

Towards A Growing Ghanaian Church

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Abstract

Church growth is normally defined in purely numerical terms without taking into account other measurements of growth. This clearly does not present the full picture. This article therefore deals with general Church Growth Principles with a view to facilitating the total growth of the Ghanaian Church. It looks at a) The Church Growth Movement, b) The Meaning of "Growth", c) A Biblical Illustration of Growth, d) The Marks of Growth, and e) Examples of growing churches in Ghana.

Introduction

Even though many people may be familiar with the term "Church Growth", a clear and full understanding of all the implications of the term seems to be lacking. The following illustrates this lack of a full understanding of "Church Growth". In my research for this work, a number of people I talked to about the subject intimated that they too were deeply concerned about the issue of "Church Growth". But what a majority of them meant, from all indications, was that they worked hard and prayed that the membership of churches would increase. Many Christians, perhaps, share this sentiment and are committed to "growth" one way or the other. However, as Donald McGavran rightly asserts:

The goal of church growth studies is not merely correct facts as to the quantity of growth. It is not sufficient to see the structure clearly – though that must be done. The goal is through evaluation of the facts to understand the dynamics of church growth

Thus, any conception of church growth, which is

limited to increase in church membership or what McGavran calls the "quantity of growth", is not adequate. It will be helpful, therefore, to look at the sort of understanding that may be derived from the Church Growth Movement on the issue.

(a) THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

The Church Growth Movement does not simply consist of those who hope that downward numerical trends of total church membership might be reversed, even though this is something all involved in it wish to see. The Movement consists also of those who are prepared to use the methods and insights of the social and behavioral sciences, as well as those of theology, to make witness and mission more effective.

If there is one person to whom the Church Growth Movement is most indebted for both its origin and methodology, that person is Donald McGavran who spent much of his life in India. He is regarded by many as the twentieth century's premier missiologist. Peter Wagner, another prominent missiologist, thinks that when, one or two generations from now, historians of religion look back to the twentieth century, McGavran will most likely be remembered chiefly as the father of the Church Growth Movement. Seed thoughts for the Movement began to germinate in the 1930s when he was an executive secretary for the United Christian Missionary Society in India. It was in 1933 that McGavran recognized that no one really knew why some churches in India were growing whilst others in similar situations were not. They were either static or declining. He asked a number of Ministers to account for what was happening in their particular church, but found that none could do so adequately. They had ideas, of course, and they had rationalizations, but not satisfactory reasons. One said his church was growing because he preached "the pure word of God". Another

said his church was declining for exactly the same reason. In neither case did the Minister know the reasons for what was happening in the church. McGavran decided it was important to find out and thus began the search leading to the founding of the Church Growth Movement.

Having laid the conceptual groundwork for the Church Growth Movement in the 1950s, McGavran's crowning achievement was the establishment of the institution, which was to become his base of operation. In 1961 he started the 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.

It is true to say, nonetheless, that the term "Church Growth" suggests an overriding concern with numerical increase of church membership. The term itself leaves so much unsaid which need to be said. One, therefore, cannot help but agree with Jeffery Harris that:

The improvement of the quality of membership is as basic to it as is numerical growth. So also is a membership which is active and responsible in today's world.

Looking at the British situation Harris alleges that some Christians do not want to have anything to do with Church Growth because they have read a particular book or books about it and in fact confirms:

There are, quite frankly, some bad books which put me off also. The writers have simply used church growth terminology as a set of pegs on to which they have preconceived theological ideas. If they are bad theological ideas, the use of Church Growth terms does not improve the theology.

If Christians in Ghana are to have genuine concern for Church Growth, it is essential from the outset to indicate that church growth thinking involves beginning with a number of growing churches, and

then with patient enquiry into the complex factors involved in their growth, trying to discover valid reasons which can be tested in other churches. If they are valid, they can be used positively by similar churches.

Growth experts and missiologists agree that: *Church Growth is not a package deal. It begins with each local situation, with its ministers, members, programmes and buildings.*

It may be concluded, therefore, that the Church Growth Movement seeks to make available to churches and their leadership, the tested experience of churches, which in similar situations are growing, and the reasons for their growth, so far as these are known. It provides clues so that a local church can see its way ahead more clearly. In this way it helps local churches to be more effective. The greater proportion of Church Growth theory can, in fact, be used by churches of every denomination and by Christians of different theological persuasions. It can always open new doors in the exercise of ministry.

The Theology of the Movement

The theological consideration upon which the movement is based may be summarized as follows:

- a) **God's Initiative:** This is a basic theological principle of the movement. The point stressed here is that no church can grow with integrity by simply following a predetermined course of action. If there is genuine growth, then it is because God's Spirit is at work. It is a work of grace. It is not the result of human planning. There is, nevertheless, a proper part for people to play in making growth possible.
- b) **The Biblical Sense of Time:** This idea which is very important to the Church Growth Movement is expressed in wonderful poetry in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven..." Thus, time presents us with the opportunity. When opportunity is wedded to response, there is a time of harvest and fulfillment. Church Growth, therefore, uses this Biblical sense of time in its

teaching about "Receptivity".

c) **The Aim of Evangelism:** Most Church Growth writers use the particular vocabulary of the movement in their books and articles rather than traditional theological terms. They say the aim of evangelism is to persuade people –

1. to become followers of Jesus
2. to seek to do God's will in their daily lives
3. to become responsible members of Christ's church

They also believe that there is no necessary sequence in which these three elements occur, but that evangelism is not complete until all three take place. An important criticism, which they level against some of those leading Revival or Evangelistic campaigns, is that they do not see responsible church membership as one essential aim of evangelism.

d) **The Mission of the Church:** The Movement indicates that evangelism and mission are not interchangeable words. The essential meaning of mission, according to the Movement, is that Christians are sent by God to do those things that Jesus expressed in His own ministry. For example, Jesus preached the Good News; healed the sick; taught His followers; chose and sent disciples; expressed compassion and forgiveness in practical terms; wept over the city; was a friend to tax gatherers and sinners; washed His disciples' feet, etc. The Movement accepts that one major strand in the mission of the Church is evangelism, making known the good news of what God had done and persuading people to believe it in faith; but then a genuine response to the Gospel includes commitment to serve God and mankind in daily life (i.e. in the Church and in the world).

