understanding the Unchurched and How to Reach Them*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2002), 132.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, *Growing Healthy Churches*, 23.

reaching out than a larger congregation.<sup>10</sup> Smith also calls for the church to be aware of the patterns of growth noting whether the numbers are coming from transfer, biological, or conversion growth. Churches which find themselves relying on transfer and biological growth are not experiencing authentic growth, as they are not truly expanding the Kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup>

When looking at church growth there is no way to get around the need for numbers. Numerical growth represents people. The number of people involved in the attendance of the church, baptized, and actively participating in ministry is a means to indicate the effectiveness of the church in following God's will.<sup>12</sup> The amount of funds given for the support of the church speaks to the level of commitment and sacrifice of the local congregation. One cannot ignore the need for a numerical comparison of vital statistics when seeking to measure church growth.

In addition, other areas of church life must be measured to add depth to the evaluation of the true health of the church. Dever and others are correct in seeking to emphasize the maturational growth of the congregation. These areas, however, are more subjective. While they are useful within the local church, when seeking to compare congregations one must use the most objective methods available.

### **North American Division Measurement for Church Growth**

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>12</sup>Mims, *Kingdom Principles*, 71.

measurement used for healthy church growth consists of five factors: church membership, baptisms/professions of faith, tithe, local giving, and the number of laity involved in ministry.<sup>13</sup> Many conferences also encourage keeping attendance records at services. These factors present an opportunity to adequately gather an objective perspective regarding a local congregation's healthy growth.

When one uses a combination of the above statistics, the health of the congregation can be objectively assessed. Aspects of the congregational life such as the ratio of active to inactive members, the percentage of growth due to baptisms versus transfers, and the retention rate of newly baptized members are more than just numbers, they speak of the general health and vitality of the membership.

When one examines the percentage of people active in ministry it measures the effectiveness of the discipleship program of the church. As one examines the local giving patterns, including both the returning of tithe and the local giving, it speaks volumes as to the faithfulness and sacrificial spirit of the congregation. When this is combined with the percentage involved in ministry one can begin to measure the commitment to spirituality among the congregants.

The only factor that is open to subjectivity is the percentage of members involved in active ministry. Some may consider teaching weekly in a children's

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<sup>13</sup>This is the accepted criteria as evidenced in the *Annual Statistical Report* published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The author however could find no written action or reference for using these criteria. In addition to the North American Division statistics, most conferences encourage local churches to keep record of the number in attendance during the Sabbath worship service. This information is not passed on to the Division, but kept for their local use of measuring the growth and health of the church. Since these figures should be readily available the author decided to include them as well in the health comparison.

Sabbath School department as active ministry, while others may limit this factor to those who are involved in ministries outside of Sabbath activities. Some may count those who participate a few times a year in ministry; others may count only those who are participating weekly. This factor is very effective when used in a local setting with the same criteria, but it is difficult to establish a clear guideline when comparing various churches across the nation.

For the above reasons, the measurements used to determine healthy growth will be limited to those which are more objective and uniform throughout the United States. To determine the effectiveness and relationship of health to growth, only the areas of membership, attendance, tithe, local giving, and number of baptisms will be used.

### **Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church Experience**

After serving the Milwaukee Central Church as an intern pastor from 1981 to 1983, the author was given the opportunity to return to the same church in 2001 as senior pastor. There were several issues which raised questions as to the direction and health of the church. Membership had declined from four hundred and twenty-nine in 1983 to two hundred and thirty-five in 2001. The attendance which hovered around two hundred and seventy-five in 1981 had diminished to an average of one hundred and twenty-five. Some of these statistics were due to the shifting demographics of the city and the church being without a pastor for over six months prior to the author's arrival. However, when adding in a plateau of local giving which had not grown over the twenty years and the low number of baptisms, it

became necessary to address the health of the church.

Not everything in the church was in a state of ill-health. Members of the church had been seeking to meet the needs of the homeless by serving soup and sandwiches twice a month since 1992. Additionally, other members had recently started a youth ministry directed at the community surrounding the church's junior academy. These activities spoke to the passion for the lost and offered hope that the congregation was willing to be used of God in a special way to reach the lost.

Upon assuming duties in October 2001, the author brought to the November Church Board meeting a proposal to utilize NCD as a tool in determining the focus of the church in improving its health. This was facilitated by encouraging the Board to analyze the trends and health of the church. The Board realized the decline over the previous decade and sensed a need to do something to turn the church around. The Board recognized that taking the survey was simply taking the church's temperature and a long term process would be needed to bring the church back to health and vitality. Therefore, a commitment was made to make working with NCD a top priority of the church. This commitment to health did not excuse the church from its mission to reach the community for Christ, but would be integrated into the fabric of the church.

### **November 2001-December 2002**

The results of the first survey gave a picture of health just below the average SDA church with its minimum factor being empowering leadership with a score of thirty-five. The maximum score was in passionate spirituality scoring just over the

Adventist norm at fifty-two.<sup>14</sup> Questions initially surfaced regarding the validity of these scores. Why would the church rate the pastor's leadership so low? Upon further reflection, the score made total sense. The Milwaukee Central church had been without pastoral leadership for over six months. The survey was not reflecting the congregation's health with respect to the author's ministry; rather it reflected the felt needs due to the length of time without a pastor.

Understanding the need to focus on the minimum characteristic along with its interrelationship with the other areas, the author spent the next Church Board meeting addressing possible ways to work on empowering leadership. The Board members participated in a brain-storming session where each member was encouraged to give input as to possible areas to improve the minimum factor. Large papers, each with a different NCD quality characteristic were laid on tables. The Board was divided into groups of three people and given opportunity to think of ways that empowering leadership could impact each of these areas, adding ideas to the ever growing list.

An implementation team consisting of the pastor and four laity was asked to report back to the next board meeting with measurable goals. The implementation team met and came up with four goals to be presented to the church.

1. To provide opportunities for training and involvement of the youth in areas of church worship and ministry, enabling at least 50 percent of the youth to be actively involved a minimum of once per month.

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<sup>14</sup>Burrill, *How to Grow Adventist Churches*, 62.

2. To provide pastoral support and training for all small group leaders, encouraging the development of new groups and enabling active small group participation to increase by 100 percent in the year 2002.

3. To provide the opportunity for training and support for members to utilize their spiritual gifts in either a new or established need-oriented ministry. To establish two new ministries in the year 2002.

4. To provide annual training and ongoing support in developing a ministry to reach and encourage both the inactive and less active members of the church.

A fifth goal added by the Church Board at its next meeting was to train and equip the laity for evangelism and hold four simultaneous evangelistic meetings in the fall of 2002.

With these goals expressed to the church body on Sabbath and a sermon series dealing with the importance of maintaining a healthy church, an instant spark seemed to ignite in the hearts of the congregation. Members were excited about something happening in the church with a vision for the youth, evangelism, and overall programs of the church. It was as if new life had been breathed into their hearts and the church seemed alive.

During the course of the year the church made a concerted effort to involve the youth in numerous ministry opportunities. Some helped with the audio equipment, others led in praise worship, served as junior deacons and deaconesses, still others helped in various Sabbath School departments, played the piano for church services, provided special music, told the children's story, or typed the praise

song lyrics into the PowerPoint presentations. At the end of 2002, the church had accomplished its first goal.

Training was provided by the church for those interested in leading out in small groups. There were times when testimonies would be given in church regarding an individual's experience in a small group, encouraging congregants to join an active group. Three elders were chosen to give a simultaneous evangelistic campaign. After receiving training, they were asked to gather a group of members around them as a support staff to further plan and execute the evangelistic thrust. By the end of 2002 the church had a 75 percent increase in the number of small groups. This did not include Sabbath School classes as small groups.

