



CHURCH GROWTH
LEADERSHIP THEORY AND M.B. THEOLOGY

CONSULTATION
COPY

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INTRODUCTION

"Church Growth" is essentially a new way to describe evangelism and mission. It was coined by Donald McGavran who is credited with founding the Church Growth movement. In many ways it is a leadership movement in that it calls the church leaders to concerted action and to new ways of thinking about evangelism and missions. For McGavran, Church Growth means "All that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership."¹

Peter Wagner's definition of Church Growth is more comprehensive. "Church growth is that science which investigates the nature, function and health of the Christian church as it relates specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all 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 behavioral sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference, the foundational work done by Donald McGavran."²

The basic theme of Church Growth was embodied in the constant focus of Donald McGavran who throughout his life called for church leaders to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (panta ta ethne). He was relentless in his efforts to refocus leaders, schools and churches to the priorities of making disciples of all nations. Kent Hunter, in his profile of Donald McGavran in the tribute issue of Global Church Growth, suggests that not only did he model a life of single focus but that his leadership style is exemplary and proves true the Marshall McLuhan adage that the medium is the message.³ If Church Growth has produced a leadership model that is worthy of

emulation, it is that of the founder himself. The Church Growth movement has not only produced volumes of leadership theory but has in its founder left us a leadership legacy.

McGavran, after many years of missionary life, came forward with the conviction that the efforts put forth in mission and evangelism around the world should produce a greater spiritual harvest. In a sense he started a movement to reinvent missions, to use the popularized phrase used today to update or transform an outmoded or unproductive system. In many ways the Church Growth movement is suggesting that the church needs to undergo a major "reorientation". There are those who feel that most of what is happening in the present church is based on past relevancies and needs to be completely overhauled. Those in this school of thought feel that the church, like the crumbling family and like many declining businesses, is dysfunctional in its present state and therefore conclude that change is the only option. The worship patterns need to change, the organizational structures need to change, leadership styles need to change, music needs to change, prayer needs to change, evangelism needs to change and training methods need to change. The overall feeling here is that the church needs to be "reinvented and converted" to fit the present information age. Church Growth leadership theory is based on church change for more effective evangelism.

The Church Growth movement can no longer be put into a tidy tight idea box. It is a growing, worldwide movement both in thought and in character. The Church Growth focus from Asia expresses itself in explosive and inspirational terms and is driven by a freedom of the Holy Spirit. The Church Growth expression coming from British leaders has a distinct character of spiritual renewal and revitalization. The Church Growth in Canada is driven less by individuals and more by the cooperation of denominational leaders and church related agencies under the Vision 2000 Canada umbrella. It was not until the decade of the 80s that Canada began to articulate its own Church Growth character and surface its own leadership and written materials. The Church Growth character in Canada is intentional and relational and distributed across the country in terms of leadership. The Church Growth that comes from the United States, the country that gave birth to the movement, has a character that reflects an extroversion leadership style. Church Growth is shaped more by high profile individuals in the U.S.

Note *

The Mennonite Brethren have greatly benefited from the Church Growth models that come from both the church practitioners and from the academic theoreticians. In Canada Church Growth finds the British renewal models more applicable than some of the flamboyant large church models coming from some of the larger cities in the U.S.

The object of this paper is to explore some of the areas of commonness that exist between the wide spectrum of M.B. leadership theologies and practice with the various N.A. Church Growth theories of leadership. An attempt will be made to harmonize Mennonite Brethren leadership theology with Church Growth theory.

I. MENNONITE BRETHREN LEADERSHIP THEOLOGY/PRACTICE AND CHURCH GROWTH

The North American Mennonite Brethren have been careful over the years to articulate a leadership style and governance pattern that has reflected their understanding of a biblical church. Until recently governance and leadership expression among Mennonite Brethren have had a fair degree of uniformity even though the broader Mennonite experience has been fairly diverse.

The pattern of congregational government among Mennonite Brethren varies with the regions and from church to church. In broad strokes one might say the smaller the church is, the more congregational the practice and the larger the church, the more centralized the decision making tends to become. The governance patterns are also related to church age. The older, more traditional churches seem to be more congregational and the more recent church plants tend to go with a governance structure of church elders. The other observation can be made that those churches that are more intentional about their growth and church planning tend to have a more centralized form of governance.

Mennonite Brethren have always thought of themselves as having a strong biblical pattern of leadership. Church leadership has always been an important subject.

A. Leadership is Missional - ch. growth high, M.B. fair
B. Leadership Sharing both strong

Much of the discussion over the years has been related to minimizing the distinction between clergy and laity. Mennonite Brethren have been quick to

embrace the leadership models of scripture that affirms congregation involvement. The Church Growth leaders also strongly affirm the involvement of the congregation in ministry. Both groups have noted that:

1. The leadership in the New Testament churches appears to be multiple rather than single. There was a plurality of leaders and a sharing of responsibilities (Acts 6).
2. There appears to be a universality or decentralization of ministry with each one serving according to spiritual giftedness (Eph. 4).
3. There also seemed to be a consultative relationship between leaders somewhat akin to a conference brotherhood for discussing and deciding difficult church situations (Acts 15).
4. There were some leaders who worked in the interest of a number of churches again something like a conference area minister (II Cor. 8:18-19).
5. There was the priesthood of all believers which gives equal access to Christ and spiritual equality as heirs of Christ. (I Peter 2:9; Eph. 1:14)
6. There was a spirit of mutuality and of submitting to one another in love and respect. (Rom. 12)
7. There was also a strong awareness that greatness means servanthood. (Matt. 20:26-28; John 12:26)

G. Leadership Humility

M.B. Strong Ch. Sr. weak

Leadership among Mennonite Brethren has also reflected an attempt to live within the paradox of leadership strength and weakness as George Shillington calls it in his paper, "Strength in Weakness: Paradox for the Church."⁴ Mennonite Brethren like to describe their leaders as servant leaders who lead from a position of humility. The Church Growth movement has been weak on these biblical leadership assumptions.

