

THE LIFE OF DONALD MCGAVRAN: FOUNDING A SCHOOL

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— 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 here the sixth of several excerpts from the biography.

Abstract

With the Institute of Church Growth in Eugene, Oregon, set to close in June 1965, McGavran was thinking of retiring to his small farm in Oregon. However, his plans changed when he was chosen to become the founding dean of Fuller Theological Seminary’s new School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth in September of that same year. The story of McGavran’s selection, as well as that of getting Alan Tippett back into the USA, demonstrates God’s miraculous work in bringing about the establishment of the new school.

Just ten years following the founding of the seminary that bears his name, Charles E. Fuller, a well-known evangelist of the early twentieth century, spoke of a dream for a school of evangelism and mission in a sermon preached on the “Old Fashioned Revival Hour” in 1957. In that sermon he declared,

But I’ll tell you something that is on my heart—and in the night hours I have been awakened time after time to pray—and that is that God would somehow lay it upon the hearts of the people world-wide to stand by in prayer and help us to make the Missions

and Evangelistic departments of the Fuller Theological Seminary the best, highest, truest training departments in all the world for missions and evangelism.¹

Charles Fuller's dream began to take form in early 1964. Actually, the idea of a school of missions had been on President Hubbard's mind for several years, and with the plans for a school of psychology well underway, Hubbard decided that "the next move is to work toward the setting up of a school of missions."²

President Hubbard and C. Davis Weyerhaeuser, a board member, had already made an exploratory trip to Northwest Christian College in the early spring of 1964 to investigate the work of Donald McGavran. In a thank you letter to Ross Griffith, Hubbard explained, "I will express my appreciation to Dr. McGavran who did a yeoman's service in seeing that Mr. Weyerhaeuser and I were made welcome and informed, not only concerning NCC but also the Institute of Church Growth, which strikes me as an unusually creative enterprise."³

By July of that year, President Hubbard started the process of appointing a committee to consider the appropriateness of establishing a school of mission. The principle members of the committee were William S. LaSor (professor of Old Testament), J. Christy Wilson Sr. (adjunct professor of missions), Clarence S. Roddy (professor of practical evangelism), Carlton Booth (professor of evangelism), Daniel Fuller (professor of hermeneutics), and R. Kenneth Strachan (chair). Daniel Fuller explained, "Our task is to think, to dream, and to construct a specific, detailed recommendation."⁴ Hubbard asked that the committee's plan be finished by February 15, 1965. As the committee was to begin its work in the fall of 1964, Dan Fuller and Ken Strachan conversed privately about the first meeting's agenda and the new school. By August, they were tossing around the idea of starting an institute of world evangelism. In preparation for the committee's initial gathering, Fuller and Strachan⁵ asked the members to think through seven key issues.

1. Is an Institute of World Evangelism needed?
2. What should be the goals?
3. What program of study should be suggested?
4. Should Fuller specialize in one field of Christian mission, becoming a strategic center for such studies?
5. What faculty should be provided?

¹ Charles Fuller 1957 as quoted in D. Fuller (1972): 230.

² Daniel P. Fuller, letter to R. Kenneth Strachan, July 28, 1964.

³ David A. Hubbard, letter to Ross J. Griffith, April 22, 1964.

⁴ Fuller to Strachan, July 28, 1964.

⁵ Strachan became ill during the fall of 1964 and passed away in February 1965.

6. To what students should the program be geared?

7. What degrees should be offered?⁶

The committee thought it advisable to poll faculty, present students, alumnae (particularly those serving outside the USA), and key leaders and educators in the fields of evangelism and missions.

The faculty committee met each Monday afternoon to discuss the possibilities and potential curriculum and to interview missionary leaders in order to get a lead on how to establish such a school. At the December Urbana Missionary Conference, leaders of the evangelical missionary movements met twice to offer their advice on the new school.⁷ Following the meetings in Urbana, the faculty committee decided it would be wise to organize a steering committee composed of fifteen or twenty missionary leaders to function in an advisory capacity. Daniel Fuller wrote to Arthur Glasser, home director of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, asking him to serve on the steering committee.⁸ Donald McGavran served as executive secretary for the committee. Other members included Horace L. Fenton, chairman (Latin America Mission), Raymond B. Buker (Conservative Baptist Seminary), George Cowan (Wycliffe Bible Translators), Ted W. Engstrom (World Vision), Eric Fife (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship), Clarence Jones (World Radio Missionary Fellowship), Samuel Moffett (Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions), Paul Rees (World Vision), Jack Shepherd (Nyack Missionary College), Abe Van Der Puy (Station HCJB, Ecuador), Warren Webster (Conservative Baptist Mission), Christy Wilson Jr. (Presbyterian Mission), and C. Stacey Woods (The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students).⁹

