

4-1-2007

## A Short History of Winfield C. Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth

Gary L. McIntosh

Biola University, [gary.mcintosh@biola.edu](mailto:gary.mcintosh@biola.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalarchives.apu.edu/jascg>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McIntosh, G. L. (2007). A Short History of Winfield C. Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth. *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*, 18(2), 33-64. Retrieved from <https://digitalarchives.apu.edu/jascg/vol18/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by APU Digital Archives. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* by an authorized editor of APU Digital Archives. For more information, please contact [mpacino@apu.edu](mailto:mpacino@apu.edu).

*This article is being reprinted from the Fall 2005 issue of the Journal of the ASCG in tribute to Win Arn. Readers who are not familiar with the early history of church growth, and particularly the role played by Win Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth, will find this article of interest.*

—Editor

### **A Short History of Winfield C. Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth**

**Gary L. McIntosh**

The Church Growth movement traces its beginning from the publication of *The Bridges of God* in 1955. From that time until the early 1970s, the movement focused almost exclusively on training leaders who ministered outside of North America.

Donald McGavran realized, of course, that church growth principles applied to all countries, even the USA. However, his keen desire to see the church grow worldwide led him to apply church growth insights primarily to situations outside the USA.

C. Peter Wagner reports,

Interestingly, when McGavran was teaching mission in the seminaries of the Christian Church in the late 1950s, his students preparing for American ministry frequently said to him, "The principles you teach apply here." He would reply, "Yes, they do, but how they apply will have to be worked out by you" (1984:15-16).

When McGavran became dean of the Fuller School of World Mission in 1965, he deliberately excluded pastors from North America. As a career missionary, his primary concern was international missions, and he desired to share his insights with those who would take the gospel to people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. Thus, the entrance requirements to the School of World Mission required three years of cross-cultural experience validated by fluency in a second language, which effectively eliminated most church leaders in the USA.

By 1970 very few pastors had read McGavran's early books. However, with the publication of *Understanding Church Growth*, knowledge of Church Growth began to spread among pastors. As pastors started to hear about the fresh insights coming from

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

the new Church Growth school, some encouraged Wagner to apply McGavran's church growth insights to the American church.

Wagner had already considered such a class after coming to Fuller full-time in 1971, and in 1972 he and McGavran taught a pilot class in Church Growth to pastors and denominational leaders. The catalyst for the class came from Chuck Miller, then a staff pastor at Lake Avenue Congregational Church, Pasadena, CA. Based on an interview with Miller in 1997, David Cook writes,

The class came about when Chuck Miller, a staff pastor at Lake Avenue, remarked to C. Peter Wagner, the newest member of the SWM faculty, "I would like to learn church-growth thinking, so that I can be all that God wants me to be." Wagner replied, "You can't do that...because you haven't been in the Third World for three years and Dr. McGavran does not want to do the American scene." However, Wagner arranged a closed-door session with other members of the School of World Mission faculty, so that Miller could present his proposal. Miller recalled that they laughed when he made his proposal, saying, "We have always laughed because we proud Americans call it (baseball) the World Series and now we call [it] the School of World Mission—but of course folks in the United States can't get in." Then they added, "The key will be how Dr. McGavran responds." When presented with Miller's proposal, McGavran readily agreed saying, "I don't see why we can't do this" (1998:58-59).

The School of World Mission faculty approved the new class, and a development report given to the Faculty Senate of Fuller Theological Seminary on October 2, 1972 notes, "The extension of Church Growth Studies will include America and this offering of an extension course on this subject at Lake Avenue Congregational Church" (School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary 1972:1).

Cook explains how the class functioned,

A class of eighteen Los Angeles ministers and lay people met at Pasadena's Lake Avenue Congregational Church, from seven to nine on Tuesday mornings. Students studied Wagner's *Frontiers [in Missionary] Strategy* and McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth*. After a brief lecture by McGavran and Wagner, class members discussed the chapters and applied them to their

churches (1998:59).

Flowing out of the first Church Growth class for pastors and denominational leaders in the USA, three organizations became the primary pipelines for communicating Church Growth theory to pastors and church leaders until the late 1990s—the Institute for American Church Growth, the Fuller Evangelistic Association, and the Fuller Seminary Doctor of Ministry program.

*Institute for American Church Growth*

As a result of the first Church Growth class taught by Wagner and McGavran, one student, Winfield Arn, founded the influential Institute for American Church Growth in 1974. While the Fuller Evangelistic Association and the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program also passed on McGavran's church growth missiology to pastors and denominational leaders in the USA, the Institute for American Church Growth did so in its purist form.

*Winfield C. Arn*

The Institute for American Church Growth is uniquely tied to the life and ministry of Winfield C. Arn.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1923 in Pennsylvania, Win made a commitment to Christ as his personal Savior at age twelve, and evidenced a growing commitment to Christ from that time forward. Active in Boy Scouts of America, he reached the level of Eagle Scout while in high school. After graduation he served as a pilot in the United States Army Air Force, and continued to hold a commercial pilot's license throughout his active life. He attended Bob Jones University following his discharge and, as a student, helped start the missionary aviation program at the university. While in college he met and married Barbara Carr, and over the years God blessed them with five children. During college Win was vice-president of his senior class, and appeared in a listing of "Who's Who Among Students of American Colleges and Universities."

Upon graduation from college, the Arns returned to Philadelphia where Win began study at Eastern Baptist Seminary. In 1950 he received a Master of Religious Education degree and four years later a Doctorate of Religious Education. He was editor of the seminary paper, and served as president of his senior class.

During his doctoral studies, the Arns relocated to Southern California where Win became Director of Religious Education for Hollywood Baptist Church from 1950 to 1952. They then moved to Portland, Oregon in 1952 where Win worked in a similar position at a Congregational church. While serving as Direc-

tor of Religious Education for a Congregational church in Portland, Oregon, Arn was appointed to the board of the Portland Area Youth for Christ. The board recognized his organizational, evangelistic, and leadership abilities, and chose him to become director of the Portland Youth For Christ in 1959, a position he held until 1970. Arn completed graduate work at Portland State University in Communication (1967) and in Management (1970).

Over the years Arn served actively in numerous educational and evangelistic roles. For example, he served on the Greater Portland Area Association of Evangelicals and the Greater Portland Area Sunday School Association, all the while conducting consultations on religious education for numerous churches and denominations. From 1967 to 1968 Arn was Vice-Chairman of the Executive Planning Committee for the Pacific Northwest Billy Graham Crusade.

Creative and innovative, Arn was always alert to new approaches for effective evangelism and ministry. His interest in communication led to his hosting a daily radio show for five years at KPDQ, a radio station in the Portland area. Later one of the local television stations, an NBC affiliate, asked him to host a weekly show highlighting the ministry of Youth For Christ. To enhance the productions, Arn began making short film clips to show the television audience. Gradually the short clips became full-length films. Even though some churches and denominations viewed movies as an ungodly method for ministry, Arn saw the potential of the medium to win and disciple people for Christ. Stepping out in faith, Arn founded Christian Communication for the sole purpose of producing Christian films.

As a writer and producer, Arn pioneered new concepts for religious films, such as the Charlie Churchman series and short films for use in illustrating sermons. By 1973, Christian Communication had produced twenty-seven films. Arn received an award from the National Evangelical Film Foundation and a Freedoms Foundation Award for the film "This is Our Country." By the close of his career, Arn had produced a total of thirty-seven films.

#### *Discovering Church Growth*

While working in mass evangelism, Arn gradually became frustrated with the lack of "fruit that remained." He wrote of his frustrations as follows.