Nothing formally was done during 2002 toward the third and fourth goals. However, it was during this time that a couple asked permission to begin a ministry for families of the church. The author gave them permission, support, and blessing to begin their desired ministry. Another member approached the author with the request to begin a ministry to the troops serving in the war on terror by sending care packages to a Seventh-day Adventist chaplain in the Army for distribution to soldiers. This too was supported, encouraged, and participated in by the church. These new ministries were not sought out, but rather came from within the hearts of the members as the church became more intentional about reaching out to the community with the gospel of Christ.

At the close of the evangelistic meetings in the fall of 2002 an evaluation revealed that during the meetings over 60 percent of the active membership had

been involved. The church had fully completed three of the five goals and reached over 75 percent of the fourth goal. During this year the church's average attendance rose from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty-five, with the membership increasing from two hundred and thirty-five to two hundred and fifty-three. The church once again was alive.

The survey was repeated in December of 2002. The previous minimum factor of empowering leadership had risen nineteen points, and every other factor rose, most more than ten points. The average score rose from forty-five to fifty-nine, with the new dual minimum factor score now being higher than the previous survey's maximum factor.

It was after the second survey that the Board started asking questions such as, "Is this a valid assessment?" "Did we grow because we focused on the minimum factor?" "Did we score better because we knew how to answer the questions?" "Would we have grown without focusing on the minimum factor?" Yet, despite these questions the church was excited and ready to go through the NCD Cycle again.

### **January 2003-March 2004**

The second survey revealed a dual minimum factor of gift-oriented ministry and holistic small groups. When the results were discussed with the Church Board, it was decided to work on gift-oriented ministry since there were several small groups already working in the church. Rather than getting input from the Board and working with an implementation team, the author sought to determine by himself

what was to be done for the church and set specific goals. The established goals were to have a sermon series on the importance and value of spiritual gifts in the church, and to conduct two spiritual gift seminars over the coming year.

The other activities continued with the church. The street ministry flourished as those involved found meaning in helping others. The Youth in Action ministry began to add a spiritual aspect to the program by having worship before basketball practice. They also began to participate in the Lake Region Conference League, which included Adventist Youth meetings on Sabbath afternoon before the league evening games. In addition, preparations were laid for an evangelistic series with Leo Schriener in the spring of 2003.

After preaching the series on spiritual gifts, and announcing the special seminar to identify the members' gifts, the author was astounded that only four people attended the first Connections seminar. It was obvious that something was not right and that the need was not being met. However, the author made no attempt to modify the goals or objectives. Following the evangelistic meetings a second spiritual gift seminar was conducted during the summer, with six people in attendance. At this time the author finally approached the head elder and sought his opinion about the poor attendance. The answer was simple, yet profound. "Every pastor for the past fifteen years has conducted a spiritual gifts seminar," he said "why should we come, when we already know our gifts?"

The church members knew their individual gifts, yet were not focusing their efforts to match their ministry to those gifts or passions. Like so many other churches

across the United States, there was a disconnect between knowledge and practice.<sup>15</sup> While the self-imposed goals had been accomplished over the year, the real root of the problem had not been addressed. Therefore, it is no wonder that upon taking the survey the third time, many scores went down and the average score for the church dropped over three points.

### **April 2004-July 2006**

The minimum factor for the third survey was once again empowering leadership. It was at this point that questions developed in the mind of the author as to the value of continuing on with a focus on NCD. The attendance at church had plateaued. There was not a significant increase in the local giving. It seemed as though the first year's successes were a temporary spike not a permanent shift. However, having started this ministry project, he determined to see it through to its completion. While there was a basic understanding of what was needed for empowering leaders, the author again failed to gain board input or establish and communicate clear goals for working on the minimum factor.

Other issues began to further complicate the focus of the author and by extension the church. It was during this time that an extended family crisis began to occur. The author's eldest daughter began to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and eventually ran away from home a couple of times. Given the preoccupation for the health and safety of his daughter, there was not much energy left to intentionally

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<sup>15</sup>Burrill, *How to Grow Adventist Churches*, 113.

develop an effective program for NCD within the church. It was during this period that many of the programs and ministries of the church were put on auto-pilot.

Instead of having intentional goals and objectives there were several things that were done to encourage the laity in ministry without establishing any set goals. The street ministry was encouraged to branch out its influence in working with the homeless shelter to bring the homeless to church the first Sabbath of each month. The Youth in Action ministry was encouraged to start offering Bible studies in the homes of the kids and have an intentional program to lead them in a deeper understanding of their walk with Christ. Two laity were trained to give an evangelistic meeting, and each conducted a full-message crusade on opposite sides of Milwaukee. Both evangelistic teams were blessed with baptisms and more importantly developed a deeper passion for the people with whom they were ministering.

It was also during this time the author began casting a vision to plant a new church on the southside of Milwaukee. The evangelistic team from the southside formed a small group and began meeting weekly. Soon there were two groups meeting and plans were being laid with other Milwaukee churches to plant a church during evangelistic meetings on the southside of Milwaukee.

Upon reflection, while there were no set goals for working on empowering leadership, everything that was done fostered greater lay involvement and training. Ministries were encouraged to try new things and a vision was cast for expanding the Kingdom of Christ to a new section of Milwaukee. The author was hesitant to

take

the fourth survey, fearing the results not having had any set goals to work toward improving the minimum factor.

### **July 2006-March 2007**

The results of the fourth survey revealed a health score that had significantly increased. The church average rose seven points from fifty-six to sixty-three. The minimum factor was now shown to be loving relationships. However, due to the emphasis placed on the new church plant, there were no formal goals established by an implementation team. There were some suggestions made by the author to a couple of ministries, but nothing was voted upon by the Church Board or formal strategic goals laid out before the church.

First, the social committee was asked to plan and provide social opportunities for the church membership on a monthly basis. The majority of the events planned were simple and uncomplicated. They included outdoor activities such as ice skating in the park and snow tubing at a local ski resort. There were indoor activities such as a salsa night and a pasta night where members brought their favorite salsa or spaghetti sauce and enjoyed a Saturday evening of games and activities.

In addition to the activities of the social committee, the family life ministry coordinators for the Central church planned a marriage retreat at a resort near Milwaukee. This was well attended by the local church members and other Adventists around the state.

The focus of the author during this time was on establishing the new church plant on the southside of Milwaukee. After holding small group meetings for over a

year, there was an intense evangelistic thrust in the area. This effort was a joint project with all the area Caucasian Seventh-day Adventist churches supporting the meetings and the goal of planting a new congregation. The first worship service was held on April 7, 2006, the first Sabbath after the presentation of the Sabbath message in the evangelistic meetings. Those attending the meetings were encouraged to become a part of this new congregation, and the Southside Adventist Fellowship was organized as a company on May 20, 2006 with thirty-five charter members.

An unexpected consequence of the church plant was that new leaders began to emerge at Milwaukee Central to take the place of those who started the new church. While the attendance at Milwaukee Central took a little dip, the enthusiasm was high as the church had given birth to a healthy church on the southside.

During this period, again there was no work with an implementation team, instead there was simply an effort to keep the members expanding the impact of their ministries. Once again, without a clear, formulated strategy for working on the minimum factor, there was hesitation about retaking the NCD survey. Yet, after receiving the results, the church was pleasantly surprised to see that its average health score had risen five points to sixty-eight.

### **April 2007-July 2008**

Upon seeing a steady growth in the average score, it was decided to attempt to follow the prescribed plan of implementation of NCD from NADEI. This included holding a focus group meeting to determine the reasons for the minimum factor,

establishing SMART goals, and communicating the goals to the church. Since many on the church board had participated in the survey, the church board was chosen to be the focus group to discuss the reasons for the minimum factor.

Each board member was given three post-it notes and instructed to write down the most important reasons they thought the church had the minimum factor of effective structures. These post-it notes were then sorted into like categories by the consensus of the board. Three areas emerged as most important, they were: (1) a lack of clear duties and responsibilities for the office positions; (2) a lack of clear vision for the church since church plant on the southside; (3) a lack of communication as to what was going on in the church with the various ministries.