Daniel Fuller revealed to Glasser that the decision had been made to move forward with the opening of a school of missions and world evangelism and that his father, Charles E. Fuller, was going to make a preliminary announcement on the "Old Fashioned Revival Hour" the following March 7, 1965. Billy Graham was going to pledge his support to the new school on the broadcast slated for April 4. Several members of the steering committee were also going to make short announcements of support on upcoming broadcasts to help raise the needed financial resources for the new school.

By January 1965, it became clear to Donald and president Griffith that the Institute of Church Growth would close at the end of June. With Griffith retiring in June of that year, Donald asked the board of Northwest Christian College whether they would continue to fund the Institute. The

⁶ Memo to committee members planning for a school of mission. No date but most likely sometime in August or September 1964.

⁷ Daniel P. Fuller, letter to Arthur Glasser, December 17, 1964.

⁸ Daniel P. Fuller, letter to Arthur Glasser, January 21, 1965.

⁹ *Bulletin of Fuller Theological Seminary* (Spring 1965): 3.

board said no. To provide support for a new president, the board decided not to put more money into the Institute of Church Growth. However, the Lilly Endowment for the church growth study of Latin America was to continue into 1967, providing some funding.¹⁰

In spite of this discouraging news, Donald and president Griffith continued to believe there was hope to keep the Institute going. One of the pressing issues was obtaining a visa for Alan Tippett, so he could return to the United States to start teaching in September 1965. At the time, the United States had strict entry quotas, which required a long application process. Tippett had previously been in the United States on a student visa, but now he needed a workers visa, which Northwest Christian College needed to request and process.¹¹ Unknown to anyone at the time, getting Tippett into the United States was going to take a minor miracle.

Responding to an invitation from President Hubbard, Donald traveled to Pasadena on February 18–19 to discuss the proposed school of evangelism. He attended a faculty meeting on February 19 with Charles Fuller, Dan Fuller, William LaSor, and President Hubbard. Following that meeting, the four unanimously decided to explore the possibility of getting McGavran and his Institute of Church Growth to come to Fuller as the nucleus of the school of missions. As a preliminary step, President Hubbard requested that Donald draw up a brief statement as to the kind of graduate school of world missions and evangelism he would envision for Fuller Theological Seminary (FTS). After giving Hubbard's request significant thought, Donald suggested that the unique graduate school of missions should place strong emphasis on four essentials.

Training missionaries and nationals in harvesting **evangelism** with a minor emphasis on seed sowing evangelism, training men to know how churches grow, discovering by rigorous research what methods God has blessed to church multiplication, furnishing missionaries those knowledges and skills —language skills, understanding of younger Churches, nationalism, the science of man, the need for both Christian unity and doctrinal truth, etc.—which help them be effective witnesses in today's world.¹²

Donald envisioned a graduate school that would constantly renew itself through research in church growth, that would teach mission history as a record of church multiplication, and that would teach theology of mission as a biblical system of belief through which God propagates the gospel. He dreamed further, (1) that this Graduate School will take its stand squarely on the assumption that the salvation of men through faith in Jesus

¹⁰ Notes of Donald McGavran, read and interpreted by Betty Ann Klebe on audio tape, September 19, 1990, transcribed copy September 20, 1990.

¹¹ Alan Tippett, letter to Ross J. Griffith, February 24, 1965.

¹² Donald A. McGavran, *Purpose, Objectives, Curriculum and Staff for the Graduate School of World Missions and Evangelism* (unpublished proposal, March 5): 1965.

Christ is the chief purpose of Christian mission. (2) That the many good things done by mission today will not be permitted to obscure and hinder the supreme aim—that the Gospel be proclaimed and “multitudes be added to the Lord” in multiplying churches in every land. To the extent that the many good things provedly aid the supreme aim, they will be gladly used, but they will not be allowed to become ends in themselves. (3) That conventional academic disciplines, hallowed by use in other seminaries, will not be followed slavishly. Indeed, they will be followed only to the extent that they provedly contribute to propagating the faith in the radically new and radically old world of today and tomorrow.¹³

