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Ray W. Ellis
Free Methodist Church

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**Spiritual Factors Impacting Church Health
and Growth in the 21st Century**

Ray W. Ellis

Background

My first exposure to the church growth movement occurred in 1984 when I was serving as Conference Superintendent of the Florida Conference of the Free Methodist Church. I had served for 3 years as Conference Superintendent and had seen growth in local churches and was overseer for several new Anglo, Hispanic and Haitian congregations. I was searching for ideas to help me coach established churches that were declining or on a plateau.

About that same time I had read the book by Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church To Growth*. I was impressed by what Peter Wagner had to say about pastoral leadership in relation to church growth. In November, 1985 my wife and I traveled from Florida to Garden Grove, CA to visit our son during the Thanksgiving holidays. Prior to our trip I called Peter Wagner's office and talked to his secretary, Doris Wagner. She made an appointment for me to see her husband.

When I talked with Peter I asked him for his guidance as I worked with churches and pastors as a Conference Superintendent. He asked me about our conference and I told him I needed help in counseling churches. Many needed to get off a plateau and experience a turn around. He said, "In Florida you have many opportunities for church growth. You should double the number of churches you have during the next ten years. When I went to Florida in 1980 there were 22 churches in the conference

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and when I left eight years later in 1988 we had 36 churches. During the eight years I served as Conference Superintendent we had growth every year in conversions, membership, attendance, and finances.

When I told Dr. Wagner about my concern for plateaued and declining churches he suggested I take the church growth consultant training offered by the Fuller Institute of Evangelism the second week of December that year. The training was for church growth consultants and was called Diagnosis with Impact. I traveled to the Institute of Evangelism and talked with Rev. Vince Rutherford. After talking to Vince I enrolled in the training and returned in December to begin the Diagnosis With Impact training. During the training I became acquainted with the instructors: Dr. Carl George, Dr. Peter Wagner, and Dr. Dan Reeves.

I completed the training in 1986 and became a field consultant for the Fuller Institute while serving as Conference Superintendent in Florida. My on-the-job training was with Carl George. I assisted him when he led a consultation at the First Baptist Church in Ocala, Florida. I remember one of the recommendations Carl made was for the church to purchase 25 acres of property and prepare to relocate in the future. A couple of years ago I heard on the national news that the church had burned to the ground and relocated to a new location.

The consultation in Ocala was timely for our Free Methodist Conference. While doing the consultation with Carl I saw the demographic study and growth potential in Ocala. I saw the opportunity for that city of 50,000 to double in a few years and deployed a church planting team to start a Free Methodist Church in Ocala. The new congregation now has converted a strip mall into their church facility and is doing well today.

Purpose of this Message

The topic this evening for my President's address is "Spiritual Factors that Impact Church Health and Growth." My purpose is to show that church growth is about growth of the Kingdom of God. Numerical growth and spiritual growth are not incompatible. Church growth is about numerical growth. Church growth is about sharpening skills and utilizing technology to carry out the great commission. Church growth is about redemptive growth. Church Growth is more than numbers, it is the supernatural work of God.

In I Corinthians 9:19–23, the Apostle Paul declares:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law). To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

The strategies of the Apostle Paul and the master plan of Jesus make it clear that evangelism and church growth are on target when we blend spiritual factors and technology to carry out the command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations.

I learned the balance of church growth methodology and spiritual factors in church growth when I participated in the Diagnosis With Impact training at the Fuller Institute in Pasadena. There were about 35 in the class taking the training. One participant in the class was from Seoul Korea. He seemed very shy and spoke very little in the group sessions. One day I asked Sundo Kim to go to lunch with me. I was experiencing growth in our churches in Florida and thought I might have some growth ideas to share with Sundo.

During our lunch conversation I asked Sundo Kim how things were going at his church. He said that when he went to his church there were 175 in attendance. I said, "That's a nice size church." I asked how things were going at his church now. He said, "Before I flew to California we had over 8,000 in our multiple worship services." I forgot about my growth strategies and pulled out a pad and pen and asked: "How did you experience such incredible growth in your church?"

He said that when he arrived at the Kwang Lim Methodist Church he didn't know much about being a pastor so he invited people to come to church every morning to pray from 5:00 to 6:00 a.m. Eventually about 300 came to pray on their way to work. So I wrote down "pray at church."