As the director of a large evangelistic organization aimed primarily at winning youth, we had what we thought was an effective approach to a very winnable segment of society. A distinctive of this ministry was a

youth rally where attendance of over two thousand per meeting was common. This rally included a variety of activities to attract youth and concluded with a message on salvation and an invitation to make a decision for Christ. Week after week, with few exceptions, five to fifty young people would respond and make a “decision.” This appeared, at the time, to be very effective evangelism.

While much good was accomplished in this ministry, I sensed problems. What happened to those who made “decisions”? Did they become growing, reproducing Christians? Did they become actively involved in a church?

I researched, collected data, interviewed, and analyzed until I had a body of significant facts. The results were startling! The fruit which remained was seriously lacking!

At this same time, I served as leader for an area-wide-evangelistic crusade which brought to Portland, Oregon, a leading evangelist. He was accompanied by a highly organized and efficient staff for a two-week evangelistic campaign. Hundreds of prayer groups were formed. Billboards covered the city. Daily newspaper ads and television commercials foretold the event. Counselors were trained. Finances were raised. The crusade was held, decisions were made, and all acclaimed it a success.

When it was all over and the team had gone, I again researched the fruit. To my dismay, it was seriously lacking. What was wrong? (McGavran and Arn 1977:10-11)

Arn’s frustration with the actual results of mass evangelism resulted in his resignation from Youth for Christ in early 1970. Returning to his roots in Religious Education, he accepted a position as Director of Christian Education for the California Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America and moved back to California.

Arn took advantage of the summer break between ministries to travel to the lands of the early Christian churches. Throughout the trip a cameraman recorded the historical, geographical, and cultural settings of the seven churches found in chapters two

and three of Revelation. The films were edited into a series of eight, five-minute color 16mm films, and distributed to churches through Christian Communication. The film series was titled *Exploring the Churches of The Revelation*. Another film series, *Building the Church*, examined the basic strategy Paul employed in building the early church. The six, five-minute films were used by numerous pastors as sermon illustrations and to stimulate small group discussions on the growth of the early church and its implications for local church ministry.

In the fall of 1972, Arn received information about a course being offered at Lake Avenue Congregational Church on the subject of church growth. Attending the class as part of his continuing education, Arn immediately saw the connection between the principles he was learning and the frustrations he had experienced while doing mass evangelism. In McGavran's missiological principles of church growth he found the effective approach to evangelism for which he had been searching. "He determined that the principles and insights from the church growth movement had considerable relevance to the American Protestant Church" (Church Growth, Inc. 2004).

For a class project, Arn designed the first church growth media, a series of six two-foot by four-foot color posters. The class responded so well to the media that Arn knew he was on to something larger than expected. David Cook comments on this use of visual aids.

These visual aids were significant because Arn's ability to take an abstract concept and visualize it was a marked departure from McGavran and Wagner's more academic and didactic approaches. His expertise in visual education impressed McGavran. The charts and workbooks produced by Arn for the class were then used to teach 150 church leaders in three "VIP Church Growth Seminars." Afterwards, the class requested "Arn to publish his church growth kit so that it could be used in Key 73 by interested [church leaders]" (1998:103).

By early 1973, Arn made the decision to focus his expertise on communicating McGavran's church growth principles to pastors and church leaders. He resigned from his position with the Evangelical Covenant Church, and took a "leap of faith" to found the Institute for American Church Growth. At the time, he had no visible means of support, and no guarantee that American churches and leaders would even respond to this new paradigm for evangelism. After telling McGavran of his plans to resign, McGavran replied, "You'll lose your shirt. There's no

money in church growth" (1984:391).

The class began a friendship between McGavran and Arn that was to last until McGavran's death in 1990. Their first collaboration was the writing of *How To Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth* (1973). In late 1972 Arn and his son recorded McGavran at his home. Arn asked questions and McGavran responded as his son recorded the conversation. Arn's wife, Barbara, later transcribed their conversation, and Win edited the manuscript. This groundbreaking book sold over two hundred thousand copies before being discontinued in 1994.

As the book was in production, Arn determined to produce a film on church growth by the same name: *How to Grow a Church*. Arn conceived of the film being an interview of McGavran, somewhat like the book. He presented the concept to several film companies, but they all turned him down saying, "Who would want to watch a film with a little old bald man talking?" (Arn 1983). Arn was so convinced of the need to get the message of Church Growth out that he financed the film himself. The film was released in the summer of 1973, becoming the first church growth film ever produced. It turned out to be a grand success, and thousands of church leaders viewed the film in the coming quarter century.

#### *Founding an Institute*

Win and Barbara Arn started the Institute for American Church Growth in 1973. However, the first official board meeting was held on May 21, 1974. The future board members met in the conference room of the Fuller Evangelistic Association. Board members present included McGavran, Arn, Wagner, Ted W. Engstrom, and Cyrus N. Nelson. One board member, Russ Reid, was out of town and could not attend. McGavran was elected Chairman, Engstrom Secretary/Treasurer, and Arn President/Executive Director (Institute for American Church Growth 1974a).

At the board meeting, Arn presented the purposes of the institute, copies of stationary, brochures and seminar materials, as well as samples of advertising. Arn's schedule distributed at the first board of director's meeting indicated he had already spoken ten times on church growth between February and the May board meeting. The speaking engagements included the Brethren in Christ, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Friends Yearly Meeting, Open Bible Standard Churches, and American Baptist Churches. His itinerary for the remainder of 1974 listed twenty speaking engagements with the Nazarenes, Friends, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Covenant, and Baptists. Arn also was

scheduled to speak on church growth at the Robert Schuller Institute on September 29.

Arn had already made significant plans for the Institute for American Church Growth before the first official board meeting. The fact that his speaking calendar for 1974 was already filled is evidence of the receptivity of American churches to church growth thinking. Minutes of the board meeting stated, "A time of sharing by Board members concluded with the consensus that the time is right for Church Growth in America and for the birth of the Institute for American Church Growth" (Institute for American Church Growth. 1974a). By the next Board of Directors meeting, held June 20, 1974, a Board of Reference was presented. Several well-known church leaders had agreed to allow their names to be added to this list, such as Medford Jones, Robert Schuller, Ray Ortlund, Wendell Belew, Richard Halverson, and Elmer Towns.

While Win Arn was moving toward the new field of church growth training, his son, Charles Arn, who held a doctorate in instructional technology, gradually became active in the new institute designing teaching materials. In collaboration with his father, Charles Arn, designed and wrote the script for the popular Basic Church Growth Seminar, which was used from the founding of the Institute for American Church Growth until the late 1980s. He also developed a church growth game known as "Church Growth Eyes," and served as editor of all the Institute's publications.

#### *Seizing the Opportunity*

The ministry of the Institute for American Church Growth developed quickly during the fall of 1974. Minutes of the December 30, 1974 Board of Directors meeting reported several interesting developments. Most of the income had come from seminars led by Win Arn. The numerous letters and advertisements were paying dividends, and Arn's speaking calendar filled up quickly during the fall. His itinerary listed thirty speaking engagements between August 3 and December 20. More impressive, he was scheduled to speak thirteen times in January 1975, eight times in February, five times in March, and four times in April. American churches were responding to the new church growth insights, and Arn's itinerary filled up quickly.

At the same board meeting, Arn introduced a Church Growth Strategy for denominational districts and conferences. It was a one-year cooperative venture between the Institute for American Church Growth and denominations to motivate and train churches for outreach and growth. This strategy took root,

and over the ensuing years developed into the Two-Year Church Growth Plan and the Thirty-Month Church Growth Plan.