Donald hoped that the graduate school would offer a masters of theology degree and, as soon as possible, a doctor of theology. The school would group the curriculum under six major divisions: theology of mission, apologetics and comparative religions, history of missions, missions and culture, missionary methods and practices, and research in church growth. As for faculty, he suggested beginning with a dean, two professors, and two associate professors. They would divide their responsibilities as follows: dean with half-time responsibilities in teaching and directing research, professor of evangelism and church growth in Africa (anthropology, animism, and Islam), professor of evangelism and church growth in Latin America (sociology and Roman Catholicism), associate professor of evangelism and church growth in Asia (theology, Hinduism, and Buddhism), and an associate professor of history of church expansion (director of International House). Donald expected all professors to be engaged in research and writing, as well as being stimulating teachers. Further, he recommended funding for three teaching fellows and five research fellows. In summary, his vision of a graduate school of missions was to “find out all we can about how twentieth century men and populations are discipled and to teach all we find out to the end that the Church of Jesus Christ be extended to His glory—this is the kind of Graduate School of Missions I would like Fuller Theological Seminary to found.”¹⁴

Donald wrote the proposal just two days before Charles Fuller publicly announced the new School of World Mission on March 7, 1965. Fuller told his constituency that it was time to found a school of worldwide evangelism, which would operate as a department of Fuller Seminary. He asked that all his listeners prayerfully join him in carrying out this venture of faith. Clearly, the new school was going to open in the fall of the year, but much still needed to be accomplished—assembling an adequate library, hiring

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

faculty, recruiting students, raising the necessary funding, and, most critical, hiring a founding dean.

The faculty committee's first choice for the founding dean was Samuel Moffett, a distinguished missionary to Korea. Similar to McGavran, Moffett was the son of missionaries and was born in Korea in 1916. He and his wife Eileen had begun service in Korea in 1955, just in time to take part in the rapid church growth in that country. The faculty committee, along with President Hubbard, negotiated with Moffett for three months. However, he felt that his work in Korea was not yet finished and that he needed to return. The committee then turned to its second choice, Christy Wilson Jr. Born and raised in Iran, Wilson worked as a missionary in Afghanistan from 1951 to 1974. He also felt the call to go back to Afghanistan and turned down the offer to become the founding dean of the new school.

Thus, the attention of the faculty committee and President Hubbard turned to Donald McGavran. Looking back in 1972, Daniel Fuller remembered,

Early in 1965 our attention focused upon Dr. Donald McGavran, who several years before had founded the Institute of Church Growth in connection with the Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon . . . As the committee at Fuller Seminary carried on conversations with missionary leaders, the name of Donald McGavran and the term "Church Growth" kept coming up. Why shouldn't a school of missions primarily emphasize the question of why churches grow? With such an emphasis in the forefront, a school would be less prone to veer away from the task of evangelism than might be the case if its primary emphasis were, say, linguistics, or anthropology.¹⁵

Several aspects commended McGavran to the faculty committee. He was well prepared academically, had extensive missionary experience, and enjoyed extensive knowledge of many missionary fields. His theology was compatible with Fuller Theological Seminary's, and he had an understanding of the impact of social science on mission theory. The primary question was his age. At sixty-seven years old, some wondered whether he would provide the creative and imaginative leadership the new school needed. Others wondered if the new school would just become a high-class institute, as opposed to a solid academic institution. At least one person felt Donald's publications manifested a sort of fuzziness of thought, lacking the precision needed in a dean.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Donald's clear vision for what a graduate school of world missions might look like won out. By April, he was the most likely candidate to become the founding dean.

¹⁵ D. Fuller (1972): 231.

¹⁶ For an example of one person's thoughts, see Jack F. Shepherd, letter to Carlton Booth, April 23, 1965.

Part of the discussions between Hubbard and McGavran concerned the Institute of Church Growth. Donald wanted the Institute to move from Northwest Christian College to Fuller Theological Seminary. The truth was that Donald was not interested in coming to Pasadena unless Fuller was willing to take over the entire Institute of Church Growth, which included both himself and Tippett as professors. While having the Institute located right across the street from the University of Oregon, with its excellent schools of sociology, anthropology, and history, was positive, the fact that Oregon was on the edge of the United States limited the Institute's influence. This, plus the fact that financing and housing of the Institute at the college were uncertain after President Griffith retired in June 1965, led Donald to believe relocating the Institute to Fuller Theological Seminary was a sound idea. He recognized that relocating it to Pasadena, California, would offer distinct advantages, among which would be abundant funds, better housing, an ability to grant MA and ThD degrees, a more centrally located campus for missionaries passing through, and, of course, the all-around strength that being part of the famed Fuller Seminary would bring. One negative was the Graduate School of Mission would have to teach the anthropology and sociology courses that were obtained through the University of Oregon, but that seemed manageable.

