

## THE LIFE OF DONALD MCGAVRAN: TURNING TO NORTH AMERICA

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*Gary L. McIntosh*

Editor's Note: Gary L. McIntosh has spent over a decade researching and writing a complete biography on the life and ministry of Donald A. McGavran. We are pleased to present the eighth of several excerpts from *Donald A. McGavran: A Biography of the Twentieth Century's Premier Missiologist* (Church Leader Insights, 2015).

### ***Abstract***

The event that put Church Growth on the worldwide map was the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism held on July 14-28, 1974. Then, as the Church Growth Movement took hold around the world, the focus of some faculty at Fuller's School of World Mission gradually turned toward North America. This article describes the actions and processes that propelled the movement into world prominence.

## Turning to North America

Events to occur in the coming two years turned the teaching of church growth toward North America, while also causing it to explode around the world. The event that was to make Church Growth a worldwide movement did not take place until 1974, but initial ideas were forming in January 1972, as God stirred Billy Graham to consider hosting an international congress on world evangelization somewhere in Europe within two years.

World congresses had previously been held in Berlin, Singapore, Bogota, and Amsterdam, and Graham believed the time was ripe for another one. In preparation, he sought prayer and counsel from a group of 31 men from around the world. The group agreed to approach one hundred evangelical church leaders to consider convening such a congress. “The purpose of the Congress was to call the Church back to the task of world evangelization under the dynamic of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

As chairman of the convening committee, Anglican Bishop Arthur John “Jack” Dain (1912-2003) wrote to ask Donald to assist in the planning of the congress by suggesting clearly defined goals. Donald wrote back within two weeks accepting the opportunity and confirming the support of the SWM-ICG for the congress. He wrote to Bishop Dain setting forth three main tasks for the congress to accomplish. The first was “the evangelization by each congregation and cluster of congregations (denominations) of its own ethnic, cultural and linguistic neighborhood.” The second was “the evangelization by each congregation and ‘cluster of congregations’ (denominations) of its fair share of the unevangelized two billion in other cultures and languages.” Finally, McGavran identified that “[t]he clear enunciation of the basic, common, biblical foundations on which all Gospel-proclaiming, sinner-converting, and church-multiplying evangelism stands is a third essential task.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the three tasks, Donald felt that a crucial goal for the congress was to clearly define what mission is. He emphasized this in his concluding remarks:

Bishop Dain, you note that throughout this response I am equating evangelism with world mission. One potent source of confusion

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1 A. J. Dain to Donald McGavran, June 15, 1972.

2 Donald McGavran to A. J. Dain, no date.

and weakness in evangelism and mission today is the systematic debasement of the term “mission” to mean anything the Church ought to do. What our forefathers called “doing our Christian duty” is today, in grandiose phrase, called “The Missio Dei.”

The Congress on Evangelism 1974 must define evangelism and mission to mean classical biblical evangelism and classical biblical mission. Not just proclamation by word of mouth, but every activity whose intention is to communicate the Gospel and reconcile men with God in the Church of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

“Believe me,” Donald explained to John Dale, director of the Mexican Indian Mission in Mexico, “this emphasis is greatly needed in this day when so many are engaged so violently in redefining mission to mean everything but saving men’s souls.”<sup>4</sup> The Lausanne Congress on Evangelism was still two years away; thus the immediate event that thrust church growth thought into the churches was the teaching of church growth principles to church leaders in North America.

Donald realized that church growth principles applied in all countries, even the United States. However, he was interested in world evangelism, seeing the animist world opening up and thousands of open doors for the gospel. His keen desire to see the church grow worldwide led him to focus on training mid-career missionaries who would apply church growth insights primarily to situations outside the United States. Wagner remembered that “when McGavran was teaching mission in the seminaries of the Christian Church in the late 1950s, his students preparing for American ministry frequently said to him, ‘The principles you teach apply here.’ He would reply, ‘Yes, they do, but how they apply will have to be worked out by you.’”<sup>5</sup>

Tippett had first talked with Donald in 1962 in Eugene about the potential of adding a course on American urban church growth, but Donald had felt the timing to be less than advantageous. The reality was that

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3 McGavran to Dain, no date.

4 Donald McGavran to John T. Dale, May 1, 1972.

5 C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1984), 15-16.

Donald knew American culture, realizing that if the Institute of Church Growth were to turn its sights on North America, they would be swamped with students, and the emphasis on the ripe fields of Asia and Africa would be lost. He argued, “When those ripe harvests have been gathered in then we will turn no doubt to America.”<sup>6</sup> When Donald became dean of the Fuller School of World Mission in 1965, he deliberately excluded pastors from North America. The entrance requirements to the SWM required three years of cross-cultural experience, validated by fluency in a second language, which effectively eliminated most church leaders in North America.

Actually, very few pastors in North America had read Donald’s early books. With the publication of *Understanding Church Growth*, however, knowledge of church growth began to spread among American pastors. More importantly, just as fields were ripe unto harvest for winning people to Christ, so North America was ripe for church growth training.

An illustration of just how ripe Americans were for church growth thinking was just ninety miles away from Pasadena in the burgeoning community of Garden Grove. Robert H. Schuller hosted an annual Institute for Successful Church Leadership for pastors who desired to see their churches grow. The Garden Grove Community Church (later to become the renowned Crystal Cathedral) opened its doors in 1955 and grew rapidly to become one of America’s most innovative churches, nationally known for its drive-in worship service. While Schuller had not studied church growth principles directly, he was using similar strategies in his church ministry and attracting hundreds, soon to be thousands, of pastors to his institute on leadership.

Always observant of the growing churches, Donald understood that Schuller’s brand of church growth was limited to a certain segment of the population. He told Wagner that Schuller’s approach to church growth would work if one had “a congregation with money . . . & education & organization AND if you have a very large population of nominal Christians [who are] highly winnable people of the same HU [homogeneous unity] & same culture.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that Schuller’s Institute for

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6 Tippet, *No Continuing City*, 446.

7 Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, August 10, 1970.

Successful Church Leadership was attracting so many pastors presented good evidence of the interest of American pastors in learning growth principles.

A popular brand of church growth literature had been coming into the consciousness of North American pastors since the late 1960s. Elmer Towns (b. 1932), a well-known Christian educator, wrote the first true church growth book by an American pastor—*The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Baker, 1969).<sup>8</sup> He followed this book three years later with *America's Fastest Growing Churches* (Impact, 1972). During those same years Southern Baptist leader Wendell Belew wrote *Churches and How They Grow* (Broadman, 1971), and Hollis L. Green released *Why Churches Die* (Bethany, 1972), which closely followed Donald's ideas.