Another development announced at the December board meeting involved the training of associate staff to lead church growth seminars. Arn had suggested this idea at the first board meeting in May, and by December he already had three people trained. Another two men were in the process of being trained, with three more interested. This concept eventually grew into a full-fledged training in 1984 called the Church Growth Associate program.

Arn also announced the beginning of *Church Growth, America*, a communication bulletin published six times a year. The first issue appeared in November 1974 in the form of a three-page newsletter. The lead article was written by Arn and titled, "The Pastor and Growth." A picture on the front page showed Arn, McGavran, and Wagner looking at a copy of *How to Grow a Church*. The first volume of the newsletter was comprised of five issues published in 1975. Beginning with the first issue of 1976, the newsletter became a full-fledged, twelve-page magazine.

Another development that first year was an attempt to establish a branch office of the Institute for American Church Growth in New England. Arn presented a proposal for a "Memorandum and Working Agreement " between the Institute for American Church Growth and the Evangelistic Association of New England. Don Gill, Director of the Evangelistic Association of New England, was already in the process of becoming an outside staff member of the Institute for American Church Growth, so the relationship looked promising. However, a formal relationship never took place (Institute for American Church Growth 1974b:1-3).

During 1974, Arn had produced a second church growth film, *Reach Out and Grow*. However, the highlight of the year was Arn's participation in the Lausanne World Congress on Evangelism. The Congress, held July 14-28, 1974, proved to be a plus for the Church Growth movement worldwide. Several professors from the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary were featured speakers, and Arn was in attendance. In a lengthy report to the board of directors he reported,

The World Congress for Evangelization was a great "plus" for the Institute. Many new contacts were made and thanks to friend and Board member, C. Peter Wagner, two church growth films, HOW TO GROW A CHURCH and REACH OUT AND GROW, were used before 650 delegates. Church Growth played a most significant part in this Congress (W. Arn 1974).

The Institute for American Church Growth was on its way to becoming the foremost communicator of Church Growth thought to the American church. Arn summarized his feelings as follows:

Response to the ministry of the Institute is growing! My personal schedule for conducting Seminars for Ministers' Conferences is full into the spring of '75. We are ministering to individual churches, consortia of churches and denominations...churches of many homogeneous groupings, sizes, locations, problems and opportunities. For example, following the World Congress of Evangelization at Lausanne, I was a featured speaker with the KANSAS YEARLY MEETING-85 Friends Churches. A spin-off from that meeting was the invitation to do a series of 8 Growth Seminars throughout their district where, in clusters of 6-8, every church could be exposed to Church Growth principles ...thinking ... planning ... enthusiasm ... opportunities (1974).

Based on the rapid growth of interest in American church growth, plans were made to add additional staff to the institute, produce a film on church planting—*The Birth of a Church*—, and develop a three-day intensive seminar on church growth.

*Growth and Struggle*

As Chairman of the Board, McGavran worked to promote the Institute for American Church Growth. He encouraged Win Arn to "press forward with franchises and training men as fast as you can" (McGavran 1975).

Responding to McGavran's encouragement, the Institute for American Church Growth sponsored its first weeklong intensive course on Church Growth May 12-16, 1975. The "Studies in Church Growth: Training Seminar" would eventually grow into a regular event called the "Advanced Church Growth Seminar." Speakers for the first intensive course included Arn, Chuck Kraft, McGavran, Alan Tippett, Wagner, Arthur F. Glasser, Robert Munger, Raymond Ortlund, and John Wimber. Seminar participants took field trips to the First Nazarene Church and Lake Avenue Congregational Church, both in Pasadena, California. This seminar was the first of many the Institute would hold over the coming years to train pastors and denominational executives in McGavran's church growth ideas.

On December 30, 1975, Arn reported to the Board of Directors that:

Since our last board meeting (June, 1975), I have traveled

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

over 90,000 miles...conducted 655 seminars and training sessions, with over 7,500 in attendance. This ministry has touched over 1300 local churches, representing 20 different denominations in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Church Growth thinking is going forth! (1975:1)

He also announced that the *Church Growth, America* newsletter would be changed to a magazine format beginning with the January 1976 issue. The issue would include enlarged special features and have a circulation from seven thousand to ten thousand, working toward a goal of twenty-five thousand. The new Advanced Growth Seminar would be held January 11-16, 1976. Most surprising was notification that all of Arn's available speaking dates for 1976 were already full. The Institute had started franchising its materials and seminars to individual denominations. For example, the Brethren denomination contracted in 1976 to use Institute materials and their own personnel to conduct seminars in their churches.

The first official Advanced Growth Seminar for professionals was held from August 30 to September 3, 1976. Speakers included McGavran, Glasser, Ortlund, Winter, Wagner, Wimber, Reid, Arn, C. W. Perry, Charles Mylander, Tom Wolf, and David Hocking. A second Advanced Growth Seminar was offered in January 3-7, 1977 using the same lineup of speakers.

The Institute advertised a new film, *And They Said It Couldn't Be Done*, in July 1976. Arn was becoming known outside of the United States, and had conducted a month-long series of seminars in Australia and New Zealand in the summer of 1975. The Australian trip was sponsored by the Churches of Christ and covered each of the capitals in each state. A total of 2,055 people were exposed for the first time to church growth thinking, 337 churches participated, and 23,200 miles were covered in three weeks. In a letter to McGavran the following year, Arn reported on a recently received report from the Churches of Christ in Australia.

It is an exciting, documented story, of how God used Church Growth thinking to change an entire denomination, in one continent, from decline to growth.

Similar results are now starting to surface in America. I was recently in the state of Washington, following up one year later, a series of Basic Seminars I conducted. You will be pleased to learn, that in that denomination (Free Methodist) among the churches in that district,

they grew more in that one year following the seminars, than they did in the years of 1968, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, and 75 combined! Praise the Lord!

These are busy days...have been working hard...in the last 60 days I have spent 5 1/2 at home...seeing the Lord increase His Church...and feeling fulfilled and useful in His service (1976).

After seeing the report from the Churches of Christ in Australia, McGavran recommended that it be rewritten as an article. However, he cautioned that only the actual results be used, rather than projections of growth. The Institute proceeded to develop a letter citing the report, but calculated the results from actual growth during 1975-1976 and projections for 1976-1977. McGavran was not pleased with this mixing of actual results and mere projections. He commented,

I advised as gently as I could that all use of this "letter from Kevin Crawford" be stopped, . . . and that we wait till KC could provide the actuals. . . . Then let us rejoice and publicize the real results.

Even my good friend Win Arn has not learned to be ruthless about hopes and projections and to separate them rigidly from actually achieved membership (1976).

This letter illustrates McGavran's heavy emphasis on research. It is not known how Arn responded. At the semi-annual board meeting of the Institute, Arn reported that sixteen thousand people representing nearly seven thousand churches had been reached with the message of church growth.

McGavran and Arn started working on a new manuscript that was published as *Ten Steps for Church Growth*. On December 14-15 and 21-22, McGavran and Arn recorded a taped conversation based on this book. Barbara Arn served as moderator on the tapes asking questions that McGavran and Arn answered. Charles Arn did the recording that was edited and released along with the book during 1977. The tape set, *10 Steps: 120 Minutes of Dynamic Church Growth Concepts*, comprised six cassette tapes covering the information from the book in a conversational manner.

By the end of the year board meeting, it was evident that American churches were continuing to respond to church growth seminars and training. During the year, the Institute had grown from two full-time and two part-time employees to ten

full-time employees. The Institute needed to relocate to larger facilities. Arn recommended to the board that the Institute move to offices in the Grosvenor Building in Pasadena (adjacent to the Pasadena Hilton). Insight into Arn's thinking at that time is seen in the conclusion to his proposal.