From these three areas of concern three measurable goals were set for the church and implemented to address the minimum factor over the coming year: (1) to create clear job descriptions for each position in the church outlining all expectations and give these job descriptions to each individual at the time of asking for their acceptance of the position; (2) to perform a self evaluation of each ministry within the church as to its purpose for existence, its mission, and its effectiveness in reaching its goals; and (3) to have a business meeting where the vision and goals of each ministry would be shared with the church in general.

The nominating committee worked to clearly delineate the expectations for each of the positions within the church. Guidelines were established, job descriptions were written and approved by both the nominating committee and the church board. These job descriptions were then given to each member when they

were asked to serve in the position. The member was encouraged to pray over the job description and expectations before accepting the position. While it is impossible to be certain that each member followed those instructions, it appeared that the majority of the church members appreciated the clear nature of the expectations for the coming year.

Second, the Church Board voted to ask each ministry within the church to re-evaluate its effectiveness and mission. This was to be done at a time when a pastor was not present. The desire was to encourage the church members to wrestle with the mission of their ministry and discover their purpose without relying upon the direction or input from the pastoral staff. Each ministry of the church gathered together, some over several sessions, to hammer out the reason for their existence and discover where God was leading them in ministry. Elders, Sabbath School directors, deacons and deaconesses, the youth, health, family, and social ministry teams all participated in this self-evaluation and discovery process.

The following is a sample of the questions these ministry teams were encouraged to address:

1. Why does our ministry exist?
2. What is the purpose of our ministry in the church?
3. What have we been doing over the last few years?
4. Has it been effective? If so, how?
5. What are some ways that we could be more effective?
6. Where do we see God leading us in the future?

7. What needs to change or be emphasized for this to occur?

On May 17, 2008 the church gathered together on Sabbath afternoon to share a “Central Vision.” Each ministry was given a few minutes to bring a report to the body of the church in regards to their responses to the above questions. Some reports were simple, other elaborate with power-point presentations. Yet, one mood prevailed, the church body was excited about what it was doing and how God was directing in the various ministries and outreaches of the church.

Soon after this event, the sixth survey was taken and the ministry project came to its conclusion.

### **Milwaukee Central Growth Statistics**

The scope of this ministry project is to determine if by focusing on the NCD process a local church will grow. While one could argue there are many factors that bring about church growth, the author recognized an apparent correlation seemed to exist with NCD during his ministry at the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Upon assuming duties in October 2001 the author found that the membership of the church stood at two hundred and thirty-five, with the average weekly attendance only one hundred and twenty-five or 53 percent. The annual tithe for 2001 was \$231,241 and the local giving was \$107,525. This marked the base line for the ministry project.

These statistics also represented a steady decline in the church for several years. In 1983 the membership stood at four hundred and twenty nine, yet by 1995

it had declined to two hundred and eighty-nine. It further declined so as to be only two hundred and thirty-five in 2001. While there was an increase in local giving of nearly 11 percent from \$96,983 in 1995 to \$107,525 in 2001, it was primarily due to an annual foundation donation of \$10,000 to the Church for its homeless ministry. The annual tithe during the same period declined from \$237,630 in 1995 by just over 2.5 percent to \$231,241 in 2001. The attendance during these years also showed a slight decline from one hundred and thirty-three in 1997 to one hundred and twenty-five in 2001.<sup>16</sup>

From the beginning of the author's ministry in Milwaukee, he directed the focus of the church to the establishment of the most healthy environment possible. This however could not be done to the exclusion of reaching out to the community with the message of the Gospel. Table 1 shows the growth over the years in which the focus of the Milwaukee Central church was on building a healthier church through NCD. Since during the scope of this ministry project the Milwaukee Central church planted a new congregation on the southside of Milwaukee, the growth statistics of that new church plant were also included in the study.

The health of the church and its subsequent growth is seen in these statistics. There was a growth in tithe of approximately 19 percent over the period of the project. The growth in local giving was 27 percent. While the growth in membership was only 14 percent, the increase in attendance was 64 percent. The percentage of

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<sup>16</sup>The author could not obtain the attendance figures for the Milwaukee Central church prior to the fourth quarter 1997. Before that date, attendance was not required or reported to the Wisconsin Conference.

attendance to membership rose from just over 53 percent to over 75 percent.

TABLE 1  
MILWAUKEE CENTRAL GROWTH STATISTICS

Year	Tithe	Local Giving	Members	Attend	%	Baptisms
2001	\$231,241.00	\$107,525.00	235	125	53.19	5
2002	\$234,504.00	\$106,908.00	257	155	60.31	18
2003	\$249,570.00	\$122,364.00	242	145	59.92	11
2004	\$243,138.00	\$114,965.00	243	153	62.96	4
2005	\$262,770.00	\$109,261.00	255	160	62.75	12
2006	\$277,396.00	\$112,226.00	254	190	74.8	27
2007	\$275,330.00	\$136,622.00	270	205	75.93	10

During the years 2003 and 2004 the Milwaukee Central Church plateaued in its statistical growth. It was during these years that the author sought to implement goals for working on the minimum factor without the help of an implementation team. Due to family issues and misreading what was needed by the church, there was a slight dip in the church health scores in NCD. This could have possibly been avoided or at least mitigated by having an implementation team working in conjunction with the author. It is noteworthy that this period was paralleled by a similar dip in the church's growth statistics, which further indicates a relationship between the health of the church and its subsequent growth. The increase in the

local giving for 2003 was largely due to raising the funds for new carpeting of the church. Though not directly related to NCD, it does represent a time that the church came together to complete a much needed project.

In 2005 the health of the church was such that plans began to be laid to plant a new congregation on the southside of Milwaukee. While there were no voted goals or objectives by the church board, this was a time of renewed focus in empowering the laity for evangelism. As mentioned previously, the whole church again became focused on its mission to expand the Kingdom of God as existing ministries tried new ways to reach the unreached. Small groups were formed as the basis for the new church. The laity were trained, equipped, and supported in ministry. Intentional effort was made to foster loving relationships within the congregation. The Milwaukee Central was again clearly focused on building up a healthy environment in the church and reaching out to others with the message of the gospel.

There are no doubt many factors that helped to turn the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church from its downward slide. The laity was willing to work and perform significant ministry within the church and community. Evangelism was made a priority in the life of the church. The leadership of the church was willing to empower, train, and support the laity in diverse attempts to reach the public for Christ. Yet all of these began to coalesce as the church became focused on its health, and allowing God to work naturally in developing His church. It is clear that the change in the Milwaukee Central church was facilitated by a

conscientious effort to utilize the tools and direction offered in the NCD process to improve the church's health. This improvement in health was then translated into the natural growth of the church.

## **Lessons Learned through the Process**

There were numerous lessons learned over the course of the seven years of working with NCD in the Milwaukee Central Church. One of the first lessons learned was not to set too many goals as the church may only be able to do justice to three or four at the most. Having too many goals not only has the tendency to spread the pastor and leadership too thin, but also has the potential of fragmenting the cohesiveness of the church. In the first year the church had the worthy goal of starting an active ministry to the inactive and less active members, but with all the other focus given to the other areas, the church simply could not handle the added burden of starting this ministry as well.

A second lesson was how the implementation of a clear vision and mission for the church created a desire for others to become involved. While there was no formal attempt to start new ministries, two were started in the first year just because people were being impressed that this was what God wanted them to do. Later, other laity would seek permission to expand or participate in ministry. Still other members were willing to finance the evangelistic project because they saw something happening in their church. As the vision for reaching out to others caught fire, there was a contagious spirit that permeated the church and brought more people to participate in various ministries.

Not all the lessons learned were from positive experiences. The author learned the sobering truth that despite how well the pastor/church leader may think he/she knows what is needed for the church to implement working on the minimum

factor, it is vitally important to get input from other church members. This lesson was perhaps the hardest to learn and took the longest to accept. In looking back over the ministry project, much more could have been accomplished if more attention was made to include the laity in every implementation goal.

