

The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance.

Submitted by

Ian Hussey B.Sc., Dip. Ed., B.Th. (Hons), M.Mgt.

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School of Educational Leadership

Faculty of Education

Australian Catholic University

Research Services

Locked Bag 4115

Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

Australia

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Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee (Appendix A).

Signed:



Date: 30th November 2010

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Abstract

Christian church attendance in Australia is static or declining. Contrary to this trend some churches have been identified as attracting increased numbers of attenders. Within this group of new attenders there is a category of attendees joining churches for the first time, or rejoining after a substantial absence of years. These can be called "Newcomers." The research problem focuses on exploring this atypical population. Hence, the purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The focus of the research is local churches which have high percentages of Newcomers.

The literature review informs the research questions that focus the research design:

1. How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?
2. How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and "a strong and growing sense of belonging" experience this sense of belonging?
3. How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

Since the research questions address the experience of the participants (the church attenders and Newcomers) the epistemology of constructionism is an appropriate choice. Consistent with this epistemology, interpretivism is employed as the theoretical perspective. In particular, the interpretivist lens of symbolic interactionism generates understanding of how church attenders experience church engagement, sense of belonging and the church's leadership. In order to develop a depth of understanding the methodology of case study is used.

The 50 churches with the highest percentage of Newcomers in Australia were invited to participate in this research by the National Church Life Survey. Of the churches that responded, three churches from three different states and three different denominations were selected for case study and visited by the researcher.

The experience of Australian Newcomers during the engagement process is marked by their fear of rejection and their acknowledgement, and expectation, of the work of the supernatural in their lives before and after they enter into church.

The family-like nature of high percentage Newcomer churches is their defining characteristic. The lenses of Sense of Community and empowering leadership and communities foster an understanding of the role of strictness, leaders taking ideas into account, egalitarianism, non-Sunday church activities and the opportunity to minister, in a growing sense of belonging.

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are visionary and empowering and they use Transformational Leadership behaviours. They are also experienced as authentic, humble and caring. The power of the leader's example in inspiring church members is also identified.

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1. Defining the Research Problem

1.1 Introduction to the Research

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and define the research. First, the personal, state and national context of the research problem is described. This is followed by a section identifying the research problem and its significance. An outline of the thesis concludes the chapter.

1.2 The Context of Research Problem

1.2.1 Personal Context

I am the Senior Pastor of North-East Baptist Church, located in Nundah, Brisbane, Australia. Before studying to enter vocational ministry I was a high school science teacher in western New South Wales and Brisbane. After completing my Bachelor of Theology I undertook a Master of Management which spurred my interest in organisational science. In the period 2000-2009 I was a member of the Queensland Baptist Church Consultancy Team involved in consultancies with more than 10 churches. I have also been on the Board of Queensland Baptists and so have developed an interest in broader denominational issues.

The impetus for this study came from personal interest in the issues associated with church growth. As leader of a church, I have a special interest in the issues related to the entrance of non-Christians into the organisation. Further, as one belonging to the Evangelical strand of the Christian Church, there is a natural interest in the integration of those outside the Church into the active Christian community. (The distinction between the Church universal and the local church is made through the use of the capital "C" for the former.)

Evangelism is part of the Baptist way of life (Beasley-Murray, 1992). Of the 15 men who signed the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 every one was an ardent evangelist. This commitment to evangelism is common among all Baptists. Every Baptist World Alliance meeting ends with an evangelistic meeting (Beasley-Murray, 1992). Having been a Baptist for over 15 years, I have been influenced by this emphasis on evangelism.

I am also aware of the benefits of Christian belief and church attendance in my own life, something I want to share with other people. There is empirical evidence to support the link between church attendance and well-being. In a random sample of 997 Australian adults, belief in God, church attendance and personal prayer have been shown to be significant predictors of a high level of psychological wellbeing (Francis & Kaldor, 2002).

The 2002-03 Wellbeing and Security Study (Quoted in Kaldor, Hughes, Castle, & Bellamy, 2004) was designed to examine the nature and levels of security and insecurity in Australian society and their relationship to wellbeing, based on a random sample survey of 1514 Australian adults. The results of this study suggested a generally positive relationship between religious beliefs and active involvement in private or public religious practices with many of the measures of wellbeing. Most obvious are the positive relationships to a sense of purpose and place in the universe, and, to a lesser extent, personal growth (Kaldor, et al., 2004).

Consequently, my goal in leading the North-East Baptist Church has not just been to have it grow numerically, but to see new people who have not previously been involved engage in church life. This is because of the benefits I perceive to come from belonging to a community of faith and encountering and applying the principles of Christian life.

In seeking to understand how people come to engage in church life, The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) has generated considerable understanding. The NCLS was developed by ANGLICARE (Diocese of Sydney), the Uniting Church in Australia NSW Board of Mission and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The National Survey has been carried out on four occasions in Australia: 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006. Nineteen denominations participated in the 2001 NCLS.

The makeup of attenders in congregations was defined by the NCLS as below:

- Long-term attenders – those who have attended their congregation for more than five years.
- New arrivals at church: Attenders who have joined their present congregation in the last five years and:

- Previously attended a congregation of the same denomination (Transfers).
 - Previously attended a congregation of a different denomination (Switchers).
 - Were not previously attending anywhere else for several years (Newcomers - Returnees).
 - Had never attended anywhere else (Newcomers - First timers).
- Visitors – do not normally attend the congregation.

When the North-East Baptist Church participated in the 2006 National Church Life Survey, findings indicated that the church had grown by 119% in the period between 2001 and 2006 (*North-East Baptist Church-Church Life Profile, 2006*). However, 30% of the congregation were “Switchers” from another denomination, 24% were “Transferees” from within the same denomination, and 38% had attended for more than five years. Only 7% of the congregation were what had been defined by the NCLS as “Newcomers.” These were people who had been involved in the church for fewer than five years and were not previously attending regularly elsewhere.

On many scales the North-East Baptist Church could be considered successful. Over the past 17 years it has been transformed from an older, retired, traditional congregation into a vibrant, “contemporary” church. The NCLS profile identified that in eight of the nine Core Qualities (identified by the NCLS research team as important for congregational vitality) the church scored better than average. At the time of the survey, 45% of the church population were aged between 30 and 49, many with young families. The church offers a wide range of ministries including youth groups, playgroups, small group Bible studies and contemporary worship styles. However, in terms of making an impact on the wider non-Christian community, the results indicated that the church was doing less than the “average” Baptist church.

Newcomers joining churches for the first time, or rejoining after an absence of more than five years, are important to the future of the church (Sterland, Bellamy, Escott, & Castle, 2006). In many respects they are a measure of the relevance of churches beyond their own

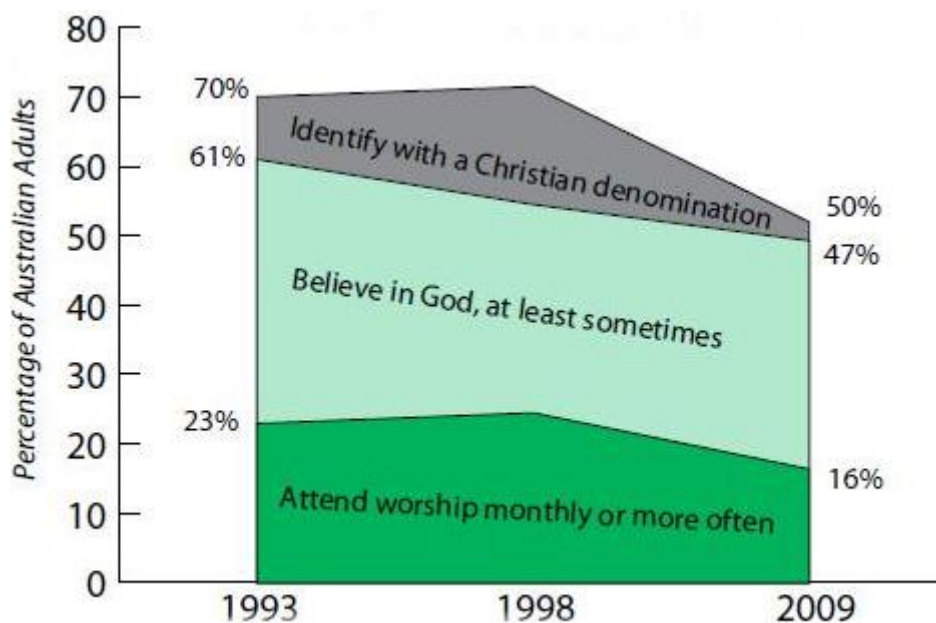
walls. For Newcomers to become part of church life, some relevant engagement between a church and the wider community has occurred. Rather than being simply a circulation of attenders between congregations, they represent a true addition to the total number of attenders within the Church.

Yet, they represent only a small part of the growth at North-East Baptist Church, and an even smaller proportion in many other churches - a third of all congregations participating in the National Church Life Survey had no Newcomers at all.

1.2.2 National Context

The International Social Science Survey Program (ISSP) (as cited in Hughes, 2010) indicates that in Australia most measures of religion show significant decline. Attendance at religious services (at least once a month) declined from 23% to 16% of the population between 1993 and 2009. Belief in God has fallen from 61% of the population to 47% over the same period. Identification with a Christian denomination has fallen from 70% in 1993 to 50% in 2009. There has also been a large increase in those claiming to have "no religion," up from 27% in 1993 to 43% in 2009 (Hughes, 2010).

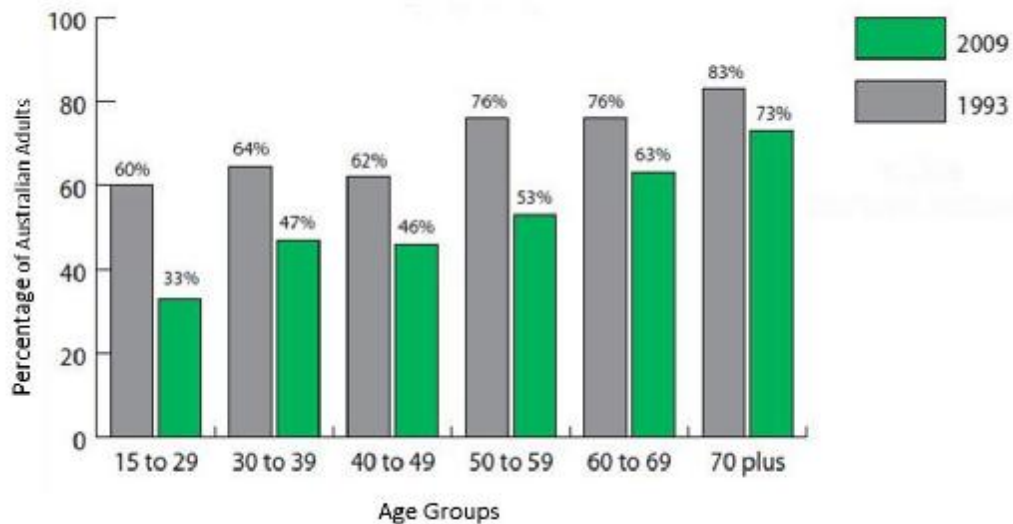
Figure 1-1 Changes in Identification, Belief in God and Attendance at Worship, 1993 to 2009



Source: International Social Science Survey Program for Australia (as cited in Hughes, 2010)

Figure 1-2 shows that among people of all age groups, there has been a movement away from Christian religion.

Figure 1-2 Identification with a Christian Denomination, 1999 and 2003 by Age Group



Source: International Social Science Survey Program for Australia (as cited in Hughes, 2010)

This reflects census trends in religious affiliation. Through the various censuses over the decades, about 10% of the population has chosen not to answer the question about religion. In 1971, when, for the first time, people were invited to say "no religion" if they had no religion, 6.7% of the population responded to that invitation. Since then, this proportion of the population grew to 16.6% in 1996 but then fell slightly to 15.4% in 2001 (Hughes, 2007).

There are two major influences on religious trends in Australia (Hughes, 2007). The first is immigration. Immigration tends to raise the numbers involved in religious groups. For some migrants religion is a bearer of their distinctive ethnic identity. As the importance of that ethnic identity declines, so will involvement in religious groups.

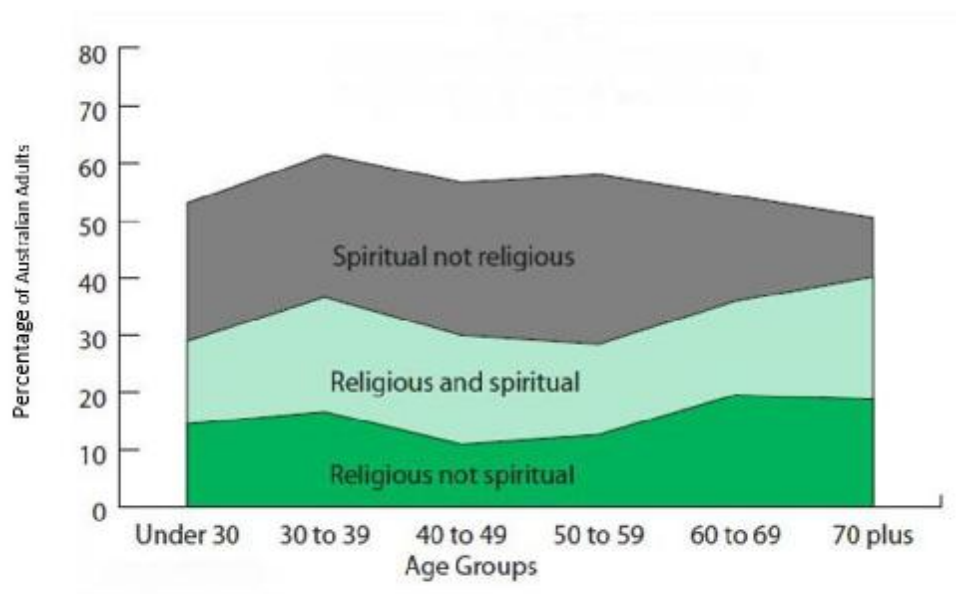
The second factor is the change in the nature of culture. Declines in religious practice have been seen by many as the inevitable outcome of modernity (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000). As science has de-mystified natural processes, so there is less room for religious interpretations. Globalisation and the Western emphasis on the individual have contributed

to religion becoming a personal lifestyle choice. Only recent immigrants expect that they will simply take up the traditions of their parents. Most young people engage with religion only if they think it will be helpful.

Several groups are underrepresented in churches (Hughes, 2007). Among them are those in de facto relationships, or who are separated and those in homosexual relationships. Among those who are in de facto relationships, only 4% attend a church monthly or more often, compared with 25% who are in their first marriage. Only 11% of people who are separated attend a church. Business people are also underrepresented.

However, not all the news is bad. In response to the question in the International Social Science Survey as to whether people considered themselves religious and/or spiritual, 40% indicated that they were (Hughes, 2010). Indeed, as shown in Figure 1-3, if one adds those who are religious to those who are spiritual, the overall proportions do not vary greatly from one age group to another. The highest proportions of those who are religious and spiritual are aged between 30 and 39. This confirms that Australians are rejecting religious organisations rather than spirituality. Identification with, and involvement in, religious institutions has declined at a faster rate than religious belief. The selection of "no religion" in census and other surveys does not necessarily imply atheism.

Figure 1-3 How Australians Consider Themselves



Source: International Social Science Survey Program for Australia (as cited in Hughes, 2010)

However, this evidence still indicates that despite this underlying spirituality, church attendance is either static or declining in Australia. The long-term consequences of this decline will be decreased effectiveness for churches and eventual extinction. However, one style of church, in particular, is flourishing and growing in Australia and is now a major feature of the national church landscape.

1.2.3 The Pentecostal Phenomenon

Some denominations are better at attracting and retaining Newcomers than others. The NCLS results indicate that the Pentecostal churches (including the Assemblies of God and Christian Outreach Centres) are effective at attracting Newcomers. (The distinction between the terms “Pentecostal” and “Charismatic” when used to describe churches is confused and for the purpose of this study they are considered equivalent.) The Pentecostal churches of Australia have, on average, 14% Newcomers, compared to 13% for the Salvation Army and only 8% for Queensland Baptists. The NCLS research also indicates that these Pentecostal churches score highly in the areas of growing sense of belonging, empowering and inspiring leadership and willingness to invite others to church.

Table 1-1: Comparison of Denominations and Core Qualities 2006

	Queensland Baptists	Australian Pentecostals	Australian Salvation Army
Newcomers	8%	14%	13%
Sense of belonging is strong and growing	53%	69%	62%
Leaders encourage gifts and skills to a great extent	22%	40%	29%
Leaders inspire to action	72%	86%	75%
Invited someone to church in the last 12 months	43%	59%	39%

Source: NCLS 2006

However, not only are Pentecostal churches growing through attraction and retention of Newcomers, but through other means as well. As a result, a new Pentecostal church is

opening every four days, and figures from the NCLS show that Pentecostal churches now have the second-largest church attendance in Australia, 198,000, outstripping the Anglicans, Uniting Church, Baptists and Lutherans, but behind the Catholic Church, which at last count had 764,800 practising parishioners (Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Ferguson, 2006). If the Pentecostals continue to grow as they have in recent years, theirs will be the nation's largest denomination within a decade.

The rapid growth of the Pentecostal churches is not restricted to Australia. One hundred years after its birth, Pentecostalism has established such major denominations as the Assemblies of God (AOG), the Church of God in Christ, and the Church of God (Cleveland), as well as para-church organizations like the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. Despite its origins in the U.S., it has rapidly spread and now two thirds of its 523 million adherents live in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, as do most of the nine million people who convert to it each year (D. Martin, 2002).

The reasons why Pentecostal churches in Australia are marked by higher levels of Newcomers, invitation, growing belonging and inspiring and empowering leadership are uncertain. It may be a consequence of their distinctive theology and/or the practices that derive from this theology.

A distinctive of Pentecostal theology is that believers receive the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit and have ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophesying (Robbins, 2004). They also believe the Bible has great authority and endeavour to interpret it literally. The theology also reflects its roots in the Protestant Evangelical tradition that grew out of the eighteenth-century, Anglo-American revival movement known as the Great Awakening. Evangelical Christianity, which includes such denominations as Methodists and Baptists, is marked by its emphasis on conversion. People are not born into the Evangelical faith but must "convert" (being "born again"). Because Evangelicals, including Pentecostals, believe this experience is available to everyone, they strongly emphasize the importance of evangelistic efforts to convert others.

As a result, Pentecostal churches encourage every member to act as an evangelist working to convert others. The emphasis on outreach was apparent from the start of the movement, with visitors to Asuza Street carrying the message all over North America and the world

almost from the outset of the revival (Robbins, 2004). It is believed that anyone indwelt by the Spirit is equipped to evangelize, regardless of educational or theological qualifications.

The egalitarianism of Pentecostal doctrine also supports evangelistic efforts. Led by an African American preacher and attended by many whites, Asians and Latinos, the Azusa Street mission was based on the assumption that all were equal when used by the Spirit. It was notable for its openness to letting African Americans and women speak at services. Pentecostalism has continued to feature its egalitarianism both in its outreach, which is often to the poor or otherwise marginalized, and in the life it offers its converts, who are encouraged to acknowledge their most important identity not as one of class, race, gender, or ethnicity, but as children of God (Robbins, 2004).

The egalitarianism also promotes the idea that believers do not need special education to preach or run a church; only Spiritual inspiration is required. The lack of prerequisite credentials for leadership gives Pentecostal churches a large pool of potential local talent from which to draw. By authorising so many members to occupy formal roles, Pentecostal churches mobilize large numbers of local people in their institution-building efforts (Robbins, 2004).

The emphasis on discontinuity is also an important part of how Pentecostalism spreads. Baptism is an important ritual of discontinuity with the secular world in Christian traditions that emphasize adult conversion. Pentecostalism also offers a host of post conversion rituals aimed at deepening the break made at conversion, including the baptism of the Spirit.

The rapid growth and worldwide spread of Pentecostalism is also explained by sociological arguments about the role of deprivation in fostering the growth of ecstatic and sect-like religious movements. It is argued, that for the "deprived," those who feel they are not getting their lot in life, Pentecostalism offers ecstatic escape, hope for justice and an egalitarian environment in which everyone is eligible for the highest religious rewards (i.e., salvation and the gifts of the Spirit) (Robbins, 2004).

Women are especially empowered in Pentecostal churches. Research in North America and Latin America demonstrates that Pentecostalism generates observable changes in relations between husbands and wives, encourages women to take initiative (some for the first time) in extra-domestic activities and often grants women greater informal power in church affairs

than is assigned on the formal level (D. Martin, 2002). Even though men monopolize formal institutional titles such as Pastor or Missionary, women are routinely recognised as receiving more gifts of the Spirit. These gifts underwrite their work as lay preachers, healers, evangelists, and prophets whose voices are often heard in church and other public settings (Robbins, 2004).

The vitality of Pentecostal churches is also attributed to their superior ability to provide meaning and belonging to their members. Meaning is most effective when belonging mechanisms are strong. Effective provision of meaning is best accomplished through the conservative beliefs and strong commitment identifiable in Pentecostal churches (McGaw, 1980).

There are also suggestions that Pentecostal churches are tapping into a void in people's lives, offering a sense of community and happiness. Other theories centre on the churches' ability to offer certainty in times of change.

Pentecostal churches also successfully demand heavy participation from members who attend church services, meetings, and home Bible studies and participate in evangelization efforts. The requirement to tithe and give offerings is another aspect of Pentecostal culture (Robbins, 2004). Poor members often find in tithing a way to experience the power of occupying the donor role, thereby furthering their sense of involvement in the church. The Pentecostal "success is rooted in ideas of Spiritual empowerment, institutional commitment, and religious generosity" (Robbins, 2004, p. 131).

Other theories centre on the contemporary style of worship in Pentecostal churches and the experiential nature of their approach to faith (Ferguson, 2006). Pentecostal worship style is spontaneous, experiential and exuberant. Worship services have an "eventful" quality, with people waiting to see what the Spirit will do.

Although preachers and clergy seem to dominate fundamentalist movements as spokespersons and organizers, fundamentalism is actually based on mobilization of the laity. Such a focus often undermines traditional religious authority (Riesebrodt, 2000). "While Pentecostalism is indeed attached to Christian "fundamentals" and to a Conservative understanding of scripture, the heart of its distinctive appeal lies in empowerment through spiritual gifts offered to all" (D. Martin, 2002, p. 1).

Pentecostalism is now a major feature of the landscape of Australian Christianity. Not only are these churches growing rapidly but they are attracting the high levels of Newcomers. However, the reason for their success in Australia is not clear. An exploration of Newcomer engagement, not just in Pentecostal churches, but in churches of other denominations, is needed for greater understanding of the Pentecostal church phenomenon.

1.2.4 Queensland Baptist Context

Of the 125 Queensland Baptist churches who supplied information for the 2007 Annual Handbook, 41% recorded a growth in church membership, 38% recorded a decline and 21% had net static membership for the 2005-2006 year (*Queensland Baptists' Handbook, 2006*). Although official church membership does not equate with church attendance numbers, it is indicative of church attendance trends.

Overall, there has been a steady growth in the size and number the congregations within the denomination. In 1997 there were 18,301 adults in Queensland Baptist churches while in 2009 there were 26,678. This represents a 45.8% growth in a 12 year period, at an average of 3.8% per annum.

However, Queensland's population grew by 2.3% in the year to 30 June 2008, which was slightly down from 2.6% in the year to 30 June 2007 (Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning, 2009). Queensland's annual population growth rate was above 2% for the third consecutive year. Hence, at least 2% of this 3.8% growth per annum could be attributed to Baptists moving from interstate or from people switching from other denominations. The growth of Queensland Baptist churches from people who have never previously attended a church may well be less than 1.8% per annum.

The 1991 National Church Life Survey research indicated that only 8% of those who attended Baptist churches across Australia were Newcomers (joined in the last 5 years). This compared with 10% in the Anglican denomination and 13% in the Assemblies of God churches (Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Hughes, & Castle, 1997).

The stated purpose of the Queensland Baptist family churches is: "to extend the Kingdom of God by assisting each local church to develop and achieve its own vision under God and to

achieve together what individual churches can do alone" (*Queensland Baptists' Handbook*, 2006, p5). However, Queensland Baptist churches are not "extending the Kingdom of God" as effectively as several other denominations including the Anglicans and Assemblies of God. Given the Baptist emphasis on evangelism this phenomenon invites further research.

1.3 Identification of the Research Problem

1.3.1 Church Growth or Circulating Saints?

Like all organisations, churches depend on recruitment for growth and, ultimately, existence. As a result, the Christian Church has been, at some times more aggressively than others, evangelising in order to grow. Following the conversion of Constantine, church growth in the Western world had been relatively easy. Over 30 generations of people were born and baptised in a Christian society where Church and State found a working harmony for the good of both (Shelley, 1982). Through the sacraments the Church dispensed saving grace to virtually the whole population.

However, the Reformation unintentionally shattered Christendom. Although strong national princes arose to perpetuate the alliance of Church and State, the arrival of denominations meant that no longer would membership of a nation mean membership of the Church. Thus churches were forced to shoulder the burden for evangelising the unconverted and nurturing the believers. People could accept or reject the Gospel as they pleased (Shelley, 1982).

As the number of "unchurched" has grown in the wake of the Enlightenment, the Church has struggled to respond. Within the Catholic tradition, Popes reacted to the decline of Christendom by reaffirming Church authority and resisting change. They continued to defend the past and lost touch with the movements of their time (Shelley, 1982). Amongst Protestant churches, there has been some success through the Evangelical revivalist preachers such as John Wesley and George Whitfield, spurring Methodism in England and The Great Awakening in the United States. Although the open air campaign achieved significant results in the 18th-century, its effectiveness has continued to dwindle since. Although the Protestant missionary movement has taken the Christian Church throughout the world, in its Western heartland, it has declined. As Australia, Europe and North America

have passed through modernity into post-modernity, church growth has become more difficult as society has become more secular (Shelley, 1982).

In the later part of the 20th century, the "Church Growth Movement" espoused a number of principles to grow churches. The origin of the movement is often identified as McGavran's book, *The Bridges of God* (1955). McGavran was a third generation Christian missionary to India, where his observations of growing churches went beyond theological discussion to discern sociological factors that affected receptivity to the Christian Gospel among unconverted peoples. Peter Wagner applied these findings to Western churches through his work at Fuller Seminary in the 1970s. The movement exploded onto the wider evangelical scene in the 1980s (Stetzer, 2005).

However, the popularity of the Church Growth Movement has failed to address the overall decline of the Church in the West. Although Church Growth writers normally emphasise that the purpose of their strategies is to draw non-Christians into the Christian community, the practices they have recommended have the effect of not only attracting non-Christians, but Christians from other churches as well. Church Growth strategies such as inspiring vision statements, relevant preaching, contemporary music and good car parking are attractive for Christians as well as non-Christians.

The reality is that church attendance growth comes from several sources, not just Newcomers. Transfer from other churches, either of the same or a different denomination, children born in church-attending families, and the arrival of new people from the non-church community each contribute to the total "inflow" just as a number of avenues account for the outflow of people. Church Growth practices may, therefore, grow church attendance but not result in many Newcomers.

Such an hypothesis is supported by the Australian NCLS research indicating that the fastest growing churches also have the largest percentage of "Switchers" and "Transferees." In 1991 the Assemblies of God denomination was composed of 28% of people who had switched denominations in the previous five years, compared to only 13% who were Newcomers (Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, & Castle, 1994).

Similarly, research on church growth in Canada concludes that most new members are Evangelical switchers, or "circulating saints" (Perrin, Kennedy, & Miller, 1997). It is estimated

that approximately 70% of membership additions are re-affiliates (i.e., switchers who are already Christians when they join the church), 20% are offspring and only 10% proselytes.

One of the latest emphasises in Church Growth literature is the concept of “church health.” Research in 1000 churches, 32 countries and six continents, has concluded that a healthy church is a growing church (Schwarz, 1996). Eight key qualities of healthy, and therefore growing, churches have been identified: Empowering leadership, gift oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

But again, if healthy churches grow, they do so indiscriminately. The eight key qualities are equally, if not more, attractive to Christians than they would be to non-Christians. Although healthy churches might be growing, there is no evidence that healthy churches are any better at attracting Newcomers than unhealthy ones.

Hence, many churches are healthy and growing through people switching from other denominations or from other churches of the same denomination. However, some churches are attracting and retaining high percentages or numbers of Newcomers. These churches represent a significant minority worthy of investigation.

It may well be that churches attracting and retaining high percentages or numbers of Newcomers are also growing rapidly overall. However, churches demonstrating overall numerical growth have had ample exploration already (Inskeep, 1993). This research focuses on “real” church growth not just the “circulation of saints” - on Newcomers and on the churches which have successfully attracted and retained them, whether these churches are growing rapidly overall or not.

1.3.2 Newcomers and Churches

Despite the overall decline in church attendance evident in Australia, some people choose to attend church for the first time. “Newcomers” are people who have been involved in their church congregation for fewer than five years and were not previously attending church elsewhere.

Newcomers may be of any age, but they are more likely to be aged in their 20s and 30s (Kaldor, et al., 1997). “First timers” (those who have never attended church before) are more likely to be young adults in their 20s without children, while “Returnees” (those who have returned after a long period of absence) are more likely to be in their 20s or 30s with young children.

Newcomers are more likely to come from a lower economic status and have lower educational levels. They are more likely to feel tentative about church involvement, taking longer to integrate or feel as though they belong. Many Newcomers either settle into the congregation they first attend or don't attend at all. Newcomers tend to join congregations through personal invitation: 64% joined through some form of personal contact, including friends, acquaintances, family, clergy or a church activity (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000).

Churches with high levels of Newcomers tend to have a younger age profile and higher levels of recent arrivals in the area (Kaldor, et al., 1997). The attenders tend to describe their faith as growing, and are ready to discuss their faith and invite others to church. These churches also tend to have contemporary styles of music and worship.

In order of importance, the following church characteristics are identified as key priorities for attracting Newcomers (Bellamy, et al., 2006):

- Promote a strong sense of belonging among attenders.
- Encourage attenders to invite others to church.
- Be an empowering leader.
- Discover a sense of vision and direction.
- Nurture growth in faith and a movement towards commitment.
- Aim for joyful, inspiring services.
- Introduce contemporary worship.
- Perform informal acts of helping.
- Look after the young.
- Focus on people beyond church life.

- Be willing to try new things.

These factors invite further exploration. What sociological, psychological, denominational, demographical or theological factors underlie these characteristics and how do they make some churches better at attracting and retaining these Newcomers than others?

In some cases these characteristics of high percentage Newcomer churches are logically linked to Newcomer attendance. For example, if a church has more attenders who are inviting others to church, it would not be surprising that there are more Newcomers in that church. However, one of the key characteristics of churches with high percentages of a Newcomers is “a strong and growing sense of belonging” among the current attenders. The link between this characteristic and high percentages of Newcomers is more complex and needs exploration. The link between empowering leadership, inspiring leadership and high percentages of Newcomers is also worthy of research.

