DISSERTATION AND THESES NOTICES

Compiled by Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Each issue of the *Great Commission Research Journal* features recent dissertations and theses of interest to our readers. Particular attention is given to publications that present research on evangelism, church growth, church planting and multiplication, missional church, emerging/emergent church, communication theory, leadership theory, and other topics related to effective fulfillment of the Great Commission. Directors of doctoral programs, as well as graduating students, are encouraged to send notice of recent dissertations to Dr. Gary L. McIntosh, Dissertation Editor, at gary.mcintosh@biola.edu. Due to space limitations, and the large number of dissertations published each year, only a few dissertations are featured.

This issue of the *Great Commission Research Journal* features recent dissertations that focus on some aspect of leadership and church growth.

"The application of learning organization principles to church growth." Author: Colleen S. Bryan, Ph.D. dissertation, Walden University, School of World Mission, 2009. 282 pages.

abstract

While many studies showed evidence of the use of learning organization theory in a variety of venues, these theories have been studied in a limited capacity in church settings. This research attempted to substantiate the presence of learning organization principles in churches experiencing growth and to refine a tool to measure these characteristics in churches. Relationships and strengths of association between and among three learning organization principles of leadership, job structure and systems, and performance and development; and degrees of growth defined as negative, plateau, and positive growth were examined in a sample of Nazarene churches via a revised survey completed by senior pastors. Pre and post survey analyses were employed, resulting in stronger reliability and validity outcomes for the instrument and contributing to a significant gap in the literature. Correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA methods were used to assess relationships between the three learning organization principles and three levels of church growth. Outcomes did not show significant substantiation of these relationships, except for slightly higher evidence of leadership in the positive growth group. This study adds to the scientific knowledge of church growth via the creation of a new survey instrument for church use. The promotion of social responsibility and professional application of knowledge to church venues is an important tenet of this study, and lends valuable insight and knowledge for church leadership to engage in strategies that lead to social change.

"Leadership of growing churches: The role of the senior pastor's attributes and leadership practices." Author: Paul W. Steen, Ph.D. dissertation, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 2008. 424 pages.

abstract

Through a review of relevant literature, theological examination, and quantitative analysis, this research project studied the role of a senior pastor's personal attributes, leadership practices, and church demographics in order to investigate his

relationship to a church's decadal growth rate. The Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI-Self, Kouzes & Posner, 2003) was used as the assessment instrument along with fifteen questions of a demographic nature.

The study's population included all 298 senior pastors serving in Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) churches in the United States and Canada. The research project was completed in three phases: selection of senior pastors in the CCCC denomination, gathering data using the LPI-Self and selected demographic information, and analysis and interpretation of data. From those selected, 211 pastoral respondents (71%) returned surveys. Of these returned surveys, 188 were usable for data analysis. Data was compiled and analyzed in order to find the leadership best practice most correlated to church decadal growth rates. The study also explored which pastoral and church demographic characteristics are indicative of leadership best practices and church decadal growth rates.

Descriptive statistics for all variables were obtained using a frequency distribution. Results were presented as absolute frequencies and adjusted percentiles. Mean scores, modes, and standard deviation were also calculated. Analysis of variance, Pearson's product-moment correlations, and Chi-Square statistical analyses were used to examine the relationship between variables.

The study concluded three significant findings. A statistically significant difference exists when comparing the ages of CCCC senior pastors with their related leadership best practice. A pastor's leadership best practice changes as he gets older. Also, there was a statistically significant relationship between the CCCC senior pastors' leadership best practice and their church's setting. Pastors serving in small towns are far more likely to demonstrate the leadership practice of enabling others than in any other practice. Finally, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between the CCCC senior pastors' ages and the decadal growth rate of their churches. Younger pastors are more likely to be leading growing churches than older pastors are.

"The leadership succession process in megachurches." Author: Meredith Edward Wheeler, Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 2008. 434 pages.

abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the succession, processes, and experiences of senior pastors in megachurches. The term succession is used in the study to refer

to the transition in which one leader leaves an organization and another one takes her/his place. The term process speaks of the sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context (Pettigrew, 1985). The term senior pastor is used to refer to the top leader in churches with multiple pastoral staff. The term megachurch is used here as a descriptive term to refer to Protestant churches with 2,000 or more attendees in their worship services each week (Thumma, 1996).

Few changes have greater impact on an organization than the change of the senior leader. Historically, succession processes in churches have been disruptive events, often leading to temporary or, in many cases, permanent decline (particularly when the predecessor led the church to a perhaps unprecedented time of growth). Succession was often an undiscussed matter until the departure of a predecessor. Since the proliferation of megachurches is a relatively new social phenomenon, little is known about the succession processes of senior pastors in these churches. This study on succession process seeks to address a gap in the literature regarding succession in megachurches by offering first-hand descriptive accounts by those who have lived through the succession process. Further, this study seeks to enrich the literature by seeking to integrate current leadership theory with this succession study.

