

**A training programme for promoting church growth in the
Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms
of Schwarz's model of a healthy church**

by

MLUNGISI S. MANGWANA

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MLUNGISI S. MANGWANA

P.O. Box 1

New Brighton,

Port Elizabeth 6200.

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SUMMARY

This study is an attempt to develop a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth based on the Schwarz model of a healthy church.

Firstly, the study provides a literature review of the Church Growth Movement. This includes a historical overview and a critical evaluation of the main principles of the Church Growth Movement, as well as a summary of Healthy Church Surveys, including a review of Christian Schwarz's book, *Natural Church Development*.

Secondly, the study presents the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth, including a Biblical perspective of Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church.

Thirdly, an empirical survey is conducted amongst the members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth to determine their perceptions regarding the main obstacles to church growth in their church, based on Schwarz's eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church.

Finally, based on the research findings, a training programme is developed for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church based on the Schwarz's model of a healthy church.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.2 Statement of the research problem

1.2.1 Background to the problem

1.2.1.1 The Great Commission: An important mandate for the Church

The Lord Jesus Christ has given the Great Commission to His Church. To understand the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission one needs to answer this question: Why does the church exist? According to Getz (1984:21), the Bible has not left Christians without an answer. Jesus Christ before going back to the Father answered this question. One day on the mountain of Galilee, He spoke directly to His disciples:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mat 28:19-20, NIV).

The Church is commanded to make disciples of all nations. The church is able to fulfil this commission through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians need to trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, remembering that they are not alone, and that He is with them always.

Paul considered the fulfilment of the Great Commission as an important element of his life. In Romans 1:16 (NIV) he uttered these words:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1.1.1.2 Jesus builds His Church: A Promised Victory

In any contest there is a victor. So it will be in the Church's battle in the modern age. Jesus said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matt 16:18, NIV). According to Towns et al. (1990:210), there are four important aspects of God's plan:

Firstly, it is God's *objective* to build the church. Theologians ought not to question whether it is God's will for this church to be built or for that church to grow. The words, "I will build my church" clearly express Christ's intent to establish a new community. The future tense here expresses not only futurity, but also probably volition.

Secondly, the *ownership* of the church is God's, not believers'. The living church belongs to Christ. Furthermore, what is true of the body of Christ is true also of the local church.

Thirdly, there will be *opposition*. The best explanation of 'the gates of Hades' would be that it is referring to death, as the doorway into Hell." Death, Hell, and sin are powerful adversaries of the work of the church. In Revelation 1:18 Christ says that he holds the keys of death and Hades. How did he gain this control? He did so through suffering the cost of defeating the opposition.

Fourthly, the *outcome* is promised. Christ says that the adversaries "will not overpower it." No opponent will have sufficient power to get the upper hand and defeat the church. The Apostle Paul said to the Ephesians that they must be "strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (6:10, NIV). He goes on to direct the church to "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (6:11, NIV). Satan and his forces will attack the church, but Christ will prevail. The prospects for today's church are bright if it is anchored firmly to biblical principles, aware of the needs of those who are lost, and going forth wearing the whole armour of God.

1.1.1.4 Factors in the church hindering church growth

According to Warren (1995:77-78), the following two factors hinder church growth:

(1) Tradition

In the tradition-driven church they always say, 'we have always done it this way.' This type of church always thinks of the past and it does not want to move forward. To sum up one can say; change is resisted.

(2) Personality

In this church the most important question is, what does the leader want? If the pastor has served the church for many years, he is likely to be a stumbling block. The lay leaders also become a problem in churches where there are no pastors. The ministry of the church comes to a halt when the driving personality leaves or dies.

(3) Lack of vision

Another problem is the lack of vision. God has given gifts to His church so that we may minister to one another. If the church loses its vision of winning the lost surely the people will die without God. The church needs to keep on checking if it is still on the right track. In this regard, Dr David Molapo (2003:34) states:

People, who have vision, believe the incredible. This enables them to receive the impossible. People without a vision are merely playing games with their lives. However, men and women who do have a vision see more and further than other people. These people have empires in their brains.

1.1.1.4 Factors in modern society that hinder church growth

It would be very encouraging if one could report that the institutional church is growing phenomenally. But, of course, the sad truth is that it is not. The institutional church is in a deplorable shape and in desperate need of renewal, reorganisation, renaissance, and revival. Towns et al. (1990:207-209) present the following factors in this modern age that hinder church growth:

(1) Accelerated change

Toffler predicted in *Future Shock* that acceleration of change could be one of the greatest enemies of life, as we have known it. Today's civilization is like a jet airplane, accelerating ever faster and faster. However, there is a finite limit to how much speed that airplane can withstand. Unless it slows down, it will eventually reach the disintegration point.

Many church growth leaders advocate change in order to stay abreast of society's needs. They recognise the problem of change in modern life, yet feel that the church must keep up in order to be effective. But it is not enough for the local church to be willing to change. Church growth leaders must produce that change in a non-manipulative, proper, and biblical way.

(2) The post-modern age of experience

It is the peculiarity of the post-modern age that so many dull, drugged-out people continually crave an encounter with genuine feeling, with experience, with what is vaguely termed "reality." The enchantment of today's youth with drugs or oriental mysticism is really an acted-out parable, which says, "Give us a taste of experience."

Both students and adults look to religious counterfeits simply because they offer experiences. And by pursuing experience they have abandoned their belief in absolute truth. If the church teaches sound biblical doctrine *and supports that with genuine experience in Christ*, then the church will grow.

(3) Today's crisis and uncertainty

Today, the local church faces a crisis. We live in an age of wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, population explosion, hunger and poverty, growing apostasy, and religious and political persecution. In such times the church should not be found naked and wanting for strength. The church needs to raise its voice and proclaim the answer. The church should not be sidelined to the corners of life, while false Christ's broadcast their heresies with authority.

The answer to the crisis in the church and in the world is Christ, for "Salvation is found in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NIV).

Getz emphasizes the point that in order to avoid such "tunnel vision" a proper church strategy must be developed by looking through three lenses: eternal Scripture, past history, and present culture (Getz 1984:16).

1.1.1.5 A strategic age for church growth

This present age is possibly the most strategic one for the effective proclamation of the biblical gospel. History has come full circle and returned "to the spirit of the first-century Roman world". According to Snyder in Towns et al. (1990:205-206), there are some differences, but the following "seven signs of the times" stand as hard evidence for his interesting conclusion:

1. An essentially urban world with cities playing the major cultural role.
2. Unparalleled peace, stability and political unity.
3. The worldwide spread of one predominant culture and language.
4. International travel, communication and cultural interchange.
5. Pervasive social change, with a tendency toward a humanizing, Universalist, "one world" outlook; a feeling that mankind is essentially one and shares a common destiny.
6. Widespread religious and philosophical ferment; the mixture and revitalization of worldviews; the rise of new religions; a practical atheism and disbelief in the gods, coupled with an existential mysticism.
7. Moral degeneration.

1.1.2 The problem observed

1.1.2.1 A brief literature survey of the problem

An American perspective

A Special Report by Rebecca Barnes and Lindy Lowry from *Outreach* magazine, May/June 2006 indicates that the American Church is in a crisis. The picture is bleak. New research reveals seven startling and sobering facts about church attendance in America:

1. Less than 20% of Americans regularly attend church—half of what the pollsters report.

While Gallup polls and other statisticians have turned in the same percentage—about 40% of the population—of average weekend church attendees for the past 70 years, another study published in 2005 in *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* by sociologists C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler—reveals that the actual number of people worshipping each week is closer to 17.7% —52 million people instead of the pollster-reported 132 million (40%).

2. American church attendance is steadily declining

In 1990, 20.4% of the population attended an Orthodox Christian church on any given weekend. In 2000, that percentage dropped to 18.7% and to 17.7% by 2004. Well-known church researcher and author Thom Rainer notes that the failure of churches to keep up with the population growth is one of the Church's greatest issues heading into the future.

3. Only one state is outpacing its population growth

Hawaii, where 13.8% of the state's population (1.3 million) regularly attends church, was the only state where church attendance grew faster than its population growth from 2000 to 2004.

4. Mid-sized churches are shrinking; the smallest and largest churches are growing

While America's churches as a whole did not keep up with population growth from 1994 to 2004, the country's smallest (attendance 1-49) and largest churches (2,000-plus) did keep up with the population growth.

5. Established churches—40 to 190 years old—are, on average, declining

All churches started between 1810 and 1960 (excluding the 1920s) declined in attendance from 2003 to 2004.

6. The increase in churches is only 1/4 of what's needed to keep up with population growth

Between 2000 and 2004, the net gain (the number of new churches minus the closed churches) in the number of evangelical churches was 5,452. Perhaps most telling is the fact that from 2000 to 2004, a net gain of 13,024 churches was necessary to keep up with the U.S. population growth.

7. In 2050, the percentage of the U.S. population attending church will be almost half of what it was in 1990

If present trends continue, the percentage of the population that attends church in 2050 is estimated to be at almost half of 1990's attendance—a drop from 20.4% to 11.7%.

A South African perspective

The church in South Africa has changed and will continue to change. The church is quickly moving into a post-denominational era as new Charismatic Churches move into the cities and towns right across the country. The older mainline churches are losing their members. These church members are moving across to the new independent churches (Froise 2000:33).

But there is another dimension to the decline. Today's young people have a different mind-set, which is influenced by post-modernism, and the church does not want to change its approach. Consequently, many of the youth and young

adults are leaving the church. They are saying that the church is no longer meeting their spiritual needs. It is time for the church to acknowledge and accept the challenges of the post-modern generation.

Marjorie Froise (2000:48, 72, 75) provides the following statistics on church growth in South Africa:

- Church growth in South Africa: 1911 – 1980 was 77%.
- Church decline in South Africa: 1980 – 1996 was 74.1%
- Black Christian population declined from 77.2% in 1991 to 75% in 1996

A perspective of the New Brighton area, Port Elizabeth

New Brighton comprises of the following areas: Red Location, McNamee village, White location, Boast village, Elundini Location, and Thembaletu location. New Brighton is greatly developed and is a centre of attraction to people who visit Port Elizabeth (Baines 2002:72).

The New Brighton area has predominantly Black churches. There is also a cultural problem of people not wanting to look seriously at the matter of statistics. According to Froise (2000:50), the 1996 census indicates that there were 4 439 959 Black Christians in the Eastern Cape.

A Biblical perspective

All church members need to be involved in church growth, since Christians are called upon to serve as labourers in God's kingdom. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matt 9:37, KJV). Church leaders need to pray to "the Lord of the harvest," and ask Him to give them the necessary strength to equip church members to fulfil the task of evangelism and discipleship, which is set before them.

Robert Coleman (1994:38) explains the simplicity of Jesus' training programme:

Jesus called His disciples and He was always with them. He set himself as an example and He commanded them to follow Him. Jesus had no formal school, no seminaries as we have today. All Jesus did, was to teach them. He was always longing to draw them closer to Him. He was a living example to His disciples.

In Ephesians 4:12, 13 (NIV) Paul indicates the purpose for preparing believers for works of service:

To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Church growth cannot be kept alive unless the church members are encouraged to fulfil their special ministries both in the Church and in the world. The issue of motivating the church members is a great concern for all, especially the church leadership. It has been said that the problem with the body of Christ (the church), is talking more than doing the job. Most of the church members are not really sure of their role in the church. For them to be a church member is to come, sing and give. Developing a training programme for the lay people is an urgent necessity. This would enable the church members to use their talents for the glory of God (Gibbs 1981:221).

It is clear that the training of lay members is an important task facing the church today. It is true that there are members who have little understanding of their place in the body of Christ. For this reason church leaders need to motivate and encourage their church members to play a more active role in the body of Christ. Each member has a gift or a talent, which should be used in God's service and for His glory.

1.2.2.2 Personal observation

New Brighton, Port Elizabeth is an area with great opportunities for church growth. If one visits New Brighton on a Sunday morning, one would observe many people going to various churches to worship God. On the other hand, one would also notice many others not attending worship services, each person with his or her own excuses for not doing so. However, God desires that everyone should worship Him in a local church.

In my view, denominationalism plays a role in the minds of God's people. It is not easy to persuade church members to attend a special gathering of Christians from all denominations in a special effort of spreading the Word of God. People are also self-centred; they look for something, which is going to benefit themselves or their churches. They do not have a global vision of winning the lost for Christ. Church programmes also keep churches far apart from one another. Christians find it difficult to meet with churches from other denominations in a united effort of evangelising the city or building up one another spiritually.

New Brighton is an old area in Port Elizabeth, which was established in 1903. However, the fact that the churches have existed for a long time should not stop the church members from witnessing for Christ. The Great Commission is an unfinished task.

It appears that there is a lack of church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth. It is also apparent that the members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church need to be motivated and encouraged to continue preaching and teaching the Word of God.

Hence, from the researcher's point of view, there is a great need for a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church. Church members need to be trained for the ministry of evangelism and discipleship. This would enable them to make a meaningful impact on society.

1.1.3 Summary of the research problem

The following questions summarise the main research problem:

- (1) What are the biblical and theological foundations of Church growth? (Chapter 3)
- (2) What are the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church? (Chapter 4)
- (3) What are the main components of a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church? (Chapter 5)

1.3 **Research Objectives**

- (1) The first objective of this study is to provide a historical overview, a literature review and critical evaluation of the Church Growth Movement (Chapter 2).
- (2) The second objective is to present the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth (Chapter 3).
- (3) The third objective is to investigate the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church (Chapter 4).
- (4) The fourth objective is to develop a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church (Chapter 5) based on the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth in Chapter 3 and the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 4.

1.4 Definitions of relevant concepts relating to church growth

1.4.1 The Church

The church is "the whole body of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life ... while universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers that display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole" (Erickson 1998:1044).

The church is an assembly of professed believers under the discipline of the Word of God, organized to carry out the Great Commission, administer the ordinances, and minister with spiritual gifts (Towns 2008:187).

1.4.2 Church growth

Church growth is the fulfilment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), a theology-centred process including both spiritual formation and effective evangelism strategies (*Christian Growth* 2008).

Church growth is the science that investigates the nature, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Church growth is simultaneously a theological conviction and an applied science, striving to combine the eternal principles of God's Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioural sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran and his colleagues (Towns 2008:187).

1.3.3 Types of church growth

The four types of church growth are: (1) Internal-growth of Christians in grace, relationship to God, and to one another; (2) Expansion-growth of the local congregation by the evangelization of non-Christians within its ministry area; (3) Extension-growth of the church by the establishment of daughter churches within the same general homogeneous group; and (4) Bridging-growth of the church by establishing churches in different cultural areas (Towns 2008:187-188).

1.3.4 Vital signs of a healthy church

The vital signs of a healthy church are the normal signs of life that are found in healthy and growing churches. Seven vital signs are commonly recognized: (1) the pastor; (2) the people of the church; (3) church size; (4) structure and functions; (5) homogeneous unit; (6) methods; and (7) priorities (Towns 2008:201).

1.3.5 Church Growth Movement

The Church Growth Movement is a philosophy that if a local congregation is not growing numerically, it signifies that they are diseased or dying (*Church Growth Movement* 2008).

The Church Growth Movement is a group of pastors, denominational executives, missionaries, professors, and other Christian leaders who allow their ministry to be governed by the principles of church growth developed by Donald McGavran and fellow participants in the Church Growth Movement (Towns 2008:187).

1.3.15 Evangelism

The word *evangelism* in fact is not in the Bible -- but the words *evangelist* and *evangelize* are there, and from these one learns what evangelism is. The Greek word *euaggelizo* means "to preach, to proclaim the good tidings, to tell the good news." The angels evangelized. They brought "good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10). Jesus evangelized. He preached the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Paul evangelized (Martin 2008).

Evangelism is proclaiming the Good News (gospel) of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, toward the goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ, resulting in their incorporation into the church (Towns 2008:191).

1.3.16 Evangelistic mandate

The Evangelism mandate is Jesus' command to reach others through the witness of the gospel; the mission and ministry of the church as it is expressed in spiritual concerns (Towns 2008:191).

1.3.17 Cultural mandate

The Cultural mandate is Jesus' command to have concern for one's neighbour; the mission and ministry of the church, as it is expressed in social concerns (i.e., Christian social responsibility) (Towns 2008:189).

1.3.18 Types of Evangelism

Different types of evangelism are needed to reach the unbeliever with the gospel. The church needs to employ every available means to bring people to Christ, such as:

- E-0 Bringing people to a commitment to Christ (new birth who are already church members)
 - E-1 Near-neighbor evangelism of non-Christians whose language and customs are those of the Christian who is witnessing
 - E-2 Evangelism across a relatively small ethnic, cultural, or linguistic barrier
 - E-3 Evangelism across a relatively large ethnic, cultural, or linguistic barrier
- (Towns 2008:190-191)

1.3.19 Mission

Mission is the task for which God sends his people into the world. Mission includes the evangelistic mandate and the cultural mandate (Towns 2008:194).

A Christian mission has been widely defined, since the Lausanne Congress of 1974, as that which is designed "to form a viable indigenous church-planting movement." This definition is motivated by a theologically imperative theme of the Bible to make God known, as outlined in the Great Commission. The definition is claimed to summarize the acts of Jesus' ministry, and is taken as a model motivation for all ministries (*Mission* 2008).

1.3.20 Disciple

A disciple is not only a pupil, but an adherent. Hence disciples are spoken of as imitators of their teacher (John 8:31; 15:8) (Vine nd: 318). A disciple is a Christian who follows Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, is growing in the grace

and knowledge of Him, and who is a responsible member of His body (Towns 2008:190).

1.3.21 Discipling

To disciple means to assist a spiritual baby to become spiritually mature. Put in another way, "Discipling" is mentoring the disciple to express (bring forth/out/into the open) the life of Jesus (*Discipling* 2008).

Discipling is bringing people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Towns 2008:190).

1.3.22 Perfecting

Perfecting is the process of nurture and development (following discipline) that is required to take believers from the initial acceptance of Jesus Christ to mature faith and obedience; sanctification (Towns 2008:196). Sanctification is the process of *perfecting* the saints until we are resurrected in our glorified bodies (Sundquist 2008). The process of *perfecting* is described in Ephesians 4:11-13 (KJV):

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

1.3.14 Discipling-Perfecting (The two stages of Christianisation)

Discipling means bringing a person or group to commitment to Christ, while *perfecting* means to nurture them in their faith and bring about ethical change (Towns 2008:190).

1.5 Methodology

This study falls within the discipline of practical theology, which, according to Heitink (1993:6), is defined as *the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society*.

1.4.1 Zerfass research model

Although various models exist for pursuing research within practical theology, the Zerfass research model will be used as the point of departure for this research. Zerfass (1974) developed a research model in which specific deficient *praxes* (practices) are analysed by using instruments derived from the social sciences for the purpose of enriching these *praxes* (practices) (Heitink 1993:113). The Zerfass model follows the following process (Heitink 1993:114):

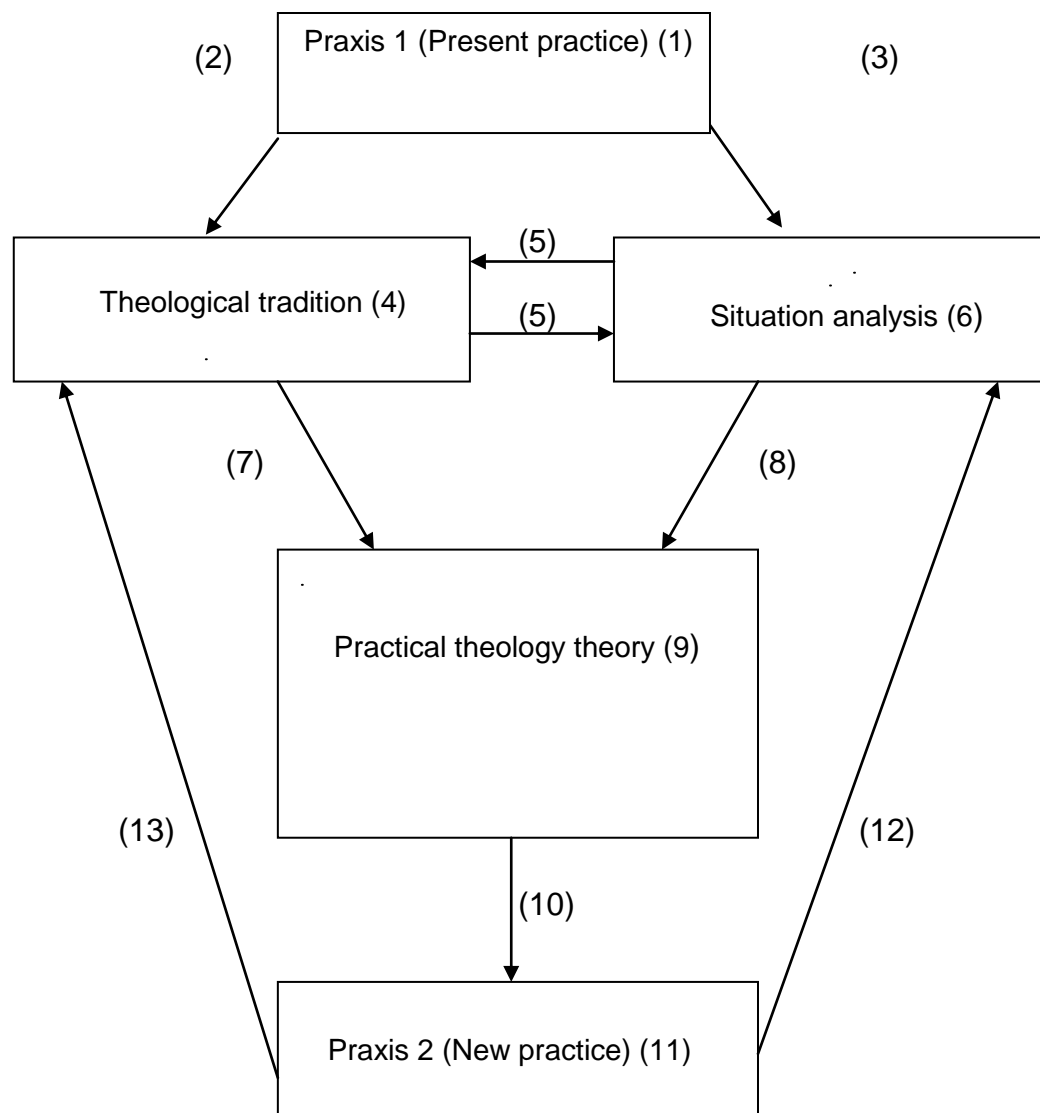


Figure 1: Adapted Zerfass model

1.4.2 How the Zerfass model will be utilised in this study

Praxis 1 represents the issue of church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth. Church growth is understood and applied in a specific manner due to *theological tradition*, that is, church tradition, church history and other theological disciplines. The fact that some believers perceive certain obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth demands that a situational analysis be conducted of possible changes in the theological views regarding church growth, as well as possible changes in the needs of the believers.

The dialogue between the church and theological traditions, on the one hand, and the situational analysis, on the other hand, takes place on the basis of new information obtained from the situation. Information regarding the situational analysis can be obtained empirically (empirical research), as in this study, or by using the results of other sciences and then integrated with one's own practical theological theory (the so-called interdisciplinary approach). Theory must become *praxis*, and therefore the new theory should be applied in practice. To complete the circle, the new *praxis* should be tested in terms of the situation and the theological tradition (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:39 ff).

Chapter 2 will conduct a historical overview, a literature review and a critical evaluation of the Church Growth Movement.

Chapter 3 will present the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth.

Chapter 4 will consist of a situation analysis of the present needs of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth: an investigation into the perceptions of believers regarding obstacles to church growth. This will involve an empirical survey relating to church growth and training needs. It will involve conducting a quantitative empirical study via the use of questionnaires, as well as qualitative research by means of interviews. This chapter will include the outcomes of the empirical study.

Chapter 5 will consist of practical proposals (a new *praxis*) for the development of a training programme for the promotion of church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in terms of Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church. The proposals will be based on the *theological traditions* of (Chapter 3) and a *situational analysis* of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth (Chapter 4).

1.5 Literature overview

This study will make extensive use of the following sources, as motivated in the following book summaries:

1.5.1 'Sharpening the focus of the church' by Gene A. Getz

In this book Gene Getz teaches and reminds Christians that the church exists for the purpose of making disciples of all nations. Those who witness for Christ must set an example by living holy lives. The church members are to exercise their gifts for the edification of one another. God wants the lost to be found. This is a responsibility of all the members of the body of Christ. The equipping of the believers for Christian service is a great priority.

1.5.2 'Understanding church growth' by Donald A. McGavran

The author of this book indicates that the church is growing all over the world. Church growth follows where Christians show faithfulness in finding the lost. The Bible through the power of the Holy Spirit leads and guides us. The churches are the instruments for spreading the word of God. Only God, not human forces, builds the church. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18).

1.5.3 'I believe in church growth' by Eddie Gibbs

Eddie Gibbs in this book gives us the following important information: God has sent his church into the world, to make disciples of all nations. Church growth is on God's agenda and it is God's intention for the church to grow. God by the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to communicate the gospel effectively to all cultural groups. Gibbs also mentions the importance of data gathering, which helps us to know where we are and where we are going. For personal

evangelism to be effective it must be spontaneous, flexible and sensitive. Lay members must be trained for the ministry and use every opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts. Lastly, a team spirit among the church leaders is a key to success.

1.5.4 'The purpose driven church' by Rick Warren

Every church is driven by something. Tradition, programmes, personalities, events, seekers, and even buildings can be the controlling force in a church. In this book Rick Warren shows that in order for a church to be healthy it must become a purpose-driven church, built around the five New Testament purposes given to the church by Jesus. The book shifts the focus away from church building programmes to emphasizing the people-building *process*. According to Warren, "If you will concentrate on building people, God will build the church."

1.5.5 'Natural church development' by Christian Schwarz

In this book Schwarz presents the practical conclusions drawn from the most comprehensive study ever conducted on the causes of church growth – more than 1000 churches in 32 countries on all six continents took part in this project.

1.5.6 'The Complete Book of Church Growth' by Elmer Towns, John Vaughan and David Seifert.

This book is the most comprehensive book on church growth in print. The aim of the authors is to examine growing churches, wherever those churches may be, and to acknowledge all possible reasons for that growth. The book combines statistical research with biblical exegesis and informed opinion to provide student and layman with a complete, accurate, and contemporary view of church growth.

CHAPTER 2

A literature review of the principles of the Church Growth Movement: a historical overview and a critical evaluation

“Not by might or by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty (Zech 4:6, NIV).