1. The work of Christ seems to be at its best when we minister from a position of dependency and weakness (II Cor. 11:16 - 12:10).
2. The disciples were convinced that the essence of true leadership and followership had to do with self sacrifice, self denial and of losing ones life to find it (Matt. 10:38).
3. Leadership success and victory must be seen as a willingness to suffer for Christ and to become like Him in His death (Phil. 3:10).

4. Leadership is also a call to preach the foolishness of Christ amidst a society of mockery and worldly wisdom. God uses the weak to confound the wise (I Cor. 1:18 - 2:5).

5. The church leaders made themselves accountable to the congregation for the work that God had done through them (Acts 14:29).

D. Leadership Honour *Ed M. better than MB*

There is also a leadership modelling in the New Testament that portrays a less congregational style which is equally important for the church today. The Church Growth leaders have been more ready to emphasize these qualities than the Mennonite Brethren have been accustomed to doing in their theology of equalness.

1. The body of Christ was instructed to obey their leaders and to submit to their authority given that they must give an account for their work among the congregation (Heb. 13:17).

2. The leaders (elders) who direct the affairs of the church are to be considered worthy of double honor (I Tim. 5:17).

3. There was a call to respect and to hold in highest regard those who have leadership roles within the church (I. Thess. 5:12-13).

4. The leaders are described as shepherds of God's flock who served as overseers and caregivers of the body in a "non-lording" way (I Peter 5:2-3; Acts 20:28).

5. The leaders of the church are to be financially supported by the congregation (I Cor. 9:14).

E. Leadership Qualification *MB stronger, Ch. M. weaker*

Important to the Mennonite Brethren understanding of biblical leadership has been the character and spirituality of church leaders. They have taken seriously the biblical qualification for ministers, deacons or elders and pastoral staff. These qualifications are discerned and assured through the congregational appointment process. The Church Growth focus here is often more on being technically qualified.

1. They must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (I Tim. 3:2-3).

2. They must manage their own family well and see that their children

obey with proper respect ... not a recent convert, or he may become conceited ... have a good reputation with outsiders and so avoid falling into disgrace (I Tim. 3:4-7).

3. They must first be tested and if there is nothing against them they are permitted to serve. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience not pursuing dishonest gain (I Tim. 3:9-10).

4. The leadership of the church is recruited, discerned and guided by the church (Acts 6).

E. Leadership Modelling

There has been no leadership model for Mennonite Brethren as powerful as that modelled by Christ and His followers. Seeing the actions and responses of the biblical leaders has been very instructive. These lessons continue to shape both the Mennonite Brethren and Church Growth leadership styles.

1. We learn from Christ a relational, informal style in small groups which turned into more assertive and directive leadership in task situations such as the feeding of the five thousand and the sending out of the seventy.

2. We learn that Christ gave more leadership time to his primary leaders Peter, James and John than to the larger group. He balanced his time between individuals, small groups and large group involvements.

3. In Peter and Paul we see aggressive extrovert leadership while in Barnabas and Timothy we find a more subdued style. All were focused to reaching their world for Christ.

4. In James the pastor from Jerusalem we find considerable influence exercised in solving difficult church understanding. He models strong leadership.

5. In Acts we find that elders were assigned to give leadership to the emerging churches.

The overriding impression from the New Testament leaders is that they were orientated towards the great commission and highly motivated as stewards of the gospel, ambassadors of reconciliation and as co-labourers with Christ in extending the kingdom of God. They were risktakers in spiritual warfare and not easily thwarted in their vision for Christ. It seems as though their main concern was to fulfil the mission of Christ and to do so at great

sacrifice and risk. There were few road blocks that these leaders could not overcome.

F. Leadership Heritage - *strong linkage w. ch. gr.*

Basic to the Mennonite Brethren theology of leadership is their strong mission evangelism heritage. The fulfillment of the great commission is primary for them. The leadership in Mennonite Brethren churches have a history of seeking to lead their churches to be witnessing and growing churches. Here we find strong linkages with the Church Growth leadership theories.

1. Mennonite Brethren leaders stand in the tradition of the Anabaptist missionary vision were "witnessing to the spiritually lost or impoverished both within the MB brotherhood and beyond, became for them an inseparable part of the nature of the Church of Christ" to use the words of Cornelius Dyck.⁵ There continues to be a strong commitment to world wide missions.

2. M.B. leaders are constantly challenged to bring the church into conformity with their statement of faith which says, "We believe that the command to make disciples of all nations is the primary task of the church. Every member has the responsibility to be a witness to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and to call men to be reconciled to God."⁶ There is evidence in many churches that their leaders are taking this Church Growth statement seriously.