Examination of the processes of succession and the nature of the proposed research questions favor a qualitative approach methodologically. Since this is an attempt to holistically describe what is going on and to build a knowledge base for developing theory rather than test hypotheses, the methodology adopted needs to allow maximally for serendipitous discovery, description and explanation. This study proposes to describe, analyze, and compare the succession processes and experiences of senior pastors in three megachurches through in-depth interviews with those most immersed in the succession process, through document review, archival review, and through a basic organization profile survey.

"The relationship between pastoral leadership characteristics and church size and growth."
Author: David S. King, Ph.D. dissertation, Capella University, 2007. 109 pages.

abstract

This research study investigated the leadership practices of pastors. The pastors were all senior pastors of churches in North Carolina and Virginia that were members of the Willow Creek Association. The study sought to determine if

significant relationships existed between the pastors' leadership characteristics (the independent variables) and the size and growth of the churches (the dependent variables) under their leadership. Leadership practices were identified and quantified by use of Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Church size and church growth measures were gleaned from a three-item demographic questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed based on the LPI's five leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner: Challenge the Process, Inspire a Shared Vision, Enable Others to Act, Model the Way, and Encourage the Heart. Correlational and multiple regression analysis of the ninety responses found significant relationships between Inspire a Shared Vision and six-month proportional church growth, Model the Way and four-year proportional church growth, Encourage the Heart and six-month raw number church growth, and Encourage the Heart and four-year raw number church growth. As such, this study has added to the bodies of knowledge of the complex issues of leadership and the local church as an organization.

abstract

This study is seeking to evaluate the pastoral leadership in mega-size churches in the Korean community. There had been many factors for the growth of the church in the past centennial years of Christianity in Korea, but pastoral leadership was more influential than any other in its growth. When the pastors showed charismatic leadership by ministering sacrificially in their churches and by being a good model in faith and intellect in society, the church grew fast, and the influence of the pastors in that community was maximized. However, now it is different. As the identity of the pastor as a leader in the society changed and the church became more secularized and institutionalized, the church became more stagnant. The tension inside the church grew more and more, and the church began to be criticized by society. The researcher felt the necessity of studying this topic based on this trend.

By doing the library research, the researcher constructed the foundation and theories. To place the theoretical foundation, he studied the successful leadership styles of Jesus Christ and other biblical figures. Then he studied the practical ones. He chose four pastors in the Korean church who helped their churches grow large

and greatly influenced the Korean communities. He studied the distinctiveness and typologies of their leadership styles. Then he studied five doctoral projects which are related to pastoral leadership, analyzing their leadership styles and leadership theories.

He chose four mega-size churches and got the data through a survey method. To know the distinctiveness and common points of the pastoral leadership in the four different churches, he composed the questionnaire by dividing it into region, denomination, pastoral style, and church offices. He analyzed and evaluated the data statistically. Based on this research, he concluded that pastoral leadership should be charismatic, professional, holistic, democratic, and open to the public. He also concluded that the pastoral leadership which would be fitting to the Korean context is needed. He pointed out that certain leadership styles which are not appropriate to the Korean church should be changed. Finally, he reflected on a new pastoral leadership paradigm theologically. The researcher prays that this project would be a help to those who want to know the growth factors of a large church and the leadership styles which would make the church grow.

"The relationship between leadership traits and church growth among pastors of Free Churches in Germany." Author: Edgar Machel, Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2006. 197 pages.

abstract

Problem. Many German Christian denominations have been losing members year by year for the past five decades. There are more and more voices that question the way pastors function as leaders. Therefore, this study looked at the differences of personality traits among pastors of Free Churches in Germany in the context of church growth. The leading research question was, *What kind of leadership traits, behaviors, and attitudes are favorable to lead a church toward growth and to return stagnating churches to vibrancy?*

Methodology. The "Business-focused Inventory of Personality" was sent out to 1,100 Pentecostal, Baptist, and Adventist pastors, of whom eventually 220 responded. In addition, demographic data and personal perceptions of skills, abilities, and activities were asked for. Pastors of growing churches were compared with pastors of plateaued or declining churches using Chi Square, ANOVA, and discriminant analysis.

Conclusion. Pastors of growing churches demonstrated higher self-confidence, emotional stability, power over systems, power over people, networking, and perseverance in the face of opposition. The ability to deal with setbacks, rejection, and failure to such a degree that the goal orientation does not get lost is characteristic for mission-oriented pastors.

Considering the demographic data, the probability that pastors would be in a growing church increased with tenure, especially after ten years. Pastors of declining churches with more than one church were less successful than pastors of declining churches with just one church. Finally, pastors of growing churches scored higher in regard to mission-orientation, team-orientation, and training of members.