2.5 Introduction

It is important for the church to recognise and acknowledge the moving of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people who started the Church Growth Movement. Church growth is not by man’s wisdom but by the Holy Spirit. Men like Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, Rick Warren and others saw the need of starting and developing the Church Growth Movement, because they had a vision.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical overview, a literature review and critical evaluation of the Church Growth Movement. A secondary aim is to motivate church members to participate in making disciples. As God used McGavran in the past, He can also use ordinary church members to play a vital role in church growth. The key to success is dedication and commitment in the service of God.

In pursuit of these aims the following topics will be dealt with:

- A Profile of the Church Growth Movement
- A Historical overview of the Church Growth Movement
- McGavran’s six key Church Growth principles
- Some weaknesses of the McGavran’s Church Growth principles
- Ten leading principles of today’s Church Growth Movement
- A critique of the Church Growth Movement
- Strengths and weaknesses of the Church Growth Movement
- Summary of Healthy Church Surveys
- A review of Christian Schwarz’s book, *Natural Church Development*.

2.6 A Profile of the Church Growth Movement

2.6.1 What is the Church Growth Movement?

God's church has grown enormously since it started nearly two thousand years ago. The Church Growth Movement has dedicated itself to understanding why and how this growth has taken place so as to facilitate the continuing growth of the church until Christ returns.

The Church Growth Movement has its foundations both in Anglo–American and German missiological roots. The “three-self” formula proposed that national churches should be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Nevius (1829-1893) incorporated the three-self concept into the “Nevius method,” a six-point plan for developing strong national churches. The Nevius method was seen as significant by the Church Growth Movement because it was built on the ideas of developing an indigenous church and proved successful. Finally, the focus of Allen (1868-1947) on the mission of the church as communicating Christ, propagating faith and multiplying churches, permeates the modern Church Growth Movement (Moreau 2008:1).

Powell (2008:1) defines the Church Growth Movement as follows:

It is a philosophy of ministry that is “seeker” driven. It sets out to determine what will attract the unchurched and then arranges services and designs ministries to appeal to the felt needs of the unsaved.

2.6.2 The common features that characterise the Church Growth Movement

Powell (2008:1) indicates that the following features characterise the Church Growth Movement:

- They apply a business marketing approach to ministry. They rely heavily upon sociological and demographic data. George Barna states, “This is what marketing of the church is all about providing our product

(relationships) as a solution to people's needs." They design their ministries to attract a certain focus group.

- Sunday morning services are designed to attract "seekers." Casual dress and style, contemporary music, drama and a "positive" message. Most avoid anything that would make the unchurched feel uncomfortable. This includes controversial doctrines and topics, long prayers, and meditative or contemplative songs.
- They believe that "people will not learn the way they used to."

2.6.3 The major contemporary personalities in the movement

According to Powell (2008:2, 3), the following are the major personalities in the Church Growth Movement today:

2.6.3.1 Bill Hybels

Bill Hybels is the pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. In 1972 he began the Son Life ministry to high school students. In 1973 he began Son City outreach to unbelieving youth. The message, music and environment were adapted to the audience. The Son City model became the prototype in the founding of Willow Creek Community Church. It is a youth ministry strategy applied to adults. In 1975 Hybels attended Robert Schuller's leadership Conference. He started the Willow Creek Community Church. He then took approximately 25 members of the Willow Creek leadership team to Schuller's Conference. In 1992 he founded the Willow Creek Association (WCA).

2.6.3.2 Rick Warren

Rick Warren is a Southern Baptist pastor who followed Schuller's pattern of using a community survey in founding Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, California. He is the author of the Purpose Driven Church. His conferences and seminars have had an attendance of over 100,000 people from all over the world. He is the most definite and articulate writer of Church growth theology and philosophy to date.

2.2.3.3 George Barna

George Barna is a Christian pollster and the leading advocate of the evangelical use of marketing techniques. He formerly attended Willow Creek and still has an ongoing association. He has become an authority for much of the movement through his research and absolute statements of what will and will not work in the modern Church.

2.7 A Historical overview of the Church Growth Movement

A historical overview of the Church Growth Movement is a valuable exercise, since it enables one to better understand how its past foundations paved the way for its future developments.

Several of the basic principles McGavran used in developing his approach to church growth come from the Anglo-American and German missiological roots, including the concept of responsive peoples, mass conversions, people movements, Christianization, the use of small groups led by local leaders and the development of an indigenous peoples' church. In general, however, he avoided some of the extremes of both the German (e.g., over-emphasis on existing social orders and the mythic conceptions of "folk") and the Anglo-American missiological theorists (e.g., autonomous rather than Christonomous churches) roots (Moreau (2008:2).

2.7.1 Origins

It is generally accepted that the founder of the Modern Church Growth Movement is Donald Anderson McGavran (1879-1989). His life was influenced by his parents who were both missionaries. As a missionary in India he was unsettled at seeing the slow growth of the churches. He started to wonder what caused church growth. His interest was raised by his research work with J. Waskom Pickett and the publication of Pickett's 1933 study, *Mass Movement in India*. A vast curiosity arose within him. Why do churches grow and multiply? Why do they stagnate and decline? He made this his life study. Spurred on by the results of Pickett's study, and equipped with a methodology of survey research from his own participation in the study, McGavran began what turned

into a life-long work involving travel to many countries on every continent of the world to research how churches grow. He travelled to many countries in the world to research how churches grow (Moreau 2008:1, 2; Elwell 1984:241).

According to Moreau (2008:2, 3), Pickett's research resulted in three concepts that were incorporated into a theory of Church Growth:

- More people came to Christ when mass conversion was allowed than by individual conversion.
- The quality of mass movement Christians was equal to the post-baptismal care given to them.
- The popular belief that the process of forming people into churches must necessarily be long and difficult was not correct.

In 1961 McGavran started an Institute of Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon. In 1965 he moved the Institute to Fuller Seminary and became the founding dean of the Fuller School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth. Although he stopped teaching at the age of eighty-three, he continued an active schedule of research, writing, travelling and speaking, and working in his Seminary office daily when he was in town. His school is the foremost institution of missiological training with a resident body of over 700 (McGavran 1990:xi).

The written beginnings of the movement came with *The Bridges of God* (1955), in which McGavran set out the following four key issues:

- *Theological*: Following Allen, the central purpose of God's mission was reaching lost people, bringing them to Christ, and incorporating them into responsible membership in Christian churches.
- *Ethical*: From his own observations and work with Pickett, he proposed that God's resources were being used without asking whether or not the kingdom of God was being advanced by the programmes they were supporting. There was a need for greater accountability.

- *Missiological*: Following the German missiological theorists and Pickett's study, McGavran proposed a need, in non-Western contexts, to shift the focus away from individual decisions to group decisions.
- *Procedural*: McGavran proposed the recognition of two distinct stages of Christianisation. The first stage was "discipling" (which McGavran reference to conversion and incorporation into the body of Christ) and the second "perfecting" (the lifelong process of bringing a new Christian to maturity).

During the 1970's there was no one individual who represented the Church Growth Movement (CGM) in America, because McGavran was involved with third world missions. Therefore, during this time the movement was most clearly represented by the Fuller School for World Missions, which he founded, and by people like Ralph Winter, Arthur Glasser, Charles Kraft, Allen Tippet and C. Peter Wagner. It was not until the early 1980's that one person emerged as the leader and chief spokesman of the movement in the United States, namely, C. Peter Wagner. He had served as a missionary to Bolivia, and he studied under McGavran at Fuller, where he had been on the staff since 1971. In 1981, he published *Church Growth and the whole Gospel*, which thrust him into the spotlight as McGavran's successor, and in 1984 he took up his responsibilities as the Professor of Church Growth. Since 1956 he has produced over 700 works, including 40 full-length books (Wellum 2005).

Characterising the modern framework, C. Peter Wagner proposed six minimum elements of the Church Growth Movement (Moreau 2008:3):

- 1) Non-growth displeases God (it is abnormal, a disease, and correctable).
- (2) Numerical growth of the church is a priority with God and focuses on new disciples rather than on decisions.
- (3) Disciples are tangible, identifiable, countable people that increase the church numerically.
- (4) Limited time, money, and resources require strategy based on results.
- (5) Social and behavioural sciences are valid tools in measuring and encouraging church growth.
- (6) Research is essential for maximum church growth.

From the beginning the Church Growth Movement has been rooted in Biblical, evangelical, conversionist theology. It has refused to take sides on issues facing denominational differences on the areas of faith and church government. The church growth leaders have abided by their own theological convictions and they were not imposing them on the universal church. However, they were totally agreed on this point: That men and women without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are lost forever. The decisions the people make for or against Jesus in this life will make the difference. Therefore, faithfulness to God implies doing our part, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to persuade all men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of His church (McGavran 1990:8-9).

2.7.2 The modern Church Growth Movement and its influence

McGavran (1990:3) comments as follows regarding the continuous expansion of the Church Growth Movement:

Tremendous Church Growth is going on in the world today. We live in the age of most rapid forward advantage of Christianity that history has ever known ... as the years go by, the proportion of Christians to non-Christians is gradually increasing, especially in the Third World.

Today the Church Growth Movement is recognised as one of the most influential movements of the 1970's. At many major theological institutions it is now established as a discrete academic field of study. It has strong sociological and anthropological foundations, as well as an ongoing emphasis on being a pragmatic rather than a purely theoretical discipline (Moreau 2008:2, 3). Elwell (1984:242-243) describes the influence of the Church Growth Movement today:

Today, the Church Growth Movement has far outgrown its humble beginnings on the West Coast of America. New congregations and denominations catch the vision. The Holy Spirit says to this

Christian and that: "Wake your sleeping comrades. Look on the fields. They are white to harvest. Go. Bring in the sheaves."

Since the advent of the modern Church Growth Movement - which dates from the 1950's - pastors and local churches have been under great pressure to do something to facilitate church growth. The movement was founded primarily by two people, independently of each other, namely, Donald McGavran and Robert Schuller. Donald McGavran wrote *The Bridges of God* in 1955, which, according to C. Peter Wagner, launched the Church Growth Movement. Rick Warren cites McGavran's book as being influential early in his ministry. About the same time Robert Schuller started his ministry in California, which became the Crystal Cathedral. Later, in 1970, Schuller founded the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership, where he has trained many key leaders in the Church Growth Movement including Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. It is accurate to say the McGavran is the intellectual founder of the movement and Schuller the most visible populariser of the movement (DeWaay 2005:1-2).

Finally, it can be stated that, although its theoretical roots go back to the nineteenth century, the modern Church Growth Movement has been an entirely twentieth century movement. By and large, it has had a largely positive impact on the twentieth century evangelical church not only in the United States, but also around the world.

2.8 McGavran's six key Church Growth principles

What is Church Growth principle? McGavran and Arn (1977:15) define it as follows: "A universal truth which, when properly interpreted and applied, contributes significantly to the growth of the churches and denominations."

How does one discover such a universal truth? By a process of careful observation, one observes where the church is growing and then asks why. This leads to the discovery of one or more Church Growth principles. It should be noted that in recent years Church Growth leaders have softened their assertions somewhat. C Peter Wagner, for example, admits that in the past he and others claimed that any church can grow if it follows the right principles. He

has come to speak a little more guardedly about the universal validity of these principles. He describes them as, “usually helpful,” but indicates that, “every church growth principle has exceptions.” This section will examine McGavran’s six Church Growth principles (Wagner 1984:43).

The six key principles of Church Growth have been selected for the following two reasons:

- They can be traced back to the father of Church Growth Movement, Donald A. McGavran.
- Most of the more recent principles, including those geared towards Church Growth in the United States, are derived from these basic principles. The six principles that will be discussed are very closely interrelated.

The first, and foundation on which all other principles rest, is the harvest principle.

2.4.1 Harvest Principle

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Mat 9:37, NIV). Jesus wants the lost to be found and be brought back to His fold.

According to McGavran (1988:108), “The Church Growth Movement maintains that the central purpose of all evangelism must be the finding of the lost and bringing them back to the fold.” Kent Hunter puts it this way: “A person is not evangelised until he or she becomes a responsible member of the body of Christ” (Wagner 1986:119). Wagner simply defines the harvest principle as follows:

Our task is to locate the ripened harvest fields and reap them in Jesus’ name. This is the harvest principle (Wagner 1987:72).

All of this confirms clarifies McGavran’s frequently quoted words, “God wants his lost children found.” Church Growth people distinguish between harvesting the crop and merely sowing the seed. Usually they put it in terms of a “find

theology” as opposed to a “search theology.” A search theology of missions is the conviction that in Christian mission the essential thing is not the finding, but the going to all the places and preaching the Gospel. Search theology sees mission work as broadcasting the seed, without much concern for the harvest. Find theology is, as the term indicates, the conviction that mission work is a vast and purposeful finding (McGavran 1980:27, 28, 32).

Find theology concentrates heavily on bringing in the harvest. Wagner writes, “While God ripens the harvest, He does not reap the harvest. He expects us to be his agents in reaping” (Wagner 1984:19). Again Wagner writes:

Sowing the seed is not an end in itself; it is a means toward the end of producing the fruit ... follow the harvest principle, evaluate our activities in terms ... not of how many missionaries we send, but how many lost people we reach and bring to Jesus Christ. We will never be satisfied with *good* outreach programs that are supposed to bring people to Christ but do not (Wagner 1987: 60, 62).

Church Growth proponents point to the New Testament to support their harvest principle/find theology convictions. McGavran (1980:33) writes,

The New Testament Church... did not badger and bother people who resisted the Good News, but hurried on to those who were ready to become believers ... Christians besought those who could believe and enter eternal life.

It should be noted that Jesus’ parables often emphasize an actual finding. The lost coin is found and likewise the lost sheep. In the parable of the wedding feast, “issuing the invitation was not the end: partaking of God’s feast was. If one group would not accept the summons, then the servant was to find other men who would.” Just as Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost, likewise the church today should seek and find the lost (McGavran 1980:33, 34).

This principle implies going to where the harvest is ripe, which leads to the second Church Growth principle, Receptive People.

2.4.2 Receptive People

Longman (2001:1181) defines the word *receptive* as, “willingness to consider new ideas or listen to someone else’s opinion.” Acts 2: 37, 38 (NIV) provides an example of receptive people:

On the day of Pentecost, as the people’s hearts were prepared by the Holy Spirit, they listened to Peter’s message and said, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

McGavran defines receptive people as a segment of society, “friendly to the idea of becoming Christian.” “Societies” he says, “ripen to the Gospel at different times” (McGavran 1980:170, 246). People’s hearts are made receptive by “God’s prevenient grace” (McGavran & Hunter 1980:26). The key is to be at the right place at the right time, “winning the winnable while they are winnable” (McGavran 1980:291).

Jesus, it is claimed, followed such a strategy in his ministry and taught his disciples to do the same. Wagner quotes Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 10:5, 6: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (NIV). He then comments:

By doing this, Jesus was sending his workers into a ripened harvest field. At that point the Samaritans were not ready and the Gentiles were also not ready. If the twelve apostles had gone there while Jesus was still alive, they would have had little fruit indeed ... God had prepared more Jews to listen to the gospel of the kingdom at that point in time than Samaritans or Gentiles. Jesus knew this and acted on this information ... As a competent

strategy planner, Jesus took as many precautions as possible to see that the output of energy resulted in the maximum harvest (Wagner 1987:67, 68).

It is clear that Wagner stretches this passage to say more than Jesus intended to say. There is a tendency in the Church Growth Movement to be somewhat slipshod in Biblical exegesis in an attempt to find passages to back up their principles.

The parable of the Sower and the Seed is another such example. It is given a novel interpretation to undergird the receptive people principle. Win Arn writes, "There seemed no doubt in Christ's mind that the 'seeds' should be planted in 'fertile soil'" (Arn 1982: 26, 27). Wagner speaks of the good soil as "people who have been so prepared that they hear the word and understand it." He concludes as follows:

One way to increase the effectiveness of evangelistic strategy planning is to determine ahead of time which individuals or groups of individuals have hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the Word (Wagner 1987:62).

How does one determine who the receptive people are? That leads one to the third Church Growth principle, namely, testing the soil.

2.4.3 Testing the soil

The purpose of soil testing is to determine which people group might be most receptive to the gospel at any given time. Jesus himself taught his church to be soil testers, when he told the Twelve disciples as he sent them out, "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave" (Matthew 10:11, NIV) (Valleskey 1990:7). Wagner indicates that, "this is a method of seeking out the receptive" (Wagner 1987:67).

Wagner (1987:79-86) points out the following three major elements of soil testing:

- First, look where churches are growing. Identify the geographical area and people group within that area where this growth is occurring. Then calculate the remaining harvest by subtracting the number of practising Christians from the total population of people group. This group that is left can be fertile soil for planting a church and reaping a harvest. McGavran (1980:242) calls this, “discipling out to the fringes.”
- Secondly, look where people are changing, whether it is socially, politically, economically or psychologically. Changes can be produced by factors, such as war, internal migration, natural disasters, land reforms, change of residence, recession, urbanization or industrialization. People in times of transition, it is claimed, tend to be receptive people.
- Thirdly, churches should concentrate their work among the masses. Why? Because the masses, that is, the common, working people and the poor, are usually more receptive than the upper classes, that is, those who are more comfortably situated in life.

It is clear that “soil testing” is accomplished by a process of observation (Where is growth occurring now?) and a reliance on the social sciences (What kind of people seem to be the most receptive and under what circumstances?). Even the Church Growth leaders realise that soil testing remains an inexact science; but their goal is to remove as many elements of uncertainty as possible (Valleskey 1990:7). In this regard Wagner states:

I dream of the day when some courageous and energetic computer expert will catch a vision of serving God by working out computer programs for evangelistic soil testing.

Given the proper input, the computer, presumably, would be able to direct missionaries to the fields most ready for harvesting.

Another Church growth principle relates to increasing the chances of reaping the harvest by carrying on mission work within a specific people group. In Church Growth terminology this is usually called the homogeneous unit principle.

2.4.4 Homogeneous Unit Principle

A homogeneous unit, or a people group as, “a section of society in which all the members have some characteristics in common” (McGavran 1980:95), for example, language, geography, caste or class. It is perceived as “the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance” (Wagner 1987:181). In McGavran’s words:

Humanity is a vast mosaic of tens of thousand pieces ... Each segment must be won to Christ on its own level. If it is invited to join a church composed of people living on a different level, it will reject the message of Christ very largely, because the Savior is obscured by his congregation ... But in each of the thousands of ethnic unit societies of the redeemed will multiply (McGavran 1988:111-113, 116).

The rationale for this principle is that human beings think differently. In addition, each segment of society needs to be won to Christ on its own level. This requires great wisdom and a careful understanding of the different people groups in society.

McGavran maintains that, “men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers,” and that “in most cases of arrested growth of the Church, men are deterred not so much by the offence of the cross as by non-biblical offenses,” which are caused by forcing people to cross linguistic, class or racial barriers (McGavran 1980:223, 230).

McGavran (1955:94) contends that, “Christianity like electricity, flows best where there is good contact. The power of God acts best within a people.”

When a number of people within a specific homogeneous unit, or people group, become “disciples of Christ,” McGavran (1980:335) calls this a “people movement,” which he defines as:

the joint decision of a number of individuals—whether five or five hundred—all from the same people, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation, while remaining in full contact with their non-Christian relatives, thus enabling other groups of that people across the years ... to come to similar decisions and form Christian churches made up exclusive of members of that people.

According to this principle, the contention of Church Growth leaders is that the Christian faith spreads most effectively within homogeneous units, or people groups, has led to a fifth Church Growth principle.

2.4.5 New Church Planting

McGavran (1980:75) indicates that, “If God’s plan for the salvation of the world is to be carried out, a mighty multiplication of living congregations must occur in most pieces of the mosaic in most countries.” McGavran (1980:406) further contends that,

There is no other way, in which the multitudinous pieces of the human mosaic can become Christian ... Requiring converts to join conglomerate congregations will hinder the church from rapidly spreading to *panta ta ethne* (all nations).

The principle here is not simply the multiplication of congregations, but the multiplication of churches that serve specific people groups. According to this principle, for example, you would expect more growth in certain congregations in the inner city of Milwaukee, if separate congregations were established for the Blacks and the Whites or for other cultural groups of people. They might even share the same facilities. However, two congregations, each composed of

its own kind of people, would do much better than one that tries to combine different pieces of the mosaic (Valleskey 1990:9).

Wagner (1976:110, 116) indicates that,

of all the scientific hypotheses developed within the church growth framework, this one as nearly as any approaches a 'law' ... Show me a growing church, and I will show you a homogeneous unit.

But what about those pieces of the mosaic in which there are at present no or very few Christians? Church Growth literature calls such units of society "unreached people," which is defined as,

a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance" (Wagner 1987:181).

It is estimated that there are approximately 17,000 such "unreached people groups." They are found not only in primitive parts of the world, but also in the United States. New church planting is required here also, but of a specialized kind. What is called for is cross-cultural church planting. New church planting is required here also, but of a specialized kind. What is called for is cross-cultural church planting. In Church Growth language this is called "bridging growth," defined as, "the increase of a church's membership through the process by which new churches are planted in cultures different from the culture of the base church" (Valleskey 1990:9).

This brings us to the sixth Church Growth principle relating to making disciples.

2.4.6 Discipling, Not Perfecting; Disciples, Not Decisions

“Therefore go and *make disciples* of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The making of disciples is the responsibility of all members of the body of Christ.

On the one hand, the “discipling, not perfecting” principle is that one should not demand too much from people before baptizing them and taking them into the church. The idea is to get them into the church and then later give them further instruction. In that way one brings more people into the church more quickly. This is not to say that Church Growth spokesmen downplay the importance of nurture. In fact, they emphasize the need for continued post-baptismal instruction. On the other hand, the obverse of the “discipling, not perfecting” principle is that of “making disciples, not decisions.” While the former principle cautions against demanding too much, too quickly, of a new convert, the latter principle cautions against being satisfied with too little. The “disciples, not decisions” principle is directed to a large degree against a crusade approach to Church Growth, which measures results by the number of decisions recorded at an evangelistic meeting (Valleskey 1990:9, 10).

Central to both of these related principles is the Church Growth Movement’s concept “disciples.” Wagner (1987:53, 54) presents a three-part definition of a disciple:

- (1) First, a disciple is a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his/her Saviour.
- (2) A second identifying mark of a disciple is obedience. “In order to become a disciple one has to agree to obey Jesus from that point on. It means that Jesus is Lord as well as Saviour.”
- (3) The third mark of a disciple is “responsible church membership.” “From a purely theological perspective, a disciple is made when the power of the Holy Spirit comes and makes that person a new creature. But, while theologically this is valid, strategically it is not very helpful.” The transformation in the person’s life is invisible. So how do I know whether it has really happened? The test through the years by the Church Growth Movement is responsible church membership. A person’s commitment to

Christ may be invisible, but the same person's commitment to the Body of Christ is visible and measurable. The two commitments should not be separated. If a person who professes to be a Christian is not a responsible church member, one needs at least to raise questions about the validity of the profession.

The third element of this definition of a disciple makes it relatively easy to conduct ongoing measurements and analyses that are part and parcel of the Church Growth Movement. Using that definition as a starting point, it can be concluded that growing churches are effectively carrying out the commission to "make disciples" while churches which are not growing are not engaged in carrying out that commission (Valleskey 1990: 10).

Summary

- The bottom line of the Church Growth Movement is growth.
- Make harvesting your concern, not just planting.
- Look for receptive people.
- Test the soil and concentrate your efforts on fertile soil.
- Plant churches within homogeneous units.
- Make disciples as measured by a growing number of responsible new church members.

2.5 Some weaknesses of the McGavran's Church Growth principles

2.5.1 Decision Theology

Decision theology is an attempt to answer the unanswerable question, "Why some and not others?" It robs sin and grace as well as law and gospel of their full meaning. "As for you," writes Paul to the Ephesians, "you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph 2:1). Dead people can't make a decision to become alive.

The Church Growth Movement, with its presuppositions, operates on the assumption that they can make such a decision. However, sin is not just some

bad things we do or good things we fail to do, a situation, which, with some help from God, we might be able to rectify. Sin is a condition of spiritual death.

2.5.2 Felt Needs

The Church Growth Movement also displays a faulty understanding of the Scripture's teaching on sin and grace, law and gospel with its popular felt needs approach to evangelism. C. Peter Wagner (1986:290) defines a felt need in this way: "The conscious wants and desires of a person; considered to be an opportunity for Christian response which stimulates within the person a receptivity to the gospel."

It is not difficult to see the problem here, if one proceeds directly from the felt need—whether it is loneliness or alienation or grief or poverty or marriage or family troubles or the need for a friend or whatever—to the gospel. The gospel thus becomes a band-aid to cover up a minor sore, leaving the gaping wound untouched. The real problem—sin, alienation from God—has not been exposed, and the real gospel, the good news of full and free forgiveness won by Jesus, has not been proclaimed (Valleskey 1990: 15). As Charles Cortright (1989:18) correctly puts it, "The 'felt needs' emphasis ... can so easily lead to a distorted Gospel."

2.5.3 Homogeneous Unit Theory

The homogeneous unit theory also stems from a faulty conception of sin and grace, law and gospel. For example, McGavran (1980:215, 223) states that "the great obstacles to conversion are social, not theological" and that "men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers." However, the truth of the matter is that nobody "likes to become a Christian." People might like to become church members if the church and its people and its programmes are packaged attractively enough. But nobody likes to become a Christian. "The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God" (Rom 8:7, NASB).

The great obstacle to conversion lies within the person, not without. The problem is sin; the solution is God's grace in Christ. The means to deal with the problem is the means Christ has given to his Church, the law and the gospel.

This does not mean that we should disregard anything written on this subject. Even though the theological base is flawed, there are certain common-sense elements of truth worth considering. For example, differences in race, language, class—all of these can be barriers to getting people to come and hear the message of salvation. In the area of pre-evangelism, it is easier to bring these people together in their own homogeneous group and tell them of God's salvation, than to bring them into a group whose culture and language are foreign to them (Valleskey 1990: 16).

2.5.4 Visions and Goals

The Church Growth Movement has a strong interest in numbers. McGavran (1980:93) in fact, writes, "The numerical approach is essential to understanding church growth." In Church Growth thinking, the effectiveness of one's ministry is measured to a large degree by numbers.