3. The M.B. ordination of pastors reinforces a commitment to the gospel. The church leadership manual (1985) defines ordination by the "laying on of hands as an act by the local church and conference, of affirming those called by God for the ministry of the gospel upon the examination of a candidate by a local church and the district/provincial Board of Reference and Council."⁷ This commitment and conviction to the gospel is a common thread among M.B. leadership. Most M.B. leaders would agree with Darrell Robins statement of church priority in the book, The Total Church. He says, "The mission of the church is to reach people and disciple them so they can reach other people and disciple them. This is the mission of Jesus. Consequently this is the mission of the local church."⁸

The Mennonite Brethren theology and philosophy of leadership fits well

with the intentions of the Church Growth movement which seeks to recover and reinstate witness and evangelism as the driving force of the Christian church. The words of Donald McGavran, the Church Growth forerunner, coincides with our mission heritage when he says, "According to the New Testament, evangelism should be located at the very centre of the activities and progress of the church, rather than the periphery. Evangelism is not simply one of many parallel thrusts of the church, some of which may be omitted. The Holy Spirit constantly impels Christians toward the rightful expansion of the church and the multiplication of congregations of the redeemed."*

This strong biblical basis for leadership understanding has resulted in a history of leadership with considerable church growth impact. We gratefully acknowledge, for our encouragement, the following evidences of God's blessing on our leadership. We have by the grace of God today!

1. A history of mission leadership that has made its impact felt around the world.
2. A strong network of regional/provincial church extension committees that give leadership to church planting.
3. A longstanding tradition of leadership training with a strong mission focus in these institutions.
4. A growing network of church leaders who are giving significant leadership to the Church Growth movement in both the U.S. and Canada.
5. A conference of churches that are committed to bringing people to Christ for salvation and into the body of Christ for meaningful worship, fellowship and service.
6. A vision statement that reflect a desire to see significant growth of our conference by the year 2000.

II. CONTEXTUAL REALITIES AND TRENDS AFFECTING CHURCH GROWTH LEADERSHIP FOR THE MENNONITE BRETHREN

Good leadership theology along with a considerable track record of growth does not mean all is well. There are some sobering realities that face church leaders today. The growth of Mennonite Brethren is affected by changing trends and historical realities.

A. Small Church Dominance

The dominance of small churches needs to be of concern to us as a conference. According to the 90-91 planner directory of the Mennonite Brethren Churches, we have a total of 333 churches, 202 in Canada and 131 in the U.S. A quick tally of these churches by membership shows the following configuration of size. The Arlin Rothauge categories are used.

SIZE	CANADA	U.S.	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
1 - 50	80	55	135	40.6%
50 - 150	55	43	98	29.1%
150 - 350	47	22	69	20.7%
350 - 500	13	6	19	5.7%
500 - 1000	4	4	8	2.4%
1000 plus	32	1	4	1.2%
	202	131	333	100%

2? (

Some interesting realities and questions emerge from this quick survey. According to the chart above 70 percent of our churches count a membership of 150 or less and 40 percent of the churches have a membership of less than fifty. A total of 63 percent of the U.S. churches and 56 percent of the Canadian churches have a membership of 100 or less (not shown on the grid). Of the 333 churches only 30 percent have a membership of more than 150 and 78 percent have a membership of 200 or less. Only 10 percent of the churches in Canada and the U.S. have a membership of 350 or more. The fact that 78.6 percent of the U.S. churches and 75.7 percent of the Canadian churches have a membership of less than 200 raises some serious questions about our theology of leadership. Is the fact that we are a denomination of small churches the result of a deliberate small church design or is it a product of our leadership theology? Is there something about our theology that keeps the majority of our churches small? Is this the way we want our denomination to be?

The majority of our churches have not been able to break the 200 barrier, as Wagner describes it. Does this say something about our vision and plans for growth or about our pastoral training approaches? Could it be that our emphasis in congregationalism, shared ministry, family network and heritage has produced a certain size of congregation? Isaac Block, in his 1990 paper "Church Size and Leadership Style", suggests that the size of a church may well be related to the church's theological moorings. He says, "Quite possibly the small church in which the pastor functions as an enabler among the people is the optimum size for a church when theological considerations are taken into account."¹⁰

The small church reality and slow growth of many churches could well be related to the shortage of evangelism leaders within our churches generally. We have not been able to maintain the balance of Ephesians 4:11 which names evangelists among apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for the work of service. It seems as though the role and presence of evangelists is virtually non-existent in our conferences. There is clearly a need for more practising evangelists, more evangelism training and stronger Church Growth pastoral leadership within our conference of churches.

B. Change Vibrations

In a 1989 fall survey taken in five provinces involving 187

pastors/leaders from 67 M.B. churches at regional meetings called by the Board of Evangelism to assess church growth trends in Canada, the church leaders provided information that suggests changes are coming.¹¹ The implied changes could lead to a future of more Church Growth activity. The survey shows both concerns and trends toward stronger leadership.

1. Outreach/evangelism and leadership surfaced as the top two in a list of six in answer to the question of what they considered to be the major weaknesses of the Mennonite Brethren denomination (outreach evangelism, leadership, preaching, music, mission, doctrine).

2. Clarifying leadership, evangelism and outreach, unified vision and prayer renewal kept recurring as the most crucial issues facing the Mennonite Brethren denomination today.

3. Intercessory prayer, commitment to the task, renewal and revival, strong leadership training and modelling were listed as some of the major issues to see our churches experience healthy evangelism growth.

4. The survey indicates that only 55 percent of churches provide evangelism training, 57 percent have evangelism committees, 46 percent have done a community survey, 69 percent have evangelism assigned to the pastor's job description and 69 percent practice outreach visitation.

5. The survey shows 94 percent think their church has potential for growth; 85 percent divide the church into small groups for fellowship and caring; 91 percent have seasonal program highlights for the purposes of inviting friends and neighbours and 76 percent have an advertising program.

6. On their views on Church Growth, 80 percent strongly agree that the church needs to set goals for consistent growth, 89 percent strongly agree that for the church to grow the laity needs to be mobilized around the vision of its leaders, 90 percent strongly agree that for the church to grow consistently, it needs to be prepared to evaluate and change programs and 78 percent strongly agree that for consistent growth, a church needs to have a written philosophy of ministry.