One of the primary publications to catalyze interest in church growth among American pastors was *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (Harper and Row, 1972). Written by Dean M. Kelley (1926-1997) of the National Council of Churches, it incorporated insights from sociology of religion and presented ideas on why conservative churches were growing and liberal churches were not.<sup>9</sup> Other influential books to hit the marketplace during the late 1960s and early 1970s came from the research of Lyle Schaller (1923-2015) of the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana. A former city planner, Schaller turned his insightful eyes toward the church and published the first of what was to become more than ninety books to help churches grow.<sup>10</sup> While neither Kelley nor Schaller was technically a church growth writer in the line of Donald McGavran, their writing did alert pastors in America to the needs and potential for renewed growth.

Church growth also received notice from pastors of mega churches who wrote their "How-I-Did-It" books and who held "How-We-Do-It" seminars. A short list of pastors in the 1970s who promoted popular models

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8 Elmer Towns is the most prolific writer of church growth books in the United States. As of the publication of this biography, he has written 177 publications (books, booklets, pamphlets and manuals).

9 Dean M. Kelley was an American legal scholar concerned with religious liberty issues. He was an executive of the National Council of Churches.

10 Some place Lyle Schaller's publications more in the line of church renewal than of church growth. However, there is no doubt that his writings crossed the line into the field of Church Growth and were read by thousands of North American pastors.

of church growth included Jack Hyles (First Baptist, Hammond, Indiana); Robert Schuller (Garden Grove Community Church, California); James Kennedy (Coral Ridge Presbyterian, Fort Lauderdale, Florida); Ray Stedman (Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California); Harold Fickett (First Baptist, Van Nuys, California); Charles Blair (Calvary Temple, Denver, Colorado); Richard Halverson (Fourth Presbyterian, Washington); Paul Smith (People's Church, Toronto, Canada); Rex Humbard (Cathedral of Tomorrow, Akron, Ohio); and W. A. Criswell (First Baptist, Dallas, Texas). None of these well-known pastors had studied classic McGavran church growth thought. However, they all had experienced local church growth and were eager to share their stories as a means of helping other pastors. The inherent danger of the "How-I-Did-It" books was that they all focused on particular methods of evangelism, methods that were not always transferable to other contexts. Classic McGavran church growth thinking focused on principles of growth that pastors needed to contextualize, a reality that early practitioners of church growth research often missed. Even with this weakness, the publications and seminars of these pastors served to build interest and awareness of church growth in North America.

During this same time, several organizations and agencies formed to aid churches in their renewal and growth—for example, TOUCH ministries (Transforming Others Under Christ's Hand) in Houston, Texas, and IDEA (In-Depth Evangelism Associates) in Miami, Florida. Other ministries hosted church growth training seminars. For example, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) held a series of church growth seminars in February 1973. These all helped set in motion interest in church growth among North American pastors.

As pastors in North America started to hear about the fresh insights coming from the new Church Growth School, some encouraged Wagner to apply church growth ideas to the American church. Wagner had already considered such a class after coming to Fuller full time in 1971, and in 1972 he and Donald taught a pilot class in church growth to pastors and denominational leaders from North America. The catalyst for the class was Chuck Miller, then a staff pastor at Lake Avenue Congregational Church, located just across the freeway from FTS. One day Miller told Wagner that he would like to study church growth thinking, to which Wagner replied,

“You can’t do that . . . because you haven’t been in the Third World for three years and Dr. McGavran does not want to do the American scene.”

However, the idea interested Wagner, who later arranged a closed-door session with other members of the SWM-ICG faculty, in which Miller personally requested to study church growth. They laughed when Miller made his proposal, saying, “We have always laughed because we proud Americans call it (baseball) the World Series and now we call [it] the School of World Mission—but of course folks in the United States can’t get in.” They added, “The key will be how Dr. McGavran responds.” When presented with Miller’s proposal, McGavran readily agreed, saying, “I don’t see why we can’t do this.”<sup>11</sup>

The SWM faculty then approved the new class and announced it in a report given to the faculty senate of FTS: “The extension of Church Growth Studies will include America and this offering of an extension course on this subject at Lake Avenue Congregational Church.”<sup>12</sup> Advertisements were sent to church leaders primarily in Southern California, and 18 pastors and other church leaders from the Los Angeles region signed up for the course. They met for eleven weeks, from 7:00 to 9:00 on Tuesday mornings. Students studied two texts, Wagner’s *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* and McGavran’s *Understanding Church Growth*. After brief lectures by McGavran and Wagner, class members discussed the chapters and applied them to their own congregations and churches.<sup>13</sup>

Over the last three weeks, the class members designed hard, bold plans for effective evangelism in their own contexts. The class became the springboard for beginning the American Church Growth Movement, with one student, Winfield (Win) Arn (1923–2006), along with Wagner, destined to become a leader in the American Church Growth Movement.

While he was serving as director of religious education for a Congregational church in Portland, Oregon, the Portland Area Youth for Christ appointed Arn to the board. The board recognized his organizational, evangelistic, and leadership abilities and chose him to become director of

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11 David L. Cook, “The Americanization of the Church-Growth Movement,” M.A. Thesis, Auburn University (1998), 58–59.

12 School of World Mission report, October 2, 1972.

13 David L. Cook, 59.

the Portland Youth for Christ in 1959, a position he held until 1970. Over the years Arn served actively in numerous educational and evangelistic roles. For example, he served on the Greater Portland Area Association of Evangelicals and the Greater Portland Area Sunday School Association, all while conducting consultations on religious education for numerous churches and denominations. From 1967 to 1968 Arn was also vice-chairman of the executive planning committee for the Pacific Northwest Billy Graham Crusade.

Creative and innovative, Arn was always alert to new approaches for effective evangelism. His interest in communication led to his hosting a daily radio show for five years at KPDQ, a radio station in the Portland area. Later on one of the local television stations, an NBC affiliate, asked him to host a weekly show highlighting the ministry of Youth for Christ. To enhance the productions, Arn began making short film clips to show the television audience. Gradually, the short clips became full-length films. Even though some churches and denominations viewed movies as an ungodly method for ministry, Arn saw the potential of the medium to make disciples. Stepping out in faith, Arn founded Christian Communication for the sole purpose of producing Christian films.