Wagner, in fact, evaluates Jesus' ministry in this way. "As an evangelist," Wagner (1976:65) writes, "Jesus was an outstanding success." How did Wagner determine this? By the fact that the number of Jesus' followers grew from 12 to 120 in just three years, a remarkable annual growth rate of 115%. Wagner conveniently ignores the fact that 115% is a dismal record in light of, e.g., Peter's "success" on Pentecost Day and subsequently.

If numbers are to serve as the basis for measuring success, then the disciples were more successful than their discipler. We see the Church Growth Movement's interest in numbers also in its emphasis on goal setting. Robert Koester sounds a good caution here. He reminds us that some goal setting can proceed from a faulty understanding of sin and grace, law and gospel. In particular, goal setting is improper when it intrudes into areas God has reserved for himself. Koester (1986: 86, 94, 95) writes:

In our sphere of responsibility, the means are the end. The ultimate end for which we hope—the conversion of souls—is God's responsibility ... The nature of the Gospel ... forces us to focus on preaching the Gospel. It is within these parameters that

we must devise goals, visions and methods. ... My concern is to remain within the circle of my responsibility ... This understanding precludes establishing percentage or absolute "faith goals" as a *tool to bring about the growth of the church* [emphasis added].

In brief, Koester's point is that we can, and perhaps should, be setting ministry goals, for example, number of evangelism calls we intend to make or number of new missions, home and abroad, we plan to open. However, we should not be setting goals in the area that is God's doing, that is, producing results. We can only plant and water the seed; God makes it grow (cf 1 Cor 3:6). This does not mean, however, that for planning purposes, we cannot, on the basis of past experience, make certain projections of what we might expect in the future.

2.7 Ten leading principles of the today's Church Growth Movement

According to Wellum (2005:2-3), the following are the ten leading principles of today's Church Growth Movement (CGM):

2.6.1. Pragmatic principle of interpretation

In the first place, the CGM has adopted a pragmatic principle of interpretation. Although they affirm that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and has power to save the lost and is the final authority when it comes to evaluating the truth claims of all other sources, when it comes to interpreting the Bible, they are directed by something called *growth pragmatism*. This means that those doctrines that receive the greatest attention are those, which actually work to make the church grow numerically.

The key Scripture used by the CGM in this regard is 1 Cor 9:22b where Paul says, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." For those in the CGM, this validates their use of sociology, demography and the fruits of marketing research to determine what part of the Bible they should concentrate on in order to have the greatest impact on the people they are trying to reach.

2.6.2 The need for prayer

In the second place, the CGM emphasizes the need for prayer. Apparently this was not always the case, but that changed in 1980's during the leadership of Wagner after he became aware of the importance of spiritual weapons in the fight. According to George Barna, to qualify as a growing church, there needs to be ample evidence that those attending understand the power of prayer and consistently include prayer in their services.

2.6.3 The right kind of pastoral leadership

Thirdly, the CGM puts a high premium on the right kind of pastoral leadership. Successful leaders are men of vision, who not only know how to pray, but how to read the polls. The CGM believes the church needs leaders who are disciplined and wise; who know how to communicate their ideas and how to follow through with an initiative after it has been adopted. Their experience indicates that one of the greatest hindrances to growth is a copycat mentality, which does not take the principles and implement them according to one's own unique circumstances. And this hindrance is followed closely by giving up too soon when there is a setback.

2.6.4 The involvement of all church members in ministry

Fourthly, the CGM encourages the involvement of all church members in ministry. They argue that too many church members believe that the pastor and other ministerial staff members are paid to do ministry, so it should be their responsibility. However, this is not the way to church growth, because it involves an enormous waste of talent and spiritual giftedness. Church leaders need to help members of the congregation discover what their spiritual gifts are and then encourage them to use them. In some cases this means that pastors will have to confront their own insecurities which lie behind their unwillingness to relinquish "power", and they will have to make a conscious effort to become "enablers," not just "scholars or teachers, social activists or parents."

2.6.5 Effective evangelism and new church planting as crucial priorities

In the fifth place, the CGM sees effective evangelism as a crucial priority that includes the need to plant new churches. *Effective evangelism* is that which

produces results which can be counted and which actually brings people into the church as active participants. The methods of door to door, street corner and others evangelism are no longer so effective on account of change of times. Today people are biblically illiterate. They are very busy and they do not want to be interrupted at their homes. Christians interested in evangelism need to change their approach if they want to be successful. To this end, the CGM advocates the use of small groups where outsiders can be introduced to the gospel and to the church in a less threatening way. Christians also need to emphasize the importance of cultivating meaningful relationships with those they are trying to reach.

2.6.6 The worship service as a critical evangelistic tool

Sixthly, the CGM believes that the worship service needs to be used as a critical evangelistic tool. Research indicates that, if the “unchurched” are going to enter a church building, they are most likely to attend a Sunday morning service, as opposed to an evening service or a small group like a Sunday school class. They do this because they do not want to be singled out or put on the spot. They do not want to be questioned or asked to commit themselves to anything. These people merely want to come and observe what is going on in the church and leave as quietly as possible. The key word is *anonymity*. Because of this the *worship service* needs to be changed.

Furthermore, churches need to pay attention to what people want: worship services that are informal and relaxed, music that is contemporary and sermons that are not too long but practical, relevant, interesting, simple, positive and even entertaining. The people of today want drama, skits, dance and other more visual ways of expressing the faith.

2.6.10 Churches must have an aggressive church strategy

Seventhly, the CGM believes that churches need to have an “aggressive growth strategy.” It is not enough to pray and wait for people to come to our services – churches need to have a plan of action. This plan does not deny the sovereignty of God in salvation. Rather, it shows that the church is fulfilling the Great Commission by going out into the world and making disciples. Having a plan

also helps the church, as a body, to move as one. It clarifies what the church is trying to do and provides a standard by which to measure whether the church is succeeding or failing.

2.6.8 The importance of integrating new converts into the life of the church

Eighthly, the CGM understands the importance of integrating new converts into the life of the church. Nobody can please all the people all the time, and those who come within the CGM would be the first to say that one should not even try. Each year in a church, there will be those who will come and those who will go, for various reasons. Some people indicate that they would be better off if they attended another church. Despite this trend, church growth proponents also recognise that if a church is going to grow it needs to retain its people by winning their confidence. Church leaders need to find ways of keeping involved in the life and ministry of the church. People need to be encouraged to form meaningful friendships and develop their spiritual gifts in the church context. They need to understand and share a common vision for the ministry. This will enable them to grow spiritually as a result of their contact with the church. If these things are not happening, they will be discouraged and may look elsewhere for a church where their needs will be met.

2.6.9 Ministering to young people is the key to having a growing, healthy church

Ninthly, the CGM stresses the need to have a ministry to youth. Barna reports that successful churches believed that “ministering to young people was the key to having a growing, healthy church.” There are many different reasons for this. “Baby boomers” are very concerned about their children, so programmes for children and young people bring those that run them into contact with their parents sooner or later. In fact, many adults will attend a church for no other reason than the fact that they provide things for their children to do. Statistics indicate that two out of three adults decide to commit themselves to Christ before they reach the age of eighteen. Therefore youth ministry represents “the highest potential for conversion.”

Today's youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow but they have a positive affect on the life of the church right now, by their freshness and zeal and their willingness to question things. In addition, children can have a profound effect on the spiritual life and interests of their parents. Converted children can be good ambassadors for Christ to their own families and they can challenge their parents to pursue a deeper walk with God. When working with young people, the church needs to have quality youth leaders that practise what they preach. The church needs to develop its own curriculum to meet the needs of its young people. Youth programmes need to be interesting and allow for times of fun.

2.6.10 Churches should pay careful attention to their external, physical surroundings

Tenthly, the CGM encourages churches to pay careful attention to their external, physical surroundings, if they want to make a positive impression on people for Christ. In particular, churches need to realise the importance of having the following: a well-painted church building, plenty of parking, a clean up-to-date nursery, lots of classroom space, an attractive playground for the children, and a welcoming auditorium. As the church grows numerically, the leadership would need to think seriously about planning a larger church building or its rate of growth will plateau.

2.7 A critique of the Church Growth Movement

2.7.2 Most common critiques

Church Growth has not been without its critics over the years. Even with the addition of theologically trained faculty at Fuller School of World Mission, those criticisms have not abated. Several of the most common critiques are worth noting (Moreau 2008:3, 4):

- The accusation levelled most often is that the Church Growth Movement tends to replace people with numbers, and has fostered a bottom line mentality that is more appropriate for a business context than a church context. Critics maintain that the Church Growth Movement appears to

have replaced the glorifying of God as the primary task of the Church with numerical growth.

- A second critique is that in the process of demystifying the growth of the church the movement tends to reduce the role of the Holy Spirit to that of a sociological caretaker who is limited in His work to our own ability of finding effective means by which he can work.
- A third critique of the movement is that its proponents, like Warneck, have allowed experience to dictate the interpretation of Scripture. Church Growth has a sociological base built on the Durkheimian foundation that religious belief (doctrine) *is* social experience. Linked with this is the tendency to naively proof-text sociological propositions.
- A fourth criticism is that throughout the Church Growth literature there is confusion over terminology. For example, the "principles" advocated by Church Growth often appear to be developed as descriptive observations of social phenomena and then promulgated as prescriptive principles.
- Finally, in spite of the theoretical framework of cultural sensitivity, the Church Growth Movement has been accused of being largely insensitive in its borrowing predominantly from the North American culture.

2.7.2 Concerns relating to two key premises of the Church Growth Movement

It can be argued that from a biblical perspective the following two key premises that underlie the Church Growth Movement are false:

2.8.2.1 That God's Will for Every Local Congregation is Numerical Growth
Church Growth leaders believe it to be axiomatic that Christ wants His church to grow. They cite several passages Church Growth leaders use to show this. For example:

He presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches' (Matthew 13:31, 32).

Donald McGavran continually emphasized the need to find the “lost sheep.” He writes, “For the Son of Man came to seek and *to save what was lost* (Luke 19:10, NIV). The lost are always persons. They always have countable bodies” (McGavran 1990:28).

McGavran always judged mission efforts by their outcome in terms of numbers, results. He did not accept various excuses, for example, people being hardened. Wagner wrote in the 1990 foreword to *Understanding Church Growth*, “McGavran demanded more accountability in Christian stewardship. He wanted efforts evaluated by their results” (McGavran 1990: ix, x). Results in terms of numbers were the bottom line for McGavran. He wanted mission efforts to be judged accordingly.

While it is true that Christ wants His gospel preached to all peoples and that His kingdom shall increase throughout the church age, there is an underlying problem with the focus of this argument. It focuses on the relative size of given local congregations or the relative success of various missionary endeavours judged in terms of numbers (either in terms of individual converts or numbers of congregations started). The statistics they cite to justify the need for their principles and practices have to do with local congregations and church attendance (De Waay 2005).

Christians need to set their eyes on the church of Christ as a whole, not the size of local congregations. The church is growing world wide continually, as soul-by-soul God saves people through the preaching of the gospel. Jesus Christ builds His own church. The size of various congregations and whether they are growing or shrinking is a different matter altogether. The missionaries who have only a few converts have played their part in the life of the church, even if people like McGavran have different views.

2.8.2.2 That the needs and sensibilities of the unconverted should determine the strategy of the church

According to Rick Warren (1995:219), “It is my deep conviction that anybody can be won to Christ if you discover the key to his heart ... It may take time to identify it. But the most likely place to start is with the person’s felt needs.”

This principle of “felt needs” is the foundation of Church Growth principles. It is related to the idea of “relevance” and “satisfy the customer” and is one of marketing’s oldest principles. If a person feels a need and is convinced that your product meets that need, he will be satisfied if he buys the product and it performs as expected. Often, however, marketing is more difficult. The potential customer does not feel the need for your product and you have to convince him that he has a need (De Waay 2005).

However, in this regard, the Church Growth Movement is taking the easier approach. Rather than showing the people that they have a spiritual need, they start with needs that people already feel. Having determined what those are, they design a church that meets those needs. If the church succeeds in adequately meeting the needs, it has satisfied customers. Satisfied customers are the best advertising for future potential customers. If the customers come from a homogeneous unit, they more are likely to enjoy the process corporately. Ideally this leads to a “people movement” (another of McGavran’s concepts) (De Waay 2005).

From a biblical perspective, the greatest need that all people have, because, as children of Adam, they are under God’s wrath against sin, is for the blood atonement that only Christ provides. Unbelievers do not feel this as a need unless they have come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), which happens through the preaching of the Law and the Gospel. The unregenerate in any place are not going to feel a need for the blood of Jesus to wash away their sins. This is a need they must be convinced they have. They will not be convinced, unless the Holy Spirit works in their hearts. DeWaay (2005) explains:

The bad theology that underlies Church Growth thinking is man-centered. It does not take serious the depravity of the fallen human race. It apparently assumes that people have the power and inclination to become Christian without a prior supernatural work of grace.

2.9 Strengths and weaknesses of today's Church Growth Movement

There is little doubt that Church growth as a discipline is here to stay. Moreau (2008:4) indicates the following strengths and weaknesses of the Church Growth Movement:

2.8.1 Its strengths

The Church Growth Movement has several strengths to offer the body of Christ in its understanding of the growth of God's church:

- It has pioneered something of a paradigm shift within Evangelism, namely that the growth of the church is not limited to a mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, but also includes social dynamics which can be studied for our benefit.
- It has maintained unswerving support of the importance of the task of evangelism and the process of enfolding new believers into the body of Christ in a way that recognizes the primacy of Scripture and the reality of culture in the life of every Christian.
- It is bringing to a level of awareness several significant issues facing the church (e.g., homogeneity, responsive peoples, the limited success of cooperation, the role of demographic changes in the growth of local churches).
- As a movement, Church Growth has also fostered the development of significant methodological changes, especially the concept of planting indigenous churches and the people's approach to evangelism.
- It has shown convincingly that the numerical growth of the church is a factor that must be considered in determining its health--while we must not depend on numbers for analysis, neither should we discard any reference to them.

- Finally, the movement has awakened the church to the need of bringing the laity more into the active life of the church. Together with this, it has promoted and enhanced the small group cell approach as a means of providing a climate within a church in which the needs of every individual may be met.

2.8.2 Its weaknesses

While acknowledging these strengths as important contributions of the Church Growth Movement, one also needs to note several areas of concern for the future of the movement:

- Most significantly, the Church Growth approach to theological methodology needs to be redeveloped. To date descriptive findings have too often been presented as prescriptive principles. In particular, the overly simplistic appeals to proof-texting need to be changed if the Church Growth Movement is to find credibility in theological disciplines.
- Church Growth proponents need to address the criticism of over dependence on a quantitative focus and show in their writings and research a greater recognition of the role of quality growth in church development.
- Church Growth also needs to become more sensitive to the charge that it tends to reduce the growth of the church to a purely sociological phenomenon, and must be weaned from its North American business mentality and show more sensitivity to cultural differences in management and organizational frameworks. The one exception to this is the recent promotion of warfare prayer against territorial spirits, which has significant theological and historical difficulties to overcome before it will be accepted in the larger evangelical church.
- Finally, with the exception of the territorial spirits issue, much of what has been written and presented by Church Growth in the past several years has been a rehashing of old ideas rather than a presentation of genuinely new ones. This must change if the movement is to retain its freshness and energy as a discipline.

2.9 Summary of Healthy Church Surveys

The following are brief summaries of different approaches relating to the quality and growth of healthy and effective churches:

2.9.1 Characteristics of a Healthy Church: Rick Warren, Willow Creek (Purpose Driven Church) (Warren 1995)

1. Active spiritual formation
2. Authentic community (not public)
3. Contagious evangelism
4. Mobilized spiritual gifts
5. Good stewardship
6. Strong leadership
7. Cultural relevance
8. Effective generation focused ministry
9. Collaboration and partnership

2.9.2 Seven Vital Signs of Healthy Churches: Peter Wagner (Wagner 2001)

1. A positive pastor
2. A well-mobilized laity
3. Meeting members' needs
4. Proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell
5. A common homogeneous denominator
6. Effective evangelistic methods
7. Biblical priorities

2.9.3 The Nine Habits of Highly Effective Churches: George Barna (Barna 2001)

1. They rely upon strategic leadership
2. They are organized to facilitate highly effective ministry
3. They emphasize developing significant relationships within the congregation

4. They invest themselves in genuine worship
5. They engage in strategic evangelism
6. They get their people involved in systematic theological growth
7. They utilize holistic stewardship practices
8. They serve the needy people in their community
9. They equip families to minister to themselves.

2.9.4 Ten 'signs' of a healthy church: Roy Pointer (Pointer 1984)

1. Constant prayer
2. Community Life
3. Continuous evangelism
4. Compassionate service
5. Eventful worship
6. Openness to change
7. Released resources
8. Respect for Biblical authority
9. Effective leadership
10. Mobilised membership

2.9.5 Ten Characteristics of a Healthy Church: Dale E Galloway (Galloway 1986)

1. Clear-cut vision
2. Passion for the lost
3. Shared ministry
4. Empowered leaders
5. Fervent spirituality
6. A Flexible and Functional Structure
7. Celebrative Worship
8. Connections in Small groups
9. Seeker-Friendly Evangelism
10. Loving Relationships

2.10 A review of Christian Schwarz's book, *Natural Church Development*

This section will provide a brief review of Christian Schwarz's book, *Natural Church Development*.

2.10.6 Background of Christian A. Schwarz

The author of *Natural Church Development* is Christian Schwarz, a German church growth consultant who has been working among Germany's churches for many years. His books on theory and practice have been published in 34 countries. In recent years, from 1994-1996, Schwarz has turned his attention toward the international church and subsequently initiated and supervised what may be the most comprehensive research on church growth ever conducted. More than 1000 churches in 32 countries took part in his study. Schwarz is currently the head of the Institute of Natural Church Development located in Germany and has published several other materials such as *the Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, *The ABC's of Natural Church Development* and others. Schwarz studied theology in Bochum, Bethel, Wuppertal and Mainz, Germany, and in Pasadena, California. He presently lives with his wife and three children in Northern Germany (Simonian 2008).

2.10.7 Intended audience and purpose

Schwarz's *Natural Church Development* (NCD) primarily targets the globe's pastors, church leaders, and church planters. The reference to "global" is used here because Schwarz believes that the principles he sets forth are for all the people and all cultural groups. With a backdrop of dozens of new church planting and church growth books written in the past decade, Schwarz purposes to offer not another "how-to" manual, but what he sees as timeless truths rooted in the Scriptures. Schwarz intends to help church leaders revitalize their congregations. Schwarz would ultimately say, however, that *Natural Church Development* is for all the church members since church growth is a subject every believer must take seriously (Simonian 2008).

2.10.3 Summary of the book

In *Natural Church Development*, Schwarz presents the findings of what is said to be the most thorough study to date on the causes of church growth. The survey developed by Schwarz and the Institute for Natural Church Development, was translated into 18 languages and completed by thirty members from each of the over one thousand participating churches. Through this survey, Schwarz hoped to find an answer to one fundamental question, that is, “What are the essential qualities of a healthy, growing church, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?” (Schwarz 1996:18, 19)

Having processed the nearly 4.2 million responses generated by the survey, Schwarz and his team came to some interesting conclusions. Just as crops grow all by themselves, if weeds are taken out of the way, churches will experience growth when those barriers to growth are removed. Since growth is a natural occurrence among living things, our job is to minimize the obstacles to growth. Since we have very little control over outside factors, we should first concentrate on the removal of obstacles to church growth and the multiplication of churches. Then church growth can happen all by itself. God will do what he promised to do. God made the church grow (1 Corinthians 3:6) (Schwarz 1996:10, 18).

In part one of *Natural Church Development*, Schwarz identifies distinctive quality characteristics, which are seemingly more developed in growing churches than in those he sees as experiencing negative growth. Because of the breadth of his research, he believes that these characteristics are “keys to success” which will produce a soil suitable for viable church growth. The following are the eight quality characteristics, which for Schwarz (1996:22-37) characterizes, universally, all growing churches:

(1) Empowering Leadership

Leaders of healthy, growing congregations empower other Christians for the ministry. Their purpose is to help Christians reach the spiritual potential God has for them. The study shows that pastors of growing churches need not be

spiritual “superstars.” In fact, the superstar pastor typically becomes a hindrance to what God wants to do in a church.

(2) Gift-Oriented Ministry

The role of church leadership is to assist its members in the identification of their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries. This is vital since 80% of over 1600 believers questioned could not identify their spiritual gifts (Schwarz 1996: 24). Schwarz sees that the most effective churches are those who provide lay training for their staff, helping them to minister according to their gifts. God has already determined the gifts of each church member and has a place for each member in the body of Christ. Therefore, the pastor needs to place the appropriately gifted person in the proper ministry position.

(3) Passionate Spirituality

Healthy churches are passionate about their walk with Christ. Passionate spirituality comes when every believer realizes his/her place in Christ and the Body, and accepts responsibility to pray and reach the lost with the compassion of Christ. He also notes that congregates from healthy, growing churches experience prayer as an inspiring experience.

(4) Functional Structures

The false paradigms, which consciously or unconsciously influence many Christians, must be understood. Traditionalism stands as a polar opposite to functional church structures. While a small percentage of qualitatively above-average churches struggles with traditionalism, a large percentage of declining churches of lower quality are plagued by it. However, the term “functional structures” goes beyond this. It implies asking leaders to consider whether their leadership style is demeaning, whether church services are conducted at inconvenient times, or whether church programming is really reaching their intended audience.

(5) Inspiring Worship Services

Inevitably, members of growing churches describe the worship services at their churches as and ‘inspiring experience.’ People attending truly inspired worship

services indicate that church attendance is fun. Thus, when worship inspires, it draws people to the services all by itself. Schwarz warns churches, however, against seeking to reproduce a particular worship model at a growing congregation, hoping that it will cause growth in one's own congregation.

(6) Holistic Small Groups

Schwarz states that, "If we were to identify any one principle as the most important, then without doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups. They must be holistic small groups, which go beyond just discussing Bible passages to applying its message to daily life (Schwarz 1996:32). The vision to see these small groups reproduce, characterizes the healthiest of churches surveyed. Indeed, 78% of growing churches consciously promotes the multiplication of small groups through cell division (Schwarz 1996:33). The great majority of growing churches also indicated that it was more important for members to be involved in a small group than to attend church.

(7) Need-Oriented Evangelism.

Each believer should use his or her gifts to serve non-Christians with whom one has a personal relationship. Churches with the highest growth rates, according to Schwarz, appear to have a clear understanding of which members of their church have the gift of evangelism (Schwarz 1996:34)

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(8) Loving Relationships

Growing churches practise hospitality by regularly inviting the unchurched, as well as church members to their homes. People do not want to hear Christians talk about the Gospel. They want to see authentic Christianity expressed through the love of Christ.

2.10.4 Evaluation of the book

The eight characteristics or qualities of growing churches, outlined by Schwarz, represent clear Biblical principles, which cannot easily be disputed. His presumptions, well outlined in his introduction, also appear to base themselves in Scriptural principles. For example, Schwarz often speaks of discovering the *biotic principle*, which is "the inherent capacity of an organism or species to

reproduce and survive” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That is, God has built into the genetic framework of all mankind the capacity to reproduce. This same capacity is also built into the genetic code of the church (Schwarz 1996:10).

As in the natural world, where there are obstacles to the growth of living things, there are also obstacles to church growth. Hence, church growth has more to do with minimizing the obstacles so that the church’s natural propensity to grow may begin and develop on its own. Through Natural Church Development, the church is better equipped to distinguish between the inorganic aspect of church growth (working to develop the eight qualities in our churches) and the organic aspects, which can only be done by God, who himself causes the growth. While the principles set forth in Natural Church Development cannot easily be dismissed, several approaches Schwarz takes may be in need of reform. For example, he goes to some length to prove his premise of the “biotic principle” through natural theology (Simonian 2008).

2.10.5 Significance for ecclesiological studies

Jesus Himself said, “I will build *my* church.” He also said that if we lift up His name, He would draw all men unto us. So, at the most foundational level, church growth is about the worship of the majestic Creator and King. This principle is what Schwarz highlights: It is the task of the church to focus on the watering and planting while letting God take care of the growth (Simonian 2008).

This book on church growth helps the church to determine the fundamental nature of this watering as expressed in the eight qualities of healthy, growing churches. It also helps church leaders to understand what elements might be hindering their church from experiencing quantitative and qualitative growth. For this reason, this book is of great relevance to the body of ecclesiastical literature and therefore should be read by church leaders who desire to see their church be all that God is calling it to be in Christ.

Christian Schwarz has provided important teaching on Church Growth in his book, *Natural Church Development*. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

2.11 Conclusion

The Church Growth Movement leaders have played an important role in promoting the vision of Church Growth. Much research has been done and many institutions formed to train leaders in the important field of church growth. The main aim of the Church Growth Movement is to win the lost for Christ and to see the Body of Christ growing. Hence, their work is commendable. Today Church Growth is admired by many believers and is seen as an important subject taught at the Colleges, Seminaries and Universities. However, while acknowledging the important contributions and strengths of the Church Growth Movement, one also needs to note several areas of concern for the future of the movement.

Chapter 3

Biblical and theological foundations of church growth with special reference to Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church

3.1 Introduction

McGavran (1990:6) contends that, "Only where Christians constrained by love, obediently press on, telling others the good news of the Saviour, does the church spread and increase. Where there is no faithfulness in proclaiming Christ, there is no growth. There must also be obedience in hearing." As the church, the body of Christ, listens to the Holy Spirit the church grows effectively and stronger.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of church growth from a Biblical and theological perspective with special reference to Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church. In particular, this chapter will deal with the following:

- A Biblical understanding of growing the church
- The Great Commission as the priority of the church for church growth
- A Biblical portrait of a healthy church (Acts 2:42-47)
- Biblical images of the Church and the principles of church growth
- A Biblical perspective of Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church.

3.3 A Biblical understanding of growing the church

It is imperative to fully comprehend the teachings of the Scriptures, as one considers the subjects of growth, revitalization, and new church development. In Matthew 16:18 (NIV), Jesus declared, "On this rock I will build my church." This section will attempt to explore how God began the programme of building His church from the very beginning of time and continuing today. That programme continues to challenge the today's church regarding the task of proclaiming the good news and expanding the kingdom of God. Daniel (2005) indicates the importance of church growth and equipping disciples to grow:

Striving to grow and revitalize the church of Jesus Christ encourages those faithful to the Great Commission of our Lord to make disciples and be his witnesses. By equipping and nurturing disciples to grow in Christian discipleship, the kingdom of God is thereby built, expanded, and extended throughout the world.