In the second cycle, the goals and objectives could have been totally different had the author taken the time to simply talk with the head elder at the beginning of the process, instead of waiting until the end of the year. Had the author taken the time to consult with the implementation team or Church Board, different and more effective goals and objectives could have been established. The Central church members knew their gifts, but their ministries were not necessarily in harmony with their gifts. The problem was not a lack of knowledge, rather a lack of integration and implementation. Understanding the concept of spiritual gifts is only part of the characteristic of a healthy church, the other part is orienting the ministry performed by the laity in harmony with their gifts. If the author had sought guidance from a focus group, implementation team, or Church Board this truth would have become self-evident.

Additionally, during times when the author was preoccupied with other ministry or family issues, using an implementation team could have facilitated more intentional action. Instead of having to choose between care for a family crisis or focusing on the ministry and health of the congregation, trained and equipped laity could have picked up the slack. This lesson has been difficult to learn and accept, but

has now become evident and hopefully will not need to be re-learned at a future date.

A fourth lesson that has been learned through this process has been the need to persevere over the long term. A church does not become unhealthy overnight. Neither will it become the epitome of health over a twelve to eighteen month period. There will be times that focusing on the health of the congregation may not be on the front burner of the church's agenda. However, the concept of health must never be taken off the table. Just because dramatic results are not seen each and every year, it is no reason to scrap the concept and move on to something else. Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States are ever in need of increased health. Even a church which scores over sixty-five in all eight NCD categories, must focus on its continued health or it is in danger of becoming unhealthy. Pastors and church leaders must make a solid commitment to focus on the health of the congregation. This cannot be viewed as a short-term project but a rather a long-term lifestyle.

A fifth lesson learned by the author is that while having clear and concise goals to work on the minimum factor help to facilitate health, action should never be postponed because of the lack of knowing what to do. Doing something is better than doing nothing. Mistakes can be made in the process and implementation of NCD. However, the greatest mistake is to do nothing. Though sometimes the wrong thing was done to work on the minimum factor, something was being tried. Though sometimes there were no formal goals or objectives, the concept of making the

church a more healthy place was always before the congregation. It was because of this constant awareness and effort to make the Central church a more healthy environment for God to work that good things began to happen. It is vital for the pastor/church leader to not only encourage the church to take the NCD survey, but also to follow through and do something to improve on the minimum factor.

Finally, this ministry project has shown the author how difficult it is keep focused on health over the long term as a pastor. While the experience of Milwaukee Central shows that NCD can be implemented without the help of a coach or outside consultant, it is very difficult for the pastor to remain focused without this accountability. The work of ministry is multi-faceted. The demands on the pastor's time and energy are enormous. It is beneficial to have someone holding the pastor accountable and bringing into focus that which can at times be lost. In the author's experience with Milwaukee Central there were times when the focus of ministry did not include an emphasis on church health. Months would go by without any intentional effort or evaluation. Certainly having a trained coach to constantly prod the author on to new heights would have helped to facilitate a more productive experience.

In the last cycle of NCD, the author had the benefit of a coach for the beginning of the implementation process. There were a few telephone conversations with a trained coach. These conversations helped to hold the author to a time schedule and to accomplish what needed to be done to establish the goals and objectives. Even though the author is a trained NCD coach, having someone else

hold him accountable was extremely beneficial.

## CHAPTER 5

### STATISTICAL GROWTH COMPARISON OF SELECTED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES

As of the writing of this project, there has not been a detailed study examining the difference between churches in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination within the United States that implemented a plan to work on their minimum factor (NCD churches) versus those churches which simply took the NCD survey and did nothing to improve their health (Status Quo churches). To accomplish this comparison, the author sought to obtain results from one-hundred Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States. The author randomly selected the churches to participate in this analysis from those churches which had taken the survey multiple times and had their scores stored at the North American Division Evangelism Institute or other conferences which keep their own NCD scores.

This random selection was done by putting all the churches' names on slips of paper and pulling them out of a container, carefully shaking the container before each name was drawn. The author then contacted each of these churches, in the order in which they were selected, to determine which group they would be placed for the study. When the author contacted either the pastor or head elder of the

church, he would ask two simple questions. First, did you work on the minimum factor between the times your church took the survey? Secondly, can you tell me what you did? Unfortunately, many of the churches had to be thrown out for there could be no verification of whether they worked on their minimum factor or not. Either the numerous messages left by the author were unreturned, or there was no one available in the district who could answer these questions with any degree of certainty. Therefore, the author contacted over one-hundred and fifty churches before he could get the sample of fifty in each group.

After determining the two study groups, the author then made the first attempt to gather the necessary data. The conferences of the respective churches were contacted and the churches' annual tithe, local giving, membership, baptisms, and attendance was requested. It was here that another reality began to emerge. Many of the conferences encourage but do not require the keeping of attendance. The author could only get scattered, limited attendance reports from the NCD churches. None of the Status Quo churches could give any attendance reports for the years they were in the NCD program. Therefore, there was no possibility of using the attendance as one of the growth criteria for comparison.

An additional problem arose when some of the conferences chose not to divulge the statistical information on their churches. Since the author had chosen to deal directly with the conferences to obtain this information, he was reliant on their willing, voluntary participation for the data. Still, despite these setbacks, over 80 percent of the randomly selected churches had some usable data and over 60

percent had complete data relating to tithe, local giving, membership, and baptisms. It was from this data that the following comparisons are made.

### **Plan of Analyses**

The data was first examined to determine if there were any extreme scores that could unduly influence the results.<sup>1</sup> No extreme scores were found; therefore all churches were included. While some of the churches had building programs that influenced their local giving scores, these were in both groups and hence did not require any adjustments.

The plan of analyses followed several steps. The first analyses was conducted to determine whether within each group (NCD or Status Quo) there was a significant increase or decrease in the mean score on the main outcome variables of tithe, local giving, membership and baptisms from the beginning of the study to the end. The second set of analyses examined whether the mean score differed between the two groups NCD churches vs. Status Quo churches. The mean score of the outcome variables of tithe, local offering, membership, and baptisms were compared to see if there was any significant difference between the two groups at the outset of the study or whether they were approximately equivalent. Finally, the mean score on these same variables were compared at the end of the study to determine whether changes over time had led to statistically significant differences

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<sup>1</sup>The author had the assistance of Dr. Robert Nohr in running the analyses of the data collected. The program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the statistical analyses. The statistical analyses were conducted using the typical convention in the social sciences applying an alpha level of .05. Both groups were in the study nearly the same amount of time. The NCD churches averaged 3.7 years of data and the Status Quo churches averaged 3.4 years of data.

between these two groups by the end of the study.

In order to add additional rigor to the findings, a multiple regression was conducted. This procedure consisted of entering first the pre-study score as a predictor of the final post-study score. Group status (NCD vs. Status Quo) was added as a second predictor of the final post-study score. This procedure controls for any pre-existing differences between the two groups on the outcome variables.

Descriptive statistics are also provided to illustrate the magnitude of any increase or decrease that was experienced by either group on the outcome variables over the course of the study.

### **Fifty Churches Which Implemented Natural Church Development**

Other studies conducted within the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the effectiveness of NCD have not sought to differentiate between those churches which tried to work on their minimum factor and those which simply took the NCD survey. To clearly determine if focusing on the NCD process would help to facilitate growth in Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States, there needed to be a simple verification process to determine which churches actually worked on their minimum factor.

The focus of this project was to determine if simply attempting to improve the health of the local church would result in a measurable difference in church growth. This group was set in contrast to other churches which simply took the survey to see the status of health of the congregation and did nothing to improve their health.