(b) THE MEANING OF "GROWTH"

The word "growth" has more than one meaning, both in relation to plants and people, and also to the growth of churches. When, therefore, we speak of Church Growth, we are not talking only of the numerical increase of church membership. It will help to clarify our understanding of what is involved in Church Growth if the various meanings of the

word "growth" are set down.

McGavran, for example, distinguishes three kinds of Church Growth. These are biological, transfer and conversion growth.

Biological Growth derives from those born into Christian families. Biological growth is good growth, looking at it in the light of God's command, "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 35:11). Indeed Christians are admonished to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). Yet this type of growth will never "bring the nations to faith and obedience", since the non-Christian part of the world's population is growing faster than the Christian and seems destined to continue to do so. In other words, biological growth is exceedingly slow and often does not equal the normal population increase for the nation, for while some children born in Christian homes become ardent Christians, some are lost to the world, or through marriage are sucked back into other faiths.

By **Transfer Growth** is meant the increase in certain congregations at the expense of others i.e. Christians transferring from one community into another and joining a church in the new community bring about this type of growth. Transfer growth is important. Every church should follow up its members and conserve as many of them as possible. But it is obvious that transfer growth will never extend the church, for unavoidably many are lost along the way.

The third kind is **Conversion Growth**, in which those outside the church come to rest their faith intelligently on Jesus Christ and are baptized and "added to the Lord" in His Church. This is the only kind of growth by which the Good News of salvation can spread to all the segments of our society and to earth's remotest bounds. The importance of this kind of growth is underscored by McGavran as he writes:

The goal of mission is to have a truly indigenous congregation in every community of every culture. When that occurs, and only when that occurs, we may be sure that the Gospel has been preached to every creature. Patently, this goal requires enormous conversion growth.

It has already been pointed out that it is inadequate to think of church growth in terms of adding to the membership of the church. Yet it would appear, from the above discussion on the three kinds of church growth (biological, transfer and conversion) that the preoccupation is membership increase. It is probably this limitation which has led to other concepts of church growth. One concept, helpful in understanding church growth, sees it occurring in four (4) ways, namely, Internal Growth, Expansion Growth, Extension Growth and Bridging Growth. Ralph Winter and Peter Wagner share the credit for discovering and popularizing this creative classification.

Internal Growth occurs within the fellowship and membership of a church. It means a church is growing in quality because a considerable proportion of the membership is conscious of a deepening of religious experience. When there is internal growth, there is an unmistakable vitality about the church. In such a church, Harris observes,

Worship is an act of joyous celebration; members know they are truly loved and accepted by the rest of the fellowship; there is love for others which leads members to serve their neighbours.

John Wesley once defined Methodism as "none other than the love of God and of all mankind". When the members of a church know that their love for God is becoming greater, and consequently the love for all mankind is also increasing, that church has true internal growth.

Church Growth believes that internal growth is the essential quality that a church must have if it is to grow in any other way. Where a church is growing internally, the presence of God's Spirit is evident to those who are not members. There is a quality to its life that George Hunter calls "contagious".

Expansion Growth also known as **Numerical Growth** occurs obviously when a church is growing numerically since it is receiving new members into its fellowship. The church expands as it converts non-Christians and takes more of them into itself. Church

Growth, however, makes a distinction within the category of new members between those who have grown up in the church and decide as part of a natural process to become members, and those who are converted and, as totally new Christians, wish to join the church.

Extension Growth occurs when congregations plant daughter churches among their own kinds of people in the neighbourhood, district or region. i.e. when a local church or circuit decides, as a matter of policy, to extend the scope of its work to reach such people who are not in touch with any church. **Bridging Growth**, on the other hand, occurs when a church or circuit sets out deliberately to cross a linguistic or strong social, ethnic or racial barrier, and, in effect, plants a church in a new culture.

To emphasize this classification, Ralph Winter in a paper written in 1974 for the "Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelization" distinguishes four (4) categories of evangelism that will result in the four ways of growth described above. He makes use of a sequence of numbers 0, 1, 2 and 3, each used with the letter "E" for evangelism. First, he talks of E-0 evangelism, which seeks to win nominal Christians to personal faith and commitment. It does not involve cultural distance. It refers to the definition of evangelism that involves both personal commitment and membership of the church. These are people who are within the church but do not have a personal salvation experience. John Wesley, before his Aldersgate Street experience, perhaps illustrates those who would be the object of E-0 evangelism. This category of evangelism is also related to internal growth, discussed earlier.

Second, Winter talks about E-1 evangelism. A church undertakes E-1 evangelism when it goes beyond the "stained-glass barrier" into the area around the church. It is evangelism amongst people who speak the same language, and are of similar socio-economic classes; amongst people who share the same social heritage. Anyone from this group would quickly feel at home in the church, and find its pattern of worship quite congenial.

The third category which Winter calls E-2 evangelism, is undertaken amongst people of similar culture which is nevertheless sufficiently different to make the founding of separate congregations desirable to act as a base for effective outreach to others of the same culture. The fourth category, E-3 evangelism, is applied to evangelism undertaken in a totally strange culture. This is cross-cultural evangelism in which a deliberate effort is made to cross barriers of language etc. and plant a church in a new culture.

Other missiologists have also categorized church growth as **Spiritual Growth**, **Numerical Growth** and **Functional Growth**. In many respects spiritual growth may be likened to internal growth already discussed. Numerical growth, similarly, has the same implications as Expansion growth while Functional growth, in a sense, may represent both Extension and Bridging growth discussed above.