As a writer and producer, Arn pioneered new concepts for religious films, such as the Charlie Churchman series and short films for use in illustrating sermons. By 1973, Christian Communication had produced 27 films. Arn received an award from the National Evangelical Film foundation and a Freedoms Foundation Award for the film "This is Our Country." By the close of his career, Arn had produced a total of 37 films.

While working in mass evangelism, Arn gradually became frustrated with the lack of "fruit that remained." He wrote of his frustrations in *Ten Steps for Church Growth*:

As the director of a large evangelistic organization aimed primarily at winning youth, we had what we thought was an effective approach to a very winnable segment of society. A distinctive of this ministry was a youth rally where attendance of over two thousand per meeting was common. This rally included a variety of activities to attract youth and concluded with a message on salvation and



an invitation to make a decision for Christ. Week after week, with few exceptions, five to fifty young people would respond and make a “decision.” This appeared, at the time, to be very effective evangelism. While much good was accomplished in this ministry, I sensed problems. What happened to those who made “decisions”? Did they become growing, reproducing Christians? Did they become actively involved in a church?

I researched, collected data, interviewed, and analyzed until I had a body of significant facts. The results were startling! The fruit which remained was seriously lacking!

At this same time, I served as leader for an area-wide-evangelistic crusade which brought to Portland, Oregon, a leading evangelist. He was accompanied by a highly organized and efficient staff for a two-week evangelistic campaign. Hundreds of prayer groups were formed. Billboards covered the city. Daily newspaper ads and television commercials foretold the event. Counselors were trained. Finances were raised. The crusade was held, decisions were made, and all acclaimed it a success.

When it was all over and the team had gone, I again researched the fruit. To my dismay, it was seriously lacking. What was wrong?<sup>14</sup>

Arn’s frustration with the actual results of mass evangelism resulted in his resignation from Youth for Christ in early 1970. Returning to his roots in religious education, he accepted a position as director of Christian education for the California Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and moved back to California. It was while he was serving in this position that he took part in the first course on American church growth.

Each student in the class had to complete a major project. For his final course project Arn presented six two-foot by four-foot colored charts illustrating church growth ideas. Attendees felt that the charts were highly effective and encouraged Arn to develop them further and make

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14 Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 10-11.

them available so they could use them in the upcoming Key 73 national evangelism outreach. He then produced ten charts and several workbooks to teach church growth, which he later used to train 150 Covenant leaders in three VIP Church Growth Seminars.<sup>15</sup> “These visual aids were significant because Arn’s ability to take an abstract concept and visualize it was a marked departure from McGavran and Wagner’s more academic and didactic approaches. His expertise in visual education impressed McGavran.”<sup>16</sup>

In fact, the class and seminar attendees responded so well to the media that Arn knew he was on to something larger than expected. Because of these experiences, Win and his wife, Barbara, founded the Institute for American Church Growth (IACG) in 1973. Perhaps just as importantly, the class began a friendship between McGavran and Arn that was to last until McGavran’s death in 1990.

Back at FTS, Donald and Wagner co-taught Principles and Procedures of Church Growth I during the fall quarter of 1972. In the winter quarter, they also co-taught Principles and Procedures II, while McGavran taught Indian Church and Wagner taught Third World Missions. During the spring quarter, Donald taught two classes—Theology Today and Advanced Church Growth. Wagner also taught two courses—Mission and Urbanization and Dynamics of Christian Mission in Latin America. Wagner and Donald discussed the possibility of Wagner’s teaching Principles and Procedures alone, with the two of them team teaching Advanced Church Growth beginning in the 1973-1974 school year, but Donald was reluctant to turn over his courses to Wagner so soon.

The year 1973 started on a hopeful note, with some 200,000 churches from 150 denominations cooperating in a year-long effort named Key 73, using the slogan “Calling Our Continent to Christ.” It was a cooperative effort among church groups in the United States and Canada, aimed at giving every person an opportunity to say yes to Jesus Christ and become a member of his church. Harold Lindsell, editor-publisher of *Christianity Today*, visited Fuller Seminary’s School of World Mission to engage faculty members in discussion on how to make Key 73 effective. The result was

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15 Donald McGavran, “The Dividends We Seek,” *Christianity Today* (January 19, 1973), 5.

16 Cook, 103.

a series of six articles written for *Christianity Today's* January 19, 1973, edition, suggesting church growth principles and strategies helpful to everyone involved in the evangelistic effort. The articles included

The Dividends We Seek: What Key 73 must produce

— Donald McGavran

North America's Cultural Challenge: Why styles of evangelism must vary

— Charles H. Kraft

A Not-So-Secular City: Analyzing the Christian's competition

— A. R. Tippett

Existing Churches: Ends or Means? Where new congregations are needed

—Ralph D. Winter

What Key 73 Is All About: A call for action

—Arthur Glasser

How to Diagnose the Health of Your Church

— C. Peter Wagner

Acknowledging that Key 73 was important, Donald nevertheless reminded readers that “[t]he dividends declared a year from now should be written in terms of lasting growth of churches.” In the same article, he described church growth thinking in America in the following eight statements:

- Accept the fact that God wants His lost children found, brought into the fold, and fed.
- Dig out the facts about the growth of congregations and denominations.
- Recognize the winnability of North Americans.
- Harness insights of the social sciences to evangelism and church growth.
- Pray and plan revival.
- Multiply evangelists—men and women, boys and girls.
- Multiply new cells of Christians.

- Expect rich dividends in the Christian Life Style.<sup>17</sup>

Donald briefly described the emergence of church growth thought in America, noting that many good programs of evangelism exist but that church growth evangelism's merit was that it focused attention on methods and aims intended to enhance the growth of churches.

In April, *Missiology* carried McGavran's article "Loose the Churches, Let Them Go!" in which he called for evangelism and discipleship that were strictly biblical and strictly Indian.<sup>18</sup> The next month Ralph Winter asked the SWM faculty for a list of their publications for the previous two years. McGavran's list for the years 1970 to 1973 included five books, two chapters in books, four articles (three of them in *Christianity Today*), one book in preparation, and 21 issues edited for the *Church Growth Bulletin*.