Then he pulled out a church program and brochure that listed 1,000 home groups. He said, "We gather in homes for

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prayer and Bible study and invite our friends and neighbors to pray and become followers of Jesus." I wrote down, pray in homes. Then I asked, "What else do you do for church growth?"

He said: "On Saturday night I go to my church study and pray all night long seeking God's anointing and blessing on Sunday's services." At that point I interrupted and asked: "Dr. Kim what does your wife think about that?" He replied, "Oh we have plenty of time together." I wrote down, "Pastor prays at church all night." I asked what else did you do for church growth. He answered, "That's it."

Conflicting Views on Church Growth

Those who say the church growth movement is only interested in numbers personally have puzzled me. Yes, we unashamedly are interested in numerical growth. The great commission commands us to go and make disciples of all nations. We are not interested in a church decline movement. In the early church accurate records were kept of the number of people involved in ministry. One hundred twenty were in the upper room. 3,000 and then 5,000 men were counted as responding to the call of Jesus to become followers. Jesus talked about ninety and nine that are found but one lost person is valuable in God's sight and should be found. God's mandate is clear. We are to use all means to save those who are lost.

I was impressed the first time I heard Dr. Donald McGavran talk at a conference sponsored by Dr. Win Arn for denominational leaders in Pasadena. He spoke with conviction about the importance of making disciples. He was not only interested in seeing people come to Jesus, but also growing in spiritual maturity as disciples and becoming incorporated into the life and ministry of the local church.

The very definition of church growth used by the American Society for Church Growth gives a balance between spiritual factors and technical factors.

Church growth is that careful discipline which investigates the nature, the function, and the health of Christian churches, as they relate to the effective implementation of the Lord's Great Commission to make disciples of all peoples (Matthew 28:19-20). It is a spiritual conviction, yet it is practical, combining the eternal principles of God's Word with the practical insights of social and

behavioral sciences.

I have been impressed by the passion for Kingdom Growth in those who are part of the Church Growth Movement. I have found a good balance between the spiritual and the technical.

In the book, *Natural Church Development*, Christian Schwarz in his introduction notes that both critics and Christians who have a heart for the lost see the Church Growth Movement as presenting simplistic rules and principles “that don’t work in the real world.” Schwarz says:

From their point of view, mere people are trying in their own strength to do what only God can do. Whether or not this impression is right, it is the image the church growth movement has in the eyes of many believers—a technocratic endeavor through and through, even in those cases where the spiritual aspect is emphasized. The problem is that their methods are insufficient because they are inconsistent with God’s plan.

I personally don’t agree with that view of the church growth movement at all. Those of us in the church growth movement are fully committed to God’s plan. Perhaps we have not been careful and intentional to articulately state that fact.

Then Christian Schwarz presents eight new principles for church health. These church growth principles have been around for many years and are not that new.

In fact his book is based upon surveying over a thousand churches (a church growth principle). Surveys in themselves may not be that spiritual, but they do help us diagnose needs and carry out strategic planning for church health.

The survey instrument developed by Christian Schwarz that is used to diagnose the health of a local church produces computer printouts of the four areas of church life and ministry. This applies another basic principle of church growth that uses technology to discern spiritual vitality. His book and survey instruments are being used widely in the Free Methodist church. I appreciate the book and look forward to seeing many churches benefit from the application of some of the principles.

In another popular book, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Pastor Cymbala of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church declares that the growth of his church started after he made their Tuesday night prayer meeting the priority ministry of the Brooklyn Tabernacle

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Church. He states, "Instead of trying to bring men and women to Christ in the biblical way, we are consumed with the unbiblical concept of "church growth." The Bible does not say we should aim at numbers but rather urges us faithfully to proclaim God's message in the boldness of the Holy Spirit" (p. 124). He goes on to say, "User-friendly" can be a cover-up word for carnality."

Cymbala says he is anti-church growth principles yet he uses his church choir, the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, as a way to gather thousands of people and start new churches. Cymbala writes, "Church planting became an important motive for the events. We would give away free tickets in whatever section of the city we wanted to start a church. Then during the concert we would announce. 'This coming Sunday, services will begin at such-and-such a place; please join us there'" (p. 49).