3.2.1 Old Testament understanding of growing the church

Throughout the Old Testament, it is revealed how God extended His grace and love to people of other nations so that they also could be redeemed, restored, saved, and brought into the loving embrace of God. Although terms such as "church growth," "evangelism," "new church development," and "revitalization" do not appear in the Old Testament, it is clearly evident that the concepts of God's love, divine grace, salvation, spiritual and numerical growth, church development, and discipleship are present.

The Old Testament is not simply a collection of historical writings. It is the history of the faith-formation of God's people, and it is filled with acts of God's saving grace within history. These acts of God in history provide the foundation of Israel's faith. The salvation history of the Old Testament becomes a background by which God's unconditional love, saving action, and the growth and expansion of God's church are fully discerned.

Daniel (2005:1-2) provides the following Old Testament examples of God's concern for church growth:

- God's plan for the growth of the body of Christ begins in Genesis 1:28 when God says to Adam, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion ..." This was more than an attempt to promote biological growth. God also meant that the earth is to be filled with "knowers of God." Adam was called to extend the "garden of God" to the uttermost boundaries of the entire earth (Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8-9). It was God's desire to fill the earth with priests, kings, and prophets so that the

covenant purposes of the grace of God could be fulfilled throughout the earth.

- Furthermore, in Genesis 17, God revealed himself to Abraham and called Abraham to usher into being a nation of priests who would proclaim Jehovah to the world. Through Abraham's descendants, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Joseph, God's continued redemptive work continues. The book of Exodus reveals how God remembered to keep God's side of the covenant promise of blessing to the nations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24).
- Even in the history-making division between Egypt and Israel (Exodus 8:23; 9:4; 11:7) through plagues and the dividing of the sea, the nations bear witness to the salvation of God (Exodus 7:5). And God rightfully declares, "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots and his chariot drivers" (Exodus 14:18).
- Other examples of what God had in store for the pagans include the stories of Rahab the Canaanite (Joshua 2; 6:17; Hebrews 11:31) and Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 1:16-17; Matthew 1:5). God made it clear to the Israelites that he did not love them more than the pagans around them, but that the Israelites were special to God because God had chosen them so that, through their witness, the whole earth would be made aware of God's redeeming love, redemption, and provision for the salvation of all people. The Psalmists, especially David, understood this intention of God; and the Psalmists encouraged God's people to sing praise to the God of salvation "to the ends of the earth."

3.2.2 New Testament understanding of growing the church

God's divine will to save people from all nations and to bring them to redemption, which was clearly seen in the Old Testament, is stated even more explicitly in New Testament writings. The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the beginning of God's harvest to build, extend, and expand the church of God. More than in any other book in the New Testament, the people in Acts are seen responding in large numbers to the salvation message.

In the New Testament, one learns how the Holy Spirit moved among His people. Specific men allowed the Holy Spirit to use them. There was a great partnership between God and man. There was a great relationship between God and the early church. These believers were obedient to God and He added to the church those who were born again. These men were playing their part and the Lord was 'adding members' daily to the church. "Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41, NIV).

The churches one finds in the book of Acts are good examples of church growth. In spite of being persecuted in Jerusalem, the believers were powerful witnesses and enjoyed the peace of God. They were built up in the Lord, and they continued to fear the Lord and they enjoyed the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. The church continued to grow in numbers.

As the church was persecuted in Jerusalem, the Christians were scattered into different places. But on account of the conversion of Saul, the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was set free from pain. In Acts 9:31 we are told that, "The church was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, new members were added to the church and they continued to fear the Lord" (Barker and Kohlenberger 1994:436).

In the New Testament the churches grew by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christians were living very close to God; they were connected like branches to the Vine. There was also a close link between the believers; they were always together. Even persecutions were not able to separate them. They continued to preach the gospel being empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Lord added to their number those who believed.

Daniel (2005:3) provides the following New Testament examples of God's concern for church growth:

- The early church grew at a rapid rate. In Acts 1:15 one learns that the church began with 120 people. At Pentecost, however, the congregation

grew to more than 3,000 (Acts 2:41). And the growth continued, "And day by day the Lord added to their number" (Acts 2:47).

- Acts 5:14 indicates that multitudes of believers were added to the body of Christ. In Acts 6:7 we read that the number of disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and we learn of a great awakening in Samaria in Acts 8:5-25.
- Furthermore, the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria grew (Acts 9:31); and all who were living in Lydda and Sharon and Joppa also believed (Acts 9:35, 42).
- Acts 11:21, 24, and 26 tells of the movement in Antioch; and the text says that many believed and turned to Christ. The first part of Acts concludes: "But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents" (Acts 12:24). Acts 21:20 mentions thousands of believers among the Jews.
- The book of Acts provides a clear picture of the numerical and spiritual expansion of the early church. Other references to growth in the development of the church include Acts 13:43-44, 48-49; 14:20-21; 16:5; 17:2,4; 18:8-11; 28:24, 30-31; Romans 15:19, 23.
- Luke further elaborates on the maturity and breadth of the expansion of the church. In addition to the numerical and geographical growth of the early church, Luke gives attention to growth in moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. There are four dimensions of growth in the early church, as seen in the New Testament: (1) growth in spiritual life; (2) growth in Christian fellowship and prayer; (3) growth in Christian service; and (4) growth in numbers.

3.3 The Great Commission as the priority of the church for church growth

In the last hours of Jesus' ministry He spoke to the eleven disciples, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat 28:18-20, NASB).

McGavran (1990:51) touches on the issue of the supreme purpose of the church when he states:

God desires that men be saved in this sense: that through faith they live in Christ and through obedience they are baptized in His name and live as responsible members of His Body. God therefore commands those of His household to go and “make disciples of all nations.” Fulfilling this command is the supreme purpose, which should guide the entire mission, establish its priorities, and coordinate all its activities.

A closer look at the Great Commission and combining the thrust of the other texts as well (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 1:8), reveals the following three central issues for the church: (1) the Church “proclaiming and evangelizing,” (2) the Church “perfecting and edifying,” and (3) the Church “planting and expanding.”

3.3.2 The church proclaiming and evangelizing

3.3.1.1 Action (mobilisation)

The first issue that the church must face in order to proclaim and evangelize is that of action (*mobilisation*). In the Matthew passage the helping verb or participle “going” is first. It could be translated “as you are going” or “while you are going.” In the Mark passage the concept of going is also presented in participle form. It would be translated the same “while you are going.” “Going” is not specifically mentioned either in the Luke or Acts passage; rather it is assumed. Christ never questioned or doubted that his true disciples would go into “all the world.” Thus the “go” of the Great Commission is not set forth as an imperative, but assumed to be an inward motivation to evangelize the world. Hollis Green (2007:20, 21) explains:

It is not an order to “go,” it is a plan of action for individuals who are in the process of “going.” The “good news” of the gospel

impels those who receive it to share their experience with others
... The Commission was for followers already in motion ...
Conversion became their motivation.

George Peters asserts that the imperative “go” implies that the main thrust will be outside of the church building. The major effort of evangelism is done *by* the church but not *in* the church building, by all members and not only by a professional man or team. This, no doubt, is the biblical order and pattern (Towns et al. 1990:241).

3.3.2.2 Announcement (message)

In order for the church to successfully fulfil the Great Commission it must understand its *message* and unceasingly proclaim it. The Apostle Paul shared his burden for the non-Christian Jew or Gentile when he said, “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14, NASB).

Michael Green indicates that in order to adequately meet the need of proclamation, the church must understand three great words and their meanings. Those words include: (1) to tell the good news (*euaggelizesthai*), (2) to proclaim or preach (*kerussein*), and (3) to bear witness to the facts (*marturein*). The gospel must be proclaimed or announced. It consists of the good news and it can be affirmed by facts, which are thoroughly trustworthy (Green 2004: 48).

Evangelism deals mainly with the Gospel message itself. George Peters in Towns et al. (1990:245) explains the three forms of the word *evangelism*:

1. The word for “gospel,” literally *evangel*, means “good news.” It is found seventy-six times in the New Testament. The Anglo-Saxon form of it was God spell, that is, God-story, indicating that the Gospel concerns the great acts of God.
2. The verb *evangelize* means “to bring,” or “to announce,” or “to proclaim good news.” It appears fifty-one times in the New Testament.
3. The word *evangelist* describes the person involved in telling the good news. It occurs only three times.

Paul refers to the basic gospel message in I Corinthians 15:1-4. He notes the manner in which he presented it to them. He says it includes the words, “which I preached to you.” To “preach” or “proclaim” is taking the role of a herald announcing a message with the full authority of his Lord. Paul also stresses this when he writes to the Corinthian church. “And my message and my preaching [heralding] were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Cor 2:4, NASB). The issue here is that the believers must be *telling*. Without the heralds fulfilling their charge, the lost will never hear (Towns et al. 1990:246).

3.3.1.3 Accomplishment (making disciples)

Just how successful should believers aim to be, in this matter of evangelizing the world? On the one hand, believers know that not every person will come to Christ. On the other hand, they do not know who will come to Christ. Many Christians today, whether they admit it or not, are neutral. They believe that they are responsible to proclaim but not to persuade.

As one examines the Great Commission, one sees that Christ did not command that we “attempt” to make disciples. He gave direction to each follower that he or she should plan to succeed at the process of reproduction. If we are not “making disciples,” something is wrong. Either we are ignorant of the message or how to properly communicate it, or our zeal is not great enough, or we're just plain disobedient. George Peters affirms this:

Christ commissioned us to invite and to compel people to come in. There is urgency in the motivation and tone of the announcer of the good news that arrests and attracts, draws and compels the listener. It is an encounter of men for decision, not only to listen but to consider. Evangelism never leaves man neutral; it compels him to take a position for or against Christ (Towns et al. 1990:249).

Although the regular theme the Apostle Paul was the sovereignty of God, one cannot but be impressed by his zeal in proclaiming the gospel, especially when he writes, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we *beg* you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20, NASB). Paul's enthusiasm and sincerity was evident in his challenge to King Agrippa, who, upon hearing his piercing message, replied, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28, NIV).

Virgil Gerber, a student of the Great Commission, has developed a concept known as "body evangelism." Contrary to other methods or types of evangelism, "body evangelism" emphasizes church growth to the point that participating churches are urged to discard any method which does not measurably contribute to its increase (Wagner 2001:140).

From the above it is clear that if a local body of believers understands and fulfils its responsibility to proclaim and evangelize, thus making disciples, the church will grow.

3.3.3 The church perfecting and edifying

As one studies the Great Commission in the light of New Testament practices, it is clear that any person who believed was expected to be baptized as well as become attached to the local assembly of believers. Thus, after the lost are sought and found, they must be added to the fold. Tippet (1987:61) explains that it was McGavran, who initially:

differentiated between quantitative growth by conversion from paganism or from the world, which he called “discipline,” and qualitative growth within the Church, which he called “perfecting.” It must be insisted that both of these are essential to church growth theory, and each has its biblical base.

After referring to many passages that teach the growth of individual Christians and the necessary perfecting growth of a local church, Tippet (1987:63) remarks:

Discipling and perfecting, then, are different but related kinds of growth - one the quantitative intake due to evangelistic outreach, the other the qualitative development to maturity within the congregation. Without the former the congregation would die. Without the latter it would produce neither leaders nor mature members. Without maturity and leadership there would be no organic growth of “the Body.”

3.3.2.2 The purpose of baptism

Water baptism is the obvious meaning of the Great Commission. Water baptism is the outward symbol of Spirit baptism (1 Cor 12:13). Scriptural evidence indicates that a person's profession of faith was immediately followed by water baptism. For example, in Acts 2:41, 42, it is clear that as soon as the 3,000 believed the proclaimed message, they took the initial step of faith which made them candidates for water baptism.

Baptizing in the early church resulted in believers being added to that particular fellowshiping group of believers, as is evident in Acts 2:41, 42, and 47. Beyond the issues of personal faith and baptism, the New Testament adds no other requirements for church membership. If one follows the order of the Great Commission and the order of the New Testament church in Acts, the perfecting-teaching ministry does not really begin until after baptism (Towns et al. 1990:251).

3.3.2.2 The programme for perfecting

Once he or she is a fellowshipping member of the body of Christ and of the local assembly, the new disciple-learner must become a responsible Christian. In the words of Jesus, this step is, “teaching them [the new disciples who have been baptized] to observe all that I commanded you.” This clarifies who the learners are, the subject material, and the identity of the teachers (Towns et al. 1990:251).

It is interesting to note that believers were called disciples before they were called Christians, which occurred at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Thus it is obvious that one of the problems today is to understand what it means to be a disciple. If taken in its simplest meaning, the emphasis of the Great Commission is on evangelism. If taken to mean a strong mature believer, then the Great Commission results in an emphasis on edification.

Edward Murphy, in stressing a theology of discipleship, explains:

The Great Commission speaks of making disciples, not just converts. A disciple is one who believes in the doctrine of his teacher and follows him. The idea of following Christ is implicit in the word disciple. Professions of faith, therefore, that do not produce followers of Christ do not represent the New Testament concept of evangelization (Towns et al. 1990:253).

Perfecting is definitely a part of the Great Commission, but only after the “making of disciples” is a reality. In the example of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-42) 3,000 disciples experienced perfecting by “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (NASB). Here there are four simple elements, which in a sense all make up the programme of perfecting. It was a specific fulfilment of Christ’s instructions.

3.3.3 Church planting and expanding

The study of the Great Commission as the priority for today's church reveals the importance of evangelism and edification being carried on in a continuous pattern. A further study of Christ's instructions to His church reveals a similar command for the church to expand to other nations.

Em Griffin points out that in Matthew 28:19 the command includes the discipling of "all the nations" or peoples. Mark 16:15 includes the entire world as the sphere and every creature (person) as the goal, to which the gospel is to be proclaimed. Luke 24:47, 48 indicates that the message of Christ's offer of forgiveness for sins is to be taken into all the nations beginning from Jerusalem (Towns et al. 1990:256-257).

A commitment to multiplying local churches

Beginning with the great dispersion of the Jerusalem believers recorded in Acts 8, the disciples successfully multiplied congregations and planted additional churches. In fact "new congregations were planted in every pagan center of the then-known world in less than four decades." As the believers were scattered, so was the seed of the gospel that would take root in various national soils. In Acts 9:31 a geographical broadening takes place so that believers are placed (as directed in Acts 1:8) "throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" (NASB).

The dynamic church-planting efforts of the Apostle Paul, Barnabas and Silas, Timothy, and others who were all early disciples verifies the concept of local church expansion to which the eleven were committed. High on the list of practical issues that face the growing church today is the commitment and planning that are necessary to begin other works. Orlando Costas (1984:120) agrees that:

Another principle of church growth strategy is the concentration on congregational multiplication in established church situations

rather than in increasing the membership role of one local congregation. Wagner says that “the best way for a church to grow ... is to be active in reproducing itself.” He warns that such an enterprise is bound to be costly. It will cost people, time, money, and identification, but the fruit it will produce will make the sacrifice worthwhile.

3.3.3.3 A strategy to multiply local churches

Are we to say that, while the example of the New Testament churches proves that church planting is the chief method of fulfilling the Great Commission, we can and should no longer follow that course? Edward Murphy believes that young churches can parent new congregations and that we must return to this biblical practice. He states:

The early churches did not depend on foreign missions for financial aid before planting more churches. Neither did the apostles import ordained men from Jerusalem nor Antioch to pastor the hundreds of new churches being planted all over the Roman Empire. Pastors were found within the churches themselves. Local men, gifted by the Holy Spirit, were given on-the-job training by the apostles and other leaders, and thrust out to work (Towns et al. 1990:261).

The Apostle Paul concentrated his efforts of church planting in cities, which were centres of communication, transportation, and commerce. In his plan to begin churches, Paul would often go to the synagogue seeking to win his Jewish countrymen first (Acts 13:5 - Salamis; Acts 13:14 - Pisidian Antioch; Acts 14:1 - Iconium; Acts 17:1, 2 - Thessalonica; Acts 18:4 - Corinth). Paul gained a hearing with the Jews who attended the synagogues and later continued with the Gentiles (God-fearers) who also had heard of him and his message. As the Scripture indicates, before Paul reached Thessalonica, he had been practising his plan for starting churches, to the point where Acts 17:2 records, “And according to Paul's *custom*, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (NASB, italics added).

3.4 A Biblical portrait of a healthy church (Acts 2:42-47)

This section deals with a Biblical portrait of a healthy local church. The book of Acts is the record of what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His people after His ascension. On the Day of Pentecost, God called to Himself 3,000 people (Acts 2:39). It is further recorded that, “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). It is clear that Jesus Himself was at work in His church. The passage in Acts reveals a healthy church, as an example to follow, and marks of a healthy church that can be used as criteria for evaluating today’s churches.

As a healthy church the early Jerusalem church was marked by three priorities (Cole 2000:5-10): (1) continual devotion to God, (2) to His people, and (3) to His work in the world:

3.4.1 A healthy church is marked by continual devotion to God

The risen Lord Jesus was central to all that was happening in this new church. The word translated “continually devoting” (verb) points to constancy, purpose, or resolve. Out of ten uses of the (above-mentioned) verb and one use of the noun in the New Testament, six are connected with prayer and two with the ministry of the Word. One can see their continual devotion to God in various ways:

3.4.1.1 Devotion to God means devotion to the teaching of His Word.

“They were continually devoted to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). “The apostles’ teaching” was probably the same subject matter that one finds in Peter’s sermons in Acts 2 to 4. In other words, the content of the apostles’ teaching was the gospel. No doubt there would be a good deal of emphasis on the fact that the saving work of Jesus was the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies. For example, Jesus had to be rejected, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead (Deffinbaugh 2008).

A healthy church is devoted to sound doctrine, because God has chosen to reveal Himself in the written Word. If a church is not continually growing to understand and apply the doctrines of God's Word, it is not growing in devotion to God.

3.4.1.2 Devotion to God means devotion to corporate worship.

The preaching of God's Word should result in worship, which should bring His people into us to an encounter with God Himself, which is the heart of true worship. However, besides the apostles' teaching, there are several other aspects of worship that can be seen in the early church:

The Lord's Supper

"They were continually devoting themselves to ... the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) refers to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds His people of the great truth that, "the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me" (Cole 2000:5).

Prayer

Different translations refer to the term "prayer" but only the ESV reflects the Greek text, noting both the definite article ("the") and the plural form of prayer ("prayers"): "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42, ESV) (Deffinbaugh 2008).

Acts 2:42 refers to set times of corporate prayer. Whenever and wherever the church meets, whether in a large meeting or from house to house, prayer ought to be woven into the fabric of church life. Even the singing of His people should be directed to God in prayer. Prayer acknowledges the total dependence of believers on the living Lord (Cole 2000:5).

Praise and joy

“They were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (Acts 2:46). The church in Jerusalem was characterized by joyful celebration in all that they did. There was a constant mood of celebration in all that they did (Deffinbaugh 2008).

Their lives were marked by joy because of what the Lord Jesus had done for them on the cross. “Praising God” (Acts 2:47) is a present participle, pointing to the ongoing, common expression of praise to God. It no doubt marked their corporate times of worship, but it also penetrated their daily lives, drawing others to the source of their joy.

The only way to develop that kind of constant joy and praise is to deliberately focus one’s mind on God. In the Psalms, often the psalmist is in dire straits, but he resolves to focus on the Lord: “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!” (Ps 57:7). David wrote and sang this song in a cave, hiding from the angry King Saul. Even in the “caves of life,” God’s people should resolve to be people of praise and joy (Cole 2000:6).

Thus the first mark of a healthy church is continual devotion to the Lord. It must be continual in the sense of a deliberate resolve to be in His Word and to be worshipping Him.

3.4.2 A healthy church is marked by continual devotion to God’s people

“They were continually devoting themselves to ... the fellowship” (Acts 2:42, literally). A Christian cannot be devoted to the Head, who is Christ, and at the same time cut himself or herself off from the body, His church. The Bible commands Christians not to forsake assembling together with other believers (Heb 10:25). Christians are also exhorted to bear with one another and to forgive each other, since they often offend and get offended (Col 3:13).

The term Luke uses for “fellowship” is a much broader term than our English word. Essentially, “fellowship” means “joint participation” or “sharing something in common.” It is thus a kind of partnership (Deffinbaugh 2008).

What does it mean to be devoted to the fellowship? The Greek word, *koinonea* means, “to share in common.” In verse 44 it indicates that, “all those who believed were together and had all things in common.” The Greek phrase translated “together” is repeated when it states that, “the Lord was adding to their number (literally, “together”) those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Verse 46 underscores this sense of togetherness, when it says that they were of one mind and had their meals together. Therefore, being devoted to the fellowship is a commitment to be built together with those who have joined God’s family by being saved. In this regard, it should be noted that the phrase, “to have fellowship” has the following four implications (Cole 2000:5-9):

3.4.2.1 “To have fellowship” means that the people were believers (truly saved)

Those added to the fellowship were those whom the Lord was saving (Acts 2:47). While some who were not saved may have attended the large gatherings and their home meetings, they were not truly a part of the fellowship until the Lord saved them.

To be saved means that they were delivered from God’s wrath and judgment that they deserved because of their sins. As soon as a person becomes a true believer, that is, “gets saved,” he or she shares Christ in common with all others who are saved. Salvation by grace through faith in Christ is the basis of all true fellowship (Cole 2000:7).

3.4.2.2 “To have fellowship,” means that the people were together and united

The church began with 3, 000, and soon it numbered over 5,000 (Acts 4:4) and it kept growing from there (Acts 5:14; 6:1, 7). It is only by attending the worship gatherings and spending time getting to know other believers saints on a

deeper level that Christians can really enjoy the fellowship that God intends for them.

There are two levels of Christian unity. There is the unity of the Spirit, which is a fact among all who have been baptized by the Spirit into the one body of Christ (Eph 4:3; 1 Cor 12:13). Paul commands us to preserve it since it already exists. Then there is the unity of the faith, which we are to *attain to* as we come into a deeper knowledge of Christ and grow to spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13). Believers who know Christ and His Word well can have deeper fellowship than those who do not know Him well (Cole 2000:7).

3.4.2.3 “To have fellowship” means that believers share together in the things of God

These early Christians were taking their meals together (Acts 2:46). The fact that their meals are referred to as “breaking bread,” suggests that these were not elaborate feasts, but just common meals. Believers are built up in the faith by sharing together in the things of God over a simple meal (Cole 2000:8).

Luke does not appear to be calling attention to Communion - the remembrance of our Lord’s death - as much as to the simple sharing of a meal with fellow believers. Even if Communion was observed, this is not what Luke wanted to emphasize. It should be noted that in the New Testament the Lord’s Table was celebrated as part of a meal. The sharing of a meal was perhaps the most intimate form of fellowship one could have with fellow believers (Deffinbaugh 2008).

3.4.2.4 “To have fellowship” we must share together in material things

To meet the special needs of the believers, Christians opened their homes to help the needy. Some even sold land and donated the proceeds, although this was not required (Acts 4:37; 5:1, 4). It is evident that the new believers were not giving up their possessions or sharing their meals with others in a begrudging manner. However, it should be noted that Acts 2:44 is not prescribing

communal living for God's people in every situation. The Bible recognises the right to personal property and the need for families to be distinct.

In this section we have seen that a healthy church is marked by continual devotion to God and to His people.

3.4.3 A healthy church is marked by continual devotion to God's work in the world

Evangelism is primarily God's work, but He does it through His people. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are being saved, but we are responsible to share the gospel. Note that the Lord added the new converts *together* with the church (literal rendering of "to their number," Acts 2:47). God does not save people without adding them to the church where they can grow, and people are not truly added to the church unless they are saved (Cole 2000:9-10).

Some of the evangelism took place through the miracles that the apostles were performing (Acts 2:43), and the preaching that accompanied these miracles (Acts 3:1-26). The ability to perform these miracles was limited to the apostles and their close associates (such as Philip). The miracles confirmed these men as God's messengers and identified them with Jesus, who had also done great miracles.

Beyond this, *there is a deep sense of awe*, inspired to some degree by the evidences of God's power and presence through the many signs and wonders He was performing through the apostles (Acts 2:43). They knew that their Lord was still with them. They knew that He was powerfully at work among them, and this was particularly evident in the miraculous deeds our Lord accomplished through the apostles (Deffinbaugh 2008).

There is a sense in which a healthy church will be a reproducing church. Granted, there are special times of God's sovereign working, where many

hundreds, if not thousands, are saved in a short period of time. One cannot expect that to be the norm. However, Christians should frequently pray that the Lord would add to His church those whom He is saving (Cole 2000:10).

A healthy church is devoted to God, to His people, and to His work in the world. No church is perfect and none will come close this side of heaven. But as believers in the context of the local church continually devote themselves to God through His Word and through worship, as they devote themselves to the fellowship of His people, and as they devote themselves to His work in the world, He will continue to use His people to glorify Himself.

3.4.4 Summary: the FLOWS model

According to Warren (1995:49), there are five facets, which help the church to grow:

- Churches grow *warmer* through fellowship
- Churches grow *deeper* through discipleship
- Churches grow *stronger* through worship
- Churches grow *broader* through ministry
- Churches grow *larger* through evangelism

Warren's five facets can be represented in terms of the FLOWS model (*Growing healthy churches* 2008):

- **F – Fellowship:** Christians receive encouragement from other believers when they relate properly in community. The early believers in Acts 2 were “devoted to the fellowship ... all the believers were together in one body.” People today are looking for authentic community – and the best place to experience it is in the body of Jesus Christ, the Church.
- **L – Learning:** This can come from preaching on a Sunday morning, teaching in a Bible study, or by one-on-one discipleship. The early church was “devoted to the Apostle’s teaching...” They knew that the Word of God was truth – and that it was the basis for all that they did.

- **O – Outreach:** This refers to evangelism. The early church was on a mission with God to reach their community for Christ. In Acts 2 one observes that thousands came to Christ through their preaching (v. 41) and God graciously “added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47).
- **W – Worship:** “They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and prayers ... praising God.” Exalting God corporately is one of the main focuses of the Church when it gathers together.
- **S – Service:** Believers are each given spiritual gifts and abilities to effectively serve God in ministry. The church needs to meet the legitimate needs of the congregation and help them through the gifts and abilities that God has given to His people.

In Acts 2: 42-47 these five points are prominent in the life of the early church. The New Testament church, fellowshiped, edified one another, worshipped, ministered, and evangelised. The Lord started to bless His church, by adding daily to their numbers those who were being saved.