Early in 1973 Arn made the decision to focus his expertise on communicating Donald's church growth principles to pastors and church leaders in the United States. He resigned from his position with the Evangelical Covenant Church and took what he later called a leap of faith to found the Institute for American Church Growth. At the time, Arn had no visible means of support and no guarantee that North American churches and leaders would even respond to this new paradigm for evangelism. After telling Donald of his plans to resign, Donald replied, "You'll lose your shirt. There's no money in church growth."<sup>19</sup>

Donald and Arn's first collaboration was the writing of *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth* (1973). In late 1972, Win and his son Charles (Chip) recorded Donald at his home. Win asked questions, and Donald responded as Chip recorded the conversation. Barbara Arn later transcribed it, and Win edited the manuscript. This groundbreaking book sold over two hundred thousand copies before it was discontinued in 1994.

As the book was in production, Arn determined to produce a film on church growth by the same name: *How to Grow a Church*. Arn conceived of the film being an interview of McGavran, somewhat like the book. He presented the concept to several film companies, but they all turned him

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17 Donald McGavran, "The Dividends We Seek," 4-5.

18 Donald A. McGavran, "Loose the Churches. Let them Go!" *Missiology* [1973]: 81-94.

19 Donald McGavran, "Still Building the Bridges of God," *Global Church Growth*, 391.

down, asking rhetorically, “Who would want to watch a film with a little old bald man talking?”<sup>20</sup> Arn was so convinced of the need to get out the message of Church Growth that he financed the film himself. The film was released in the summer of 1973, becoming the first church growth film produced. It turned out to be a grand success; thousands of church leaders viewed the film in the coming quarter century.

By June, Donald was working on his address “Dimensions of World Evangelization” for the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism scheduled for July 14-28, 1974. The plan was for those presenting major addresses to prepare a 6,000-page paper by September 1973. Attendees received in advance these written addresses, known as *Issue Strategy Papers*. The delegates were to read the papers and send in comments and questions. The authors of the papers would receive the comments and questions and then prepare a forty-minute address in response to the questions and comments. Donald completed a tentative outline on June 25, 1973. Over the summer months he completed his manuscript, despite making trips to India (August 6-10), Kenya (August 13-17), Nigeria (August 20-24), and the Ivory Coast (August 27-31) to conduct church growth workshops. He arrived back in Los Angeles on September 2, 1973.

Even at this early date in the Church Growth Movement, there was enough criticism of the phrase “Church Growth” that some people suggested using a different name. Peter Wagner proposed that the SWM-ICG refer instead to “body evangelism” as a synonym. Donald disagreed with this new term and wrote to the SWM faculty that

[b]ody life is life of the existing body. Body evangelism is evangelism of the existing body.

That is its natural meaning . . . so once Body Evangelism has come in, it will be captured by the renewal people. “Body Evangelism” is hard to defend against capture.

I am not at all sure that we want to drop “church growth.” It has come to mean exactly what it was intended to mean across great

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20 Personal interview, 1983. Note: I worked for Win Arn from 1983 until 1986 and as a result had numerous conversations with him about Donald McGavran and the foundational years of the Church Growth Movement.

reaches of the world. It is a pity to give up something as successful and meaningful, and start defining a new term. But if it has to be done, let's get a term which has in it strong defenses against the reinterpretation of evangelism which is going on all sides.

Church Multiplying Evangelism has one of the two right meanings. Let's be slow about taking a backward step.<sup>21</sup>

Donald was never completely tied to the term "Church Growth," but he did not want one that focused inwardly on the existing body. Vergil Gerber replied,

By all means, I hope that "church growth" will not disappear from our vocabulary! On the contrary, my idea is that the term "body evangelism" will contribute to its use and make it even more definitive in its meaning. I would hope that "body evangelism" would concisely point up that we're talking about evangelism that contributes to the growth of the Body of Christ, i.e. "church growth." So let's not do away with the term "church growth." Let's underscore its meaning by the use of the term "body evangelism." If it doesn't do that, I'm against it.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, "church growth" remained the phrase of choice for years to come.

After he had retired from the deanship of the SWM-ICG, the school did not guarantee Donald a full-time teaching contract. On November 12, 1973, he sent a note to President David Hubbard asking if the school would invite him to serve full time for the 1974-1975 school year. He also asked to be appointed for special duty in India during the fall quarter of 1974. President Hubbard and Dean Glasser agreed to invite Donald to teach full time in 1974-1975 and to give him a sabbatical for the fall quarter, so that he could participate in lectures and seminars in East Asia and India. Glasser appreciated Donald's continuing contribution to SWM

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21 Note to SWM-ICG faculty from Donald McGavran, no date.

22 Vergil Gerber to Donald McGavran, October 15, 1973.

and to the larger missionary task and wrote, “We need his input, his vision, his wisdom, his enthusiasm and his drive. We are all in his debt.” However, Glasser recognized the need to begin expediting Wagner’s teaching of the church growth courses, as well as limiting Donald’s mentorship of dissertations/theses and teaching load for the winter and spring quarters.<sup>23</sup>

Donald was always concerned that the School of World Mission remain faithful to the conservative evangelical position. He wrote,

We should recognize the ease with which we can destroy the good will we have built up during the past eight years through establishing a record of faithfulness to the Word in the matter of disciplining the nations.

That is a good and fragile thing. To the degree that it increases, students will increase, income will go up, money will be easier to raise, more books will be published, and all our various emphases will make greater impact. To the degree that it is eroded or seriously questioned, missionaries will be strongly advised not to come here, nationals will not be given travel funds to come, income will go down, fewer books will be published, and all the various emphases we make will suffer.<sup>24</sup>

Donald’s major concern was that the school remain faithful to its evangelical roots so that evangelical mission agencies would continue to send their missionaries to SWM for training. This was an issue he could not neglect, for 43 mission boards from 36 countries had sent missionaries to the School of World Mission in the 1973-1974 school year.

Charles Kraft coined the term *ethno-theology* to mean the clothing of essential biblical theology in the language, thought forms, logic systems, philosophy, and culture of the people being reached. Donald voiced concern that some might misuse this new advance in missiology to seek a supposed eternal truth that lay behind the plain meaning of the words of the Bible. He felt that the misuse of the term posed great danger; no

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23 Arthur F. Glasser to David A. Hubbard, December 4, 1973.