1.4 Definition of the Research Problem

Research concludes that Christian church attendance is static or declining. In Queensland, many Baptist churches report a declining or static church membership. Contrary to this trend some churches have been identified as attracting increased numbers of attenders. Within this group of new attenders there is a category of attendees joining churches for the first time, or rejoining after a substantial absence of years. These can be called “Newcomers.” The research problem focuses on exploring this atypical population. Hence, the purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance.

1.5 Significance of the Research

Although there has been much research on conversion, this research is significant because it focuses on one specific activity related to conversion - church attendance. Newcomer church attendance is critical for the future of the Church. Every organisation needs to attract new members in order to sustain and revitalise itself. Hence it is important that churches

understand more about Newcomers and how to attract new members from the non-Christian community, not just other churches.

Further, Newcomers to churches are younger than the typical attender. Nearly a third of all Newcomers who have never been to church before are in their 20s compared to 13% of attenders as a whole. People returning to church life are more likely to be in their 30s (Sterland, et al., 2006). Integrating people from this younger age group into the Church in Australia is crucial for its future.

This research is important because it represents an elaboration of the NCLS data regarding Newcomers. The NCLS has been able to statistically identify some characteristics common to Newcomers and churches with high percentages of Newcomers. This research is an “on the ground” examination of the experience of Newcomers in engaging with these churches and what behaviours and attitudes these churches actually demonstrate in light of the characteristics suggested by the NCLS data and other research. It provides a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomena than that provided by statistical research and provides insight for further statistical research.

In order to better understand Newcomer engagement and high percentage Newcomer churches, a number of social scientific theories are brought to bear on the statistically based NCLS research and the churches studied. A theological framework is also used to inform understanding of the research problem. As such this research represents an important integration of three schools of knowledge.

The research is also significant because it identifies how these churches are able to develop these qualities. Knowing these characteristics exist in high percentage Newcomer churches is only useful if a knowledge of how the characteristics are developed can be described. As such this research represents a practical analysis, and development, of the theoretical knowledge.

There is a significant imbalance in church growth literature in its emphasis on generic church growth (Sterland, et al., 2006). Rainer makes the surprising statement, “As I read again through my rather extensive church growth library, I realised that none of the works have devoted themselves to the study of leading *conversion* growth churches” (Rainer, 1996, p.

1). This research on Newcomers and why and how they come into churches represents a significant narrowing of the focus onto an extremely important segment of church growth.

The research also highlights the contours of the contemporary Australian church scene. Although not a specific exploration of the Pentecostal phenomena, these case studies allow for a comparison and contrast of churches which are attracting and retaining high levels of Newcomers and develops additional understanding of the success of Pentecostal churches in Australia.

Finally, this research is important to church leaders in identifying ways of attracting and retaining more Newcomers. It clarifies what causes Newcomers to find a church and then explores the nature of the churches that retain and/or attract them. It also explores the role leaders actually play in the engagement of Newcomers and high percentage Newcomer churches.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. A conceptual framework is developed which allows for the diverse concepts in the literature to be organised into a manageable structure. Then, the specific literature related to people who engage in church attendance for the first time is examined. This is followed by an examination of how people engage in religious life. The social scientific research related to churches and communities is then incorporated into the aspects of church life and leadership identified by the National Church Life Survey. Research questions are generated and justified from a synthesis of the literature.

A theological conceptualisation of the engagement of Newcomers in church is generated in Chapter 3. Since the Bible is a crucial guiding document for church operation, an understanding of the process of Newcomer engagement from the perspective of both the Old Testament and New Testament is pertinent. The theological conceptualisation also provides an alternative lens through which to examine and understand the phenomena related to Newcomer engagement.

The design of the research is explained and justified in Chapter 4. This chapter outlines the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods employed for data collection. It also describes the way the data is analysed.

In Chapter 5 the findings of the research are generated. The data from each case study is separately presented.

These findings are discussed in light of the Literature Review and the Theological Perspectives in Chapter 6. Three headings, corresponding to the specific research questions, are used to organise the material.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the research questions are addressed, the contribution to existing theory identified and recommendations for churches, leaders and other research presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The research examines this phenomenon from the perspectives of the Newcomers and attenders of churches with high percentages of Newcomers. The previous chapter defined the research problem in the light of the context of the Australian church scene and the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) research. Although overall church attendance is falling, the NCLS has identified that some churches have high levels of Newcomers who have never attended church before.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the research problem within the sociological and psychological understanding of religious engagement, organisations and leadership. The chapter is divided into three main sections and explores scholarly literature related to the concepts of Newcomers, the process of engagement and churches with high levels of Newcomers. The review serves to provide a conceptual framework for exploration of Newcomer church engagement.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that underpins this literature review represents a synthesis of literature from a number of disciplines in the light of the research purpose. The phenomena of Newcomer church engagement is a complex object of study and unique to each Newcomer. However, even though it may appear simplistic to think of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance in terms of the conceptual framework set out here, it does offer a structure for analysing the literature related to this engagement. The framework also highlights the importance and relevance of the research questions.

This section aims to give an overview of the literature review in terms of the conceptual framework. More details, justification and references are included in the body of the literature review but are omitted here for brevity and clarity.

The first part of the conceptual framework focuses on "The Prospective Newcomer." Some insights into the phenomena of Newcomer engagement are gained from an examination of

the demographics of Newcomers and the attitudes of non-church attenders towards church and spirituality.

The next section focuses on understanding Newcomer engagement. Six factors emerge as being important in understanding how a “normal” non-church attending person makes the transition to Newcomer.

1. Relational transition. Research has indicated the demographic characteristics of many Newcomers. One that emerges as important is that many Newcomers are in a state of relational flux.
2. Spiritual awareness. A fundamental predisposition towards spirituality also offers some explanation of Newcomer engagement.
3. Social connection with churchgoers. Although the process of Newcomer engagement is unique for each person, social connection with churchgoers has consistently been demonstrated as crucial.
4. Fundamentalism. There is evidence that fundamentalism influences people to seek out the absolute answers offered by many religions, including some branches of Christianity.
5. Invitation. Multi-national research indicates that just over half of all Newcomers cite “invitation” as the reason they joined a particular church.
6. Church leadership. The character and preaching of church leaders is a significant factor in the decision of Newcomers to attend.

The third part of the conceptual framework focuses on “The High Percentage Newcomer Church.” The engagement of Newcomers in church attendance occurs in the context of individual, local, churches. The NCLS (Bellamy, et al., 2006; Kaldor, et al., 1997) data provides the best information for the Australian setting. It reveals that churches with high percentages of Newcomers have a number of characteristics in common. The attenders at these churches indicate that:

1. They have a strong and growing sense of belonging.
2. They have a high willingness to invite others to church.

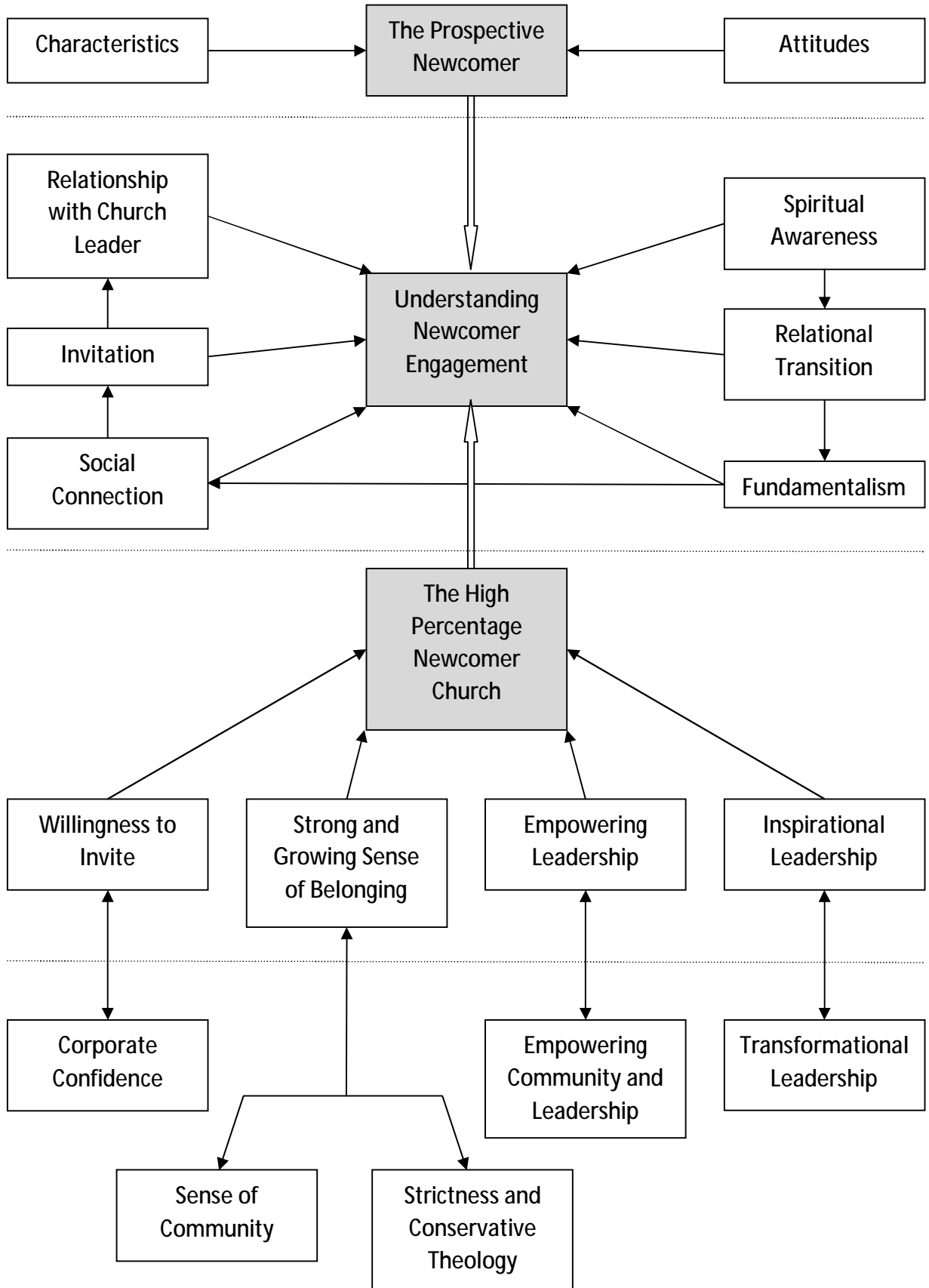
3. The leaders of their church encourage them to use their gifts and skills (the NCLS identifies this as “empowering leadership”).
4. The leaders of their church inspire them to action (the NCLS identifies this as “inspiring leadership”).

The NCLS team identify a concept, “Corporate Confidence,” as being an underlying factor to these characteristics. The research from overseas confirms these characteristics but also suggests that church “strictness” and conservatism play a role. In particular, leaders in churches with high levels of Newcomers appear to be conservative in their theology and literalistic preachers.

In seeking to better understand these concepts a range of social scientific research is reviewed. A number of concepts offer insights on these characteristics of churches. In particular, research in psychological Sense of Community, principles of empowering communities and empowering and inspirational leadership is demonstrated to be relevant to this phenomenon.

This framework (Figure 2-1) allows the development of informed research questions that will guide the research and link together theoretical concepts related to the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance.

Figure 2-1 Conceptual Framework



2.3 The Prospective Newcomer

The engagement in church attendance for the first time varies from person to person. However research suggests a number of factors involved in the motivation for, and process of, Newcomer engagement. These six factors and the relationship between them are discussed in Section 2.4 But first, the characteristics and attitudes of prospective Newcomers are considered.

2.3.1 Characteristics of Newcomers

The NCLS, which surveys about 300,000 church attenders every four years, is able to statistically describe Newcomers who have been retained by churches (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000). The survey allows for two different kinds of Newcomers: those who had never previously attended church, the so-called "first timers," and those returning to church after five years or more of non-involvement, called "returnees." First timers to church are mostly aged 15 to 39 years. Two thirds of first timers are in this age group. By comparison, returnees to church life are more likely to be aged 30 to 49 years and nearly half of all returnees are in that age band. First timers are less likely to be tertiary educated than attenders as a whole. They are more likely to be male and tend to be a little more ethnically diverse than attenders as a whole.

Newcomers can often be described as being in "relational transition." The proportions of Newcomers who have been divorced, separated, remarried after divorce or who are in a *de facto* relationship are dramatically higher than other attenders (Sterland, Escott, & Castle, 2004). The reason for this requires further investigation. It may be that from a point of relationship crisis many are seeking answers and consolation in faith. It may be that there is a simple desire for safe companionship.

Most Newcomers know little about church before they start attending. Only 24% of Newcomers attended church or Sunday School, and if they did, it was often prior to being 12 years of age. Most (60%) did not attend Sunday School or church except on special occasions. While nearly two-thirds of all church attenders had one or both of their parents actively involved in church while they were growing up, only 27% of first timers had parents who were so involved. Only 18% of first timers identify their parents as the most significant people to show them what faith is about.

The process of church engagement is gradual. While some first timers are converts before they become church attenders, few cite personal conversion as the major reason behind their decision to engage in church attendance. Few first timers have had a faith during their life but most go through some kind of process of change or conversion in the first year after beginning church attendance (Kaldor, Bellamy, & Moore, 1995). Although the process of engagement is often a gradual process, for many it involves a moment of decisive commitment (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000). This gradual entrance into church life manifests in less frequent worship attendance, less involvement in group life, less financial giving, less involvement in congregational decision making and less awareness of the vision or direction of the congregation (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000).

To summarise, Newcomers are typically in relational transition, with little background knowledge of the church and enter church life gradually, often before they are converted.

However, despite these distinctive characteristics, Newcomers remain a subset of the Australian community. Given this is the case, it is appropriate to examine the attitudes of the broader community towards churches for insights concerning Newcomers' perceptions of churches before they make the decision to attend.

2.3.2 Attitudes Towards Church

The most common reason cited for not attending church among infrequent attenders and non-attenders is that they believe the services are boring or unfulfilling (42%) (Bellamy, Black, Castle, Hughes, & Kaldor, 2002). Others do not appreciate the value of church attendance – 34% say they see no need to go to the church while 31% say they would prefer to do other things. The major reason that Australians do not attend church is a perception of the poor value of church services relative to alternative uses of time.

One explanation of this phenomenon is the way church and religion are portrayed in the media. The religious side of TV characters' lives is not typically presented on fictional prime time network television. Characters demonstrate minimal religious affiliation and religious activity is infrequently presented. When it is portrayed, it is rarely a central theme in the storyline and is usually framed as a personal and private activity (Clarke, 2005; Skill, Robinson, Lyons, & Larson, 1994). The infrequent presentation of religion and spirituality tends to convey the message that religion is not very important because it is rarely a factor

in the lives of the people on TV or the social setting in which they are portrayed (Skill, et al., 1994).

Despite this perception, relatively few non-attenders and infrequent attenders think that church services are a *total* waste of time (Hughes, Thompson, Pryor, & Bouma, 1995). Indeed, many think church plays a positive role in encouraging good morals (47%) and supporting the poor (30%) (Bellamy, et al., 2002). Non-attenders perceive that church *might* be worthwhile but their perceptions of church services (whether based on personal experience or other sources) as boring, unfulfilling, unnecessary or not as valuable as other activities, mean they do not attend.

In contrast, Newcomers do find some characteristics of churches appealing. A positive experience of the clergy, perhaps arising from a funeral or wedding or some other personal event, has an important and measurable impact on people's attitude to the church and to their actual levels of attendance (Bellamy, et al., 2002). "An experience of God" may also be a compelling motivation to attend church for the first time, as is the provision of valuable religious teaching or training for the Newcomer's children (Barna, 1995). Moral guidance for oneself or one's children represents tangible and valuable assistance towards leading a more satisfying and meaningful life. Churches which can communicate that they offer an experience of God and assistance with life are attractive to prospective Newcomers.

The activities of a local church have also been shown to be an influence on the decisions of potential Newcomers (Barna, 1995). The most appealing and successful approach is for church people to build honest, caring relationships with the non-church people and eventually to invite them to attend church. When a church sponsors non-religious events such as sports clubs, community fairs, social extravaganzas, community assistance projects, concerts or seminars of interest to the unchurched, the unchurched are more likely to consider attending the church services (Barna, 1995).

Advertising may effectively inform people of the existence of the church and may also position the church in a positive light, however, it does not motivate people to change their existing behavioural pattern to include church attendance. Aggressive marketing such as telemarketing or home visitation generate negative reactions from the unchurched (Barna,

1995). Personal contact with church attenders is a more effective means of communication than advertising.

There are three things a the non-churched person is interested in discovering about the church they are considering attending (Barna, 1995):

- The Doctrine and Beliefs - specifically they are interested in how the church might enhance the quality of life.
- Denominational Affiliation - some want to know about denominational affiliation because they were reared in particular kinds of churches and are most likely to return to those churches. However, others may choose not to attend a church for the same reason.
- Location and Schedule - the non-churched person wants to blend in and experience church as it truly is. Consequently, they are interested in the exact locations and times of the services so they neither become frustrated by getting lost or make spectacles of themselves by entering the proceedings after they have begun.

To conclude, the demographics of a person or the busyness of a person's life are not decisive when it comes to willingness to go to church. Potentially all kinds of people, whether young or old, male or female, born overseas or in Australia, are open to the possibility of increasing their church attendance. Other parts of their background, such as whether they attended church as a child, are also of limited importance (Bellamy, et al., 2002). What is significant is that many Australians think that church is boring and irrelevant and so attendance is unlikely to improve the quality of their life or allow them to meet with God in a more meaningful way. For this reason they do not attend. However, if church attenders, through relationships with the non-churched, are able to communicate that church can enhance life, at least some unchurched people are open to exploring that possibility.

Having sought to better understand the characteristics of Newcomers, the phenomenon of church engagement is now examined.

2.4 Understanding Newcomer Engagement

There is far more research and theory on conversion and the general phenomenon of religion than on church attendance *per se* (Rambo, 1992; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). However, even though church attendance and conversion to Christianity are not synonymous, they are related. Conversion can be broadly defined as a change in a person's behaviours and beliefs, without considering the characteristics of the beliefs and the behaviours involved (Richardson, 1985). One of these changed behaviours may be church attendance. However, church attendance in Australia tends to precede conversion (Kaldor, et al., 1995) and so an understanding of conversion sheds light on the decision to attend church and vice versa. Consequently, the distinction between conversion to Christianity and church attendance in this review will not be emphasised.

A number of factors are related to the complex phenomena of Newcomer engagement. A sequence is suggested in the following review, however, engagement is a unique process and the sequence should not be expected in each case. Further, some, or even all, of these factors may be absent in some cases.

2.4.1 Spiritual Awareness - Motivation for Engagement

Evidence for an Innate Spirituality

Spirituality is "an enormously rich and diverse construct that defies easy definition, simple measurement, or easy identification in the life of another person" (Emmons, 2000, p. 9). According to the Bible, God is spirit (John 4:24) and He has breathed His Spirit into humanity (Genesis 2:7) and His followers should be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). More recent authors suggest that spirituality is concerned with an individual's connectedness and relationship with self, others, the world, or universe, and with the Transcendent (Hay & Nye, 2006; O'Murchu, 1997). Whatever definition is adopted, human spirituality has been theoretically asserted and empirically demonstrated.

A number of recent theorists suggest that spirituality is an inherent and fundamental quality of what it means to be human - it is an innate feature of human life and existence (O'Murchu, 1997; Tacey, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). It is something that all people are born with, and something that seeks expression in human living (O'Murchu, 1997).

The language of a fundamental spirituality can be traced back to Otto, an eminent German Lutheran theologian and scholar of comparative religion. In his most famous work, *The Idea of the Holy*, first published in 1917, he introduced the term “the *numinous*” to describe the non-rational, non-sensory human experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self (Otto, 1959). The numinous is a mystery (Latin: *mysterium*) that is both terrifying and fascinating at the same time. Otto’s work prompted a study of religion that focused on religion as a non-reducible category in its own right.

The existence of a fundamental spiritual awareness suggested by the theorists can be substantiated in a number of ways. First, even though Otto’s concept of the *numen* invited scrutiny during the second half of the last century it has been increasingly acceptable as its phenomenological aspects have become more apparent (Gooch, 2001). The concept of the *numinous* is a widely accepted research issue in the fields of psychiatry (King & Dein, 1998), psychology (Grof, 2000) and sociology (Merkur, 2006). All three fields recognise that the *numinous* is a legitimate contributing influence on human behaviour.

Second, spiritual awareness can be thought of as a biological feature of the human species that evolved through the process of natural selection because of its survival value (Hardy, 1966). The universal success of religion is attributable to it tapping into a broad array of psychological mechanisms (including attachment, coalition formation, social exchange, kin-based altruism, and mate selection) that theoretically evolved via natural selection to solve specific problems (for example, relationships with offspring, friends, and potential mates) experienced by humanity (Kirkpatrick, 1999).

Third, research conducted, primarily, through the British national press in the 1960s also suggests intrinsic spiritual awareness. The general public were asked to respond to questions like, “Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?” (Hardy, 1979, pp. 17-20). That and succeeding appeals resulted in the accumulation of more than 5000 written responses from which Hay (1987) identified eight major types of experience. These eight types of experience formed the basis of further research (Hay & Hunt, 2000). The most common kind of spiritual experience is the recognition of a “transcendent providence”: a patterning of events in a person’s life that convinces them that in some strange way those events were meant to happen.

This awareness of transcendent providence is growing. In the 2000 (Hay & Hunt, 2000) survey, 55% of the national sample recognised this in their own lives - a 90% rise compared to the response when the question was asked in 1987. In the 2000 poll, 38% of the sample said they had personal awareness of such a divine presence – a 41% rise on the 1987 result. In great unhappiness or fear, many people, including those who were uncertain about God's existence, turn to prayer for help. A total of 37% of those questioned in 2000 felt they had received such help – a 40% increase on 1987. Another commonly reported experience is an awareness of a sacred presence in nature: a total of 29% of the sample felt that they had had this kind of experience – an 81% rise since 1987. Clearly, an awareness of “the spiritual” is a significant and growing reality for many Britons.

A fourth indicator of innate spirituality is provided by research into the spirituality of children. Awareness of the spiritual does not begin in adulthood but is observable in children (Hay & Nye, 2006). Indeed, this intrinsic spirituality is obscured, suppressed and in some cases repressed by the pattern of modern Western assumptions as children grow older. These assumptions turn spirituality from something explicitly reflected upon, and therefore potent within political and social life, into something implicit and vague, disconnected from the mainstream of human activity. Fundamental to this intrinsic childhood spirituality is the notion of what Hay & Nye (2006) call “relational consciousness.” Children have a self-awareness of being in relationship with something or someone, including “I-Self”, “I-World” and “I-God” relationships.

The relational nature of spirituality is explained by the fifth source of evidence - neurology. For example, high-tech imaging devices used to examine the brains of meditating Buddhists and Franciscan nuns found the intensely focused spiritual contemplation triggered an alteration in the activity of the brain that lead the subjects to perceive transcendent religious experiences as solid and tangibly real (Newberg, d'Aquili, & Rause, 2001). The portion of their brain affected is known as the Orientation Association Area (OAA). The OAA of the human brain creates a distinct, accurate sense of physical orientation to the world by generating a clear, consistent cognition of the physical limits of self. People who suffer injuries to the OAA have great difficulty manoeuvring in physical space because without the OAA's help in keeping track of the body's shifting coordinates, they are incapable of locating themselves in space either mentally or physically. When the OAA is deprived of information,

through injury or some other mechanism, the brain perceives the self as endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything the mind perceives. At this point the individual feels part of “something bigger.” Such an experience is what Buddhists call “oneness with the universe” and the Franciscans attribute to the palpable presence of God.

Acknowledging the neurological contribution to spiritual experience does not dismiss or minimise its reality. There is no other way for consciousness of God except through the brain’s neural pathways. Reality happens in the brain, and while imaging studies do not prove the existence of a higher spiritual plane, they indicate that to the brain, these states are as real as any other. Newberg et al. (2001) conclude “that spiritual experience, at its very root, is intimately interwoven with human biology. That biology, in some way, compels the spiritual search” (Newberg, et al., 2001, p. 8). One explanation of why religion “won’t go away” is that God is “hardwired” into the human brain.

There is also evidence that spirituality should be recognised as the sixth major dimension of personality. The Five Factor Model (FFM) is an empirically validated and comprehensive taxonomy of individual differences (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). Examination of the relationship of spirituality to the FFM of personality revealed that some elements of spirituality are conceptually unique, pointing to the possible existence of major aspects of personality not represented in the FFM (MacDonald, 2000). Other psychometric investigations have revealed that measures of spiritual transcendence and religious attitudes are statistically independent of measures of general intelligence (Piedmont, 1999). These aspects are the fundamental spiritual dimensions of humanity.

It has also been suggested that spirituality is a type of human intelligence (Emmons, 2000). Intelligences are sets of capacities and abilities that enable people to solve problems and attain goals in their everyday lives. The term “Spiritual Intelligence” suggests that it is one of several types of intelligence and that it can be developed relatively independently. Five components of Spiritual Intelligence have been identified (Emmons, 2000): (a) the capacity for transcendence; (b) the ability to enter into heightened spiritual states of consciousness; (c) the ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred; (d) the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems in living; and (e) the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviour (to show forgiveness, express gratitude, be humble,

display compassion). These capacities and abilities, though they can be developed, are latent in all humans.

Although modernity has tended to downplay the importance of the supernatural in human life, there is growing evidence for, and acceptance of, innate human spirituality. This diversity of the evidence confirms an awareness of the activity of God in people not currently engaged in church. Human spirituality is a tangible factor which must be considered in any study of church engagement. However, the relationship between this innate human spirituality and organised religion is a separate topic.

Spirituality and Organised Religion

Although there is some evidence to the contrary (Voas & Crockett, 2005), much research has indicated that people have strong spiritual intuitions even if they have nothing to do with religious institutions. Because spirituality is an attribute of all human beings, it is not the exclusive property of any one religious tradition. Hence, religion should be distinguished from spirituality (Hyde, 2004). Spirituality is much larger and older than any form of organized formal religion (Tacey, 2000). While formal religion encompasses the organized structures, rituals, and beliefs belonging to the official religious systems (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism), spirituality concerns the primal search for meaning (O'Murchu, 1997). Formal religions have developed as a means by which communities of people have given voice to their primal spiritual experiences (Tacey, 2000). Therefore, even if humans have this fundamental spiritual awareness which drives them, from childhood, to experience the *numen*, the linking of spirituality to organised religion, including the local church, is not automatic. Further, people may choose to move away from a particular religious institution if they perceive it no longer sustains their spirituality.

The Australian Community Survey (ACS) has confirmed this underlying Christian spirituality of Australians (Bellamy, et al., 2002). While only 20% of Australians attend church frequently, 43% believe that Jesus' resurrection was an actual historical event, 42% believe that Jesus was divine and 53% believe in heaven. Among non-attenders and infrequent attenders, 46% believe in some kind of higher power or life-force. Around 14% have explored alternative spiritual practices such as those associated with the New-Age

movement or mainstream Eastern religions. Even members of Generation Y, supposedly the most secular group in the history of Australia, are still interested in things spiritual and are not totally disenfranchised with the church (Mason, Webber, Singleton, & Hughes, 2006).

So, not all Australians have not lost their intrinsic spiritual awareness even though church attendances are falling. The issue is that many no longer automatically associate their spirituality with Christian churches and so they do not participate. A rift has grown up between spirituality and the possibility of expressing it through traditional religious doctrine and language (Hay & Nye, 2006).

Yet, some Newcomers *do* make the transition from the unchurched to the Church community. Even in a culture where leisure time is pressured, people can, and do, make time for church involvement if they are sufficiently motivated to do so. What needs to be understood, then, is the link between spiritual awareness and the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance.

A theoretical link can be found in Otto's (1959) explanation of the *numinous*. Although humans have the *potential* to perceive or experience the *numinous*, not everyone has the same degree of receptivity to it. The revelations of those who are specially receptive, like the prophets, stimulate the *numinous* capacity of the less receptive. The means some Newcomers may come to link their experience of, and fascination with, the *numinous* with a local Christian church through relationships with people who themselves experience the *numinous* in that church. It is only to the extent this fundamental spiritual awareness has been stimulated (Otto, 1959), and the extent to which an individual associates the *mysterium fascinans* with their local church, that one is likely to become a Newcomer.

This is an important concept in understanding the phenomenon of Newcomers and will be clarified by the sociological and psychological research to be discussed later. However, there is another possible stimulant for engagement with religion - fundamentalism.

2.4.2 Fundamentalism - Stimulus for Engagement

Fundamentalism, whether religious or not, has an attractive power (Huppert, 2006). An inability to tolerate uncertainty may drive a person to seek answers that will reduce the

anxiety of not knowing. Fundamentalism provides a position of unquestionable absoluteness and involves an idealisation that is essential to maintain. Fundamentalist movements of the 19th and 20th century emerged in response to processes of modernization and globalization and in opposition to a variety of modernist ideologies and ways of life (Riesebrodt, 2000).

Christian fundamentalism usually focuses on the historicity, accuracy and authority of the Bible - an approach sometimes referred to as "literalism" (Shelley, 1982). Fundamentalism is shaped by a dynamic process of group formation which arises in the context of social restructuring under the impact of industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, professionalisation and secularisation. These processes do not allow traditionalists to take tradition for granted, but challenges them to defend it. By defending it they have to reflect upon it and they will selectively emphasize aspects which they feel are particularly important but in danger (Riesebrodt, 2000). This is what the Christian fundamentalists have done with the Bible.

American research indicates that some Newcomers decide to attend churches because of the church's fundamentalist approach to the Bible. Three hundred and fifty-three formerly unchurched people who had recently (typically within the past two years) become active in church were interviewed (Rainer, 2001). For all, or a large portion, of their lives they were not in church. Their answers to the question "What factors lead you to choose this church?" are in Table 2-1:

Table 2-1 Factors In Choosing A Church

What factors lead you to choose this church?	Percentage
Pastor/preaching	90%
Doctrines	88%
Friendliness of members	49%
Other issues	42%
Someone from church witnessed to me	41%
Family member	38%

Sensed God's presence/atmosphere of church	37%
Relationship other than family member	25%
Sunday school class	25%
Children's/youth ministry	25%
Other groups/ministries	12%
Worship style music	11%
Location	7%

Source: Rainer (2010)

Witness from a church member or invitation from a family member were still common reasons for joining a church, but the pastor's preaching and doctrines were identified as more important. The formerly unchurched saw that "preaching that truly teaches the Bible in its original context" was a major factor influencing their decision to attend church (Rainer, 2001, p. 58). This issue was mentioned by 211 of the 353 respondents. They also said they were attracted to "strong" biblical teaching and to understanding Christian doctrine. This style of preaching can be identified as the literalistic style of preaching common in fundamentalist, theologically conservative churches (Rainer, 2001).

This American research raises the question of whether Australians decide to attend church because of their desire to embrace the comfort of fundamentalism. Given that many Australian churches which have high percentages of Newcomers are Pentecostal and Baptist (Kaldor, et al., 1994) and so are at the theologically conservative (fundamental) end of the church spectrum, this proposition is worth further investigation.