There was no attempt made to determine the quality of work done toward the minimum factor. There was no distinction between those churches which may have had a coach leading them through the NCD implementation process vs. those who simply attempted to do the best they knew how. There was no delineation made between those congregations which actually improved their health score and those which did not. The only criteria used for separating the two groups was whether the pastor/church leader could tell the author something that was done in an attempt to improve the score of the minimum factor. There were no other controls placed on the churches.

### **Process for Determining Churches and Statistics**

In an effort to make a clear distinction each church was contacted. Either the pastor, head elder, or NCD implementation team coordinator was asked to verify that the church worked on the minimum factor. Many pastors could tell specific things they tried in the church to strengthen their minimum factor. Some had detailed goals, others had general action plans. However, each church which was placed in the NCD churches group had some verified action working on their minimum factor.<sup>2</sup>

Any verifiable attempt to improve the minimum factor was cause to include that congregation in the NCD churches group. One pastor claimed they “only worked on NCD when they wanted to or agreed with the results.” Another pastor

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<sup>2</sup>A sample of the responses from those churches which were placed in the NCD group can be viewed in appendix B.

claimed that they did not have stated goals but talked about it at every board meeting and tried to work on their minimum factor by making it the center of all their discussions. Other pastors could give specifics on how many small groups were started or what was tried to improve their worship experience. No matter the quality of work done toward the minimum factor, each of these churches were included in the NCD churches group.

The statistics were gathered from the reports given to the local conferences. These reports offered the most unbiased information and the least possibility for manipulating or exaggerating the data. The only exception to this was when the local conference did not keep record of the giving in the local church. Then, with the permission of the local conference, attempts were made to reach the local church treasurer for these statistics.

### **Fifty NCD Churches' Growth Statistics**

Data was obtained from forty-four of the original fifty NCD Churches. Thirty-four of the churches which reported had complete data for each of the categories requested.<sup>3</sup> These churches came from every union conference in the United States and represented a cross section of churches from small rural areas to large urban settings. A careful analyses of their growth statistics reveals some remarkable information.

Eighty-three percent of these churches had a tithe increase during the time

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<sup>3</sup>The raw data collected for this study can be examined in appendix C. Those churches included in the study which attempted to work on their minimum factor are designated with a "yes" in the second column.

they were seeking to improve their health. The average percentage of tithe increase for these churches was 26 percent. The churches which did not experience a tithe increase had an average tithe loss of 10 percent. The average percentage of tithe increase for this entire group of NCD Churches was a statistically significant difference of 22 percent.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 2  
MEAN GROWTH STATISTICS FOR NCD CHURCHES

	Beginning Data	Ending Data	Percent Increase
Tithe	\$212,225	\$259,365	22% increase
Local Giving	\$122,429	\$146,648	20% increase
Membership	254	278	9% increase
Annual Baptisms	8.1	8.2	—

Examining the statistics of local giving reveals a similar pattern. Seventy-three percent of the churches saw an increase in local giving averaging 37 percent. Within the 27 percent that experienced a loss in local giving the loss amounted to only an average of 18 percent. Combining all the NCD churches together, there was a statistically significant increase in local giving of 20 percent.

A close look at the membership also reveals a correlation between increased

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<sup>4</sup>The statistical analyses were conducted using the typical convention in the social sciences applying an alpha level of .05. Such a cutoff indicates that for findings describes as statistically significant, there is a five percent or less probability of getting such a result if there is no real difference. The complete analyses for all the questions applied to the data can be examined in appendix D.

health and increased membership. Seventy-five percent of the NCD churches experienced a membership gain over the period of their focusing on NCD. The average percent of membership gain was 15 percent. This far offset the 25 percent of churches which experienced a membership decrease averaging only 4 percent. Taking the entire group of NCD Churches as a whole, the membership increased at a statistically significant magnitude of 9 percent over the period of the study.

### **Fifty Churches Which Did Not Implement Natural Church Development**

Many of the churches which were contacted to be included in the analyses could not provide a verifiable account as to whether they worked on their minimum factor. Given the difficulty in obtaining a verifiable fifty Status Quo churches (those churches which did nothing except take the survey and possibly report the results back to the church board), it was necessary to broaden the random selection process. To reach the required number of fifty churches, the author included churches which only took the NCD survey once. For these churches, the author chose to gather the growth data over a three year period. Following the same practice of random selection, all fifty churches were contacted to confirm they had not sought to work on their minimum factor.

### **Process for Determining Churches and Statistics**

There were times when the pastor or head elder would clearly state that

nothing was done or that it was a waste of time. These churches were placed in the Status Quo category.<sup>5</sup> However, some pastors would claim they had done something, but when asked what the church did, the pastor could not recall a single thing beyond reporting the results of the survey to the church board. These churches were also placed in the Status Quo category. Numerous pastors reported that the church had talked about it, but due to a lack of training in the value, purpose, and process of NCD both the pastor and congregation did not know how to work on their minimum factor. Many of these pastors did not recognize the need or value in persevering with NCD and often went on to other projects. It was clear that some of the congregations perceived NCD as simply a survey they had to take in order to obtain evangelism money from the conference and did nothing with the results in an attempt to improve their health.

### **Fifty “No” Churches’ Growth Statistics**

Just as the analyses of the data from the NCD churches revealed a profound correlation between working on the health of the church and its corresponding growth, the opposite was confirmed in the data from the Status Quo Churches. Those churches which did not make an effort to work on their health experienced a general decline in their congregations.

Whereas 83 percent of the NCD churches saw a tithe increase averaging 26 percent, 54 percent of the Status Quo churches experienced a tithe decrease

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<sup>5</sup>A sample of the responses from the churches which were placed in the Status Quo group can be viewed in appendix C.

averaging 15 percent. While there was 46 percent of the Status Quo churches that did experience a tithe increase, the average was only 9 percent, far below the

average of NCD churches. Taking the Status Quo churches as an entire group, not only was there no tithe gain, there was a nonsignificant trend downward as they lost an average of 5 percent in annual tithe.<sup>6</sup>

TABLE 3  
MEAN GROWTH STATISTICS FOR STATUS QUO CHURCHES

	Beginning Data	Ending Data	Percent Change
Tithe	\$147,898	\$140,265	5% decrease
Local Giving	\$107,116	\$113,009	6% increase
Membership	196	190	3% decrease
Annual Baptisms	5	5	—

It is noteworthy to see that in the area of local giving 54 percent of this group of churches did experience an increase in their giving to their local church. This could be due to many factors, including the notations made by a few conferences regarding building programs in some of the randomly selected churches. Depending on when the building program or other special project was in place, it could vastly influence the amount of funds given at the local church level. Though the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, the Status Quo churches

<sup>6</sup>The raw data collected for this study can be viewed in appendix D. The statistics were ran using the typical convention in the social sciences applying an alpha level of .05. Setting the cutoff of the probability to less than five percent of obtaining the result occurring without there a real difference in place. A list of the questions applied to the data and the results from the equations can be examined in appendix E.

experienced only a 6 percent increase versus the 20 percent increase found in the NCD churches.

Upon examination of the membership data, the downward trend continues. Here one finds 60 percent of the Status Quo churches experienced a decline in membership averaging 8 percent. Comparing with the NCD churches, this amounts to twice the decline in membership in those churches which lost members over the period of the study. Those churches which bucked the trend and increased in membership did so only at an average of 9 percent, far below the average of 15 percent increase found in the NCD churches which increased their membership. Combining all the Status Quo churches together, the loss of 3 percent of membership combined with the gain of 9 percent by the NCD churches resulted in a finding that the NCD churches had statistically significantly more members at the end of the of the survey period than the Status Quo churches.