What sealed the deal for the faculty committee was a resounding recommendation from Arthur Glasser:

1. Dr. McGavran is obviously an extremely competent man in this field. His formal training (PhD) balances his practical experience, gained through years of service in India, and through extensive travels in all parts of the world.
2. Dr. McGavran is an enthusiast, a "vibrator," in the best sense of the word. He can convey a glow. He has the thrust to his personality that would qualify him as a leader.
3. Dr. McGavran is recognized as the most seminal thinker in the business of church growth, world evangelism, missionary methodology, etc. His books are widely read, and often quoted. . . . He would be bound to draw top-level missionaries to do furlough studies under his direction at Fuller.
4. I understand that as long as Dr. McGavran was located in Eugene, Oregon—off the beaten path—he was not reaching his fullest potential. But a move for him to Pasadena should automatically enlarge his teaching and leadership—in—research seminars, etc. By inviting him to Fuller we would be helping him: he would be grateful, and would give us the right sort of loyalty, etc.
5. In terms of sheer achievement overseas, and consequent orientation from a theoretical approach to strategy, he would appeal to mission leaders more than, say, Sam Moffett, whose accomplishments and interests are more pedestrian and traditional.

Glasser's only question was McGavran's theological stance, of which he knew little. The fact that the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA) and the International Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) both endorsed Donald's workshops held at Winona Lake, Indiana, made Glasser feel all was well on this point.

In May 1965, David Hubbard extended an invitation to McGavran to move the Institute of Church Growth to Pasadena and to establish the School of World Mission as a school of Fuller Theological Seminary. Daniel Fuller immediately sent an invitation to Alan Tippet to join McGavran as a charter faculty member for the proposed School of World Mission as associate professor of missionary anthropology. Tippet was open to coming, but the most serious problem of all was whether he could even get into the country.

After Donald accepted the invitation, William LaSor sent an announcement to the steering committee on June 1:

You will rejoice with us, I am sure, when we tell you that Dr. Donald McGavran has accepted the invitation to become Dean of the School of World Mission and Director of the Institute of Church Growth of Fuller Theological Seminary. He will take up duties here in September.

This was clearly the leading of the Lord, for the continued existence of the Institute of Church Growth became an uncertainty at the same time that we became interested in Dr McGavran as Dean of our school. When it was made clear to him and to us that the Institute itself could be transferred to Pasadena and that he could continue the direction of its unique ministry both he and our committee recognized it as the hand of the Lord.

The whole development is positively exciting. Instead of starting a new school and waiting for it to develop, we have in institute-in-being with its program already operating, its students already engaged in research projects, its publications already recognized as authoritative, and some foundation grants already made. Added to that is Dr. McGavran's infectious zeal for the new School of World Missions.¹⁷

As noted in the letter of announcement, everything came together when President Griffith worked out the details to transfer the Institute of Church Growth from Northwest Christian College to Fuller School of Theology. Even though President Griffith had worked hard to make the Institute of Church Growth a success at Northwest Christian College, he recognized that it had the best chance to flourish at Fuller. Thus, he graciously worked to make the move possible. In a letter to Alan Tippet, Griffith wrote con-

¹⁷ William S. LaSor, letter to Arthur Glasser, June 1, 1965.

cerning the Institute of Church Growth, "I wish that we might have kept it, but the success of the venture was its own undoing. We lacked the money to feed the critter adequately. Well, anyway we have started something. It is up to you and McGavran to keep it going great guns."¹⁸

Final details meant that Fuller Theological Seminary had to reimburse Northwest Christian College \$9,100 for money already spent on research fellows, publication, and the Institute's library. President Hubbard worked at the arrangements for Fuller to pay reimbursement beginning in June. Northwest Christian College agreed to continue to pay the salaries of McGavran, Tippett, and their secretary, Betty Ann Klebe, through August 31. Most importantly, the full amount of the Lilly Endowment Foundation specified for the Latin American church growth study was to be transferred to Fuller on September 1.¹⁹ Additionally, the *Church Growth Bulletin* was to transfer to Fuller along with the Institute of Church Growth, although Overseas Crusades would continue to publish it.