2.4.3 Social Connection - Process of Engagement

A number of theories, emerging from a number of different disciplines, each with empirical support, have developed to explain religious behaviour. Theories relating to religious socialisation, the psychology of conversion, the attractive power of groups, the sociology of

conversion and Rational Choice Theory can be brought together to provide a framework for understanding the process of Newcomer engagement.

Religious Socialisation

Socialisation refers to the process by which a culture, usually through its primary agents, such as parents, encourages individuals to accept beliefs and behaviours that are normative and expected within that culture (Spilka, et al., 2003). Individuals adopt a particular worldview through some form of socialisation, usually in early childhood.

Childhood religious socialisation is a strong indicator of future church attendance (Spilka, et al., 2003). Most non-believers originate from homes where religion was only weakly emphasised and parental modelling of religion was not strong. Most religious believers had parents who valued religion and modelled religious behaviour. The first contact with the Christian faith for most Australian Anglican and Protestant church attenders was either through parents or family (57%) or through Sunday School (20%) (Bellamy, et al., 2002). Religious socialisation is important not only because it provides the individual with a worldview, but because it channels individuals into communities that sustain a particular worldview through the adult years (Cornwall, 1987).

However, parental religious socialisation influences tend to weaken, and other factors become more important, as people move through the lifecycle and begin to live independent adult lives. The process whereby people break free from religious or non-religious socialisation has been researched (B. Hunsberger, 2000). "Amazing believers," so called because they seem to "swim upstream" against the religious socialisation current, turn to religion primarily because of personal and emotional needs and problems. Many amazing believers have suffered tragedies, been involved with drugs, been in trouble with the law, came from dysfunctional families, suffered from emotional problems or some combination of the above. Many are fearful, lonely and depressed. The process of amazing conversion, which on average takes 1.8 years, takes less time than the process of becoming an "amazing apostate" (3.4 years). This is probably because amazing believers often have pressing problems in their lives which they very much want to resolve. Religion provides security, joy, purpose, self-discipline, fellowship and love.

The amazing believers typically find religion at a church youth group or a religious summer camp or retreat where religion was introduced and in a social setting where peers are committed to Christianity. Initially they almost always go to these events for social reasons, not to learn about religion. However, after a certain exposure to Christianity they adopt the whole faith - amazing believers almost never convert bit by bit. However, after that adoption, amazing believers often devote themselves to discovering the rest of their new beliefs by studying the Bible, joining discussion groups, and so on (B. Hunsberger, 2000). This process of conversion is examined further in the next section.

The Phenomenon of Conversion

There are two major approaches to conversion identified with what can be termed the "classic" and the "contemporary" periods in the socio-psychological study of conversion (Spilka, et al., 2003). The classic approach, influenced primarily by the psychological study of conversion, has focussed upon intra-individual processes. The contemporary approach is influenced by sociological and social-psychological studies.

The conversion experience of Saul on the road to Damascus is cited as the type example of the classic view of conversion (Richardson, 1985). It was sudden, dramatic and emotional, and had a definite irrational quality to it. In classic conversion the individual is changed via a total break with the past in a relatively permanent way. It is inexplicable in any terms except those that include an active agent not under the convert's control. Traditional views of this event attribute agency to an omnipotent god; some scholars attribute agency to an unconscious psychological influence or "brainwashing." Whatever the characterisation of the agent, the agent of change is definitely not the person.

The classic paradigm, with its deprivation and strain assumptions about the passivity of human beings and its emphasis on the individual, has given way, at least partially, to another view of conversion (Chester, 2003; Richardson, 1985). This new view stresses humans as volitional entities. The new paradigms in conversion/recruitment stress an active subject seeking to develop their own personhood. They also recognise that conversion is a social event and has a definite organisational aspect. The active and social nature of conversion has been demonstrated by considerable research (Richardson, 1985; Spilka, et al., 2003). The

converts in these studies sometimes define themselves as “religious seekers” and take action to change by interacting with selected people and by allowing affective ties to develop with them. The act of leaving a religion (or disaffection, de-conversion, disaffiliation) has, by its very nature, lead to greater recognition of the volitional nature of conversion.

The differences between the two views of conversion are summarised in the following table:

Table 2-2 Perspectives on Conversion

Classical Perspective	Contemporary Perspective
Conversion is sudden	Conversion is gradual
Middle adolescence to late adolescence	Late adolescence to early adulthood
Emotional, suggestive	Intellectual, rational
Stern theology	Compassionate theology
Passive	Active
Release from sin and guilt	Search for meaning and purpose
Emphasises intra- psychological processes	Emphasises inter-psychological processes

Source: Spilka, et al., 2003

These differing perspectives are not exclusive and overlap in significant ways (Richardson, 1985). “Religious change is usually a process involving a complex interweaving of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces. Conversion is a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic set of force fields involving people, institutions, events, ideas and experiences” (Rambo, 1992, pp. 159-160). Conversion and engagement in church attendance are rational, though complex, processes with certain recognisable stages which will now be discussed.

The Stages of Conversion

The process of conversion can be conceptualised as a stage process (Rambo, 1992). The stages in the model do not always follow each other sequentially and are able to interact. There are seven stages: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences.

Context: The context of a religious decision can be divided into macro context and micro context. Macro context is the cultural and social milieu of the larger environment. The macro spiritual context of Australia has already been discussed in Section 1.2. Micro context is the more immediate world of the family, ethnic group, religious community and local neighbourhood. The micro context is influenced by the macro context.

Crisis: Most scholars agree that a crisis or disorientation precedes conversion (Rambo, 1992). The crisis may be religious, political, psychological, or cultural, or it may be a life situation that opens people to new options. Traditionally it has been concluded that converts are emotionally ill. However, psychologically "healthy people, view conversion as a quest for intellectual, spiritual, and emotional transformation and growth" (Rambo, 1992, p. 166).

Quest: Classical psychology of religion has portrayed the convert as passive. However, there is evidence that the convert is actively searching for new experiences, new depths of spiritual understanding and transformation (Richardson, 1985).

Encounter: The encounter stage involves contact between the potential convert and an "advocate." A dynamic interplay occurs involving the affective, intellectual and cognitive needs of the convert and the advocate where both sides strategise, manoeuvre and engage in mutual interaction. Emotional bonding between the convert and advocate is a consistent and important finding in the study of conversion.

Interaction: If people continue with the group after the encounter, the interaction intensifies. In this stage the potential convert learns more about the teachings, lifestyle and expectations of the group. The group provides various opportunities, both formal and informal, for people to become more fully incorporated. The intensity and duration of this phase varies.

Commitment: Crucial elements of the commitment stage include biographical reconstruction, testimony, rituals, induction, decision-making and surrender.

Consequences: In the seventh and final stage, the nature of the consequences is determined, in part, by the nature, intensity, and duration of the conversion.

Individual change processes, such as that of conversion, have certain elements in common (Sarbin & Adler, 1970). The most common element in the transformation is the importance of the relationship between the convert and a teacher, mentor, or guide who provides a model for the new way of life. The second element is the centrality of ritual (for example, church attendance) as a way for the convert to participate in the new religious system. Through the ritual the convert has direct experience of new beliefs and practices. The third common element of change is bodily experience. In all systems of significant change the involvement of the body is a necessary factor. Finally, there is a “trigger” or catalyst at the moment or turning point when the external religious story becomes relevant and compelling to the person and begins to be internalised.

Although the psychological perspective of a conversion has tended to focus on the individual, Rambo's (1990) model of conversion and Sarbin and Adler's (1970) study of significant change highlight the importance of other people, groups, encounter and interaction in the process of conversion. Hence it is worth examining why people join groups, including religious ones.

The Attraction of Groups

Given that conversion is not synonymous with church attendance, other factors, apart from conversion, are necessary to explain Newcomer engagement. One such factor is the attractive power of groups. There are three major reasons why people join groups (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1999):

- They like the task or activity of the group. The more connected the individual is to the task, the greater potential for that member's participation in the group.
- They like the people in the group. The other people in the group are a major factor in determining whether a person finds a group experience significant. People with certain characteristics, such as positive attitudes, feel an attraction to groups which also exhibit that characteristic.

- The group meets their needs.

One need fulfilled by a group is the need to belong (Maslow, 1943). Lack of attachments is linked to a variety of ill effects on health, adjustment, and well-being. People need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships and so the desire to belong is a powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need to belong may be a more compelling factor than the need to believe (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). Many people do not fully comprehend the theology of their religion, but they are well aware of what sort of people belong to their religious community and have a desire to be with them (Stark & Finke, 2000).

People are also motivated to join groups because of other psychological needs. Individuals often behave as a convert, playing the convert role, as they experiment with or affirm their personhood (Richardson, 1985). People with a high need for affiliation tend to join groups more frequently, spend more of their time in groups, communicate more with other group members, and accept other group members more readily (McClelland, 1988). Those individuals who have a high need for intimacy also like to join with others.

Another important motive for joining a group is to obtain a social identity (Hogg, 2003). Groups provide people with a consensually recognised definition and evaluation of who they are, how they should behave and how they will be treated by others. People are motivated to join certain groups, like a well functioning church, because it will give them a positive social identity.

And so, psychology has highlighted the motivation to meet psychological needs through belonging to social groups in the process of conversion and church attendance. There is evidence that the attractiveness and activities of religious groups are an important part of the process whereby a Newcomer makes the decision to convert and/or attend church. This is further supported by the sociological research described next.

The Social Aspects of Conversion

There are a number of sociological theories explaining religious conversion and church involvement including "strain theory" and "social influence theory." According to "strain theory" (reflecting the classical psychological perspective of conversion) people join a

religion in order to satisfy conventional desires that unusual personal or collective deprivations have frustrated (Bainbridge, 1992). These desires may not be of a material nature but an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful place and to take a position towards it, in which case it could be called the “meaning” approach (Roberts & Davidson, 1984; Weber, 1968).

According to “social influence theory” (reflecting the contemporary psychological perspective of conversion) people join a religion because they have formed social attachments (networks) with persons who are already members and because their attachments to non-members are weak. This can also be described as the “belonging” approach (Roberts & Davidson, 1984). Despite the differences, there is evidence in favour of both these theories, and the best explanation is probably an informed combination of each (Bainbridge, 1992).

Attention has been given to the influence of demographic characteristics on religious behaviour (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). This has been a result of an interest in strain/deprivation theory, which says that religion is a source of compensation for people suffering from economic or social deprivation. “Relational transition,” the state of relationship flux where individuals or families have significant changes in their relationship network due to lifestyle or other changes, creates relational deprivation. As a result, marriage, migration and childrearing tend to boost religious participation (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995). Marriage tends to attach each spouse to new kinship networks which may be religious. Age also plays a role because people are more likely to marry or migrate when they are young, and many people shift their social networks upon leaving their parent’s homes. Migration is a major factor tending to produce shifts in attachments because geographic mobility often disrupts social ties and leads to changes in religious affiliation, including conversion to new religious movements (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). Consequently, re-affiliation and conversion will be most prevalent among the geographically mobile, teenagers and young adults, at marriage, child-rearing and following a divorce (Iannaccone, 1995; Stark & Finke, 2000).

The best predictor of church participation in adulthood is traditional Christian beliefs, particularly the belief that salvation is possible only through Jesus Christ (Cornwall, 1989; Hoge, Johnson, & Luidens, 1993). However, group involvement influences the formation of

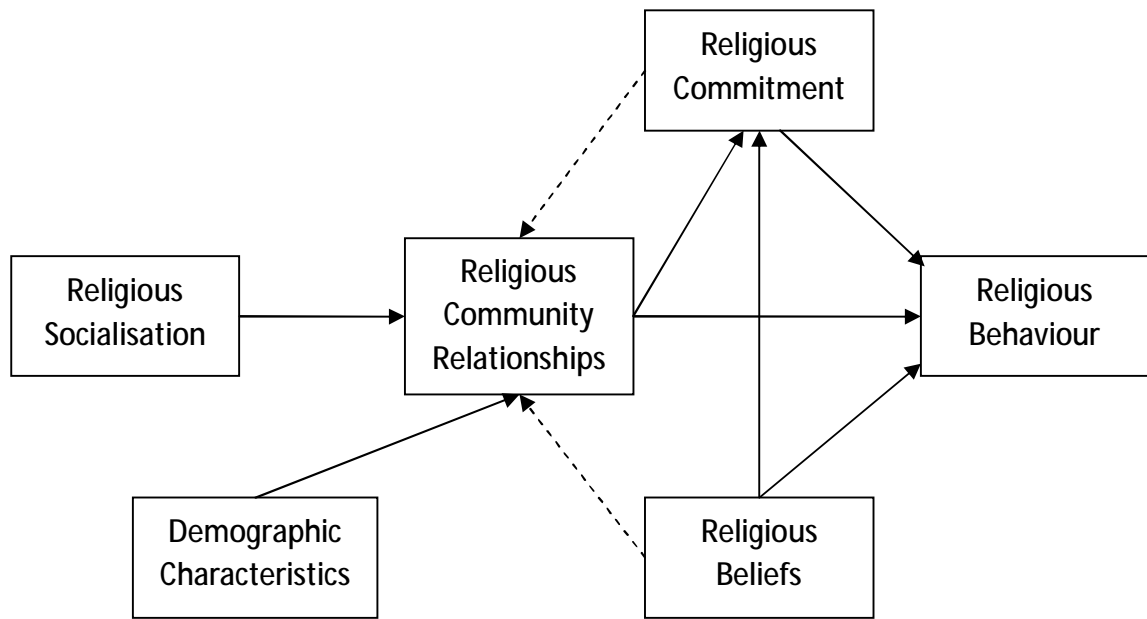
beliefs (Roberts & Davidson, 1984) and the number and strength of in-group ties with a religious group is positively associated with belief and commitment (Cornwall, 1987). Belief orthodoxy is a significant influence on religious behaviour but it is also strongly connected to personal community relationships.

Hence, even though socio-demographics and beliefs influence religious behaviour, relationships are the major determinant of religious involvement (Roberts & Davidson, 1984; Stark & Bainbridge, 1987). Movement into and out of religious groups (including cults, sects, and mainstream denominations) depends heavily on social ties, not just on ideological belief (Stark & Finke, 2000). Conversion tends to proceed along social networks formed by interpersonal attachments in order to retain the good opinion of friends and family (Lofland & Stark, 1965). Studies of small intense religious groups have repeatedly shown the importance of friendship relationships in drawing new converts (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). For example, when Mormon missionaries make "cold calls" - when they knock on the doors of strangers - this leads to a conversion once out of a thousand calls and never immediately, only after a long series of contacts and as a friendship is established. However, when the missionaries make their first contact with a person in the home of a Mormon friend or relative of that person, this results in conversion 50% of the time (Stark & Finke, 2000). The principle is also demonstrated by the fact that many people convert to a new religion as a result of marrying a person who already has strong faith in it (Bainbridge, 1992).

Affection and emotional ties also play key roles in the decision to negotiate with a group about possible participation and commitment (Richardson, 1985). Existing friendships with members draw people in, and friendless people may be attracted to a group in the first place by the need for friends. Cults have been shown to mainly attract people who are socially isolated or lonely, and these individuals are often attracted particularly by the promise of becoming part of a community or gaining a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

One model that integrates these findings is that of Cornwall (1989):

Figure 2-2 A Model of the Predictors of Religious Behaviour



Source: Cornwall, 1989

The model highlights the centrality of personal community relationships but also recognises the importance of other factors and their interrelatedness. Cornwall’s research confirmed this model in a Mormon congregation in United States (Cornwall, 1989). It is also supported by Australian research presented in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3 Factors Related to Church Attendance

Factor	Percent of Variance Predicted
Church attendance of spouse	48
Religious beliefs and practices	42
Moral and the other values	29
Church attendance of friends	25
Attitudes towards churches	23
Parent Attendance/Your Childhood Attendance	10
Demographics	7
Denominational identification when growing up	5

Source: Bellamy, et al., 2002

This research confirms that church attendance of spouse and friends are factors in predicting church attendance. Other factors, such as religious beliefs, practices and moral values, are also shaped by social factors. Social influence is the medium of transmission of faith and it no doubt does much to sustain that faith.

However, unless people have a religious yearning, and unless religion offers them something distinctly different from what any social club can give, faith will wither (Bainbridge, 1992). Even though there is strong evidence for the validity of social influence theory, there is also evidence for the role of strain and the search for meaning (Richardson, 1985). The stories of the “amazing believers” demonstrate that strain, the search for meaning and social connections are also needed to overcome a non-religious upbringing (B. Hunsberger, 2000). The claim that “conversion is seldom about seeking or embracing an ideology; it is about bringing one's religious behaviour into alignment with that of one's friends and family members” (Stark & Finke, 2000, p. 117) is an over-simplification.

Social factors are a demonstrably important part of the process of engagement, but so is the idea of a specific moment, where the potential Newcomer, whether in a “strain” situation or just seeking to improve their lives, makes a personal decision. Rational Choice Theory gives understanding of this decision.

The Decision to Attend

Christianity purports to offer something of value to a potential Newcomer - but at a cost. Having experienced Christianity in a social group context, the potential Newcomer has a decision to make about whether engaging with church is worth the sacrifices it will entail. Rational Choice Theory is able to help explain how Newcomers make the decision to engage in church attendance. The theory is based upon three assumptions (Iannaccone, 1997):

Assumption 1: Individuals act rationally, weighing the costs and benefits of potential actions, and choosing those actions that maximize their net benefits.

Assumption 2: The ultimate preferences (or “needs”) that individuals use to assess costs and benefits tend not to vary much from person to person or time to time.

Assumption 3: Social outcomes constitute the equilibria that emerge from the aggregation and interaction of individual actions.

Application of these assumptions to religion suggests that people make decisions about church attendance and religious involvement by weighing up the costs and benefits, just as they do in many other aspects of life (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987). However, the costs are not the standard costs associated with the production or purchase of secular commodities. In cults, they are gratuitous costs such as distinctive dress and grooming that invite ridicule or scorn; dietary and sexual prohibitions that limit opportunities for pleasure; and, restrictions on the use of modern medicine or technology (Iannaccone, 1997). However, all religions have some costs associated with affiliation. For most Australian Newcomers the costs would involve the sacrifice of some autonomy, time, effort, money, lifestyle changes and possible ridicule from friends and family.

The benefits of involvement in church can be of many kinds. Some may appreciate the experiences of worship, others comfort in the midst of life's struggles. For some it may be the enjoyment of community and the sense of belonging. Some would decide to join a religion because it builds their interpersonal attachments.

Some benefits of the religious decision may not be experienced immediately.

“Compensators” are benefits which are expected to occur at some later point of life. One of the most important of these is the belief that one will be rewarded after death. In those groups which maintain that they exclusively provide the way to heaven, the compensatory value of salvation is perceived to be much greater than in those groups which hold that such benefits are available irrespective of the church attendance (Bellamy, et al., 2002).

And so, Rational Choice Theory suggests that Newcomers rationally weigh the costs and benefits, both in this world and the next, of the decision to engage in church attendance. But in making religious choices, people will also attempt to conserve their social capital. When people base their religious choices on the preferences of those to whom they are attached, they conserve (maximise) their social capital. To the extent that people have developed stronger attachments to those committed to a different religion, they will convert (Stark &

Finke, 2000). The maintenance of social capital is part of the equation, but the hope of a better life, which emanates from the Christian message, also influences the decision.

2.4.4 Invitation - Trigger for Engagement

An individual's characteristics, spiritual awareness, attraction to fundamentalism and social connections may make them predisposed towards church engagement. However without the trigger of invitation the process may not be consummated. This is demonstrated by Newcomer's responses to the question in the National Church Life Survey: "Why did you join this church?"

Table 2-4 Newcomer's Reasons for Joining Churches

Reason For Joining	Newcomers (First timers) %	Newcomers (Returnees) %	All attenders %
Invitation from friends/other family	47	36	21
Invitation from spouse	9	7	5
Church was close to home	8	11	15
Attended a wedding, baptism, funeral	7	7	2
Contact with Minister	5	7	6
Local congregation of my denomination	4	12	23
Contact through church activity	3	7	6
Received a newsletter/saw an advert	2	2	1
Grew up in the congregation	1	2	13
Other reason	14	14	13

Source: Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000.

In deciding whether to attend church with the first time, invitation from friends, spouse or other family was significantly more important for first timers and returnees than for all attenders. For first timers and returnees, friends, other church attenders or church ministers are reported to be more influential in the decision to join a church than parents (Kaldor & Bellamy, 2000). These findings are confirmed by international research. Britons who have

never been to church before are far more likely to mention being invited by someone, and they are more likely to indicate that taking their children is a motive (Finney, 1992). “Having churchgoing friends is strongly predictive of a person’s current church attendance” (Bellamy, et al., 2002, p. 35). In contrast, 60% of Australian non-attenders indicate that they do not have close friends who attend church.

Just as invitation is a very common way that Newcomers enter church life, Newcomers are more likely than other attenders to be inviting people to church. Forty-three percent of Newcomers said they invited somebody to church in the previous year, compared to 38% of other attenders (Sterland, et al., 2004). This may be because of enthusiasm for their new faith or because they know more non-Christians than the average attender.

Once the Newcomer has completed the process of making the decision to engage in church attendance, and the trigger of invitation has been released, they will visit a church for the first time or after a long period of absence. At some time, either during the service or afterwards, the Newcomer will make a decision as to whether they will return. Their perceptions of the leader of the church they visit are crucial in that decision.

2.4.5 The Perception of the Leader – Influence on Engagement

The impression Newcomers gain of the pastor/minister/preacher of the church they visit is a significant influence in their decision to attend a church (Rainer, 2001). The factors related to leaders in the Newcomer’s decision to attend to church are set out in Table 2-5:

Table 2-5 Factors Related to the Pastor in the Decision to Join a Church (Rainer, 2001)

Factors In Deciding to Join a Church	Number (out of a total of 353)
Preaching that teaches	211
Preaching that applies to my life	147
Authenticity of the Pastor	121
Pastor's conviction	120
Personal contact by Pastor	105

Pastor is a good communicator	89
Pastor is a leader	88

Source: Rainer, 2001.

At some point in the process of committing themselves to a church, Newcomers need to have a favourable impression of what the clergy have to offer. "Rarely do people join a congregation when they are not impressed with the clergy" (Oswald & Leas, 1988, p. 57). Newcomers look for a church leadership style with which they can identify and feel comfortable.

Invitations from church leaders are an especially important factor in the decision of Newcomers to attend church for a first-time (Finney, 1992; Oswald & Leas, 1988). A portion (17%) of Newcomers identify the leader as the main factor for them becoming a Christian and still more identify them as an important supporting factor (43%) (Finney, 1992). In open ended questioning, 41% of Newcomers mentioned that the minister they had encountered was "friendly and approachable" (Finney, 1992, p. 51). For Australians over the age of 20, church ministers, small groups and other church workers are the most important influence on faith development (Bellamy, Mou, & Castle, 2004).

By contrast, large scale evangelistic events (for example "crusades") have a minimal effect on Newcomers (Finney, 1992). Only 4% identify crusades as a main factor in finding faith and for 13% it is a supporting factor. These findings suggest that it is the personal perception of the preacher which is the key factor rather than the actual content of the sermon itself. The way clergy share her or his faith with the Newcomer is also important (Oswald & Leas, 1988). It is not always communicated in a one-on-one conversation, but comes from impressions received from the leader's preaching and leadership of worship. Newcomers are looking for good sermons, warmth and spiritual depth. In the earlier stages of a person's relationship with the church, transference goes on between a Newcomer and the person of the clergy. Newcomers hope that somehow the church leader might be able to give them help in discovering that life has order or meaning or purpose, or that it can be fulfilling and rewarding, or that they can and will know the love and acceptance of God. Further, early in their relationship with the church, the Newcomer looks to the leader more than anyone else for clues that it is possible to believe and that belief is efficacious (Oswald & Leas, 1988).

So, clergy are important not only in the running and the morale of the church but also in the personal lives of the people they encounter, both inside and outside the life of the church. For a significant proportion of Newcomers the preaching and personal characteristics of the leader are an important factor in their decision to engage (Oswald & Leas, 1988). Again, this highlighting of the personal role of leader in the attraction of Newcomers is worth further investigation in the Australian context.

2.4.6 Summary of Newcomer Engagement

Although the engagement of a Newcomer in church attendance is a complex process it is possible to draw together a tentative description. Australians have an underlying spirituality but they do not always associate it with Christian churches. Although socialisation as a child is a significant determinant of church attendance, one's current social status, group influence and belief orthodoxy grow in importance in later life (Cornwall, 1989). If people are in relational transition their chances of establishing a new relationship with a churchgoer increase significantly. Re-affiliation and conversion is most prevalent among the geographically mobile, teenagers and young adults, at marriage, child-rearing and following a divorce (Iannaccone, 1995; Stark & Finke, 2000).

The churchgoer, who experiences the *numinous* in their local church, may invite the potential Newcomer to attend church with them. They are the prophets referred to by Otto (1959). The majority of Newcomers in Australian churches came to church at the invitation of friends or family. Relationships and invitations from church leaders are especially significant.

Because there is an attractive power in groups, if people in relational transition encounter a church group they may be attracted in order to meet their psycho-social needs. If the potential Newcomers sense that church attendance may add value to their lives, they may respond to an invitation. The appeal of fundamentalism may be a factor in this decision to begin engagement.

A crisis may heighten interest in religion and church attendance, however psychologically healthy people view conversion as a quest for intellectual, spiritual, and emotional transformation and growth (Rambo, 1992).

Church attendance usually precedes conversion. The potential convert learns about the teachings, lifestyle and expectations through interaction with the group. Social networks make religious beliefs plausible and new social networks thereby make new religious beliefs plausible. One or more members of the group will be especially important in the transition. The impression the potential Newcomer receives of the senior leader of the church is also an important influence.

Over time the potential Newcomer comes to understand the potential costs and benefits of engagement in church life. In the end, they weigh up these costs and benefits and make a rational choice, one way or the other.

Having examined the nature of Newcomers and the process whereby they engage with churches, attention now shifts to the high percentage Newcomer churches where many of them choose to engage.

2.5 The High Percentage Newcomer Church

Churches differ in their characteristics and contexts. Some characteristics are internal or “institutional” and within the realm of control of churches. Other characteristics are external or “contextual” and outside the realm of control of churches. Some churches are better at attracting and retaining Newcomers because of institutional and/or contextual factors. The relative importance of each of these institutional and contextual factors is important in determining whether churches can do anything to attract and retain Newcomers.

2.5.1 The Importance of Institutional Characteristics

There has been much debate about which factors are the best determinants of church growth & decline (Bruce, Woolever, Wulff, & Smith-Williams, 2006). Some have concluded that local contextual factors are more powerful than local institutional factors (Hoge & Roozen, 1979). In other words, the locality of the church and its demographics are more important than the actual activities of the church.

However, a review of the research has identified a number of potential statistical pitfalls in research on church growth that may have downplayed the importance of institutional

factors (Iannaccone, 1996). Institutional factors are more difficult to measure and more subjective and prone to error than are census-based contextual measures. For this reason, it is possible that inadequate measurement, rather than lack of importance, has caused institutional measures to produce small correlations with church membership change (Hadaway, 1991).

Certainly, churches in areas of population growth, or where affluent new residents are moving in, have certain advantages over churches which lack these contextual characteristics. However, recent church growth research has confirmed the influence of institutional factors in generating organizational growth (Dougherty, 2004). A review of the empirical studies from North America (Hadaway & Roozen, 1993) identifies seven important sources of church growth. Four sources are institutional factors:

1. Members who are more active and involved in their churches.
2. Churches that emphasize outreach and evangelism.
3. Programmatic efforts to grow.
4. Churches founded relatively recently and those with younger members.

Two are contextual factors:

1. Church type and location (small and rural churches are less affected by location; those in the (American) South are more likely to grow).
2. Population growth and new housing construction in the local community.

The seventh source of church growth is a national institutional factor: denominational affiliation and the denomination's perspective on growth.

More recently an interfaith survey of 14,301 congregations in the United States identified the relationship of four variables to membership growth for Protestant congregations (Roozen, 2004):

1. Breadth of internal programming (.272).
2. Electronic guitars (.206) – the best single measure of contemporary worship.
3. Strictness (.158).

4. Population change (.118) - 1990-2000 zip code population change - a typical measure of demographic influence.

All but the last are institutional factors. However, for just the Evangelical Protestant churches the following were also correlated to growth (in order):

1. No serious conflict.
2. Number of programs.
3. Welcoming of change.
4. Clear purpose.
5. Strictness.
6. Size of membership.
7. Population change.
8. Special programs for unchurched.
9. No family feeling.
10. Inspirational worship.

Again, the majority of factors were institutional.

The NCLS research among Australian churches also indicates that, in relation to Newcomers at least, the local demographic context predicts only 11% of the variance in the proportion of Newcomers. In contrast, 29% of the variance can be predicted by factors internal to the life of the church (Sterland, et al., 2006). This highlights the importance of the internal life of the church to the flow of Newcomers.

Although debate continues, the bulk of the recent evidence points to the fact that a range of institutional factors are significant in church growth (Dougherty, 2004). Given that a percentage of church growth will be Newcomers, this means that it is justified to examine the internal characteristics of high percentage Newcomer churches.

2.5.2 Characteristics of High Percentage Newcomer Churches

The NCLS research identifies particular churches with high percentages of Newcomers. The data also identifies certain church congregational characteristics which correlate strongly with a high percentage of Newcomers (Bellamy, et al., 2006). Multiple regression was used to establish which areas of church life predict the level of Newcomers with some strength, and how well the level of Newcomers can be predicted when these areas of church life are considered together. The amount of variance explained by individual factors was estimated after controlling for faith identity (how the individual classified themselves, for example, evangelical, Pentecostal etc.)

Variance in Newcomer levels in congregations can be accounted for by the features of local church life listed in Table 2-6. Newcomer levels are being “predicted” in a statistical sense by these features, so causality can be speculated but not inferred. It may be that in some cases that Newcomer levels precede some features (so if there was any causal link it would be the other way around), or that both Newcomer levels and some features together proceed from some other characteristic (Sterland, et al., 2006).

Table 2-6 Factors Related to High Newcomer Levels in Congregations

Factor	Variance Due to Factor (%)
More inviting to church	12
High “Strong and growing sense of belonging”	11
Skills encouraged to large extent	7
Sense of movement in new directions	6
High growth in faith from this church (other attenders)	6
Clear owned vision	6
More beyond first marriage (among other attenders)	5
Other attenders experienced decisive faith commitment	5

Source: Sterland, et al., 2006.

These results, and those in Table 1-1, indicate that there are three areas of church life that are especially worth examination with respect to Newcomers:

1. Willingness to invite others to church.
2. Strong and growing sense of belonging.
3. Empowering and inspiring leadership.

Each is now discussed in more detail.

Willingness to Invite Others to Church

There is a correlation between a high percentage of Newcomers and the willingness of attenders to invite others to church. Forty-nine percent of people in churches with high levels of Newcomers indicated they had invited others to church in the past year compared to 35% in churches with low Newcomer levels (Bellamy, et al., 2006). This result concurs with the finding that about two-thirds of Newcomers engaged because they were invited to church by someone. Churches have many ways of engaging people, yet attenders inviting others remains by far the most successful (Sterland, et al., 2004).