(c) A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION OF GROWTH

Church Growth, as we have observed, must be total. Total in the sense that it must involve the various aspects of growth discussed above. Church Growth must be both qualitative and quantitative in order to be total. Fortunately, this kind of total growth is clearly illustrated by scripture. As we scan the Book of Acts, we see exemplified, the various kinds of Growth – **Internal** (qualitative) Growth, **Expansion** (quantitative) Growth, and **Extension/Bridging** (quantitative) Growth. In other words the New Testament Church is observed to have grown both qualitatively and quantitatively as we find in the following passages from **Acts**:-

1:15 – The church had a very humble beginning. It started with about a hundred and twenty (120) persons. As it turned out to be it had the potential for phenomenal growth.

2:41 – After Peter's pentecostal sermon three thousand (3000) souls received his word, were baptized and were added to the church. Thus there was **expansion growth** within a short period of time.

2:42 – These new believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship; to the

breaking of bread and prayers". Such activities undertaken in earnest could ensure **internal growth**. **2:47** – The church had favour with all the people; "and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved". The result of the equipping of the believers (vv.42-46) was daily addition of converts reported in this verse which again is an example of **expansion growth**.

4:4 – This is another example of **expansion growth**. The number of men alone had come to five thousand (5000). Membership of the church at this time could be said to be in the neighbourhood of fifteen thousand (15000), taking into account women and children whom this verse is silent about.

5:14 – The writer now speaks of multitudes of converts joining the church – another example of **expansion growth**. He writes, "more than ever believers were *added* to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women".

6:7 – The verse could be a reference to **internal growth**. As "the word of God increased" and commitment deepened, "the number of *disciples multiplied* greatly in Jerusalem". The writer now speaks of multiplication rather than addition of believers. We may also note the fact that it is the disciples (the committed believers) who are reported to have multiplied.

9:31 – This verse may refer to both **internal** and **extension growth**. "The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was *built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord (internal)* and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit *it was multiplied (extension)*". Note that the church had now extended from Jerusalem to Judea, Galilee, Samaria and beyond.

13:47-49 – Out of the conviction that the Lord had commanded them, "saying, I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth", Paul and Barnabas ventured out into the Gentile world – crossing various barriers. Vs.49 says "the word of the Lord spread throughout the entire region". This is an example of **bridging growth**.

17:6 – The resultant impact of the Church on the different peoples was irresistible. Members of the church “turned the world upside down”. This exemplifies *extension/bridging growth*.

19:10 – *Extension/bridging growth* is again illustrated by this verse. “All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks”.

21:20 – Having returned to Jerusalem after his ministry among the Gentiles, Paul told James and all the elders about what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. The reaction to this report was, “you see, brother, how many thousands there were among the Jews of those who believed”; This is also an example of *extension growth*.

The above already shows that the New Testament Church was not preoccupied with numerical increase. Instead the Church utilized all resources available to ensure total growth – growth in quality and in quantity. This was possible because the Church

appeared to have followed a particular cycle of growth revealed in **Acts 2:41-47**. As regards each of the members of the Church the following happened:

2:41 – The Word was received by those who heard the preaching.

2:41 – These believers were baptized and added to the Church.

2:42 – They received teaching.

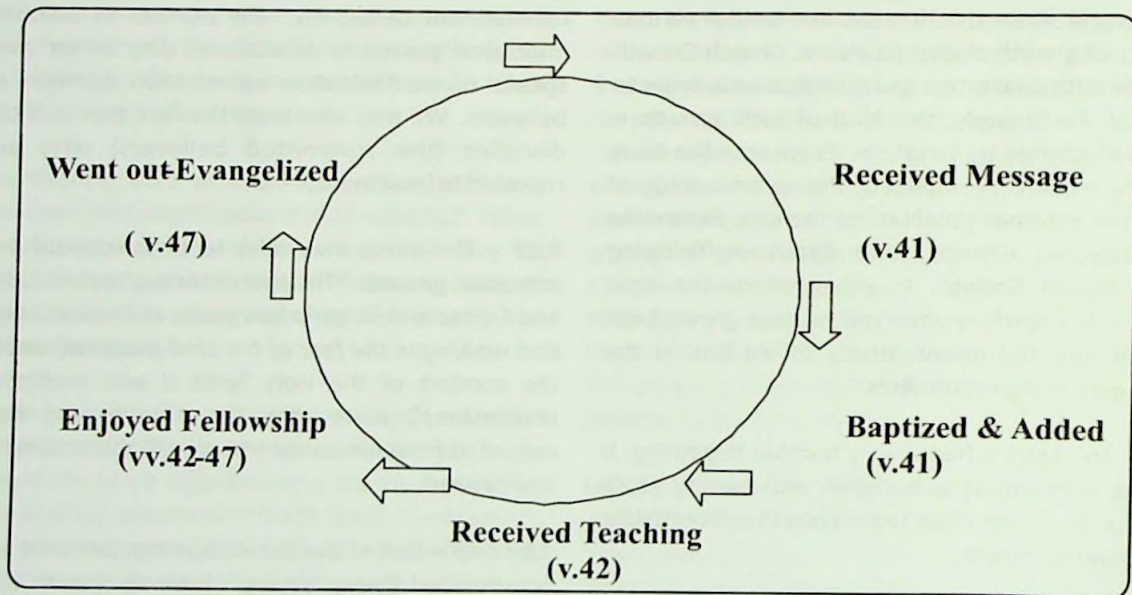
2:42 – They shared fellowship – breaking bread together and praying together.

2:44 – They showed concern for one another (had all things in common).

2:47 – They went out to evangelize (they had favour with all people).

2:47 – The Lord added to their number daily those saved.

The following (*figure E*) illustrates this cycle:



Members of any Church that may contribute to both qualitative and quantitative growth have to be involved in each stage of this cycle. They must first of all receive the message of salvation. They must then be baptized and enrolled as members of the Church. Having come into the Church, they must be taught the word of God. (Matt.28:19-20). They must be committed and active members of the Church who enjoy fellowship with one another and through that be equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Members so equipped will reach out to the community to evangelize and thereby repeat the cycle.