I respect leaders like Christian Swartz and Pastor Cymbala and many other critics of church growth. I have appreciated their books and have learned new insights from them. We have a common enemy—the Devil and all anti-Christian forces. We may not always agree one hundred percent on our theology but we can agree on working together to depopulate hell.

Spiritual Factors and Church Growth

Church Growth investigates the nature, the function and health of Christian Churches as they relate to the implementation of the Great Commission in making disciples of all people groups. We might ask, "How do we measure the impact spiritual factors have on church growth?" One way is to hear testimonies of pastors who have experienced church growth through spiritual factors. There is a difference between numerical growth and church growth. True church growth is Kingdom Growth. My conviction is that there can be no true kingdom growth without spiritual factors that involve prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of the church in response to prayer.

In the forward to the book *Partners In Prayer* by John Maxwell, Max Lucado tells how the prayer partners in the Skyline Wesleyan Church impacted his life. Max Lucado related how his visit to Skyline changed his ministry priorities. He writes:

My Sunday at Skyline was bathed in prayer. The prayer partners met me as I walked in the door and met me as I walked off the platform. They were praying for me as I

flew, as I spoke, even as I rested. I was so convicted about the importance of prayer partners that I asked God to grant me 120 members who would covenant to pray for me daily and pray with me fervently.

“Upon returning to the pulpit I announced my dream to the congregation. Within a month exactly 120 people had volunteered to form the team. We divided the volunteers into four groups and assigned each group one Sunday per month on which they would arrive early and pray for the congregation.”

God honored the prayers of the congregation where Max Lucado was serving. Six months later he reported:

- We have broken our Sunday attendance record twice.
- We finished the year with our highest ever average for Sunday attendance.
- We finished the year over budget.
- We added three new staff members and six new elders.
- We witnessed several significant physical healings.
- Our church antagonism is down, and church unity is up.

Max Lucado says, “When we work, we work; but when we pray, God works” (From the Forward to *Partners in Prayer*).

John Maxwell testifies that his ministry was transformed after Bill Klassen came to his office and said that God had called him to become John’s prayer and accountability partner. Bill went on to organize a prayer partner ministry at Skyline beginning with 31 laypersons and expanded to 120 laypersons committed to be prayer partners with the pastor.

During the next 14 years the congregation tripled in size from 1,000 to nearly 3,500 and the church income jumped from \$750,000 to \$5,000,000 per year and thousands of people came to Christ.

Dr. Thom Rainer, professor of the Billy Graham Chair of Evangelism at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY, did a survey of 576 Southern Baptist Churches that were experiencing evangelistic growth. In his book, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, Thom Rainer reports, “Nearly 70 percent of the churches rated prayer as a major factor in their evangelistic success. Except for those with attendance of 700 to 999, at least 60 percent of churches in every size category identified prayer as a

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major factor" (Page 67, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*).

Dr. Marlin Mull, Director of Evangelism and Church Growth for the Wesleyan Church, received responses from 469 Wesleyan churches concerning both the pastors' personal involvement in prayer and the congregations' involvement in prayer. He found that churches involved in prayer ministries had a 10% to 20% greater growth rate than churches not committed to prayer ministries.

For this address on "Spiritual Factors and Church Growth" I contacted Directors of Evangelism in several denominations that are members of the National Association of Evangelicals. I asked them to give me a list of their top 15–20 churches that were experiencing convert growth, numerical growth, and overall church health. One hundred and fifty surveys were sent to pastors of growing churches that the denominational Directors of Evangelism had identified. I received 56 completed surveys from nine different denominations and two surveys from non-denominational churches.

The churches varied in size from a morning worship attendance average of 3,200 to 118. Twenty-six of the churches averaged between 700 and 3,200, 20 churches averaged between 200 and 700 and 6 churches averaged 200 and under in morning worship.

For the remainder of this address I'm going to highlight the responses from the pastors to the eight questions.

Top Barriers to a Healthy Growing Church

Of the fifty-six pastors who responded there were a number of responses that related to common barriers to growth. The top ten barriers given are listed according to the number of responses.

1. Lack of vision.
2. Lack of outreach and passion for the pre-Christians.
3. Congregation not willing to change.
4. Lack of leadership.
5. Lack of prayer.
6. Lack of unity.
7. Congregation comfortable and satisfied.

