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Remembering Win Arn

Gary L. McIntosh

Dr. Win Arn completed his life's journey on earth this past December (June 26, 1923—December 13, 2006). For many of us who identify with the Church Growth Movement, his passing brought back memories of an important era in the life of North American churches that began in the early 1970s.

Churches and denominations in the United States experienced almost continual growth from the early 1600s until the late 1950s. However, by the 1960s several churches and denominations had started to decline, and church leaders were looking for ways to reverse this trend. The major response to this decline was the emergence of the Church Growth Movement in the 1970s.

The founders of this new movement were Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner, and Win Arn. McGavran, of course, had been teaching church growth principles since the mid 1950s, but he had resisted teaching North American pastors. It was not until 1972 that Peter Wagner convinced McGavran to team-teach a church growth course for pastors in the United States. One student in that first class was Win Arn. He immediately saw that church growth thought could assist pastors in winning people to Christ, as well as assimilating new converts into local churches. Arn's vision for training pastors in church growth principles led to the founding of the Institute for American Church Growth, with Donald McGavran as chairman of the board. The entire story is retold in the article "A Short History of Winfield C. Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth," which is reprinted in this issue of the *Journal of the ASCG*.

In many ways, I owe my ministry career to Win Arn. I began pastoring a church in San Bernardino, California in 1976 and started looking for resources to help me lead my church to

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greater effectiveness in winning and keeping people for Christ. To my delight, a catalog from the Institute for American Church Growth arrived on my desk and I immediately subscribed to Arn's magazine—*Church Growth: America*. The stories of growing churches, and the practical application of church growth principles I found in that magazine, gave me hope that my small church could grow. Later I used several of the Institute's films in my church. I took my elders to a Basic Growth Seminar, and attended the Advanced Church Growth Seminar held in Pasadena, California. The application of church growth ideas, empowered by Arn's resources, helped my small church regain its vision and vitality.

Later I had the pleasure of working with Win Arn in an effort to bring the Institute's two-year strategy for church growth to my denomination. My first published article was in *Church Growth: America*, and in 1983 Win offered me the chance to become director of church consulting for the Institute of American Church Growth. During my years at the Institute (1983-1986), Win mentored me in leading seminars, writing, and working with denominations. When the opportunity came for me to move to Talbot School of Theology to teach church growth, Win encouraged me to do so. The ministry that God has given to me today is in many ways due to Win's investment in my life during the 1970s and 1980s. I will forever be grateful for Win and Barbara Arn's friendship and encouragement.

Win Arn's life and ministry touched many people, as the following personal reflections of Win Arn illustrate.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Win Arn for his decades of ministry and influence. As I reflect back, few people have had a greater impact on my work with churches. Dr. Arn founded the Institute for American Church Growth that served as a model for numerous ministry organizations such as the Center for Church Growth.

While serving as a local pulpit minister I strongly depended upon resources from the Institute for American Church Growth. I will always remember Chuck and Diane Bradley who were memorable and lovable characters in the church training films produced by Arn and company.

In those days invaluable resources came from Dr. Arn's work. The list included training films, seminars, books, magazines, computer software, and church diagnostic and planning tools. Most congregations in the U.S. with

a heart for evangelism and growth were benefiting from his labors.

God truly blessed Dr. Arn with a passion for lost souls, a creative mind, and a seemingly endless supply of energy. Because so many of us are standing on his broad shoulders, we have stood much taller in our service to the Lord and His church.

—John Ellas, Center for Church Growth, Houston, Texas

I was thinking back to an impressionable period of my life—in the 1970's—when Win did something that (to my knowledge) no one else had ever done. He took an academic school of thought (Donald McGavran's Church Growth school) about how people are reached and, combining the skills of interviewer, field researcher, writer, film maker, and entrepreneur, he found ways to transfer and interpret the key perspective and ideas out of the missiological academy and into the life of thousands of churches.