What has been attempted in this section is pointing out of what is involved in Church Growth from the point of view of what happened in the Early Church with regard to membership trends. Indeed, the New Testament Church, from the above discussion, demonstrated all the three kinds of growth (internal, expansion, extension/bridging). The Ghanaian Church needs to know whether or not it is growing in these various ways. The next section on "Marks of Growth" will facilitate this.

(d) MARKS OF GROWTH

Roy Pointer has said that "Signs of Growth" are the evidence of spiritual vitality and life under the rule of God. They are discernible within the churches of the New Testament when these first "communities of the king" were formed, and have reappeared throughout history whenever the church has been renewed by the Spirit and Word of God. They cannot be manufactured or copied in isolation, for they are the product of prior submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is the head of the body and all genuine expressions of spiritual life within the church are from his Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-27); Eph.2:21-22).

"Marks of Growth" or "Signs of Growth" are therefore, similar to the "fruit and gifts of the Spirit". The former are the outward and recognizable manifestations of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit within a community. The latter are manifestations within an individual (1 Cor. 12:11; Gal.5:22,23). Since the church on earth has never been perfect, "marks of growth" indicate health

rather than perfection. The Church, like the Kingdom, awaits the end of history and the complete fulfillment of its destiny as the Bride of Christ (Eph.5:27). It will not be "without spot or wrinkle" until Christ returns and the Kingdom is consummated. The Church is complete and perfect before God in Christ (Col.2:10) but in its present form on earth it strives for perfection under the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor.13:11; 1 Thess.5:23-28; Jude 24-25).

A way of examining the health of the church is using certain "marks of growth" for comparison and evaluation. What this implies is the preparedness of leaders and members of the church to undertake a "diagnosis" of the church using "marks of growth" that may be identified as the basis and guide. What then are these "marks" or "signs"?

Various church growth experts and church leaders have attempted to discuss these "marks of growth". The views of some of these men of God on the issue will engage our attention briefly. Rev. W.K. Kumuyi, Founder and General Overseer of the Deeper Life Bible Church (believed to be the fastest growing church in Africa today) who is the Africa Co-ordinator of the AD2000 Movement identifies the following twelve (12) marks:

1. Emphasis on salvation experience
2. Commitment to scripture as the only absolute, final authority in all matters on doctrine and life.
3. Regular systematic study of God's Word.
4. Effective leadership with spiritual qualifications.
5. Practical holiness and consistent Christian living.
6. Mobilized membership for evangelism.
7. Fellowship, love and unity, sharing among members.
8. Prayer and supplication with implicit faith in God.
9. Infilling with the Holy Spirit with the accompanying power for service.
10. Endurance and steadfastness in persecution.
11. Lively hope for Christ's Second Coming.
12. Prompt response in solving identified problems.

Charles Chaney and Ron Lewis also list the following seven (7) signs:

1. Growing churches know where they are going.
2. Growing churches focus on homogeneous units.
3. Growing churches mobilize and train the laity.
4. Growing churches have diversified ministries.
5. Growing churches utilize small group dynamics.
6. Growing churches major on direct evangelism.
7. Growing churches go forward in faith.

Floyd Bartel, another key person of the Church Growth Movement, says:

1. A growing congregation has a deliberate commitment to people beyond itself.
2. A growing congregation knows clearly why it exists.
3. A growing congregation has a climate within that accepts and affirms new persons.
4. A growing church multiplies the number of meaningful groups in the congregation.
5. A growing congregation has accepted evangelism as a basic responsibility of the local church.
6. A growing church has a leadership which enables and encourages growth.
7. A growing church faces and deals with obstacles to growth.
8. A growing congregation intentionally plants new churches.
9. A growing congregation seeks to understand itself and analyses the situation into which God has placed it.
10. A growing congregation plans expectantly.
11. A growing church uses the many gifts of the Spirit for worship, fellowship, and outreach.
12. A growing church trains its members for the tasks to which they are called.

Donald McGavran and Winfield Arn also identify the following:

1. Churches grow as they discover church growth principles.
2. Churches grow as they respect biblical principles.
3. Churches grow as they yield themselves to God's unswerving purpose.
4. Churches grow as priorities are given to

effective evangelism.

5. Churches grow as they rightly discern the body.
6. Churches grow as they rightly discern the community.
7. Churches grow as they find new groups and ways to disciple.
8. Churches grow as they structure for growth.
9. Churches grow as they risk for growth.

One finds from the above lists that the various people are virtually saying the same thing. A discussion of these various "marks of growth" is appropriate, yet to do this, one needs a typology of a sort – a categorization that will provide a synthesis of the views expressed by these opinion leaders.

Running through the four lists are references to:

- 1) Prayer
- 2) The Bible,
- 3) Leadership,
- 4) Membership,
- 5) Worship,
- 6) Evangelism,
- 7) Service,
- 8) Community Life,
- 9) Change
- 10) Resources.

In other words, we conclude from the lists that churches grow when they pray constantly; respect the authority of the Bible; appoint effective leaders; mobilize their membership; worship God in eventful services; engage in continuous evangelism and compassionate service; develop genuine community life; are open to spirit-directed change and release the resources of the church for the mission of God. Roy Pointer, in his discussion of the "signs of growth", takes cognizance of the above and, therefore, writes:

The following list of ten "signs of growth" is not exhaustive but I believe these are observable phenomena that accompany genuine church growth. I am not suggesting that growing churches have all of them but they generally have several, depending on their churchmanship and structure.

It must be pointed out, nonetheless, that each of these signs is not just a good thing that all congregations of the Church in Ghana must be encouraged to do. What is important to note is that these signs will normally lead to the growth of the church. Scripture endorses the fact that the proper outworking of these signs leads to growth. Some instances from the Bible will be cited in the course of the discussion.

One finds, therefore, that Roy Pointer's typology of this subject is apt. The following is a synopsis and an adaptation of Roy Pointer's discussion of signs of growth under these ten headings.