24 Donald McGavran to the Faculty of SWM-ICG, no date.

matter how careful missionaries might be, it made them vulnerable to the charge of changing the Bible to suit man's convenience. Donald felt that what would be gained in closeness to the local culture would be lost in a low view of the Bible.<sup>25</sup>

In a letter to Donald Hoke (1919-2006), development treasurer of the Lausanne committee, Donald summed up his understanding of the Church Growth School of Thought at this point:

The church growth school of thought is basically a theological and biblical movement arising in violent opposition to the neglect of mission by both the right and the left. The right had settled back into carrying on good church and mission work whether the Church grew or not. Institutionalism was firmly in the saddle. Plateaued little denominations of a few hundred or a few thousand members were accepted as the will of God. The missionary movement was firmly in the grip of clichés manufactured to comfort those who met steady resistance to the Gospel—such as “God required obedience not success,” “We want quality not quantity,” “The little church under the cross is the harbinger of the new day. It is the creative minority,” and “One soul is worth all the labor of a thousand years.” The left neglected church multiplying evangelism (mission) because, it said, “The day of planting churches is over.” “Church planting is the enemy of true evangelism.” “Evangelizing social structures is what is needed today,” and “Evangelism is exploiting men to make theological profit of them.” The left proposed a tremendous swing to social action, church mergers, and renewal of existing congregations.

To meet all of this, the church growth school of thought vigorously maintained that without conscious dedication to Jesus Christ men are lost. God wants His lost children found; the complexities of the situation must not divert churches and Christians from mission; the world was never more winnable than it is today; the mosaic of mankind has in it at present thousands of responsive homogeneous units; the social sciences can be and must

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25 Donald McGavran to SWM Faculty, March 25, 1974.



be harnessed to the propagation of the Gospel; the theological and biblical defenses cast up by beleaguered missionaries facing hostile populations are not needed by ministers and missionaries facing responsive multitudes, and it is normal and healthy for churches to grow. Slow growth is often a disease, fortunately usually curable.

Church growth men encourage honest appraisal of each particular situation. They resolve to understand the matrix in which each cluster of congregations is growing, the past growth patterns of hundreds of congregations in Eurica and Latfricasia<sup>26</sup> and the growth potential in each of these small beginning denominations. Church growth men are pro every section of the Body of Christ which is obediently carrying out the Great Commission. Church growth men are against every theory, every theology, every organization, and every ecclesiology which diverts Christians from carrying out the mandate of Christ to disciple the nations.<sup>27</sup>

His rather lengthy reply provides a precise summary picture of how he saw the focus of church growth.

Once again, Donald's heart came out in a letter to the secretary of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS), Olav Guttorm Myklebust, who resided in Norway. Donald shared his concern over the lack of biblical references and mission thought in the IAMS newsletter. As part of the letter's conclusion he wrote,

I have felt free to write you frankly in regard to this matter because visitors to my school here have on numerous occasions praised our tremendous use of anthropology, sociology, cultures, and our tremendous concentration on the contemporary situations, the contexts, the ethnic approaches, and the indigenous churches. Contextuality is, indeed, of high importance; but being contextual is not being missionary. The chameleon is highly contextual. Being

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26 McGavran used Eurica in reference to all the nations that made up Europe and North America, and Latfricasia to mean Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

27 Donald McGavran to Donald Hoke, April 29, 1974.

missionary is making the Gospel contextual in order to make it effective. It is studying movements of innovation to aid the discipling of the nations.<sup>28</sup>

As the correspondence shows, Donald was always concerned that whatever was done in missions lead to the winning of people to Christ and bringing them into a local church.

Nyack College in New York and Biola College in La Mirada, California, hosted annual church growth seminars for a number of years, and one was scheduled for April 5-8, 1974. Donald had normally been a featured speaker, among others such as Glasser, Wagner and Kraft, but 1974 was different. The new man on the roster was Win Arn, who spoke about the importance of small groups, charting for growth, and leadership for growth. He also provided a multi-media presentation titled "2000 Years of Church Growth." Yet there was more than a new man on the roster. The topics reflected a move toward emphasis on church growth in America. Wagner, who along with Arn had become a primary voice of church growth in the United States, spoke on "The Church Growth Movement Invades the American Scene." Arn followed with a lecture on "Planning for Growth in American Churches." Wagner also addressed objections to church growth theory and how to find responsiveness for evangelism. On the final afternoon of the seminar, Arn showed his filmed interview of Donald, *How To Grow a Church*.<sup>29</sup>

Donald traveled to India, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Ivory Coast, conducting four-day church growth seminars during the summer. However, it was at Lausanne that the Church Growth Movement came of age. Some 2,700 participants from about 150 nations gathered in Lausanne for the Congress on Evangelism. Approximately 512 were from the United States, and the Fuller faculty played key roles in gathering data, as well as presenting papers and leading sessions. Tippet, Winter, and McGavran presented plenary papers, and Wagner led a four-day workshop on Church Growth. Eyewitnesses reported that on the first day, only about fifty people attended Wagner's workshop. On the second day, between 200

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28 Donald McGavran to O. G. Myklebust, June 18, 1974.

29 Brochure Church Growth Seminar at Biola College, April 5-8, 1974.

and 300 showed up, and by the final day more than half of the people at the congress were trying to get into his session. The great success of church growth teaching at Lausanne was due in part to the numerous missionaries that had been trained at the SWM-ICG. More than 100 of the attendees at Lausanne were Fuller alumni. This, along with the fact that Donald and other faculty members had input into the design of the Lausanne agenda, put church growth on the map internationally.

Another great success that resulted from the congress was a new interest in unreached people groups. Winter had been given the task in his plenary session to describe how many nonbelievers were outside the natural networks of Christians and thus beyond the reach of near neighbor evangelism. At the end of the congress, Winter felt as though he had failed in his assignment. Even though he had done his best to show that 87% of non-Christians were so different in culture and language that local churches were unlikely to reach them, he felt his ideas were too new, too technical, or too unbelievable for most attendees.<sup>30</sup>

Unknown to him, his lecture was to change the course of many missionary efforts and would result in an emphasis on unreached people groups. Since the end of World War II, some observers had been saying that missionaries were no longer needed. Yet Winter's plenary lecture demonstrated that cross-cultural missionaries were needed more than ever before if the hidden peoples were to be reached with the gospel of salvation. Referring to Winter's lecture, Donald declared, "Today's challenge is . . . to surge forward on ten thousand fronts sending apostles, sending preachers, sending missionaries across cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers to evangelize any segments of society which the existing Churches in any land are not reaching and cannot reach."<sup>31</sup>

Win and Barbara Arn started the Institute for American Church Growth in 1973. However, the first official board meeting was held on May 21, 1974. The newly appointed board members met in the conference room of the Fuller Evangelistic Association. Board members present included McGavran, Arn, Wagner, Ted W. Engstrom (president of World

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30 Ralph D. Winter, October 1974.