However, as important as invitation is, it does not mean that it is easy: only one in six people are likely to accept an invitation to church (Bellamy, et al., 2002). Once in church the decision to continue attending is easier: nearly 70% of British Newcomers to church life found it was quite easy or very easy to start going more regularly once they had started attending. Only 14% indicated it was very difficult (Finney, 1992). This highlights that the first step for Newcomers is the most difficult and important.

The NCLS has identified some common characteristics of congregations where high levels of attenders are involved in inviting people to church and sharing their faith with others (Bellamy, et al., 2002). The characteristics are as follows:

- Attenders are involved in congregational mission activities - such activities may provide the opportunity for issuing invitations or give attenders the confidence to invite others.
- Attenders have a lively faith that is more likely to be shared with others.
- Attenders have higher levels of involvement in church activities, particularly small groups.

- Attenders receive training for mission and ministry.
- Leadership style: churches with high levels of attenders who invite others to church are likely to have leaders who have a vision for future growth and who tend to put an emphasis on developing the gifts and skills of those in the church.
- An outward focus.

North American research has confirmed the relationship between high levels of Newcomers and willingness to invite people to church (Durey, 2000). Interviews with pastors and Newcomers found that personal relationships were the most significant reason why unchurched people were attracted to, and stayed in, a church.

Strong & Growing Sense of Belonging

A strong and growing sense of belonging among attenders is correlated to percentage of Newcomers. Fifty-six percent of people in churches with high levels of Newcomers indicated they had a strong and growing sense of belonging to that church compared to 47% in churches with low Newcomer levels (Bellamy, et al., 2006).

The NCLS indicates that most church attenders say they have a strong sense of belonging to their local church, although it does vary across denominations. But note, the crucial factor is not just a strong sense of belonging but that it is *growing* (Sterland, et al., 2004).

Apart from the specific question in the NCLS survey that asked about sense of belonging, the following were also taken into account in this Core Quality:

- Measures of participation, such as frequency of attendance at church and involvement in small groups.
- Ease of making friends in the congregation.
- Result of conflict in the congregation.
- Sense of belonging to the denomination.

The practice of providing small groups is the most effective means of helping new people form significant relationships and grow spiritually (Durey, 2000). Churches which retain

Newcomers are also intentional in reaching lost people, welcoming visitors and providing a pathway for spiritual formation.

This explains why churches with high numbers of *church* friends per attender are often stable or declining (Olson, 1989). The ability of church friendship networks to incorporate Newcomers appears to decline as average tenure and number of church friends increase. In contrast, attenders of churches with lower attendance tenure, fewer church friends, and greater desire for additional church friends are more inclined to incorporate Newcomers. It is possible that Newcomers find some churches “cliquish” because high-tenure members have as many friends as they want or can manage. This is confirmed by the fact that attenders of high percentage Newcomer churches also demonstrate a strong and growing sense of belonging rather than just a static, though strong, sense of belonging.

Other factors associated with a strong and growing sense of belonging include:

- Frequency of church attendance.
- A sense of growth in faith.
- A commitment to the vision and direction of the local church.
- Positive experiences of worship services.
- Having leaders who are inspiring and empowering.
- Involvement in outreach activities.

Local churches where people have a strong and growing sense of belonging to the church also tend to be churches that are growing in attendance. The NCLS research concludes that this is one of the most important aspects linked to changes in attendance, the flow of Newcomers and most of the other Core Qualities (Bellamy, et al., 2006). A strong and growing sense of belonging emerges as a key characteristic of vital churches, interrelated to other important characteristics, and especially important to those churches who are seeking to attract and retain Newcomers.

Inspiring and Empowering Leadership

A number of factors related to high levels of Newcomers identified in Table 2-6, namely, “skills encouraged to large extent,” “sense of movement in new directions,” “high growth in faith from this church (other attenders)” and “clear owned vision” are related to leadership. The two descriptors, “inspiring” and “empowering,” emerged through an examination of the factors related to high levels of attenders inviting others to church.

The NCLS has contrasted three leadership styles in their surveys: strongly directive leadership, leadership that inspires people to action and leadership that allows other people to start things. Of the three approaches, leadership that inspires people to take action is the one most associated with church vitality (Bellamy, et al., 2006). This inspiration is achieved to a large extent, but not exclusively, through vision: 36% of people in churches with high levels of Newcomers are strongly committed to the church's vision compared to 25% in churches with low Newcomer levels. It has also been found that a strong commitment to the vision, goals or directions of the church is associated with growth in attendance (Bellamy, et al., 2006).

High percentage Newcomer churches also tend to have leaders who put an emphasis on developing the gifts and skills of those in the church – the NCLS have defined this as “empowering leadership” (Bellamy, et al., 2002). People who feel empowered at their place of worship are more likely to have confidence in inviting others. A church where many of the attenders are freed to contribute to the work of the church is likely to have more success in achieving all kinds of aims, over a church where a handful of staff (or even a lone minister) tackle tasks and attenders are more like passive spectators (Sterland, et al., 2004).

Having identified these characteristics of high percentage Newcomer churches attention shifts to trying to understand these characteristics better through the lens of social scientific research.

2.6 Understanding the Characteristics of High Percentage Newcomer Churches

According to the NCLS research, churches with high percentages of Newcomers have certain characteristics in common: a willingness to invite others to church, a strong and growing sense of belonging and inspiring and empowering leadership (Bellamy, et al., 2006). Of these three characteristics, “willingness to invite” is salient: for the prospective Newcomer invitation to church is a frequent trigger for engagement.

However, a deeper understanding of concepts such as “sense of belonging” and “inspiring and empowering leadership” is needed. These terms have been thoughtfully created by the members of the NCLS team, but their existence invites an “on the ground” analysis of their characteristics. Social science has much to say about sense of belonging and leadership in secular and religious settings. This section will identify possible conceptual links between established social scientific knowledge and the NCLS constructs of sense of belonging and inspiring and empowering leadership in churches.

However, before examining these constructs separately, the link between sense of belonging, leadership and willingness to invite Newcomers to church will be explored. The connecting factor is an attitude called “Corporate Confidence.”

2.6.1 Corporate Confidence

The NCLS team undertook a factor analysis of 67 variables covering nearly all the main survey questions in the National Survey to identify what was the natural clustering of all possible variables related to church life (Sterland & Castle, 2004). Two strong factors (Factor 1 and Factor 2) emerged. Factor 1 contained elements related to 9 of the 12 NCLS “Core Qualities” - the framework used to conceptualise church vitality. The second factor that emerged contained many elements not related to the Core Qualities, as well as a small number that were.

Table 2-7 Factor Analysis (Reduced Model) of NCLS Survey Questions 2001

Variable	Loading - Factor 1
High "Strongly agree spiritual needs met"	0.80
High growth in faith from this church	0.75
High experience of joy in services	0.72
High experience of inspiration in services	0.72
High "Strong and growing sense of belonging"	0.72
High sense of God's presence in services	0.66
Skills encouraged to large extent	0.63
Strong agreement church always ready to try new things	0.61
Leadership that is inspiring and empowering	0.59
Strong agreement church is focussed on serving the community	0.59
Low experience of boredom in services	0.56
High experience of spontaneity in services	0.56
More inviting to church	0.55
Leadership takes into account people's ideas	0.45
High sense of awe or mystery in services	0.44
Higher levels of newcomers	0.37
Higher levels of numerical growth	0.30

Source: Sterland & Castle, 2004.

These variables indicate strong positive perceptions of the church to which the respondent belongs. For these reasons, Factor 1 has been identified as "Corporate Confidence." "Confidence in one's church can plausibly sit behind virtually all these statements, including those that relate to actual behaviours such as being willing to invite others" (Sterland & Castle, 2004, p. 15).

A similar concept has been called a "sense of identity" (Oswald & Leas, 1988). Members of growing churches think that their churches are special, unique and not like anyone else. "It

is the 'we' that endures through the shifting styles and circumstances of the congregation, that persist through the loss of members as well as the addition of new ones" (Oswald & Leas, 1988, p. 18).

The second factor reflects people who are highly involved in their church (they attend more regularly, belong to extra groups, and participate in extra activities), as well as valuing Biblical input, youth ministry and contemporary music. Other analyses showed this factor related to higher financial giving, sharing faith in the home, and considering God the most important reality in one's life. This factor was given the label "Individual Commitment."

Factor 1, Corporate Confidence, shows the strongest correlations with other qualitative measures of vitality and with variables related to the *church as a whole*. Factor 2, Individual Commitment, shows more relationship with the quality of *individuals* within the church, particularly their levels of involvement, but also links with important youth issues such as the successful retention of young adults.

When the same factor analysis was applied to the NCLS data from the United States, Factor 1 consisted of the same variables with similar loadings (Sterland & Castle, 2004). The most notable difference with this factor was that two variables more associated with Factor 2 in Australia were more likely to load on it: "valuing preaching" and "large church size." This sheds light on Rainer's (2001) findings which highlight preaching and conservatism.

Preaching is more important to Newcomers in the US than to Newcomers in Australia.

This two factor model is consistent with Rational Choice Theory (Sterland, et al., 2004). Corporate Confidence approximates the *benefits* of church involvement; the satisfaction with church services, the sense of community and personal growth, and the relationship to numerical growth represent a "pay-off" for investment. Individual Commitment approximates the *costs* associated with church involvement; a church strong in this factor seems to correspond to a strict/conservative church, where people attend more, join extra groups and activities, and give more of their finances. This strictness, in combination with other concepts like psychological Sense of Community, is a factor in understanding churches where attenders have a growing sense of belonging.

Having examined the relationship between these characteristics of high percentage Newcomer churches, three of the most significant - sense of belonging and empowering and

inspiring leadership - will now be examined in more detail through the lens of social scientific research. In particular, their potential relationship to established theories/constructs will be identified.

2.6.2 Sense of Belonging and Sense of Community

Sense of Belonging in Churches

Attendees at high percentage Newcomer churches have a strong and growing sense of belonging. However, belonging is more than just a stated affiliation. Sense of belonging is the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that people feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). People want to feel they belong somewhere and that they are a valued and productive member of a meaningful social group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943). Some have gone as far as to say that the need to belong is, "almost as compelling a need as food" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 498). This may be an overstatement but it is evident that a sense of belonging exerts a major influence on many aspects of social life (Krause & Wulff, 2005).

Two defining attributes of sense of belonging have been delineated from case studies and focus groups amongst psychiatric patients (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995): (a) valued involvement or the experience of feeling valued, needed, or accepted; and (b) fit: the perception that the individual's characteristics articulate with the system or environment. Sense of belonging was demonstrated to be beneficial for psychiatric health.

However, general wellbeing, not just psychiatric health, is enhanced through sense of belonging. Sense of belonging provides a sense of meaning in life. Although meaning is difficult to define, most researchers would agree that it involves finding a sense of purpose and direction (Reker, 1997). Being involved in, and committed to, interpersonal relationships is an important source of meaning in life (Debats, 1999). As a result, people who are tightly integrated in a social group are especially likely to find a sense of meaning in life and wellbeing (Ellison & Levin, 1998; Krause & Wulff, 2005).

When individuals believe they belong in a group, they are likely to experience a range of positive emotions, including happiness, contentment, and security (Krause & Wulff, 2005).

These positive feelings are important because they trigger a range of beneficial physiological responses that tend to enhance and maintain health (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

In particular, membership of a church congregation has been shown to be positively associated with wellbeing through sense of belonging (Krause & Wulff, 2005). People with a long history of affiliation with a particular church are more likely to attend worship services in that church and so to receive assistance from the people who worship there. Those who receive a good deal of support from their fellow church members are more likely to feel they belong in the congregation and a strong sense of belonging is associated with greater satisfaction with health. Support from church members also bolsters health because it helps people cope more effectively with stress, promotes healthy life styles, provides access to the basic necessities of life (e.g., food and clothing) and engenders a sense of meaning in life (Ellison & Levin, 1998).

But a strong sense of belonging not only meets a basic human need, it is also linked to church growth (McGaw, 1980). This is because belonging, as expressed in the interactions between members, is fundamental in generating and maintaining commitment. When belonging is provided in a consistent and comprehensive way, the commitment of the members is remarkably strong and enables the provision of services which will attract new members (Iannaccone, Olson, & Stark, 1995). The NCLS research has confirmed that growing sense of belonging is not only related to high levels of Newcomers, but to overall church growth (Bellamy, et al., 2006).

A sense of church belonging may be generated in a number of ways (Krause & Wulff, 2005). First, "attachment to place" may emerge through a long personal history with a location. If people feel strongly attached to a place, then it seems likely they will also believe they belong to the people who meet there.

Acts of helping may also create a sense of belonging. When significant others provide assistance, they are doing more than merely giving immediate practical aid. The very act of helping conveys subtle messages, letting the help-recipient know they are loved and valued highly (Krause & Wulff, 2005). This positive feedback makes support recipients feel welcomed, and makes them feel as though they belong to the group. Although this proposition has not been evaluated empirically in a church, it is consistent with research on

social support and belonging that has been conducted in secular settings (Rankin, Saunders, & Williams, 2000).

The rituals that occur within a congregation may also be significant in development of sense of belonging. Rituals, such as christenings, baptisms, weddings and funerals, can mark major rites of passage in life. These shared experiences generate memories that are charged with emotion and valued highly (Wuthnow, 1999).

When people attend the same church for a long time they are likely to invest a good deal of effort in it. For example, they may become involved in formal groups within the church, such as Bible study groups, prayer groups, and programs designed to help those in need. This investment forms “religious human capital” which tends to deepen commitment to the church and increase the attractiveness of the congregation (Iannaccone, 1990).

Current levels of church attendance may further bolster a person’s sense of belonging in a congregation. High rates of participation are correlated to a strong sense of belonging among existing members (Dougherty, 2004). When individuals attend worship services they are exposed to the basic tenets of the faith. Messages embedded in group prayer, sermons, songs, and the communion ritual continuously remind church members they are part of a larger family that is bound together by a common faith and sense of commitment to each other. Also, active engagement increases the density of social networks and congregational identity for members.

Finally, the organizational structure of a congregation can enhance or impede the sense of interdependence, which undergirds belonging. The key adaptation needed in congregations is the on-going ability to mobilize membership involvement (Dougherty, 2004). A structure that fosters connections for present members and potential members holds great potential for participation and growth. Some structures to build belonging are suggested by research into what attracts and keeps *youth* at church (Lytch, 2004). The research found that the sense of belonging was created by:

- Giving a physical space (i.e., a room or youth centre) to meet in that is truly “theirs.”
- Connecting with first time guests in the week following their visit.

- Maintaining a balance between being “open” enough that new people can enter, but “closed” enough that once they enter, they don't “fall through the cracks.”
- Using small groups help to create a sense of cohesion and “family.” Youth need to have a chance to meet regularly with a group of friends through small groups.
- Having an adult in the youth ministry who regularly checks in with them and “pastors” them.
- Thoroughly integrating students into the life of the overall church.

The NCLS research has also identified that sense of belonging is linked to level of involvement in a church (Kaldor, et al., 1994). This does not just refer to church attendance, but to having a formal or informal role in the congregation. Those with strong sense of belonging are more likely to have close friends in the church and are more likely to be satisfied with the preaching and music of the church.

However, more needs to be known about how a sense of belonging in a church arises especially in churches with high levels of Newcomers. Research is needed to see what, if any, role is played by leaders and the relationship between the size of the church and sense of belonging. The potentially significant influence of participation in church activities other than worship services (for example, Bible study groups and prayer groups) on sense of belonging is also worthy of investigation (Krause & Wulff, 2005; Wuthnow, 1994).

Having begun to define and understand the concept of sense of belonging in church settings, its potential relationship to the psychological concept of Sense of Community is now explored. First, an examination of the concept of Sense of Community will be undertaken.

Sense of Community

The construct of psychological “Sense of Community” is a relatively recent one (Sarason, 1974). It can be described as the feeling that one is part of a readily available, supportive and dependable structure, that is part of everyday life and not just when disasters strike. Well functioning communities are supportive, even though one may not have personal relationships with each individual member. Furthermore, members may continue to have a Sense of Community even though individuals come and go. Hence, Sense of Community can

be an elusive cognition and affect which is not necessarily based on experiencing individual level transactions (Pretty, Bishop, Fisher, & Sonn, 2006).

Even though much of the work in Sense of Community has been conducted in specific contexts, and some of the dimensions arising from this work are unique to their respective context, there is a commonality of dimensions arising repeatedly, such as belonging, ties and interaction with other community members and a sense of support (Obst & White, 2004). This suggests that there are dimensions to Sense of Community which are common to a variety of communities.

A well accepted model of Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) includes four components: membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection.

Membership: To have a Sense of Community, members must feel they are a member of that community. There are five attributes of membership:

- Boundaries.
- Emotional safety.
- A sense of belonging and identification.
- Personal investment.
- A common symbol system.

Membership has boundaries. This means that there are people who belong and people who do not. The boundaries provide members with the emotional safety necessary for needs and feelings to be exposed and for intimacy to develop. Boundaries are marked by such things as language, dress, and ritual. Sense of belonging and identification involves the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there. It also involves a feeling of acceptance by the group, and a willingness to sacrifice for the group. The role of identification may be represented in the reciprocal statements, "It is my group" and "I am part of the group." Understanding common symbol systems is also important to understanding community membership. Groups use symbols such as rituals, ceremonies, rites of passage, forms of speech and dress to indicate boundaries of who is or is not a member (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Influence: For a group to be attractive to individual members, an individual must feel they have some control and influence over the group. That control may be either directly or indirectly. Through the leadership role, people can feel that they have influence even when their influence may be only indirect. On the other hand, for a group to be cohesive, the group must also influence its individual members. Influence of a member on the community and influence of the community on a member operate concurrently, and both are operating simultaneously in a tightly knit community.

Integration and fulfilment of needs: For any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members. Given the complexity of individuals and groups, however, it has been impossible to determine all of the reinforcements that bind people together into a close community. However, several common reinforcers have been identified. The status of being a member and group success brings group members closer together. People are also attracted to others whose skills or competence can benefit them in some way. Finally, shared values provide an integrative force for cohesive communities. When people who share values come together, they find that they have similar needs, priorities, and goals, thus fostering the belief that in joining together they might be better able to satisfy these needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek.

Shared emotional connection: There is positive affect related to community membership. This is, in part, based on a sense of shared history or identification with a community. The more people interact, the more likely they are to form close relationships. The more positive this interaction is, the stronger the bonds developed from this interaction. The more important a shared event is to those involved, the greater the community bond. People who donate more time and energy to an association will be more emotionally involved. Intimacy is another form of investment. The amount of interpersonal emotional risk one takes with the other members and the extent to which one opens oneself to emotional pain from the community life will affect one's general Sense of Community. There is also a spiritual bond present to some degree in all communities. Often the spiritual connection of the community experience is the primary purpose of religious and quasi-religious communities and cults.

In summary, strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively,

opportunities to honour members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

This model of Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) has retained its prominence partly because a measure of Sense of Community, the Sense of Community Index (Long & Perkins, 2003), was developed on the basis of it. Several questionnaires have been developed for use in research.

Despite this, there is debate as to which is the best way to measure Sense of Community. Although quantitative methods allow better comparison qualitative methods are more culturally sensitive and less disenfranchising (Chavis & Pretty, 1999). To understand the nature, processes and experience of Sense of Community at any one time for a particular community it is necessary to have some appreciation of the community's history. It is difficult to capture this history from quantitative surveys (Pretty, et al., 2006).

Sense of Community and Sense of Belonging In Churches

A number of features of churches suggest that Sense of Community is a useful tool to understand characteristics of churches, including sense of belonging. The first component of Sense of Community is membership. Churches have membership criteria which enable an individual to determine belonging - who is "in" or "out" of membership and thus give emotional safety to its members.

Influence is also a salient feature of churches. Although influence of the institution by the individual has been frustrated in some churches at some times, the influence of the community on the individual through group expectation is readily apparent.

The third element of the model, integration and fulfilment of needs, can include the status of membership, success of the community and the perceived competence of other members. These features exist in churches with strong Corporate Confidence. There is a pride in the organisation, in one's fellow members and in one's own membership. A positive sense of togetherness is maintained because the individual-group association is rewarding for the individual members. Needs are also fulfilled when people feel that those things that are important to them are also important to the other members of their community. For

most people spiritual values rank high on the list of things which are important to them (Hill, 2000). Hence, shared spiritual values, as demonstrated in a church, build Sense of Community.

Shared emotional connection, the final component of Sense of Community, is also observable in a church setting. Specifically, the notion of "spiritual bond" (McMillan, 1996). The rituals shared by church members, such as corporate worship, christenings, baptisms and funerals are powerful shared emotional activities. Strong emotional connection is also built by common faith. Writing of the relationships between readers of the *Left Behind* series of books, Frykholm (2004) comments:

At this particular church, community is profoundly local. It is an insular community, open to visitors like me, but rooted in the connections - often decades and generations long - between individual members and between its locality and the people. Congregants are united by race and class - the majority are white and working class - as well as by religious faith, but it is religious faith that gives the fullest expression of their connection to one another. Without that faith, they might be connected in the less deep and less powerful ways that they are connected to co-workers or other members of the town. Shared religious faith is an important part of what makes them "family" to each other as the members describe, and their connections to one another are often more powerful and more important than their connections to their own biological families... I am moved by what appears to be genuine interactions between the people who have gathered and by the spirit of inclusion that attends the singing... These experiences in the churches ... hint to me that strong social bonds based on religious faith draw readers into evangelicalism and hold them there. (Frykholm, 2004, pp. 41,54)

The link between psychological Sense of Community and the NCLS concept of sense of belonging has been identified in an Australian Baptist church involved in conflict (Miers & Fisher, 2002). The research involved use of the SCI and the NCLS questions. There was a moderate to strong correlation between the SCI scores and the participant's self-reported sense of belonging. There was also a weak to moderate positive correlation between the SCI and the participant's perception of their influence on decision-making at the church.

The results of this study suggest that Sense of Community is a useful concept for understanding the life of a local church community and the Sense of Community Index is a useful tool when used in conjunction with other measures of community life. (Miers & Fisher, 2002, p. 158)

Consequently, Sense of Community is a useful lens to examine sense of belonging in churches. However, there is another potential factor at work in creating a strong and growing sense of belong in churches – strictness.

Sense of Belonging and Strictness

During recent decades in the United States, church growth has occurred primarily amongst Conservative Protestant groups, and especially amongst the holiness/Pentecostal ones (Tamney, 2005). Leaders of churches attracting high levels of Newcomers in the U.S. have been found to be theologically conservative (Rainer, 1996). The majority of leaders in such churches (80%) believe the Bible is totally true in all areas. They also believe that Jesus Christ is the *only* way of salvation and that explicit faith in him is imperative (Rainer, 2001). Such beliefs are often labelled fundamentalist (Shelley, 1982).

Australian research identifies a similar phenomenon (G. Martin, 2005). There were a number of features common to churches on the north coast of New South Wales having high percentages of Newcomers including: the ordained and lay leaders were clear about the vision and direction of the church; the ordained and lay leaders were in agreement as to the role of the clergy - the role was clearly leadership; the welcoming nature of the congregation was vital; and the use of contemporary music in worship style. However, the most important factor was that the ordained leaders had conservative theological views.

This relationship between theological conservatism and percentage of Newcomers (as opposed to just attenders) can be inferred from the NCLS data. People's view of the Bible can be classified in three ways:

- Literalistic - it can be taken literally word for word.
- Contextually - the Bible needs to be read in the context of the times.
- Simply as valuable.

The denominations with the highest proportion of Newcomers, for example, the Assemblies of God and the Christian Revival Crusade, are also the denominations which have the most literalistic interpretation of the Bible (Kaldor, et al., 1994). In contrast, those denominations with lower proportions of Newcomers, for example, Lutherans (4%) also have lower percentages of people with a literalistic view.

It has been argued that conservative churches are appealing because they are “strict” (Kelley, 1972). A strict religious movement expects firm adherence, even the sacrifice of status, possessions and safety for the sake of the movement. The appeal of a specific group is not a function of its message about meaning, but of the apparent seriousness of the group's members. Kelley theorized that to the extent members of a church are willing to make sacrifices to retain their membership of a church, outsiders will assume the group's message must be worthwhile, and thus be drawn to the group. Seriousness, then, is signalled by costliness.

Tension refers to how in-step (low tension) or out-of-step (high tension) a religious group is with mainline culture. From an historical perspective, throughout American history, growth had been concentrated among the stricter higher-tension religious groups, while lower-tension groups have declined (Stark & Finke, 2000). The Methodists have displayed the entire pattern, having grown at a spectacular rate during the nation's first century and declined quite dramatically during the second. When they were a high-tension group the Methodists were an aggressive sect. As they became a lower-tension denomination, decline set in.

Charismatic congregations in particular have been demonstrated to show stronger commitment because they are more effective at providing meaning and belonging to their members through stronger closure, strictness, consensus on authority and cohesion (McGaw, 1979).

Rational Choice Theory has been used to demonstrate how strictness leads to organisational strength (Iannaccone, et al., 1995). Strictness can screen out “free riders” who consume church resources but contribute nothing in return. Sacrifice increases the individual commitment of those who stay and drives away those unwilling to contribute to

congregational life (Roozen, 2004). This organisational strength enables these churches to put resources into quality and outreach.

However, another explanation of the strength and growth of strict churches is that church strictness contributes to sense of belonging. Boundaries of church communities enable an individual to clearly determine whether they are "in" or "out" of membership. Such boundaries are needed for a healthy identity. Strict churches tend to have well-defined boundaries which create a strong sense of belonging for those who are within those boundaries.

Boundaries are needed for a healthy identity. If the church doesn't know who it is, if it doesn't know who belongs here-or doesn't agree on who should belong-the invitations, the reaching out to others will be half-hearted and not convincing. When we know who we are, what we are here for, we are then able to attract and integrate (assimilate) people into a community. (Oswald & Leas, 1988, p. 19)

Further, if a religious group advocates that it really does not matter whether you attend church or not, the members of that group are less likely to attend. If God equally loves those who attend church and those who do not, there is no reason to attend. However, reduced attendance by an individual results in a diminished sense of belonging.

Some research has questioned strictness theory in explaining the growth of conservative churches (Tamney, 2005). However, other research continues to suggest its validity. For example, analysis of data from the first wave of the National Congregations Study indicate a positive relationship between a church's level of behavioural strictness and the production of an enthusiastic, outwardly emotive worship style (Baker, 2010). The role of strictness in churches with high percentages of Newcomers and a strong sense of belonging is worthy of exploration in the Australian context.

An examination of the social scientific literature relating to sense of belonging, Sense of Community, conservatism and strictness has shed light on the nature of growing sense of belonging in churches. According to the NCLS research, another characteristic of high percentage Newcomer churches is empowering leadership. Although there has been much written about empowering leadership, there is also much in the literature about

empowering communities. Both will now be explored in order to better understand the NCLS construct of empowering leadership.

2.6.3 Empowering Communities and Leadership

Empowering Communities

Attendees at high percentage Newcomer churches indicate that their leaders put a priority on encouraging people to use their gifts and skills. The NCLS have therefore used the term “empowering leadership” to describe this phenomenon. However, the social scientific literature suggests that empowerment emerges in the environment of empowering communities. To be sure, leadership is a key in the creation of these communities, but the phenomenon of empowerment is the product of more than just the leader.

Definitions of empowerment abound (Maton & Salem, 1995). It is usually considered to have two components: (a) to give power or authority, and (b) to enable (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2010). For the purpose of this research personal empowerment will be defined as the extent to which people develop a personal sense of being able to achieve important life aims, and/or acquire psychological or material resources necessary for the accomplishment of those aims, and/or actually achieve, or make progress towards achieving, personal aims (Maton & Rappaport, 1984). Organisational empowerment can be thought of as the organisational efforts that generate personal empowerment among members and organisational effectiveness needed for goal achievement (Zimmerman, 1995).

The concept of empowering communities provides another lens to examine high percentage Newcomer churches. The organisational characteristics of empowering community groups have been identified through in-depth case studies of three different community settings that appeared to help members enhance psychological sense of control and achieve personal goals (Maton & Salem, 1995). One of these community groups was a church, the “New Covenant Fellowship.” Four broad characteristics were identified:

Group Based Belief System

A belief system refers to a community's ideology, values or culture. In each of the three settings a group based belief system was in place that inspired growth, was strength based

and focused beyond self. The belief system inspired growth because it was personally challenging and motivating and clearly defined important goals and the means of achieving those goals. It was based on strength in that the community held that each member had the capacity (strengths, resources) to achieve goals and represented a valuable resource. Members were also encouraged to look beyond themselves and to view themselves as part of a larger humanity based, and/or spiritually based, group mission.

In the New Covenant Fellowship members were encouraged to become transformed and the desired outcomes were clear: to develop new behaviours and lifestyles consistent with Jesus. The means to accomplish these goals were also clear. All individuals were viewed as having the capability to develop a personal relationship with God through prayer, Bible study and community and to grow as a result. Further, all members were viewed as a resource having an invaluable contribution to make towards bringing God's Spirit into the world and to serving God, the congregation and others. The belief system was focused beyond self, towards God.

Opportunity Role Structure

An opportunity role structure refers to the availability and configuration of roles which provide meaningful opportunities for individuals to develop, grow and participate.

Meaningful role opportunities contribute to empowerment by helping members achieve personal goals in an active, participatory, skill building fashion. In recipient roles, members develop instrumental and psychological competencies, and in provider roles, self-efficacy is enhanced through skill utilisation, helping others and contributing to goal setting. In each case the role structure was pervasive in that it offered a large number of roles at multiple levels of the organisation. The roles were also highly accessible because they required varying levels of skill, responsibility and self-confidence. The role structure also contained many opportunities for skill development and learning, skill utilisation and the exercise of responsibility.

At New Covenant Fellowship the division of the congregation into smaller groups enhanced the pervasiveness of the role structure. A large number of roles were necessary for the operation of the congregation. The role opportunities were highly accessible with numerous avenues for members to become involved in congregation wide, house church, or small-

group contexts. Members were continually being solicited and encouraged to take on various roles and responsibilities. Roles usually involved learning new skills and utilising current skills.

Support System

A Support System refers to the social support resources available to contribute to quality of life and ability to cope with stressful situations. In each of the three settings the support system was found to be encompassing because there were a wide variety of types and sources of support available. The support systems were largely peer based.

At New Covenant Fellowship the support available was both of formal (e.g. elders, councillors) and informal (prayer partner, a friend) nature and it was both proactive and reactive in nature. Members reported a strong sense of family-like belonging encompassing both a spiritual sense of being brothers and sisters in Christ and a social sense of committed kin who are accepting, no matter what happens. Members reported lower mean levels of feeling like “an outsider” and greater mean levels of being “part of the mainstream” in the congregation than members of comparison congregations.

Leadership

In each of the three empowering communities leadership was inspirational, talented, shared and committed. The leaders of all three communities had a clear vision of what they were trying to achieve. They could all be described as passionate and with a natural ability to motivate others. They also represented role models who shared significant life experiences with members. They were talented interpersonally and organisationally. They were able to work well with others, mobilise resources, maintain stability, support change and respond effectively to external threats. Leadership was shared rather than resting with one person and open to expansion. The leaders were also committed to the community and to the member's growth.