The author did not evaluate the transfers of membership in each group. Some of the increase in membership within the NCD churches could have resulted from transfers and not true Kingdom growth. However, an analyses of the baptisms is quite revealing. In the first year after taking the NCD survey, the Status Quo churches averaged five baptisms compared to the average of eight baptisms among the NCD churches.<sup>7</sup> This trend continued over the period of the study. At the conclusion, the NCD churches baptized a statistically significant average of 72

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<sup>7</sup>Some consider this to consist of a non-significant trend since the alpha level was between .10 and .05.

percent more individuals than the Status Quo churches.<sup>8</sup> While the entire difference in membership can not be attributed totally to the number of baptisms, it is clear the NCD churches saw a significant increase in expanding Kingdom growth over the Status Quo churches.

Comparing the two groups one can readily determine there is a strong correlation between a congregation making an effort to work to improve their health and their subsequent church growth. The group of NCD churches had a statistically significant difference in their mean score in four of the six areas tested, tithe, membership, annual number of baptisms, and total number of baptisms over the Status Quo churches at the end of the study. The NCD churches also had a statistically significant increase from the beginning of the study to the end in the areas of average tithe, local offerings, and membership within their group. Whereas, the Status Quo churches experienced a nonsignificant average loss in membership as well as a nonsignificant trend toward a decrease in average tithe over the period of the study.

Due to the unexpected finding that the Status Quo churches experienced a decrease in tithe but an increase in local offering (although both were nonsignificant changes), the author elected to run an additional analyses combining all giving by adding up both tithe and local offering into a combined total giving variable. Eighty

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<sup>8</sup>It must be noted that there was a non-significant trend (alpha level .10) favoring the NCD churches at the outset of the study. However, over the course of time there developed a statistically significant difference in both the annual number of baptisms and the total baptisms (alpha level .03). The reason why a small absolute difference was significant is that the key statistic is influenced by the fluctuation in the standard deviation (the measure of the variability within each group) at Time 1 and Time 2.

two percent of the NCD churches experienced a total giving increase, while at the same time only 51 percent of the Status Quo churches experienced an increase. Whereas the NCD churches experienced a statistically significant increase in their total giving over the time of the study, the Status Quo churches experienced a nonsignificant loss in their total giving.

A question might be raised as to any apparent advantage the NCD churches had at the beginning of the study. Since it might appear that the group of NCD churches had an advantage of size and health at the beginning of the study,<sup>9</sup> the two groups were tested for any pre-existing differences. This was necessary to discover whether the NCD group had an advantage which caused the end results to be skewed. Is it possible that the difference in the results were simply because the Status Quo group was at a disadvantage from the beginning? Therefore a multiple regression equation was added to control for any pretest differences.<sup>10</sup> The results showed that even using this rigorous method of control both the final tithe, total giving, and membership were still significantly predicted based simply upon the group status of NCD or Status Quo churches.

### **Comparison with the Milwaukee Central SDA Church**

The question then arises as to the experience of the Milwaukee Central

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<sup>9</sup>There was no significant statistical difference in the two groups on any area of the outcome variables at Time1. However, there was a non-significant trend for the NCD churches to have more tithe (\$212,225 vs. \$147,898) and baptisms (8.1 vs. 5) in the first year of the study..

<sup>10</sup>The Time 1 score was first entered as a predictor, then the group (NCD Churches or Status Quo Churches) was added as a second predictor of the Time 2 score.

Church with relationship to these two groups. Did the author's pastoral experience in that church parallel either one of these groups? Did the congregation in Milwaukee experience the kind of growth that can be expected when a church focuses on improving its health? Was the growth experienced in Milwaukee an aberration of the trend or another example to support focusing on the health of the congregation in the quest for church growth within Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States?

During the period of study, the tithe of Milwaukee Central grew by 19 percent. The local offering increased by 27 percent and the membership increased by 15 percent. However, the Milwaukee Central church was in the study longer than the other churches. Therefore, while it appears as though the experience of Milwaukee Central was right in line with the churches which worked on their minimum factor, the other churches experienced a 22 percent tithe increase over an average of just under four years. The Milwaukee Central church experienced only a 19 percent increase in tithe over the longer period of six years. The experience at Milwaukee Central however, did not come close to the Status Quo Churches mean of decreasing 5 percent in tithe over the period of the study.

The same is true in regard to the local giving where the Milwaukee Central Church experienced a 27 percent increase over the six years the other NCD churches had a 20 percent increase in their local giving gain in just under four years. Yet this was much closer to the NCD churches mean than the 6 percent increase in the Status Quo churches. When combining the total giving, again the Milwaukee

Central

Church experienced a similar pattern to the NCD churches with a 22 percent increase in total giving instead of the 1 percent decrease experienced by the Status Quo churches.

TABLE 4  
COMPARISON WITH MILWAUKEE CENTRAL CHURCH

	NCD Churches	Milwaukee Central	Status Quo
Tithe	22% increase	19% increase	5% decrease
Local Giving	20% increase	27% increase	6% increase
Total Giving	22% increase	22% increase	1% decrease
Total Baptisms	31	82	18
Annual Baptisms	8.2	13.67	5
Membership	9% increase	15% increase	3% decrease

In comparing the membership one can see that the Milwaukee Central Church experienced a 15 percent increase over the six years compared to an average 9 percent increase over the approximately four years of the NCD churches. Additionally, the number of annual baptisms were significantly higher in the Milwaukee Central Church with an average of over five more than in the other NCD churches.

From these statistics it is apparent that the financial growth experienced at the Milwaukee Central Church fell below the average financial growth in the group of churches which worked on their minimum factor. Yet, it was far above the growth

of the churches which did nothing to improve their health. At the same time, the growth experience in membership and baptisms were above the average growth of those church which worked on their minimum factor. Additionally, given the 64 percent increase in attendance, it is clear that focusing on the health of the Milwaukee Central Church helped to create an environment in which God could grow His church. This growth was typical of what might happen in any Seventh-day Adventist congregation within the United States which also sought to create a healthy environment for God to work for the growth of the church.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the United States is facing a crisis in growth that it cannot afford to ignore. Pastors, church leaders, and conference officials alike want to see their churches grow, yet the majority of congregations are not even keeping up with the biological growth rate. Something must be done to stem the decline and foster church growth.

In the Scriptures we discover that Christ's parable of the self-growing seed in Mark 4:26-29 is describing what God intends would happen to the gospel seed that is sown in good soil. Once the seed is planted in good soil, it will grow all by itself until the harvest. It is the responsibility of the farmer to plant the seed, cultivate the soil, and harvest the crop. However, the farmer is not responsible for, nor can he generate the growth of the seed, beyond providing a healthy environment for it to flourish.

Natural Church Development focuses on developing a healthy environment within the church that will allow the growth forces that God has in place within His church to work. NCD maintains that if the church is healthy, then God will make the church grow "all by itself." Numerous individuals have sought to delineate the various characteristics found in a healthy congregation. Yet, the author has shown

that most of the characteristics espoused by these other individuals are embodied in the eight essential characteristics of a healthy church as described by Christian Schwarz's NCD.

This theory has been tested and proven true in various denominations around the world. However, there has not been a study within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the United States comparing a local congregation's experience of implementing NCD with other Seventh-day Adventist churches that either attempted to implement NCD or did nothing to improve their health except to take the NCD survey. Therefore the author's pastoral experience at the Milwaukee Central Seventh-day Adventist Church was used as a test of what could happen with a long-term focus on the NCD process.

To complete the study, one hundred Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States which had taken the NCD survey were randomly selected to participate in a church growth comparison. The only criteria used to distinguish between the two groups of church was that something was verifiably done in the local church to work on the minimum factor. No effort was made to quantify or qualify the work toward the minimum factor. The pastor or head elder simply needed to be able to communicate a specific action that was accomplished in working to increase the minimum factor. After contacting about one-hundred and fifty churches, the author was able to verify fifty congregations that either did something to improve their minimum factor (NCD churches) or did nothing with the results of the survey except possibly report the results to the church (Status Quo

churches).