31 Donald McGavran, "A New Age in Missions Begins," *Church Growth Bulletin* (November, 1974), 460.

Vision), and Cyrus N. Nelson (director of Regal Publishing). One board member, Russ Reid (president of Russ Reid advertising), was out of town and could not attend. Donald was elected chairman, Engstrom secretary/treasurer, and Arn president/executive director.<sup>32</sup>

At the board meeting, Arn presented the purposes of the institute and distributed copies of stationary, brochures and seminar materials, and advertising samples. Arn's schedule, distributed at the first board of directors meeting, indicated that he had already spoken 10 times on church growth between February and the May board meeting. The presentations had been to Brethren in Christ, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the yearly meeting of Friends, Open Bible Standard churches, and American Baptist churches. His itinerary for the remainder of 1974 listed twenty speaking engagements, these with groups from Nazarene, Friends, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Covenant, and Baptist groups. Arn also was scheduled to speak on church growth at the Robert Schuller Institute on September 29.

Arn had already made significant plans for the Institute for American Church Growth before the first official board meeting. The fact that his speaking calendar for 1974 was already filled was evidence of the receptivity of North American churches to church growth thinking. Minutes of the board meeting stated, "A time of sharing by Board members concluded with the consensus that the time is right for Church Growth in America and for the birth of the Institute for American Church Growth."<sup>33</sup> By the next board of directors meeting, held June 20, 1974, a Board of Reference was presented. Several well-known church leaders had agreed to allow their names to be added to this list; these included Medford Jones, Robert Schuller, Ray Ortlund, Wendell Belew, Richard Halverson, and Elmer Towns.

During 1974, Arn produced a second church growth film, *Reach Out and Grow*, and participated in the Lausanne World Congress on Evangelism, which proved to be positive for the Church Growth Movement worldwide and also for the new Institute for American Church Growth. In a lengthy report to the board of directors, Arn stated, "Many new contacts were

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<sup>32</sup> Institute for American Church Growth. Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of the Institute for American Church Growth, Pasadena, CA, May 21, 1974.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

made and thanks to friend and Board member, C. Peter Wagner, two church growth films, HOW TO GROW A CHURCH and REACH OUT AND GROW, were used before 650 delegates. Church Growth played a most significant part in this Congress.”<sup>34</sup>

The ministry of the Institute for American Church Growth developed quickly during the fall of 1974, spawning several interesting approaches for communicating Donald’s church growth ideas. The numerous letters and advertisements were paying dividends, and Arn’s speaking calendar filled up quickly during the fall. His itinerary listed thirty speaking engagements between August 3 and December 20. More impressive, he was scheduled to speak thirteen times in January 1975, eight times in February, five times in March, and four times in April.

In 1975 Arn introduced a church growth strategy for denominational districts and conferences. It was a one-year cooperative venture between the Institute for American Church Growth and denominations to motivate and train churches for outreach and growth. This strategy took root, and over the ensuing years developed into the Two-Year Church Growth Plan and eventually the Thirty-Month Church Growth Plan, which trained over 500 churches in church growth principles and strategies.

Growing out of the exposure he received at Lausanne, Arn spent September 1975 traveling in Australia, leading several Basic Church Growth seminars for the Christian churches. Results were so positive that Arn was invited to return in 1976 to lead Advanced Growth Seminars. Altogether, Arn conducted 57 seminars in the United States, Canada, and Australia during that year.

Another development involved the training of associate staff to lead church growth seminars. Arn had suggested this idea at the first board meeting in May, and by December he already had three people trained. Another two men were in the process of being trained, with three more interested. This concept eventually grew into a full-fledged training of church growth consultants—the Church Growth Associate program.

Arn also announced the beginning of *Church Growth, America*, a bulletin published six times a year. The first issue appeared in November 1974 in

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<sup>34</sup> Win Arn to Institute for American Church Growth Board of Directors, Arcadia, CA, December 30, 1974.

the form of a three-page newsletter. The lead article was written by Arn and titled “The Pastor and Growth.” A picture on the front page showed Arn, McGavran, and Wagner looking at a copy of the book *How to Grow a Church*. The first volume of the newsletter was comprised of five issues published in 1975. Beginning with the first issue of 1976, the newsletter became a full-fledged, 12-page magazine.

As all of this activity demonstrates, the Institute for American Church Growth was definitely on its way to becoming one of the foremost communicators of church growth thought to the North American church. Arn summarized his feelings as follows:

Response to the ministry of the Institute is growing! My personal schedule for conducting Seminars for Ministers’ Conferences is full into the spring of ’75. We are ministering to individual churches, consortia of churches and denominations... churches of many homogeneous groupings, sizes, locations, problems and opportunities. For example, following the World Congress of Evangelization at Lausanne, I was a featured speaker with the KANSAS YEARLY MEETING—85 Friends Churches. A spin-off from that meeting was the invitation to do a series of 8 Growth Seminars throughout their district where, in clusters of 6-8, every church could be exposed to Church Growth principles... thinking... planning... enthusiasm... opportunities.<sup>35</sup>

Based on the rapid growth of interest in American church growth, plans were made to add additional staff to the institute, produce a film on church planting (*The Birth of a Church*), and develop a three-day intensive seminar on church growth.

The SWM-ICG faculty felt strongly that they “ought to bring onto the faculty only men concerning whom all of us have good ‘vibes.’”<sup>36</sup> Thus, they were shocked to find the name of a potential professor on the faculty agenda at the first faculty meeting of 1974—a professor not

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35 Ibid.

36 D. McGavran, C. P. Wagner, and R. D. Winter to Art Glasser, September 25, 1974.

in agreement with the church growth point of view. They responded by writing a persuasive letter to Dean Glasser, asking that the man's name be removed so that public discussion and embarrassment for him would not take place. They explained, "We need to remember that the one comm[o]nality which binds this faculty together is the church growth philosophy."<sup>37</sup> Since they had discussed the potential professor at length, and found him to be unsuitable for the SWM-ICG faculty, they asked Glasser to kindly remove his name, which Glasser did.

Another issue concerning the hiring of future faculty was on Donald's mind while he traveled that fall. He was quite aware of the fact that Fuller's three schools attracted students from different sides of the theological continuum. The schools of theology and psychology received most of their students from the Conciliar Denominations, that is, those churches and clusters of churches left of center theologically. This was the correct position for those two schools in Donald's understanding. "In these schools our stance is properly (a) middle-of-the-road, (b) preparing men and women for ministries in both, (c) avoiding criticism of either side."