8. Lack of a congregational owned mission/purpose.
9. Power structures .
10. Changes in culture and the church not willing to adapt and make changes to be relevant.

Daniel Greenlee, pastor of the Calvary Cathedral Pentecostal Holiness Church, said the top three growth barriers are: "Limited vision, power structures and lack of outreach."

Gregory Hackett, pastor of an Assemblies of God Church in Lafayette, IN, said "Lack of prayer by the church, lack of unity in the church, and lack of knowledge about the purpose of the church" were the greatest growth barriers.

Kay D. Cole of the Deer Flat Free Methodist Church in Caldwell, ID noted that "Lack of unity, lack of vision, and lack of spiritual concern" were greatest barriers to growth.

Roger Bwhelman, pastor of the Crosswinds Community Reformed Church in Hesperia, CA stated, "Lack of sense of mission, clear vision, burden for the lost, unwillingness to pay the price for change and modified traditions, and lack of commitment to personal discipleship," were the greatest growth barriers.

Dave Williams, pastor of the Mount Hope Assemblies of God Church in Lansing, MI, cited "Lack of solid prayer base, headship of Christ, and board or committee-run churches," are the greatest growth barriers.

Lane Sargent, pastor in the Church of God, Cleveland, serving in Sumiton, AL said, "Prayerlessness, apathy, church activities for the convenience of saints," are top growth barriers.

Bayse Reedy, pastor of the Nazarene church in York, PA, noted his top three growth barriers as: "Ingrown, control-based leadership structures, lack of vision, and core values that do not include growth."

When you examine the top growth barriers listed by the 56 pastors you discover that many of the barriers are related to both spiritual and leadership factors with more weight given to the spiritual factors. The key is having a balance between two areas: spiritual dynamics and relevant and effective methods. A correct balance produces church health and church health results in church growth.

1. From your experience in ministry what weight would you give to the technical and spiritual aspects for church growth? Rate the question on

a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being low and 5 being high.

The result of the rating scores gave an average rating of 3.4 to the technical and 4.8 to the spiritual aspects for church growth.

The second part of the second question asked for the pastors to describe their personal prayer and devotional life.

The responses to the question on personal prayer and devotional life reveals that pastors of growing churches have high commitment to spending time in prayer and personal devotions. Many of the pastors give 1–2 hours to prayer every day. One pastor says that he takes one hour each week and goes to the mountains with his sermon and offers it to God and seeks His direction. One day each month is set aside for fasting and the church ends that special day with a 3-hour prayer vigil.

Another pastor noted that “Personal prayer and devotional life is the key to my ministry. Those are the vital links that keep me tuned in to the Lord. They are the factors that enable me to keep my perspective on the ministry and the results.”

A number of the pastors noted that they meet on a regular basis with prayer partners and an accountability group. One pastor said. “My weekly accountability group is a big part of my spiritual vitality. They confront me each week with what’s going on in my life.”

One pastor responded to the question by saying that he prays every Thursday morning for every family in the congregation by name. Another pastor responded by saying that he sets his watch to signal him four times a day to take time to pray.

Some of the devotional resources used by the pastors surveyed include the following: study of Brother Andrew’s *Practicing the Presence of God*, Bible readings, devotional books, cassette tapes, *One Year Bible*, *Experiencing God*, and memorizing scripture, writings by Oswald Chambers, C.S. Lewis, Richard Foster, and Dallas Willard.

2. Describe the prayer climate in your local church.

In the healthy churches surveyed by this study it is not surprising that the majority of the churches have healthy climates of prayer. Gregory Hackett describes the First Assemblies of God church in Lafayette, IN prayer climate this way: “We have organized corporate prayer during services. We have organized an intercessory prayer ministry designed to pray over the country

very specifically; we have extended times at the end of services for God to confirm His Word; we have morning prayer from 6 to 7a.m., at the church Monday through Saturday. We also declare times of fasting from time to time.

Dr. R. S. Dryden, pastor of the Cathedral of Praise in Oklahoma City says, "We have an active 24 hour prayer chain monitored by computer and voice mail date. We have one specific night of prayer per month and several intercessor groups."