On June 9, a public news release of the new school read, "VETERAN MISSIONARY LEADER TO HEAD NEW GRADUATE SCHOOL AT FULLER SEMINARY." The announcement stated,

President David Allan Hubbard of Fuller Theological Seminary and President Ross J. Griffeth and Dr. Donald McGavran of Northwest Christian College (Disciples of Christ) jointly announced today that the Institute of Church Growth, founded by Dr. Griffeth and Dr. McGavran at Northwest Christian College in 1960, the Institute's journal *The Church Growth Bulletin*, and the Institute's library will be moved to Pasadena and will become part of Fuller Theological Seminary's new program in world mission. Dr. McGavran will serve as dean of the Fuller School of World Mission and director of the Institute of Church Growth.²⁰

As the announcement indicated, the formal name of the new school was the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth. Those who feared that Donald's advanced age would result in a lack of innovation soon learned that such was not the case. In a letter written to the members of the steering committee, Donald declared, "I do not wish to develop a missionary training institution geared to 1930 or even 1960. Our training institution should fit missionaries to carry out the great commission in 1970 and 1980."²¹

Following this short word to the steering committee, Donald embarked on a speaking trip to Michigan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, Peru, Brazil, New York, and Indiana, lasting from June 23 to September 13. He left the responsibility for moving the Institute of Church Growth office

¹⁸ Ross J. Griffeth, letter to Alan Tippett, June 12, 1965.

¹⁹ David Allan Hubbard, letter to Ross J. Griffeth, June 2, 1965.

²⁰ News release from Fuller Theological Seminary, June 9, 1965.

²¹ Donald McGavran, letter to members of the steering committee, June 18, 1965.

and the belongings of home to Mary and his secretary Betty Klebe. When he returned to the United States on September 13, it would be to Pasadena rather than to Eugene.

Donald was always a person to get things done, something President Hubbard and others at Fuller soon discovered. Letters were flying back and forth between McGavran and Hubbard during June, with the result that Hubbard was constantly issuing memos to various people at Fuller regarding the move of the Institute of Church Growth. One day a member of Hubbard's staff came into his office waving a handful of memos and commenting, "Everybody's working for McGavran!" When Mary McGavran and Betty Klebe arrived at Hubbard's office, he pointed to the sign on Donald's door that read "Private" and quipped, "Instead of 'Private,' that should say 'General.'"²²

The whole matter of opening the School of World Mission and the Institute of Church Growth so quickly seemed no less than a miracle. Part of what made the turnaround workable was the existence of the program at Northwest Christian College. Essentially, the first semester of classes in fall 1965 was just an extension of what had already been going on in Eugene. The initial brochure advertising the new school and institute clearly stated,

In transferring the Institute of Church Growth from Northwest Christian College to Fuller Theological Seminary and beginning the graduate School of World Mission, the administration announces that during the fall quarter the course of studies of the Institute of Church Growth will be followed. In the winter and spring the School of World Mission courses will be offered as supplementary.²³

The first session of the School of World Mission found the following course offerings available:

Principles and Procedures in Church Growth I	D. McGavran
Animism and Church Growth I	A. Tippett
Anthropology and Mission I	A. Tippett
Case Study in Melanesian Church Growth	A. Tippett
Church Growth in Latin America	William Read
Research Seminar in Church Growth	A. Tippett and D. McGavran
Research Methods	A. Tippett
Reading and Conference	Independent
Theology of Missions to Resistant Populations	Warren Webster ²⁴

²² Betty Klebe, letter to Donald McGavran, September 8, 1965.

²³ Brochure from the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, September 1965.

²⁴ Registration form from School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth, September 1965.

Fourteen students in total, all missionaries representing twelve boards and eleven different countries, were hard at work, with each student carrying twelve units. An additional fourteen BD students were also enrolled that first quarter. Tuition was \$21 per quarter hour. The faculty was comprised of McGavran, Tippet, and two lecturers, William Read and Warren Webster. During the second quarter, thirteen career missionaries and twenty-five BD students were registered.²⁵

The on-time arrival of Alan Tippet from Australia was a minor miracle, as Donald explained in a letter to the steering committee on October 18:

Alan Tippet's arrival in the United States on the first day of school was a miracle. His visa seemed impossible to obtain—the immigrant quota was filled up for three years. Through the intercession of Billy Graham with President Johnson a way was opened, and Alan Tippet is here!—a tower of strength, a first-class anthropologist, and an ardent missionary who takes the great commission seriously.²⁶