In contrast, the SWM-ICG was right of center theologically and found most of its students from the Conservative Evangelical missions. "These men and women are our precious resource. We must do everything to keep these coming. We must do nothing to hinder their coming." Donald's concern was replacements for professor Tippett and himself. The conservative evangelicals who were members of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association and the International Foreign Missions Association knew that both McGavran and Tippett were biblically sound. Members of these two associations, who had a combined 16,000 missionaries, were already concerned that Fuller's other two schools were not biblically sound. Moreover, their members were watching closely to see who would be the next faculty members of SWM-ICG.

McGavran spoke directly to Dean Glasser and President Hubbard: "The next men on the Missions Faculty must be straight Conservative Evangelicals—openly and unashamedly in favor of winning men and women to Christ, salvation and eternal salvation, the Bible as a unified,

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37 Ibid.

authoritative revelation by God.” He likewise believed that any new faculty members should have had missionary experience and good standing with their agency. The faculty did not need avant-garde thinkers but solid persons. “We should, of course,” he wrote, “remain open to the Conciliaris, but on our terms, not theirs. No danger exists that we shall become narrow bigoted obscurantist, in growth. That is neither the kind of faculty I built up nor that you men would choose.”<sup>38</sup>

In spite of his concern, Donald continued to recruit students wherever he traveled and spoke. After receiving a number of names of possible students, Dean Glasser wrote, “I have established contact with all the names you have sent during recent months. You are a good salesman for this place, and it is a joy to follow through with these potential SWMers.”<sup>39</sup>

That fall found McGavran on sabbatical in Bangladesh and India, where he led eight seminars and workshops on church growth. He found that opportunities for church multiplication abounded in India but were being neglected due to “lack of vision, faulty theology, laziness and coldness, tied to old patterns of mission work, immobility—‘I am a specialist missionary’—dedicated to care for existing Christians, dedicated to turn over to Indians and return to Fortress America!!! But the fields are white and God is awaiting His people to harvest.” He asked everyone at home to “[p]ray the Lord of the Harvest to send in men and women with sickles and scythes!!”<sup>40</sup>

Along with Arn’s Institute for American Church Growth, the other major ministry that propagated church growth thought to American pastors was the Fuller Evangelistic Association (FEA). FEA was established in October 1942 “for the purpose of training, or assisting in the training, of men and women for the Christian ministry and for evangelistic work.”<sup>41</sup> From its founding to 1974, the Fuller Evangelistic Association focused on two great works: establishing Fuller Theological Seminary and a Department of Field Evangelists.

Financial support was provided through FEA for evangelists so

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38 Donald McGavran to Dean Glasser and President Hubbard, October 14, 1974.

39 Arthur F. Glasser to Donald McGavran, December 9, 1974.

40 Donald McGavran to Faculty and Associates, November 16, 1974.

41 Fuller, 190.



the gospel could be preached in small towns and villages through the Department of Field Evangelists. Whenever one of its teams held an evangelistic campaign in a small community, the FEA would “make up the difference between what such churches could pay and the cost of supporting an evangelist.”<sup>42</sup> However, the major challenge for the board of the association was the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary, which opened in 1947.<sup>43</sup>

After the establishment of the seminary, the FEA gradually lost direction. Charles Fuller passed away on March 18, 1968, leaving the association without its main visionary. Added to this, the cultural changes taking place in the 1960s left the future of evangelistic ministry in doubt. Thus, when Wagner joined the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary in the fall of 1971, the board of the Fuller Evangelistic Association appointed him to be its executive director.<sup>44</sup> Wagner remembers,

When McGavran invited me to move from Bolivia to Fuller, David Hubbard and Dan Fuller, who was then Dean of the School of Theology, strongly backed me. . . . Charles Fuller had died . . . and his only son, Dan, became his heir and inherited the Fuller Evangelistic Association. Dan is a pure scholar. He did not have gifts for a radio preacher, so he turned the Old Fashioned Revival Hour over to Dave [Hubbard]. Nor did he have the management skills to serve as CEO of FEA, so he asked me to take it over when I arrived in Pasadena. . . . It involved managing a good amount of money which Charles Fuller wanted distributed to missions around the world. . . . Then came the economic recession of the middle to late seventies and the giving dried up. . . . So if FEA was to continue, it needed a new vision. By then I had laid the foundation for American Church Growth, I had released *Your Church Can Grow*, and I was ministering to several groups across the country. . . . So the

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42 Ibid., 191.

43 For the story of the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary, see George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).

44 Fuller, 234.

new vision I cast for FEA was the Charles E. Fuller Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth (CEFI).<sup>45</sup>

Wagner's 15 years of experience as a missionary and mission executive paved the way for his appointment as executive director of the FEA. In addition, his growing involvement in the field of American Church Growth made for an easy transition of the FEA into the Church Growth field.

Having seen the responsiveness of American pastors to that first church growth class in 1972, as well as the growth of Arn's Institute, Wagner began steering the FEA toward an emphasis on church growth. Wagner recalled, "I also knew that my strengths in American Church Growth were more on the theoretical side, and that I needed a practitioner who could do what I couldn't do."<sup>46</sup> Providentially, directors of the Fuller Doctor of Ministry were overhauling the program in 1974 and appointed Wagner as a member of the curriculum committee. Under his influence, the committee added two new doctor of ministry courses on church growth beginning in 1975 and two additional classes in 1978. Wagner met John Wimber in one of his doctor of ministry classes and noticed that Wimber "was extremely smart. . . . He knew church growth principles intuitively and all he needed was labels, and . . . he was a winner."<sup>47</sup> Wimber's success as a personal evangelist and local church pastor added to his credibility. "A successful businessperson before his conversion and call to the ministry, Wimber brought a very important credential to church growth: he had been a successful American pastor."<sup>48</sup>

To prepare the FEA Board of Trustees for the move toward American church growth, Wagner wrote a memo to them outlining the fact that Paul Toms, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, was scheduling a series of one-day church growth seminars. Church growth was going to be the NAE's major thrust in 1976, and Toms wanted FEA to lead the seminars. Wagner shared with the FEA board, "They have asked me to lead these seminars, set up my own program and choose my own personnel. I

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45 Peter Wagner to Gary L. McIntosh, November 26, 2004, 1.