The importance of the visionary, talented and committed leadership for empowerment of communities has been demonstrated by research into civil rights, feminist and other democratic social movements (Evans & Boyte, 1986). Inspirational, talented, shared and committed leadership has the potential to contribute to the member's adoption of, and commitment to, the community belief system, their level of learning and mastery and their

sense of support and community. It also helps to generate needed organizational resources, maintain stability within the organisation and respond to changing environmental conditions.

At New Covenant Fellowship the leadership functions were shared among multiple leaders and new positions were added as the need arose. The leaders were visibly committed to member's growth, organisational development and serving God in an authentic way.

Having examined a model to understand empowering communities, and the outworking of that model in a church, the specific role of leaders in creating empowering communities will now be explored.

Empowering Leadership

Some have gone as far as to define leadership as the art of empowering others (Conger, 1989). This may be an overstatement but the practice of empowering - instilling a sense of power - is at the root of organisational effectiveness (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Research by the Harvard Business School has identified a popular model of empowering leadership involving five empowering management practices (Conger, 1989):

Providing a Positive Emotional Atmosphere

Providing positive emotional support, especially through play or drama, is an empowering practice. For example, in one organisation, every few months, several executives would stage dramatic "up sessions" to sustain the motivation and excitement of their staff. They would host events devoted solely to confidence building. An element of play appears to be especially liberating in situations of great stress. Play allows for venting of frustrations and in turn permits individuals to regain a sense of control by stepping back from their pressures for a moment.

Rewarding and Encouraging in Visible and Personal Ways

Expressing personal praise and rewarding in highly visible and confidence building ways is also empowering (Conger, 1989). The sense of power comes from relatively close contact and approval from those in authority. Organisations that do not reward employees for initiative, competence and innovation are creating conditions of powerlessness.

Expressing Confidence

Empowering leaders express their confidence in people throughout each day in speeches, in meetings and casually and office hallways. "People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks are likely to mobilise greater sustained effort than if they harbour self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arise" (Bandura, 1986, p. 400).

Fostering Initiative and Responsibility

Job design is a crucial aspect of empowerment. Where people have talent and energy but lack a sense of power, leaders need to restore a sense of ownership and self-importance. Role clarity, training and technical support, realistic goals, appropriate authority and discretion, high task variety, participation in meetings and decisions that have a direct impact on job performance, appropriate resources, network forming opportunities, minimal rules and guidelines, advancement opportunities, meaningful goals and tasks, and significant contact with senior management are all ways of empowerment.

Building on Success

Organisational change can often be introduced through pilot or otherwise small and manageable projects. These projects ensure early success for their organisations and these early success experiences strongly reinforce sense of power and efficacy. An individual sense of mastery through actual experience is the most effective means of increasing sense of power and efficacy. Initial success will make people feel more capable and, in turn, empowered.

In contrast to this empowering leadership style, the authoritarian management style can strip away subordinate's discretion and, in turn, sense of power. Under an authoritarian manager subordinates inevitably come to believe that they have little control. The problem becomes acute when people begin to attribute their powerlessness to internal factors such as their own personal competence (Conger, 1989).

Another model of empowering leadership was developed by Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow (2000) using an inductive approach of studying leadership behaviours in an empowered work team. A construct was developed through interviews with external leaders and team members in three organizations. Behaviours elicited in the interviews were

classified by researchers into eight categories of leader empowering behaviour and the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) was constructed to measure each of these categories. The ELQ was then administered to team members and leaders from two organizations. The results indicated that five-factors (Coaching, Informing, Leading By Example, Showing Concern/Interacting with the Team, and Participative Decision-Making) adequately described the data. The scale was then cross-validated in a sample from five organizations and the factor analysis confirmed the five-factor model. Comparison with two well-established measures of leader behaviour indicated that the ELQ dimensions partially overlapped with previously identified constructs, but that empowering leadership behaviour could not be entirely accounted for by the earlier measures. Hence, the ELQ represents a refined empirical model of empowering leadership to compliment that of the Conger.

The social scientific literature on empowering communities and empowering leadership provide a lens for a better understanding of the NCLS construct of empowering leadership which is observed in high percentage Newcomer churches. However, the literature also suggests a relationship between empowering communities and Sense of Community which could also be explored further in high percentage Newcomer churches.

Sense of Community and Empowerment

It has been demonstrated that Sense of Community is a catalyst for empowerment within a community (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Hughey, Peterson, Lowe, & Opreacu, 2007). Programs that foster membership, increase influence, meet needs, and develop a shared emotional connection among community members will enhance a sense of group or personal power. The stronger the Sense of Community, the more influence the members feel they have on the immediate environment. Further, locus of control has been empirically related to participation (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

The relationship between the two is further confirmed by observations from the L'Arche communities (McDonald & Keys, 2006). The L'Arche communities offer faith-centred, shared community living for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities. The focus on deepening social ties for persons with intellectual disabilities in an international context has been demonstrated to produce empowerment in the group.

Moreover, people feel more attracted to groups and settings in which they feel influential or powerful (Scot, 2007). Young people feel a stronger self-described Sense of Community in contexts in which they experience voice and resonance, some power and influence, and adequate adult support and challenge. The ability and opportunity to play a meaningful role and the ability to influence the course of events help young people feel connected and powerful. Young people feel a stronger Sense of Community for contexts to which they feel responsible - they want, and need, to play a role (Scot, 2007).

Having demonstrated the potential link between Sense of Community and sense of empowerment it is justified to explore whether this relationship exists in high percentage Newcomer churches. By using the Sense of Community Index and the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire in the same research instrument it is possible to explore this theoretical link.

The literature review has revealed insights into the first two characteristics of high percentage Newcomer churches: sense of belonging and empowering leadership. The relationship between these constructs and Sense of Community and empowering communities has been explored. The role of empowering leadership in developing empowering communities has also been demonstrated. However, another type of leadership is also observable in high percentage Newcomer churches - inspiring leadership. In order to better understand inspiring leadership, its relationship to the construct of "Transformational Leadership" is now examined.

2.6.4 Inspirational Leadership and Transformational Leadership

Leaders of churches with high percentages of Newcomers have the following characteristics (Kaldor, Castle, & Dixon, 2002):

- They are seen as someone who inspires people to action.
- They listen to attenders ideas and perspectives.
- They place a high priority on encouraging attenders to identify their gifts and skills.
- They model an outward focus beyond the immediate life of the church.

- They have a capacity for innovation and lateral thinking.

The NCLS has highlighted the importance of “inspiring leadership.” In seeking to understand this construct there would be many different leadership models to choose from. Leadership paradigms - such as those of autocratic versus democratic leadership, directive versus participative leadership, and task versus relationship oriented leadership - have dominated leadership research for the past 50 years (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed to expand and build upon the dimensions of leadership measured by previous leadership surveys. The major leadership constructs used in the MLQ - Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and passive/avoidant leadership - address both the lower and higher order effects of leadership style. Because of its breadth of coverage, specific use of the term “inspirational motivation,” and frequency of use (Avolio & Bass, 2004), the MLQ is the best instrument to better understand the concept of inspiring leadership in churches.

Specifically, the use of the MLQ allows for an assessment of whether the style of leadership used by leaders in these high percentage Newcomer churches can be described as “Transformational.” Transactional Leadership, in contrast to Transformational Leadership, means that followers agree with, accept, or comply with the leader in exchange for praise, rewards, and resources or the avoidance of disciplinary action. It is a form of external motivation and is a valid leadership approach in certain settings. In contrast, Transformational Leadership is an intrinsically based motivational process whereby leaders *engage* with followers to create a connection that raises the level of effort and moral aspiration in both (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003).

Using the MLQ, the following have been identified as the distinct components of Transformational Leadership (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999):

- Idealized influence (or charisma). These leaders are admired, respected and trusted. Followers identify with and want to emulate their leaders. Among the things the leader does to earn credit with followers is to consider their needs over his or her own needs. The leader shares risks with followers and is consistent in conduct with underlying ethics, principles and values.

- **Inspirational motivation.** Leaders behave in ways that motivate those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Individual and team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. The leader encourages followers to envision attractive future states, which they can ultimately envision for themselves.
- **Intellectual stimulation.** Leaders stimulate their followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. There is no ridicule or public criticism of mistakes. New ideas and creative solutions to problems are solicited from followers, who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions.
- **Individualized consideration.** Leaders pay attention to each individual's need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers are developed to successively higher levels of potential. New learning opportunities are created along with a supportive climate in which to grow. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognized.

The Transformational Leadership component "Idealised Influence" is also known as charisma. A leader is required to demonstrate charisma in order to create significant change in both followers and the organization (Fry, 2003). The effects of charisma include follower trust in the leader's ideology, similarity between followers' beliefs and the leader's beliefs, unquestioning acceptance of the leader, expression of warmth toward the leader, follower obedience, identification with the leader, emotional involvement with the leader's goals, heightened goals for followers and follower confidence in goal achievement.

Charisma ignites followers' energy, commitment, and performance. It does not reside in a leader, nor in a follower, but in the relationship between a leader who has charismatic qualities and a follower who is open to charisma, within a charisma-conducive environment (Klein & House, 1995). Charismatic leaders transform followers' self-concepts and fashion linkages between the identity and values of followers and the collective identity or values of the organization. In this fashion, workers view work for the group as an expression of themselves and thus rewarding in and of itself. Thus, the effects of charismatic leadership

are primarily implemented by emphasizing intrinsic motivation while de-emphasizing extrinsic motivation (Fry, 2003).

As well as using Transformational Leadership behaviours, inspirational leaders may inspire through use of language (Conger, 1991). This “language of leadership” can be broken into two distinct skill categories. The first is the process of defining the purpose of the organization in a meaningful way. This process is called “framing.” Framing is the leader's interpretation of his or her organisation's purpose with accompanying values and beliefs. It is an opportunity for leaders to construct an appealing and motivating force for change and transformation in their organizations.

The second skill is the leader's ability to use symbolic language to give emotional power to his or her message. This is a process of “rhetorical crafting.” While the message provides a sense of direction, rhetoric heightens its motivational appeal and determines whether it will be sufficiently memorable to influence the day-to-day decision-making of an organization. While the leader's message is critical, the process by which it is communicated appears to be just as significant. The style of verbal communications is a critical distinguishing factor in whether the message will be remembered and endorsed. This is where the art of rhetoric enters the language of leadership (Conger, 1991).

In seeking to understand the concept of inspiring leadership, a particular model of leadership has been examined because of its breadth, its use of the word “inspirational” and the existence of a related survey instrument. Transformational leadership, Conger’s model and the MLQ provide an excellent starting point for a better understanding of inspirational leadership in churches.

2.7 Summary

The review of literature, summarised in Table 2-8, has provided important insights into the phenomenon of Newcomer engagement. The NCLS and social science combine to describe the object and process of Newcomer engagement and the characteristics of churches with high levels of Newcomers. However, the review also informs the research questions described in the next section.

Table 2-8 Literature Related to Characteristics of High Percentage Newcomer Churches

School of Literature	Sense of Belonging Krause & Wulff (2005)	Sense of Community McMillan and Chavis (1986)	Empowering Communities Maton & Salem (1995)	Empowering Leadership Conger (1989)	Corporate Confidence Sterland & Castle (2004)	Inspirational Leadership Avolio, Bass, & Jung (1999)	Conservatism/ Strictness Rainer (2001)/ Kelley (1972)	Perception of Leaders Finney (1992)/ Oswald & Leas, (1988)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attachment to place Acts of helping Rituals Religious capital investment Levels of church attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership: Feelings of emotional safety, sense of belonging & identification Influence: Exertion of one's influence on the community with reciprocal influence of the community on oneself Integration and fulfilment of needs Shared emotional connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Based Belief System Opportunity Role Structure Support System Leadership: inspirational, talented, shared and committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Emotional Atmosphere Rewarding and Encouraging Expressing Confidence Fostering Initiative and Responsibility Building on Success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong identity Satisfaction with church services Sense of community and personal growth Willingness to invite others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idealized influence Inspirational motivation Intellectual stimulation Individualized consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literalistic interpretation of Bible High demand membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clergy influential to Newcomers Newcomers impressed by clergy
	<p>Hagerty & Patusky (1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valued involvement: experience of feeling valued, needed, or accepted; Fit: perception that the individual's characteristics articulate with the system or environment 			<p>Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, (2000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching Informing Leading By Example, Showing Concern/Interacting with the Team Participative Decision-Making 				

2.8 Research Questions

The Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance in Australia. This is a complex and multifaceted process, but the various components of the process come together in the environment of a local church. The Newcomer and those who have led them into church attendance operate within the context of that church. This research focuses on churches with high levels of Newcomers, as identified by the NCLS research, and so gain a deeper understanding of the engagement of these Newcomers in church attendance.

The Research Questions

The phenomena of engagement of Newcomers in church attendance can be broken up into three components as identified in the Conceptual Framework.

The first component is the prospective Newcomer themselves. Research has identified some of the attitudes of the unchurched towards church. The NCLS have been able to define some statistical characteristics of this group and the context from which they engage.

The second component of the phenomena of Newcomer engagement is the process whereby Newcomers begin church attendance. The social sciences have been able to shed light on the process whereby a Newcomer would engage in church attendance for the first time. It would appear that as certain people, often in relational transition, encounter a faith community, they are embraced by, and embrace, that community and its faith. However, it is inadequate to conclude that engagement in church attendance for the first time is purely a social phenomenon. This is evidenced by the underlying spirituality of humanity and by evidence that Newcomers view conversion as a quest for transformation and growth based on a desire for a more satisfying and meaningful life.

However, despite this knowledge about Newcomers and the process of their engagement, there is little knowledge about the *experience* of Australian Newcomers during their entry into church attendance, especially their emotions, perceptions and conclusions. Although we

know something about Newcomers, there has not been the opportunity to hear their actual "voice."

And so, the first specific research question focuses on the first two components of Newcomer engagement: the characteristics and attitudes of Newcomers and the process whereby they engage. It aims to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance from the perspective of the Newcomer themselves. Consequently the first specific research question is:

How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?

The third component of the phenomena of Newcomer engagement is the churches with which Newcomers engage. The second and third specific research questions focus on churches which have high percentages of Newcomers. The NCLS has identified certain qualities of these churches. These qualities include a strong and growing sense of belonging amongst attenders, inspiring and empowering leadership, willingness to invite others to church and Corporate Confidence. Although statistically identified these qualities have not been fully defined or explored in a local church.

The social sciences have produced a number of concepts which can be seen to be related to these NCLS terms. Sense of belonging, Sense of Community, empowerment and empowering communities, empowering leadership and Transformational Leadership are all well developed concepts which may shed light on these NCLS constructs. Some of these concepts have also been shown to be related to one another. They also provide a lens through which to examine these churches.

The most significant characteristic of high percentage Newcomer churches is a strong and growing sense of belonging. There is evidence that the concept of sense of belonging is related to psychological Sense of Community (Miers & Fisher, 2002) and church strictness. However, the best understanding of growing sense of belonging will come by hearing the voice of church attenders as they describe their experience of being part of their church. Consequently the second specific research question is:

How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and “a strong and growing sense of belonging” experience this sense of belonging?

The third specific research question aims to explore the role of leaders in churches with high percentages of Newcomers. According to NCLS research, attenders at these churches indicate that the leaders of the church they attend demonstrate inspirational leadership, and encourage them to identify and use their gifts. A number of characteristics of empowering communities, empowering leadership and Transformational Leadership have been identified by the literature and their relationship to these NCLS leadership constructs asserted.

There is also evidence that the preaching and theology of the senior leader in a church is a factor in high levels of Newcomer engagement. Although empowering and inspiring leadership generates growing sense of belonging and sense of empowerment in churches, there is evidence that strictness and conservative theology, stemming from Biblical literalism, also builds sense of belonging and is appealing to Newcomers.

Hence, the importance of the leader in the process of engagement of Newcomers has also been identified. Consequently the third specific research question is:

How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

Having positioned the research within the established social scientific scholarship and developed specific research questions, the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance is now examined through the lens of theology.

3. A Theological Framework for Newcomer Engagement

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. (The distinction between the Church universal and the local church will be made by the use of the capital "C" when referring to the former.) The purpose of this chapter is to generate a theological perspective of this engagement which will serve as an alternative lens to observe and understand the phenomena and inform the discussion of findings in Chapter 6.

Historically, the Bible is the foundation of Christianity's evangelism, teaching, worship and morality (Shelley, 1982). Although various denominations have developed their own specific doctrines for church operations, the Bible remains the fundamental and widespread basis for church practice. The Church has, at least in theory, sought to make the teaching and example of Jesus, the apostles and the early Church its pattern throughout its history.

For this reason it is justified to take a theological perspective of Newcomers and their engagement with churches. At the very least it informs an understanding of what church attenders and leaders understand by the term "Newcomers" and how, as a church, they believe they should be going about engaging with them. However, Biblical theology also provides a different perspective of Newcomers and the churches they engage with from that of social science by looking at the phenomena from the faith-based viewpoint.

As identified in Chapter 2, there are three elements of the phenomena: the nature of Newcomers, the process of engagement and the nature of the churches in which they engage. The Bible brings theological perspectives on each of these elements.

Certain theological terms can be associated with the process of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. Biblical terms such as "the Kingdom of God," "conversion," "repentance," "evangelism," "invitation," "hospitality" and "worship" shed light on the phenomenon of Newcomer engagement. By exploring these terms it is possible to develop not only a Biblical understanding of Newcomer church engagement, but of the role that the local church plays in that engagement.

3.2 The Process of Engagement

The word "Newcomer" does not appear in the Bible. It is also difficult to identify a process of transition into the Church. The process of entry into the Kingdom of God is identified, but the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church has been a subject of much debate.

The Church intentionally bears witness to the meaning and relevance of the Kingdom, while not itself being identical with that Kingdom (Kirk, 1999). Additionally, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God while the Church is a realm of God - a group of people who are under His rule (Wright, 1996). The Church, then, is the community of people who proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom to all nations and are a sign of its activity in the world (Braaten, 2008). And since the Church is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God it is reasonable, for this discussion, to proceed on the assumption that entry into the Church approximates entry into the Kingdom of God and vice versa.

Entrance into the Kingdom of God is through repentance and belief. According to Mark, at the beginning of his ministry Jesus announced, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel (*euangelion*)" (Mark 1:14-15). The Greek words *metanoein* and *epistrephein*, translated as "repent" in Mark 1:14, mean "to turn around" and have been associated with the English word "conversion." The word translated "believe" means to "trust" or "assent" (Wright, 1996). Its meaning, stressed at various points in the Gospels, focused on the insistence that Israel's God was to be seen as the "father" of his people (Matthew 21:28-32, Luke 11:5-8). It also implied giving up *their* way of being the people of God and trusting God for his.

The word "conversion" is normally used in a religious context in one of two ways: either to indicate that a person has left one religious position for exclusive attachment to another or to describe where a person has had a merely nominal adherence to faith but has then awoken to its significance and importance with enthusiasm and insight (Green, 2003).

Conversion is primarily an act of God (Witherup, 1994). It is an work of grace, which humans interact with, and are called to respond to. In keeping with all God's activity, conversion entails an element of mystery. It is an intensely spiritual experience which defies rational explanation. It is difficult to describe and the Bible relies upon metaphor and symbol to

explain it. Conversion is related to a variety of other Biblical themes including sin, forgiveness, repentance, salvation, justification, baptism, faith and the Holy Spirit.

Conversion is also accompanied by some concrete symbolic gesture (Witherup, 1994). In the Old Testament it is the renewal of the covenant or a cleansing water ritual which symbolises the change, while in the New Testament baptism is the hallmark of conversion. Conversion needs to be ritualised to be fully appreciated. This ritualised action also provides a means for the total community to participate in the action by way of affirmation.

The assumption - from the preaching of John the Baptist through Jesus to the first apostles - is that people are on the wrong path, moving away from God (Luke 5:29-32; Romans 1:18-21) (Wallis, 2005). The Bible refers to a self-determined course as walking in sin, darkness, blindness, dullness, sleep and hardness of heart. To convert is to make an about-face and take a new path. The New Testament stresses the necessity of a re-birth (John 3:3) and invites people to pursue an entirely different course of life. Thus, fundamental change of direction is central to the meaning of repentance and conversion.

Jesus' life and ministry was a call to conversion - to a life of childlike faith and trust in the closeness, generosity and forgiveness of God. Such conversion implies letting go of all securities which move people to grasp at life and others. Repentance is the painful, yet joyous, recognition that human life has only one centre - the sovereign grace and rule (Kingdom) of God (Persha, 2008).

Consequently, conversion should be thought of as entry into the Kingdom of God (Wallis, 2005). The salvation of individuals and the fulfilment of the Kingdom are intimately connected and are linked in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles. The compelling call to conversion in the Gospels arose directly out of the fact of an in-breaking new order. To be converted to Christ meant to give one's allegiance to the Kingdom and to enter into God's purposes for the world (Wallis, 2005).

The Bible is not specific about the amount of time conversion involves (Erickson, 1983). On some occasions, it appears to have been a cataclysmic decision (akin to the classical psychological theory of conversion), with the change taking place virtually in a moment's time. The visitor to the Corinthian church described in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25 had a dramatic spontaneous conversion as the "secrets of his heart" were laid bare. On the other

hand, for some people, conversion was more of a process (akin to the contemporary psychological theory of conversion). There are five prominent accounts of individual conversion in Acts, each with six stages (Smalley, 1964):

1. There is always some form of preparation for the conversion.
2. Mediators preach about Jesus in some fashion.
3. The individuals make enquiry.
4. There is evidence of God's activity in the conversion.
5. Baptism is uniformly mentioned.
6. Each conversion entails specific though not uniform results.

Similarly, in the Gospel of John, the heart of conversion was a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. However, the conversion was not a critical moment but a gradual process of growth and insight (e.g. Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and, the man born blind.)

But, not only does the period of conversion vary in length, the emotions associated with conversion can vary greatly. In the case of Saul of Tarsus, according to the book of Acts, the decision was under highly dramatic circumstances. He heard a voice speaking to him from heaven (Acts 9:4-7) and even became blind for three days. By contrast, Lydia's conversion seems to have been simple and calm (Acts 16:14).

Just as conversion has come to be thought of as a crisis decision by some psychologists, many in churches have thought the same. Although conversion is sometimes related to a crisis, differences in personality type, background and immediate circumstances may result in a longer period of conversion (Erickson, 1983).

Either way, for the Greco-Roman Christian conversion was a new and unique thing in the ancient world - humbling, dynamic and stark (Green, 2003). This was for three reasons. First, for Greco-Romans it was not necessary for you to believe in the deities you worshipped. Second, ethics were not necessarily a part of religion, although they may have been a part of contemporary philosophy. Finally, the idea of Christian conversion would have been surprising to a Greco-Roman because of the exclusive claims it made upon its devotees. It was the passionate monotheism and rigid morality of the Jews which put them at odds with culture and made them a target of persecution (Green, 2003).

And so, while correct intellectual belief was the major concern of the Greeks, the early Christians were more concerned with transformation. The first evangelists did not simply ask people what they believed about Jesus; they called upon their listeners to forsake all and to follow him. To embrace his Kingdom meant a radical change not only in outlook but in posture, not only in mind but in heart, not only in worldview but in behaviour, not only in thoughts but in actions (Wallis, 2005).

Conversion brings a new relationship with God and with other human beings. Covenant relationships with God lead to new human interrelationships with responsibilities and privileges in the context of community. Although an aspect of conversion is outwardly directed to bringing new people into the community of the church (evangelisation), the majority of the Scriptures regarding conversion are directed to those who are already members of the believing community (Witherup, 1994).

This radical transformation resulted in the early Christians being referred to in Acts as “the people of the Way” (Acts 9:2). They were associated with a particular way of life. Their faith produced a discernible lifestyle, a pattern of life and a process of growth visible to all. This different style of living and relating grew out of their faith and gave testimony to that faith.

This faith of the first Gentile Christians had clear social results. They became well known as a caring, sharing, and open community that was especially sensitive to the poor and the outcast (Stark, 1997; Wallis, 2005). Their love for God, for one another, and for the oppressed was central to their reputation. Their refusal to kill, to recognize racial distinctions, or to bow down before the imperial deities was a matter of public knowledge. They were not called the people of “the experience” or the people of “right doctrine” or even the people of “the church.” Rather, they were the people of “the Way.”

And the Christians in Acts are described as *the people of the Way* (Wallis, 2005). More than just individuals who had been converted, they were now a new community of faith, which had embarked together on a new way of life. To follow Jesus meant to share his life and to share it with others. The first thing Jesus did after announcing the Kingdom was to gather a community of disciples. Then in Acts, the Kingdom was made manifest through a people who shared a common life. Their visible fellowship was the sign and the first fruits of God’s new order begun in Jesus Christ. Those who had left everything, including family, to follow Jesus

were given the gift of community with one another. Henceforth they would belong to Jesus and be inextricably bound together as brothers and sisters in the family of God. The call of Jesus was not only to a new commitment; it was also to a new companionship - a new community established by conversion (Wallis, 2005).

3.3 The Church's Role In Conversion

Until recently theologians have largely neglected the study of evangelism or relegated it to the margins of serious theological discourse (Chilcote & Warner, 2008). Books abound on evangelism but most are practical "how to" manuals and lack serious theological engagement and reflection (Chilcote & Warner, 2008; Guder, 2000). This has resulted in confusion about how the Church is to go about achieving its mission. However, the Church is God's appointed means of spreading the gospel (Stott, 2008). Indeed, there can be no evangelism without the Church. And so, in seeking to develop a theology of Newcomer engagement, which hinges on the concept of conversion, a number of Biblical terms related to the Church are important.

3.3.1 Evangelism

As indicated in Section 3.2, the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark relate to the Kingdom and evangelism: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel (*euangelion*)" (Mark 1:14-15).

The Greek words associated with the English word "gospel," *euangelion* (noun) and *euangelisomai* (verb), by virtue of the element *eu*, invariably denote good tidings. It is a technical term for "news of victory." Hence, the gospel is sometimes referred to as "the good news." The Greek verb is best translated by the English word "proclaim." Hence, "to evangelise" means to proclaim the good news of the gospel (Abraham, 2008), although it is used in two senses: an act of proclamation of the message and the content proclaimed. Both occur in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "Those who proclaim the gospel (the content) should get their living by the gospel (the act of proclaiming it)."

Luke 4:18-19 records a further elaboration of the gospel as Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

The “good news” Jesus proclaimed was to the “poor,” “prisoners,” “blind” and “oppressed.” According to Luke 7:22, Jesus cites some ways this proclamation was being fulfilled: “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” In other words, the proclamation was a physical event, not just verbal.

Consequently, the mission of the Church is more than verbal proclamation or what has been too narrowly defined as “evangelism.” The proclamation of the Kingdom is not only words, but actions. Followers of the Way are to show love and compassion for both believers and non-Christians, so reflecting the heart of God (Bosch, 2009).

It is clear that Jesus cared about the problems of the needy and suffering. According to Matthew, when Jesus looked at the crowds he saw that they were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36) and he was moved with compassion. If the Church is to carry on this ministry, it will be engaged in some form of ministry to the needy and suffering. That Jesus had such an expectation of his followers is evident in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-30).

The mission of the Church has all the dimensions and scope of Jesus’ own ministry and may never be reduced to verbal propositions. It consists in proclaiming and teaching, but also in healing and liberating, in compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. The mission of the

Church, reflecting the mission of Jesus, involves being sent into the world to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to save and to free (Bosch, 2009).

The early 20th century saw a divergence in the worldwide Church on the nature of the mission of the Church. A false dichotomy was developed between “evangelism” and “social action.” The evangelicals emphasised the personal dimension of salvation in Christ while the ecumenicals elevated God's work in the redemption of the social order (Chilcote & Warner, 2008).

However, in more recent times there has been a convergence of thought on this matter. In 1982 the World Council of Churches published “Mission and Evangelism-an Ecumenical Affirmation.” The document is characterised by commitment to evangelism as the heart of mission, personal conversion to Christ as the foundation of Christian life, solidarity with the victims of unjust social and economic systems, and witness to the reign of God through word and deed. While significant differences still exist between evangelical and ecumenical theologians and practitioners of evangelism, the chasm between them has narrowed significantly and the distinctions tend to be more matters of emphasis than substance (Chilcote & Warner, 2008).

And so, the mission of the Church must be thought of as evangelism plus social action (Sider, 2008; Stott, 1975). The two are inseparable in the sense that evangelism often leads to social justice, and vice versa. The fact that evangelism and social action are inseparable does not mean that they are identical. They are distinct but equally important parts of the total mission of the Church (Sider, 2008). However, the ongoing expression of Christ's love for the world through social action is not something that should only be directed to those outside the Church, but something that characterises a local church itself.

3.3.2 The Family-Like Community

The communal emphasis of church life is implied in the language the early Church used to describe itself. The word “church” is derived from the Greek word *kuriakos*, meaning “belonging to the Lord.” However, it is the word *ecclesia* that is more important in understanding the nature of a church (Erickson, 1983). In classical Greek the word referred to an assembly of the citizens. The apostle Paul used the word in his letters addressed to

specific local gatherings of believers. This local sense of the church is intended in the vast majority of occurrences of the word *ecclesia* (Erickson, 1983).

Beyond these references to churches in specific cities, there are also references to churches meeting in individual homes. In sending greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, Paul also greets “the church in their house” (Romans 16:5). In each case a group of believers is never regarded as only a part, or component, of the whole Church. Instead, the whole is found in each place (Erickson, 1983). Combining these two terms means that the church is the active communion of people who belong to the Lord in any given location.

For Paul, the gospel bound believers to one another as well as to God. Acceptance by Christ necessitated acceptance of those whom he had already welcomed (Romans 15:7).

Reconciliation with God entailed reconciliation with others involved in gospel preaching (Philippians 4:2-3). Union in the Spirit involved union with one another. The gospel was not a purely personal matter. It had a social dimension. It was a communal affair. As discussed in Section 3.2, to embrace the gospel was to enter into a community (Banks, 1994).

The image of the church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23, 1 Corinthians 12:27) emphasises the connection of the church with Christ and the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the church. Christian faith is not to be defined merely in terms of individual relationship to the Lord. There is an interconnectedness of the body, especially in terms of the gifts of the spirit. “All the members of the body, though many, are one body” (1 Corinthians 12: 12).

Members are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). The body is also to be characterised by a genuine fellowship. This does not mean merely a socially interrelated group, but an intimate feeling or understanding of one another. “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

However, the crucial stimulus for the formation of this Kingdom community, and its guiding metaphor, is its identity as the family of God. The family or household of God is the most common metaphor for the Church in the New Testament (Banks, 1994). Although Paul only used the term “household” rarely, so many other related expressions are present that “family” must be regarded as the most significant metaphor of the church.

The concept was probably introduced by Jesus himself (Mark 3:34-35): "Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'"

This new family was not connected by blood relations but by common service of the Kingdom as brother and sister to one another (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006). Church as family is primarily about relationships. It is not about meetings, events, or structures. Further, families consist of relationships that are not based on choice. Individuals typically do not choose their families or church and are connected to them whether they like it or not.