7. In order to reach the 25-40 age bracket, 78 percent strongly agreed that the church needs to change its music and worship to a more contemporary style.

8. In light of the rapid growth and mission expansion of charismatic

type churches, 58 percent agree that the M.B. Church should consider a more charismatic approach to theology and practice.

9. Fifty-six percent said yes, our church has introduced major program changes in the last two years to address community needs.

This survey is pushing in the direction of change. In some ways it serves as a notice of motion to a more intentional leadership style, more aggressive evangelism and to a more contemporary and charismatic worship format.

C. Baby Boomers Trend

There is a growing group of emerging leaders between the ages 25 - 45 who are not institutionally oriented. Elaborate conference structures and church committees are not that important to them. They are part of the generation with little tolerance for theory and tradition.

They have little ownership in the institutions created by their parents and have a need to create new structures and ministries.

This anti-institution baby boomer mood is reinforced by a parallel trend which John Naisbitt calls horizontal rather than institutional resourcing. He observes that the top down authoritarian management style is yielding to a networking style of management where people learn from one another horizontally, where everyone is a resource for everyone else.¹² Church Growth pastors are often seen in groups sharing their experiences and innovations. This leadership trend is clearly in the direction of less structure and fewer layers of oversight.

This more consultative, collaborative leadership trend needs to be taken seriously in the face of the growing church trend to have an eldership style of leadership. These two converging trends could be the cause for a new kind of conflict over power and authority.

The gap between leadership models of music style and worship format also appears to be age related. For the most part congregations are following the traditional pre-war organizational understanding while the baby boomer leadership mind-set is tuned more to the post war contemporary information age. For many churches and leaders, the changes called for is a "Quantum Leap." Much of which was held important by the past generation of leaders is of little consequence to some of the younger and visa versa. The church leadership visions may need to be shared and shaped to a greater degree

through process and collaborative interaction in order to gain grass roots church ownership and cross generational leadership acceptance.

The Church Growth leadership theoreticians address these contextual factors and trends. In many ways they serve the church as a bridge into the future. They have brought new understanding and experience to the current church leadership evolution. Many Mennonite Brethren churches have done well in incorporating the younger generation of leaders.

D. Leadership Elders

Growing churches tend to have a unified church governance structure led by spiritually qualified elders. This pattern toward leadership by elders in churches today is in many ways a return to the early years of the Mennonite Brethren Church. On the Centennial celebration address in 1960, John A. Toews talked about a need to change the elected democratic church governance structures of the day. He said the representative administrative councils are "no substitute for spiritual and biblical leadership. If church leadership is an administrative function, the congregation loses its character as a spiritual community and sinks to the level of a secular organization."¹³

He furthermore contends, "In our Mennonite Brethren congregations the church council has as a rule consisted of ministers and deacons ..." The council of elders or church council consisted of spiritually mature brethren who on the basis of their spiritual character and endowment, are chosen and appointed for this service."¹⁴ There continues to be a theological conflict in the minds of some churches with the current trend toward a more centralized, eldership governance structure. The more democratic type of elected committees and church councils are considered to be more in keeping with our traditional interpretation of the priesthood of all believers and servanthood leadership. Church Growth consultant, Bob Orr, suggests that the different organizational patterns may vary in their effectiveness to fulfill the churches' goals but they are not scripturally prescribed.¹⁵ Peter Wagner while promoting a strong leadership style says, "My observation is that God blesses many different church leadership styles as long as they are implemented in a Christian way."¹⁶ If there is a leadership pattern in scripture it leans in the direction of a centralized eldership governance structure. There is more clarity on who was leading the church namely elders than how the leadership structure was organized. Those churches with declared

growth visions tend also to have a leadership pattern by spiritual elders.

Leadership Authority

There is confusion and uncertainty among churches today about leadership authority. For some the solution is easy, they see the congregation to be the group vested with authority on church matters. The Church Growth people tend to see the call to the ministry of the pastor and the endowment of spiritual gifts to include a licence to authoritative action. John E. Toews, in the paper "New Testament Patterns of Church Leadership", concludes his section on authority by asserting that authority "is located in the act of ministry in community and is tested continually by its faithfulness to the traditions, on the one hand, and by its effectiveness in building up the church on the other hand."¹⁷ Ralph Lebold, in his paper "Free Church Understanding of Leadership", describes the authority of church leadership to be connected to four realities.¹⁸

1. Transcendent conferred charismatic authority given as a sacred gift that comes with the call of God to fulfil the mission purposes.
2. Professional, rational, legal authority that comes by way of training and ministry readiness.
3. Pragmatic earned authority that comes by way of results, quality of ones work and recognized service.
4. Routinized congregationally endorsed authority that comes through discerned positions, gifts, personality, relationship, leadership and office.

The Lebold configuration is helpful in bringing together a balanced understanding of how leadership authority comes about.

There is clearly a level of uncertainty in terms of leadership authority in our congregationally driven churches. There seemed to be more leadership authority permitted by churches in the past than is the case today. F.C. Peters clearly suggests the power of influence in his definition of leadership. He says, "Leadership is an activity of influencing people to cooperate toward some goal which they feel will benefit the kingdom of God and the brotherhood."¹⁹ The answer for us may well be in a modified Presbyterian structure that shares authority between the congregational and the elder leadership.