God's plan for the expansion of the church cannot be ignored. It is clearly seen throughout the writings of the New Testament, especially in the Book of Acts. In fact, if one studies the entire Scripture on the topic of "growth," it would be difficult to conclude anything other than that the Old and New Testaments were both written by missionaries to missionaries. In this respect, they are the greatest manuals for growing and expanding the church of Jesus Christ.

3.5 Biblical images of the Church and the principles of Church Growth

In the Bible the church has been described in terms of many images to teach important truths, especially relating the nature and growth of the church. Each image portrays the church from a different perspective and provides different principles of church growth.

3.5.1 The Body of Christ

The body of Christ is Paul's most-used description of the church. The Bible teaches that Christ is the head of the body, which is the church (Col 1:18). He is the source and supplier of all growth to the entire body (Col 2:19). The many members are part of that one body in Christ and of one another (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12-31). What principles can be derived from this image of the church concerning growth?

3.5.1.1 Growth occurs when Christ has first place

The reasons why Christ should be given the first place in the church are as follows: (1) He created all things for Himself (Col 1:16); (2) He preceded all things (Col 1:17); and (3) He preserves all things (Col 1:17); and (4) He purposes to be first in all things (Col 1:18). The head is always the one who gives directions. The members of the body are those who must willingly receive the orders. The growing church today should know how to listen to her head and how to respond when direction is given (Towns et al. 1990:212).

If each member of His body, beginning with the pastors would acknowledge the lordship of Christ and experience the daily dependence upon the Spirit of God, through prayer and Bible reading, there would be no division or conflict within the body.

Early in the history of the church, in Corinth, this biblical principle was set aside and church members began following men. They were good men with great ability, but in no way could they avoid the problems of human headship (1 Cor 1:10-17). They were no longer a body united, but members divided.

3.5.1.2 Growth occurs when the body functions together

If a body is healthy, all of its members function properly and in accord with the other members. The Body of Christ is designed in such a way that its members need one another and should care for one another. As the Body of Christ, the

church should unite in love and a shared life. Such unity is not uniformity or conformity.

The church as a body grows through the supply of energy distributed to each part through the Head. As each member, receiving the gift of grace, contributes to the whole, the body grows (Col 2:19; Eph 4:15, 16) (Towns et al. 1990:214).

The truth is that the Body of Christ is designed to teach us that we need one another and that we much care for one another. To the world we must show ourselves as one in Christ, united in love and a shared life. Such unity is not uniformity or conformity. It is rather a Spirit-given sense of our mutual needs and the recognition that our diversity is both God-given and essential to maturity and health.

3.5.3 The Building of God

The *building of God* is similar to the previous picture of the church. The bodies of believers are referred to as a building (2Cor 5:1) in which God dwells (1 Cor 3:16). Furthermore, the building of the church is a growing edifice (Eph 2:21), which is built up with spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:12, 16). In the building process the living stones must be fitted together for maximum growth (Eph 2:21).

Jesus Christ Himself builds the church by calling His people to Himself. He promised that He would build His church (Mt 16:18). Church growth is not by human effort alone. As we play our part of giving our lives to the Lord and being obedient to Him, the Lord adds, everyday to the church those who are saved (Acts 2:47). The process whereby Christ builds the church is just a continuation of the pattern established by God in the Old Testament whereby He called people to Himself to worship Him (Grudem 1994:853).

What principles can be derived from this model of the church concerning growth?

3.5.2.1 Growth occurs when Christ dwells in the building

The purpose of the building is not only to grow, but also to exalt Christ as His indwelling presence is manifested. Paul warned the Corinthians to take care of their individual bodies because they were each the temple of God (1 Cor 3:17; 6:19, 20). Each convert, whether he is Jew or Gentile, adds growth to the structure. And this structure is no less a holy temple, for God dwells within it (Towns et al. 1990:215).

3.5.2.3 Growth occurs when Christ is the foundation and cornerstone of the building

The foundation that is laid must be Jesus Christ alone (1 Cor 3:11). Paul previously determined before coming to Corinth that he would focus on one goal, namely, “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2, NASB). For this reason church planters should know and preach about the historical person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no other effective way to build a church (Towns et al. 1990:216).

After the foundation of a building is firmly settled, and the stones or bricks have been placed in their correct places, one needs to give attention to the cornerstone. In this regard, Christ is the One, “rejected by you, the builders, but which has become the very cornerstone” (Acts 4:11, NASB).

3.5.2.3 Growth occurs when builders build properly

One of the important biblical issues concerning church growth is who the builders are and how they build? In 1Corinthian 3:10-15 Paul is quite clear that many builders are involved in church growth: “But let each man be careful how he builds... Now if any man builds upon the foundation.” To the church at Corinth Paul admits that, “as a wise master builder I laid a foundation” (1Cor 3:10, NASB).

The apostle has laid the foundation by teaching the doctrines of Christ and bringing men into a relationship with Him who is the only foundation that is laid.

The church is not built on a man or a creed but on the person of the living Christ (Towns et al. 1990:216).

Today there is a need for builders in the church of God. There is a need for places of instruction within the local church, which will adequately train “new builders” in the greatest construction on earth, namely the building of the church of God.

3.5.2.4 Growth occurs when quality material is used

The building material for the local church referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:12, includes the choice of quality materials (gold, silver and precious stones) or non-quality materials (wood hay and stubble). Because of the ultimate test yet future (“for the day will show it”) the builders are admonished to ensure that, as the building is fitted and joined together, quality material is relied upon. Gene Getz (1984:61) summarises the situation:

“Be careful how you build!” warned Paul. A church can be weak and immature – constructed of wood, hay and stubble. Or it can be strong and mature – composed of gold, silver and precious stones (1Cor 3:10-15). If it is immature, it reflects impatience, jealousy, strife, divisions, pride, arrogance, and unbecoming behaviour. If it is mature, it reflects a growing love, a unity of faith, and a steadfast hope.

3.5.3 The Bride of Christ

The bride of Christ is used to describe the church in only a few New Testament passages, but not without great significance. In this regard, the following passages are meaningful:

- “Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the lamb” (Rev 21:9, NASB).

- “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin” (2 Cor 11:2, NASB).

What principles can be derived from this model of the church concerning growth?

3.6.3.1 Growth occurs when believers realise Christ’s love

Christ loved the church and demonstrated His love by dying for it on the cross (Ephesians 5:25). Such love goes far beyond friendship love. It sacrifices itself for the one it loves (Turaki 2006:1436). According to this passage, Christ intends to love us and in the process to cleanse and perfect His Bride. Like Paul prayed for the Ephesian church, so church leaders today should pray that their flock: “may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:18, 19, NASB).

The Apostle John wrote that, “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) and He proved His love to His Bride on the cross (1 John 4:9). The first biblical principle seen here in its effect on the growing church is the proclamation and demonstration on Christ’s limitless love. It is clear from Scripture that Christ loves the church in spite of her failure to live by His standards. Hence his love is not based on the church’s performance. He loves His Bride, the church, because He is God (Rom 5:8). It was on the basis of this principle that Peter could exhort fellow Christians to “keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins” (Towns et al. 1990:218).

3.6.3.2 Growth occurs when believers respond to Christ’s love

The Apostle John explains that, “we love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19, NASB). God’s love, which we have experienced, is our reason for loving others. It is clear that not everyone around us will deserve our love. Despite this, it is the duty of Christians to extend their love to all. It should be

remembered that, “we were equally unlovable when God first loved us” (Ngewa 2006:1535).

3.6 A Biblical perspective of Schwarz’s Eight Characteristics of a healthy church

3.6.1 Quality Characteristic 1: Empowering leadership (Leaders that equip others to serve)

Schwarz describes how empowering leadership helps to foster what he calls the “all-by-itself principle.” This principle recognizes that when soil has the proper nutrients, it grows by itself (Mk 4:26-29). In the same way, when a congregation has all the essential qualities it grows all by itself (Schwarz 1996:23).

In Ephesians 4:12 Paul says: “To prepare God’s people for work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” The key word is ‘empowerment’. Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as “helpers” in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather they change the pyramid of authority so that leaders assist Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be (Schwarz 1996:22).

When it comes to leadership, it should be emphasized that leadership should not be defined in terms of being paid to lead. The paid members of staff are only part of the leadership in the church. The church also has Deacons, Administrators, Children’s Ministry Leaders, Children’s Bible Class Teachers, Small Group Leaders, and the list goes on and on! The paid staff members of the church should be committed to seeing leaders rise up in every area of the church. If a person has the gift to lead, in any capacity, then he or she should lead. These people should not bury your talent of leadership. Volunteer leaders are usually more effective than assigned leaders for the simple reason that their hearts are involved. They should search for areas in the church that need leadership and volunteer their services, where they can make a difference (Eph 4:11-16).

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy, his son in the ministry about the importance of empowering leadership. He writes, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2Tim 2:2). This is an example of Jesus equipping His disciples to do ministry and empowering them to carry out His mission when He ascended to heaven.

3.6.2 Quality Characteristic 2: Gift-oriented Ministry (Task distributed according to spiritual gifts)

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet 4:10, NIV).

The role of the church leadership is to help its members identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries. When Christians serve in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary (Schwarz 1996:24).

In 1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV) the Apostle Paul informs us that, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Our spiritual gifts are given to us so that we can build the body of Christ in general and our congregation in particular. Gift-oriented ministry is an indispensable part of a healthy church. One of the greatest mistakes we have made in the past is the election of people who do not qualify for certain positions, and as a result the church has suffered.

Everyone has a talent in some area. Some have more and others less talent. However, the truth remains: We all have God-given talents. The question arises: Are church members using their God-given talents to glorify Him and to build up His church? The church needs to spend time in identifying the areas where God has blessed His people with special abilities. Once discovered church members should use their talents to glorify God (1 Cor 12:27).

3.6.3 Quality Characteristic 3: Passionate Spirituality

This quality refers to the spiritual lives of church members typifying prayer, enthusiasm, and boldness. In Romans 12:11 (NIV) Paul teaches us, “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.”

Elwell (2001:1139) describes Christian spirituality as follows:

Christian spirituality is Christocentric. The Apostle Paul frequently describes the life of a believer as ‘in Christ’ to emphasize the union Christians enjoy with Jesus Christ ... For God’s original purpose to create man in His own image (Gen 1:26-28) is reinterpreted by redemption as being ‘conformed to the likeness of His Son’ (Rom 8:29).

Passionate spirituality is demonstrated in the lives of believers by prayer. In Acts 2:42 (NIV) we read these words: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

The early church did not only pray but they were also enthusiastic about the Word of God and were willing to share it with others. In Acts 4:12, 13 (NIV) we read these encouraging words: “Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

A personal relationship with one’s Maker is the foundation believers should build on. As each one draws near to God, he or she taps into the power and strength that only He can provide to carry out His will. Believers need to continually recommit themselves to meaningful Quiet Times with God every day (Ps 5:3; 42:1-2). There is a constant temptation to put off one’s relationship with God due to the demands of life. They need to throw off all excuses, and put their hand to the plough of prayer. They need to study the Bible daily and find

nourishment for their souls. A really good Quiet Time is the best avenue to de-stress one's life.

3.6.4 Quality Characteristic 4: Functional Structures (Structures that are useful for church growth here and now)

Mark 2:27 (NIV) reads, "Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

The Sabbath was time to help people to do their daily duties and not to create a problem among them. Jesus managed to deal with this issue, which was causing a conflict between his disciples and the Pharisees.

Department head principle: Schwarz has chosen this sub-principle because it typifies the core of this quality characteristic: the development of structures which promote an ongoing multiplication of the ministry. Leaders are not simply to lead, but also to develop other leaders (Schwarz 1996:28).

This principle is well illustrated in Jethro's advice to Moses: He advised his son in law to appoint leaders who would help him to handle the cases of the people. Moses accepted the advice, and he was released from his heavy workload (Ex 18:24-26).

The fellowship of believers should be well organised and well equipped. Christians are called upon to meet each other's needs (Heb 3:12-13), and should constantly re-evaluate the structures they have in place. Churches need to answer the following questions: Do we have the church organised in a way that glorifies God? Are we offering too many ministries, or maybe not enough? Does the weekly schedule maximise time use and create a healthy church? Only by working together in unity can Christians build a healthy church (1 Cor 12:12-27).

3.6.5 Quality Characteristic 5: Inspiring Worship

In 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-19 (NIV) Paul writes to the Thessalonians, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”

It is God’s desire for His church to worship Him. Worship is an inspiring experience when we draw our hearts to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He deserves all praise and glory because there is no one like Him. Psalm 100:1-3 (NIV) reads, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs, Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.”

Schwarz (1996:31) emphasizes that:

“The word ‘inspiring’ deserves clarification. It is understood in the literal sense of *inspiratio* and means an inspiredness, which comes from the Spirit of God. Whenever the Holy Spirit is truly at work, He will have a concrete effect upon the way a worship service is conducted including the entire atmosphere of a gathering.

Sunday worship should be a time of spiritual refreshment, a respite from the storms of life. All Christians should be looking forward to their next time together, plan to be there early, come with a heart to give and encourage, and strive to honour God with their worship. Worship is a time of praise, a time of prayer, and a time of passion. It is through worship that believers draw closer to God and to one another. The sharing should make believers grateful for the grace of God, and the singing should fill them with awe as they sing to the Maker of all things (Ps 100).

3.6.6 Quality Characteristic 6: Holistic Small Groups

In Acts 2:46-47 (NIV) we read the following: “Every day they continued to meet in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with

glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

The early church members met daily in the temple courts. They had a wonderful fellowship, sharing the word of God and praying together as a family. They met in their homes in small groups. There was great interaction among them and they were able to help each another and to know each other better. The Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Small groups are essential to every growing church. The biggest challenge is finding the time to have quality small groups. Church leaders should strive to adjust their midweek and devotional schedule to allow more opportunities for small groups to meet. There needs to be a renewed commitment to the development of small groups in the local church (Acts 19:9).

Holistic small groups are the natural place for Christians to learn to serve others – both – in and outside the group – with their spiritual gifts. The planned multiplication of small groups is made possible through the continual development of leaders as a by-product of the normal group life (Schwarz 1996:32).

Home cell groups provide an opportunity for people to be involved in the life of the church. Every week members gather to worship the Lord and also experience the Holy Spirit working in their lives. They are afforded opportunities to be used by God to minister to others in the group. Building relationships is a key factor in small groups. The Bible spreads like fire because these people are close to one another and they are carrying each other's burden. Home cells are like living cells because they grow and multiply and provide a great opportunity of winning the lost for Christ (Yonggi Cho 1981:50-71).

3.6.7 Quality Characteristic 7: Need-oriented Evangelism

In 1 Corinthians 9:20-22, we see Paul's desire for winning the lost. His main aim was for these men to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. With this in mind he became all things to all men.

In Matthew 28:19 (NIV) the Lord Jesus commands His disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

It is the responsibility of every Christian to use his or her gifts to fulfil the Great Commission. As we go, we are commanded to reach out to the lost with the gospel. This task is vital since the lost has a great need of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul writes, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them" (Rom 10:14, NIV). People will hear the gospel as Christians take a stand to evangelise the whole world.

It is the task of each Christian to use his or her gifts to serve non-Christians with whom one has a personal relationship to see to it that they hear the gospel, and to encourage contact with the local church. The key to church growth is for the local congregation to focus its evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians (Schwarz 2006:35).

Everyone has friends, neighbours and relatives. In addition, everyone comes into contact with new people almost every day. Although believers might differ in their effectiveness, they all need to have a heart for the lost. Church members need to renew their commitment to give everyone in the vicinity of their church an opportunity to have a relationship with God. People should be invited to attend the church, a small group, a personal Bible study, or whatever other event that might be planned. One never knows who might be searching for God (Phil 1:12-14; Col 4:3).

3.6.8 Quality Characteristic 8: Loving Relationships (Jesus motivates his disciples to love one another)

John 13:34-35 (NIV) says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”

Unfeigned, practical love has a divinely generated magnetic power that is far more effective than evangelistic programmes, which depend almost entirely on verbal communication. People do not want to hear Christians talking about love. They want to experience how Christian love really works. The more technocratic a church is, the more difficulties it will have in living out the Christian commandment to love. Since the technocratic paradigm understands faith primarily as the fulfilment of dogmatic and moral standards, it produces a deficit among Christians in their ability to love (Schwarz 1996:36).

1 John 4:16-21 indicates the close connection between God and love: “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” As we become more like Jesus, love matures. It provides our confidence facing the Day of Judgment, and it drives out fear. But love must be practical. We can’t say we love God and hate others. Whoever loves God must love his brother (Moore 2003:38).

Love relationships become practical, as we start to stretch out our hands to help the needy. In Acts 2:44-45 (NIV) the Word of God says: “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

The church should be full of great friendships, since believers need each other. Furthermore, friendships in the local church need to be deep and real (1 Thess 2:7-12). Most believers love being with other Christians. Most of their best friends are members of the church. Church members should constantly ask the following questions: How good are my relationships? Am I a good friend? How can I expand my friendships? Christians make friends by being a good friend.

The quality characteristics mentioned above are essential to all churches. If church leaders can promote these characteristics their congregations, our churches, would grow effectively.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter description of church growth from a Biblical and theological perspective was provided. In particular, several Old and New Testament examples of God's concern for church growth were presented and the Great Commission was discussed as a priority of the church for church growth. This chapter also dealt with a Biblical portrait of a healthy church as described in Acts 2:42-47, and indicated the close relationship between Biblical images of the Church and the principles of church growth. Finally, Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church were described from a Biblical perspective.

From the findings of this chapter it is clear that it is God's desire for His church to grow. The church grows by the power of the Holy Spirit. Human effort cannot fulfil this ministry without the help of the Holy Spirit. God is concerned about His people and He wants to work through them.

God wants the lost to be found and to be brought back into His household. The church is like a mustard seed; it is growing but some people are not aware of this. The Lord seeks faithful men and women who are ready to witness for Him so that the lost might be saved; that it might be evident that the Lord is adding to His church daily.

Home cells are very instrumental in church growth. Yonggi Cho (1981:52) emphasizes this fact when he says, "Home cell groups give every church member an opportunity to participate in the ministry of the church, and to bring the revival to his own neighbourhood."

Chapter 4

An empirical survey of the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, regarding the main obstacles to church growth based on Schwarz's "Quality characteristics" of a Healthy Church

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter an attempt will be made to ascertain the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth regarding the main obstacles to church growth. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which involves both quantitative and qualitative research: the collecting of first-hand information through questionnaires and structured interviews (feedback).

Due to the nature of this thesis, it is imperative to include relevant data in order to form a conclusion. The means of achieving this is to gather information about what church members regard as the main obstacles to church growth. The questionnaire was designed with this objective in mind, taking into account the amount of knowledge that the believers had about this subject, prior to their participation in the survey.

4.2 The purpose of the investigation

The purpose of this Chapter will be to investigate through the completion of questionnaires and structures interviews (feedback) the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth regarding main obstacles to church growth.

In recent years the field of Church Growth has been widely researched. The following sources have proved helpful:

- McGavran D.A 1970. *Understanding Church Growth*.

This source is very helpful to all servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer encourages Christians to preach the Word in season and out of season. He points out that there are greater opportunities to witness for Christ, "The harvest

is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (Mat 9:37, RSV). God wants the lost to be found and brought back to the church. By winning the lost, the church is following the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who “came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10, RSV). The church must always remember that the gospel must be preached to all nations.

- Jenson R & Stevens J 1981. *Dynamics of Church Growth*.

This source tells us that the church grows through prayer. As the people pray, God grows the church. The Holy Spirit establishes the church. He touches the lives of the people and they repent and forsake their sins. The Holy Spirit employs human resources in His work, but the responsibility for convicting a person is His alone. The Holy Spirit equips the church through the use of the Word. The Word of God guides the believer. The Holy Spirit provides every believer with (a) spiritual gift(s), so that each member of the body of Christ may play his or her part in the body of Christ.

- Pointer R 1984. *How Do Churches Grow?*

Roy Pointer encourages all those who love the Lord saying, “We are to give the King and the Kingdom our first priority of loyalty and service and to pray for Kingdom to come. The Kingdom is God’s reign; the church is the fellowship of those who have experienced God’s reign and entered into the enjoyment of its blessings (Pointer 1984: Ch 3).

Roy Pointer mentions the signs of growth, which are the evidence of spiritual vitality and life under the rule of God. These signs indicate health rather than perfection. The following are some examples (Pointer 1984: Ch 3):

Constant prayer: Constant prayer is very important in the life of the church. A praying church is a growing church. Jesus in His ministry demonstrated the necessity of prayer and His disciples followed His example. Prayer is essential to the life and growth of the church because it affects every dimension of growth.

Respect for Biblical Authority: When the Bible is allowed to speak to the church she is renewed and reformed. The Bible, which is the Word of God, is therefore an instrument of the Holy Spirit for the growth of the church and the Kingdom.

Mobilised Membership: Churches grow when they mobilise their total membership in the service of Christ. Every church member belongs to the body of Christ and is called and equipped for the ministry. Churches grow effectively as all the gifts of the Spirit function properly.

Openness to change: Some find it difficult to change, but openness to change is a requirement for church growth. Growing churches are not only open to change but have successfully managed all the changes that they believed the Holy Spirit required.

- Schwarz C A 1996. *Natural Church Development*.

In this book the writer shares the eight characteristics of a healthy church. These characteristics are necessary to all churches that desire to grow. Growth is a sign that the church is healthy.

4.3 Research methodology (Data collection techniques)

The following methods were used to collect data: One questionnaire (See Appendix 3), and informal interviews and feedback from respondents. The questionnaires were distributed personally.

4.3.1 Self-administered Questionnaire

4.3.1.1 The Development of the Questionnaire

The following format was used for the Questionnaire: The Questionnaire is composed of 8 items. The front page of the questionnaire explains the aim of the study, and requires information about the respondent. There is a space for the respondent's name, followed by a note that the respondent may remain anonymous if preferred. The other details are required for the purpose of the study. The first page of the study provides instructions on the completion of the questionnaire, and assures confidentiality. This is followed by a list of 8 questions related to the main obstacles to church growth, while the last two pages require a ranking, in order of priority of the 4 items chosen from the list.

4.5.2.2 The Validation of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to five church leaders from the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, for validation and comment. Regular consultation with the supervisor allowed for further validation.

4.5.2.3 The Pilot Study

A pilot study can be defined as a trial run of the study. It helps one to know whether your instructions were clear, your cover story was believable or whether you need to revise your Questionnaire (Mitchell 1992:525).

A pilot test of the questionnaire was done with the five church leaders from the Ebenezer Baptist Church, who did not participate in the actual survey. Interviews were conducted with them after the pilot test. The feedback obtained from these leaders improved the way the Questionnaire was structured.

Participants and procedures

The participants were informed about the research project and the importance of the pilot study for making the Questionnaire as understandable as possible. Each participant was given a copy of the Questionnaire to read and to offer feedback. The documented observations and suggestions provided by the participants, along with further consultation with the supervisor, allowed for a final version of the Questionnaire that was more user-friendly and easier to understand.

4.5.3 Semi-structured interviews/comments

This Questionnaire served as a guideline for the interviews. A representative sample of the respondents was interviewed on the completion of the Questionnaires.

4.6 Description of the empirical survey

4.6.1 Procedure

The researcher personally delivered a total of 30 Questionnaires to Mr L. Mama of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, who, with the minister's permission, was requested to distribute the questionnaires amongst the church members.

Conducting a survey of this nature requires at least two letters, not only from the person conducting the survey (see Appendix 1), but also from the institution under whose auspices the research is being conducted (see Appendix 2). This helps the people from the church to understand the legitimacy and authenticity of the intended area of research and indicates that the institution confirms that the candidate is conducting this survey, under its guidance. Church members are often reluctant to respond to just any Questionnaire, as they might feel that it could implicate them at a later stage, or even be misused to testify against them.

A covering letter was sent to the minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Church requesting that the survey be carried out amongst the church members (see Appendix 1). The letter contained certain instructions that the minister needed to follow. Another letter was also sent from the institution of the South African Theological Seminary, under whose auspices the research was conducted, in order to indicate its support of the survey (see Appendix 2). The letter also served as an authentication of the survey. The Questionnaires (see Appendix 3) were distributed in the following way:

At a Sunday morning Church meeting (11/05/2008) an explanation was given verbally to the congregation. All selected members were given a Questionnaire, with the request to complete and return it within one week to Mr L. Mama. The researcher would collect them from Mr L. Mama. The researcher was present at the time of distribution, and explained the procedure and reason for the intended research.

4.6.2 Sampling method

Schultz and Schultz (1984:45) define “probability sampling” as a method for constructing a representative sample of a population for surveys or polls. Each person in the population has a chance of being included in the sample.

A *probability sample* is one in which every element has a known non-zero probability of being selected. Each element has a chance and that chance must be known so that the sampling results can be applied to the universe (Martins, Loubser and Van Wyk 1996:253).

The *probability sampling method* (representative sample) was considered to be the most suitable method of selecting church members from the participating church. In this study the pastor of the church selected a *representative sample* of church members from the Ebenezer Baptist Church - all of whom were willing to participate in the survey.

Sample size and response

The 30 Questionnaires were distributed to the Ebenezer Baptist Church during on 11 May 2008. Mr L. Mama from the participating church returned these Questionnaires to the researcher on the following date: 18/05/08.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church returned all of the 30 completed questionnaires. This comprised a 100% response rate.

4.7 Presentation of the data (Results and analysis)

The percentage of church members from the participating church is indicated below:

Church's name	Date forms sent	Date forms received	Members	Forms received	Percentage
Ebenezer Baptist Church	11/05/08	18/05/08	30	30	100%
Total			30	30	100

4.7.1 Biographical details of respondents

The biographical details of the survey participants are noted in the following charts relating to gender, age, and marital status.

4.5.1.1 Gender

More females participated on the survey. There were 9 males and 21 females who participated on the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate their gender, which is reflected in figure 1.

Gender

Male	9
Female	21

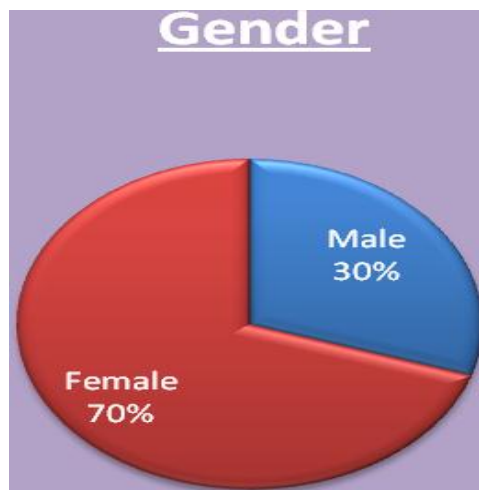


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

4.7.1.2 Age

The participants are comprised of the following age groups as reflected in figure 2:

- 15 – 25 In this age group 1 church member participated on the survey.
- 26 – 35 In this age group there were 12 participants.
- 36 – 49 At this age level, 7 church members participated on the survey.
- 50+ 10 church members in this age group participated on the survey.

