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MS 615 Foundations of Church Growth

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Recommended Citation

MS 615   Foundations of Church Growth
ME 700   Principles of Church Growth

Fall Semester, 2004
E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism,
Asbury Theological Seminary
Instructor: George Hunter

I. Course Description:

"The foundational principles and strategies of the Church Growth movement pioneered by Donald McGavran (with newer insights from several disciplines) seen as one informed approach to strategy development in mission and evangelism and as a means to inform congregational and denominational outreach and expansion. Focus upon North American and Third World cases."

II. Course Objectives:

1. To raise consciousness regarding the "strategy" dimensions of the practice of Christian evangelism and mission.
2. To orient the student to the Church Growth approach to informing mission strategy and Christian evangelization.
3. To equip the student with the classical principles, and some of the newer insights, discovered by Church Growth (and similar approaches to)research, .
4. To develop the capacity to critique ministries and approaches to evangelism and mission, and thereby advance the practice.
5. To facilitate the student's beginning contribution to Church Growth research, reflection, and literature.

III. Textbooks:

The following textbooks are for students in MS 615 and ME 700. The literature, especially McGavran's Understanding Church Growth, should be perceived as the heart of the course. Class sessions will stimulate deeper reading, provide perspective, headline some themes and expand upon others, fill gaps, suggest implications and applications, and facilitate learning and strategic thinking. Class sessions may involve varied technologies, such as lectures, experiential lectures, case studies, visiting speakers, films, maps, data gener-ation, simulations, pencil and paper instruments, reports, processing of assigned readings, etc.

A. Read EACH of the following:

1. Donovan, Vincent J. Christianity Rediscovered. Orbis, 1979. This autobiographical case study, one of the most engaging and moving books in all of missiological literature, focuses on the planting of indigenous Catholic Christianity among Masai people in East Africa. It dramatizes the central "apostolic" issue of starting a Christian movement from scratch among an unreached people.

2. Arn, Win and Charles Arn. The Master's Plan for Making Disciples. Baker Book House, 1998.

3. Donald A. McGavran. Understanding Church Growth, Third Edition. Eerdmans, 1990. The authoritative text in the field of Global Church Growth, written by "the Father of the Church Growth Movement." The second and third editions include "Eurica" within the world's mission fields, thus making this a definitive general text, although the third edition-- condensed by C. Peter Wagner, made some unfortunate omissions.

4.. Winter, Ralph D. and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. <u>Perspectives on the World Christian Movement</u>, Third Edition. William Carey Library, 1999. In this course, we assign only a "bakers dozen" articles (primarily from the "Strategic Perspective" section) from this widely used collection, but every serious mission student will own this book.

B. Read ANY TWO of the following:

5. Charles Arn. <u>White Unto Harvest: Evangelizing Today's Senior Adults</u>. Monrovia, CA: Institute for American Church Growth, 2003. A cogent research-based report on approaches to reaching a distinct target population.

6. Hunter, George G. Hunter, III. <u>To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit</u>. Abingdon, 1987. Drawing from twentieth century studies, as well as from John Wesley's strategic genius.

7. _____. <u>Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism</u>. Abingdon, 2003. Delineates a case for, and approaches to, a more "apostolic" way of "doing church" among pre-Christian populations.

8. McIntosh, Gary. Biblical Church Growth. Baker, 2003. This is new engaging treatment, especially useful for people with any doubts about whether the Church Growth approach to mission and evangelism is rooted biblically.

9. Schaller, Lyle E. <u>44 Steps Up Off the Plateau</u>. Abingdon, 1993. A range of "interventions" for churches "stuck" at their present membership strength, by the writer who knows more about churches than anyone else who ever lived!

10. Schwartz, Christian. <u>Natural Church Development</u>. ChurchSmart Resources, 1996. Currently the most widely praised (and critiqued) book in the field; purports to profile churches that experience growth through health.

C. The following additional books are required for students taking the 700 level course.

10. Donald A. McGavran. <u>The Bridges of God</u>. New York, Friendship Press, 1955. McGavran's 1955 "bombshell", challenging the widespread arrested (mission station stage) development of the world Christian movement, and delineating his early strategic conclusion about how the gospel characteristically spreads along social network lines within people groups.

11.. Donald A. McGavran. <u>How Churches Grow</u>. New York, Friendship Press, 1959.

12. Read one of the field studies in which McGavran was a principal writer, such as the following: <u>Multiplying Churches in the Philippines</u>; <u>Church Growth in Jamaica</u>; <u>Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India</u>; <u>Church Growth in Mexico</u>; <u>Zaire: Midday in Missions</u>. (The student may choose some other field study if he or she is particularly interested in the field.)