The author then contacted the local conferences to access the churches' membership, baptisms, tithe, and local giving. In comparing this data there were striking statistically significant differences found between the two groups. Within the NCD Churches 75 percent experienced a gain in membership over the period of the study. Additionally, 73 percent saw a gain in local giving and 83 percent saw an increase in tithe. This was in stark contrast to the Status Quo Churches of which 60 percent experienced a decrease in membership, and 54 percent saw a decrease in tithe. The only area in which there was an increase for the Status Quo group was in the area of local giving. However, it still did not increase the same rate as the NCD group.

Even after allowing for the differences in the two groups at the beginning of the survey period, there was a statistically significant difference in both membership, total giving, and tithe. This means that taking away any perceived advantage that the NCD Churches may have had at the beginning, both tithe, total giving, and membership could be predicted to increase based simply upon whether the congregation had worked on their minimum factor or not.

Questions have been raised within the Seventh-day Adventist church regarding the effectiveness or value of NCD within the denomination. While the author does not claim that NCD is a magic potion, the author has shown that continued focus on the quality of health within the congregation will lead to a greater quantity of growth in that same congregation. As Christ spoke of the self-

growing seed, so in Seventh-day Adventist churches across the United States, once the environment of the church is healthy, God will and does cause His church to grow.

APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF HEALTHY CHURCH CHARACTERISTICS

Schwartz 1996	Barna 1999	MacNair 1999	Galloway 1999	Werning 1999
Empowering Leadership	Leaders who direct the church	Train and implement shepherd leadership	Empowered Leaders	Empowering Leadership
Gift-oriented Ministry	Equipping the Family	Use Gifted Member initiative	Shared Ministry	Gift-Oriented Ministry
Passionate Spirituality	Systematic Theological Growth	Retain commitment to Scriptures	Fervent Spirituality	Passionate Spirituality
Effective Structures	Structuring the Church for Impact		Flexible and foundational structures	Functional Structures
Inspiring Worship	Genuine Worship	Regular Vibrant Worship	Celebrative Worship	Inspiring Worship
Holistic Small Groups			Connections in Small Groups	Holistic Small Groups
Need-Oriented Evangelism	Engage in Strategic Evangelism		Seeker Friendly Evangelism	Need-Oriented Evangelism
Loving Relationships	Lasting, Significant Relationships		Loving Relationships	Loving Relationships
	Holistic Stewardship			Biblical Stewardship
		Vision and Plan	Clear Vision	Mission Driven
			Church Planting	
				God's Word

## COMPARISON OF HEALTHY CHURCH CHARACTERISTICS

Schwartz 1996	Foltz 2002	White 2002	McIntosh 2003	Macchia 2003
Empowering Leadership	Healthy Leadership; Discipleship Ministry	Conscientious, Visionary Leadership	Right Pastor	Servant Leadership Development
Gift-oriented Ministry	Fostering and training laity to use spiritual gifts		Right Process Right People	
Passionate Spirituality	Ministry of prayer and intercession; Obedience and Sacrifice	Priority on Prayer	Right Priority Right Power	God's empowering presence; spiritual disciplines
Effective Structures			Right Procedure	Appropriate systems, equipment and facilities
Inspiring Worship	Celebration and Worship	Worship that Inspires		God-Exalting Worship
Holistic Small Groups				Grow in walk with God within a safe environment
Need-Oriented Evangelism	Repentance for not reaching out to the community	Good reputation in community & People added to the church	Right Philosophy Right Plan	Communicating the truth of Jesus to those outside the faith
Loving Relationships	Healthy Body Ministry	Environment of Unity and Joy		Commitment to loving, caring relationships
		Cheerful Stewardship		Stewardship
		On Mission for Christ	Right Premise - Word	

## COMPARISON OF HEALTHY CHURCH CHARACTERISTICS

Schwartz 1996	Smith 2003	Dever 2004	Scheidler 2005	Getz 2007
Empowering Leadership	Provides own leadership and resources	Biblical church leadership; Discipleship and Growth	Builds up all member for ministry; principle of servanthood	Biblical discipleship and leadership
Gift-oriented Ministry	Carry out mission with various gifts		Releasing gifts and Ministry	Manifest faith, hope and love - not just spiritual gifts
Passionate Spirituality		Biblical understanding of conversion	Present truth & strong prayer life	Christ's life lived out and demonstrated within the heart
Effective Structures	Fully functioning parts		Divine pattern; Biblical Structure	
Inspiring Worship			Promote the presence of God in the meetings	Worship - fellowship with God / each other
Holistic Small Groups	Close watch on spiritual and physical well being		House to house ministry	
Need-Oriented Evangelism	Adapts to needs of target people and community	Biblical understanding of evangelism and church membership	Local church to expand kingdom	Impacting the world and seeing people place faith in Christ for Salvation
Loving Relationships	Provides care for members and community it serves	biblical church discipline	Exercise Spiritual discipline; Unity a priority	Relationships with others and loving discipline
		Expository Preaching	Word and Tradition	

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE RESPONSES DURING VERIFICATION OF NCD CHURCHES

1. We held spiritual gifts seminars and implemented small groups.
2. Preached sermons on spiritual gifts, held a spiritual gift seminar, attempted to tie the nominating committee with spiritual gifts.
3. Talked about it on board each meeting, focus was changed to improve health.
4. Worked on passionate spirituality by having a sermon series, elders retreat, Bible reading focus.
5. Worked with an implementation team established by the board and focus groups to establish measurable goals.
6. Worked for three years on empowering leadership.
7. Worked on inspiring worship by implementing a worship team.
8. Worked through staff, focus groups and affinity exercises.
9. Not done as much as should, but was intentional in working to improve.
10. Had implementation team, worked to change order and format of worship.
11. Focused on effective structures with communication and vision. Currently working on inspiring worship.
12. Worked with the pastor in an informal way.
13. Worked in general manner and saw the atmosphere in the church change.
14. Only worked on the minimum factor when we agreed with the results.

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE RESPONSES DURING VERIFICATION OF STATUS QUO CHURCHES

1. Used the purpose-driven model instead of NCD
2. Didn't do anything.
3. Used as a tool to identify weaknesses and strengths but didn't implement any changes, simply took the survey.
4. No training on what to do after the survey, therefore nothing was done.
5. Interest waned in the program, nothing was done and the congregation moved on to something else.
6. Worked a little on and off, didn't really do anything, most of the time nothing.
7. Hopes to do something this time, didn't do anything last time.
8. Didn't do anything with this church, only worked with the other congregation.
9. Not trained in the process or value of NCD, takes survey because has to.
10. Congregation sees no value in the process, simply takes survey to get evangelism money.
11. People don't want to be involved, doing nothing with NCD.

APPENDIX D

STATISTICAL GROWTH DATA OF RANDOMLY SELECTED CHURCHES

Church	NCD	Begin Tithe	Ending Tithe	Begin Local \$	Ending Local \$	Begin Member	Ending Member	Baptisms
1	Yes					98	135	25
2	Yes					160	167	5
3	Yes					69	68	3
4	Yes	484135	530343			683	678	30
5	Yes	472374	558761			426	500	33
6	Yes	517038	704246			469	505	77
7	Yes	457410	479280			378	404	24
24	Yes	143887	204891			59	65	3
27	Yes	688253	834351			645	823	131
81	Yes	75009	104368			135	154	12
8	Yes	45037	64230	58688	68331	84	96	15
9	Yes	507261	539316	267117	292646	605	686	63
10	Yes	197868	216280	119895	116683	298	289	13
11	Yes	120043	120545	213832	88978	80	95	17
12	Yes	60108	49908	45377	37698	129	104	27
13	Yes	382564	410546	211845	186316	536	565	14
14	Yes	66387	67978	54460	60402	152	150	7
15	Yes	220748	341114	169441	128602	290	324	41
16	Yes	114806	169717	38848	87366	127	133	10
17	Yes	67496	70312	24725	32572	70	72	2
18	Yes	144608	141159	84863	170716	294	291	39
19	Yes	47515	64558	84431	178704	176	166	9
20	Yes	194532	166185	84641	84413	166	156	28
21	Yes	441470	787277	344656	621330	800	985	98