Gender

Male	9
Female	21

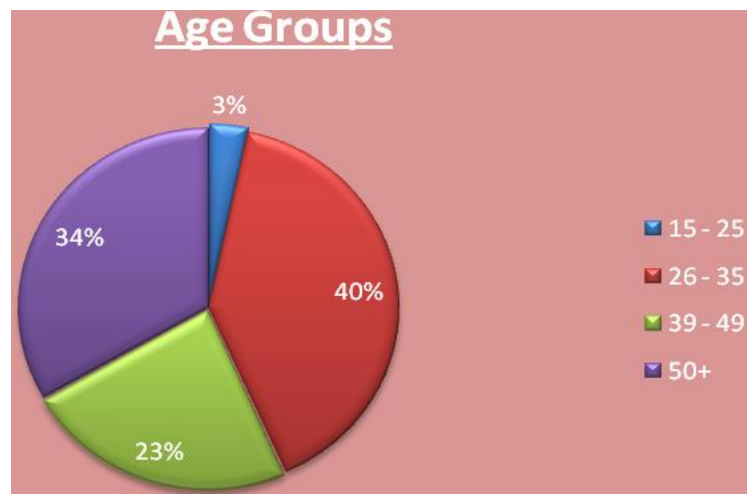


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to age

4.7.1.3 Marital status

The distribution of respondents, according to marital status, is as follows:

- The singles are made up of unmarried people, divorcees and widows/widowers.
- 13 singles and 17 married people participated in the survey.

Marital status

Singles	13
Married	17



Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to marital status

4.5.2 Results of investigation into the main obstacles to church growth

The empirical survey was conducted to ascertain the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, regarding obstacles to church growth.

A quantitative approach was used in Section A (See Appendix 3) of the empirical survey. The objective was to ascertain the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church. Participants were asked to study the Schwarz's *Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church* and to rate their church in terms of the Schwarz model on a scale of 1-10. The results were documented, collated and given a percentage for the purpose of comparison

and analysis. The graph in the next paragraph (see Figure 4 below) details the results of the survey.

4.5.2.1 Summary of findings from ratings of the health of the church

The following is the summary of findings of the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, regarding the health of the church in terms Schwarz's *Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church* (The lowest scores indicating the main obstacles to church growth):

	<u>Average scores</u>
(1) Love Relationships	(73%)
(2) Inspiring Worship	(72%)
(3) Functional Structures	(72%)
(4) Holistic Small Groups	(65%)
(5) Passionate Spirituality	(65%)
(6) Need -oriented Evangelism	(61%)
(7) Gift- oriented Ministry	(60%)
(8) Empowering Leadership	(56%)

4.5.2.2 Graphic representation of the findings

The following graph (See Figure 4) summarises the results of Section A of the Questionnaire:

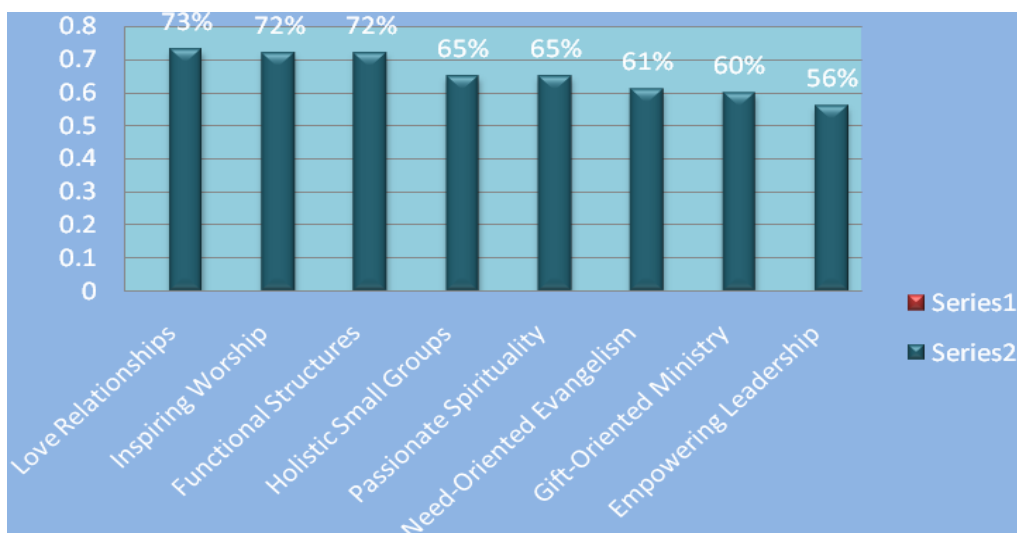


Figure 4: The rating of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in terms the Schwarz's *Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church* (The lowest scores indicating the main obstacles to church growth)

4.5.2.3 Summary of the ranking of the church's main obstacles to church growth

From the above graph (See Figure 4) it is clear that the following are the church's four main obstacles to church growth, as perceived by the respondents from the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth:

Ebenezer Baptist Church

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| (1) Empowering Leadership | (56%) |
| (2) Gift –oriented Ministry | (60%) |
| (3) Need–oriented Evangelism | (61%) |
| (4) Passionate Spirituality | (65%) |
| Holistic Small Groups | (65%) |

4.5.3 Themes gleaned from the interviews relating to the top four main obstacles to church growth (Comments and Suggestions)

A qualitative approach was employed in Section B of the empirical study (See Appendix 3). Participants were asked to reflect on the church's four main obstacles to church growth as selected in Section B, and to (1) briefly explain why you believe that the particular "essential quality of a healthy church" is an obstacle to church growth in their church and (2) make a brief suggestion in the space provided in Column 4 regarding a possible solution to the problem (Biblical and/or practical).

When the results were documented and collated for comparison, the following themes emerged from the responses. Recurring comments and suggestions were recorded on the Questionnaires (Section B) by the respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth:

(1) Empowering Leadership

Comments

"Leaders are not doing their work effectively."

"Few leaders are equipping the congregation."

"Leaders do not share their experiences enough."

Suggestions

“Leaders must be encouraged to equip others.”

“More teaching on leadership is necessary.”

“Training in and distribution of leadership is needed.”

(2) Gift-oriented Ministry

Comments

“Some members are very shy. As a result they do not want to get involved.”

“Tasks are given to a few members only.”

“Young people are afraid to come forward.”

“Leaders are not spending enough time in identifying people with special gifts.”

Suggestions

“More teaching on spiritual gifts is needed.”

“Workshops would be helpful.”

“Leaders need to guide the youth.”

“Opportunities must be given to all the members.”

(3) Need-oriented Evangelism

Comments

“Only a few members are involved in evangelism.”

“Some find it difficult to visit other members.”

“Many think that evangelism is only for the chosen few.”

Suggestions

“Teaching on evangelism is very important.”

“All church members need to see evangelism as a high priority.”

“Workshops and seminars on evangelism would be helpful.”

(4)(a) Passionate Spirituality

Comments

“There is a lack of commitment and dedication amongst church members.”

“More time is needed for praise and worship.”

“Leaders need to encourage the youth to participate fully.”

Suggestions

“People should be encouraged to attend Bible Study groups.”

“Leaders must continue to teach and encourage people.”

“More time needs to be spent on worship.”

(4)(b) Holistic Small Groups

Comments

“Many members do not know each other.”

“There are too few Small-Group leaders.”

“Some members do not want to participate.”

Suggestions

“Invite visiting speakers to teach on Holistic Small Groups.”

“People need to be motivated to attend these groups.”

“Leaders need to train Small-Group leaders.”

4.6 Key findings, conclusion, recommendations and further research

4.6.1 Key findings

By means of an empirical survey the researcher has clearly identified the four main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, as recorded by the respondents on the Questionnaires.

4.6.2 Conclusion

Based on the key findings, one can conclude that if the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, wants to grow more effectively, the church leaders need to pay special attention on the following areas:

(1) Empowering Leadership

For the church to grow effectively, the church leaders need to concentrate on empowering others for the ministry. Leaders should continue to share their experiences with others, and invite experts to present workshops and seminars on church leadership.

(2) Gift-oriented Ministry

The training and development of church members is of great importance. People need to be motivated and encouraged in the Lord's work. They need to be trained to identify their spiritual gifts. By identifying their gifts, it will help them to serve the Lord effectively. Church leaders should not be discouraged. They should expect that some church members will "fall by the way side."

(3) Need-oriented Evangelism

The church needs to be pay special attention to carrying out the Great Commission. The church is commanded to go into the world and win the lost for Christ. This ministry needs the involvement of the whole church. Church members are committed to serve others and to meet the needs of the lost. The purpose of the church leaders is to motivate the entire congregation to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) Passionate Spirituality

People should be encouraged to attend prayer meetings, Bible study groups, so that they might grow spiritually. If most of the members only attend the Sunday morning services, they would not be able to stand against the forces of the evil one.

(5) Holistic Small Groups

Holistic small groups are very important for church growth. Church leaders need to organise seminars and invite visiting speakers to teach on this topic, so that the church members might learn to appreciate the importance of attending these holistic small groups.

4.6.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the church members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in the New Brighton, Port Elizabeth be given pastoral help to overcome the identified main obstacles to church growth by arranging the following:

- A training programme for all on the nature and elimination of obstacles to church growth
- A training programme for equipping church leaders for ministry and identifying their spiritual gifts.
- Seminars and workshops for enriching church members with the Word of God.

4.6.6 Further Research

There is a need for further research in the area of the identified obstacles to church growth, as well as in the area of how these obstacles to church growth are experienced by other churches in the New Brighton area in Port Elizabeth.

Chapter 5

A training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church

5.2 Introduction

Chapter 5 will seek to present a training programme for promoting church growth in the Church based on Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church. In particular, it will formulate Biblical and practical guidelines for promoting church growth and for addressing the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton Port Elizabeth, based on the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth in Chapter 3 and the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 4.

5.1.1 Summary of findings

In chapter 4, amongst other things, an attempt was made to ascertain the perceptions of believers in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth regarding the main obstacles to church growth. This was done by means of an empirical survey. Firsthand information was collected through Questionnaires and interviews (feedback).

The following is a summary of findings: the average scores in percentages (in rank order) of the perceived qualities of a healthy church at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth (The lowest rankings indicating the main obstacles to church growth) (See Chapter 4):

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| (1) Love Relationships | (73%) |
| (2) Inspiring Worship | (72%) |
| (3) Functional Structures | (72%) |
| (4) Holistic Small Groups | (65%) |
| (5) Passionate Spirituality | (65%) |
| (6) Need-Oriented Evangelism | (61%) |
| (7) Gift-Oriented Ministry | (60%) |
| (8) Empowering Leadership | (56%) |

The aim of Chapter 5 can be summarized as follows: To develop a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth based on Schwarz's Eight Quality Characteristics of a healthy church.

5.1.2 The principle of the minimum barrel

The minimum barrel is a tub with staves of varying lengths. The barrel consists of eight staves, which represent the eight quality characteristics. Writing the names of the eight quality characteristics on the staves indicate how strongly or weakly each of the characteristics is developed. The name of the minimum factor is written on the shortest staff and the name of the maximum factor on the longest (Schwarz 1996:52, 53).

Schwarz uses the following illustration to demonstrate the spiritual significance of the minimum factor: Pour water into the tub until it starts to overflow. The water symbolises God's blessing flowing down from heaven into the church and the tub represents the church. As the water overflows, it shows that there is a problem with the tub: The more water one pours into the tub, the more water overflows from the shortest staff. The problem can only be solved as follows: lengthen the shortest staff (the minimum factor) and the tub will hold more water. In the same way, if "passionate spirituality" were the minimum factor, it would need to be improved for the church to receive more of God's blessing and hence improve its growth (Schwarz 1996:52).

The church needs to look to all its eight quality characteristics. However, it first needs to start paying special attention to the minimum factor. This is the quality characteristic in which the church has gained the lowest score. This is the area, which needs more caring and development. As one follows certain steps the church should grow effectively.

The next section, which consists of a training programme, will seek to address the main obstacles to church growth, as indicated in the research

findings, by encouraging the church to give attention to these and other areas in a Biblical manner. While the church needs to look at all of the eight quality characteristics, it needs to start by paying special attention on the minimum factor. This is the quality characteristic in which the church has gained the lowest score. This is the area, which needs more caring and development. As these steps are followed the church will grow effectively.

5.2 A training programme (strategy) for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church: Building Block no. 1 - What should we do? (Contents)

The implementation team

The purpose of this section is to provide a strategy to help church members to promote effective Church growth. In the process for congregational change, the selection of the implementation team is very important. Team members should in large measure be determined by which “Quality Characteristic” has the lowest score. In the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth (members who participated on the research) “Empowering Leadership” is the lowest score.

The Church would need to select church members who would form the implementation team using the following guidelines:

- 1) Let the church choose 2 or 3 members of the Executive to be part of the team to coordinate with the main church leadership.
- 2) If you have traditionally-minded people in your church as well as visionary people, include them in the implementation team, also consider the older and younger people.
- 3) One will also want people with a variety of skills on the team. A visionary, an administrator, an influencer, a compassionate person, and others. A variety of skills is important, as this team will be a change agent in the congregation.
- 4) Most of all, you want people who are team players rather than people who have an agenda.

- 5) 6 to 8 are a good number of people for the implementation team. If you want, you can have a team that is a little larger (*The CECL Guide* 2005:6).

The following aspects of Congregational change (the new *praxis*) represent the main components of the training programme:

5.2.4 Congregational change 1: Empowering Leadership

5.2.4.1 Overview of “Empowering Leadership”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic “Empowering leadership”:

1. Leaders of growing churches are equipping leaders; they invest their time in discipleship, delegation and multiplying new leaders.
2. Leaders of growing churches seek outside help.
3. Leaders of growing churches have less formal training (and, perhaps, more practical training).

Leaders of growing churches focus on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as “helpers” to attain their own goals. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential that God has for them (Schwarz 1996:22).

Pointer (1984:66) describes “Effective Leadership” (as a sign of a growing church) as follows:

Growing Churches always have effective Leadership. They have leaders who get the job done. Whatever leadership gift, skill or style is required for the healthy functioning of the local body of Christ, they possess and exercise it.

The foundation of “Effective Leadership” has been described as follows:

The core or foundation of effective leadership is an intimate relationship with God, which matures into a Christ-like character and a clear sense of God’s calling in the leader’s life. As spiritual maturity grows, effective pastors and leaders pass this to their disciples, to multiply, guide, empower and equip them to realize their full potential in Christ and to accomplish God’s vision (*The CECL Guide* 2005:7).

Leaders of growing churches need to focus on empowering others for the Christian ministry. Pastors need to recruit, train, equip, support, motivate and mentor church leaders, enabling them to reach the spiritual potential that God has given them. Pastors and other leaders should not handle the bulk of Church responsibilities on their own. Rather, they should multiply their energy by investing most of their time in discipleship and delegation (Ackerman et al. 2006:21).

Biblical foundations for effective leadership

The following passages from Scripture of equipping Christians for service clearly support the ministry of equipping and training: 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV): “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Paul had solemnly entrusted Timothy with the gospel. He is charged similarly to commit it to trustworthy ministers who will pass it on to others. Andria (2006a:1478) elaborates:

Timothy must already start preparing those who would succeed him. He will need to exercise discernment in choosing these men, and would be wise to remember Paul’s description of a potential leader (1 Tim 3:1-13).

In Colossians 3:16 (NIV) we read: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” Andria (2006b: 1456) explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

The Colossians taught and warned by Paul through the word (1:5, 25, 28), must in turn teach and warn one another. It is in this way that they will reach full knowledge (1:9).

5.2.1.2 A strategy for “Empowering Leadership” in the Church

The Average score for Empowering Leadership

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Empowering Leadership” a score of 56%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked number 8 in the church’s list. This is a low percentage, a minimum factor, which needs more attention, until it becomes a maximum factor. The Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth needs to empower leaders by means of the following strategies.

Weiss (1997:§1) points out that,

There is a great need of discipling and empowering the church members with special gifts and abilities to serve the Lord in the church. The empowering of lay people increases the number of leaders and spreads the workload, rather than one person does more work. The time is invested on equipping others so that they may fulfil the Lord’s work.

The priority of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth is to equip Christians for the ministry. More training and education is needed for the church leaders, so that they may be fully equipped to enable them to equip other church members. Seminars and workshops are valuable tools to meet the need for empowering leadership. The youth need to be encouraged to be participants in this empowering strategy.

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

The Ebenezer Baptist Church plans to run a training programme to assist the newly converted people, so that they may be equipped to become integrated into the life of the church and to be able to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This training programme will also be helpful to those who have been members of the church for many years. Some of the areas, which will be covered, are: Church membership, discipleship, evangelism and spiritual gifts. This programme will be open to all believers, who desire to equip themselves for the ministry. The objective of the programme is to develop and equip believers for future ministry in the church.

Logan et al. (1998:2-3 to 2-4, 2-5, 2-19) provide the following strategy (Factors and Questions) to improve “Empowering Leadership” in the Church:

Reflection upon the characteristics of an empowering leader

Being an empowering leader involves several factors:

- 1) An effective match between leader and church. Does the job description or expectations of the church match the gifts/abilities and personality character of the pastor?
- 2) An effective leader continues to grow personally, in the area of character formation, authentic relationships, skills development, life-long learning, and ministry focus.
- 3) Growing leaders maintain mentoring relationships
- 4) Removing personal blockages. These blockages include complacency with status quo ministry, lack of vision for bringing others into Christian discipleship, lack of boldness and confidence in leadership, poor delegation and management skills, and poor ability to encourage and adjust to change.
- 5) Ability to focus on disciple-making through authentic relationships. These relationships include family, pre-Christians, those you mentor personally, and with the church community.

Reflection questions

- 1) In what ways has your relationship with Christ deepened in the last six months?
- 2) What Scriptures, books, seminars or other efforts have encouraged your personal growth in the last six months? How have you responded?
- 3) To whom are you accountable for your spiritual and personal growth?
- 4) For your growth in ministry skills? For the strategic direction of your ministry?
- 5) Does your primary role in your current position take energy away from you or return additional energy to you?
- 6) How does your current ministry role fit with your core values, life mission and giftedness?
- 7) How much of your time is devoted to developing and empowering leaders?
- 8) What personal blockages prevent you from becoming an empowering leader?

Other Questions for Consideration

- 1) How do you facilitate leaders to learn from each other?
- 2) What processes are you using for personal and ministry skills development?
- 3) In what ways are you using passion within your leaders to energize them in other areas?
- 4) What existing ministries could be used for developing leaders in the process of ministry?
- 5) How can you tie evangelism and leadership development together so that more people are reached and more leaders are developed?
- 6) How are the leaders becoming more effective in their ministry?

Summary

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Empowering leadership” in the church as follows: In growing churches the standards expected of leaders increases enormously. Hence leaders need to give attention to:

1. Empowering leaders need to be empowered. Look for mentors or coaches.
2. Know your own strengths and weaknesses.
3. Develop and work with a leadership team.
4. As a team, define clear goals for developing yourself and your church.
5. Learn to say “no”. Reduce the number of activities.
6. Review and monitor your progress.

5.2.5 Congregational change 2: Gift-Oriented Ministry

5.2.5.1 Overview of “Gift-Oriented Ministry”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic “Gift-Oriented Ministry”:

1. It is based on the conviction that God sovereignly determines which Christians should best assume which ministries.
- 2 The factor most associated with contentedness (and thus attendance) of members.

The quality characteristic “gift-oriented ministry” demonstrates particularly well what is meant by the concept of “divine growth automations” – the church under God operating on the “all by itself” principle. The gift-oriented approach indicates the conviction that God sovereignly determines which Christians should best assume which ministries. The role of the church leadership is to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries within the church. When Christians serve in the area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary (Schwarz 1996:24).

Roy Pointer (1984:71) describes this sign of a healthy church in terms of “Mobilised Membership”:

Church growth studies from every continent and a great variety of cultures have confirmed a basic New Testament principle — that churches grow when they mobilise their total membership in the service of Christ.

Biblical foundations for spiritual gifts

The following passage from Scripture indicates the need for training believers for a Gift-Oriented Ministry. In Romans 12:6–8 (NIV) Paul emphasizes that, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ... if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

The CECL Guide (2005:9-10) provides the following Biblical Guidelines for exercising the spiritual gifts: The Holy Spirit gives every person spiritual gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ and the building of God’s Kingdom (1Cor 12:4-7). Church leaders have the responsibility to help believers to discover, develop and exercise their spiritual gifts in appropriate ministries, so that the Body of Christ grows in love and matures “attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-16, NIV).

5.2.2.2 A strategy to improve “Gift-Oriented Ministry” in the Church

The Average score for Gift-Oriented Ministry

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Gift-Oriented Ministry” a score of 60%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked number 7 in the church’s list. This is a low percentage, a minimum factor, which needs more attention, until it becomes a maximum factor.

The main feedback from members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth includes the following: The need for training and development, the identification of spiritual gifts, motivation and encouragement. It is clear that the congregation wants to move forward and to serve the Lord effectively. The believers are aware of the fact that God has given to the church a diversity of gifts. "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he has gives them to each one, just as he determines" (1Cor 12:11, NIV).

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

The Ebenezer Baptist Church plans to run a training programme to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries within the church by means of the following strategies relating to spiritual gifts:

- Teach church members regarding the nature of spiritual gifts.
- Show them how to identify their spiritual gift(s).
- Give them opportunities to serve in the church.
- Involve them in practical ministry (House visitation, follow-up ministry, leadership and others).
- Involve and encourage the youth to participate fully in the church ministries.

Gift-Oriented Ministry is a valuable quality characteristic because it helps the church to grow rapidly, when church members use their spiritual gifts for the glory of the Lord. Unfortunately, some church members are working while others are watching. This happens, because many are not clear about their spiritual gifts and they decide not to participate in the ministry of the church, fearing failure. Churches urgently need leaders who can train others to involve themselves in the life of the church. People need to be motivated and to understand that, "We all learn by mistakes." The able and recognised leader makes mistakes at the beginning and later he is able to stand and teach others. Workshops and training programmes on spiritual gifts would greatly benefit all churches (*The CECL Guide* 2005:9).

Biblical guidelines for exercising the spiritual gifts

- 1) Each child of God is called to be a minister and use his or her God-given spiritual gifts (1 Pet 2:9, Rev 1:6, Rom 12:6-8).
- 2) Mature leaders seek to activate the whole Body of Christ. They realise that spiritual gifts have already been given to each Christian. Their role is simply to release those gifts to function. Priority must be given to help members discover, develop and use their spiritual gifts and empower them to discern and fulfil their God-given passion and call.
- 3) People are effective and fulfilled when they use their spiritual gifts. Training that includes understanding the scriptural commands that correspond to some of the spiritual gifts may be needed to enable the gifts to be fully effectively.

Understanding the spiritual gifts

- 1) What is your understanding of spiritual gifts?
- 2) Which gifts are available for use in your church? Record these.
- 3) Which gifts do you see being used in your church? Which gifts need to be recognized and released?
- 4) What factors in your church inhibit or block the natural growth and release of spiritual gifts?

Logan et al. (1998:3-3 to 3-15) provide the following strategy (Guidelines and Questions) to promote “Gift-Oriented Ministry” in the Church:

Discovering one’s spiritual gifts

- 1) Recognise what it is that motivates you, that strong, emotional stirring that feeds your passion. An intrinsic motivation to do a certain kind of work lies deep within each of us. Identify and describe times of personal satisfaction and achievements. Look for thematic patterns, common threads, and your motivational pattern will become evident. Characteristics of God-given passion/motivation: It is in harmony with scripture, accentuated by spiritual gifts, tempered by life situation, and

directed by God for His global purposes. Recognising this source of your motivation will help you to focus your ministry calling.

- 2) Confirm your spiritual gift mix. What ministry activities give you joy? In what areas are you especially insightful, more so than the average Christian? In what ministries have you been particularly effective? How have other believers affirmed and/or encouraged you in ministry”?
- 3) Evaluate your temperament and personality. Doing so will help you to understand what kind of work environment is helpful to you, how you work with other personalities, and negotiate personality conflicts. Using personality tests will be helpful in the evaluation process.
- 4) Assess your life situation. The way in which you actualise your gifts and calling is affected by many factors, such as age, career, marriage and other relationships, education, and children. Discern what steps God is showing you to fulfil His call in your life

Helping others confirm their giftedness

- 1) Re-vision your ministry in terms of how to use your ministry to release giftedness in others. Seek God’s vision to mobilize the right people in the church’s various ministries. Educate yourself by studying various gifts inventories and other education tools, which will enable you to stand and equip others. Evaluate all responsibilities in your area of ministry in the light of the gifts needed for those roles.
- 2) Develop a system of networks that help guide people into those areas of ministry for which they are gifted. Such a system will act to connect ministry opportunities with those who can best serve in that capacity.
- 3) Help people discern and develop their gifts. Give them opportunities to exercise one or more of their gifts.
- 4) Make use of small groups to activate people for ministry. The small group provides a place for people to know one another well enough to identify their gifts. Small group leaders need to be able to spot giftedness and encourage members to use their gifts. Provide an atmosphere in which persons can be encouraged to safely practise their gifts.

Other Questions for Consideration

- 1) How do you encourage those with similar gifts to interact?
- 2) How have you encouraged people with certain strengths to pass them on to others through mentoring?
- 3) Do you help others to discover and use their gifts, or do you find yourself bridging the gaps in the ministry with those who are willing to participate, regardless of their giftedness?
- 4) How are a variety of gifts being used in each ministry?
- 5) Where do you see people with different gifts and temperaments working together?
- 6) How does your assimilation process encourage people to discover their gifts and get involved in ministry?

Different variations of the same spiritual gift

A person may be gifted in applying the gift of evangelism in different ways. For example, one person may use the gift of evangelism in sermons. Another person may use the same gift in personal evangelism. Yet another one might be most effective in using this gift in writing evangelistic tracts, and a fourth one may demonstrate this gift in working with children. These are all the different ways of using the same gift. One should be careful of thinking that there is only one way of applying our gifts. One should also be careful of the danger of imitating others. Even if two Christians have the same variation of a gift, they may have it to very different degrees. Many Christians are not able to perceive their own gifting, because of trying to compare themselves with others (Schwarz 2001:46).