Dr. Tom DeVries, pastor of a Reformed Church in America, Moreno Valley, CA explains that prayer is a regular part of the life and ministry of his church. His staff and church board intercede for the congregation and they have an intercessory prayer group. Prayer is also an integral part of their small group strategy and a care line voice mail system is set-up for prayer needs. From time to time they have emphasis on 40 days and nights of fasting and prayer.

Wilbur Besecker, pastor of the Brethren in Christ Church in Waynesboro, PA reports that they have three prayer chains and 40 prayer warriors who receive a weekly prayer sheet plus prayer groups that meet at various times during the week.

Dave Williams pastor of Mount Hope Church in Lansing, MI has 120 prayer partners for his ministry, prayer at the church every day from 6-7 a.m., Wednesday noon prayer times, and every church service has intercessors praying in a prayer room.

Layne A. Lebo, Pastor of the Mechanicsburg, PA Brethren in Christ Church, reports they have a person praying in their prayer chapel 24 hours a day and a full time Pastor of prayer to oversee the church's prayer ministries.

Bob Bedford, Pastor of the Cornerstone Community Church – Free Methodist, in St. Petersburg, FL, notes that all who attend the church are encouraged to keep a prayer journal. They have 3-4 all night prayer events every year and an intercessory prayer group that prays several hours every Wednesday morning.

Bob Huffaker, Pastor of the Grove City, OH Church of the Nazarene describes their prayer climate as follows: "We have a full time prayer and evangelism pastor. We have prayer conferences from time to time and do teaching on prayer."

Arlie Davis, Pastor of the Wesleyan Church in Milton, PA believes that prayer has been a key factor in the growth of their church from an average of 180 in 1989 to an average of 672 in 1996.

Many of the pastors surveyed report that lay leaders meet

with the pastor prior to worship services for a time of prayer for the pastor and God's anointing on him and the worship service.

Without exception the pastors of healthy growing churches surveyed for this study not only talk about the importance of prayer they implement action plans to practice prayer both personally and corporately.

3. How would you rate the following ministries in your local church as helping to produce spiritual and numerical growth? Rank according to 1 being low and 5 being high.

Responses from the 56 pastors in seven categories were ranked as follows:

Biblical preaching	4.4
Celebrative Worship	4.4
Vision	4.1
Prayer	3.7
Evangelism	3.6
Cell Groups	3
Fasting	2

Biblical preaching and celebrative worship tied for the top ministry areas that have helped produce health and growth in the churches surveyed. As we enter the next century healthy, growing and reproducing churches will continue to have effective Biblical preaching and quality worship that connects with people in the pew.

A compelling vision that is born out of prayer and fasting is a recurring theme among growing churches.

Growing churches are also committed to outreach. Cell groups that continually reproduce also keep the local church on the growing edge.

The discipline of fasting was listed at the bottom of the various spiritual disciplines for church health and growth. Under the leadership of Dr. Bill Bright and others fasting has taken on a new level of interest in recent years. The Commission on Evangelism of the National Association of Evangelicals is putting together materials that will be sent to thousands of churches in June 1999. As Pastors learn of the spiritual value of fasting it will possibly take a more prominent place in the life and ministry of the local church.

4. *Describe your leadership style and if your style has changed during the past five years and how has it changed?*

The leadership styles of the pastors surveyed were varied. Some of the leadership styles mentioned were as follows:

- Influencing
- Motivator
- Vision caster
- Work to my strength and delegate in areas of weakness
- A “shepherd” at heart but have changed to a “rancher” style because of growth,”
- Servant-shared leadership
- Team concept
- Teaching ministry
- Lay empowering
- Initiating leader in the church, “I set the tone once I receive confirmation from the Holy Spirit,”
- Spiritual leader
- Laid back
- Equip and lead the staff
- “I am a big picture leader,” and lead by example.

The one theme that came through in all the answers concerning leadership style was that the pastor is the primary vision caster for the church.

The greatest changes in leadership style over the past five years has been from “doing” ministry to “equipping” others to do ministry. Many of the pastors said they have changed from a “shepherd” leader to a “rancher” leader. Dr. Stephen Struikmans, pastor of the Reformed Church in Temecula, CA., replied that he had been a shepherd believing that he was the only one that could do ministry right. He said, “I’ve hired staff, and trained lay people. Now I’m trying to operate like a leader of a flock of geese. We’re a multi-gifted team of staff and lay people sharing in the work to raise up responsible, reproducing disciples of Jesus Christ.”