Calling Tippet's on-time arrival a miracle was nearly an understatement. Since he was under contract to teach at Northwest Christian College, the college had to apply for the visa on his behalf. President Griffith wrote a forceful letter to the American Consul in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on March 9, 1965, informing them that Tippet had a confirmed contract, an assured salary, and a house for his family. In addition, he told the Consul that Tippet's coming in September 1965 was "absolutely essential." "Let me assure you," Griffith wrote, "that in his specialty he stands alone. He cannot be replaced."²⁷

Tippet was doing all he could to expedite copies of official documents—diplomas, transcripts of grades, and work records—to President Griffith so he could forward them to the Consul, but these matters moved along slowly. In an attempt to help, Tippet wrote the American Consul in Australia only to discover that the quota year ended on June 30 and that Australia had already met its quota. While the Consul official was sympathetic, Tippet was informed that the school should be prepared to renew his petition for a visa several more times.²⁸ In fact, there was no chance of him getting into

²⁵ Donald A. McGavran, "School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth: Report of the Dean on the Progress of the School—September 1965-April 1966." According to this report, the missionaries enrolled represented American Baptist, Conservative Baptist, Assemblies of God, Evangelical United Brethren, Evangelical Covenant, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, Latin American Mission, Mennonite Church, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Overseas Crusades, United Presbyterian, and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

²⁶ Donald McGavran, letter to members of the steering committee, October 18, 1965.

²⁷ Ross J. Griffith, letter to the American Consul, Australia, March 9, 1965.

²⁸ Alan Tippet, letter to Ross J. Griffith, June 2, 1965.

the United States for the next several years, possibly not even before 1968! The Consul in Melbourne advised Tippet “not to sell any property or give up any job because there was just no way.”²⁹

Griffeth continued to do what he could despite the fact that he was retiring at the end of June, and, of course, that the Institute of Church Growth was going to be moved to Fuller. He genuinely cared for the future of the Institute and worked as long as possible to make sure Tippet could secure his visa. Griffeth was to meet to interview with an immigration official on June 17 in Portland, Oregon. He went to that meeting with great hope that he might be able to obtain a visa in time to get Tippet into the United States by September. The meeting resulted in the official approving Tippet for First Preference Quota immigration status. While this did not insure his admittance to the United States, it did give him some advantage in seeking admission. Yet, the lack of a confirmed entry visa left Tippet in limbo, not being able to make plans to pack, schedule transportation to the United States, or dispose of his lease. Griffeth’s retirement escalated his uncertainty. As Donald was traveling in South America all summer, the continuing responsibility to get Tippet into the United States fell to President Hubbard.

On the surface, this appeared to be just another roadblock in obtaining Tippet’s visa, but in hindsight, it proved to be providential. Hubbard called a Fuller trustee, Billy Graham, who in turn called President Lyndon Johnson directly at the White House. Not too long after that, an official from the State Department contacted President Hubbard and told him that he was going at this in the wrong way. The State Department official suggested that Fuller make a new application on behalf of Tippet for a non-quota visa as a minister of religion. As Hubbard had all of the needed information, he submitted a new application immediately. Evidently, information had already gone out to the American Consul in Australia to grant a visa to Tippet, and they were just waiting for the final word.³⁰

Alan and Edna Tippet were unaware that all of this was happening in the United States. Alan was to begin teaching classes on September 28. When he visited the Consul on September 7, however, officials again gave sympathy but no encouragement. A week later, the Consul called and asked Tippet to return to the office. When Tippet arrived, the Consul announced, “I don’t know how you did it.”³¹ Tippet had been granted a ministerial non-quota visa on a case presented to the president by Billy Graham. From that point until departure, Alan and Edna Tippet’s life became a frantic pace of obtaining police clearances, finding flight connections, transferring money from the United States, getting medical exams for three people (their daughter Robyn would be coming along), and packing and storing their belongings.

²⁹ Tippet, *No Continuing City*, 318.

³⁰ Mary Ann Klebe, letter to Donald McGavran, September 8, 1965.

³¹ Tippet, *No Continuing City*, 318.

They arrived in Los Angeles at 6:40 a.m. on September 28. Mary McGavran picked them up at the airport and drove directly to the campus of Fuller Theological Seminary, where McGavran had already started Tippett's class. He appeared in the classroom before the coffee break!

Most of the students enrolled at both the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth were mid-term missionaries home on furlough. Sometimes a student attended the school for just one term, while others stayed for an entire year working on a master's degree. Non-degree students had to complete projects, but degree students were required to write a thesis. As the program grew, visiting lecturers shared the workload. Some of the early lecturers were Warren Webster, J.T. Seamands, Jack Shepherd, David Barrett, J.B. Kessler, and J. Edwin Orr, who eventually became a regular.

