

The Church Health/Growth Movement

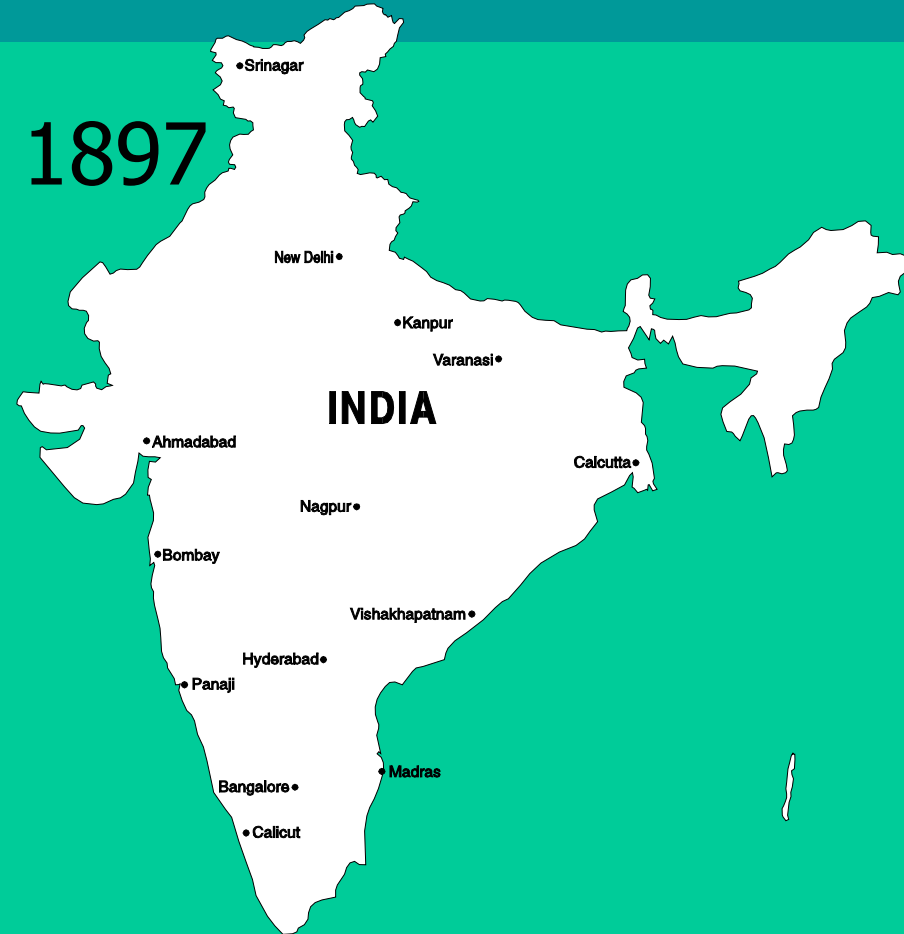
Howard Culbertson
Southern Nazarene University

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Donald McGavran

Father of the Church Growth movement

- MK, born in India in 1897
- Grandparents were also missionaries to India



Captured by materialism

While a student at Butler University . . .

“My father has done enough for the Lord.
It is time for me to strike out for myself
and earn some money.”

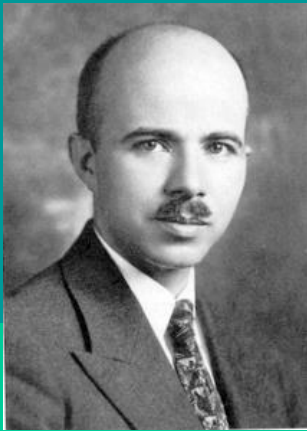


A change of direction

- Gave life to Christ
- Went to Yale Divinity School
- Would finish Ph.D. in 1937 at Columbia University with a dissertation on Hinduism and Christianity

Back to India

- Returned to India in 1923 with United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples of Christ)
- Placed in charge of mission school system at Harda



Missionary administrator

- Director of religious education
 - Standardized instruction and curriculum
 - Wrote course outlines
 - Established Christian Youth Conferences

- Became authority on Hindi language
- Translated Gospels into Chattisgarhi dialect
- Superintendent of leprosy home and hospital

- 1932-- became executive secretary of mission
 - 80 missionaries, 5 hospitals, high schools, primary schools, home for lepers
 - *20-30 small churches growing at 1% per year*

It wasn't all office work



- Fought off a wounded tiger and a wild boar
- Checked a cholera epidemic single handedly
- Climbed the Himalayas



McGavran's conclusion

- Large amounts of money producing relatively small results
- "It offended my Scottish nature."