I recommend that we move to these new facilities. This recommendation is submitted, believing we must grow and fulfill our purpose and mission, add staff, and reach the potential that God has for the Institute. However, this is another "leap of faith"...without guaranteed support and incurring obligations on a three-year base. These situations always send chills up my spine (1977).

The Board of Directors approved the proposal, and the Institute moved at the end of the summer months. The new letterhead listed Arn as President/Executive Director, David Winscott as Vice-President of Seminars, and Charles Arn as Vice-President for Communications.

The popularity of the Advanced Growth Seminars led to Arn and McGavran taking a group of church leaders on a Traveling Advanced Seminar to Italy, Greece, and Turkey during July 11-29, 1977. McGavran and Arn led the group on an experiential study in the growth of the church throughout the centuries by giving lectures on the early church at several locations. All throughout the trip, film was shot of McGavran and Arn conversing about the growth of the church in places like Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, and Philippi. McGavran's lectures from this trip would form the text of a future book on the theology of church growth, *Back to Basics in Church Growth* (1981).

Sometime in 1977, McGavran suggested to Arn that he consider hiring Ted Yamamori at the Institute for American Church Growth. Discussions with Yamamori had actually started in 1976, and in a letter to all board members on March 29, 1978, Arn announced that Yamamori would join the staff of the Institute as of July 1. Yamamori's background was similar to McGavran's, as both were Christian Church men. Yamamori graduated from Northwest Christian College with a B.A. in Ministry in 1962, just one year after McGavran had started the Institute for Church Growth there. Somehow over the years Yamamori became interested in church growth and wrote *Church Growth in Japan* (1974), *Introducing Church Growth* (1975), and *Church Growth: Everybody's Business* (1976). McGavran felt Yamamori was the right person for the job.

The job was to direct the new Center for American Church Growth Studies. Established under the umbrella of the Institute

for American Church Growth, the new center was to equip lay church leaders through correspondence study and classroom courses in church growth/evangelism. The Center planned to provide continuing education for professional church leaders, as well as conducting research to support churches and denominations in their evangelism programs. Since Yamamori held a Ph.D. in Sociology of Religion from Duke University (1970), he appeared to be well suited to lead the new center. It was another "leap of faith" as \$40,000 was needed to fund the center for its first year. Yamamori was present at the June 7 Board of Directors meeting where he presented his plan for the new center. He began on July 1 and worked to develop a curriculum for "Growing Churches Through Lay Leadership." Arn rejoiced in an August 16 update to the board members.

Good news . . . Praise the Lord! . . . the financial goal (\$40,000) for establishing the Center has been achieved! (\$50,000 received.) This provides "running time" for the Center to generate funds. The Lord's blessing is evident in this new venture (1978:1).

Along with his rejoicing, Arn shared that the seminar schedule for fall 1978 was strong and would relieve the financial burden. Arn also announced that well-known seminar leader, Olan Hendrix, was working with the Institute in an associate relationship. Advanced Growth Seminars continued to be popular, and six were projected for 1979. Three were held in Pasadena, California, while the others were hosted at Winona Lake, Indiana, Dallas, Texas, and Indianapolis, Indiana.

By January 1979 the Institute for American Church Growth was a major contributor to the increase and awareness of McGavran's church growth missiology among American churches. The Institute had trained over eight thousand clergy and fifty thousand laity through pastors' conferences and seminars. Over a million people had seen one or more films on church growth. A quarter of a million copies of *Church Growth, America* had been distributed.

At an Executive Committee meeting comprised of Arn, Engstrom, and McGavran, Yamamori presented a new proposal for training clergy in church growth as an extension of the Institute for American Church Growth. The committee recommended his proposal be presented to the entire Board of Directors meeting the following January 13, 1979. Yamamori believed the Institute had just touched the tip of the iceberg, and he desired to expand its influence by founding a Graduate School of Church Growth Studies. The proposal he presented to the Board of Directors on

January 13, 1979 explored a bold plan to offer two graduate degrees: a Master of Church Growth and a Doctor of Church Growth. Yamamori presented data from a preliminary study that showed seventy-four percent of pastors and laypersons surveyed were interested in the degree programs. The proposal outlined curriculums for both degrees, as well as several models that might be used in cooperation with existing seminaries.

George G. Hunter, III, then secretary for evangelism in the United Methodist Church, had been elected to the Board of Directors in 1978. Regarding the proposal for a Graduate School of Church Growth Studies, he wrote,

I salute you on your pioneering explorations toward a graduate program in Church Growth. It is my considered judgment, as secretary for evangelism for the United Methodist Church, that such a program,—well conceptualized, staffed, and resourced—would indeed fill an important gap in American theological education, the training of ministers, and the charting of the course of Christian outreach among the peoples of North America by leaders and pastors of mainline denominations (1979).

No decision was made at the January meeting, but at an Executive Committee meeting on February 12, 1979 the committee decided that exploration of the proposal would continue.

*The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook*, a compilation of articles from *Church Growth, America*, was published in the summer of 1979. The book was given away free to those who subscribed to the magazine. In addition Arn explained that new specialty seminars would be offered in 1979 and 1980 on the following topics:

- Communication
- Master Planning
- Identifying, Reaching & Winning New People
- Effective Incorporation of New Members
- Applying Church Growth Principles

These specialty seminars were well received, and continued to be offered into the 1980s.

As the summer months approached, the Executive Board discussed the financial picture. It appeared that the Institute was on its way to another record year, but the board anticipated that the summer would be difficult financially. With his contract set to expire on April 30, Yamamori saw the proverbial handwriting on the wall and made plans to change positions. He announced his resignation to take a position with Biola College and Talbot

Seminary as Director and Professor of Intercultural Studies. The board expressed its appreciation for his service, and their anticipation of a continuing relationship in the future. With Yamamori's resignation, the proposal for a graduate school in Church Growth studies was tabled.

Positive response to the Institute's training seminars continued to roll into the Institute for American Church Growth office. One letter, from the director of Evangelism, Worship, and Stewardship of the North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, is a good example.

Upon completing our seventh Basic Church Growth Seminar I would like to express my personal appreciation for your leadership. I know that I also speak for many of my colleagues and countless numbers of laypersons in saying that the response to the church growth emphasis here in our Conference has been phenomenal.

All ten districts have participated. Twenty seven hundred persons have been involved. This represents more than 300 churches. There are 640 churches in the North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church (Mahan 1979).

A follow-up study conducted later showed that all ten districts experienced growth in membership and attendance the year after the seminars were conducted.

The Advanced Growth Seminar held between April 30 and May 4, 1979 included some new speakers and topics. The list included,

Introduction of Church Growth—Win Arn  
 Biblical Foundations for Church Growth—Art Glasser  
 Christian Excellence—Ted Engstrom  
 Growth by Renewal—Robert Munger  
 Philosophy of Ministry—Ray Ortlund  
 People Flow—Win Arn  
 Growth in the Suburban Church—Charles Mylander  
 Ethnic Realities in America—Ted Yamamori  
 Communication and Church Growth—Bob Screen  
 Spiritual Gifts—Peter Wagner  
 Management Skills in Church Growth—Olan Hendrix  
 The Greatest and Holiest Work of the Church—Donald McGavran  
 Training the Laity for Church Growth—Donald McGavran.

Most of the topics were close to McGavran's original insights, but by the 1979 Advanced Growth Seminar topics started to

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

move into additional arenas like communication, management skills, and spiritual gifts. The seminars for local churches, districts, and for professional leaders were a crucial ingredient in the success of the Institute. A financial analysis of the Institute's operations demonstrated how important seminars were to its fiscal viability. In 1978 seminars accounted for 73.67 percent of the total income and 70.74 percent in 1979. Unfortunately, as the Institute grew, it continued to rely heavily on seminar income.