The theme of the Missions Conference that semester, held October 19–22, was *The Redeemed Community: Born to Care*. Cal Guy, professor of missions at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was the conference speaker. Both McGavran and Tippett participated in panel discussions during the conference, with Warren Webster moderating both panels.

The largest project ever completed by the Institute of Church Growth was known as CGRILA (Church Growth Research in Latin America), and it commenced immediately in the fall of 1965. With a \$54,000 funding from Lily Endowment, Inc., transferred from NCC to Fuller, they could not waste time in fulfilling research and publication responsibilities. Therefore, under Donald's tutoring, three research students—Bill Read, Harmon Johnson, and Victor Monterroso—were prepared during the first term to undertake the interviews and data gathering. The three were experienced missionaries from different parts of Latin America and from different denominations, but all three were fluent in multiple languages. Their job was to travel throughout Latin America for one year conducting interviews and collecting data on the growth of the churches. Tippett led them through a research methods class and then on a preliminary field assignment in Mexico for two weeks in December 1965. Donald insisted that they learn "how to keep the screws on their spending the budget funds."³² After returning, they met with him to review and prepare for the real research trip to begin in January 1966.

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President Alan Hubbard developed a ten-year plan for the School of Mission and Institute of Church Growth and presented it to the steering committee in early 1966. It revealed that the student body was to be limited to fifty career missionaries taught by a full-time faculty of six, along with several visiting lecturers. Ten thousand dollars was earmarked to create a notable

³² Tippett, *No Continuing City*, 345.

mission library, and a separate facility to house the new school was in the planning stages.³³ Donald was already in the process of searching for the next member of the faculty. Notably, Donald “called attention to the need to find God’s man to pick up the program a few years hence when he retires. The Dean should be a man of missionary experience and academic competence who has wide knowledge of many countries and is dedicated to the spread of the Gospel.”³⁴ The committee was to submit names of suitable men.

Donald’s mother Helen McGavran had been sixty-nine years old when her husband John had passed away in 1939. She continued to live with her daughter Grace in Indianapolis, Indiana, and later in Vancouver, Washington, where Grace worked as a freelance writer for several mission boards. Throughout the years, Helen carried on regular correspondence with all of her children, passing on news of her scattered family. She remained vigorous and healthy until just a few days before her death on January 10, 1966, in Vancouver, Washington. Donald flew to Vancouver from Pasadena, California, to see her. When he walked into her room, Helen briefly woke up and said, “Oh, Don, you have come.” These were her last spoken words. She passed away that evening at the age of ninety-five, rejoicing in the achievements of her family, especially Donald and Edward. Edward Grafton McGavran became a leading figure in the field of public health and the dean of the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina. He served as a member of the American Public Health Executive Committee and traveled widely around the world setting up schools of public health.

“Why Neglect Gospel-Ready Masses?” was published in the April 29, 1966, edition of *Christianity Today*. The article was a significant statement of Donald’s church growth point of view, covering several salient aspects that critics, both then and now, continue to miss. The opening paragraph declared one of the major beliefs of the Church Growth School of Thought:

The rise of receptive populations is a great new fact in missions.

There have always been populations in which many are willing to hear the Gospel and become responsible members of Christ’s Church. But today their number in all the continents has risen so sharply that they have become an outstanding feature of the mission landscape.³⁵

While some observers of the missionary enterprise felt the day of missions was dead, Donald began saying that the decade of the 1960s was, in fact, the

³³ The total budget for 1966-67 came to \$89,000. Of this \$44,000 was for faculty, staff, and visiting lecturers; another \$12,000 for research fellows; and \$10,000 for library acquisitions.

³⁴ Donald A. McGavran, “School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth: Report of the Dean on the Progress of the School—September 1965–April 1966.”

³⁵ Donald McGavran. “Why Neglect Gospel-Ready Masses?” *Christianity Today* (April 29, 1966): 17.

sunrise of missions. “To be sure,” he admitted, “there are still many resistant and rebellious populations with faces set like flint against the Savior.”³⁶ Yet, in his travels he saw the openness of people to the gospel from Brazil to Africa to Taiwan, and he believed that the concept of receptivity and resistance demanded a theological understanding. “Receptivity does not arise by accident. Men become open to the Gospel, not by any blind interplay of brute forces, but by God’s sovereign will.”³⁷ Thus, he believed it is a key principle of church growth thought that “Gospel-accepters have a higher priority than Gospel-rejecters.”³⁸ According to Donald, this principle of receptivity and resistance had guided the early church. When the apostle Paul encountered resistance, he moved on toward those who were receptive. “It pleases God for the missionary enterprise to determine its main thrusts in light of the growth of the Church. The bold acceptance of church growth as the goal of Christian mission is a theological decision, the bedrock on which correct action in the fact of receptivity rests.”³⁹

