

# 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.”



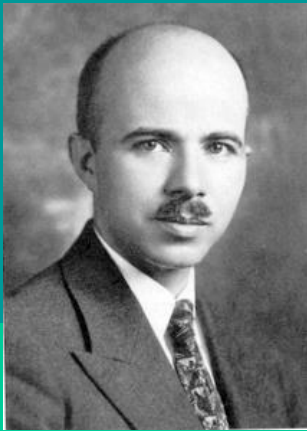
# A change of direction

- 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)





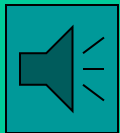
# Missionary administrator

- 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

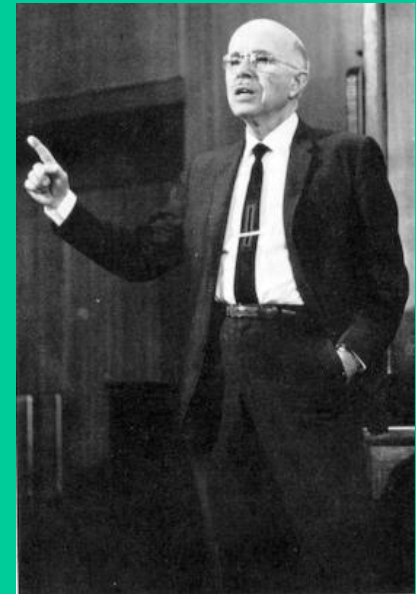
- 1936 McGavran left administrative position; spent next 18 years in church planting
  - (15 churches/ 1000 converts)

- 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.”

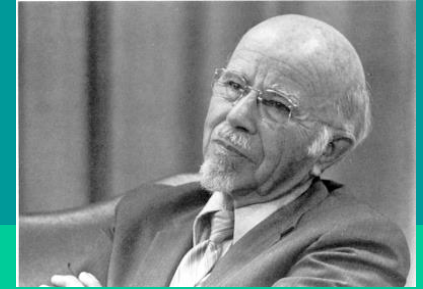
- 1961: founded Church Growth Institute in Oregon; 1965 moved to Fuller Seminary
  - Plan: educate furloughed missionaries
- 1970 Published "Understanding Church Growth"

# McGavran and the scientific method

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



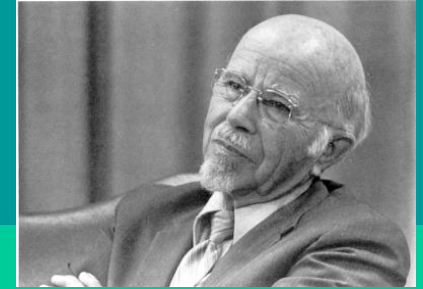
# McGavran's 3 questions



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

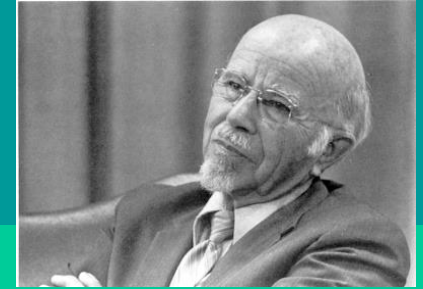


# McGavran's 3 questions



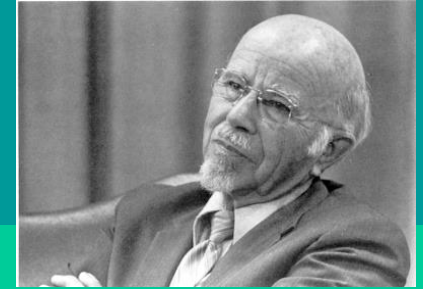
- 2. What **barriers, obstructions or sicknesses** prevent the natural life, vitality and growth of churches?
  - Examples: Ethnikitis, "holy huddle," ghost town problems, people blindness, First Church syndrome, out of space issues, pew paralysis

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

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