D. In addition, the following articles are accessible within the ESJ icon on Asbury Seminary's website. (Report any difficulty to Julee Bellar 858-2259) The student may either read each article on-line, or print it out.
   a) Hunter, "The Legacy of Donald McGavran"
   b) _____. "Learn Why Some Churches are Growing."
   c) _____, "Top Ten Reasons for NOT Leaving Evangelism to the Pastor."
   d) _____. "Reaching WAY OUT in Urban Evangelism"
   e) _____. "Mega-Churches"
   f) _____. "Examining the 'Natural Church Development' Project"

IV. <u>Writing Assignment Options for the Course</u>:

   The instructor expects the student to accept responsibility for his/her own learning. This responsibility will normally be exercised through regular and involved class attendance, the thorough reading of the assigned textbooks and readings, a final examination, and the completion of one writing assignment.

   All students will need to submit to the instructor, by the class session on **December 9th**, a (say) 12 to 15 page **research paper**, which should be based upon some appropriate blend of <u>library</u> research **and** <u>field</u> research. Consider the following options for the paper:

1. The story and analysis of the growth history of <u>a local church</u>, emphasizing the causes of the growth that might be reproducible or adaptable for other churches. In most cases, the student would normally focus on the recent growth of the church, say within the past decade, but a more historical analysis of a significant growth period would be welcome.

2. The story and analysis of the growth history of <u>a unit</u> of a (presumably large) local church, emphasizing the causes of the growth that might be reproducible or adaptable for other churches. "Unit" here refers to, say, a specific worship service, or the Sunday School, or even a specific Sunday School class, or the youth ministry, or the recovery ministry, or some other organized part of the church.

3. The story and analysis of the local spread of the gospel among some distinct target population, such as "builders" or "boomers" or "busters," or unchurched men, or youth, or single adults, or retarded adults, or deaf people, or addictive people, or a distinctive ethnic population or socio-economic class. (Students will find the categories (and modeling) in Arn's <u>White Unto Harvest</u> to be very useful for this option.

4. One **may** submit a more traditional term paper, on a Church Growth topic or the main insights of some specific wsriter, instead of one of the field research assignments. Students so inclined may see the instructor to get feedback on a proposed topic. The supplementary bibliography at the end of this syllabus will be especially useful to students doing a traditional term paper.

   For any of the first three options, the student needs to identify, <u>early</u> in the course, the local church (or churches) in which to do the field research. The student will negotiate and do on-site "field research" (interviews, observation, and focused historical analysis) to determine causes for the growth. Base the paper upon the most insightful and promising data that you collect -- much of which will illustrate some established church growth principles, some of which may lead you to suggest new hypotheses. The paper may include anecdotal, and even inspirational, material derived from the field research.
   Many students will need to identify their topic early, especially in regard to a topic that might require inter-library loan or data to be sent from some field. Whichever option you choose, write the paper so that it can be understood by someone who has not taken a Church Growth course.

V. <u>Final Exam</u>:

   All students will need to complete, **December 13th**., 8:00-10:00 A. M., a **final examination** covering the assigned readings, class sessions, and other course resources. The instructor expects the exam to call for short essays--for which the student should bring several <u>blue books</u> for the exam.
   Those taking the 700 level version of the course will want to prepare for an "extra" question on the final exam: "Trace the development of Church Growth insight in the mind of Donald McGavran, and delineate some of the major strategic conclusions of Church Growth research, with some regard to a particular field of mission."

Students taking the 600 level version of the course will have 1 and 1/2 hours to complete the exam. Students taking the 700 version will have 2 hours. In each version of the exam, international students (for whom English is a second language) may take an additional half hour to complete the exam.

About one-half of the student's **grade** for the course will be based upon performance on the examination, and almost half on the research paper, with secondary weight given to class attendance, involvement, and contribution.

Course Outline
(Subject to Modification)

September 9: Introduction to Church Growth Lore

      1. Origins, Distinctives, and Relevance of the Church Growth tradition.

      2. Representative Strategic Insights from Church Growth lore.

                  Film: "How to Grow a Church"

September 16: The Role of Research in Generating New Church Growth Insight
Come to class having read McGavran, chapters 1-8, and Hunter's "Learn Why Some Churches Are Growing."

    1. Research Approaches in Church Growth
    2. Presentation: "Evangelism: The Ministry of Helping People Become Christians."
    3. Presentation: "The Fifth and Sixth Essential Ways in Which Churches Grow"

            Video: Inuit segment from "Transformations II"

September 23: The Process of Planting a Christian Movement in an Unreached People.
  Come to class having read Donovan's <u>Christianity Rediscovered</u>, and having written **a one-page paper**:

    a. Students in the MS 615 version of the course: Submit to the instructor, **by Thursday at   11:00 A. M.,** on **one page**, your answers to these questions:
      1) What was THE MAJOR PROBLEM that Donovan perceived, early, relating to the mission station's relationship and ministries to the Masai people? Succinctly state and   describe.
      2) Where else have you observed some form of this problem? Describe briefly.
       Be prepared to <u>present</u> these insights to the class (3 minutes maximum).
    <u>The instructor encourages you to bring a copy of your one page paper for each class member.</u>

    b. Students in the ME 700 version of the course: Submit to the instructor, **by Thursday at noon,** on **one page**, your understanding of the steps that Donovan took to reach the Masai people--expressed as <u>generic</u> steps. (For example, Donovan learned the Masai language. A generic version of that step might be "Learn the language of the receptor population.") Do <u>not</u> copy Donovan's own (partial) internal summaries of his principles, such as the material on pp. 162-3; he wrote that section "off the top," and neglected to summarize some of his essential steps. Do <u>your own</u> summary of, say, the 10 to 20 generic principles involved in planting Christianity among an unreached people. Feel free to add, with an asterisk*, any essential steps for which you are confident-- that are not prominent in Donovan's case study. Be prepared to present these insights to the class (3 minutes). <u>The instructor encourages you to bring a copy of your one page paper for each class member.</u>