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Gift-Oriented Ministry” in the Church:

- 1 Create understanding of gift-oriented ministry through teaching (sermons, Bible studies, seminars, etc.).
2. Help members discover their talents and gifts.
 - Talents are natural abilities.
 - Gifts are God given abilities for specific needs.

3. Develop a gift-counselling ministry
 - Train gift counselors who can help others identify and focus their gifts into ministries.
 - Offer continuous opportunities for identifying, discussing and testing for gifts.
4. Cut out ministries or programmes, which have lost their spark and/or do not contribute to the numeric or spiritual growth of the church.

5.2.6 Congregational change 3: Passionate Spirituality

5.2.6.1 An Overview of “Passionate Spirituality”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of “Passionate Spirituality”:

1. Churches grow because their members are *both* faithful and active
2. Characteristics of passionate spirituality:
 - The members are “on fire” for the Lord
 - They practise their faith with joy
 - They exhibit contagious enthusiasm about their faith and their church
3. Spiritually passionate people share their faith.

The quality characteristic ‘passionate spirituality’ demonstrates empirically the theological core of the matter in church growth: the life of faith as a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ” (Schwarz 1996:27).

Schwarz in his research found that Christians in a growing church are more likely to be ‘on fire,’ to live ‘committed lives’ and practise their faith with joy and enthusiasm. In these churches, prayer is inspiring, and there is joy among them (Ackerman et al. 2006:12).

Having a passionate spirituality involves personal spiritual disciplines, corporate spiritual disciplines, and contagious faith. Passionate spirituality refers to the believer’s personal closer walk with the Lord. Spiritual maturity is not measured by how long a person has been in the church, the position or qualifications

he/she is having. Instead, it is more accurately measured in a manner that is consistent with Christian core values. These include a hatred of evil (not evil doers!), love for unlovable people, ability to share the gospel with others, a teachable spirit, flexibility, a spirit of peace and joyfulness (*The CECL Guide* 2005:16).

Pointer (1984:59) describes this sign of a healthy church in terms of “Constant Prayer”:

Constant corporate and personal prayer is an essential “sign of growth” that is found in every growing Church. The church that never prays does not grow. Jesus himself taught by word and deed that prayer is essential to life in the Kingdom of God. In the Sermon on the Mount he gave instruction about living under the rule of God and taught that prayer is a privilege and duty for every child of God (Mat 6.5-13).

Enthusiasm for the faith is the foundation of effective ministry (*The CECL Guide* 2005:16):

An inspiring, intimate relationship with God leads to confidence that God will act in powerful ways. Alignment with God’s will and activity can only be accomplished through a hopeful faith that discerns obstacles as opportunities and turns failure into victories. Passionate spirituality is not the same as emotionality; a variety of worship styles can be passionate. Passionate spirituality is inspiring to others because it is faith lived out with sincerity, commitment and enthusiasm.

Jenson and Stevens (1981:97) describes *enthusiasm* in terms of a positive spirit:

When a group of people is caught up in what God is doing, a positive, and constructive spirit results. People are attracted to

positive attitudes. Throughout the Epistles the emphasis is on rejoicing, thankfulness, and similar attitudes. Even in testing and trial, a positive spirit is encouraged.

Biblical support for a passionate faith

The following Scripture portions could be used to encourage believers to be passionate about their faith:

- Matthew 9: 37, 38 (NIV): Then the Lord said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (NIV).
- Romans 12: 9, 12 (NIV): “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.”

5.2.6.2 A strategy to improve “Passionate Spirituality” in the Church

The Average score for Passionate Spirituality

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Passionate Spirituality” a score of 65%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked jointly number 4 on the church’s list together with “Holistic Small Groups.” This is a fairly high percentage, which needs to be maintained.

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church need to examine their enthusiasm about their faith, and learn to share the Word with other people. They need to inspire others to experience and grow in their relationship with God and with one another by means of the following strategies:

Prayer and Bible Study

The Ebenezer Baptist Church needs to spend more time in prayer and Bible Study. Time spent with the Lord in prayer is an inspiring experience (Schwarz 1996:26). Prayer goes together with the study of the Word of God.

Prayer and Bible Study are a great encouragement to all Christians. This enables church members to grow and be strong in the Lord. In this regard Frizzel (1999:9) explains:

Former generations exhibited intense spiritual hunger and a deep desperation to seek God's face in prayer. A sense of urgency drove them to prayer as a major top priority ... to embrace powerful corporate prayer meetings and they believed God would send a revival.

Biblical support for Prayer and Bible Study

The following verses from Scripture could be used to encourage church members to pray and study the Bible:

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV): "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Prayer). Coulibaly (2006:999) elaborates:

The people will find the Lord because they will seek him with all their heart (29:13). He will let himself be found by his people when they seek him in this way.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV): "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Diligent study of the Bible is important:

Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of the word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living (*Life Application Bible* nd: 2189).

Retreats

The Ebenezer Baptist Church needs to plan retreats for the spiritual uplifting of its church members. These retreats should be organized at special places, where the individuals will not be disturbed by their family commitments. This is a

special time for spending time with God in worship, ministering to one another, meditation, prayer groups and prayer walks.

Church members should be encouraged to attend these retreats, so that they may grow spiritually and renew their passion for God and His ministry. Church members, who have been to these retreats, usually return with great joy and excitement. Their passion for the Lord and His ministry is rekindled. The retreats help the church members to build their relationship with the Lord. They grow in prayer and in their desire to study of the Word and to serve the Lord.

Logan et al. (1998:4-1 to 4-13) propose the following strategy (Questions) to improve “Passionate Spirituality” in the Church:

Reflection Questions

- 1) What attitudes and actions would indicate genuine growth in spiritual passion?
- 2) How has your prayer life and faith deepened in the last six months?
- 3) What Scriptures encourage you in your spiritual journey? What actions, attitudes or experiences diminish your spiritual passion?
- 4) How have you encouraged others in faith, in your church? How have you integrated prayer into the life of the church?
- 5) Do you have strategic intercessors praying for your church? If not, how will you develop such a team?

Other questions for Consideration

- 1) Are worship and prayer integrated into all the ministries of the church, or are they isolated to certain times and places?
- 2) What guidelines do you provide to help people grow responsibly in their spiritual walk?
- 3) In what ways do you see mature passionate spirituality empowering the ministries of the church?
- 4) How could you use prayer walks and prayer evangelism to reach your neighbours?

- 5) Which ministries of the church strengthen or deepen the spiritual life of the church members?
- 6) What are the signs of a person in love with Christ? Is your church growing in the number of people who demonstrate those signs? In what ways?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Passionate Spirituality” in the Church:

1. Maximise leadership modelling. Passion among the leaders will rub off onto followers.
2. Minimise passion blockers:
 - Puritanism, limiting art, drama, music, etc., a ‘fast rather than feast’ mentality
 - Legalism, righteousness by works
 - Magical expectations, if you do this, it will work
 - Ecstasy dependency, flight from one emotional high to the next
3. Celebrate God’s victories among His people.
Use personal testimonies in the worship assembly.
Do not be afraid to recognize struggles and problems; significant victories only come after significant struggles.

5.2.7 Congregational change 4: Functional Structures

5.2.4.1 Overview of “Functional Structures”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of “Functional Structures”:

1. Functional structures are the means by which the church accomplishes its life task. Common areas in which structures exist:
 - *Worship*: Sunday services, devotionals, retreats
 - *Leadership*: ministers, elders, deacons, ministry leaders

- *Instruction*: Bible classes, youth groups, home groups, focus groups (dependencies, MOMS)
 - *Fellowship*: home groups, parties, informal visitations
2. Structures are often bound by the “forms, regulations and institutions” handed down through the traditions of the church, local or heritage.

Every healthy church must have “Functional Structures” - internal systems that work together to fulfil their intended purpose. Each part of one’s structure must be evaluated on a regular basis to make sure that it is effectively fulfilling its intended purpose. The “Structures” this quality characteristic refers to include: the programmes and ministries of the church, the systems and infrastructures that link them together into one unified organism, the written and unwritten forms, institutions and regulations that define church culture, and the systems for communication and decision-making (*The CECL Guide* 2005:8).

Causes of failure in structures:

The following are the causes of failure in structures:

- 1) Lack of intentional approach to ministry and mission.
- 2) Lack of overall ownership to a clear, concise vision.
- 3) Lack of clarity to an agreed-upon model of ministry.
- 4) Lack of commitment to excellence.

(*The CECL Guide* 2005:8-9).

5.2.4.2 A strategy to improve “Functional Structures” in the Church

The Average score for Functional Structures

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Functional Structures” a score of 72%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked jointly number 2 on the church’s list together with “Inspiring Worship.” This is a high percentage, a maximum factor, which needs to be maintained.

Growing churches have structures that promote an ongoing multiplication of the ministry of the church, that is, structures that produce leaders, who not only lead, but who also develop other leaders. For example, children, youth and

young men and women are developed through Bible studies (Ackerman et al. 2006:22).

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Morning Worship Service Structure

The Sunday Morning Worship Service is an appropriate structure for winning people of all age groups for Christ, since many people attend this service. Worship is a time of praise and giving glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The people open their hearts to God, as they remember the great things the He has done for them. The worship service prepares the hearts of the people for the ministry of the Word of God.

Occasionally young people attend the morning service. Their participation in the worship service has a great impact on their lives. The Ebenezer Baptist Church plans to make changes in the worship service structure, in order to meet the needs of the young people. The church also plans to provide more opportunities for the youth to participate in the public reading of the Scriptures. This gives them a sense of belonging and of being accepted.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth needs to create and evaluate its Functional Structures on a regular basis to ensure that they are effectively fulfilling their intended purpose by means of the following strategies.

Conduct a survey relating to the “Functional Structures”

Ackerman et al. (2006:22-23) propose the following “Functional Structures” questions for the survey are as follows:

1. How are the ministry functions of your church presently structured?
2. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of a particular department that performs a ministry function?
3. How do you determine whether a particular department that is involved in a ministry function, should:

- Have its function expanded (or contracted)?
 - Be given additional resources (or fewer resources?)
 - Have its function combined with the function of another department.
4. Do you plan to add new departments to perform ministry functions?
 - If “yes,” in what areas?
 - If “yes,” when?
 5. How do you determine the roles of staff versus laity in each function?

The CECL Guide (2005:9) provides the following guidelines for creating, evaluating and developing functional structures:

Creating functional structures is an on-going process of:

- 1) Evaluating – determining course action needed.
- 2) Planning – determining how that action will be carried out.
- 3) Implementing – actually doing it.

Evaluate functional structures using the following three criteria:

- 1) How closely is it related to the vision?
- 2) How effective is it in its operation with regards to its intended outcomes?
- 3) What is its contribution to producing harvest leaders?

Developing functional structures requires that the church should ask the following questions:

Values: “Who are you?”

Vision: “Where are you going?”

Mission: “How will you get there?”

Outcomes: “Are you there yet?”

Ministry Flow Chart: “What are you doing to get where we’re going?”

Job Description: “Who is going to do it, and what are you supposed to do?”

Logan et al. (1998:5-11) provide the following strategy (Questions) to improve “Functional Structures” in the Church:

Questions for Consideration

- 1) How are the various ministries of your church related to each other?
- 2) Do they function independently or do they take advantage of other's strengths and weaknesses?
- 3) In what ways are your leadership structures designed to expand and reproduce?
- 4) How does each ministry generate the resources needed to develop and expand that ministry?
- 5) Are the systems working in a way that promotes growth?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic "Functional Structures" in the Church:

1. Identify all the current structures.
2. Evaluate all structures for:
 - Their potential for adding to the numeric and spiritual growth of the church.
 - Utilisation of the spiritual gifts already identified within the church.
3. Cut as many programmes or ministries as possible which do not contribute to the development of the church.
4. Identify changes, which should be made in the remaining structures in order to increase their ability to release God's blessings on the church.
5. Create an organizational chart, which identifies the structures, functions and leaders for each.

5.2.5 Congregational change 5: Inspiring Worship

5.2.5.1 Overview of "Inspiring Worship"

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of "Inspiring Worship":

1. The style of service (seeker, liturgical, contemporary or traditional) makes little difference.
2. The deciding factor is: Is the worship service an "inspiring experience"?

3. Inspiring experiences have something to do with fun and enjoyment, sending people home with more hope and fewer burdens than when they came.

Schwarz (1996:31) explains the word “inspiring” in the following manner:

It is to be understood in the literal sense of *inspirito* and means an inspiredness, which comes from the Spirit of God. Whenever the Holy Spirit is truly at work (and His presence is not merely presumed), He will have a concrete effect upon the way a worship service is conducted including the entire atmosphere of the gathering. People attending truly “inspired” services typically indicate that, “going to church is fun.”

Roy Pointer (1984:77) describes this sign of a healthy church in terms of “Eventful worship”, especially when the Holy Spirit is present in the service:

When a ‘community of the King’ worships, it celebrates the reign of God. This must always be eventful for those who participate or even watch (1 Cor 14:22, 25). Pentecostal experience from Latin America suggests that worship becomes eventful when manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s activity are present and there is fellowship, liberty, faith and cultural sensitivity among the worshippers.

Grudem defines worship as follows:

The activity of glorifying God in His presence with our voices and hearts. Worship is something we do especially when we come to God’s presence, when we are conscious of adoration of Him so others may hear (Grudem 1994:1003).

Inspiring worship involves a personal and corporate encounter with the living God. The presence of God in worship creates times of joyous exultation as well as times of quiet reverence. It is not driven by a particular style of worship, but rather the shared experience of God's awesome presence (*The CECL Guide* 2005:12).

Inspiring worship is a lifestyle that acknowledges that Christ is Lord of one's life. The work and person of God is the source of life-giving inspiration in worship, which can be experienced in a corporate setting as well as in individual quiet times. Corporate worship is an overflow of personal worship: as one experiences the presence of God and allows Him to transform one's life on a personal level, when the congregation comes together for corporate worship, God touches one as a group. As the people glorify God in worship, the result is a dynamic process of celebration and reflection, which leads to unity, vision, maturity, blessing and empowerment for ministry. As one's life is built on the solid foundation of God, one will continuously praise God, rejoice in negative circumstances, focus on God, desire to serve Him, confess one's sins, and rejoice always in the Lord. This behaviour is contagious – it spreads through the congregation, and results in inspiring worship! (*The CECL Guide* 2005:12).

Biblical support for inspiring worship

Paul encourages Christians in Col 3:16 (NIV) to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God"

Commenting on Acts 2:42 Henry (1983:711) states:

They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the preaching of the word. They continued in the apostles' doctrine. Those who have given up their names to Christ must make conscience of hearing his word. They kept up the communion of saints. They continued in fellowship.

Getz (1995:178) elaborates:

In addition to devoting themselves 'to the breaking of bread,' they also devoted themselves 'to prayer' (Acts 2:42). True worship has always involved prayer ... As the believers prayed, they were participating in each other's lives ... Prayer was an essential element in their worship.

5.2.5.2 A strategy to improve "Inspiring Worship" in the Church

The Average score for Inspiring Worship

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave "Inspiring Worship" a score of 72%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked jointly number 2 on the church's list together with "Functional Structures." This is a high percentage, a maximum factor, which needs to be maintained.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth needs to promote Inspiring Worship in its corporate worship services, as the congregation seeks to glorify God in worship by means of the following strategies:

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Prayer

When a believer prays, he or she opens his heart before the Lord. The church plans to encourage all of its members (young and old) to participate during prayer time, since all believers are members of the Body of Christ. Every member needs to play his or her role in the body ministry of the church.

Preaching

The church plans to improve the standard of inspiring worship by arranging workshops, inviting special speakers, who are gifted in preaching, to preach and to teach the Word of God. The aim of this programme is to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through the different speakers.

The CECL Guide (2005:13) provides the following questions for promoting “Inspiring Worship” in the Church:

Reflection Questions:

- 1) In what ways is your worship service more than a “feel good” experience? When does it seem that people are connecting personally and corporately with God?
- 2) How do you include children in the worship service? What other programmes or opportunities do children have to be involved in the life of the church? How well are those attended?
- 3) How easy or difficult is, for the newcomers to locate the church, nursery, children’s ministry rooms, and rest-rooms?
- 4) How do you address and involve guests and pre-Christians in the worship experience? What characteristics of a good sermon do you need to intentionally develop?

Other Questions for Consideration:

- 1) In what ways does the worship service fuel other ministries?
- 2) What segment of your community is not being reached through your present style of worship?
- 3) In what ways do you reinforce the sermon through the worship and the worship through the sermon?
- 4) What are the intended outcomes of the worship service? How are those increasing?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Inspiring Worship” in the Church:

1. All parts of the service (seating, lighting, sound, participants, and events) should more and more be vehicles through which the people may experience God’s love and His Spirit.
2. Develop a worship preparation team.
3. Organise a prayer team to pray during services.
4. Focus on real questions and needs of the participants.

5. Identify exactly the kinds of changes in the life of the congregation you envision the worship to produce.
6. Include 20 minutes of uninterrupted singing.
7. Get feedback after each service.

5.2.6 Congregational change 6: Holistic Small Groups

5.2.6.1 Overview of “Holistic Small Groups”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of “Holistic Small Groups”:

1. Holistic small groups are those, which engage in Bible study and seek to apply biblical principles into the current and future life of its members.
2. The growth principle is the continuous multiplication of small groups.
3. For growing churches small groups are a primary characteristic, not a supplement.
4. The importance of small groups increases with the size of the church.

Continuous multiplication of small groups is a universal church growth principle. These small groups must be holistic, which go beyond just discussing Bible passages to applying its message to everyday life. Members should be able to discuss those issues and questions that are immediate personal concerns (Schwarz 1996:32).

Biblical Precedence for Small Groups

Acts 2:46 (NIV) supports the idea of the holistic small groups:

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.
They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

It is clear from this verse that the early church enjoyed great fellowship, as they met (in small groups) in the temple and in their homes, sharing and helping the needy.

Hunter explains that one reason for considering small groups is biblical. The early church used two structures: They met as cells in the homes, and also together (as a congregation) in a public place. During times of persecution, they avoided the public places. This twofold structure is reflected in the Book of Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus first modelled this pattern by gathering and mentoring His twelve disciples. He worshipped with them in the synagogue and He also ministered to the crowds. Acts 2 suggests that the early church, following Peter's sermon at Pentecost, assembled together the 3,000 people who accepted the message, into small groups that met in homes, while the entire church in Jerusalem also gathered at the Temple. After they had experienced a period of public preaching, compassionate ministries, signs and wonders and continued growth, they continued to meet in the temple courts and in homes (Acts 5:42) (Hunter 1996:82,83).

One of Wesley's strategies for the (Methodist) movement's expansion was to start as many classes as he could. Wesley regarded the teaching, nurture and accountability in the group context, as so important that he advised against awakening a spiritual quest within people without involving people in classes (Hunter 1996:85).

Warren (1995:325) points out the importance of small groups within the church:

One of the biggest fears members have about growth is how to maintain that 'small church' feeling of fellowship as their church grows. The antidote to this fear is to develop small groups within your church. The church can provide the personal care and attention every member deserves, no matter how big the church becomes.

One of the sayings Warren quotes to his staff and lay leaders repeatedly is the following:

Our church must always be growing larger and smaller at the same time. By this I mean there must be a balance between the large group celebrations and the small group cells. Both are important to the health of the church. Large group celebrations give people the feeling that they belong to a body (a church), which they can claim as their church. They are impressive to unbelievers and encouraging to your members. But you can't share personal prayer requests in a crowd. Small groups, on the other hand, are perfect for creating a close relationship. This is the place where everyone is known by name; when you are absent, people notice (Warren 1995:326).

There are four benefits for using homes:

- 1) They are infinitely expandable (homes are everywhere).
- 2) They are unlimited geographically (you can minister to a wider area).
- 3) They are demonstrations of good stewardship (you use buildings that other people pay for, releasing more money for ministry).
- 4) They facilitate closer relationships (people are more relaxed in a home setting) (Warren 1995:326).

Holistic small groups make an important contribution towards church growth. Today's churches need more teaching on this aspect. Empowering of the leaders in the development of holistic small groups would be very helpful.

The CECL Guide (2005:11) indicates the importance of "Holistic small groups" in the ministry of a church:

(1) Holistic small groups are spiritually oriented disciple-making communities which provide a safe place for their members to come together to develop an authentic relationship, grow according to their God-given gifts, meet individual needs, and raise leaders to sustain the growth of the church. Like any living organism, holistic small groups are designed to grow and multiply.

(2) Growing churches have accepted a system of small groups where individual Christians can experience intimate community, practical help and significant spiritual interaction. The groups provide a place where not only is the Word of God discussed, but biblical insights into practical issues are applied.

(3) Changes in our culture have increased the need for small group ministries. The reasons for this growing need are many: broken marriages, lives that are out of control, children disobeying their parents, increased stress, and a lack of genuine relationships. In secular society, small groups are growing rapidly, with support/recovery programmes being particularly effective. The church can meet those same needs while providing a spiritual base for people through small groups.

(4) Small groups should be integrated into the fabric of the church. What is done in small groups needs to be thought through carefully, be consistent with the church's values and vision, and designed to multiply. Implementing an effective small group ministry will be leadership intensive and require moving through a change process. If Holistic Small Groups is the church's minimum factor, investing in a teaching manual that leads into the process of developing such groups is strongly encouraged.

5.2.6.2 A strategy to improve "Holistic Small Groups" in the Church

The Average score for Holistic Small Groups

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave "Holistic Small Groups" a score of 65%. This Quality Characteristic is jointly ranked number 4 in the church's list together with "Passionate Spirituality." This is a fairly high percentage, which needs to be maintained.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth needs to provide a system of small groups where individual Christians can experience intimate community, practical help and significant spiritual interaction, by means of the following strategies:

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Home Churches

The Ebenezer Baptist Church is at a stage of improving the house churches by splitting them into smaller groups, and giving leadership opportunities to young people and ladies desiring to be involved in cell groups leadership. Workshops and leadership training will play a vital role, as the church seeks to move in this direction.

Gibbs (1981:167) explains how throughout the New Testament there is an emphasis on the home:

Jesus was teaching at his home base in Capernaum where the paralytic was lowered down through the roof. He visited people's homes to heal the sick ... When he sent out the twelve and the seventy-two they were to go out in pairs to people's homes (Mat 10:14; Luke 10:5).

Ackerman et al. (2006:20) emphasize the need to continuous development of leaders for a system of small groups:

Holistic Small Groups must go beyond discussions of Bible passages to focus on applying the Bible's messages to everyday life. Members must bring up, discuss, and resolve issues of immediate and personal concern. Planned multiplication of small groups is made possible through the continuous development of leaders.

Questions that church members and leaders need to answer

Logan et al. (1998:9-1 to 9-13) provide the following strategy (Questions) to improve "Holistic Small Groups" in the Church:

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What does group life look like when God “shows up”? How many of the groups are experiencing this on a regular basis?
- 2) To what extent is Scripture a central part of small group life? To what extent is prayer an essential part of small group life?
- 3) What makes your small group a “safe place” to share personal problems? What do you think hinders honest sharing?
- 4) In what ways are members encouraged to interact between meetings? What evidence do you have that indicates that the groups are actually meeting the needs of people who participate?
- 5) How do small groups fit into the overall scheme and ministry of the church? In what ways will small groups enable people to live out the church’s core values?

Other Questions for Consideration:

- 1) Are your small groups linked in a system, or is each one on its own?
- 2) In what ways does your small group system promote and encourage the multiplication of groups?
- 3) How do you capitalise on the excitement of a growing group to encourage other groups/leaders?
- 4) In what ways does your system for small groups enable more groups to be formed?
- 5) How do people with various gifts and abilities work together in small groups to provide a holistic community?
- 6) What evidence do you have that small groups are fulfilling their function to produce more and better disciples?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Holistic Small Groups” in the Church:

1. Train small group leaders for effective work:
 - Pastoring skills, taking long-term responsibility for the spiritual and personal welfare of the people
 - Bible study and teaching
 - Leading small group discussion

- Training apprentice leaders
 - Multiplying a small group
2. Develop different types of groups (fellowship, dependency, Bible study, prayer, etc.).
 3. Provide appropriate resources for content development.
 4. Provide ongoing coaching of group leaders.

5.2.7 Congregational change 7: Need-Oriented Evangelism

5.2.7.1 Overview of “Need-Oriented Evangelism”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of “Need-Oriented Evangelism”:

1. Need-oriented evangelism is defined by evangelism that focuses on the questions and need of non-Christians.
2. Need-oriented evangelism makes use of already existing relationships as the primary contact mode.
3. Peter Wagner’s 10% rule states that the gift of evangelism applies to no more than 10% of all Christians.

Growing congregations focus their evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians. True “evangelists” are those to whom God has given a corresponding gift - the gift of evangelism. They are skilled at developing new relationships with the un-churched. By some estimates, such a gift is found in no more than 10% of all Christians. Pastors of growing congregations know which members of their church have the gift of evangelism, and direct such members into the relevant area of ministry (Ackerman et al. 2006:24).

Roy Pointer (1984:78) describes this sign of a healthy church in terms of “Continuous Evangelism”:

Continuous evangelism should take place at two complementary levels. *Spontaneous evangelism* that involves every Christian in their daily affairs and *systematic evangelism* by individuals or groups who make new contracts and break fresh ground.

Spontaneous evangelism takes place through the 'networks' or relationships of believers (John 1.40-45; Acts 8.1, 4). Systematic evangelism uses planned missions, events, services etc. to discover new and responsive people (Luke 9.1-6; 10.1-20; Acts 8.5-8; 10.1-48).

Wagner (1986:13-28) defines evangelism in terms of making disciples:

Evangelism is not only reaching people with the gospel message and bringing them to a decision for Christ; it is making them disciples. My favourite definition of evangelism is the one developed by the Anglican Archbishops in 1918: To evangelise is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that man and woman shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour.

The CECL Guide (2005:14-15) indicates the role of "Need-Oriented Evangelism" in the church:

(1) Need-Oriented Evangelism intentionally develops relationships with unbelievers, so that they can become mature Christians, who will be able to participate in the life of the church and Christian community. Employing appropriate ministries and authentic relationships, believers can lead others into the family of God.

(2) Growing churches are not manipulated or over-bearing in the way that they evangelise. Rather their success lies in the way in which they share the gospel, so that it is relevant and comprehensive and meeting the needs and questions of unbelievers.