Paul said Christians were to see themselves as members of a divine family with the head of the family being God the Father (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3; 3:11). The Father adopts his children by their faith in Jesus Christ and through receiving the Spirit (Galatians 3:26; 4:6,7). The presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to address God as "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

Paul saw implications of this relationship for the life of the local churches - those who belong to them should see one another primarily as members of a common family. Paul's letters give evidence that the communities which emerged as a result of his preaching the gospel were organised into household units (Collins, 2003). In some cities there were several house churches. In Corinth members of different house churches came together for the shared meal. The home, with its expressive kinship language, was the basic unit of the Pauline churches. Communication and kinship relationship bound them together.

The relationship that the members of the Thessalonian church had for one another was sibling love (*philadelphia*) - 1 Thessalonians 4:9: "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." He identified the same relationship for the Romans in Romans 12:10: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."

"Brother" or "brethren" is the most common word for Christians in the letters of the New Testament and Jesus is described as their older brother (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10-18). This word is often used generically of both males and females, as the word "folks" is used in English (Banks, 1994).

In first century Mediterranean families, the closest family ties were conventionally experienced among brothers and sisters (Bartchy, 2002). This is in contrast to family values of modern Western culture, where such loyalty and affection are experienced in the bonds of marriage. In the world of Jesus and his early followers, the breakdown of family values and treachery in its most extreme and despised form was epitomised in stories of strife and betrayal among blood brothers (Bartchy, 2002). This was the depth of relationships that were to be present in church communities.

Further, kinship language is the "language of belonging," imparting a sense of identity and distinguishing family members from outsiders. The Thessalonian's active love for one another was the manifestation of these kinship ties (1 Thessalonians 5:13-14). They were expected to live in peace with one another, encourage one another, admonish the unruly, exhort the fainthearted, help the weak and be patient with everyone (Collins, 2003).

Like all families, the church community shares meals together. The word used in 1 Corinthians 11, *deipnon*, to describe the meal shared by the Corinthian church, indicates that it was not a token meal (as it has become since) or part of a meal, but an entire, ordinary, meal. The term indicates that it was the main (normally evening) meal - the one to which guests were invited. Its character as an ordinary meal was retained even though it had been given new significance. The breaking and distribution of bread was the normal way of commencing such a meal. The precedent would be the Passover feast, also held in the home, which included education of the young in the fundamentals of the religious heritage (Exodus 12:21-27).

The meal is vital for, as the members of the community eat and drink together, their unity becomes a visible expression. Thus, the meal that the church shares together reminds its members of their relationship with Christ and with one another in the same way that participation in an ordinary meal cements and symbolises the bonds between a family.

Paul also instructed the members of a church community to greet one another with a holy kiss (1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Corinthians 16:20.) To interpret this action as merely a formal or secondary procedure would be to underestimate its importance. By means of this action the family bond between each member of the church was given a real, not merely symbolic, expression (Banks, 1994).

And so, the Pauline picture of the church is not as a royal court or as infants or slaves meeting with their parents or masters, but as a meeting of adult children with their father (Banks, 1994). The use of these family terms is not purely theological, but relational. Christians not only refer to one another as brothers and sisters because that is their status, but also because that is how they experience them. The focal point of reference for Paul's communities was neither a book nor rite, neither a code nor cult, but a set of relationships. God primarily communicates to them, not through the written word and tradition or mystical experience and cultic activity, but through one another (Banks, 1994).

This emphasis on family terminology appears unique to the Church. Israel is referred to as a household (Amos 5:25; Jeremiah 38:33) and to its members as brothers (Leviticus 10:4) but nowhere in the Old Testament is Israel referred to as God's family, as such (Banks, 1994). The Greeks occasionally referred to members of the same political unit or friends as "brothers." The Pharisees and Qumran refer to "sons" and a rabbi is occasionally described as a "father." But fraternal language does not seem to have been particularly prominent (Banks, 1994).

Yet Paul's vision of the church was a family where the art of love could be learned and applied - where the love of the Father and the Son could be made visible in the lives of those who had committed themselves to the gospel. The result was a unique community which almost unconsciously drew others into its network. The evangelistic activity of the Gentile churches was the spontaneous outcome of the transformation of individuals in the community they belonged to. There is very little about an intentional "evangelism strategy" in the New Testament. Paul did not need to command the church to evangelise in his epistles. He rebukes, reminds and exhorts about faithfulness to Christ in many matters, but he never exhorts them to be active in evangelism (G. R. Hunsberger, 2008). Their evangelism was an overflow of whom the church was, not a burden.

The fellowship which the Pauline churches unconsciously offered, transcending barriers of race, sex, class and education was an enormous attraction (Green, 2003). Formally, there was little to distinguish Christian associations for fellowship from any other. The initiation, the equal partnership, the cult meal, the mutual benefits were all standard procedure. But there was a difference in the quality of the fellowship. Aristocrats and slaves, Roman citizens and provincials, rich and poor mixed on equal terms and without distinction:

societies which presented this quality of caring and love were unique. Herein lay its attraction.

And so, this quality of life shared in the Christian community was a vital part of the evangelistic message of many early churches (Stark, 1997; Wallis, 2005).

Christian fellowship became the companion of the Christian gospel; demonstration was vitally linked to proclamation. The oneness of word and deed, dramatically evident in their life together, lent power and force to the words of the early Church... The message of the Kingdom became more than an idea. A new human society had sprung up, and it looked very much like the new order the evangelists described. Love was given daily expression; reconciliation was actually occurring. People were no longer divided into Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. In this community the weak were protected, the stranger welcomed. People were healed, and the poor and dispossessed were cared for and found justice. Everything was shared, joy abounded, and ordinary lives were filled with praise. Something was happening among these Christian communities that no one could deny. According to Tertullian, people looked at the early Christians and exclaimed, "See how they love one another!" (Wallis, 2005, pp. 16-17)

Although lacking the ethnic diversity of the Pauline Gentile churches, the book of Acts indicates the Jerusalem church was also characterised by compassion, fellowship, sharing, worship, service and teaching (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). The ministry of evangelism in this Christian community, the consequence of which was "the Lord adding to their number day by day," consisted of spending time in communal worship and praise of God, sharing together the sacred gift of food, and offering kindness and hospitality to others. All of this life together, including the sharing of personal possessions so that no one lacked the basic necessities of life, was aimed at living in and manifesting the Kingdom of God (Chilcote, 2008). The Christians did not need to say, "join us" because outsiders came to the church, drawn to it by its engaging character.

The fervent character of Christian love not only bound them to one another; it also spilled over the boundaries of their own communities and extended to all in need. The economic sharing practiced by the early Christians, together with their generosity toward the poor,

was one of the most evangelistic characteristics of their life. Radical, practical love became the key to their public reputation (Wallis, 2005).

And so, the very nature of God can shape the people of God into local communities that always seek to share the good news with others (Vaughn, 2008). The God of relationship desires relationship. This confirms that the evangelist will not share the gospel simply through direct proclamation. Openness and sensitivity to the other are essential in the establishment and development of genuine community. The good news of Jesus Christ cannot be communicated from a distance, whether that distance is provided by a large imposing pulpit or emotional unavailability. The good news is shared through a relationship that reflects the nature of God (Vaughn, 2008). Because God is a communal God, the sharing of the gospel will involve the work and commitment of a local community of believers.

The preaching of the Church carries no weight if it does not come from a community in which the truth of what is being preached is validated in the life of the community (Newbigin, 2008). This is because the Kingdom becomes present wherever Jesus overcomes the power of evil (1 Corinthians 15:24). The way Jesus chose to destroy the Kingdom of Satan was to call together a new, visible, community of disciples formed together by their acceptance of the divine forgiveness. The Kingdom will reach its fulfilment at Jesus' return, but people can enter into a new society where all social and economic relationships are being transformed. The Kingdom of God is not just a future, but also a present, reality. The Church is part of the good news (Sider, 2008). The Church offers a visible model of the way people can live in community in more loving and just ways.

To think of mission only in terms of verbal proclamation fosters the practice of disconnecting evangelism from the life of the local church. It nurtures the illusion that evangelism can be done by the religious entrepreneur who can simply take to the road and engage in this crucial ministry without the body of Christ. It allows a church to ignore evangelism, for it can hand this responsibility to the evangelist (Abraham, 2008).

But evangelism is not just the verbal proclamation of certain propositions but the tangible expression of those propositions in the life of the one who proclaims it. More specifically, the proclamation of the gospel is evident in the relationships of those who belong to the

Kingdom as expressed by those relationships demonstrated in the life of the Church and as expressed by those inside the Church to those outside the Church. A community committed to the gospel of the reign of God provides a most convincing apologetic of the gospel (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006). One struggles to understand the truths of Christianity as an outside observer. One needs first to experience the embodied truth of the community.

Tertullian described the affection which marked the Christian “brethren” assembling together. He explained that the meeting opened and closed with prayer (Tertullian, Apologeticus, 39, cited in Green, 2003). Worship, fellowship and feasting were all carried out under the “Father's eye.” The lowly, the needy, the sick were shown particular consideration. One in mind and soul they did not hesitate to share their earthly goods with one another. “They talk as those who know the Lord is listening to them. Each is asked to stand up and sing a hymn to God.” This testimony is all the more interesting because there had been a mass turning to Christ in north Africa shortly before he wrote (Green, 2003).

Evangelistic techniques are not enough. If the Church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, faith and justice, something of this should become visible, audible and tangible in the Church itself (Bosch, 2008). Evangelism is most effective when the community that evangelises - the church - is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and has a winsome lifestyle (Bosch, 2008). The medium is the message.

However, in order for a Newcomer to experience the medium and the message it is necessary for them to enter into the Christian community, even if only as a visitor. This can only happen through the activity of invitation.

3.3.3 Invitation

Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a banquet to which people are invited. In Matthew 22 he said, “The Kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.” The words translated as “who had been invited” and “to tell them to come” came from the same root word, *kalleo*, meaning to call or invite.

Paul used the verb *kalleo* more than any other word when referring to conversion (Chester, 2003). For example, "And those he predestined, he also called (*ekallesen*); those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). This calling grants a new identity, principally in terms of belonging to the people of God (Chester, 2003). The term, *ekklesia* (assembly or church) was also derived from the word *kalleo*.

The link between the mission of the Church and invitation is confirmed in Luke 14:12-14:

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

As the proclamation of the Kingdom had been specifically targeted at the marginalised (Luke 4:18) so they were to be invited to the meals by Jesus' followers. This understanding of the Kingdom informs the practice of evangelism. Evangelism is invitation and so it should never deteriorate into coaxing, much less into threat (Bosch, 2008).

Invitation may often be something done by an individual Christian. However, the metaphor of the Kingdom of God as a banquet meal implies that the Christian is inviting the non-Christian to experience the community of the Kingdom of God. In this sense, invitation is a communal and family activity.

The term "Christian Family" is used by many churches, even as part of their church title. But sometimes these churches are using "Christian Family" in an exclusive rather than an inclusive sense. The New Testament concept of the church as God's family is invitational. It is based on a bigger understanding of the family than the modern nuclear family. The church family invites others of all genders, races and social classes.

The New Testament indicates that the early believers invited outsiders to experience their faith community in two specific contexts: hospitality and corporate worship.

Hospitality

There was a long honoured tradition of hospitality both in the Middle-East and amongst the Greeks (Green, 2003). The Church's tradition of hospitality drew on the Old Testament

depiction of God as a God of hospitality (Cronshaw, 2007). The Jews were not to forget that their ancestors were nomads who came to appreciate God as their host (Psalm 39:12; Leviticus 20 5:23) and knew they must play host to strangers and aliens (Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:33-34). Abraham was remembered as the patron saint of hosts for his hospitality to the strangers who turned out to be the angels (Genesis 18:1-8). God's people were to be inclusive and welcoming of strangers and people of all nations, just as God welcomed and hosted them. The Tabernacle and later the Temple were described as "the Lord's house." And so the prophets were critical of Israel whenever she failed to reserve a place for the stranger.

However, hospitality was a particular distinctive of early Christians and Christian communities, following the example of Jesus. When Jesus came as a "visitor to the world," he became host and offered hospitality for people to know the salvation of being brought from the margins to an honoured place (Luke 19:1-10). He was often described as a guest at someone's table, and many of his most memorable parables were told during and around a meal (Keifert, 1992). The themes of abundance and hospitality characterised these mealtime parables.

A study of Luke's gospel reveals that the meals Jesus attended were not so much about food as they were about the people who were present (LaVerdiere, 1994). In all the meals it was the guest list, not the menu, that mattered. Jesus always entered the banquet as one who needed hospitality, but as the banquet proceeded, the role of guest and host, stranger and known, were reversed (Keifert, 1992).

The meals recorded in Luke are places of repentance (5:27-39) and reconciliation (7:36-50). The meal was consequently an event of evangelisation, reconciliation and mission. At each of the meals, Jesus was present primarily to challenge the community to fulfil its basic identity as people called, assembled and sent by him. The Last Supper was the final announcement of the Kingdom of God (22:16, 18).

Jesus was also involved in a miraculous picnic (Luke 9:10-17), partying with sinners (15:1-2) and drawing a strange mixture of people around his table which caused many upstanding people to consider him immoral. His inclusiveness, shown most graphically around the table, was central to his ministry and was its major scandal. The central symbol of his new

vision of life, the Kingdom of God, was a community joined together in a festive meal where the bread sustained life and joy. In Communion a church remembers the hospitality of Jesus and recalls its responsibility to continue this practice. Further, the statement by Jesus that "I was a stranger and you received me in your homes" (Matthew 25:35) makes the practice of hospitality sacramental (Arias, 2008).

Jesus was calling people to a change of mind and heart in keeping with the coming of God's realm. The change moved the convert from isolation to the fullness of community life which God had always intended for Israel. As a result, the abundance of God was offered in Jesus' ministry through the central metaphor of the banquet (Keifert, 1992). Out of this lavish giving came the sinner's repentance and the power to leave behind their isolation and join the community life that God intended for all. Repentance followed God's giving rather than preceding it; it was clearly not the condition of God's prodigious giving but a result.

Verbal proclamation of the gospel is an essential dimension of evangelism - evangelism is definitely a word event. It is not, however, solely verbal, as demonstrated in Jesus' incarnation, the paradigmatic event of evangelism, in which the Word became flesh (Park, 2002). As people look for evidence of the life of the gospel, the practice of hospitality compellingly embodies the gospel and makes its witness credible and inviting (Pohl, 1999).

Evangelism practised in the context of hospitality is not simply the sharing of knowledge of the gospel, but a demonstration of redeemed lives, transformed and sustained by the grace of God. When the gospel is shared, the lives of the witness and the one invited to Christian faith are also to be shared. In this way, hospitality is more than simply a context for evangelism; it is integral to the gospel (Park, 2002).

Hospitality allows the Church to continue the ministry of Christ. Meals should permeate the fabric of Christian life. Every Christian meal reflects aspects of the Kingdom of God, where guests are welcome, people share with one another, broken covenants are renewed and all are reconciled (LaVerdiere, 1994).

Therefore, "Open your homes to strangers," said Paul in describing the Christian lifestyle (Romans 12:13). The theological underpinning of Paul's exhortation to hospitality was "Receive one another as Christ received you" (Romans 15:17). Bishops, elders and widows were required to show hospitality in the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:9-10; Titus 1:8).

Although initially reluctant, according to Luke, the apostle Peter left behind his religious upbringing to eat with Gentiles because he realised God's hospitality embraced all (Acts 10: 9-11: 18). The writer of 1 Peter considered hospitality the right and normal things for Christians to do: "Open your homes to each other without complaining" (1 Peter 4:9). The apostle Paul rebuked the believers at Corinth when they were insensitive or humiliated one another around the meal table when they should have been embracing one another. The Church recognized that hosting strangers had special significance (Hebrews 13:2). Socio-economic differences did not disappear, but in God's eyes slavery, gender and racism had passed away (Galatians 3:28) and Christian hospitality was expected to override these and any other barriers.

The transmission of the materials that became incorporated in the Gospels first circulated through Christian travellers in the atmosphere of hospitality (Arias, 2008). But hospitality was also an important means of evangelisation (Collins, 2003). The informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, and the hospitality which must often have gone with it, all helped to make this form of evangelism particularly successful (Green, 2003). Jason's house at Thessalonica was used for this purpose (Acts 17:5) as was that of Titius Justus (Acts 18:7). Both Lydia's house and the jailers' at Philippi were used as evangelistic centres and Stephanas apparently used his home at Corinth in the same way.

However, not only in is God the host of the meal, he is also the host of public worship. His presence is often revealed in and through the stranger (Matthew 25:35). However, he is also present in worship as the gracious God who gives to the stranger (Keifert, 1992). And it is to corporate worship that the believer also seeks to invite the unbeliever.

Corporate Worship

The term "worship," like "evangelism," defies simple definition. They can be defined so narrowly that the profound nature of their significance is lost; they can be defined so broadly that they come to mean nothing. In the Church today, "worship" can mean anything from the entirety of the Christian life to a set of praise songs in the context of the Christian assembly (Chilcote, 2008).

For Paul, worship pervaded the whole of life, not just the assembly of a church. Not once did Paul say that a person went to church primarily to worship. This is because, for Paul, worship

was obedience rather than literal sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). Since all places and times were the venue of worship, Paul could not speak of Christians assembling in church distinctively for that purpose. They are already worshipping God, acceptably or unacceptably, in whatever they are doing (Banks, 1994). The purpose of church is the growth in edification of its members into Christ through their God-given ministry to one other (1 Corinthians 14:12, 19, 26).

Similarly, the picture of the Church described by Luke in Acts is of an organisation where there is no distinction between worship, evangelism or life in general:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Throughout the Bible public worship and evangelism are linked. Psalm 40:3 declares, "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD." God commanded Israel to invite the nations to join in declaring his glory. Zion is to be the center of world-winning worship (Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6-8). "Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord...so the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem when the peoples and the Kingdoms assemble to worship the Lord" (Psalm 102:18).

Psalm 105 is a direct command to engage in "evangelistic" worship. The Psalmist challenges the assembly to "make known among the nations what he has done" (v.1) by their voices: "Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of his wonderful acts" (v.2). Thus Israel is told to sing and praise God before the unbelieving nations (see also Psalm 47:1; 100:1-5). God is to be praised before all the nations, as he is praised by his people. The nations are summoned and called to join in the song.

There are two important passages in the New Testament relating to worship and evangelism (Keller, 2001). In 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, Paul addressed the misuse of the gift of tongues. He complained that tongues speaking would cause unbelievers to say believers were out of their minds (v.23). He insisted that the worship service must be comprehensible to them. He said that if an unbeliever came in, and worship was being done “for the strengthening of the church” (v. 26), “he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all” (v.24). The result: “So falling on his face, he will worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you’” (v.25).

In Acts 2, when the Spirit falls on those in the upper room, a crowd gathers because they are hearing the disciples praising God and also because this worship is “in our own tongues” (v.11). As a result, they are first made very interested and later they are convicted deeply - “They were cut to the heart and said, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’” (v.37).

There are obvious differences between the two situations. In 1 Corinthians 14 conversion happens on the spot. In Acts 2, the non-believers are shaken out of their indifference (v.12), but the actual conversions (v.37-41) occurred later when Peter explained the gospel (v.14-36) and showed them how to individually receive Christ (v.38-39).

These passages demonstrate that non-believers are expected to be present in Christian worship. In Acts 2 it happens by word-of-mouth excitement. In 1 Corinthians 14 it is probably the result of personal invitation by Christian friends (Keller, 2001). But Paul expects both “unbelievers” and “the unlearned” (literally “a seeker” or “one who does not understand”) to be in worship (Keller, 2001). He directly tells a local church to adapt its worship because of the presence of unbelievers.

Corporate worship should focus on the primary purpose of glorifying God and experiencing his transforming presence. It should be a centrifugal experience that thrusts the people of God into the world rather than just a centripetal model that asks the people of God to come to church (Collison, 2009). Corporate worship should not focus on the worshippers, whether they are seekers or not, but the One being worshipped.

However, worshippers need to be aware that their worship of God also affirms or contradicts their message about God (Morgenthaler, 1995). Unbelievers will draw lasting conclusions about the veracity and uniqueness of God based on what they see, or do not

see, happening in church services. Visitors are looking for something supernatural and life-changing and a sense God's presence and work (Morgenthaler, 1995). They experience it in two ways: first, as unbelievers hear the truth about God (through worship songs, prayer, Communion, baptism, Scripture, testimonies, drama, and so on); and second - and more importantly - as they observe the real relationship between worshipers and God. Unbelievers, influenced by an experience-oriented culture, will see Christians in authentic worship and hunger after that kind of relationship.

The various components of public worship announce the good news of God's healing love in Jesus. Therefore, one of the primary and irreplaceable ingredients in evangelism is the quality of corporate worship in the Christian community (Guder, 2000).

Public worship is the first and central form of witness to the world. It is at the same time a demonstration of the reality of God that cannot be, in every way, understandable and accessible. The watching world must see a community of people who love the God they are addressing, who love each other, and who desire to carry their God's love into the world. The watching world will not necessarily understand the significance of broken bread, poured out wine, or baptismal washing. They will not know what is happening when people pray, communicating with our unseen God whose presence we do not doubt. But even as they do not understand, they will witness the difference that the presence of God makes in the midst of this community. They will see good news happening, whether they can join in worship of the one true God or not. (Guder, 2000, p. 157)

The early Church invited outsiders to experience their faith community in two specific contexts: hospitality and corporate worship. In doing so they were a witnessing community.

3.3.4 A Witnessing Community

According to Acts 1:8 Jesus says: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." The word translated "witness," *martures*, was a legal term that meant to give witness, testimony, or in the extreme, to be a martyr - one who witnessed unto death. And so in witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do,

the Church does not announce anything that the individual witness is bringing about but draws people's attention to what God has brought about (Bosch, 2008; Guder, 2000).

Although Paul did not use the "witness" terminology with the same emphasis as Luke and John, he emphasised the calling and formation of a church as a community of witnesses who glorify God by showing his nature and works and by making manifest the reconciliation and redemption God has brought about through Christ. Their corporate life is essential to their witness. The community, in its corporate life, is to embody the alternative order that stands as a sign of God's redemptive activity in the world (Guder, 2000).

Consequently, it takes a community to adequately witness to the reality of the Kingdom. Karl Barth noted that one of the several ways in which the church witnesses to Jesus Christ is simply by its existence (Barth, 1936). While the predominant meaning of witness has to do with communication, there is reason to understand it in a more comprehensive sense - as defining the entire Christian life both individually and corporately (Guder, 2000). Obedience to the "one-another" passages - the almost 100 New Testament imperatives emphasising the mutuality of Christian community - produces a witnessing community powerfully validating the Christian message.

The simple phrase "for God so loved the world" would have puzzled an educated pagan (Stark, 1997). The notion that the gods care how humans treat one another would have been dismissed as absurd. Perhaps the concept is no easier to understand today. Yet a church is able to powerfully model this reality through their love for one another. The quality of care demonstrated by members of the Church to one another throughout history has been a powerful witness to the love of Christ towards humanity. Individual acts of mercy and love can have a profound influence, but so can the good deeds done by the community of God's people (Dickson, 2005). The character of a church as a family in the household of God is a powerfully effective method of witness, attraction and integration of Newcomers.

3.4 Summary

Christians are to be incarnational - like Jesus they are to become involved with the world so that they can provide, through word and deed, signposts to the Kingdom of God (Kaldor, et al., 1995). Since the Christian faith is inherently incarnational, in the sense of God taking a

concrete human form in a specific social context, the Christian mission, if it wishes to be authentic, also has to be specific and contextual (Bosch, 2009). But Christians can only incarnate the Kingdom of God in the context of Christian community. Direct contact with one another, mutually supportive relationships, sharing of resources, struggling and growing together in faith are the expressions of the Kingdom's reality. The Kingdom of God is, then, a visible, tangible, "experientable" shape. Any understanding of the Church which does not emphasise local and particular communities is ignoring the incarnation of the mission of Jesus Christ in his Church (Guder, 2000).

And so, a church should also be attractional - inviting people from the wider community into its life and worship so they can explore faith in the congregation (Kaldor, et al., 1995). The assumption that the church can *either* be between incarnational *or* attractional is unhelpful. The Church and the people who compose it should be both incarnational and attractional. The emphasis on personal incarnational evangelism is correct, but it still only represents a part of the missional strategy of the church.

The Emerging Church movement, made up of a diverse number of recently founded church communities in the Western world, emphasises these community elements of evangelism (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006). They seek to be located within the culture they serve, rather than within some ecclesial culture. Emerging churches also emphasise Kingdom before church. The core practices of these communities include identifying with the life of Jesus through welcoming the outcast, hosting the stranger and challenging the political authorities by creating an alternative community (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006).

They also emphasise living as community within all realms of the life of their members, not just Sunday morning meetings. They speak of no longer doing evangelism but simply living as a community in the way of Jesus Christ. "We are to love one another, and that creates its own attraction" (Ward quoted in Gibbs & Bolger, 2006).

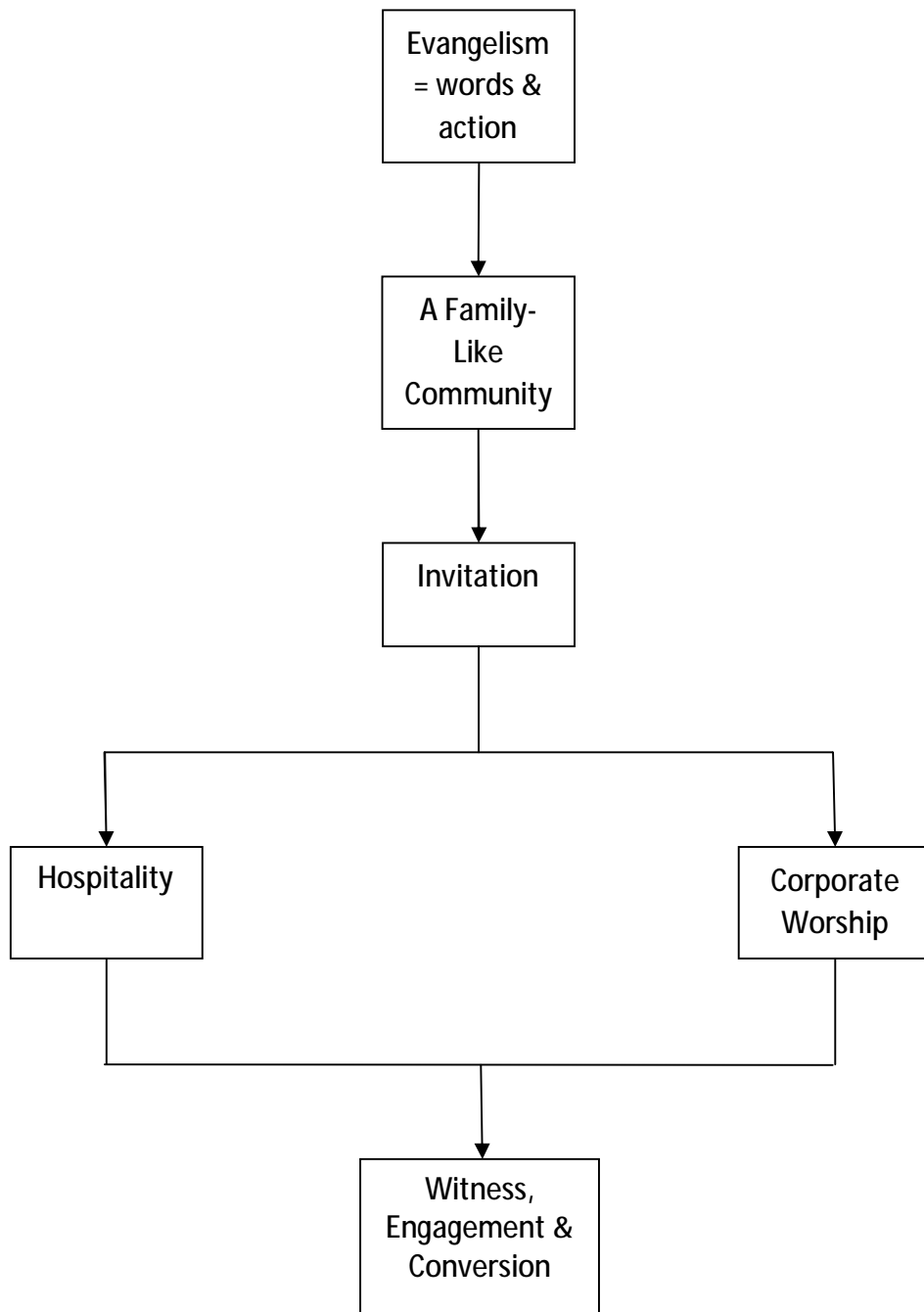
However, the Emerging Church does not represent a new ecclesiology. The focus on church as community is simply a return to an ancient ecclesiology in which mission is integral to the church. If all the Emerging Church movement achieves is to stimulate the wider church to move towards being a family-like witnessing community, it will have done a great service.

The invitation to respond to the gospel leads to engagement with a witnessing community within which God is known, worshipped, made known, and served. Jesus initiated this process with the formation of the disciples into a mission community. Individual Christian existence is only possible and meaningful within such a community. The life of the community is the primary form of its witness, and it is also the equipper and supporter of each individual Christian in the practice of his or her witness (Guder, 2000).

When the body of Christ assembles, the powerful kinship-like relationships, the brotherly kiss, the sharing of possessions and meals, and the corporate worship of God are the tangible witness to the invisible reality of the Kingdom of God. As individual Christians have invited unbelievers to share hospitality in these family community building activities, so the unbelievers have been exposed to the values of the Kingdom. As these Newcomers have experienced the power of these values first-hand and heard the verbal proclamation of the gospel (repent and believe) they have in turn decided to enter the Kingdom of God and engage with their church.

The process can be described in Figure 3-1:

Figure 3-1 A Theological Framework of Newcomer Engagement



4. Design of Research

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design adopted in the exploration of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The research questions that focus the research design are:

1. How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?
2. How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and “a strong and growing sense of belonging” experience this sense of belonging?
3. How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

The centre of the research is local churches because this is where the Newcomer, the person who invites the Newcomer to church, and the leaders who lead churches with high percentages of Newcomers are all present.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is a conceptual structure which offers a defensible basis to plan, implement, analyse and interpret research (Crotty, 1998). In this research framework there are four elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. These four elements influence one another: the epistemology informs the theoretical perspective, which determines the methodology which, in turn, governs the choice and use of methods.

The choice of theoretical framework is influenced by the researcher’s understanding and articulation of the research problem (Crotty, 1998). In this research project the problem is the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance and focuses on people in churches with high percentages of Newcomers. Since the research questions address the *experience* of the participants (the church attenders and Newcomers) the epistemology of constructionism is an appropriate choice.

Consistent with this epistemology, interpretivism is employed as the theoretical perspective. In particular, the interpretivist lens of symbolic interactionism is appropriate in generating

understanding of how church attenders experience church engagement, sense of belonging and the church's leadership. In order to develop a depth of understanding the methodology of case study is used. This methodology orchestrates selection of appropriate methods to collect the data necessary to address the research questions.