Menno Epp, in The Pastor's Exit, points out that authority and power are

both gifts of God to be exercised responsibly within the church. But it is how these are used that makes the difference. When the body is edified and when the great commission of Christ is being fulfilled then authority and power have been exercised appropriately. When mutuality is lost and persons in the church feel a sense of an over/under relationship by the power/authority use either by the congregation or parts of it or by the leaders, then an injustice is happening. Epp points out that it is not uncommon for the congregation or part of it to exercise lordship over the pastor.²⁰ Mennonite Brethren have for the most part been able to maintain a workable balance.

F. Leadership Heterogeneity

The pastors' role has seen many changes in the past decades. Creating a level of uncertainty about leadership roles. Abe Dueck, in his paper "Church Leadership: A Historical Perspective", says "Most churches have undergone significant transitions in leadership patterns in the past thirty years."²¹ He notes the changes from multiple lay leadership to the single full-time paid pastor to a multiple full-time staff pastoral system. As the pastors role changes so does the role for the congregation. In many churches the senior pastor's role has become more a management and leadership training role, quite removed from the people, which has introduced a new role of lay shepherding. These transitions have created uncertainties and conflict in some churches where the roles and expectations have not been clearly understood or accepted.

To a great extent our denomination has been under the influence of heritage M.B. leadership. This homogeneity of leadership is fast changing. The majority of our leaders over the age of fifty are traditional ethnic Mennonite Brethren who have a special story to tell from another country which is a mix of culture, theology and heritage. A new group of leaders is emerging with new stories and new visions. Allan Labun quotes A. A. Unruh who describes the difference of leadership between the 1870 arrivals and the later Canadian arrivals.²² He describes it as a "clash of two histories between the 'Kanadier' with their emphasis on evangelism and missions and the 'Russlaender' with their interest in education and culture."²³ A growing number of leaders under fifty years of age today is Mennonite Brethren by choice. They are bringing new histories and a potential for new growth with their evangelism focus. These people have a story of their own which is just

as important to them as the history of the ethnic German Russian experience. Rapid evangelism will only increase the mix and diversity of heritage.

Many of the leadership concerns in the churches today have to do with the growing spiritual diversity in the churches. The church in our urban secular society is no longer what J.A. Toews calls a "brotherhood in which there are no classes, no clergy and laity, no artificial distinctions but a fellowship of equals."²⁴ The commitment levels, church loyalty, spiritual maturity and ethical conduct is very diverse in the church today. There is a widening gap also between ministry experience, leadership training and biblical understanding. The assumption of spiritual homogeneity with equal eligibility and access to church leadership positions by election from the church membership floor is hardly adequate any more. The principle of church leadership by spiritual qualifications and gifting needs to receive a higher priority in many churches.

Does our theology of leadership help us with these contextual realities or can the Church Growth leadership theories help us cross some of our leadership crisis points. The Church Growth people certainly help us with our small church plateau problem and with theories for introducing church changes. On the question of leadership by elder and leadership authority we need to evaluate our theology of leadership. The Church Growth school would encourage a shared authority between leaders and congregation and would most certainly prefer a more centralized elder system of leadership. The Church Growth leadership position may have considerable biblical evidences for their leadership and governance preference.

III. CHURCH GROWTH INFLUENCES AND CHALLENGES FOR M.B. LEADERS

One of the strengths of the Mennonite Brethren over the years has been their openness to learn and to assimilate various theologies and philosophies from the broader body of Christ. Much can be learned from the Church Growth leadership patterns and models given the contextual leadership realities of today. There are also some tension points between the Church Growth leadership theories and M.B. leadership theology and practice. Both the cautions and the influences are important for us.

A. Church Growth Cautions

Any movement of major proportions like the Church Growth movement also has its weaknesses and its accesses. For many leaders these shortcomings have unfortunately overshadowed the contributions. We need to evaluate the movement and ourselves on the following issues.

1. Leadership Accommodation

Church Growth leaders are often categorized on the basis of being too controlled or influenced by social and cultural factors. The Church Growth movement has on principle sought to harness the social sciences, especially sociology and cultural anthropology to develop appropriate strategies for the missionary task of the church.²⁵ This has been perceived by some as minimizing the scriptures as the basic foundation for effective leadership guidance. There is a danger that the social science theory rather than good theology becomes the guide for the program patterns of the church.

2. Leadership Successes

"Church Growth" has often been criticized for feeling too much at home with the North America culture of mass production, consumer choices, and the success mentality. John Howard Yoder suggests that this criticism detracts from the real issue of the movement but warns against the danger of communicating a "paramessage."²⁶ His concern is that elaborate church structures with parking lots full of new cars may tell people something about stewardship and sacrifice that are more akin to a culture of affluence than the gospel of Jesus. There is a danger that Church Growth has contributed to making the Christian Church a privilege of the middle class, unaffordable and inaccessible to the poor.

3. Leadership Numbers

There is a perception that Church Growth leaders are driven by the

bottom line numbers much like a business accountant. There are those that think the bottom line attendance needs to show increases as the business ledger needs to show profits. If the bottom line numbers show increases than both the church's and the pastor's ratings go up. The bigger the better principle appears for many to be a common understanding of good church life. The health of a church cannot be measured by head count only. There are those who feel that Church Growth has placed too much emphasis in numerical growth at the expense of discipleship quality. Wayne Zunkel warns that we not fall into the business growth principle where the number of sales go up when the price goes down.²⁷

4. Leadership Pragmatism

The Church Growth movement is strong on practical leadership skill and experience. It is not uncommon in larger churches to have some of their pastoral staff recruited on the basis of business experience rather than theological qualifications. This practice, some fear, can on the long run threaten the spiritual stability and depth of the church. Some feel the movement shows major weaknesses in qualifying church leadership on the basis of spiritually proven maturity. This more pragmatic business style of leadership may well provide organizational efficiency but could short change the church in its biblical mooring. There is a need for a more clearly defined leadership theology among the Church Growth theoreticians. Leadership technique is no substitute for leadership spirituality. Both the being and the doing of leadership needs to reflect the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