(3) Churches which have Need-Oriented Evangelism as their minimum factor may have many members who avoid even mentioning the word "evangelism" – their associations with the word are negative, and filled with fear. A way of growing in this Quality Characteristic will be to educate the members about the different ways of sharing the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ, including how to share one's own spiritual life story in an effective way.

(4) Need-Oriented Evangelism also involves the following: developing culturally relevant outreach oriented ministries, becoming user friendly, the welcoming of guests in the worship services, and assimilating newcomers into the life of the church.

Biblical foundations

Jesus does not want anyone to perish, but rather that all be saved through faith in Him. He saw the need of the evangelisation of the whole world. Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Luke 10:2, NIV).

Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. There is a great need for the churches to fulfil the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat 28:19, NIV).

The Great Commission implies that there is an urgent need for the gospel to be preached to all the people. The church needs to change its mindset. Believers need to search the Scriptures, so that their eyes might be opened to their divine calling. They need to build a good relationship with God and adhere to His call to evangelise the world.

The reason for the urgency of evangelism lies in God. God urgently pleads with sinners to turn to Him. He alone is the One who saves: salvation belongs to Him. The God of the Bible is just and righteous (Kuiper 1996:90). In Ezekiel 33:11 (NIV) God says, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel.”

Many Christians think that evangelism is only for those who have the special gift of evangelism. However, evangelism is the responsibility of the whole body of Christ (all Christians). In 2 Corinthians 5:19 Paul states, “That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (NIV).

Gladden and Olthoff (2008:23) provide the following profile of a person who is a good evangelist:

- He feels personal responsibility to share his/her faith with those who do not know Jesus.
- He looks for opportunities to build relationships with those who don’t know Jesus.
- He regularly prays for those who don’t know Christ.
- He is confident in his ability to share his faith.
- He finds that his relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in his conversations with those who don’t know Him.
- His heart is full of passion to share the good news of the gospel with those who have never heard it.

5.2.7.2 A strategy to improve “Need-Oriented Evangelism” in the Church

The Average score for Need-Oriented Evangelism

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Need-Oriented Evangelism” a score of 61%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked number 6 in the church’s list. This is a fairly low percentage, a minimum factor, which needs more attention, until it becomes a maximum factor. The Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth needs to focus its evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians.

A healthy church knows that meeting needs in the name of Jesus is not just reserved for the vocational ministries. Meeting another person’s needs in the name of Jesus can be expressed in the form of service to people inside the

church family as well as a mission to those outside the church with the resources God provides (Godwin 2008).

All church members, especially those who have the gift of evangelism, need to become skilled at developing new relationships with the un-churched by means of the following strategies:

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Personal Evangelism

Church members are keen to get involved in personal evangelism. Opportunities for personal evangelism already exist within the church for both the young and old, as well as for meeting the needs of the people. However, the church plans to provide more opportunities for sharing the gospel on the sport fields, working places, schools, in hospitals, and homes, to mention a few.

Evangelistic campaigns

The Baptist Association runs special evangelistic crusades in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, and church members are encouraged to attend these meetings. In these meetings several people have come to faith in Christ.

Workshops and Seminars

It is the desire of the Ebenezer Baptist Church for church members to be taught and trained in such a way that they might effectively meet the needs of the lost. From time to time the Baptist Association arranges special workshops and seminars in the Port Elizabeth area to equip church members in Evangelism and Discipleship. Members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church are encouraged to make use of these opportunities by attending these meetings.

Logan et al. (1998:8-1 to 8-13) provide the following strategy (Questions) to promote “Need-Oriented Evangelism” in the Church:

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Who are the un-churched people you relate to on a regular basis?
- 2) How can you help your people to build relationships with pre-Christians in such a way that they will desire to know more about God?
- 3) How have you helped people discover their personal style of evangelism? To what extent is evangelism a primary concern for small groups?
- 4) What aspects of your small groups would help or hinder bringing a new person to a small group?
- 5) How are you using prayer in your evangelistic efforts? What needs are you meeting in your community? What new ministries need to be started to meet felt needs? How will you determine effectiveness in a given outreach ministry?
- 6) What aspects of your worship service are guest-sensitive? What parts might be confusing?
- 7) What avenues are available to help guests build relationships with church members and get involved in ministry? How well are these strategies working?
- 8) What changes in your facilities would make your church more attractive to visitors?
- 9) In what ways does your discipleship ministry help to reach the un-churched, help new believers to mature, and encourage them to become active members of a small group?

Other Questions:

- 1) How will people without the gift of evangelism participate in evangelism?
- 2) How are you mobilizing new Christians to reach out to their network of friends, family and co-workers?
- 3) How do you train and encourage the people, who do not have the gift of evangelism, to evangelise?
- 4) How do you both meet specific needs and introduce Christ in a healthy way through outreach events?

- 5) What different types of evangelism do you practise in your church?
- 6) How have you researched your community to ensure that outreach events are relevant?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Need-Oriented Evangelism” in the Church:

1. Identify those who are gifted for evangelism
 - Those who are already doing it.
 - Those who are comfortable meeting and talking about their faith with new people.
2. Provide evangelism training for those identified.
3. During church services regularly make people aware of the ‘potential congregation’ and their needs.
4. Develop structures to assimilate the ‘newly won’ into the life of the church.

5.2.8 Congregational change 8: Love Relationships

5.2.8.1 An Overview of “Love Relationships”

Granberg (2008) provides the following summary of the Quality characteristic of “Love Relationships”:

1. The most ambiguous principle for the skeptic
2. Primary indicator questions:
 - How much laughter is there in the church? In its worship services? In its meetings? Does joy rank high on the descriptors that members use of the church when they talk to others?
 - How often do members meet informally with one another to share their lives?

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Love Relationships” a score of 73%. In view of this highest score (a maximum factor) it is imperative for the church to try to improve on the other quality characteristics of a healthy church as well.

A Biblical perspective

In Matthew 22:37, 39 (NIV) we read the following: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love is the key word, which builds relationships in the families, neighbours, at work, in sport clubs, and in churches. Love brings people together. Even in times of dispute, love mends the broken relationships. In Romans 12:10 (NIV) Paul says, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.”

Love relationships is the key factor in Christian life

Love relationships are at the very centre of a healthy, growing church. The heart of Christianity can be summed up in one word: love. Practical demonstration of love builds the church and brings others into a closer relationship with God. Jesus showed His love to us, by giving His life as a sacrifice for sinners. Through faith in Jesus Christ believers are given the right to be called the children of God. As Christians we need to show our love to those who are still living in sin. We are to show our love in a practical way that will touch their lives.

Roy Pointer (1984:80) describes this sign of a healthy church in terms of a “Community Life” within the church, which is characterised by love:

Fellowship is one of the hallmarks of a church and characterises every true ‘community of the King’. The new commandment that Jesus gave his disciples in the Upper Room on the night of his betrayal pointed to love and fellowship as the distinctive mark of Christian discipleship. ‘If you have love for one another, *then everyone will know* that you are my disciples’ (John 13:35).

Christianity should be lived in the context of loving and caring relationships. This was seen in a practical way at the birth of the Church at Pentecost. The first Christians loved one another (Acts 2:4, 5; 4:32-37). They shared whatever they possessed with each other (Pointer 1984:81).

5.2.8.2 A strategy to improve the “Love Relationships” in the Church

The Average score for Love Relationships

The respondents of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, on average gave “Love Relationships” a score of 73%. This Quality Characteristic is ranked number 1 in the church’s list. This is a high percentage, a maximum factor, which needs to be maintained.

Members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church have grown in their love relationship but this relationship needs to keep on growing by means of the following strategies:

A training programme for the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Relationship building amongst newcomers

The church plans to improve its love relationship with newcomers to the church, by encouraging its members to invite these people to their homes for tea, with the intention of building up a friendship with them.

Visitation of the elderly

There is a deep desire amongst church members that their love for the elderly people in the church might increase. For this reason the church plans to encourage its members to visit the elderly on a regular basis, prepare meals for them and have a special time of Bible reading and prayer with them.

The CECL Guide (2005:13-14) provided the following guidelines for promoting the characteristics of a love relationship (loving person):

(1) The call to be loving persons

Loving relationships within the church require that its members are loving persons, who relate with others in healthy ways, which will motivate the people

to rejoice and worship the Lord with gladness. Their love and joy must overflow the bounds of their church out into the world, where they share the love of God to the lost and hurting.

(2) Characteristics of loving relationships

Loving relationships involve confessing sins to each other and praying for one another's healing (James 5:16). Authentic, loving relationships are characterized by honesty, grace, forgiveness, transparency, intimacy, compassion, hospitality, laughter, and mutual accountability.

(3) Authentic, loving relationships are expressed in the followings ways:

- 1) Through mutual affection and honour (Rom 12:10)
- 2) A spirit of patience and forgiveness (Eph 4:2, 32)
- 3) Carrying one another's burden (Gal 6:2)
- 4) Mutual submission (Eph 5:21)
- 5) Correcting and accepting correction from one another (Col 3:16)
- 6) Encouraging and building one another up (1Thess 5:11).
- 7) Provoking one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24).

Questions that church members and leaders need to answer

For the churches to grow in this area of love relationships, they need to ask themselves this question: How much time do they spend with one another outside of official church-sponsored events. For example, how often do they invite one another for a meal or a cup of coffee? To what extent is the pastor aware of the personal problems of the lay workers in the congregation? (Schwarz 1996:36)

Logan et al. (1998:9-1 to 9-13) provide the following strategy (Questions) to promote "Love Relationships" in the Church:

Reflection Questions

- 1) How are joy and trust experienced and expressed in congregational life?
- 2) How have you seen people supporting one another in your congregation?
- 3) How does your church show love to people outside the church?
- 4) When people do something new for the first time, is there affirmation expressed, criticism or silence?
- 5) How does your church respond to people who try and fail at a new ministry or responsibility?
- 6) What programmes or ministries in your church promote relationship building?
- 7) In what way do church members celebrate and have fun?
- 8) What opportunities does your church provide for building up love relationships amongst the people?
- 9) How do you consistently invite newcomers to be part of a small group?
- 10) How do you train small group leaders to develop community?
- 11) What is the quality of relationships among people on leadership teams?
- 12) How can you strengthen those relationships?
- 13) What unresolved conflicts, past or present, hinder you and/or your members from developing love relationships?
- 14) Using an example of conflict resolution in your church's recent history, how would you evaluate the ability of your congregation and you as a pastor to face and deal with conflict in a healthy manner?

Other Questions:

- 1) How do you provide specific guidelines for your people to love others within and outside the church?
- 2) What specific opportunities do you provide for reconciliation in the church?
- 3) In what ways is the Christian life of church members touching the lives of others?

- 4) What benefits has your church experienced from love relationships?
- 5) How are “love relationships” encouraged in each ministry of the church?
- 6) In what ways do people show the love of Christ to others outside your congregation?

Granberg (2008) summarises a strategy for increasing the Quality characteristic “Love Relationships” in the Church:

1. Conduct theme campaigns periodically on love, joy, peace, and other Christian traits important for the ‘one another’ life.
2. Provide regular opportunities for members to share how they have grown in love.
3. Provide opportunities for exercising love and laughter among the members.

5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to formulate a training programme (strategy) for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth based on Schwarz’s eight Quality Characteristics of a healthy church. Amongst other things, this strategy includes creating an awareness of the importance of church growth and motivating the church leaders to promote church growth in the church.

The eight quality characteristics affect the entire life of the church starting from the leader to the person in the pew. As the church studies and applies these eight Quality Characteristics, it becomes healthier and grows in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Love relationships are at the very centre of a healthy, growing church. As church members focus on their relationship to God, it encourages them to love their neighbours. This love is expressed in Christians sharing the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ with their neighbours and helping them in their need. As the church is moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes more effective

in its ministry and growth. The Holy Spirit thus enables the church to meet the needs of the people in the community.

As the church members minister within the church, the Holy Spirit gives to each member a gift or gifts for the building of the Body of Christ. As the church members use the gifts properly, the church grows and becomes healthy. The healthy church then bears much fruit – fruit that will last.

This Natural Church Development programme is a very useful strategy, for any church that is ready to apply its eight quality characteristics, since it is based on the Word of God. It has shown good results in churches throughout the world, wherever it has been applied. It is not a once-off programme, but an ongoing process for all churches that want to experience growth.

If a person desires to be healthy and strong, he or she exercises and takes proper medication. Likewise for the church to be healthy and strong, it needs to promote the eight Quality Characteristics of a healthy church. Prayer and dedication enables the church to walk this road.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6 the researcher will attempt to offer a synthesis of the research by providing: (1) a restatement of the research problem and the research objectives; (2) a summary of the research findings; (3) recommendations regarding the implementation of this research; (4) the contribution of this research to Practical Theology and; (5) a conclusion.

6.2 Restatement of the research problem and the research objectives

In this section the researcher will restate the research problem and the research objectives with the purpose of reviewing the findings, drawing conclusions and making recommendations. The main objective was to develop a training programme (strategy) for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church.

6.2.1 Restatement of the research problem

The following questions summarise the main research problem:

- (a) What are the biblical and theological foundations of Church growth? (Chapter 3)
- (b) What are the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church? (Chapter 4)
- (c) What are main components of a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church? (Chapter 5)

6.3.2 Restatement of the research objectives

The following are the main objectives of this research:

- (a) The first objective of this study is to provide a historical overview, a literature review and critical evaluation of the Church Growth Movement (Chapter 2).

- (b) The second objective is to present the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth (Chapter 3).
- (c) The third objective is to investigate the main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church (Chapter 4).
- (d) The fourth objective is to develop a training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church (Chapter 5) based on the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth in Chapter 3 and the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 4.

6.4 Summary of the research findings

6.3.1 A review of the Church Growth movement

Chapter 2 provided a historical overview, a literature review, and critical evaluation of the Church Growth Movement. This included (1) a Profile of the Church Growth Movement; (2) a description of the strengths and weaknesses of McGavran's six key Church Growth principles; (3) the ten leading principles of today's Church Growth Movement, as well as a critique of its strengths and weaknesses; and (4) a summary of Healthy Church Surveys, including a review of Christian Schwarz's book, *Natural Church Development*.

It was concluded that the Church Growth Movement leaders have played an important role in promoting the vision of Church Growth and that much research and planning needs to be done in order to train leaders in the important field of church growth.

6.3.2 A Review of the Biblical and Theological foundations of Church Growth

Chapter 3 provided a description of church growth from a Biblical and theological perspective with special reference to Schwarz's eight characteristics of a healthy church. In particular, Chapter 3 dealt with (1) a Biblical understanding of growing the church; (2) The Great Commission as the priority

of the church for church growth; (3) a Biblical portrait of a healthy church (Acts 2:42-47); (4) Biblical images of the Church and the principles of church growth; and (5) a Biblical perspective of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church.

Schwarz's model was found to be a suitable Biblical model for evaluating church growth in a particular congregation. Chapter 3 concluded that it is God's desire for His church to grow and that the church grows by the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it was found that God seeks faithful men and women who are ready to witness for Him, so that His kingdom might be extended.

6.3.3 A Review of the empirical survey of the Ebenezer Baptist Church

In Chapter 4 an empirical survey was conducted among the members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in order to ascertain their perceptions regarding the main obstacles to church growth in terms of Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church. The purpose of the research was to determine the need for a training programme to promote church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The empirical research revealed the following findings regarding the top four obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth:

1. Empowering Leadership	56%
2. Gift-Oriented Ministry	60%
3. Need-Oriented Evangelism	61%
4a Holistic Small Groups	65%
4b Passionate Spirituality	65%

In the qualitative section of the empirical research the respondents revealed the following reasons why they perceived the above quality characteristics as

obstacles to church growth. They also indicated the following possible *reasons* for and *solutions* to the problem:

(1) Empowering Leadership (56%):

Reasons: Lack of delegation; ineffective leadership

Solutions: Leadership training; the need for delegation

(2) Gift-oriented Ministry (60%)

Reasons: Reluctance to participate in ministries; lack of service opportunities provided

Solutions: Training in the nature and identification of Spiritual Gifts

(3) Need-oriented Evangelism (61%)

Reasons: Reluctance to participate in evangelism; false perceptions of evangelism (as being only for the chosen few)

Solutions: Training in the nature and importance Evangelism

(4a) Holistic Small Groups (65%)

Reasons: Insufficient small group leaders; reluctance to participate

Solutions: Training in how to run home cell groups; motivation to participate

(4b) Passionate Spirituality (65%)

Reasons: Lack of commitment to Christ and the church; lack of time for worship

Solutions: Provide more opportunities for worship; encourage people, especially the youth, to participate in worship and in prayer

6.3.4 A Review of the training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church

Chapter 5 presented a training programme (strategy) for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church based on Schwarz's Eight "Quality Characteristics" of a healthy church. The training programme was based on the Biblical and theological foundations of church growth in Chapter 3, as well as the findings of the empirical survey in Chapter 4.

In the training programme for promoting church growth and addressing the main obstacles to church growth (congregational change) each “Quality characteristic” section consisted of the following: (1) an overview of the “Quality characteristic” (a summary, a definition, and Biblical foundations); and (2) a strategy for improving the “Quality characteristic” in the Church.

In Chapter 5 it was found that the eight quality characteristics of a healthy church affect the entire life of a church. It was concluded that as the church seeks to enhance Schwarz’s the eight Quality characteristics of a healthy church in the lives of its members, the church becomes a healthy growing church. As the church members grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit enables them to meet the needs of the people in their community.

6.4 Recommendations

The recommendations for promoting church growth are too numerous to receive exhaustive treatment in a single study. However, the main recommendation regarding the components of a proposed training programme for promoting Church Growth (based on Schwarz’s model) in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth can be summarized as follows:

Recommended components of a training programme on Church Growth:

(1) Empowering Leadership

Leadership Seminar: How to equip others to serve.

(2) Gift-oriented Ministry

Spiritual Gifts Seminar: How to identify and implement your spiritual gifts.

(3) Passionate Spirituality

Seminar on Spiritual Growth: How to grow in spiritually and in your commitment to Christ.

(4) Functional structures

Seminar on Church management: How to organize your church in a way that glorifies God.

(5) Inspiring Worship

Seminar on Worship: How organize a worship team and a prayer team.

(6) Holistic Small Groups

Seminar on Home cells: How to lead a home cell group.

(7) Need-oriented Evangelism

Seminar on Evangelism: How to meet the needs of the lost and lead people to Christ.

(8) Loving relationships

Seminar on relationships: How to love and care for fellow Christians.

6.5 The contribution of the findings to Practical Theology

The research topic for this thesis, church growth and health, is but one facet of Practical Theology. Although the study was confined to the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, the research also presented Biblical and theological principles for church growth, which apply to all churches. Furthermore, the empirical survey affirmed the need for a training programme to promote church growth and to address obstacles to church growth in local congregations.

The findings of this study logically fit within the parameters of Practical Theology. It is hoped that the findings of this research, namely, the proposed training programme (strategy), will help to promote Biblical Church growth, not only in the context of this study, but also in the wider context of other local churches.

6.6 Conclusion

As a pastor of a church, the researcher is very much concerned about issues relating to Church growth, the involvement of church members in the ministry of the church, and the functioning of the spiritual gifts within the body of Christ. Church leaders, on the other hand, need to set an example and motivate church members to play their part in the ministries of the church. God has given special gifts to His church, so that believers can build up each other in Christ.

Paul points out the role of the pastor in this regard, when he says in Ephesians 4:12, 13 (NIV), “To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining measure of the fullness of Christ.”

The researcher is of the opinion that upon implementation of the recommendations of this study, in particular, the training programme for promoting Church growth, will enable the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth to move forward in a positive direction.

Appendix 1

Dear Pastor/Reverend

Questionnaire/Survey for identifying the main obstacles to Church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My studies in theology have directed me in the area of church growth. As part of my MTh studies with SATS on *A training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of the Schwarz model of a healthy church*. I am planning to conduct a survey, which deals with the main obstacles to church growth.

Because of the practical nature of this study, it is important to collect empirical data in order to establish how the church members assess their church in terms of the eight essential qualities of a healthy church.

My gratitude is extended to you and your leadership in showing your willingness to participate in this survey. May the Lord richly bless you!

I shall deliver the questionnaire to your office on the date we have discussed.

Please note:

1. I will be available to assist you on the day of handing out of the questionnaire to the church members.
2. Please request the church members to return the questionnaire after seven days.
3. I shall personally collect them from you after you have received them.

Yours in Christ

Mlungisi Mangwana (Pastor).

Appendix 2

Dear Pastor,

29 March 2008

A SURVEY FOR IDENTIFYING THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO CHURCH GROWTH IN THE EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH, NEW BRIGHTON, PORT ELIZABETH

This is to certify that Rev Mlungisi Mangwana is presently involved in doing research towards his MTh degree under the auspices of the South African Theological Seminary, entitled: *A training programme for promoting church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in terms of the Schwarz model of a healthy church.*

It would be greatly appreciated if you could allow him to conduct a survey amongst members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church by means of the completion of a Questionnaire - Sections A and B - relating to the main obstacles to church growth, according to the Schwarz model. The contents of the Questionnaire will be kept in strict confidence.

Your assistance in encouraging your church members to participate in the survey would be greatly appreciated and would make a large contribution towards the success of the research project.

Yours in Christ,

Dr Noel B Woodbridge

MTh Supervisor
SA Theological Seminary
Bible-based, Christ-centred, Spirit-led

Skype Name: noelbwpretoria
E-mail address: noel@sats.edu.za
Tel: 021-991-1858

Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

A survey on the obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church by Rev Mlungisi Mangwana in association with the South African Theological Seminary (SATS)

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Marital status:

Current church involvement: (e.g. Deacon, Sunday school teacher, Worship leader)

.....

Years of church involvement:

Date of Survey/Completion of Questionnaire:

1. Please note that your questionnaire will be held in strict confidence. The purpose of this survey is to establish the main obstacles to church growth, so please complete the Questionnaire as honestly as possible.
2. If you so wish, you may remain anonymous. Simply leave out your name, but fill in the rest of the data required.
3. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey.

**Identifying of the main obstacles to Church Growth in the Ebenezer
Baptist Church using the Schwarz model**

Questionnaire (Section A): Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church

1. Instructions on how to complete the Questionnaire (Section A)

For each of the “eight essential qualities of a healthy church” listed below, rate your church on a scale of 1-10 (on the next page of this Questionnaire). The object of this exercise is to identify the main obstacles to church growth in your church. When rating your church in these eight areas, please be as honest as possible.

2. Explanation of the meaning of the Eight Qualities of a Healthy Church

Quality Characteristic 1: Empowering Leadership

Leaders that equip others to serve (Eph 4:12)

Quality Characteristic 2: Gift-oriented Ministry

Tasks distributed according to spiritual gifts (1 Pet 4:10)

Quality Characteristic 3: Passionate Spirituality

Spiritual lives of members typify prayer, enthusiasm, and boldness (Rom 12: 11, 12)

Quality Characteristic 4: Functional structures

Structures that are useful for church growth here and now (Mark 2:27)

Quality Characteristic 5: Inspiring Worship

Worship is an inspiring experience to church members (1 Thes 5:16-19)

Quality Characteristic 6: Holistic Small Groups

Small groups that meet the real needs of its members (Acts 2:46-47)

Quality Characteristic 7: Need-oriented Evangelism

Evangelism that is related to the needs of the lost (1 Cor 9:20-22)

Quality Characteristic 8: Loving relationships

Church relationships that are characterised by love and affection (Jn 13:34-35)

Questionnaire (Section A): Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church

Once you have studied the *Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church* (See previous page), **please rate the Ebenezer Baptist Church in terms of the Schwarz model on a scale of 1-10.**

Simply place the appropriate number (from 1 to 10) in the appropriate box below (Scale: No. 1 being *Very poor* and No. 10 being *Excellent*).

<u>Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church</u>	<u>Scale</u>
Rate your church in terms of each of the following qualities:	From 1 to 10
Quality characteristic 1: Empowering Leadership	
Quality Characteristic 2: Gift-oriented Ministry	
Quality Characteristic 3: Passionate Spirituality	
Quality Characteristic 4: Functional Structures	
Quality Characteristic 5: Inspiring Worship	
Quality Characteristic 6: Holistic Small Groups	
Quality Characteristic 7: Need-oriented Evangelism	
Quality Characteristic 8: Loving Relationships	

Questionnaire (Section B): The main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church

(Your FOUR lowest ratings of the “Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church”)

Instructions on how to complete the Questionnaire (Section B)

1. Once you have completed the above Questionnaire (Section A) it will enable you to identify the FOUR main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, i.e., the FOUR “essential qualities of a healthy church” with the lowest scores (ratings).
2. Place the four “main obstacles to church growth” in your church in the spaces provided in Questionnaire (Section B) (on the next page). The number one position being the, “essential quality of a healthy church” that has the lowest score (rating) and the fourth position being the “essential quality of a healthy church” with the fourth lowest score (rating).
3. Briefly explain (in one or two sentences) in the spaces provided in column 3 (on the next page), the reason why you believe that that particular “essential quality of a healthy church” is an obstacle to church growth in your church. If necessary, provide an example from your own experience as a church member or adherent.
4. Make a brief suggestion in the space provided in Column 4 (the next page) regarding a possible solution (Biblical and/or practical). That is: In your opinion, how could the problem (the particular obstacle to church growth) be solved? In other words: How do you think the situation in your church could be improved?

Thank you for your participation in this survey. May the Lord bless you in your ministry as you continue to serve in His church!

Mlungisi Mangwana.

Questionnaire (Section B): Obstacles to Church growth in your Church

1. **Please place the FOUR main obstacles to church growth in the Ebenezer Baptist Church** that you have identified in Questionnaire (Section A) (i.e., the FOUR, “essential qualities of a healthy church” with the lowest scores/ratings), from (No. 1) the lowest score to (No. 4) the fourth lowest Score.
2. **Then answer the questions posed in Columns 3 and 4** (in one or two sentences) for each of the FOUR “obstacles to church growth” in the Ebenezer Baptist Church (see example of essential quality number 1 provided below).

The Four Main Obstacles to Church growth	Brief description of the obstacle to church growth (as described in Section A)	Briefly explain why you think that this is an obstacle to church growth. If necessary, provide an example from your experience as a church member.	What would you suggest to solve the problem of this particular obstacle to church growth in your church?
<u>Example</u> 1	<i>Empowering leadership</i>	<i>The Church leaders are not equipping the church members to serve in the local church.</i>	<i>I suggest that the church leaders provide proper training to equip church members to serve in the local church.</i>
First			
Second			
Third			
Fourth			

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