1. **Constant prayer** (both corporate and personal) is essential. The church that does not give prayer its proper place does not grow. Jesus demonstrated the necessity of prayer in His own ministry. He prayed constantly throughout His life on earth – in public and alone (Mark 1:35; John 6:11; 11:41,42; 17:1-26). His life of prayer was an inspiration and example to His disciples (Luke 11:1; Mark 9:28,29). They never forgot that they could and should pray constantly, earnestly and with great faith. These disciples saw extraordinary answers to their prayers, particularly when they prayed in agreement and gathered together (Acts 2:1ff; 5:12ff). They knew that their prayers could be hindered by unconfessed sin because they learnt that prayer based upon a right relationship with God has great power (Acts 5:1-12).

Prayer is essential to the life and growth of the Church because it affects every dimension of growth. When the church was first founded at Pentecost with the addition of three thousand converts, the practice of prayer was one of the basic elements of their instruction. Constant prayer was a hallmark of the Early Church and should still be a hallmark of any church that desires growth (Acts 2:43ff; 4:23ff; 6:1-7).

2. **Respect for Biblical Authority:** "The Bible", said Emil Bruner, "is the soil from which all

Christian faith grows". It is the source of Christian doctrine and the manual of church practice. Throughout two thousand years of church history the Bible has constantly reminded the church of her distinctive message and mission. When the Bible is allowed to speak to the church she is renewed and reformed. When the Bible addresses the world mankind is called by God to faith and obedience. Where peoples respond, churches are planted. The Bible, which is the Word of God, is therefore an instrument of the Holy Spirit for the growth of the Church and Kingdom. Recognition of the power and authority of the Bible within the church is therefore a "mark of growth". As biblical truths are taught and obeyed in the church, the Bible stamps its authority and authenticates its nature within the church and the word. The scriptures are dynamic and effective to fulfil the purpose of God (Josh. 1:7-9; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:24; 19:20).

3. **Effective Leadership:** Growing churches always have effective leadership. They have leaders (i.e. ministers and all other leaders) who get the job done. In his analysis of growing churches, Peter Wagner identified the role of the minister as "the primary catalytic factor for growth". Where the minister has a vision for growth and a concern to reach the lost he becomes the key for growth. When, on the other hand, the minister has no vision for growth and little or no concern for evangelism he is an obstacle to growth. He is the proverbial cork in the bottle preventing the free flow of water. To Wagner, the role of the minister is so important that he places this at the top of his list of "Seven Vital Signs" of growth. He writes:

Vital Sign Number One of a healthy growing church is a pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth

4. **Mobilized Membership:** Church Growth

studies from every continent and from a great variety of cultures have confirmed a basic New Testament principle – the churches grow when they mobilize their total membership in the service of Christ. The example of South Korea readily comes to mind. It is a well known fact that churches of most denominations in that country experience rapid growth (numerical, spiritual and functional). This rapid growth, resulting in members attending church in shift, has been attributed to mobilized membership.

There is the traditional distinction between the clergy and laity within the Church. Yet the New Testament consistently states that every Christian belongs to the people of God and is called and equipped for active service within the body of Christ. Each member has a particular function to fulfil and a special contribution to make. This is expressed in many different ways within a local church or related itinerant ministries. Ministers must recognize the true nature of the church and their role within it. They have the task of equipping their congregations to minister and therefore, of helping each member discover, develop and use their gifts (Eph.4:11-16)

5. **Eventful Worship:** Writing about Pentecostal denominations especially in Latin America which he claims “are probably the fastest growing section of the World Church today”, Peter Wagner identifies their worship as a key factor for their rapid growth. He writes:

One of the first things you notice when you go into a worship service in a Latin American Pentecostal Church is how much the people seem to enjoy themselves. The hardest thing to find in one of the Pentecostal services is wide yawn. Unfortunately yawns are all too common in many other churches ... But since

Pentecostals have fun going to church, they do not hesitate to bring others along...

This description of worship service in Pentecostal Churches is not peculiar to Latin America. The same thing can, in fact, be said of Pentecostals in Ghana and, indeed, elsewhere in Africa. There are valid insights and many important lessons to learn about eventful worship from this Pentecostal experience throughout the world. Certain principles are discernible from a number of the characteristics of Pentecostal worship identified by Wagner. The gist of these are:-

- a) **The Bigness** - The Pentecostals love worship in large numbers. They enjoy “celebrations”. These large gatherings help to make the worship memorable and eventful. Worship in these churches is always an unforgettable experience.
- b) **The Social Opportunity** – Going to church becomes an occasion to renew friendships and share experiences. People arrive early and stay late because they like being together. It is certainly more like the New Testament pattern than some churches where greetings are never exchanged and where it is possible to attend church for years with only a “Goodbye” at the door to the minister.
- c) **The noise level, participation and motion**- These three characteristics collectively demonstrate a fundamental principle of New Testament worship – participation (1 Cor. 14:6). People are free to participate. When it is time to pray, they all pray. Their natural and spontaneous prayers encourage even the timid to pray. When it is time for personal testimonies, there is no shortage of volunteers. They feel free to contribute with exclamations of praise etc. as the service progresses. These, it is believed, ensure that members become

totally involved with body, mind and spirit as they worship God. It must be noted, however, that spontaneity and freedom may degenerate into disorder or license. Paul's caution to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14) about excesses in worship is, therefore appropriate in discussing the issue of congregational participation during worship.