With the growth of the Institute, a need surfaced to use computers to expedite research and normal business procedures. The Institute began working with Jack Gunther from the IBM company to study the system needs of the Institute and make recommendations. The plan was to have computers operational by early 1980.

McGavran and Arn got along famously, but one incident in 1979 almost led to their parting ways. The two hundred anniversary of the founding of the Sunday School occurred in 1980. In an effort to capitalize on the anniversary, Arn and his son decided to write a book highlighting church growth principles applied to the Sunday School. The working title of the book was *How to Grow a Sunday School*. They wanted McGavran to write the forward to the book and sent a rough draft of the manuscript to him. After reading it, McGavran felt that the book borrowed too much from basic church growth books—particularly *Understanding Church Growth*—and gently suggested that the new book was in danger of the charge of plagiarism.

McGavran's sensitivity to the plagiarism of his ideas first arose with the publication of *Why Churches Die* (1972) by Hollis Green. After reading the galley proofs of that book, McGavran was furious. He felt the book was a "big steal from the beginning." Regarding Green's book, McGavran commented, "The publisher [was] very apologetic. I was busy and settled far too easily. Merely a cordial statement that he was heavily indebted throughout to Donald McGavran and *Understanding CG*. I should never have let him off so easily" (McGavran 1979a:1).

When McGavran read the Arns' manuscript on Sunday School growth, he felt it was very much like Hollis Green's, but he did not feel Arn had done this intentionally. He carefully wrote,

Mind you, I understand perfectly how this came about. You live church growth and you have heard that lecture so often you can repeat it...and have voiced the ideas so effectively that you have made the[m] your own. I understand...but still they are my ideas (1979).

McGavran was ready to sever his relationship with the Institute for American Church Growth, but suggested Arn just include an acknowledgement in the book making mention of their borrowing of ideas from him. The final compromise was to include McGavran's name on the cover of the book, even though he did not write any part of the manuscript specifically. The book appeared in 1980 as *Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School*. With this issue settled, McGavran and Arn continued collaborating through the 1980s.

Seminars on church growth continued in high demand through the end of 1979. Forty-five seminars, conferences, and workshops were scheduled from September 7 through November 15 of that year. The Basic Church Growth Seminar, designed and written some years earlier, was the seminar most in demand accounting for thirty-three of the total seminars in the fall of 1979.

However, all was not well, as indicated by the update Arn sent to the Board of Directors on November 16, 1979.

A change is taking place across the nation. Attitudes and actions of pastors and denominational executives are changing. The economic "crunch" and inflation are taking their toll. Many pastors and executives are cutting back. The Institute is feeling this as pastors are more reluctant to travel west for the Advanced Growth Seminars. Attendance at these seminars has been down for the second time in a row. (We are praying and increasing our mailings for a large turnout in January. Pray with us.) Two of my own engagements have been recently cancelled. The schedule for seminars in late winter and spring is very thin.

Tie this above with the knowledge that church growth is being widely disseminated through denominational structures, and we must look more closely at the purpose and goals of the Institute. I forecast some hard times from January through next September (1979).

Not only was the Institute feeling the impact of a stagnant economy, but the pressure of growing competition. With the entrance of the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program and the Fuller Evangelistic Association into the Church Growth field, Arn's institute was no longer the only option for church growth training. As denominational leaders graduated from the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program, they often started denominational institutes that began competing with Arn's.

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

In the same letter Arn informed the board that the three-year lease for the Institute's office space was going to expire July 31, 1980. He had been notified that the rent would double. It was time again to think seriously about the future of the Institute for American Church Growth.

*Maximum Impact*

In spite of the concern about declining attendance at the Advanced Growth Seminars, and the lack of seminars for the spring of 1980, the best years of the Institute for American Church Growth still lay ahead. The slowdown in seminar attendance and the coming increase in rent did not deter the Institute from making bold plans for the future. Plans were being developed in early 1980 to increase the *Church Growth, American* magazine subscription list from six thousand to twenty thousand people. Thirteen specialty workshops were scheduled from October 1980 through May 1981, and, a brand new Sunday School Growth Seminar was being written (Arn 1980:1).

McGavran and Arn were also collaborating on a new book. Tape recordings were made of McGavran's lectures while on the traveling seminar in 1977. The transcriptions of those lectures formed the foundation of their new book. They signed a contract for the book with Tyndale House Publishers on April 14, 1980, but the exact title of the book was still in question. The working title on the contract was *Biblical Foundations of Church Growth*, but McGavran was not happy with that title. The book was finally released in 1981 as *Back to Basics in Church Growth*. The book contained six chapters, and is the closest McGavran and Arn ever came to writing a theology of church growth. The book still serves as a clear presentation of McGavran and Arn's staunchly evangelical position. Its content attests to their belief in the authority of the Bible, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, the importance of fellowship and the Church, as well as commitment to the Great Commission.

The Institute for American Church Growth never had a formal doctrinal statement. The feeling early on was that such a statement would position the Institute too narrowly since it hoped to minister across many denominations. No problems ever arose until some members of the Reorganized Church of Latter-day Saints attended an Advanced Seminar in May 1980. Some of the attendees questioned the appropriateness of this group being in attendance, leading to a discussion at the June 5, 1980 Board of Directors meeting. While the Institute certainly would not, and by conviction could not, endorse some religious groups, the board determined that widely advertised seminars

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

and conferences by necessity must be open. Thus, the board passed a motion "that the Institute state clearly 'at the front end' its position and that registration be open" (Institute for American Church Growth 1980).

In the fall of 1980 the Institute initiated a new advertising campaign published in the form of a newspaper. The *Church Growth Resource News* was a sixteen-page newspaper featuring articles and resources for church growth. The highly effective one-day specialty workshops were beginning to catch on. The 1980-1981 workshop schedule featured Win Arn and Charles Arn teaching on three topics: Identifying, Reaching and Winning New People; The Effective Incorporation of New Members; and Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School. Five workshops were scheduled for October and November 1980, with another eleven from February to May 1981. *The Great Commission Sunday School* was the newest film used in the Sunday School seminar. Other featured church growth films included *Discover Your Gifts*, *The Gift of Love, But...I'm Just a Layman!* and *And They Said It Couldn't Be Done*. The original church growth films—*How To Grow A Church* and *Reach Out and Grow*—were also available. However, only one Advanced Growth Seminar was scheduled for April 27-May 1, 1981. Later that year a second film on the Sunday School was produced: *The Possibility Sunday School*.

Working with the Institute since 1979 was Jack Gunther. He assisted the Institute in computerizing its database for subscriptions, mailing lists, and advertising. Over the two years they worked together, Arn and Gunther often discussed the potential of assisting churches to use computer technology for church growth. In the fall of 1981 Gunther left his position with IBM and founded Church Growth Data Services. An advertisement announcing the new company appeared in the *Church Growth Resource News* in fall 1981. In the same paper a small ad drew attention to a new Two-Year Plan for Regional Church Growth. This new plan, along with The Master's Plan evangelism training packet, were the ingredients that propelled the Institute to its pinnacle of effectiveness within the next three years.

Response to the specialty workshops continued to be positive, and eighteen were held in the fall of 1981 in Chicago, Minneapolis, Portland, Oklahoma City, St. Louis, and the Bay Area of California. An additional forty-eight workshops were conducted in sixteen cities in 1982. Glasser was featured in the advertising, although he most often spoke via film at the workshops.