Win Arn did not do it alone. McGavran, in his senior years, became a communicator of the American scene. Pete Wagner, Gary McIntosh, Bill Sullivan, Charles Arn, George Hunter, and others played notable roles. But it would not have happened without Win's entrepreneurial vision. He saw possibilities for American Christianity's outreach that no one else had seen, and he was the first to get his mind around what the Church Growth approach would look like in the USA, and he knew how to educate many church leaders. The Church Growth Movement is not as visible as when Win was its most visible interpreter, but it is still a movement, it still has traction, and many of its once-new teachings are now widely assumed. Only in Heaven will we all have a full accounting of all that God achieved in and through the movement. I am grateful for Win's life, energy, leadership, and witness.

—George G. Hunter, III, Asbury Theological Seminary

I first met Win Arn when he was director of youth ministries in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America. He had prepared a series of 16mm movies on Charlie Churchman, that were very effective in changing the attitude of youth workers in all evangelical churches. Next time I ran across Win Arn, he was working with

Donald McGavran in The Institute for American Church Growth in Pasadena, California. The greatest contribution of Win Arn was taking the teachings of Donald McGavran and contextualizing them into the application of church growth principles in the American culture.
—Elmer L. Towns, Liberty University

I rejoice in the influence Win Arn had upon thousands of church leaders. I thank God for his passion for the Lord's Church. He was a difference-maker. God was honored by his life and love.
—Lyle B. Pointer, Nazarene Theological Seminary

From my first exposure to Church Growth, Win Arn was an inspiration. I was last with him a number of years ago for a lunch in a Pasadena restaurant when he was asking my advice about speaking in England. I cautioned him that they didn't pay very well – travel expenses plus a book token. He laughed and I don't know whether or not he ever accepted an invitation.

It is a joy to know that he passed into the presence of the Lord with a smile on his face. What a way to go, transitioning from this world at the conclusion of a long sleep. Although he had been frail for a number of years, it still brings a great sense of loss.
—Eddie Gibbs, Fuller Theological Seminary

Win Arn's life is one of those testimonies to what God can do through someone who is devoted to him and willing to do whatever is necessary to follow the guidance of our Savior. I got to know his work through the book *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, adapted into German by Christian Schwarz. At the time I was a young pastor in Austria trying to understand how to reach the community more effectively. It was one of the most helpful books I had read because it helped to see the church as an extension of God's love to the community. We were blessed with a great harvest. Win's legacy goes way beyond North America.
—Erich Baumgartner, Andrews University

Early on in my ministry I learned much from Win Arn concerning church growth. He met with leaders of the Free Methodist Church and gave us many insights on

how to grow healthy churches. I praise the Lord for his life and the Kingdom legacy he left.
—Ray Ellis, Free Methodist Church

Win Arn was a great inspiration, encouragement and mentor and I am the richer for his ministry and passion.
—Ray Muller, Anglican Church, New Zealand

I first met Dr. Arn in 1976. His broad shoulders looked like they could carry any church growth burden. Win Arn reminded me of a Christian Walt Disney, living in California, an innovator whose sharp church growth “instincts” launched many a revealing research project and product. He was so gracious, even that first time. My father, John Hurston, and I went to his Advanced Growth Seminar to study what was happening in the field.

Win Arn fought the good fight, he finished the course, he kept the faith. He might no longer be on this earth, but his influence lives on. I rejoice in Win’s powerful legacy.
—Karen Hurston, Church Growth Consultant

When Win Arn was the director of Youth for Christ in Portland, Oregon years ago, he decided to have some fresh new young bucks on the Board of Directors. I was privileged to be one of the three chosen. I worked with him on choir projects and camping adventures. I have such warm, loving remembrances of the times when I knew and worked with Dr. Arn. I know the Lord has used him in a mighty way since the days of YFC. I know this because I know his heart and desire was to follow the Lord. I still use some of his “truisms” to this day. He meant so much to me and I lovingly remember him.
—Ernie Beckett

Many years have passed since the days I enjoyed singing in the Youth for Christ choir in Portland, and all the additional exciting activities associated with YFC. Win Arn played such an important part in forming me for these many years of ministry. The education I received during those years of singing, touring, TV productions, and soul winning was God’s springboard to prepare me for the future He had planned. I remember his pep talks, his en-

couragement. Only God knew the future of each of us as a result of the influences during those informative years. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Arn for his part in making this possible. He had a profound influence on me and the ministry God had planned. I am eternally grateful.