22	Yes	101969	94454	391173	409779	478	496	20
23	Yes	61407	93444	23506	82715	41	88	40
25	Yes	219138	232468	96930	129228	122	160	37
26	Yes	102735	160740	117877	162491	122	135	12
28	Yes	62246	67498	32823	54341	63	98	27
29	Yes	341312	472683	102431	146683	276	372	86
30	Yes	195506	275335	212558	234444	265	266	16
31	Yes	98375	87067	55203	57995	146	137	8
32	Yes	242063	247579	194692	248179	348	353	31
33	Yes	47064	58825	30367	38546	22	35	5
34	Yes	68196	92020	33236	61973	75	85	7
35	Yes	325584	295749	132031	140776	486	475	22
36	Yes	288350	427282	201928	186256	309	392	40
37	Yes	76672	95848	51877	70249	51	77	12
38	Yes	42989	36134	11862	14650	40	44	12
39	Yes	148776	173233	70914	71609	141	149	19
40	Yes	107296	127424	71766	66809	85	102	24
78	Yes	235046	387642	187567	169432	259	285	17
79	Yes	321687	416127	211452	311638	608	567	107
80	Yes	166099	167086	129588	173468	319	321	91
41	No	19802	12197			73	67	33
42	No	76302	56828			63	65	5
43	No	142533	145728			162	154	6
44	No	92791	72945			117	118	14
45	No	45948	44260	35331	31146	80	95	13
46	No	45874	63285	10044	11663	58	63	5
47	No	104078	65095	95241	43322	168	155	7
48	No	48677	59050	15910	31789	79	84	4
49	No	295139	279003	176781	412777	399	413	49

50	No	41601	40990	22086	18794	69	44	18
51	No	78882	80182	45133	62540	90	93	3
52	No	119353	97303	29047	68125	135	118	7
53	No	28478	35766	3112	2643	51	48	2
54	No	42251	34861	9640	22322	89	82	2
55	No	103498	109245	120465	162139	153	151	7
56	No	48966	38900	48572	89655	126	103	4
57	No	37349	55066	26742	62691	26	49	9
58	No	99067	85423	39224	37071	99	80	3
59	No	77373	64001	40138	52661	90	91	1
60	No	144684	154187	139906	147002	224	218	16
61	No	304398	274870	109159	104949	283	252	6
62	No	175903	192866	74526	76127	290	288	7
63	No	34638	41813	16033	17512	35	38	2
64	No	171931	179230	96245	117739	172	201	23
65	No	368633	359584	246511	182566	422	436	21
66	No	282342	278539	180205	162152	371	346	11
67	No	18425	20044	6776	9651	82	76	2
68	No	601428	495282	310144	260226	836	740	92
69	No	98147	67805	90907	75719	102	62	22
70	No	211959	220403	312032	220176	389	377	40
71	No	110754	86370	72036	86284	94	85	25
72	No	180862	98068	301590	201306	205	184	17
73	No	57447	60683	38139	31352	68	79	36
74	No	177112	200080	168582	130104	293	284	38
75	No	174371	217939	106803	125191	307	337	42
76	No	251752	229315	331296	293776	233	290	50
77	No	559493	572635	216481	378120	707	673	40

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS POSED IN THE ANALYSES OF GROWTH DATA

Q1. Were the two groups statistically significantly different from each other at Time1? (t-test)

	NCD Churches		Status Quo Churches		t	p	Sig Diff?
Avg Tithe	N=41	212,225	N=37	147,898	1.85	.07	No*
Average Offerings	N=34	122,429	N=33	107,116	.65	.52	No
Total Giving	N=34	294,869	N=33	262,899	.62	.54	No
Membership	N=44	254	N=37	196	1.36	.18	No
Annual Baptisms	N=44	8.1	N=37	5	1.68	.10	No*

\*Some consider a *p* value of between .05 and .10 a “nonsignificant trend.”

Q2. Was there a statistically significant change over time for the NCD Churches group? (T1=Time 1; T2=Time 2)(paired samples t-test)

	NCD Mean	t	p	Sig. Diff.?
Tithe: N=41	T1=212,225 T2=259,365	4.23	.00	Yes
Ave. Offerings: N=34	T1=122,429 T2=146,648	2.34	.03	Yes
Total Giving: N=34	T1=294,869 T2=358,934	3.20	.00	Yes
Membership: N=44	T1=254 T2=278	3.60	.00	Yes

Q3 Was there a statistically significant change over time for the Status Quo Churches group? (T1=Time 1; T2=Time 2)(paired samples t-test)

	NCD Mean	t	p	Sig. Diff.?
Tithe: N=37	T1=147,898 T2=140,265	1.70	.10	No*
Ave. Offerings: N=33	T1=107,116 T2=113,009	.55	.59	No
Total Giving: N=33	T1=262,899 T2=261,559	.10	.92	No
Membership: N=37	T1=196 T2=190	1.34	.19	No

\*nonsignificant trend for the tithe to go down in this group overall.

Q4 Were the two groups significantly different from each other at Time 2? (t-test)

	NCD Churches		Status Quo Churches		t	p	Sig Diff?
Avg Tithe	N=41	259,365	N=37	140,265	2.94	.00	Yes
Average Offerings	N=34	146,647	N=33	113,089	1.21	.23	No
Total Giving	N=34	358,935	N=33	261,558	1.58	.12	No
Membership	N=44	278	N=37	190	1.96	.05	Yes
Total Baptisms	N=44	31	N=37	18	2.23	.03	Yes
Annual Baptisms	N=44	8.2	N=37	5	2.20	.03	Yes

Q5. Utilizing descriptive statistics, what percentage of churches had a raw score increase or decrease on the outcome variables?

		Tithe	Offerings	Total Giving	Membership
NCD Churches	Increased	83%	73%	82%	75%
	Decreased	17%	27%	18%	25%
Status Quo Churches	Increased	46%	54%	51%	40%
	Decreased	54%	46%	49%	60%

Q6 What was the percentage increase or decrease on the outcome variables within each group total? (including all increasers and decreasers within the group; calculated by simply subtracting the difference between T1 mean and T2 mean, then dividing by T1 mean.)

	Tithe	Offering	Total Giving	Membership
NCD Churches	22%	20%	22%	9%
Status Quo Churches	-5%	6%	-1%	-3%

Q7. What was the magnitude of the percentage increase or decrease on the outcome variables within each group separated by increasers and decreasers? (calculated by simply subtracting the difference between T1 mean and T2 mean, then dividing by T1 mean.)

		Tithe	Offering	Total Giving	Membership
NCD Churches	Increasers	26%	37%	28%	15%
	Decreasers	-10%	-18%	-15%	-4%
Status Quo Churches	Increasers	9%	55%	23%	9%
	Decreasers	-15%	-21%	-15%	-8%

Q8. Does group membership (NCD vs., Status Quo) predict T2 score in a multiple regression equation after controlling for any differences at T1 on these variables?

	t	p	Is Group Predictor?
Baptisms N=81	1.52	.13	No
Tithe N=78	3.89	.00	Yes
Offerings N=67	1.23	.22	No
Total Giving N=67	2.62	.01	Yes
Membership N=81	3.36	.00	Yes

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### **Professional Experience**

- A. Pastor, Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Milwaukee Central, Intern, August 1981 - September 1983  
Sturgeon Bay District, December 1985 - March 1987  
Beloit District, March 1987 - June 1988
- B. Pastor, Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Marion District, June 1988 - July 1991  
New Albany District, July 1991 - June 1996
- C. Pastor, Kentucky-Tennessee Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Pewee Valley Church, June 1996 - February 2000  
1000 Missionary Movement, N.A., Vice President,  
Training/Supervision of Missionaries, February 2000 - September  
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- D. Pastor, Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
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