The winter 1982 issue of the *Church Growth Resource News* featured the newly designed Two-Year Plan for Growth. The

plan was a comprehensive strategy between the Institute, local church leaders, and regional denominational offices. Through this plan local churches banded together for church growth training as a group. This effectively lowered the costs so smaller churches could afford to be trained in church growth principles and receive church growth resources. Over five hundred churches became involved in this two-year plan between 1982 and 1986.

Two new books were released in 1982: *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook, Volume II* (Arn) and *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* (Arn and Arn). Similar to the first volume, the Pastor's Handbook was a compilation of articles from Church Growth, America. The major impact, however, came from *The Master's Plan*.

Published in October 1982, The Master's Plan product line included a book, a new film—*For The Love of Pete*—, a one-day training seminar, and a Master's Plan Church Action Kit. This new approach to advertising allowed for a church to become involved on four different levels. For example, if pastors had a limited amount of money, they could simply purchase the book for \$6.95. If church leaders desired to move further along with The Master's Plan, they could order and view *For The Love of Pete* for only \$37.50. For those who desired to train their people in household evangelism, they could order and use The Master's Plan Church Action Kit. The kit included a coordinators manual, leaders equipping guide, information on conducting a church-wide workshop, a copy of the book, a videotape of *For The Love of Pete* film, and a blueprint action booklet—all for \$169.95. Finally, for churches that were very serious about training their people to reach friends and family members for Christ, there was The Master's Plan Training Seminar. For a cost of \$695, a church could bring five leaders for a complete one-day training on how to effectively use The Master's Plan in that church. A total of five training seminars were scheduled for the fall of 1982 and ten for winter and spring 1982.

People and churches were ready for a new approach to evangelism, and *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* book and church action kit sold very well during the next four years. To meet the need of another national seminar leader Arn hired Robert Orr to help conduct national seminars during the fall of 1982 and the first six months of 1983. Orr had worked as an associate with the Institute for six years leading seminars in Canada and the United States. A keen leader and practitioner in the field of Church Growth, Orr had planted three churches and directed the Institute's Canadian office.

Insight 1000, a computer system to help churches grow, was publicized in the winter of 1982. It was a combination of computer technology (hardware) and programming (software) designed to provide church leaders with information that would help their churches grow. The Insight 1000 software was the first product of its kind to move beyond maintenance functions to support the ministry goals of the church. To support Gunther, as director of Church Growth Data Services, two additional employees were hired to promote, sell, install, and train church leaders in the use of the Insight 1000 program.

The *Church Growth, America* magazine continued in publication through spring 1983. The magazine needed eighteen thousand subscribers to be financially stable, but it never reached more than six thousand. Due to the high expense of publishing a magazine, *Church Growth, America* was retooled into *The Win Arn Growth Report* in fall 1983. The *Win Arn Growth Report* was mailed free, but recipients were asked to make a donation of fifteen dollars once a year. Subscriptions to this four-page newsletter reached nearly thirty-five thousand by 1986.

All of these new products, consultation programs, and seminars raised the Institute to a new level of ministry impact. Plans were made to relocate the Institute to new office space and to bring Robert Orr on full-time at the California office during the summer of 1983. *See You Sunday*, the new film in the Dynamic Laity Film Series, was featured in the winter of 1983.<sup>2</sup> To provide further support for the expanding Master's Plan training, the Institute hired Avery Powers in the spring of 1983. Powers came to the Institute with a background in evangelism and discipleship, particularly in outdoor camping. His primary role at the Institute involved coordinating and conducting training seminars for The Master's Plan.

The increasing number of churches signing up for the Two-Year Plan created a need for even more staff to oversee the numerous churches involved in the program, as well as to conduct the individual church growth analysis of each congregation. I accepted an invitation from Arn to work for two weeks in May 1983 to complete a church growth diagnostic analysis of twenty churches involved in the Two-Year Growth Plan. Following that two-week practice run, Arn offered me a position with the Institute to oversee the Two-Year Plan, consult with churches, lead seminars, and conduct diagnostic studies of churches. By September 1983 the full-time consulting staff of the Institute included six people: Charles Arn, Win Arn, Jack Gunther, Gary McIntosh, Robert Orr, and Avery Powers. Win Arn served as the Institute's principle spokesperson. Charles Arn edited the *Win*

*Arn Growth Report* and developed church growth products. Jack Gunther directed Church Data Services and oversaw the Institute's administration. Orr, McIntosh, and Powers directed seminars, consultations, and The Master's Plan respectively.

The addition of new staff fueled the continued growth of the Institute. That fall a new movie, *The Ministers*, featuring Chuck Bradley was added to the Dynamic Laity Film Series. A new series of specialty seminars was added for a total of six one-day workshops in the two series. Topics in Series II included "How to Build a Vision, a Team and a Plan for Growth," "How to Mobilize Your Laity for Ministry," and "How to Effectively Use a Computer in Your Church." Sixteen presentations of Series I and ten of Series II were scheduled between January and May 1984, for a total of seventy-eight seminars in a five-month period. Sometime during 1984, Powers left to return to the pastorate, leaving the Institute with five consulting staff.

The Institute for American Church Growth reached its peak in 1985. By that year Arn had produced eleven church growth films that were carried in forty-five film libraries and viewed by an estimated 250,000 people a year. The Basic Growth Seminar, with refinements and enhanced media, had been conducted in thousands of churches across America, and in ten nations overseas, in over fifty denominations, and forty-five states. The Institute for American Church Growth was recognized as the "spark that lit the church growth flame in America." The Institute, with its twenty-eight employees, was still on the cutting edge of the American Church Growth movement, "continuing to provide direction, leadership, and a constant flow of practical resources for local churches and denominations" (Church Growth, Inc. 1985a:1).

That same year Win Arn introduced the Church Growth Development Scale for local churches and the Denominational Growth Development Scale for denominations. Both tools provided a new paradigm on how church growth insights penetrated a church and a denomination. Arn attracted the attention of denominational leaders when he published a ten-year growth forecast for denominations. The forecast was picked up later and published by *Christianity Today* magazine. Numerous calls came into the Institute requesting further information, advice, and recommendations. The new film, *A Matter of Urgency*, was advertised as the new addition to the Dynamic Laity Film Series.

The idea of providing computer technology for church ministry proved to be ahead of its time. Church office staff was resistant to the introduction of computers in the 1980s, and the Insight 1000 hardware and software did not do well. A decision

was made in 1985 to close Church Data Services, and the software was sold to another company who rewrote it and marketed it as Logos Church Software. Since Gunther was the principal owner of Church Growth Data Services, this closure left him with no future in the company, and he left the Institute in 1985 to pursue business opportunities.

Over five hundred churches were participating in the Two-Year Growth Plan in 1985, but as the year progressed some were ending their two-year cycle and moving out of the program. The Two-Year Growth Plan had provided a regular income to the Institute, and questions began to be raised concerning how to replace the income from the departing churches. Evidence of the decline in the Two-Year Growth Plan could be seen in the number of diagnostic studies completed on churches. Since all churches in the Two-Year Plan completed a diagnostic analysis, this was a good indicator of what was happening. During 1983 approximately 116 diagnostic studies were completed, with 180 finished in 1984. The number of studies dropped to 120 in 1985, and none were done in 1986. Essentially, the Two-Year Plan was not attracting new churches by 1986. The reason for the slow-down was related to several factors. By 1986 denominations had started developing their own church growth centers and programs. Some graduates of the Fuller Doctor of Ministry program were competing with Arn's Institute by offering similar two-year training processes. The Church Growth Center in Corunna, Indiana, founded by Kent Hunter, was one such competing organization. Other denominations simply were not receptive to church growth concepts.