—Jean Pressnall Halton

As a former Continental (1965), I am so grateful for Win Arn. His vision for “Youth for Christ” really impacted my life, and many others. I remember so much those wonderful Saturday night rallies at Benson High School. How I looked forward to that. Most important was his encouragement to live for Christ. We all knew Dr. Arn loved and cared for us teenagers, and he helped us realize that we really could make a difference and impact in the world for Christ. I feel blessed to have known him. I look forward to seeing him again in the arms of Jesus some day.

—Mary (Mossbarger) Ericksen

Selected Biography of Winfield C. Arn

I. Personal Information

A. Background

1. Born 1923 in Pennsylvania
2. Wife, Barbara (Carr), holds B.A. and M.A. degrees
3. Five children
4. Christian experience began at twelve years of age, with a growing commitment since
5. High school, business college, college graduate, seminary graduate
6. Reached the Eagle Scout rank in Boy Scouts of America
7. Served as a pilot in the United States Army Air Force; also served as a flight instructor.
8. Resident of Oregon for 18 years, California 36 years
9. Extensive travel, including one around the world trip, three tours of Europe, and two trips to the Holy Land
10. First recipient of the Donald A. McGavran Award by the American Society for Church Growth in 1989

B. Present

Passed into the presence of his Lord December 13, 2006.

II. Areas of Leadership

A. Church Leadership

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1. Chairman, two terms; Vice-Chairman, one term, of the Greater Portland Area Sunday School Association
 2. Radio and television Committee, Portland Council of Churches
 3. Executive Committee, Greater Portland Area Association of Evangelicals; Chairman, television Commission
 4. Consultant for local church programs of religious education
 5. Vice-Chairman and Executive Planning Committee of Pacific Northwest Billy Graham Crusade
 6. Treasurer, Youth for Christ International; Executive Committee, Youth for Christ International
 7. Interim pastor and supply preaching for two Covenant churches (while interim pastor of one church, it won Northwest Sunday School contest)
 8. Guest lecturer for Sunday School workshops and training sessions
 9. Director of Religious education in Baptist Churches (three years) and Congregational Church (four years)
 10. Summer Conference speaker
 11. Director of Christian Education for California Conference of Covenant Churches ... ministering in 58 churches
- B. Community Leadership
1. Governor's Committee of Children and Youth
 2. Chairman of the Governor's Committee of Children and Youth Biannual Convention
 3. Executive Committee, Mayor's Committee of Juvenile Delinquency
 4. Member, State Committee on Alcohol Education
 5. Speaker for local civic clubs and professional groups
 6. Selected as "Outstanding Citizen" on three occasions
 7. Research Committee, Cascade College
 8. Parents' Magazine Achievement Award for Outstanding Community Service
 9. Appointed by Secretary of State of Oregon as Emergency Interim Successor Superintendent, Maclaren School for boys
 10. Three George Washington Medals from Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge, for Americana Pageant
- C. Leadership during Scholastic Preparation
1. High School: Eagle Scout
 2. Business College: President of the student body
School public relations

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3. College: Vice-President of the senior class
Instructor in the academic program
Appeared in "Who's Who Among Students of American Colleges and Universities"
 4. Seminary: President of the senior class
Editor of the school paper