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The principle of team leader and servant leader rather than autocratic leader is clearly demonstrated by the pastors who responded to this survey. The pastor as primary vision caster does not mean the Senior Pastor makes all the decisions. Leadership is about empowerment. The pastor empowered by the Holy Spirit equips and empowers others for reproductive ministries.

5. *What person, book or experience has had the greatest impact on your life and ministry?*

Pastor R.S. Dryden of Cathedral of Praise in Oklahoma City responded that his greatest learning experience was when he served as a lay apprentice involved with the pastoral staff as role models.

John Zuck, pastor of the Brethern in Christ Church in Ephrate, PA., said that his personal surrender to the fullness of the Holy Spirit had transformed his life, direction and priorities.

Some of the books and authors mentioned are as follows:

- J. Robert Clinton
- Rick Warren
- Eugene Peterson
- John Sider
- John Maxwell
- Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Leadership Conferences
- Carl George's *Prepare Your Church For the Future*
- Chuck Smith
- Larry Lea's book *Could You not Tarry an Hour*
- *Lincoln on Leadership by Phillips*
- *Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren
- *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* by Jim Cymbala
- *Dying for Change* by Leith Anderson
- *From Tradition to Mission* Wallace Fisher
- Stephen Covey's book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
- Robert Schuller

- Orville Butcher
- George Barna's books
- Dr. Jim Garlow
- *Experiencing God*
- Max Lucado's books
- *Ablaze for God* by Dr. Wesley Duewel

The one book mentioned the most was the *Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren. The pastors in this survey are looking to other pastors to learn and find ideas for their various ministries.

6. *What answers to prayer or supernatural events have had the greatest impact on your life and ministry?*

According to the pastors surveyed God is alive and well and is answering prayer in healing various diseases. Pastors Daniel Greenlee and John Clayton mentioned that healing from cancer had a great impact on their ministries. Pastor R. S. Dryden noted that the growth of his church was dramatically affected 10 years ago by the supernatural healing of an Army major in the last stages of Amyotrophy Lateral Sclerosis. Pastor Stephen Struikmans said in their church that they have had several experiences where lay elders and the pastor laid hands on people for healing and God answered prayer.

Pastor Dave Williams reported that Acts 13:44 became a reality in their church when Ruby Jones was healed of blindness. A local medical doctor verified the healing.

Pastor Bayse Reedy responded that "After 40 days of prayer in 1990, our church took bold steps to relocate and build. An awesome display of faith and unity resulted from prayer."

Pastor Leroy Hellmig testified that his son who was born with a heart condition was healed. His son is now 16 and 6 feet 3 inches tall and weighs 220 lbs.

Pastor Lane Sargent affirmed that a lady in their church was healed of crippling arthritis and walked out of her wheel chair. She had been confined to the wheel chair for 12 years.

Pastor David Terhune said, "The supernatural act of God has broken my heart for the lost. It has changed my preaching and my ministry focus."

7. *What is your personal vision for your church as you prayerfully seek*

God's will for your ministry in the next century?

You can catch the heartbeat of the pastors who responded to the survey in their answer to this question. Growth oriented pastors have a large capacity for vision and faith.

Some of the responses to the question were as follows:

"Transition to a younger leadership team and grow to 2,000."

"Our vision is to reduce unnecessary barriers to facilitate a constant flow of irreligious north-westerners to faith and discipleship."

"To attract, train, and motivate 10,000 active members/disciples to influence our city and the world for Christ."

"Mothering congregations as a model for denomination and beyond."

"During the next ten years we plan to grow to a church of 3,000. We plan to build a 1,200-seat worship auditorium expandable to 1,600. We will grow our church school through 8th grade, raise up and send out 5 missionary families, expand our cell group ministries to 75 open groups, 113 closed groups, have a staff of 17 and daughter a new church."

"Provide three seeker sensitive worship services with 3 different styles of worship."

"Build Anna's house for Widows and Caleb's Village for retirees plus daughter 20 more churches in addition to the six we have started."