In the fall of 1984 a new Church Growth Associate (CGA) program for training church consultants was created. Designed to train denominational executives, theological educators, pastors, and laypersons, the CGA program was a means to help church leaders communicate and apply church growth principles to their congregations. Training included two weeks of classroom study held one year apart with a twelve-month field internship between the weeks of classroom instruction. Tuition cost \$500 for each week, plus \$50 a month during the year, for a total cost of \$1,600. Associates were trained in basic consulting techniques and in leading six of the Institute's seminars. Over ninety Church Growth Associates were trained by 1986. The program never met expectations, as only five percent of those trained ended up practicing consulting for any length of time. The Institute also came to realize they were training future competitors.

The Institute conducted an extensive survey of churches to

determine the impact that love and care had on church growth. The "Love/Care Quotient," as the survey was called, was comprised of seventeen questions. A total of 168 churches from 39 denominations participated in the survey with 8,658 individuals responding. The survey results were published in 1986 as *Who Cares About Love?* (Arn, Nyquist, and Arn 1986), and a companion two-film feature movie was produced by the same name for the Dynamic Laity Film Series. A seminar by the same name was introduced later that year.

Two new action kits were published in 1986. "Celebration of Friendship" was a planning guide on how to host a one-day event where church members could safely invite their friends to church. The second kit, "Celebrating God's Family" focused on helping newcomers move toward membership and service in their church. Arn co-authored *Church Growth: State of the Art* (1986) with Wagner and Towns. The book offered twenty-two articles on the state of church growth in the United States. One of the appendixes listed "Who's Who In Church Growth," and four of the Institute's staff were listed: Win Arn, Charles Arn, Robert Orr, and Gary McIntosh. Sensing a need to have my schedule more under my own control, and spend more time with my family, I resigned from the Institute in July of 1986 to take a position as Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. Arn graciously accepted my resignation, and asked me to continue working as an associate with the Institute.

As 1987 began, the Institute publicized a new church action kit called "A Shepherd's Guide to Caring and Keeping." The brand new kit included a six-hour video course on the principles of new member assimilation. The *Church Growth Ratio Book* was published that year. A small, eighty-page booklet, it summarized nearly fifteen years of church growth insights into usable ratios and percentages.

Throughout 1987 and 1988, the Institute for American Church Growth continued to develop new products, while the number of seminars gradually declined. A move was made from the office in Pasadena to a less expensive property in Monrovia, California. A new film, *Maximum Christianity*, was produced that year, and many of the former ones were offered in video format. The 1988-1989 Church Leadership Resource Catalog featured 127 resources, of which nine were brand new.

#### *Turning Point*

A turning point in the life of the Institute came in 1989 when Win Arn suffered a stroke that took him away from the ministry

for nearly a full year. Providentially, Arn had hired a new vice-president a few weeks before his stroke. The new administrator, along with Charles Arn and Robert Orr, kept the ministry going in Arn's absence. However, the loss of the Institute's principle speaker slowed the momentum and hurt its visibility significantly, and it would never regain its momentum.

By the early 1990s, some of the films and action kits appeared dated and were no longer being advertised. A new seminar training church leaders, *How to Diagnose & Renew Your Church*, was offered nine times during the year, with Orr and Charles Arn doing the training. This three-day diagnostic clinic guided conference participants in a detailed study of their own churches. Participants obtained accurate information on their churches prior to the training event, analyzed the data during the training, and then developed a growth strategy before returning home. Response to this diagnostic workshop was positive, but not enough to restore the Institute's lost energy.

Prior to his stroke Arn had been thinking about the influence of the coming wave of aging people on the church. After he returned to work in 1990, he turned his energies toward this growing movement. Senior ministry became Arn's focus, and the Institute's as well, during the remainder of the 1990s. Arn focused his efforts on building a new thrust by establishing a new ministry: Living In Full Effectiveness (LIFE). Together Win and Charles Arn wrote a new book in 1991 titled *Live Long & Love It*. A training seminar and resource materials were designed to help churches start or retool seniors' programs. This fresh thrust established new momentum for the Institute, for Win Arn, and for his son, but Orr eventually left to pastor a church in Southern California.

As Charles Arn became more responsible for the oversight of the Institute, he discovered that he disliked management tasks, and slowly allowed the Institute's staff to dwindle down to a few people. In 1999 Beacon Hill Press released a reprint of a book first published in 1993 by Win and Charles Arn, *Catch the Age Wave*. Win Arn retired in 2000 and, as of 2005, lived with his wife Barbara, in Southern California. The ministry of the Institute for American Church Growth continued through Church Growth, Inc., a seminar and consulting firm led by Charles Arn.

#### *Analysis*

Win Arn was the first American church leader to see the enormous potential that McGavran's church growth missiology might have on church growth in the United States. With faith, he founded the Institute for American Church Growth to spread

church growth thinking among church leaders. The following is a brief analysis of Arn's Institute and its impact on churches in the United States.

First, of all the people who published and communicated church growth missiology to churches in the USA, Arn presented the most consistent form of McGavran's insights. For example, in the beginning stages of the Institute for American Church Growth, Arn simply published and communicated McGavran's missiological insights with few changes. Their first two books—*How to Grow a Church* and *Ten Steps for Church Growth*—were transcribed from direct interviews with McGavran. McGavran felt that *Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School* included so much of his material that Arn added McGavran's name as an author, even though McGavran did not write any of it directly. *Back to Basis in Church Growth* was written from recordings of McGavran's talks given on the traveling Advanced Church Growth Seminar in 1977. It is no surprise that these books contain almost all of McGavran's missiological insights in one form or another. There is direct evidence of McGavran's commitment to biblical authority, making disciples, research, receptivity, setting bold plans, the homogeneous unit, and removing growth barriers.

The Basic Church Growth Seminar used for the first twenty years of the Institute was a creative presentation of McGavran's missiological ideas. The seminar began by using research to remove the fog. After the fog was removed, several church growth principles, such as resistance-receptivity, were explained. At the close of the seminar, participants were directed to set bold, challenging goals for growth. While the creativity behind the seminar was all Arn, the content was very much McGavran's missiological principles.

The Advanced Church Growth seminars enlarged on McGavran's ideas. The use of other speakers, as well as the concept of an "advanced" seminar, naturally allowed for new material. Still, the core of McGavran's ideas are clearly evident in the session titles for the first intensive week long advanced course on Church Growth presented May 12-16, 1975: "Church Growth and Biblical Authority," "Strategy for Growth," "Theology of Church Growth," and "Sowing for Harvest." By 1979, however, the topics broadened to include management, spiritual gifts, and communication.

Second, Win Arn's major contribution to the American Church Growth movement was his creative packaging and communicating of McGavran's missiological insights. Barbara Arn writes, "Win's creativity has always been evident in his min-

istry" (B. Arn:2004). Regarding American Church Growth, Arn's creative talent is evident in the production of fifteen films between 1974 and 1987, the co-authoring of ten books, and the co-authoring of three seminars, three resource kits, and one game. He also gave the primary creative input in designing the first computer software program for using church growth ideas (Insight 1000), the development of an extended growth plan for congregations (Two-Year Growth Plan), and the cataloging of church growth principles (*The Church Growth Ratio Book*). Arn also delved into the area of church multiplication with the production of two films that highlighted church planting—*Planned Parenthood for Churches* and *A Church is Born*.