- d) **Spiritual Gifts** –Despite the seeming overemphasis, in Pentecostal /Charismatic churches, on the gift of tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 7-11), they (the gifts) reveal openness to the intervention of the Spirit during worship services. There is the belief that the Lord will signify his presence by signs of His power. There is a sense of expectancy and faith – an anticipation that God will speak and act. They expect the sick to be healed, unbelievers to be converted, and the troubled to be comforted. It is not being suggested that “sign gifts” are essential to worship or for growth. In fact there are Pentecostal churches that are not growing in the real sense of the word, whilst on the other hand; there are many non-Pentecostal churches that are growing. The important lesson to be learnt from Pentecostal worship, however, is that every worship service should be an adventure with Christ. Every worshipper should be filled with a sense of expectancy and faith that Christ will make His presence known. Eventful worship takes place when He does.
- e) **The music and the preaching** – Contemporary and popular music makes worship more lively. Drums and instruments like the guitar, the organ and accordion are played to the accompaniment of clapping and percussion instruments during worship. Preaching is also directed to the heart rather than the head. Such preaching, though not without doctrinal content, is more emotional than

intellectual. It relates to the life situation of the ordinary church member. Particular effort is made at a simple yet effective presentation of the Word. Note must be taken, nonetheless, of the need for a proper balance between emotional and intellectual preaching. Both are essential.

6. **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 contacts 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 mission, events, services, camps, etc. to discover new and responsive people (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-20; Acts 8:5-8, 10:1-48).
7. **Community Life:** Fellowship is one of the hallmarks of a church and characterizes every true church. 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 (John 13:35). Christians are related eternally to each other because of their common relationship to the Father, through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. The local church must, therefore, be a visible expression on earth of that divine community. Those who are not “God's people” should be aware of a distinct group who are. They should recognize God's family and want to join it. That Christianity is meant to be lived in the context of loving and caring relationships, was seen at the birth of the church at Pentecost. Christians had a “religious communism of love” (Acts 2:24; 4:32-37) and shared whatever they possessed with each other, so that no one lacked or had need.

8. **Compassionate Service:** The pattern for Christian mission has been laid down in the ministry of Jesus. "As the Father sent me, so I send you", Jesus said to His disciples (John 20:21). The service of Jesus was motivated by love for all men. It was often manifested in surges of strong compassion (Matt.9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:24) and always found expression in deeds of love and mercy. He gave sight to the blind; comfort to the bereaved; hearing to the deaf; food to the hungry; healing to the crippled; and deliverance to the demonized. He touched the leper and raised the dead. He had the reputation of "doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Likewise, a local church must be motivated by love to reach out and serve its neighbourhood. The love within the community of believers should spill over to embrace all men (Gal. 6:10). Good works are meant to characterize the life of all Christians (Eph. 2:8-10) and are the fruit of the faith they profess (James 2:14-18). These good deeds are also an essential foundation for the Good News (Matt. 5:16). Personal and corporate acts of love and compassion are legion in stories of church growth.

9. **Openness to Change:** The vast majority of Christians want their churches to grow, yet unfortunately many are unwilling to pay the price for growth, especially the price of constant openness to the changes required by growth in all dimensions. Growing churches are not only open to change but have successfully managed all the changes that they believed the Holy Spirit required. This is not change for change's sake, but for Christ's sake – changes in individual lives, in the church and in the world. Christians become new creatures, the church does not stick to traditions that do not promote growth and society is challenged to conform to the righteousness, justice and peace of the Kingdom of God.

10. **Released Resources:** McGavran has shown that growing churches release the resources of leadership and ministry of a large proportion of their membership, for service not only in the church but in the world. Leaders and members of a growing church love to give of their money, time, talents and gifts for the benefit of the church and the community.

(e) **EXAMPLES OF GROWING CHURCHES**

It has been mentioned that for a church to experience total growth, it must be seen to be growing numerically, spiritually and functionally. In other words the church must be experiencing internal, expansion and extension/bridging growth. There is evidence to show that some churches in Ghana are growing as far as the various dimensions of growth are concerned. Two of these churches have been picked for the purposes of emphasis. These are the **Church of Pentecost** and the **Deeper Life Bible Church**. These churches stand out in my analysis as Ghanaian churches that are growing rapidly. (Refer Chapter 6 of my book, *Christianity in Ghana: A Comparative Church Growth Study* for details).

CHURCH OF PENTECOST

Leonard Christine, who has studied the Church of Pentecost closely, makes the following noteworthy observation:

The Church of Pentecost grows with the speed and vigour of a tropical forest, covering length, depth, breadth and height. Branches and roots shoot off in all direction.

One thing that is striking about this Church is the fact that it is structured for growth. For instance, the prime focus of the three main groups in the Church is evangelism and church growth. These are the Witness Movement, the Women's Movement and the Children's Movement. The **Witness Movement**, which began as the Young People's Movement in the early 1940s for members of the Church within the

age group of 16-25, "became the vanguard of evangelism...". The stated aims of the Movement (even when it was a youth group) were:

1. To get the youth together to be trained to witness and preach in the open air.
2. To keep the youth busy to keep them from temptation and bad friends.
3. To prepare them for the ministry as Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses and Overseers.
4. To bring to the limelight the gifts of leadership in them.

By 1950 interest in the young people's movement had so grown that membership could no longer be limited to the 16-25 years age group. The movement, whose slogan was changed to "Sons of God! March forward!", has continued to make great impact in "the winning of souls to be added to the church daily" (Acts 2:47). As soon as a new local assembly is opened, a branch of the Witness Movement is started and charged with the responsibility of winning souls for Christ and the church. Indeed, "the Witness Movement may be described as the Church's main membership supply system".

The **Women's Movement**, as the name suggests, is the wing of the church responsible for the all-round development and needs of the sisterhood. This movement, apart from organizing the women in prayer and Bible teaching sessions, "is a dynamic evangelistic force in the church". The movement, therefore, organizes rallies, campaigns and conventions at all levels.

The **Children's Movement** has, as its main aim, the drawing of children to Christ while they are still of tender age. Through this movement, the church has been able to sustain the interest of children of church members and has helped keep them in the church.

These children, below the age of sixteen, also conduct open air meetings and conventions to win souls for Christ. The Church of Pentecost History Committee has the following to say about this movement: "We believe that the children's movement has affected in no small manner the numerical growth of the church...".

Official church records show that as at 31st December, 1985, the Church of Pentecost had 2,809 congregations with 241,675 members. By 1990 the church had grown to 3,683 congregations with 323,415 members. Five years later, i.e. in 1995 there were 5,253 congregations with 585,096 members. The figures for 1998 were 6,497 congregations and 779,199 members. These figures indicate a decadal growth rate of 118% for number of congregations and 141% for membership. Today (i.e. in 2007) the Church has **9,706** congregations with a total membership of **1,468,726**.