"The effect of transformational leadership on growth in specialized non-profit organizations: Churches." Author: Donald N. Knudsen, Ph.D. dissertation, Touro University International, 2006. 144 pages.

abstract

In all organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, good leadership has been vital for the success, growth, and continuation of the organization. Intuitively, one might feel that leadership has much to do with the success of an organization, but do we apply a particular type of leadership to this intuitive application or merely use the term in a very broad sense? Leadership has been written about extensively for many years, with researchers primarily covering its application in business and educational environments. The purpose of this study has been to determine the degree of Transformational Leadership in a sub-set of the not-for-profit organization, the individual church. More specifically, this study has attempted to determine whether there is a specific leadership style that can be identified on a continuum between transactional leadership and Transformational Leadership that most positively affects the growth of an individual church.

The instrument used for this determination was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) (Bass, 1995). Once this study identified the leader as transformational, transactional, or somewhere in between, historical records were examined to see whether the leaders who had been identified as transformational leaders made a difference in organizational growth.

This study was unable to show a relationship between Transformational

Leadership and church growth. Other findings with regard to attendance included as available space decreased, attendance seemed to increase. Also, as congregational interest increased in having services to attract both the unchurched and non-members to the worship services, more growth was experienced. Findings regarding contributions showed a decrease as the number of senior pastors serving the congregation increased over a ten-year period. Finally, as a pastor aged, contributions appeared to decrease slightly.

"An analysis of the ministry of Charles H. Spurgeon, with implications for the modern Church Growth Movement." Author: T. Michael O'Neal, Jr., Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006. 198 pages.

304   **abstract**

This dissertation is an analysis of the ministry of Charles H. Spurgeon, with implications for the modern Church Growth Movement (CGM). Chapter 1 presents a brief biographical sketch of Spurgeon's life and ministry. This chapter also includes a brief history of the CGM and addresses various criticisms raised within the modern CGM. Attention is given to the reasons why an analysis of Spurgeon's ministry offers constructive implications for the modern CGM.

Chapter 2 examines Spurgeon's commitment to the priority of conversion growth and discipleship. This chapter also focuses on how Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner's views of conversion growth and discipleship prove similar to Spurgeon's convictions.

Chapter 3 discusses the need for church leadership and lay ministry. This chapter compares Spurgeon's theology with the harvest theology advocated by McGavran and Wagner. Also included in this chapter are examples of lay ministries under Spurgeon's leadership.

Chapter 4 devotes attention to the primacy of preaching in Spurgeon's ministry. An analysis of what Spurgeon said about the purpose and content of preaching is included. This chapter concludes with a look at how Spurgeon's emphasis on biblical preaching and adaptation compares with McGavran and Wagner's emphasis.

Chapter 5 considers the priority that Spurgeon's church placed upon prayer, especially corporate prayer. As with previous chapters, this chapter also compares Spurgeon's views with the views of McGavran and Wagner, the founders of the CGM.

Chapter 6 concludes this work by contending that Spurgeon's ministry offers implications for the modern CGM. Specific attention is given to the implications related to prayer, conversion growth, discipleship, the proclamation of the gospel, and church planting.

"Training Turn-Around Leaders: Systemic Approaches to Reinstating Growth in Plateaued Churches." Author: Martin Alan McMahan, Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1998. 425 pages.

abstract

As the church moves toward the dawning of a new millennium, it faces an increasingly complex, interconnected, and fast-changing world. To deal with these realities, some church growth consultants and experts in missiology have applied an emerging set of tools and perspectives that view organizations (mission boards and churches) as complex, living systems which often respond in counter-intuitive ways to growth interventions.

This dissertation investigates the use of two systemic approaches to train leadership to turn around plateaued churches and reinstate church growth. Specifically, the relationship of systemic approaches to the emergence and training of turn-around leaders is explored as well as the impact upon the corporate culture of selected churches. Relevant insights are included as to how systems theory as developed by Peter Senge in his work on the learning organization can be used in the diagnosis and treatment of plateaued churches.

Two systemic church growth strategies were studied in depth in order to understand what was being recommended to the churches. They are Carl George's Meta-Church model and Church Resource Ministries' Refocusing Networks. Five churches across the United States were selected as case studies to examine how these two systemic church growth strategies were being used. The research methods used included participant observation, interviews, archival research, and statistical data. Data analysis used pattern-matching techniques to relate the field data to systemic archetypes.

The results revealed the usefulness of systems theory to intervene in organizational situations so as to promote church health. The ways in which the two church growth interventions were used revealed their systemic characteristics and suggest leverage points for promoting change.

Leadership emergence and leadership training patterns were also related to systems theory. Models were developed to explain how organizational systems and transformational leadership interact to leverage change initiatives throughout an organization. Insights were offered as to how training efforts need to combine systemic training methodologies with explicit teaching regarding the nature and performance of organic systems. Finally, the impact upon the corporate culture of churches was observed. Suggestions were offered in regard to how interventionists could insure and accelerate corporate culture change.

306