Third, Arn's best application of McGavran's missiological insights was in the area of targeting receptive people. The concept of household (*oikos*) evangelism was not new with Arn, but it was his creative application of McGavran's principles of receptivity, homogeneous unit, people as bridges to God and the Church, and intentional planning to the North American context that resulted in *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*. This approach to friendship evangelism was packaged in the form of a book, film, seminar, resource kit, and training seminar. Over eight thousand churches participated in this approach to training members in evangelism during the 1980s.

Fourth, Arn advanced McGavran's missiological thinking by engaging in research on the spiritual factors of church growth. McGavran and others had, of course, recognized that there were spiritual factors behind church growth, but little research had been attempted before Arn's "Love/Care Quotient" survey was distributed in 1985. Explaining the reason for the survey, the authors wrote, "As church growth researchers, we were interested in the relationship between a church's ability to love and its ability to reach new people and grow" (W. Arn, Nyquist, and C. Arn 1986:7). A survey instrument with seventeen questions was sent to churches representing a "variety of denominations, sizes, geographical locations, and membership growth patterns" (1986:7). The results from a total response of 8,658 people in thirty-nine denominations and 168 churches, were reported in the book *Who Cares About Love?* The study revealed that churches with the highest love/care quotients were also the ones with the highest growth rates. This was the first attempt in the field of Church Growth to study the impact of spiritual factors on church growth in the United States.

Win Arn also advanced church growth thinking by looking at the theory of organizational change. He presented his findings in what he labeled the "Church Growth Development Scale" and

the “Denomination Growth Development Scale.” Arn suggested through these scales that the introduction of church growth insights into an established system (church or denomination) progressed along an eight-point scale beginning with “Ignorance” and ending with “Innovation” (Church Growth, Inc. 1985b:1). This insight helped church leaders begin to understand that introducing McGavran’s church growth missiology into their congregations was a process rather than an event.

Win Arn and the Institute for American Church Growth played a major role in communicating McGavran’s church growth missiology to churches in North America for three decades. It is difficult to explain at this point in history the hope and energy Arn’s training seminars, materials, and films brought to church leaders in the 1970s. While the exact numbers may never be fully known, numerous church leaders and denominations in the USA received their first exposure to McGavran’s missiological ideas from Arn and his Institute.

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Arn, Barbara  
2004 Personal letter to author. La Verne, CA, September 13, 2004.
- Arn, Charles, Donald McGavran and Win Arn.  
1980 *Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School*. Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press.
- Arn, Win.  
1974 Letter to the Institute for American Church Growth Board of Directors. Arcadia, CA. December 30.
- 1975 Director’s Report to Board of Directors. Arcadia, CA, December 30.
- 1976 Personal letter to Donald McGavran. Arcadia, CA, October 22.
- 1977 Memorandum to Ted Engstrom and Donald McGavran. Arcadia, CA, May 23.
- 1978 Update to the Institute for American Church Growth Board of Directors. Pasadena, CA, August 16.
- 1979 Personal letter to the Institute for American Church Growth Board of Directors. Pasadena, CA, November 16.
- 1980 Report to Institute for American Church Growth Board of Directors Pasadena, CA, March 1980.
- 1983 Personal interview with author. Pasadena, CA.
- 1987 *The Church Growth Ratio Book*. Pasadena, CA: Church Growth, Inc.
- Arn, Win, and Charles Arn.  
1982 *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*. Monrovia, CA:

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

- Church Growth Press.
- 1991 *Live Long & Love It!* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- 1993 *Catch the Age Wave: A Handbook for Effective Ministry with Senior Adults.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Arn, Win, Carroll Nyquist, and Charles Arn.
- 1986 *Who Cares About Love?* Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press.
- Arn, Win, ed.
- 1979 *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook: Volume I.* Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press.
- 1982 *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook: Volume II.* Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press.
- Church Growth, Inc.
- 1985a "American Church Growth: the Man Behind the Movement." *Church Growth Resource News.* Pasadena, CA: Church Growth.
- 1985b "Where Are You on the Church Growth Development Scale?" *Growth Report* 2(5):1.
- 2004 "History & Background of Church Growth, Inc." Church Growth, Inc. Accessed August 30, 2004. <[http://www.churchgrowth.net/aboutus/history\\_.htm](http://www.churchgrowth.net/aboutus/history_.htm)>.
- Cook, David L.
- 1998 "The Americanization of the Church-Growth Movement." M.A. thesis, Auburn University.
- Hunter, George, III.
- 1979 Personal note to Donald McGavran, Win Arn, and Tetsunao Yamamori. Pasadena, CA, January 13.
- Institute for American Church Growth
- 1974a Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of the Institute for American Church Growth. Pasadena, CA, May 21.
- 1974b Memorandum and Working Agreement presented to the boards of the Evangelistic Association of New England and the Institute for American Church Growth. Pasadena, CA, December 30.
- 1980 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Institute for American Church Growth. Pasadena, CA, June 5.
- Lawson, E. LeRoy and Yamamori Tetsunao
- 1976 *Church Growth: Everybody's Business.* Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing.
- Mahan, Chester A.
- 1979 Personal letter to Win Arn. Marion, IN, April 10.
- McGavran, Donald A.
- 1975 Personal letter to Win Arn. Pasadena, CA, March 18.
- 1976 Personal note in McGavran's files at the U. S. Center for World Mission. Pasadena, CA, October 27.

- 1979 Personal letter to Win Arn. Pasadena, CA, July 5.
- 1980 *Understanding Church Growth*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- 1984 "Still Building the Bridges of God." *Global Church Growth* 21(4):391.
- McGavran, Donald A., and Winfield C. Arn
- 1973 *How to Grow A Church: Conversations About Church Growth*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- 1977 *Ten Steps for Church Growth*. New York: Harper & Row.
- 1981 *Back to Basics in Church Growth*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- Nicholson, Steve
- 1998 "John Wimber the Church Planter." Vineyard USA. Fall 1998. Accessed November 18, 2004. <[http://www.vinewardusa.org/publications/magazines/vov/fall\\_98/features/jrwChurchPlanter.htm](http://www.vinewardusa.org/publications/magazines/vov/fall_98/features/jrwChurchPlanter.htm)>.
- School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary
- 1972 Report to the Faculty Senate. October 2.
- Wagner, C. Peter
- 1984 *Your Church Can Grow*. Revised edition. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Wagner, C. Peter, Win Arn, and Elmer Towns
- 1986 *Church Growth: State of the Art*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- Yamamori, Tetsunao, and E. L. Lawson
- 1974 *Church Growth in Japan: A Study in the Development of Eight Denominations, 1859-1939*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- 1975 *Introducing Church Growth: A Textbook in Missions*. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing.

#### Writer

McIntosh, Gary L.: Title: Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. E-mail address: gary.mcintosh@biola.edu. Dr. McIntosh is the founder of the Church Growth Network consulting firm, and has written sixteen books on pastoral ministry and American Church Growth thinking. He holds a B.A. in Biblical Studies from Rockmont College (1970, now Colorado Christian University), a M.Div. in Pastoral Studies from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (1975), a D.Min. in Church Growth Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary (1982), and a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller's School of Intercultural Studies (2005).

#### NOTES

---

Journal of the American Society for Church Growth, Spring 2007

1. Arn often used the nickname "Win."
2. The Win Arn/Church Growth Dynamic Laity Film Series often goes by the common name "The Chuck Bradley Series." All of the films featured a popular layman named Chuck Bradley. In the Winter of 1983 there were seven Chuck Bradley films: *But...I'm Just A Layman!*, *The Gift of Love*, *Discover Your Gifts*, *The Great Commission Sunday School*, *The Possibility Sunday School!*, *For the Love of Pete*, and *See You Sunday*.