5. Leadership Dominance

To a large degree the leadership style of the Church Growth movement slants in the direction of the para-church leadership character. This leadership style is usually more action and goal oriented than being relational and congregational. It does not concern itself enough to meet the needs of people and seeks more to answer the question of church purpose and focus. It tends more toward a solo type leadership than a team approach. In a sense this style of leadership reflects western individualism which may well be out of step with the current more collaborative leadership style in the "boomer trend". This style of authoritative leadership can also be critiqued on the grounds of too little congregational process. The congregation is seen

too much as sheep to be led and fed by their leaders. Church Growth has been found wanting by some as having produced a leadership style that underestimates the role and place of the congregation.

5. Leadership Boundaries

Church Growth leaders have also been criticized at times for setting leadership boundaries too tightly. Church Growth leaders are not likely to be involved in much inter-church or ecumenical activities. The large church leaders are in danger of not having enough time and commitment for their denomination. Church Growth leaders are careful to team up with activity that will help them fulfill their church objectives. These growing churches are usually staffed with male leadership and led by a group of clearly focused spiritual elders. Part of the criticism here is toward their self sufficiency stance often interpreted as lack of interest or cooperation beyond their own church scenario. Such leadership expressions do not fit well in a brotherhood of interdependence and mutual submission.

B. Church Growth Lessons

Church Growth has had a major impact on Mennonite Brethren leaders. It has had for many pastors and church leaders a revitalizing and renewing effect. It has raised many areas where we need to grow.

1. Leadership Vision

The emphasis of vision among Church Growth leaders is noteworthy. There is hardly a book on leadership and Church Growth that does not emphasize vision as one of the most important aspects in effective church leadership. Bruce Cook describes "Personal vision as a mental picture of what we believe God is going to do in the future."²⁸ Robert Dale says, "Our dreams are the first step in defining effective ministry...our vision rivets our attention...our vision becomes our passion, our magnetic pull, our spiritual and emotional glue, and our ownership of and stake in a cause...A corporate vision gives a congregation a steady, enduring, sustaining and invigorating purpose."²⁹ John Haggai says in his book, Lead On, "Vision underlies and underpins all leadership...without a vision there will not be an adequate mission...a vision is the revelation of God's will."³⁰

Contentment with denominational growth marginally above biological growth rates would not represent much of a Church Growth vision. Is it of concern to us to have a Canadian church membership of some 27,000 when over a

similar period the Alliance Church has grown to 63,000, the Salvation Army has 105,000 and the Pentecostals have reached 195,000? No doubt there are similar comparisons in the U.S. The vision coming from the Church Growth movement is the great commission vision. The heartbeat and passion of a Church Growth pastor is to see new people come to Christ and into the church. Is there enough room for the influence of visionary leaders in our congregationally governed conference?

2. Leadership Spirituality

The Church Growth movement has helped to stir up and revitalize the pastor's office. The leadership theory of Church Growth has in many instances brought change to the pastors day. The emphasis on discipline, hard work and good stewardship of time has reoriented many church leaders. Church Growth has introduced new organizing principles and new ways of sharing the ministry through groups and spiritual gifts. The delegation principles has freed the pastor for more prayer, planning and training time. It has helped pastors to move more closely to the Peterson model that calls for praying, reading scripture and giving spiritual direction as the central activities of the pastor.²¹ The growing emphasis of worship as an evangelism opportunity has revitalized the spiritual life of many worship leaders. The passion for seeing the lost saved as emphasized by Donald McGavran has inspired many leaders to greater faithfulness to the great commission. There are many Church Growth leaders that have overcome what Charles Kraft calls "powerless enlightenment Christianity" through personal renewal and intercession.²² Many leaders have become more aware of the need to understand the dynamics of waging spiritual warfare in our paganizing culture.

3. Leadership Philosophy

The idea that each church needs to describe its ministry style and program boundaries is a very helpful concept. A written philosophy of ministry describing the ground rules of operation is very helpful to keeping the church going in a consistent direction. There are many models of church ministry that are effective in reaching out if they are clearly defined and adhered to. The James Kennedy philosophy calls for a regular community calling program with the pastor showing the way and training the witness teams. The Frank Tillapaugh philosophy of ministry is based on unleashing the church from its fortress mentality and freeing the leadership to serve

according to their gifts and interest. Dale Galloway has pioneered a ministry that is based on meeting peoples' needs through weekly tender love and care groups (TLC) with lay pastors. Rick Warren has developed a growing church philosophy through a carefully crafted worship that will attract and communicate to the unchurched. Bill Hybels has a philosophy that works off the assumptions that the church must be contemporary in style and adjusted to fit the needs of the baby boomer group. John Wimber's vineyard movement has a philosophy of ministry that is characterized by signs and wonders and strong central leadership.

Few Mennonite Brethren churches can be described by their unique effective philosophy of ministry. A growing number of our churches fit the philosophy of Terry Wardle who develops a philosophy with a "Dynamic spirit-filled worship services that glorify God, edify the believers, appeal to visitors and lift up Christ the Saviour."²² At a time when ministry options are so diverse and needs abound, the church needs to define what it can and cannot do with the resources available. A good Church Growth philosophy of ministry sees the central purpose of the church to bring people to faith in Christ and into meaningful growth and ministry in the church and society.