The theoretical framework for this research is summarised in Table 4-1:

Table 4-1 Theoretical Framework

Epistemology $\bar{\theta}$	Theoretical perspective $\bar{\theta}$	Methodology $\bar{\theta}$	Methods
Constructionism	Symbolic Interactionism	Case study	Observation Interview Questionnaire Focus group

4.2.1 Epistemology

The purpose of epistemology is to understand the nature of knowledge and how individuals and groups make sense of their world (Crotty, 1998). There exist different epistemological viewpoints which influence the investigation of the world, how researchers establish the truth of their claims, and methods of data collection (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). The epistemology embedded in this research is constructionism.

Constructionism is an epistemological viewpoint based on the presupposition that meaning is constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. In other words, there is no meaning without mind. Meaning is not discovered or created but constructed, therefore different people construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). Because constructionism validates individual's construction of meaning these perceptions can be incorporated into the process of data collection and analysis.

Constructionism is an appropriate epistemology for underpinning this research because the knowledge of Newcomers, and the churches with which they engage, is largely based upon survey information that statistically measures attenders' *perceptions* of their church, other church attenders, leaders and even themselves. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) and

other sources of information do not measure the objective characteristics of the church, but the subjective and constructed meanings of people with respect to their church. This study is seeking to better understand these constructed meanings. In particular the terms introduced by the NCLS such as “inspiring leadership” and “a growing sense of belonging” are better understood by examining the ways church attenders interpret them, make them real, and act in relation to them.

Hence, even though leadership behaviours, for example, *may* be objectively measured phenomena, the constructionist viewpoint makes the perceptions of individual attenders of churches as they interact with, and construct meaning in, complex social situations, a valid subject of research. This is because it is how these leadership behaviours are interpreted by church attenders which produces outcomes such as empowerment. In a similar way it is the *experience* of growing sense of belonging that is present in the attenders of high percentage Newcomer churches which will be explored. Hence, the objective nature of the leadership or community behaviours which engenders these experiences is not as important as the constructed meaning of the behaviours which the attender attributes to them and reports in the NCLS survey. Exploration of these constructed meanings, derived from experiences, enables a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

As a result, the research questions of this study focuses on the constructions of church attenders - the reality or meanings which individuals-in-community have assigned to their experiences of leadership and belonging in churches. The constructionist viewpoint validates these individual constructions of reality and allows for their subsequent interpretation.

Further, the literature review has demonstrated the importance of social interaction in the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. Although the desire for self-improvement for oneself or one's family is a strong motivator for people to explore spirituality and engage in church attendance, it is through the invitation of those who are within faith communities that many Newcomers find their way into church life. These social dimensions are best understood through the viewpoint of constructionism because it is more attuned to the subtleties of social interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

4.2.2 Theoretical Perspective

A theoretical perspective is a way of interpreting the world and constructing an understanding of it. Theoretical perspectives have an epistemology (a theory of knowledge) embedded in them. The theoretical perspective of the researcher in a particular research project informs the methodology and thus provides a context for the methodology and grounds it in logic (Crotty, 1998). It also brings a number of assumptions which should be stated and elaborated upon.

The theoretical perspective underpinning this research is interpretivism. Interpretivism, which emerged in reaction to positivism, is informed by the theoretical paradigm of constructionism. Positivism uses empirical methodology to understand and explain human and social reality (Schwandt, 1994). In contrast, interpretivism holds that the social sciences ought to be concerned, not simply with quantifying what actually happens in social phenomena, but in providing an interpretation of events and phenomena in terms of how the people involved perceive and understand their own experience (Schwandt, 1994). The purpose of inquiry in interpretive research, therefore, is understanding the world from the point of view of those who live in it (Clark, 2006). Interpretive researchers seek not just to observe and describe, but to offer a “thick description” of how people as actors understand and ascribe meaning to their own actions (Geertz, 1973). Interpretivist research explores the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena. It seeks to capture perspectives accurately and facilitate an understanding of the inner, and not always visible, dynamics of situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Further, interpretivism emphasises the natural setting as the source of data and is context specific (Weirama, 1995). It also looks for culturally and historically derived interpretations of social life and to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving comprehension of the whole (Neil, 2006). The researcher, therefore, takes seriously the question of language and meaning and gives first priority to unravelling the subject’s descriptions (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Interpretivist sociology does not reject the idea of a scientific methodology *per se*. It is possible to employ “scientific principles” (such as logical consistency, rules of evidence, hypothesis development and testing, and the like) in the study of human behaviour.

However, the basic methodological model proposed by positivist sociologists (based upon the natural scientific model) is often inadequate as a methodological model for the study of conscious human beings (Livesey, 2003).

The interpretivist theoretical perspective is appropriate for this research for the following reasons. First, interpretivism allows analysis of what positivism and empiricism struggle to identify – the meanings, interpretations, motives and intentions which people use in their everyday lives, and which direct their behaviour (Sanghera, 2002). It is the everyday beliefs and practices, the mundane, tacit and taken for granted, that have to be grasped and articulated in order to provide a fuller understanding of the actions of Newcomers and attenders in high percentage Newcomer churches.

Second, leadership and sense of belonging, for example, are not concrete “things” that can be objectively measured, or even fully scientifically described. They look different to different people and manifest differently in different contexts. The interpretive theoretical perspective gives voice to unique church attenders in unique churches - the ones who experience and interpret the sense of belonging and the leadership styles of their leaders. This study seeks to understand these concepts through the eyes of these church attenders.

Third, churches are organisations laden with history and culture through which reality must be interpreted. Sense of belonging and empowering and inspiring leadership are complex phenomena which are interdependent with the history and the culture of the organisation in which they exist. A major strength of the interpretive approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the complexities of the situation to be understood.

The particular interpretive perspective that guides the research design is symbolic interactionism because it is concerned with how people define events or reality and then act accordingly.

The term “symbolic interaction” refers ... to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or “define” each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their “response” is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such

actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behaviour." (Blumer, 1969, p. 180)

Hence, there are three basic principles central to the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969):

- Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them.
- Communication is a symbolic process since communication takes place through language and other symbols.
- These meanings are developed through social interaction and modified through interpretation.

The interactionist assumptions allow the researcher to move beyond his/her personal understanding of the situation to focus on the meanings that the attenders construct from their social interactions. Although words are the easiest kind of symbols to recognise, physical acts are almost always symbols when other people are around. Physical objects, for example a flag, can also be symbols (Charon, 2007).

The methodological implication of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that the participants' views of actions, objects, and society have to be studied seriously (Psathas, 1973). This reflects its origins in constructionism and interpretivism. Each person is recognised as a constructor and creator, continually interacting with the world, adjusting means to an end and both influencing and being influenced (Wood, 1992).

Hence, the symbolic interactionist perspective allows a focus on the church attender's construction of their reality through the action of language and how they act because of those constructions (Charon, 2007). The study focuses on the conclusions that the attenders have reached after interpreting and reflecting upon the physical, cultural, theological and social environment of their church. An understanding of the phenomena related to Newcomers is available through understanding the multiple meanings attenders have of

phenomena, specifically the symbols they attribute to leadership and community as they reflect upon their own meanings.

Symbolic interactionism is also appropriate for this study because it allows the exploration of the attitudes of church attenders as a unique and distinct cultural group based upon their common heritage, language, symbols, experiences and perceptions. It recognises the diversity of churches and allows for multiple case research without having to impose generic concepts or language.

Even though there is limited opportunity to directly observe people experiencing belonging or leadership, analysis of attenders' verbal responses to the researcher's questions enables the researcher to gain understanding of each attender's meaning of leadership and belonging through their symbolic use of language. The meanings and behaviours they assign and the language they use is deemed to be significant.

However, this perspective does not mean the researcher is simply seeking to lay bare how members of a social group interpret the world around them. The goal is to place the interpretations into a social scientific frame. There are, in fact, three levels of interpretation: the researcher is providing an interpretation of attenders' interpretations; these interpretations are then further interpreted in terms of the relevant concepts, theories and literature (Bryman, 2001).

4.3 Research Methodology – Case Study

The methodology of a research project is the strategy, plan, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). The methodology *orchestrates* the use of the research methods. The methodology used in this research is case study. A case study is "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Case study is used to gain in-depth understanding replete with meaning for the subject, focusing on process rather than outcome, on discovery rather than confirmation (Burns, 1997). The case study is the preferred strategy when how, who, why or what questions are being asked,

when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. The case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Burns, 1997).

There is a generic argument for value of case study research:

If one assumes that research, like other learning processes, can be described by the phenomenology for human learning, it then becomes clear that the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied. Only in this way can researchers understand the viewpoints and the behaviour, which characterizes social actors. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 236)

The advantage of large samples is breadth, whereas their disadvantage is one of depth. For the case study, the opposite is true. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of knowledge.

Case study is an appropriate methodology for this particular research because the research questions focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of the experience of Newcomers and other church attenders in high percentage Newcomer churches. In particular, from its interpretivist underpinnings, it examines how Newcomers experience these churches and how people in these churches experience the sense of belonging and leadership identified as being related to the engagement of Newcomers (Bellamy, et al., 2006). Further, given that the boundaries between the phenomenon (Newcomer engagement) and the context (the local church) are inseparable, case study is the preferred methodology.

Three types of case studies can be identified: intrinsic, instrumental and multiple (Stake, 1995). Although all case studies do not fit neatly into these three categories the distinction is useful. An instrumental case study is a particular case examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of a secondary interest - it plays a supportive role and it facilitates understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in-depth, its context recognised and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because it helps inform the external interest. The case may be seen as typical of other cases or not, but the choice of case is made to advance understanding of the other interest (Stake, 1995).

Where there is even less interest in one particular case, a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition. This is called

a multiple case study. The cases are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases (Stake, 1995).

The case study methodology in this research project is both instrumental and multiple. The experiences of Newcomers of the churches they engage in, and the experiences of church attenders of the leadership and belonging in those case churches are examined in depth (the cases). This will advance understanding of the broader issues related to Newcomers and the churches they join (the external interest).

The use of case study methodology is not without criticism. A weakness of the case study methodology is that the findings cannot be generalised (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1994) - at least not in a simplistic fashion. *Carefully chosen* experiments, cases and experience were critical to the development of the physics of Newton, Einstein, and Bohr. Similarly, in social science the *strategic* choice of cases, as in this research, greatly adds to the value of a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Further, formal generalization is only one of many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge and is often overvalued as a source of scientific development. In contrast "the force of example" is underestimated (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Construct validity (referred to as "trustworthiness" in qualitative research literature) is problematic in case study research because of potential investigator subjectivity. However, such subjectivity is problematic in quantitative research as well (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Nonetheless, safeguards can be used to counteract investigator subjectivity in case studies (Yin, 1994). Trustworthiness is enhanced in this study by using multiple sources of evidence and having a draft case study report reviewed by key informants (see Section 4.8). The use of multiple sources of data within a case study is called triangulation (Stake, 1995).

Triangulation may also help uncover an unexpected dimension of a phenomenon. Different viewpoints are likely to produce some elements which do not fit a theory or model. Thus, old theories are refashioned or new theories developed. Moreover, divergent results from triangulation can lead to an enriched explanation of the research problem (Jick, 1979).

Although the multiple case approach also builds trustworthiness, case study research is not sampling research (Yin, 1994). Selection of cases is done to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available for the study not to justify results by use of a larger sample.

Generalization of results, from either single or multiple designs, is made to theory and not to populations (Yin, 1994). Use of multiple cases strengthens the results by replicating the pattern-matching, thus increasing confidence in the robustness of the theory.

The cases chosen for this study are atypical:

When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229)

As a result the cases for this research are three churches where there are higher than normal percentages of Newcomers. Within these three case churches, multiple research methods are used to triangulate conclusions. Using the accounts of different participants in different churches draws upon multiple perspectives. This enables the development of a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal of the real life situations (Jick, 1979; Tellis, 1997).

4.4 Participants

Purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998) of atypical churches with high levels of Newcomers provided a rich source of information regarding the engagement of Newcomers. The National Church Life Survey wrote to the 50 churches in Australia with the highest percentages of Newcomers, requesting them to be involved in this research. Eight churches responded to the request and three were chosen on the basis of their geographical, demographic and denominational diversity.

Given that the NCLS data was collected in 2006 it was necessary to confirm that there had not been any major changes (for example, the exit of the Senior Pastor or major church conflict) in the life of the church in the intervening years which would have dramatically changed the qualities of the church. The use of the NCLS questions related to sense of belonging and leadership in the questionnaire (see Section 4.5.3) also confirmed that the features of interest were still present.

Since it was impossible to study all relevant people within the boundaries of the case in adequate intensity and depth, appropriate sampling decisions were made to strengthen the soundness of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The participants from within each church were drawn from four major groups: the staff (including the Senior Pastor), lay leaders, attenders, and Newcomers (who have attended for less than five years). Each provided a unique perspective on the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance.

The staff, including the Senior Pastor, provided insight on the phenomena at a macro level. In particular they identified the strategies used by the church to attract Newcomers, develop sense of belonging and guide leadership. The staff also provided some intuitive insights into the phenomena because of their high level of involvement with the church.

The lay leaders of the church were able to describe their experiences of sense of belonging and leadership in the church from a unique position. Not only had they experienced the sense of belonging and leadership but they were also aware of the policies that drove the actions focused on these two phenomena. Because they were both “attenders” and “leaders” at the same time they provided a unique perspective on the areas of interest.

For the purpose of the NCLS and this research, “attenders” were the people who filled in the NCLS questionnaire and indicated that they were not visiting this church (meaning that it was “their” church) and they were not a Newcomer. The attenders were the ones who reported they experienced strong and growing sense of belonging and inspiring and empowering leadership in the NCLS survey. It was crucial to understand *their* experience of being part of their church and their understanding of the terms “strong and growing sense of belonging” and “inspiring” and “empowering” leadership.

Finally, the Newcomers (attended this church for less than five years and previously did not attend any church) were able to describe their unique experiences of the church in which they had engaged. In particular, they were able to describe the process of joining the church as well as their experiences of people in the church, especially the leaders.

4.5 Research Methods

Research methods are techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to the research question (Crotty, 1998). Case study research “has no specific methods of data collection or of analysis which are unique to it as a method of enquiry” (Bassey, 1999, p. 69). Case study is often identified as a “qualitative research” methodology bringing with it a predetermined set of data gathering methods (Burns, 1997). However, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is ambiguous and the research strategies associated with each can be combined within an overall research strategy (Bryman, 2001; Crotty, 1998). And so, in this research project, research methods were not chosen on the basis of whether they are “qualitative” or “quantitative” but according to how well they served the fulfilment of the research purpose (Crotty, 1998). In particular, different research methods were used to triangulate the evidence.

The advantages and disadvantages of each method used are summarised in Table 4-2:

Table 4-2 Research Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeted - focuses on case study topic insightful - provides perceived causal inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bias due to poor questions response bias incomplete recollection reflexivity - interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeted - focuses on case study topic insightful - provides perceived causal inferences more time effective than interviews “brainstorming” effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bias due to poor questions response bias incomplete recollection reflexivity - interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear
Direct Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reality - covers events in real time contextual - covers event context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time-consuming selectivity - might miss facts reflexivity - observer's presence might cause change cost - observers need time

Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost effective in terms of both time and money • much information gathered from many people in relatively short space of time • respondents confidentiality assured • less pressure for immediate response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions can be misinterpreted • ordering of questions can influence responses
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Sources: Based on Yin (1994) and Kayrooz & Trevitt (2005).

Each method has its own disadvantages, but together they provide the means of grasping a good understanding of the engagement of Newcomers in these high percentage Newcomer churches.

4.5.1 Interviews

In-depth interviews with the staff, including the Senior Pastor, of each church were performed. The questions that formed the basis of these interviews were driven by the research questions. Because case studies are about people and their perceptions, interviews were a crucial method of data collection (Burns, 1997). They allowed the time for the researcher to explore, in-depth, the interviewee's construction of reality. The interviews were unstructured, using open-ended questions so that the interviewee was an informant rather than just a respondent. The interviewer was able to "probe" by asking the informant to explain or build on their responses (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Open-ended questions also provided the opportunity for the informant to provide important insights and identify other sources of evidence (Burns, 1997).

The interviews and focus groups were flexible to allow the researcher to shift from one line of inquiry to another as the data collection progressed enabling better focus on important material. Active participation by the researcher was limited to maintaining focus on the questions and clarifying or seeking confirmation of a perceived emerging theme.

It has been found that managers/leaders are more likely to agree to be interviewed, rather than complete a questionnaire, especially where the interview topic is seen to be interesting

and relevant to their current work (Saunders, et al., 2003). The interviews provided the church staff with an opportunity to reflect on their perceptions without having to write anything down.

4.5.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups typically consist of 4-12 people brought together by a facilitator to discuss a selected topic in a non-threatening environment (Wilson, 1997). Focus groups were used to gather information from lay leaders, church attenders and Newcomers. These groups were relatively unstructured and free flowing although there were particular themes and questions explored. The researcher encouraged participants to discuss the particular questions (see Appendices) but also allowed them to range more freely in the discussion in order to reveal data that provided other important insights (Saunders, et al., 2003).

The focus groups provided a more efficient way to interview a larger number of individuals than would be possible through one-on-one interviews. Moreover, the group interaction which developed in the focus groups lead to a highly productive discussion and a rich flow of data (Saunders, et al., 2003). Because of the presence of several participants, a variety of points of view emerged as the group responded to, and discussed, the issues. The groups generated and responded to a number of ideas and evaluated them thus explaining and exploring concepts. Participants were also able to discuss points of view between themselves and challenge one another (Saunders, et al., 2003).

These dynamics were particularly important because the concepts of empowering and inspiring leadership and strong and growing sense of belonging were constructs which many of the participants may not have previously sought to articulate. The group situation allowed "brainstorming" to occur thus producing a deeper understanding and description of the phenomena.

4.5.3 Questionnaire

An anonymous closed question questionnaire was used with the leaders, attenders and Newcomers who participated in the interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire

component of the research performed two functions. First, it served to triangulate the findings from the other data collection techniques. The questionnaire provided a distinctly different format for data collection than the verbal and spontaneous methods of interview or focus group. It gave the participants the opportunity to reflect upon the discussions in the focus group and integrate that reflection into the data they offered in the questionnaire thus enhancing understanding of the phenomena being examined. It also provided them with a previously developed “language” in order for them to reflect upon and describe their experience of sense of belonging and leadership in the church.

The second reason that a questionnaire was used in this research was to address the hypothetical assertions discussed in the literature review (Bryman, 2001). The link between sense of belonging and Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) has been explored empirically in a church setting by Miers & Fisher (2002). In their investigation of a church in a conflict situation they identified a correlation between the NCLS concept of sense of belonging and psychological Sense of Community. To further explore this, the Sense of Community Index (SCI) was a basis of part of the questionnaire. The SCI consists of 12 statements related to respondent’s perceptions of their neighbourhood. These were adapted for use in a church with a Lickert-type Scale. The simultaneous use of the Sense of Community Index and the NCLS question relating to sense of belonging, used by Miers and Fisher (2002), was repeated in this research.

The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) has been developed to identify and measure empowering leadership behaviours as perceived by followers (Arnold, et al., 2000). The items of the ELQ were adapted for use in the questionnaire to give greater depth of understanding of empowering leadership in high percentage Newcomer churches. The questionnaire also included the NCLS question related to empowering leadership.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is the most validated and efficient measure of Transformational Leadership, as well as a range of leadership behaviours (Bass, et al., 2003). The 45 questions related to leadership style and outcomes were used in the questionnaire. The NCLS question relating to inspiring leadership was also incorporated into the questionnaire.

4.5.4 Direct Observation

In order to fully understand the phenomena it was necessary for the researcher to participate in the life of the church, at least to some extent, in order to make contextually informed observations. It is not possible to adequately explain the behaviour of people unless their symbolic world is understood (Saunders, et al., 2003). Through the process of interaction and communication, individuals respond to one another and adjust their understandings and behaviour as a shared sense of order and reality is negotiated with others. Some form of participant observation is necessary in order for the researcher to understand the process whereby individuals and community construct and reconstruct their identity.

There are different models of direct observation varying according to whether the researcher participates or not and whether the researcher's identity is revealed or concealed (Saunders, et al., 2003). One model of direct observation is "Observer as Participant": the researcher is a "spectator" and "participant" and his/her identity as a researcher is not hidden. This approach has been used by researchers doing similar work in Pentecostal churches (McGaw, 1980). Given that this research is not about developing an understanding of a phenomenon about which the research subjects would be naturally defensive it did not require the researcher's identity to be concealed. The Observer as Participant model was also not as time-consuming as the fuller participation models.

Data collected from direct observation were recorded as soon as possible after it was encountered in a Research Journal. The Observer as Participant model allowed the researcher to be more "open" in the observation and therefore more comfortable in taking notes at the time the event was being observed or reported.

4.6 Data Collection

The researcher visited the three high percentage Newcomer churches between June and August 2009. Church A was a Salvation Army church located in regional Victoria. Church B was an Anglican church located in the western suburbs of Sydney. Church C was a Christian City Church in the south-east corner of Queensland.

The number of people who participated in each method of data collection is summarised in

Table 4-3:

Table 4-3 Participant Summary Table

Participant	Staff	Lay Leaders	Attendees	Newcomers
Definition	Employed by church	Leaders but not employed by church	People who attend this church but who are not "Newcomers"	Attended this church for less than five years and previously did not attend any church
Method	Interview	Focus Group/ Questionnaire	Focus Group/ Questionnaire	Focus Group/ Questionnaire
Church A	3	11	10	8
Church B	6	15	12	13
Church C	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>
Total number of participants	11	35	25	30

As well as these formal interviews, focus groups and questionnaire, data were collected through observation and informal discussions over three days in each church.

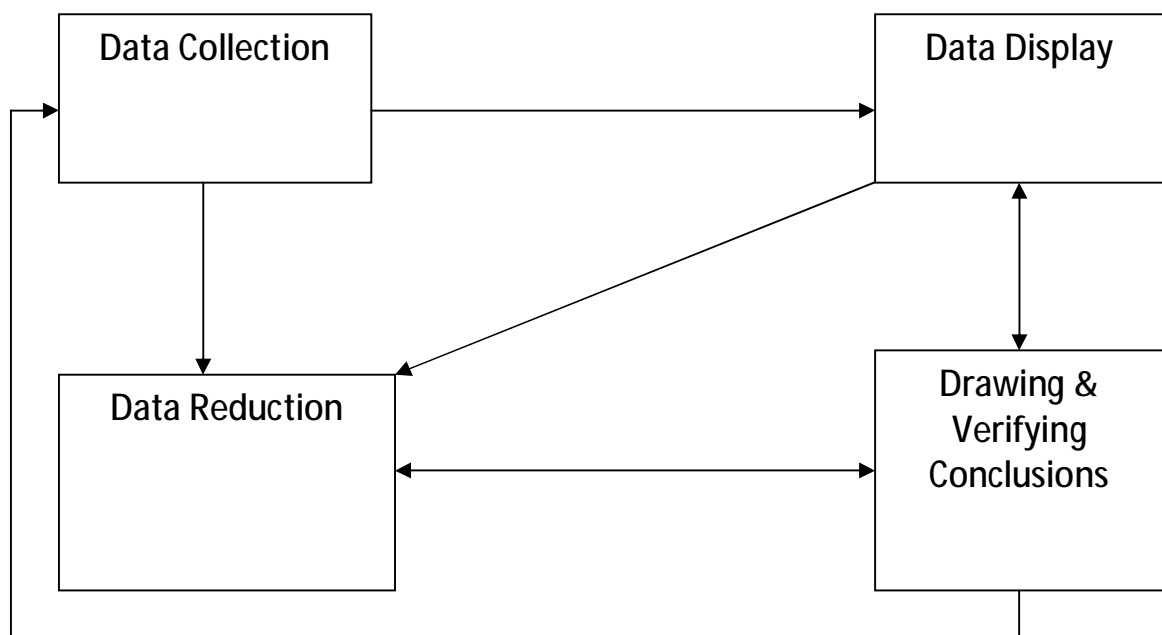
4.7 Analysis of Data

Analysis of data is a dynamic and creative process through which researchers try to gain a deeper understanding of what they are studying (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The "constant comparative method," was used in this research. Analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection and was an ongoing process of keeping track of emerging themes, reading and re-reading field notes and transcripts, and developing concepts to make sense of data (Merriam, 1998). The process of analysis began during observation of, and interaction with, the participants. While seeking to understand the meaning of the symbols used in interaction, the researcher was also forming understandings about emerging themes.

Three stages have been identified in the process of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The cycle can be repeated throughout the process:

1. Data reduction - identifying, coding and classifying data into categories.
2. Data display - summarising and assembling the information so that the themes and patterns are displayed.
3. Verification - interpreting the data, drawing conclusions and verifying the meanings.

Figure 4-1 Data Analysis Process



Source: Miles & Huberman (1994).

Data analysis may be undertaken using *within-case analysis* where each single case is treated as a comprehensive case, and then using *cross-case analysis* to build a story across a number of cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the data were analysed from within each church and then from the three churches together to produce a synthesis of the case studies. While the within-case analysis built a “comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194), the cross-case analysis allowed the comprehensive identification of common themes (Merriam, 1998, p. 195).

During data gathering, questions informed by the literature review were used to stimulate discussion in the focus groups and interviews with leaders. The researcher interrupted only to verify emerging understandings and themes. The in-depth interviews and interactions in the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Participants in the focus groups were allocated an identifier with alpha-numeric characters:

- The first character indicated the church (G = Gold Creek, W = Wattle Hills, S = Sunshine Lakes).
- The second character indicated the group (C = Cross-Section, N = Newcomers, L = Lay Leaders).
- The third character was a numerical identifier.

For example, participant GC01 was the first participant in the Gold Creek Salvation Army Cross-Section focus group.

The large amount of data generated by the focus groups was managed with the assistance of NVIVO computer software. Using this tool, analysis was undertaken to identify themes and recurring patterns of meaning embedded in the data. The raw data was prepared for this further analysis by organising it into categories (nodes) using a coding system.

Coding is the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data (Creswell, 2003). Open coding is the first stage of coding, being the process of breaking down, comparing, examining and categorising data. Categories (nodes) were based on topics, ideas, concepts, terms or phrases, and were either *a priori* (drawn from the literature review) or grounded (emerging from the data). This open coding identified categories of data and their related properties.

An example of the coding process is presented in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5. The following statements, made by people in different focus groups at the same church, were all grouped and coded under the heading "Realness" and "Just like us":

Table 4-4 Example of Coding Process - "Realness"

Interviewer: How would you describe the leaders of this church?

- GC01: I liked it when *name* was really having a bad hair day and she came in and still did the sermon and apologised for being late but she shined through even through the tears and struggle to do the sermon. Her faith carried her through. I was so proud of her for showing that side of herself. People usually put on the face, but she didn't put on a face, she was real, and I hurt for her.
- GL03: They have shared their weaknesses and allowed them to be shown to a certain extent.
- GL01: I like their honesty. We know they struggle too and it is good to know and they don't mind that.
- GL11: I think that one of the things that inspires me is that they are down-to-earth. They are real. They do not just say this is how you do it, they leave it.
- GN04: *Name* and *name* are not plastic.
- GN01: Very real, not fake.
- GN05: They don't have a Sunday face.

Table 4-5 Example of Coding Process - "Just like us."

Interviewer: How would you describe the leaders of this church?

- GC03: We have to accept that they are the preachers and we are the listeners but they are like us too.
- GC04: They live in the community. Their kids are in our school. They are in the everyday life as well.
- GC01: They're not just doing the sermon, they're like our best friends. There is a struggle who is going to talk to them first going out to the door. I love that - that's a closeness that I don't think I will ever move from my church.
- GC04: I think partly too because they are everyday people, like us. They mingle with us. They are in life with us. You run into them at the supermarket. They are normal everyday people. They make you feel as though maybe, "I can do that too." They're not up there. They are part of the church.
- GL03: [They say] "we are just people, just like you."

The coding scheme was refined by adding, collapsing overlapping categories and redefining categories until a group of themes emerged (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). For example, the two

categories “Realness” and “Just like us” described in Table 4-4 and Table 4-5 were collapsed into the theme “Authentic Leadership.”

The emerging themes from the Focus Groups were identified by a code (in brackets) after each category. They were then arranged under three headings based on the research questions: Newcomer’s experience of engagement, church characteristics and leadership characteristics, as presented in Table 4-6.

Table 4-6 Themes Emerging from Focus Groups

Newcomer’s Experience of Engagement	Church Characteristics	Leader’s Characteristics
O = Opportunity for Ministry	QS = Quality Church/Services	AL = Authentic Leaders
I = Invited	QP = Quality Preaching	IL = Inspiring Leaders
A = Acceptance	F = Friendly/Family/Warm	EL = Empowering Leaders
P = Positive experience of Leaders	SB = Sense of Belonging	CL = Caring Leaders
SU = Sense of Supernatural	E I = Egalitarian/Informal	
S = Scary	N = Non-Sunday involvement	
	SG = Small Groups	
	OF = Outward Focus	

The categories (nodes) emerging from the Focus Groups and the themes to which they were assigned are presented in Table 4-7.

Table 4-7 Focus Group Categories (Nodes)

Gold Creek Salvation Army	Wattle Hills Anglican	Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes
Coming to church scary (S)	Coming to church scary (S)	
Non-judgemental acceptance (A)	Church welcoming (F)	Church accepting (A)
God brought me here (SU)	God brought me here (SU)	Felt presence of God (SU)
Welcoming (F)	Friendly welcome (F)	Church welcoming (F)

Friendship (F)	Church egalitarian (EI)	Church egalitarian (EI)
Equality (EI)	Church is informal (EI)	Church friendly (F)
Cooperation (EI)		
Opportunity for ministry (O)	Church gives opportunity for ministry (O)	
Invited to church (I)	Invited to church by friend (I)	
Church growing (QS)	Church relevant (QS)	Church exciting (QS)
Everybody involved (O)	Church has Bible emphasis (QS)	Church services quality (QS)
Services quality (QS)	Church communication good (QS)	Church focus on prayer (QS)
Variety of people and services (QS)	Services comfortable (QS)	Church gives sense of purpose (QS)
	Range of ministries (QS)	
	Church presence in community (OF)	Church has outward focus (OF)
Non-Sunday fellowship (N)		Intentional welcome and follow-up (CL)
Feel needed (SB)	Church nurturing (F)	
Church feels like family (F)	Church diverse (QS)	
Leaders like us too (AL)	Leaders informal (AL)	Leaders like us (AL)
Leaders real (AL)	Leaders authentic (AL)	Leaders real (AL)
Leaders show care and concern (CL)	Leaders care (CL)	Leaders know us (CL)
Leaders support (CL)		Leaders willing to listen (CL)
Leaders empower (EL)	Ministers approachable (EL)	Leaders support when we fail (EL)
Leaders help us grow (EL)		Volunteers honoured and needed (EL)
Leaders help us find and use our gifts (EL)	Positive experience of ministers (P)	Newcomer positive experience of leaders (P)
Leaders energetic and enthusiastic (IL)	Leaders work hard (IL)	Leaders impart vision (IL)
Leaders challenge (IL)	Leaders give outward focus	Leaders challenge and hold

	(IL)	accountable (IL)
Leaders inspire (IL)		Leaders inspire and encourage (IL)
Leaders set example (IL)	Leaders lead by example (IL)	Leaders have integrity (IL)
Leaders humble (AL)	Quality ministry team	Leaders love or sacrifice for church (IL)
Leaders relate to all ages (CL)	Initial contact through school	Church is his family (IL)
Preaching authoritative (P)	Christianity Explained	Sermons relevant (QP)
Preaching interesting (P)	Church has outward focus (OF)	Sermons inspiring (QP)
Sense of belonging (S)	Child friendly church (F)	Breakie club (SG)
Warm atmosphere (F)	Church is caring (F)	Part of 3C movement
	Wednesday Bible study (SG)	Leaders led by God
	Close to church	Leaders willing to take risks
	Engagement through children	Leaders balance ministry and family (AL)
		Newcomer asking questions of God (SU)
		Empower courses (SG)
		Connect group important (SG)

The tentative grasp of emerging themes from the focus groups was confirmed and refined through further interaction with the participants during each case study. Triangulation was achieved by reference to observations made by the researcher, interviews with leaders and the questionnaires. Reflection, informed by the Literature Review and the Theological Framework, enabled the evolution of a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomena which incorporated the language of the focus groups and interviews but also utilised other findings, language and concepts. The meanings derived from the first case study were verified, refined or rejected by findings from the subsequent case studies. A number of factors related to the engagement of Newcomers emerged from this process and form the basis of the Discussion of Findings in Chapter 6.