"To have a Christ exalting, Bible based, spirit empowered gifts based lay implemented ministry focused on evangelism and discipleship. This will result in multiple worship services, a variety of groups focused on particular ministries including needs based outreach; a board that is permission giving rather than controlling so that ministries are multiplied."

"I believe our church can reach 2000 in attendance by carefully developing men and women into a deep walk with God and with leadership skills to develop others."

"To become a ministry driven church rather than committee driven. To plant another church and reach our community for Christ."

"Build a new complex to seat 10,000 in order to touch more lives for Jesus on our newly purchased 100 acres."

8. List any additional comments you would like to make concerning Church Growth in America.

The 56 pastors who responded to this survey were for the most part very positive as they responded to this question. Listed below are some of the comments to this question:

Pastor Brian Lefthouse commented: "Church growth experts have programs, but they don't always work in your church. The Holy Spirit must show you the characteristics of your local body of believers and direct you in ministry."

Pastor Arden Gilmer noted that "Church growth has had a major and positive influence on my ministry. I have a D. Min. in Church Growth from Fuller Seminary. Church growth insights have been significant in my ministry of turning around a traditional church so that growth has more than doubled during my pastorate. Church growth is comprehensive and includes spiritual growth."

Pastor Robert D. Ross says: "I'm not overly impressed with the Church Growth movement. It borders on marketing."

Pastor Nick Twomey writes: "Probably too reliant on our resourcefulness and not desperate enough for the sovereign move of God."

Pastor Bob Bedford responded: "I believe that too many conferences on Church growth concentrate on methods and procedures and too little on the spiritual development of the leader."

Pastor Laurel D. Buckingham believes, "The answer is a passion that will set all the great plans on fire so that momentum will increase."

Pastor Leroy Hellmig believes, "Health is more critical than growth. Growth is a by-product of a healthy organization."

Pastor David Terhune affirms, "Attendance is not the only factor to consider when looking at church growth. One should watch spiritual maturity. Too many churches are a mile wide, but only an inch deep. Church growth should be deep and wide."

Pastor Bob Huffaker testifies: "I believe we are living in the best days ever for church growth. It is easier to reach people for God now than anytime in my ministry. What a day of opportunity for any church or pastor that will become relevant to our day to reach the lost. One of the most important factors in our church growth was when we changed our worship style. We went from a traditional service to a contemporary/blended wor-

ship.”

Pastor Arlie Davis says, “My frustration is with church growth experts who try to transfer patterns of ministry from one church to another rather than transferring principles.”

Summary and Conclusion

Many of the pastors that responded to the survey expressed appreciation that the American Society for Church Growth was interested in having them give their opinions on church growth. Many were also glad to see that the Society was interested in spiritual factors as well as theological and technological factors for church growth.

There will always be differences of opinions when it comes to church growth. This study pushes us to continue to dialogue with critics of the Church Growth Movement. We can learn from each other and continue to sharpen the sickle for a greater harvest.

As members of the American Society for Church Growth we can reaffirm the words of Dr. Donald McGavran in the epilogue to his book, *Understanding Church Growth*.

Let us, then, lay down that defeatist attitude which keeps us convinced that the Church is not only at a standstill but in retreat. Let us lay aside our contentment in changing a few aspects of non-Christian thinking for the better. Let us brush aside the cobwebs of opinion which obstruct our vision and lead us to believe that the morality and concern for others which rises from a Christian base may equally well rise from a non-Christian base.

Let us realize that all we desire and hope for in the world can come only from peoples who acknowledge God as Lord and Christ as Savior and the Holy Spirit as Faithful Guide.

Let us face the fact that the world is open to belief in Christ as widespread as is our power to proclaim Him. The Church can move forward mightily. It is God’s will that she do so. His power will bless us as we devote ourselves with heart, mind, and will to the multiplying of churches from earth’s one end to the other (p. 370).

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Writer

Ellis, Ray W. Title: Senior Pastor, Church Planter, and Conference Superintendent. Dr. Ellis earned a B.A. from Greenville College and both the M.Div. and D.Min. from Asbury Theological Seminary. He was certified as a Church Growth Consultant by Fuller Institute in 1985. Ray served for nine years as Director of Evangelism and Church Growth for the Free Methodist Church. He currently is Director of Evangelism and Church Planting for the Sierra Pacific Conference targeting the San Francisco area.

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