4. Leadership Planning

Another contribution that Church Growth has brought to church leadership is the idea of careful planning, evaluation and goal setting. Growth in a church can be stimulated by strategic programming to meet the needs of the target group. Community research and establishing goals that are definable, measurable and controllable are important in moving a church into growth. Chaney and Lewis explain "that God-honouring, faith stretching, need-meeting goals are bold affirmations of faith in a living, loving God."²⁴

Good planning assures that the gospel will not bypass the ready receptive people or the resistant secular people. Leaders with "Church Growth eyes" have an orientation and a mind-set for spiritual harvest not just spiritual sowing. Strategic planning puts priority effort into identifying responsive targets for outreach such as people in social upheaval, crisis situations, life-cycle transitions, new residents or people visiting the church. Underlying the basic planning process is the assumption that God wants the church to grow, he wants to see sinners converted and brought into

the family of God in multiple numbers.

Carl George and Robert Logan describe effective leadership planning to be in three parts: (1) setting goals, (2) obtaining goal ownership, and (3) equipping people for the work to do their part in accomplishing the goals.²⁵ Annual leadership retreats and church growth seminars have helped Mennonite Brethren leaders to develop a church planning model.

5. Leadership Context

Kenneth Callahan is one of the most effective spokesmen for missional leadership in a non-church society. He calls on leadership to adjust to the non-church culture of the day. The problem, as he sees it, is that most churches still work from the model that the traffic in society is still moving toward the church. The leadership style for a society with a church culture is generally characterized as reactive, organizational, passive, institutional and professional.²⁶ But in a nation where most people are no longer regular churchgoers and society has become a non-church society, church leadership must be characterized as proactive, relational, intentional and missional. The pastor's role needs to be more clearly defined as moving from inside the church to outside the church or from professional administrative functions to a missionary pastor within the unchurched culture, says Callahan. The church-culture leadership style wrongly assumes that (1) The pastor serves inside the church, (2) the laity minister in the world, (3) the world is seeking the church.²⁷

The non-church culture leadership is concerned with (1) specific concrete missional objectives, (2) pastoral and lay visitation in the community, (3) corporate dynamic worship, (4) significant relational grouping.²⁸ Callahan observes that the spirit of leadership within the church culture is one of maintenance and routine while the spirit of mission leadership is one of outreach and "mission growth." "In a church culture the church becomes lazy and weak, timid and cautious, bloated and bureaucratic. The understanding of leadership is reduced to the principle of coordination."²⁹ There is much to be learned here for Mennonite Brethren in terms of shifting the orientation of leadership to fit the unchurched culture of North America.

6. Leadership Training

The Church Growth movement has produced its own idea of pastoral training and continuing education. It has introduced the short term upgrading

and retooling concept for pastors. Church Growth people have realized that pastors need and want to see practical working models for their ministry. Pastors today are flocking to three day seminars around the world looking for people who have made Church Growth work in their own lives and have multiplied it in the lives of others. Church leaders today are fatigued from church orthodoxy and mere doctrinal insights. They want practical models, vitality and evidence of effectiveness. The first question regarding seminar attendance is no longer, is it sponsored by or endorsed by my denomination, or do the sponsors hold my convictions or distinctives, but rather are the sponsors bringing people to Christ and do they have some transferable concepts for outreach and effective incorporation of new converts into the church? The main question that Church Growth students want answered is how do you fulfill the great commission of disciple making in our complex secular world? The traditional education model of lectureship without clear on-the-job-training and modelling does not seem to adequately produce Church Growth leaders needed for a complex society.

7. Leadership Transitions

Church Growth leaders are agreed that the size of the congregation determines the style and character of church leadership. Schaller suggests that a critical switch in leadership takes place when the leadership style shifts from a "shepherd mode to a rancher mode". Wagner suggests that churches will not likely break the 200 barrier unless leadership shifts to a ministry pattern of delegation and training. He observes that most churches with a membership under 200 expect the pastor to have a one-to-one shepherd type relationship with the following expectations. "To know the names of all your church members and their families; visit each home x number of times per year; make an extra call or two to everyone who is sick; do all the counselling; perform all the baptisms, weddings and funerals; lend a hand in personal problems; and enjoy a type of family relationship with one and all. This can be done up to the 200 barrier."⁴⁰

The rancher mode shifts the personal caring ministry to multiple under shepherds who provide the hands-on ministry usually through small group fellowships. The senior pastor is then free to provide an oversight ministry of leading and training the leaders. Since most M.B. churches are less than 200 we need to be open for lessons on breaking plateaus. David Womack

observes "that once a church is large enough to care for its own members, pay its own expense and establish a favourable image in the community, the congregation often loses momentum and is lulled into the peaceful slumber of religious passivity."⁴¹ Womack calls this the Joshua predicament where the children of Israel settled into the land of milk and honey under Joshua's leadership and did not want to continue the life of conquering and possessing. This could be us. Such an attitude produces church plateau.

Mennonite Brethren may need to make several important transitions to break the 200 barrier. Let me suggest a few.

- a) The value system in the church needs to shift from everyone present in decision making to everyone meaningfully involved in a person to person ministry. The low attendance at church decision meetings should declare this need.
- b) The congregations need to accept ministry from lay leaders who have been trained by the pastor rather than expecting the pastor to do all the shepherding themselves.
- c) The congregation needs to be visitor friendly and fully accepting of people from various backgrounds. The family of God transcends the biological families.
- d) The larger the church the more trusting the congregation needs to be of its leaders. Leadership transitions from a single cell church to multiple cell churches requires leadership trust and more eldership decision making. Just as the people cannot be present for all of the multi-cell program so also it is not possible or necessary to participate in all of the decisions.