It is worth noting that the Church of Pentecost, entering the Ghanaian church scene (as a denomination) as late as 1953, had the greatest number of churches by 1998 and it still does. The closest denomination in 1998 was Roman Catholic with 3,748 congregations (i.e. just about half the number of Pentecost congregations). This is very significant considering the fact that the Roman Catholic Church which entered the country about 73 years earlier is also known to derive some level of foreign support for its work in Ghana. With local resources, the Church of Pentecost is also involved in missionary work outside Ghana. Records from the Headquarters of the Church of Pentecost indicate that currently, the Church is ministering to 226,686 members (including 163,967 adults) in 2,784 congregations in 69 countries. The following table gives statistics of membership in the various countries:

**THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST – INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS
DISTRIBUTION OF church STATISTICS BY NATIONS FOR 2007**

S/No	NATION	OVERALL CHURCH MEMBERS)	ADULT MEMBER. (13yrs & Above	CHILDN. MEMB. (below 13yrs)
1	ANGOLA	708	278	430
2	AUSTRALIA	560	424	136
3	AUSTRIA	443	290	153
4	BELGIUM	1,175	900	275
5	BELIZE	60	45	15
6	BENIN	47,862	32,850	15,012
7	BOTSWANA	307	264	43
8	BRAZIL	235	162	73
9	BURKINA FASO	5,513	3,796	1,717
10	BURUNDI	458	302	156
11	CAMERROUN	769	574	195
12	CANADA	4142	3,129	1,013
13	CAPE VERDE	546	506	40
14	CENTRAL AFRICAN REP.***	174	137	37
15	CHAD	133	87	46
16	CONGO (BRAZ)	805	550	255
17	CONGO (D.R)	2046	1,485	561
18	COTE D'IVOIRE	53970	39,743	14,227
19	DENMARK***	62	50	12
20	DOMINICAN REP.	652	442	210
21	EL SALVADOR	207	161	46
22	ETHIOPIA	113	88	25
23	FINLAND	95	70	25
24	FRANCE	1,885	1,406	479
25	GABON	942	718	224
26	GERMANY	4,781	3,259	1,522
27	GREECE	171	138	33
28	GUINEA	1,387	958	429
29	GUINEA BISSAU	2,534	2,000	534
30	GUYANA	533	283	250
31	HOLLAND	2,087	1,613	474
32	INDIA	4,335	3,606	729
33	ISRAEL**	188	135	53
34	ITALY	6,309	4,915	1,394
35	JAPAN	113	92	21
36	KENYA	2,239	1,467	772

37	LEBANON	182	170	12
38	LESOTHO	229	159	70
39	LIBERIA	7,383	5,513	1,870
40	LIBYA	80	79	1
41	LUXEMBURG	26	17	9
42	MADAGASCAR***	301	218	83
43	MALAWI	3,833	2,840	993
44	MALI	462	379	83
45	MOZAMBIQUE	2,501	1,745	756
46	NAMIBIA	316	135	181
47	NEPAL	253	180	73
48	NIGER	697	559	138
49	NIGERIA	6,641	4,911	1730
50	NORWAY	207	146	61
51	PORTUGAL	42	33	9
52	REP. OF IRELAND	467	234	233
53	ROMANIA	46	46	-
54	RWANDA	733	596	137
55	SENEGAL	1,313	1,002	311
56	SIERRA LEONE	3,916	2,814	1,102
57	SOUTH AFRICA	2,066	1,635	431
58	SOUTH KOREA	43	43	-
59	SPAIN	1,541	1,326	215
60	SWITZERLAND	296	220	79
61	TANZANIA	3,926	2,870	1,056
62	THE GAMBIA	872	650	222
63	TOGO	1,3592	8,774	4,818
64	TRINIDAD***	58	40	18
65	UKRAINE	112	108	4
66	UNITED KINGDOM	8,383	6,574	1,809
67	UNITED STATES	14,165	10,715	3,450
68	ZAMBIA	2,050	1,303	748
69	ZIMBABWE	1,415	1,011	404
TOTAL		226,686	163,967	62,719

Reasons that have been given for the growth of the Church of Pentecost should help other churches find some solutions to hindrances to their growth. For this purpose we must again make reference to Leonard Christine. He identifies the commitment and vitality in this church as a key reason for its rapid growth. He writes:

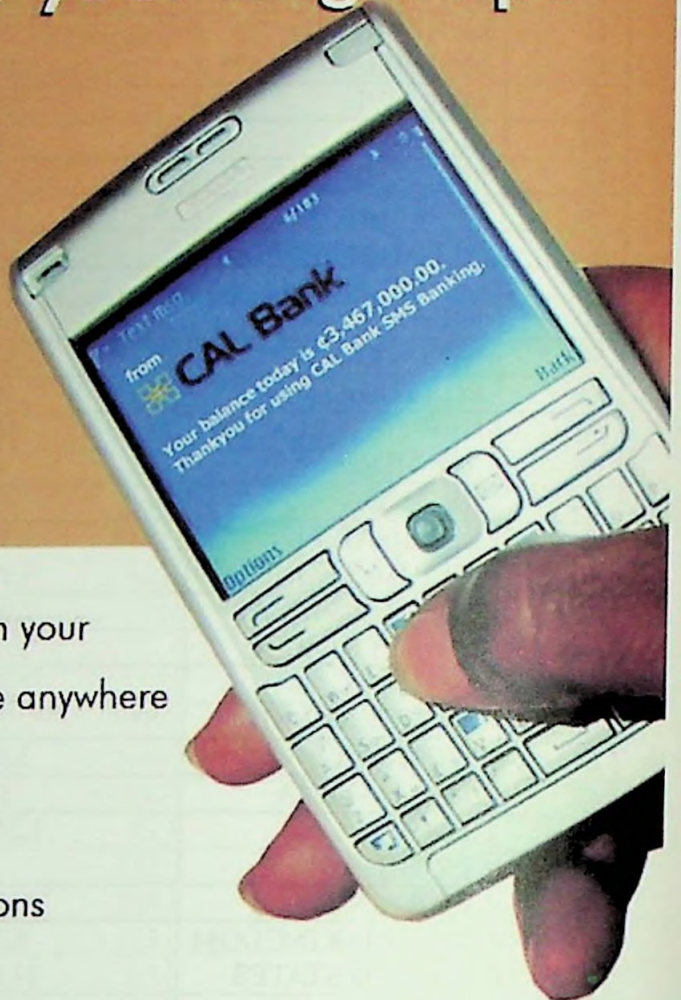
praying Church. One Wednesday morning, when I was in Ghana, I happened to be next-door to a building where hundreds of women gather. I heard them pray for over four hours without stopping. At about half past four on most mornings, we would hear members singing on their way to their local assembly's early prayer meeting.