Donald based such a theological decision on “both an acceptance of the Bible as the true, authoritative revelation of God and a living experience of Christ.” Further, he affirmed that “the principles of church growth operate through the power of Christ and his Word and can be used effectively only by ardent, Spirit-filled Christians.”⁴⁰ Based on this theological bedrock, he then listed six principles of church growth:

The first is to increase evangelism everywhere, and especially among growing churches.

The second principle of church growth is to multiply unpaid leaders among the new converts, training them to go out and communicate Christ to their unsaved relatives, neighbors, and fellow laborers.

The third principle is to take full advantage of insights now available from the sciences concerned with man.

The fourth principle of church growth is to evangelize responsive populations to the utmost.

The fifth principle is to seek, without lessening emphasis on individual salvation, the joint accession of many persons within one society at a time.

The sixth principle of harvest is to carry on extensive research in church growth.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 18.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18 and 29.

It was a certainty, Donald believed, that using the newly stated church growth principles would result in great numbers of the lost coming to faith in Christ and into his church.

Inauguration of Donald as Dean of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth took place on Tuesday evening, September 27, 1966. The service was held in the seminary chapel, with Alan Tippet giving the invocation and William LaSor reading the Scripture. President Hubbard gave a charge to the new dean.

The fall of 1966 saw the new school off and running in high gear. To answer some of the questions the new school raised, Donald published two additional articles, both released in October. "The Church Growth Point of View and Christian Mission" was published in the *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship*. Once again, Donald pressed the point that church growth is "rooted in theology. God wants church growth. He wants His lost children found. The multiplication of churches is theologically required."⁴² He also addressed the priority of evangelism over social work and called for more church planting or multiplication as the means to reach the world for Christ. In his second article, also released in October 1966 in *World Vision Magazine*, he again focused on the goal of ministry. "One Goal or Many?" asked the question: *Are all Christian activities of equal value?* He concluded that there was one primary goal: every person on Earth must have a real option of accepting or rejecting Christ. This meant that "each [person] must hear it [the Gospel] in his own tongue and thought forms, and under such circumstances that becoming Christian is a real option to him."⁴³

Underneath the umbrella of Fuller Theological Seminary, the new School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth (SWM and ICG) was able to grant a Master of Arts degree. The program had better financial support, accreditation was stronger, and the interplay of academic discussion was more energetic than had been the case in Oregon. Despite these new positives, however, life at the new school was far from ideal for McGavran and Tippet. They now had to establish themselves as peers relating to other professors at Fuller Theological Seminary, many of them professional theologians, and some highly critical of missionaries. This caused Donald and Tippet to feel they had to prove themselves at every point to the larger Fuller faculty. Then, too, the moving of the school from Northwest Christian College to Fuller Theological Seminary required the examination of the curriculum. NCC had rewarded graduates only a certificate in church growth, but at FTS, the accreditation of a graduate school had to be preserved. Thus, the

⁴² Donald McGavran, "The Church Growth Point of View and Christian Mission," *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship*, no. 13 (October, 1966): 8–13.

⁴³ Donald A. McGavran, "One Goal or Many?" *World Vision Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 9 (October, 1966): 9 and 28.

standards in the new SWM-ICG were rigorous. Thesis expectations were high, grading was stiff, and reading demands were large. General standards were higher than at many colleges and universities.

Harold Lindsell, former professor of mission at Fuller, author of *A Christian Philosophy of Missions*, and editor for *Christianity Today*, delivered the Annual Lectures on Church Growth in 1966. Unknown at the time, the man destined to follow Donald as the main spokesperson for the Church Growth Movement—C. Peter Wagner—had recently made application for the new MA program in church growth studies. He was to begin his studies starting on September 20, 1967. Wagner's initial research idea was to study the Pentecostals in Chili, an idea endorsed by Donald, who wrote to Wagner in December 1966, encouraging such a study: "Be assured that I would love to have you do the Pentecostal study. It is a large gold nugget waiting to be picked up."⁴⁴ Little did they realize the direction Wagner's research would take the North American Church Growth Movement in the years ahead.

About the Author

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⁴⁴ Donald McGavran, letter to C. Peter Wagner, December 27, 1966.