III. Areas of Communication

A. Television

1. Nine years, Executive Producer for a weekly television youth program
2. Three years, Executive Producer, Writer, Actor, in a special thirteen-week summer series seen on a three-station network through the Northwest
3. Executive Producer for a five-night Easter series
4. Producer of a documentary on the needs in Foster Home Care, "When Children Laugh"
5. Originator of local counseling following Graham Crusade telecasts
6. Special consultant in community life for local television station KPTV
7. Three programs entered by station KGW-TV in national Peabody Award competition
8. Producer and distributor of thirteen weekly video tape programs to independent stations across the nation
9. Producer of "This is Our Country" used on KING Broadcasting Company, three-station TV network
10. Introduced and used video tape equipment in educational ministry with Covenant churches

B. Radio

Five years of broadcasting on a daily basis

C. Publications

1. Numerous articles
2. Numerous small pamphlets for area distribution
3. Articles in city newspapers
4. Redesigned and restyled denominational publication the "Covenanter"
5. Regular contributions to Covenant Companion and to California Covenanter
6. Author and co-author of several books
How to Grow A Church
Ten Steps to Church Growth
Back to Basics in Church Growth
The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook, Vol 1

The Pastor's Church Growth handbook, Vol 2

Church Growth: State of the Art

The Church Growth Ratio Book

Live Long and Love It

Catch the Age Wave

7. Publisher of first magazine for American Church Growth: *Church Growth: America* (6,000 subscribers)
8. Publisher of national newsletter: The Win Arn Growth Report (30,000+ subscribers)

D. Films

1. Producer of 37 films which have been distributed nationally and internationally
2. Recipient of "Oscar" by the National Evangelical Film Foundation; other film awards
3. Writer-consultant for film scripts
4. Pioneer in new concepts for religious films — "Charlie Churchman" series, Dynamic Laity Series (Chuck Bradley Series), Dynamic Sunday School Series, others
5. Freedoms foundation Award for film "This is Our Country"
6. Developed concept in Christian communication on short films used to support and illustrate preaching and used a new curriculum material for teaching
 - Churches of The Revelation
 - Building the Church
7. Established Christian Communication Company
8. Sample of films

General Church Growth Films:

How to Grow A Church

Reach Out and Grow

"And...they Said It Couldn't Be Done"

"Planned Parenthood for Churches"

"A Church is Born"

The Dynamic Laity Series:

"But...I'm Just A Layman"

"The Gift of Love"

"Discover Your Gifts"

"For the Love of Pete"

"See You Sunday?"

"The Ministers"

"A Matter of Urgency"

"Who Cares About Love?"

"In His Steps"

The Dynamic Sunday School Series:

"The Great Commission Sunday School"

“The Possibility Sunday School”

- IV. Areas of Religious Education
- A. Teaching Experience in Religious Education
1. Professor of Religious Education, Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon
 2. Professor of Religious Education, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon, for four years
 3. Guest lecturer and Chapel Speaker at Fuller Theological Seminary, Talbot Seminary, Biola College, numerous other Bible colleges and seminaries
- B. Religious Education in Society
1. Extensive counseling and guidance of high school youth
 2. Pioneered wilderness camping experience with delinquent and nondelinquent youth (eight years)
 3. Developed camping philosophy and practice for delinquent youth
 4. Extensive experience in youth and adult evangelism (14 years)
 5. Developed halfway house and foster home concept in Oregon and established Youth Care Center for needy youths
 6. Extensive use of communication tools in practical experiences (audio-visuals, public relations, publicity, fund raising, etc.)
 7. Administration and supervision of 20 paid employees
 8. Established Christian lodge and retreat center
 9. Developed conference youth outreach into needy and meaningful service areas
 10. Extensive planning and oversight of camps and conferences in California Conference
- C. Religious Education Degrees
1. Doctor of Religious Education, Eastern Baptist Seminary (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), conferred 1954 (Major Area: Religious education; Minor Areas: Counseling, Church History)
 2. Master of Religious Education, Eastern Baptist Seminary (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), conferred 1950
 3. Graduate work in Communication, Portland State University, 1967
 4. Graduate work in Management, Portland State University, 1970
 5. Courses in Church Growth, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1972

D. Church Growth Award

1. Received the first Donald A. McGavran Award from the American Society for Church Growth in 1989.

—Editor