Another reason for growth is prayer – they are a

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will attach this level of seriousness to the activities of the church, including early Morning Prayer meetings and evening worship services. Go past any Church of Pentecost worship place in both urban and rural areas during these service periods and you cannot help but admire the level of commitment of members. Christine observes, "Power, faith and expectancy are in their prayer. These people have learnt what it is to gain victory in spiritual warfare". If the atmosphere created in a church is that which emanates from genuine love for Jesus then we can be sure that patronage of various church activities will be very encouraging. People will not want to be absent from these activities since they know there is a lot to be gained. This point is underscored by Christine as, again about the Church of Pentecost, he writes:

The main reason the church has grown is that its people love Jesus they have been set on fire for Him. It shows in their worship and in their lives. The church has never allowed compromise – they treat sin and reversion to cultic religious practices as seriously as each one takes his responsibility to Jesus Christ and the Church

This kind of meaningful religiosity issuing from genuine commitment to Jesus Christ, thus from a vital transforming relationship with Him, is nurtured not only in an atmosphere of serious prayer but also by the quality of biblical teaching given. These serious prayer and biblical teaching are not only indicative of internal growth but they are also signs of other dimensions of growth.

DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH

Also known as the **Deeper Christian Life Ministry**, this church commenced work in Ghana in 1973. During the 1988 Ghana Evangelism Committee survey, it came to light that this church had established 72 congregations. At that time total attendance was just about 5,704. The 1993 survey indicated that the church had recorded a phenomenal growth within the five-year period. The number of congregations had increased by 280% to 274 (i.e. over 200 more churches had been planted within five years). Regular church attendance also

shot up by 26% to 20,832. Given their church attendance rate of around 90% total membership in 1993 was in the neighbourhood of 23,146. Currently the Deeper Life Bible Church gives its total number of congregations as 1,005 with around 55,000 members. This means that the current growth rate of the Church, on the basis of the number of congregations, is 267%. Its growth rate is 138% on the basis of membership. The church has maintained a consistent growth rate of about 270% (i.e. 280% for 1993 and 267% for 1998).

To the question, "Does the church have an outreach programme?", the leadership of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Ghana says, "Every programme of the Ministry is outreach oriented". In answer to a related question, it was indicated that more than 70% of the Church's total income is used for evangelism and church planting. If the trend continues the stated objective of the Deeper Life Bible Church "to have a holy and powerful church in every village in the country" could be realized one day if Jesus does not return soon.

The fact that the Deeper Life Bible Church is also growing internally is brought to the fore by the indication that 95% of members attend church regularly. It is reported that more than 60% of members patronize prayer sessions whilst about 80% participate regularly in Bible studies. Obviously there must be something about this Church that sustains the interest of members in these all important activities of the church.

The rapid growth of this Church is attributed to four areas of church life: serious prayer, consistent Bible studies, commitment to outreach and well-organized House fellowships. In fact Sunday worship services and other mid-week programmes keep these in focus. The House Fellowships are meant to ensure that every member is committed to the vision of the Church. One striking result of the emphasis on commitment to Bible study is the attraction of more male members. The current ratio of male to female membership is 5:3. The Deeper Life Bible Church is the only denomination in Ghana that exhibits this trend of more male membership

and over 90% church attendance. The main reason assigned for the high male ratio is the emphasis on Bible teaching. It is believed that men have a greater desire to search for the truth, and this is provided by the Bible studies, which form an integral part of church services including the Sunday morning worship service.

The very high level of church attendance is attributed to the serious Bible teaching and prayer that feature very prominently in all church meetings. Another reason is that the House Fellowships, which are a must for all members, give enough motivation to members to make them want to patronize all main services.

One is inclined to believe that these two churches, the Church of Pentecost and the Deeper Life Bible Church provide models for any church in Ghana that wants to grow. They both exhibit all the aspects of growth discussed in this work clearly because they are seriously engaged in activities that are bound to bring about internal, expansion, and extension/bridging growth. They are both structured for growth as one can find from the various groups in these churches and their activities. In the words of the leadership of the Deeper Life Bible Church, "every programme of the group is outreach oriented".

In this article, we have looked at general Church Growth principles that may facilitate the growth of the Church in Ghana. The Church of Pentecost and the Deeper Life Bible Church have been cited as examples of growing churches in Ghana because they tend to exhibit internal, expansion, and extension/bridging growth. They are, quite clearly, churches that have given some attention to the general Church Growth principles discussed.

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From 1999 to 2006 he was the General Director, Board of Education and Youth (BEY) of the Methodist Church and the General Manager of Methodist Schools in Ghana. From 1st October 2006 he joined the staff of the Methodist University College where he is currently the Head of the Religious Studies and Ethics Department. Dr. Foli is also an adjunct faculty member of Trinity Theological Seminary where he has been teaching courses in Evangelism and Church Growth since 1995. He has some 36 books including 20 on Evangelism, Church Growth, Religious Studies and Moral Education to his credit.

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