1. Vincent Donovan communion homily: "The Gospel for the World"
2. Several student presentations on THE PROBLEM Donovan identified..
3. Several student presentations on "Generic Steps in Reaching a People."
4. Presentation: "The <u>Stages</u> in the History of a Mission"

September 30: <u>Characteristics</u> of Growing Churches.
  Come to class having read Hunter's a) "The Legacy of Donald McGavran," b) "Examining the 'Natural Church Development' Project," and c) McGavran, chapters 9-11

    1. Presentation: Several Perspectives on the <u>Characteristics</u> of Healthy Growing Churches.
        a.   Lyle Schaller b. Peter Wagner c. Christian Schwarz

    2. Presentation: The Saarinen Model of "Stages" in a Church's Life
    3. Win Arn's Characteristics of Growing Churches.
        Film: "But I'm Just a Layman"

October 7: Perennial and Universal "Mega-Strategies" for Expansion Growth.
Come to class having read a)McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, chapters 12-14, and b) Arn, <u>The Master's Plan for Making Disciples.</u>.

October 14: Complexity and Strategy
Come to class having read a) Hunter, "Top Ten Reasons for NOT Leaving Evangelism to the Pastor," and b) McGavran, <u>Understanding Church Growth</u>, chapters 15-21.

    1. Presentation: The Complex and Varied Patterns of Church Growth
    2. Presentation: Essential Questions, Historical Landmarks, and Pivotal Decisions in Mission Strategy

October 21: Typology and Quality

    1. Presentation: How Church "Typology" Can Inform Church Growth

    2. Presentation: Finding One's Way through the "Quality vs. Quantity" Debate

October 28: Toward the Application of Conversion Studies and Organization Studies

    1. Presentation: Can Church Leaders Learn from Conversion Studies?

    2. Presentation: Can Church Leaders Learn from Organization Effectiveness Studies?

November 4: No class: Instructor at American Society for Church Growth annual meeting.

In these two weeks, read, in the <u>Perspectives</u> text, articles 35, 37, 38, 44, 62, 72, 75, 76, 77, 86, 88, 90, and 91.

November 11: No class: Instructor at National Communication Association meeting.

November 18: The First Mega-Challenge: Reaching Peoples.

    DAWN video.

November 25: Thanksgiving Break

December 2: The Second Mega-Challenge: Reaching Cities
Come to class having read Hunter, "Reaching WAY OUT in Urban Evangelism."

Lausanne video: "God is Building a City."

December 9: The Third Mega-Challenge: Reaching the Secular West.
Come to class having read Hunter's article "Mega-Churches."

1. Profiling and Reaching Secular People
2. The Kind of Church That Reaches Secular People

Video: "A Church for the Twenty-first Century."

December 9 Research paper due.

December 13: Final Exam, 8:00-9:30 (10:00 for English-as-Second-Language Students)

Supplemental Selected Bibliography

(Not all of these studies are done by authors within the Church Growth missiological tradition, but they nevertheless provide helpful insight or perspective)

Themes in Church Growth (and related) Studies:

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Barrett, David B. Evangelize!: A Historical Survey of the Concept. New Hope Press, 1987.
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Conn, Harvie M. Eternal Word and Changing Worlds. Zondervan, 1984.
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Costas, Orlando. The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique From the Third World. Tyndale
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Dayton, Edward R. That Everyone May Hear: Reaching the Unreached. MARC, 1983.
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Dubose, Francis. How Churches Grow in an Urban World. Broadman, 1978.
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    Neighborhood. Abingdon, 1999.

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Hemphill, Ken. The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth. Baptist Sunday School Board, 1991.

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_____. Leading and Managing a Growing Church. Abingdon, 2000.

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Pastors have large effects on church growth: replacing a 25th percentile pastor with a 75th percentile one increases annual attendance growth by three percent, similar to the effect of a ten percent increase in the surrounding county's population. A pastor's performance in his first church — which is largely the result of random assignment — is strongly predictive of his performance in future congregations, suggesting a causal effect of pastors on church growth. In this paper, we document the impact of pastors on attendance growth, our primary measure of pastor success in furthering the church's mission. MIX at Foundations Church, Loveland, Colorado. 400 likes. Follow our new page at Foundations Students starting March 2020. The launch of our new Foundations Student pages starts today. For all updates related to our student ministries, follow our new instagram account: @foundationsstudents2020. MIX at Foundations Church. 1 March ·. Follow our new Foundations Students page!