So, what to do now?

Enter: J. Waskom Pickett



McGavran said: “I lit my candle at his fire.”

Who was this man?

- 1910 -- E. Stanley Jones convinced J. Waskom Pickett to apply for missionary service to India
- Interest aroused in "mass movements" to Christ
 - 1920's Controversy over mass conversions piques Pickett's interest
 - 1930-31 Pickett surveys mass movement phenomenon throughout India

- 1936 Pickett was asked to survey central India
McGavran traveled with him

Pickett's legacy

- Pragmatic research-based orientation
- People movements
- Awareness of social networks
- Need to reach the masses
- Study of converts' motives
- Disciplining and "perfection" as part of evangelism



Pickett is one of us

- Something not to be overlooked for our theological tradition:
- McGavran's mentor was a Methodist.

- 1936 McGavran left administrative position; spent next 18 years in church planting
 - (15 churches/ 1000 converts)

Birth certificate of church growth movement

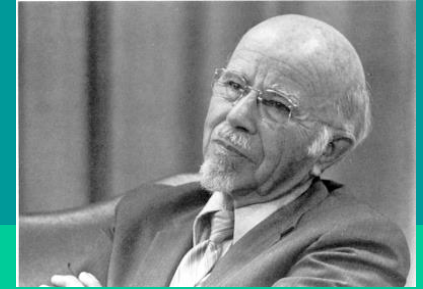
- 1955 Published “Bridges of God”
 - Fostering people movements versus mission station approach
 - Hint of Homogeneous Unit Principle

- 1959 Published "How Churches Grow"
- 1961 Church Growth Institute in Oregon
 - Plan was to educate furloughed missionaries
 - Began with one student, a Methodist missionary to Bolivia.
- 1964 "Church Growth Bulletin"

- 1965 Moved to Fuller Seminary
 - Movement went from global to dominated by North Americans
- 1970 Published “Understanding Church Growth”



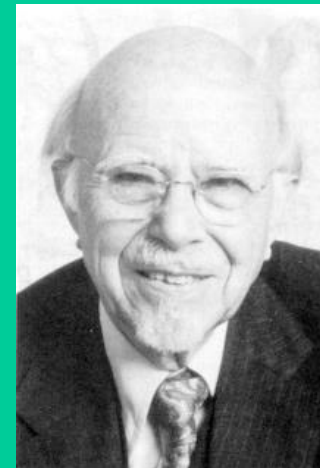
McGavran's 3 questions



- When a church is growing, **why** is it growing?
- What **barriers, obstructions or sicknesses** prevent the natural life, vitality and growth of churches?
- What **reproducible principles** operative in growing churches can be used elsewhere?

Lessons from McGavran

1. Value of a few close support people
 - Wesley / Whitefield contrast
2. Clear focus
3. Optimism
4. Value of edification and encouragement



Lessons from McGavran

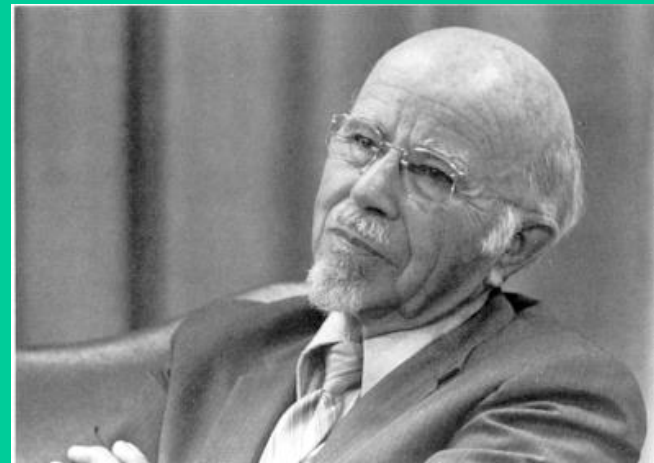
5. Humility

6. Enormous energy

Much of his work done after age 65

7. Vision

8. Incredible tenacity



Philosophic Core

Material from Elmer Towns

- Homogeneous units

Main barrier to conversion needs to be theological and not something else

- People movements

- Focus on receptivity . . . the “good” soil

- Use of scientific methodology

Wesley’s sanctified pragmatism

- Church planting

McGavran's use of scientific method

- Identify problem
- Gather data
- Construct hypothesis
(potential solution)
- Test hypothesis
- Establish principle

The Modern Church Health/Growth Movement

End

This PowerPoint presentation is available along with related materials and other PowerPoint presentations at <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/ppt.htm>