46 Ibid., 2.

47 Ibid.

48 C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*. Revised edition (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 19.

think the choice of my team mate, if all goes well, will be John Wimber.”<sup>49</sup> Donald read the memo and returned a note encouraging Wagner, stating that “[a] tremendous door has opened to you. God is pointing to a ministry which will change the course of Christianity in USA and the world. By all means enter and serve.”<sup>50</sup> The FEA hired Wimber to be the director of the Department of American Church Growth in March 1975, and together Wagner and Wimber started retooling the Fuller Institute into a church growth consultation firm.<sup>51</sup>

Wimber was an evangelist at heart. After a successful career as a professional musician—he had been the founder of the Righteous Brothers group in 1962—he and his wife, Carol, had accepted Christ in May 1963. John entered into a period of intense evangelism, during which “he led hundreds of people to Christ” between 1963 and 1970.<sup>52</sup> John and Carol began attending a Friends church, and by 1970 he was “leading 11 Bible studies a week with over 500 people in attendance at Yorba Linda Friends Church,”<sup>53</sup> where he served on the pastoral staff from 1971 to 1974. Under his direction the church experienced renewed numerical growth, but after John and his wife experienced a charismatic awakening John’s ministry began creating a stir within the church. It was precisely at this time that Wagner contacted Wimber with an invitation to become founding director of the department of church growth at the Fuller Evangelistic Association.

Wimber had little formal church growth training under Donald McGavran, but he brought with him his natural gift of leadership, as well as his years of experience as a business manager in the music field. After coming to the FEA, Wimber gained broad field experience while traveling extensively within the United States, counseling pastors and denominational leaders in how to achieve church growth.

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49 Peter Wagner to Board of Trustees, March 18, 1975.

50 Donald McGavran to Peter Wagner, March 20, 1975.

51 Vineyard USA. “Timeline of the Life of John Wimber,” Vineyard USA. Accessed November 18, 2004, 1. <[http://www.vinewardusa.org/about/history/wimber\\_timeline.htm](http://www.vinewardusa.org/about/history/wimber_timeline.htm)>.

52 Carol Wimber. “The Way It Was: The Roots of Vineyard Worship,” Vineyard USA. Accessed November 18, 2004, 1. <[http://www.vinewardusa.org/publications/newsletters/cutting\\_edge/2002\\_winter/carol\\_wimber.htm](http://www.vinewardusa.org/publications/newsletters/cutting_edge/2002_winter/carol_wimber.htm)>.

53 Vineyard USA. “Timeline of the Life of John Wimber,” Vineyard USA. Accessed November 18, 2004, 1. <[http://www.vinewardusa.org/about/history/wimber\\_timeline.htm](http://www.vinewardusa.org/about/history/wimber_timeline.htm)>.

Wimber spoke frequently at church growth conferences on the topics of philosophy of ministry, conflict management, administration, decision-making, leadership, and programming. His lectures in the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program evidenced his familiarity with Lyle Schaller, rather than with McGavran, although Wimber's class notes mentioned McGavran's classes of workers, discerning receptive people, strategic planning, and targeting specific groups of people.<sup>54</sup> However, R. Daniel Reeves, a former consultant with the FEA who worked closely with Wimber, recalled that Wimber was closer in his thinking to McGavran than to Schaller:

Most of Wimber's stuff came from Wagner, who taught from the SWM paradigm, which at that time was mostly McGavran's framework. Whereas Wimber did not have much direct exposure to McGavran (but probably more than with Schaller), much of his material could be linked to McGavran, through Wagner (second generation vs. first generation). Having read everything by McGavran and Wagner . . . available at that time, and working with Wimber for two years in the field, I feel that more of McGavran had "rubbed off" on Wimber, by osmosis, than Schaller. Certainly, many of my theoretical discussions with Wimber during car rides to and from field consultations leave me to believe he was more a McGavranite than a Schallerite.<sup>55</sup>

There is no doubt that Wimber was familiar with both McGavran and Schaller's writings on church growth subjects, but a review of his teaching materials from the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program point to more of a business perspective than a missiological one.

During Wimber's tenure as director of the FEA's Department of Church Growth, he pioneered the development of diagnostic resources to assist churches in determining their health and making plans for future growth. The early tools were designed by Wagner. They included two manuals on discovering a church's *Growth History*, one manual each on *Worker Analysis* and *Community Analysis*, and a comprehensive manual on conducting *A Church Growth Diagnostic Clinic*. All manuals were designed and published in 1976 and 1977. They were practical applications of Donald's missiological insights on research, classes of workers, analysis of

the context of the community to discover responsive peoples, and setting bold goals for future growth.

Soon after his hire, a meeting was held with Wagner, Wimber, Don Engel, McGavran, and Arn to identify ways in which the FEA and the Institute for American Church Growth might support and encourage the work of church growth. The main outcome was the willingness of the two organizations to use the same speakers for their seminars and large events. Wagner and Wimber were regular speakers at Arn's Advanced Church Growth seminars, and Arn spoke for the Fuller Institute and taught in Wagner's classes at Fuller Theological Seminary.

As chairman of the board, Donald worked to promote the Institute for American Church Growth (IACG). He encouraged Arn to "press forward with franchises and training men as fast as you can."<sup>56</sup> Responding to this encouragement, the IACG sponsored its first weeklong intensive course on church growth the week of May 12-16, 1975. The "Studies in Church Growth: Training Seminar" would eventually grow into a regular event called the "Advanced Church Growth Seminar." Speakers for the first intensive course included Arn, Kraft, McGavran, Tippett, Wagner, Glasser, Robert Munger, Raymond Ortlund, and John Wimber. Seminar participants took field trips to the First Nazarene Church and Lake Avenue Congregational Church, both in Pasadena, California. This seminar was the first of many the institute would hold over the coming years to train pastors and denominational executives in Donald's church growth ideas. As 1975 dawned, the Church Growth Movement was off and running in the United States, as well as around the world.

### **About the Author**

Gary L. McIntosh is a speaker, writer, and professor of Christian Ministry & Leadership at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. As a church growth expert, he publishes *Growth Points*, a monthly publication read by over 7,000 church leaders. His most recent book, *Dining with Jesus: How People are Coming to Christ and His Church*, was released in January 2016. He may be reached at [gary.mcintosh@biola.edu](mailto:gary.mcintosh@biola.edu).

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<sup>56</sup> Donald McGavran to Win Arn, March 18, 1975.