

Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement

for Ministry, Church and Society

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Donald McGavran

Father of the Church Growth movement

- Born in India in 1897
- Parents and grandparents were missionaries to India



Captured by U.S. materialism

As 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.”



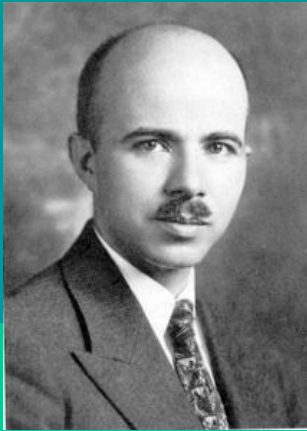
A change of direction

- While at the university, gave life to Christ
- Felt call to ministry

Back to India

- 1923: Returned to India as a missionary with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)





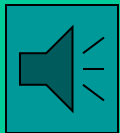
Missionary administrator

- Director of religious education
- Superintendent of leprosy home and hospital
- Translated Gospels into Chattisgarhi dialect

It wasn't all office work



- Fought off a wounded tiger and a wild boar
- Ended a cholera epidemic
- Climbed the Himalayas





- 1932-- became the head of mission

- Under him:

- 80 missionaries, 5 hospitals, high schools, primary schools, home for lepers

- 20-30 small churches growing at 1% per year

McGavran's conclusion

- Large amounts of money producing 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?

- 1936: Pickett was studying the validity of “mass movements” to Christ
- McGavran traveled around India with him

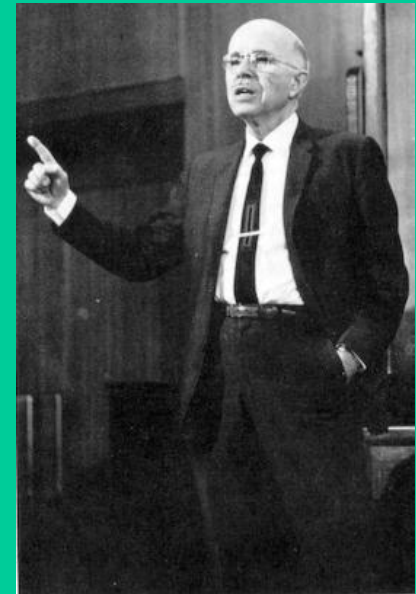
- 1936 McGavran left administrative position; spent next 18 years in church planting
 - (15 churches/ 1000 converts)

- 1955 wrote book: “Bridges of God”
 - Importance of family/friendship networks
 - Hint of Homogeneous Unit Principle
 - “People like to become Christians without feeling they have to cross racial, linguistic, social or class boundaries.”

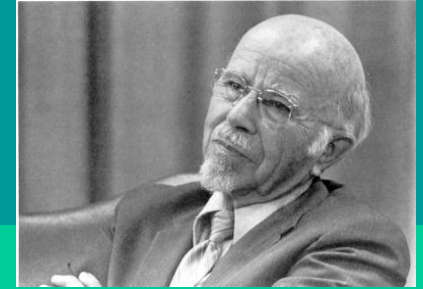
- 1961: founded Church Growth Institute in Oregon; 1965 moved to Fuller Seminary
 - Plan: educate furloughed missionaries
- 1970 Published "Understanding Church Growth"

McGavran and the scientific method

- McGavaran used the scientific method in his studies of church growth and decline
 - Gather data
 - Construct hypothesis (potential solution)
 - Test hypothesis
 - Establish principle

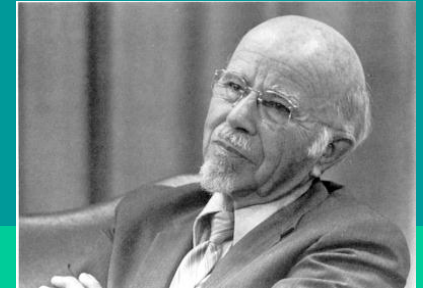


McGavran's 3 questions



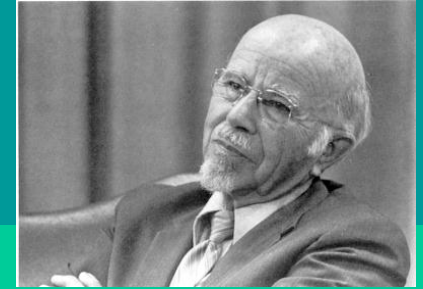
- 1. When a church is growing, **why** is it growing?
 - Look beyond superficial evaluations and get the right answer

McGavran's 3 questions



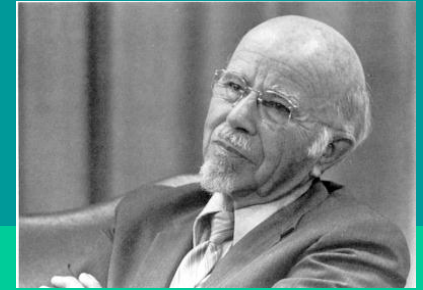
- 2. What **barriers, obstructions or sicknesses** prevent the natural life, vitality and growth of churches?
 - Examples: Ethnikitis, "holy huddle," ghost town problems, people blindness, First Church syndrome, out of space issues, pew paralysis

McGavran's 3 questions



- 3. What **reproducible principles** operative in growing churches can be used elsewhere?
 - Examples: identify receptive people, reach out through social networks, multiply recruiting units, minister to people's needs, strategic planning

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?

“God wants His lost sheep found”

How can we do the most effective job in serving Him to accomplish that task?

The Modern Church Growth Movement

MCS edition



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