Arlin Rothauge breaks the church into four basic character types. He starts with the family church 0-50 which has a strong sense of belonging based on family relationship and leadership patriarchs. The pastor church 50-150 looks to the pastor for direction and church growth. The sense of belonging here is in knowing each other. In a church this size it is easy to involve everyone in decision making and the leadership is home grown. The program church 150-350 is driven by democratic leadership. The programs rise and fall on the committees in the church. Here involvement is seen as belonging. In the program church the leadership power and authority rests with the congregation. It tends to be a conflict prone church. The corporation church

of 350 plus is characterized by complexity and diversity with governing boards and staff in control. The sense of belonging is associated with being part of an awesome worship experience led by the pastor who symbolizes unity, stability and quality.⁴² Gibbs, in his church sizing, follows more the industrial model which sees the pastor functioning in a business type mode as a foreman (2-65), supervisor (66-150), middle management (151-450), top management (451-1000), chairman of a board 1000 plus.⁴³ Mennonite Brethren have been slow to recognize the need for making leadership adjustments according to size.

8. Leadership Conflicts

Invariably when a church breaks through to substantial growth under the leadership of a new pastor the church tends to develop two conflicting bodies of people which Lyle Schaller has called the pioneers as the original and the homesteaders as the new attenders. Logan and George have developed the Berry Bucket theory to help congregations understand and resolve the pioneer/homesteader conflict.⁴⁴ They describe the congregations as former berries and new berries with the pastor in the middle. The expectations and responses of these two groups of the pastor are substantially different. The former berries oppose innovation, salute tradition, see the pastor as their servant who follows their instructions while the new berries encourage change and see the pastor as the authority who gives them instructions. The two groups have different functions. The former berries usually hold the elected positions while the new berries fill assigned ministry positions. As the new berry group grow in numbers the former berries feel threatened in their elected policy holding position and begin to launch a defensive survival war against the pastor who is obviously to blame for these new people.

In this unfortunate conflict the question of church growth and faithfulness to the great commission becomes overshadowed by questions of process, power and leadership privilege. The pastor becomes the lightning rod in the conflict and is often sacrificed on the basis of how he does things rather than on the question of whether the right things are being accomplished. This power struggle involving the emergence of new leadership over the old guard is often waged by church committees or individuals without the awareness of the full congregation. Frequently the music committee squares off against the pastor over worship control or an unofficial power

group rises up against the pastoral team. In many instances the basic issues of church effectiveness and faithfulness to the outreach mandate are overlooked in favour of more minor issues such as leadership style, pecking order violations and lack of attention to traditional powers.

There must be a way for churches to grow without sacrificing their front line leaders. More grace and care on the part of both pastor and church leaders should surely help head off some of these unfortunate and hurtful situations.

The Church Growth leadership theories and practices are having a major influence on the leadership of Mennonite Brethren. They have helped us to reestablish the priorities of the great commission and to give more effective leadership to this work. It has been for many a paradigm shift from church maintenance to Church Growth.

1. It has brought us back in touch with the missionary priorities of the Anabaptist/Mennonite early leaders.

2. It has introduced leadership initiative and vision that has resulted in more courage and boldness to bring correctives to the church where needed.

3. It has focused the church leadership planning models and brought more clarity of purpose to program strategy and philosophy.

4. It has brought a new shape to evangelism training and pastoral retooling for congregational growth.

5. It has helped the pastor to adjust his leadership style to the size of the congregation.

6. It has brought a renewed spirituality and discipline to the pastor's life involving more study, prayer and planning time.

Conclusion

What then are some of the areas where Mennonite Brethren need to give more attention in order to facilitate healthy church growth leadership.

1. Leadership Theology

The role of leaders in the church must be guided by the teaching of scripture. Both the responsibilities of the church toward its leaders and the leaders relationship to the body must be informed by the word of God. The Church Growth leadership theories which have their own theological inadequacies have at the same time also pointed toward some of our own

weaknesses.

2. Leadership Spirituality

At a time when our society appears to have lost its ethical moorings it is critical that church leaders demonstrate spiritual integrity. A more careful leadership selection process within the congregation is needed to assure that the church is led by leaders recruited more on the spiritual giftedness and on demonstrated maturity than on popular vote from the church floor.

3. Leadership Authority

The governance structure of the church must more clearly show that the authority of the Word is being respected. The leaders have the responsibility to keep the church faithful to the scriptures both in purpose and in process. Mennonite Brethren may need to evaluate their traditional congregational leadership patterns and consider moving more towards a semi-presbyterian model where spiritually qualified leaders are expected and permitted to give proactive spiritual leadership in collaboration with the church.

4. Leadership Evangelism

The work of evangelism and witness among the leadership of the church needs to be strengthened. The role of the evangelist is critical to the salvation of the unchurched. Evangelism and Church Growth needs to have a more intentional place and a higher profile within the leadership of the church and in our training institutions.

5. Leadership Change

In our society of rapid change, it is important for leaders to be change agents. The church in the nineties faces many transitions. Church growth means change. Churches will need more leadership guidance in the congregation's transition from small church leadership styles to larger church leadership models and from new church leadership patterns to older church leadership needs. It will be important that leaders advance change through a gentle process and in manageable stages that involve the congregation in an instructive and consultative change process.

6. Leadership Impact

There are increasingly more options and influences coming to the church from the social sciences, business world and secular education. The leaders in the church will need to become more informed about the theological

implications of buying into this smorgasbord of leadership ideas. Wisdom and discernment will be the much needed gift mix in our society of choices. The contributions coming from the Church Growth movement will no doubt continue to be one of the more major influences that help shape the leadership effectiveness of the Mennonite Brethren.

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