Alongside the focus groups, interviews and observation, a questionnaire was used. The items in the questionnaire were drawn from the National Church Life Survey, the Sense of Community Index, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire. The individual questions were first analysed from the perspective that they gave the participants a language to describe their experience of the church and its leaders. The statements most strongly agreed with by participants were examined to confirm other findings or initiate new reflections.

However, the responses were also coded and statistically analysed using SPSS computer software. The cases were analysed individually and then as a combined set. The validity of the instruments were tested and correlations between different items explored.

The primary tool used to measure relationship between these concepts and instruments is correlation. Correlation is a statistical technique that is used to measure and describe a relationship between two variables (for example, the answer to two questions in a questionnaire). The most common measure of correlation is the Pearson correlation (r) (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007). However, Spearman's rho (r_s) measures the association between two ordinal (i.e., ranked) variables. It is a suitable alternative to the Pearson's correlation when the assumptions of normality and/or linearity cannot be met, as in this research (Allen & Bennett, 2008).

A correlation measures the degree of relationship between two variables on a scale from 0 to +/- 1.0. A correlation of 1.0 indicates a perfect relationship. At the other extreme a correlation of zero indicates no relationship at all. Intermediate values represent the degree to which the data points approximate the perfect fit.

However, all variables are correlated to some extent; rarely will a correlation be exactly zero. Once a correlation is computed, the probability that the observed correlation occurred by chance must be determined. This is called the significance test. The significance level (p) indicates how likely it is that the correlations reported may be due to chance. The smaller the p -level, the greater the probability the correlation is *not* due to chance. A significance level of $p < .05$ means that the odds that the correlation is a chance occurrence is no more than 5 out of 100.

Correlation does not explain *why* the two variables are related. Specifically, correlation should not, and cannot, be interpreted as a proof of cause-and-effect relationship between two variables. However, since this research is not concerned with predicting whether the constructs (sense of belonging, Sense of Community, empowering leadership and inspirational leadership) “cause” or “predict” the existence of one another it is unnecessary to move beyond correlation into, say, regression analysis here. (However, further statistical work in this area may well be justified.)

To determine how reliable a questionnaire is its internal consistency must be assessed. Internal consistency refers to the extent that different items that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores. Cronbach's α (alpha) is a commonly used estimator of the internal consistency reliability of a psychometric instrument. Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or higher indicates that the instrument is reliable (Nunnally, 1978; Santos, 1999).

Spearman's rho, the significance test and Cronbach's α are used to explore the relationship between the constructs and the reliability of the instruments used in this research. The analysis is not exhaustive but does serve to triangulate findings from the other data collection methods within the groups of people participating.

4.8 Trustworthiness

In case study, trustworthiness, rather than reliability and validity, establishes the integrity of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Trustworthiness can be examined within the constructivist paradigm through frank assessment of disconfirming evidence, triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field and the production of a thick and rich description.

The search for disconfirming evidence involved the establishment of preliminary themes and then a search through the data for evidence that was consistent with, or disconfirmed, these themes. Sustained engagement with the churches under study and with the data gathered

from the research methods allowed for the cyclical analytical process described in Section 4.7 to produce satisfying conclusions.

In this study, triangulation was achieved through the comparison of data obtained from focus groups, individual interviews, the questionnaire and observation. As a theme emerged from an interview, say, its soundness was assessed on the basis of whether the focus groups, questionnaires or observations of that church confirmed or rejected that theme.

This process of compiling research material using different methods was useful whether there was convergence or not. Where there was convergence, confidence in the results grew because findings were no longer attributable to a method artefact. However, where divergent findings emerged, alternative, and more complex, explanations were generated.

In case studies, the researcher's perspective is a subject of critical reflection (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher's assumptions, beliefs and biases bring distortion to the collection of data. The potential to influence or bias the responses from the participants is acknowledged. To overcome this, active participation in any interviews and focus groups was minimised. Verbal intervention was only used to maintain focus on the questions, clarify a point or to seek validation for an emerging theme. Further, the focus on the theoretical framework throughout the process of data collection reduced distortions introduced by the human instrument in the collection.

However, the participants also play a role in building trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The tentative findings of the research were presented back to key informants for comments and verifications. A copy of the "Case Study Verification Form" sent to each church for feedback is included in the Appendices. This ensured that the interpretations of the researcher were consistent with the constructed understanding of the participants and provided an opportunity to correct any biases that the researcher brought to the research process.

Finally, the generation of thick descriptions produces in the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Trustworthiness is generated by intuitive, empirically-grounded generalization – a "naturalistic" generalization based on the harmonious relationship between the reader's experiences and the case study itself. The data generated by trustworthy case studies

resonates experientially with a broad cross section of readers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997).

An extensive record of the data collected, how it was collected, coded and interpreted is stored for future reference. These descriptions are available for audit and confirm the trustworthiness of the data collection and its interpretation.

4.9 Ethical Issues

The safeguarding of the human rights of the participants is a priority in the research process. The ethical issues considered are the protection of the participants, their informed consent, disclosure of the role of the researcher, privacy, confidentiality and safe data storage. Ethical approval from the Australian Catholic University Research Projects Ethics Committee was granted prior to research commencing.

The National Church Life Survey guarantees the confidentiality of the results from individual churches. Because the NCLS wrote to the relevant churches on behalf of the researcher this confidentiality was protected. Churches received a letter of invitation detailing the study and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw at any time. Within the churches, participants were invited to participate through a third-party who organised the focus groups and interviews.

All participants were given full disclosure of the aims and processes of the study and what was expected from them. Each participant was informed of his or her right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time, to ask questions, make comments or voice any concerns he/she had. Permission to record the interviews and focus groups was requested.

Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to participants and no identifying features were recorded.

Data stored on computer files is accessible only through the researcher's password access. Hard copies of notes and data are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Academic Supervisor's office and are accessible only with the permission of the researcher and the Supervisor. All data is de-identified in such a way to ensure the participants anonymity and confidentiality.

Respect for the integrity and truthfulness of different perspectives is also an ethical concern (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). The researcher has sought to use critical subjectivity through self-awareness to ensure that the data is collected and conveyed without distortion.

4.10 Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study have already been discussed with respect to the perceived weaknesses of the methodology of case study and the advantages and disadvantages of the various research techniques. In addition it is acknowledged that the case study is set in the specific contexts of three churches. Therefore, the notion of reliability or validity of the findings, that is the extent to which they can be injudiciously replicated or transferred, is not implied. If the same study was done again, it may not achieve the exact same result. Similarly, the findings from these churches may not be automatically generalised to other churches. However, the soundness of the research design and the generation of rich and authentic information provides valuable insights on the phenomena of Newcomer engagement in church attendance.

The possible influence of the presence of the researcher on the behaviour of participants is acknowledged. The nature of focus groups also made it difficult for participants to speak out if they did disagree with the primarily positive expressions of others in the groups.

Further, it is acknowledged that no researcher commences with a blank mind and no analysis of data is neutral. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and his experience, interests and knowledge guides the progress of the study (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 1998). In particular the research is undertaken from the perspective of a Baptist pastor in a non-Baptist church context. The issues related to understanding the context of these churches in interpreting the information collected is duly acknowledged. However, the techniques used to enhance trustworthiness (see Section 4.8) minimise the impact of these limitations on the value of the research.

The limitations of the statistical analysis presented in this research are recognised. The respondents are not a sample but a series of naturally occurring groups of restricted size. The questionnaire is not rigorously tested, nor are its results. The questionnaire is used for interpretive purposes within a certain context, not for the development of overarching

empirically derived principles. The correlations and conclusions drawn from the surveys are tentative and for the purpose of triangulation rather than generalised theory. They do, however, promote understanding and suggest relationships which should be the subject of more rigorous statistical analysis.

4.11 Overview of Research Design

This research has been completed according to the following time line.

Table 4-8 Overview of Research Design

Timeline	Interpretive process	Data Collection	Data Analysis
January 2007- July 2008	Identify the relevance, problem and purpose of study Literature Review Develop research questions Develop research design		
August 2008	Ethical Approval Application submitted and approved		
March 2009	Purposeful selection of participants	Invitations to participate are sent to high percentage Newcomer churches by the NCLS	
April 2009	Purposeful selection of participants Data Collection	Contact with churches to assess suitability and to interview church staff	
June 2009	Purposeful selection of participants Case Study One	Church attenders and Newcomers are invited to participate in focus groups by church staff Interviews, focus	Contemporaneous data analysis continues. Tentative themes emerge and are confirmed or disconfirmed by

		groups, observation and Questionnaires conducted	participants
July 2009	Purposeful selection of participants Case Study Two	Church attenders and Newcomers are invited to participate in focus groups by church staff Interviews, focus groups, observation and Questionnaires conducted	Contemporaneous data analysis continues. Tentative themes emerge and are confirmed or disconfirmed by participants
August 2009	Purposeful selection of participants Case Study Three	Church attenders and Newcomers are invited to participate in focus groups by church staff Interviews, focus groups, observation and Questionnaires conducted	Contemporaneous data analysis continues. Tentative themes emerge and are confirmed or disconfirmed by participants
September - December 2009	Confirmation of themes in light of Research questions and literature review		Transcription and analysis of data. Thematic analysis conducted.
January - June 2010	Confirmation of data Report key themes in Draft Findings chapter and use key themes and literature review to develop Discussion Chapter	Summary of interpretations returned to participants for confirmation	Data analysis and synthesis

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers (people who have joined a church in the last five years and who previously did not attend) in church attendance. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the case studies of three high percentage Newcomer churches.

The research questions that focussed the conduct of the study are:

1. How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?
2. How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and “a strong and growing sense of belonging” experience this sense of belonging?
3. How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

In order to better understand the experience of the participants within each case study, the historical and geographical context of each church is first described. Data from the 2006 National Church Life Survey, other statistical data and the perspectives of church leaders are then presented to provide further background.

Having provided a context, the experience of the researcher in visiting the church services and other activities is then presented as a first person narrative. This approach allows a more authentic description of the experience of Newcomers than a primarily analytical third person description (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Although the experience of the researcher only approximates the experience of the Newcomer, the use of first person narrative does provide a window to view some of their emotional, social and intuitive experiences.

The experiences of Newcomers, attenders and leaders, as expressed in their own words in the focus groups, are then described. The focus groups provided an environment for the participants to use their own language and to borrow and build on the language of others in the group. Although commonly expressed experiences, both in the group and across groups,

are highlighted, each experience was considered of value and its contribution to understanding considered.

Three focus groups were held at each church: one group composed of Newcomers, one of lay leaders and one of attenders. Reflecting the Research Questions, the findings from the focus groups are presented under three headings: the Newcomers experience of engagement, the attender's (including Newcomers and lay leaders) experience of the church and the attender's (including Newcomers and lay leaders) experience of the leaders of the church.

The questionnaire served two purposes in this research. First, it served on a "simple" level to give participants the opportunity to describe their experience of the church and the leadership using concepts and language developed by previous research. For each church the statements in the questionnaire which were most strongly agreed with by attenders are presented.

The questionnaire was also used to test the hypothetical links suggested by the literature review. The salient findings for each case are presented in this chapter. The full results of the questionnaire for each church are presented in Appendix F.

These insights from the questionnaire are combined with the self-described experience of the church attenders, the experience of the researcher in the church and the historical and community context in order to be able to synthesise an understanding of the engagement of Newcomers in each particular church. A number of factors related to Newcomer engagement are identified and form the basis of a summary at the end of each case.

The names of the churches and their leaders have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. However the church denominations, general geographical and demographic details are correct.

5.2 Case Study One: Gold Creek Salvation Army

5.2.1 Introduction

The researcher visited the Gold Creek Salvation Army Church from Friday the 12th of June until Monday the 15th of June, 2009. He explored the general nature of the community, the experience of the leaders and the experience of members of the church through observation, interview, focus groups and questionnaires.

5.2.2 Community Context

Gold Creek is located in Victoria's Goldfields district. The area was first settled by pastoralists in the mid-1830s. The district came to life in the late 1840s and 1850s with the discovery of gold. As the easily mined gold dwindled in the next 20 to 30 years, industry began to take over in Gold Creek. These years saw the construction of several magnificent buildings in the city, many of which still stand today, including the railway station, post office, courthouse and town hall. Since the late 1980s the major industry has been printing. However, the decline of manufacturing in Australia has had a severe impact on Gold Creek and the surrounding shire.

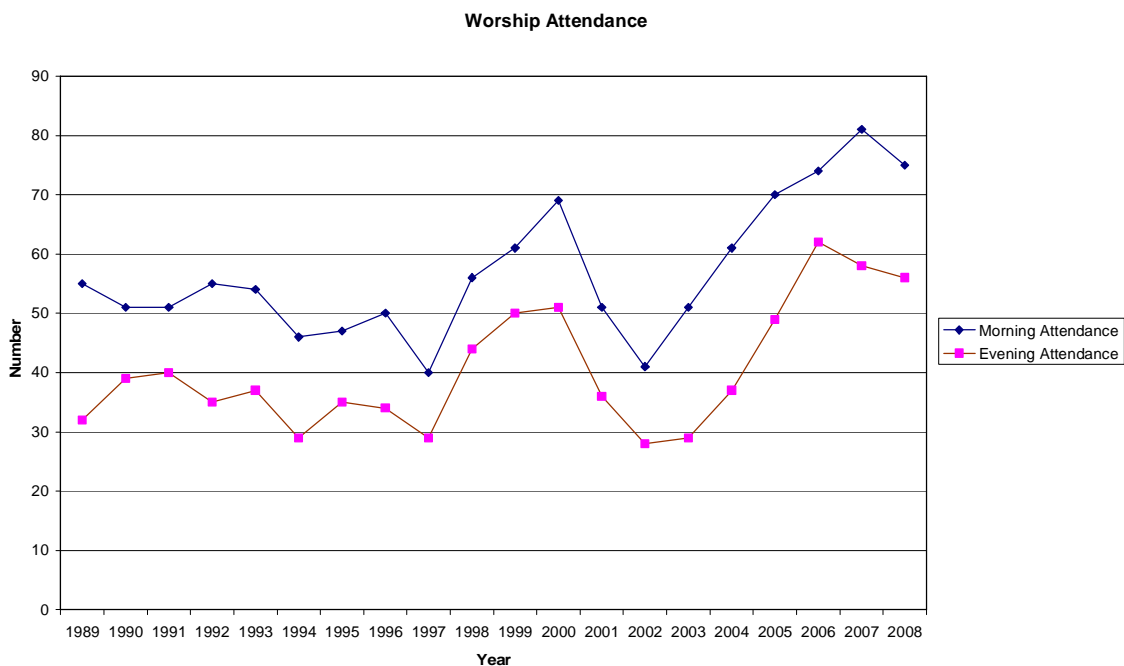
Although the population of the shire has remained relatively constant at 12,000 people, with the population of Gold Creek approximately 7700, the aging nature of the community is confirmed by the 2006 Census. The median age of persons in the local government area was 46 years compared to the national average age of 37. The median age in 1996 was 39 years. Of all the residents, 22.8% were aged over 65, compared to the national average of 13.3%.

The unemployment rate in Gold Creek in April 2008 was 9.8%, almost double the national figure. For those aged 15 and over the average weekly individual income was \$305, \$151 per week lower than the state average. The average weekly family income for the shire was \$703, \$470 below the average for both Victoria and Australia. Only 23.6% of people in the shire had completed year 12 in comparison to the state average of 44%.

5.2.3 Corps History

The Gold Creek Salvation Army Corps was officially opened on the 25th of February, 1884. The first hall was built on the current site in the main street in 1886. In 1905, 87 converts were registered and a brass band formed with 8 members. Although the corps faced closure in 1930 because of small numbers, by 1960 over 500 children were attending Vacation Bible Schools and the Young People's company had 106 in attendance. A renovated hall was opened in 1990. The attendance in the last 20 years is shown in Figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1 Gold Creek Salvation Army Average Church Attendance 1999-2008



The years 2004 through until 2007 saw a strong growth in the church. During the years 1989 to 2004 the number of people "saved" (that is, converts or Newcomers) averaged 4 people per year. However, in the years 2005 to 2008, 79 people were saved. It was the engagement of these people in church life which identified Gold Creek Salvation Army as a high percentage Newcomer church in the National Church Life Survey in 2006. According to that survey, 30% of the respondents identified that they had been attending church for five years or less and had never previously attended church or had not attended for a considerable period of time.

In 2006 attendances had reached the point where a 1:30 p.m. service commenced. The church currently offers five services:

1. Friday Celebration - a traditional service on Friday at 10:30 a.m. for older members of the community.
2. Youth Celebration - a service designed for youth and young adults on Friday at 6 p.m.
3. Sunday Celebration - a service featuring the brass band and children's programme on Sunday at 9:30 a.m.
4. Family Celebration - all age worship on Sunday at 11:30 a.m.
5. Holiness Meeting - a service designed for Christians wanting to go deeper, on Sundays at 6 p.m.

The Youth Service, in particular, continues to see growth through Newcomers.

A consultancy in 2008 identified that the Corps had reached the peak of its current lifecycle. A number of steps have been taken to address this, including a renewed vision and the commencement of multiple services to allow further growth.

The church has completed two surveys which allow for a better understanding of its nature. The results of the surveys are presented in Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.5.

5.2.4 The National Church Life Survey

The 2006 National Church Life Survey identified that Gold Creek Salvation Army was in the top 50 churches in Australia in terms of percentages of Newcomers. The 76 survey forms revealed that 30% of the congregation were Newcomers - they had begun attending the church in the last five years and had previously not attended church.

The aspects of the church most valued by the respondents to the survey were ministry to youth and children, wider community care or social justice emphasis and reaching out to those who do not attend church. This reflects the emphasis and effectiveness of the church in reaching out to Newcomers.

Over 15 years of research the NCLS has developed nine Core Qualities which are indicative of church vitality and high levels of Newcomers (Kaldor, et al., 2002). The summary scores below are based on the responses to the questions in the survey most closely correlated to the Core Quality. The church's percentages for these questions were converted into a standardised score between 1 and 10. This shows how they compare to the percentages from the other 4,000 churches that participated in the survey. A score of 5 is the average for each summary score.

Table 5-1 Gold Creek Salvation Army NCLS Core Qualities 2001 & 2006

Core Quality	2006	2001
Alive and Growing Faith	9.4	6.7
Vital and Nurturing Worship	9.3	8.2
Strong and Growing Belonging	7.1	5.9
Clear and Owned Vision	7.8	6.9
Inspiring and Empowering Leadership	7.1	3.9
Imaginative and Flexible Innovation	10.0	6.4
Practical and Diverse Service	4.9	4.5
Willing and Effective Faith-sharing	6.7	7.8
Intentional and Welcoming Inclusion	9.7	7.2

These results demonstrate that Gold Creek Salvation Army is well above the Australian average in all but one Core Quality. They also show that in eight of the nine Core Qualities the church has improved in the period between 2001 and 2006.

5.2.5 The Natural Church Development Survey

Gold Creek Salvation Army has also conducted a Natural Church Development Survey on four occasions, including September 2008. This survey is based on research by Germany's Institute for Natural Church Development to identify the causes of church growth. They

identified that healthy churches are growing churches and identified eight health characteristics which are measured by the survey (Schwarz, 1996).

A church's scores on the eight quality characteristics are standardised against the thousands of other churches that have participated. A score of 65 is considered "high," a score of 50 is considered "average" and a score of 35 is "low." Gold Creek Salvation Army's profile for 2008 is below:

Table 5-2 Gold Creek Salvation Army NCD Quality Characteristics 2008

Quality Characteristic	Score
Empowering leadership	60
Gift based ministry	68
Passionate spirituality	65
Effective structures	66
Inspiring worship service	67
Holistic small groups	56
Need oriented evangelism	82
Loving relationships	60

These surveys confirm that Gold Creek Salvation Army is an extremely healthy church. The senior leaders of the church are in a unique position to understand the dynamics of this health and describe the strategies used to produce it.

5.2.6 Leader's Perspective

The staff of Gold Creek Salvation Army consists of Captains William and Catherine (a married couple), Envoy Florence, a welfare worker and an office administrator. The researcher was able to explore the leaders' experience of the Gold Creek Salvation Army through formal interviews with William and Catherine and Florence and other informal conversations, both

with these three people, and others in the corps. The guiding purpose of the researcher was to better understand why this church is so effective at attracting and retaining Newcomers.

Envoy Florence

Florence joined the Gold Creek Salvation Army in 1998. At that time it had about 30 to 40 people attending church in the morning and 30 to 40 people at night. She describes the arrival of William and Catherine as a “godsend.” They challenged her to greater commitment but also released her into ministry. She is currently involved in revitalising a Salvation Army corps in a nearby town.

Florence identifies three key factors in the growth of the church. The first is William and Catherine's leadership. She describes how they take time with each person to explore what God wants them to do and to empower them to do it. They also allow the laity to make decisions that normally only the Officer would make.

Second, she identifies that Gold Creek Salvation Army is a very welcoming church. This is because of a concerted effort in equipping leaders and teaching people how to be welcoming. It is also a place where the non-churched can see people who are happy and equipped and so want to be part of the church. She also identifies the fact that all feel equal in ministry as an important part of making the church welcoming.

Third, she identifies a focus on vision rather than just maintaining membership as a factor in church growth. The emphasis is on taking “baby Christians” on a journey of faith by placing the focus on equipping people and teaching basics.

Captains William and Catherine

In the 120 year history of the Gold Creek Salvation Army, William and Catherine are the longest serving officers. Captains William and Catherine commenced as the Corps Officers in 2003. In 2009 they were in the fourth year of a five year covenant.

They identify four characteristics they sought to bring into the church which would promote Newcomer growth.

One of the first things they endeavoured to do when arriving in the church was to create joy and a positive attitude and vision. They also sought to give things a purpose. As a result the church offers joy and hope in a fairly depressed environment.

Second, they sought to create an environment where people felt accepted and loved for who they were and not judged. Each one was encouraged to travel their own journey at their own pace and not to have to dress and act in certain ways.

Third, they endeavoured to get people involved in the life of the church, sometimes even before they made the decision to become a Christian.

Fourth, they have sought to build momentum. They seek to enrol as many adherents and soldiers as early as possible in their Christian life to add to a general feeling of movement and excitement in the church.

One of the themes that emerged from the literature review was the role of empowering leadership in attracting and retaining Newcomers. William indicates that his philosophy is to “let people have a go” and “not treat people like children.” He also speaks in terms of “letting them do it their way.”

Another of the themes revealed in the literature review was inspirational leadership. William and Catherine speak about the importance of the church vision: “Storming the Forts of Darkness.” They also speak about leading by example and the importance of inspiring music: it speaks “the potential of God into people.”

Finally, on the topic of sense of belonging, they highlight the need to transition Newcomers into belonging as soon as possible. They appeal for a decision to become a Christian about once a month, and aim to have converts enrolled as soldiers within one year. They note that previous growth in the corps had not been sustained because increased attendances had not been converted into increased enrolments in the corps.

5.2.7 Researcher’s Experience of Gold Creek Salvation Army

My impression of the corps is shaped before I even arrive at the church building. As I book into my accommodation the receptionist asks, “What brings you to Gold Creek?” I reply, “I have come here to have a look at Gold Creek Salvation Army. It is one of the best churches in Australia at attracting new people and I have come to learn a little bit about it.” She seems surprised but says,

We are not religious or anything, but I think it was at Easter last year when they invited us to a family fun day. We went and it was good. They gave us a sort of “sample bag” with lots of information about the Salvation Army. They have lots of... classes for children. It seemed a really ... good place.

I drive a short distance to the worship centre. It is a light brick building dating from the 1970s, located a short distance from the main shopping strip. I park outside the building and walk inside. Captain William is a tall, quietly spoken, gentle man. He is dressed casually for the Friday night youth service. The two or three young people gathered joke and gently tease him.

William is operating the sound system as two teenagers practise singing to the recorded music. As we talk a steady flow of young people arrive at the building. A mother and young child arrive and the child nervously asks whether she can sing at the service tonight. (She does.) Another young person sets out the chairs in a U-shape as William explains that the youth seem to like it better that way rather than like a school classroom.

I am suddenly aware that a whole group of young people have arrived. In the middle of the cavalcade is an energetic woman who is the focus of the group. She gives me a warm firm handshake as she introduces herself. Captain Catherine, like her husband, is dressed casually in jeans and a jumper. Tonight, after church, the young people go to a nearby city for tenpin bowling. Catherine has been driving the bus picking a few up and she will drop many of them home after the night is finished.

At 6 p.m. the service starts. The two young people introduce the songs and sing over the top of pre-recorded contemporary Christian music generated by a large church from Sydney. A number of the congregation clap their hands and sing loudly. Smiles and energy abound.

During the service at least 10 young people participate in everything from games, dramas, announcements, prayer, worship leading and interaction during the sermon. The highlight of the service is the Enrolment of three young people. They have recently become Christians at the church and this is a step of commitment. Following the prayer for the new adherents the young man next to me crosses himself in Catholic style.

Although a group at the back of the church talk incessantly during Catherine's sermon, I am surprised by the general level of involvement and lack of cynicism even when Catherine

specifically addresses them about their talking. The sermon concludes with an invitation for anyone present to become a Christian.

As the service ends and young people excitedly move outside into the buses, two adult members of the congregation approach me and introduce themselves. They ask, "Do you live in town?" I struggle to explain what I am doing but I feel warmly welcomed none the less.

After the young people have left, William begins to lock up before he takes their four children home to bed. This is the second service of the day, and William looks a little tired.

On Sunday I arrive at the church at 8:30 a.m. and find William and three others gathered in prayer on the stage. They all wear Salvation Army uniforms. Although the service does not start for another hour there are already six to eight people in the church building sharing coffee and their lives together. They warmly invite me into their circle and we discuss everything from weather to their experience of the church.

As people arrive one is struck by the diversity of age. The Salvation Army uniforms mark two distinct groups in the congregation, but they mix freely.

Brian is unshaved and has a number of teeth missing. His long hair pokes out from under his Salvation Army cap. However, his uniform is immaculate and he faithfully attends all three Sunday services.

Jim is also immaculately dressed but talks throughout the service and pops outside periodically to have a cigarette.

As the service commences I notice a man arrive. His tanned complexion, bedraggled hair and dirty clothes and fingernails betray that he is probably homeless. He shuffles shyly into the seat where he nervously fiddles with his tattered and stained beanie.

The brass band starts with gusto. The horns and drums beat out a stirring tune. Tambourines fly, hands clap. The place is going off. People smile joyfully and greet one another with hugs. Children's Time comes. Catherine goes forward like the Pied Piper - children in her wake. Loud action-filled songs excite children and adults alike.

As we are seated, William goes forward and indicates that a new member is being enrolled as an Adherent. To my surprise the nervous man in front of me goes to the front. It is just seven weeks since he has been "saved" but now he signs a public commitment of his allegiance to Christ and the Salvation Army. He also receives a badge, which he proudly wears on the front of his well worn sweater.

William preaches from the book of Jonah. The message is humorous and heartfelt but warns the congregation of the dangers of not obeying God. It challenges the listeners to tell others about God's love and finishes with the catch cry that God is the God of second chances. As I look around I see many people who have embraced the second chance in this place.

The service concludes with more rousing songs and the congregation moves into the foyer for a cup of coffee. Again I'm approached and engaged in conversation. I struggle to explain why I'm there but that doesn't seem to matter. I feel amongst family.

The 11:30 a.m. service is again led by a lay person accompanied by recorded music. Puppets perform and Children's Time is again led energetically by Catherine. A young child makes noise constantly throughout the service but there are no accusing glances or shaking of heads. William preaches a different message on the book of Jonah, this time with a humorous PowerPoint presentation in the background. Although there are many new faces in this congregation as we move into the foyer for a cup of coffee. I am beginning to get to know many of these people.

By the time six o'clock comes around I am feeling a little weary. Yet Catherine and William seem to be just hitting their straps. Just before the service a woman comes and speaks to me. She shares how in the midst of a devastating family tragedy Catherine befriended her and helped her through. She is one of the Newcomers.

The band is back for the "Holiness Meeting" - this is a traditional Salvation Army style of service and the largest congregation of the day. I am again struck by the diversity of ages all enjoying a quality and style of worship that I fear many of their city cousins would not embrace.

Catherine preaches on not letting your faith leak away. During the song following the sermon the woman who had spoken to me goes forward weeping. Catherine steps down

from the pulpit and puts her arm around the woman and spends five minutes just holding her. William concludes the service. We move into the foyer for yet another cup of coffee.

A number of people have been to all three services during the day. Even now they don't want to go home. I leave feeling as though I'm saying goodbye to people I have known for years, but it has just been two days, hasn't it? I have been thoroughly welcomed, but suspect that if I had not been quite so well dressed I might have been even more warmly welcomed ...

5.2.8 Newcomer's Experience of Engagement

The process whereby Newcomers came to engage with Gold Creek Salvation Army was primarily through invitation from somebody they knew who was already involved in the church. For example, "My kids started coming to Sunday School and started begging me to come to church" (GN02). For the younger Newcomers the invitation was to attend youth group or a youth service. From youth group they made a transition into the mainstream life of the church.

The "forcefulness" of these invitations is apparent in a number of statements, for example: "My cousin dragged me, literally, to youth group" (GN05). The engagement of Newcomers is a difficult process and so the invitations that are successful in bringing a Newcomer into church life are persistent.

The initial experience of church for Newcomers was described as "scary." "I was scared, I was scared of being judged, being told I wasn't good enough for this church" (GN01). "I was quite nervous because we had been to other churches as youth and we sort of, got in trouble a lot, like a whole lot. I was a bit worried about walking into the church" (GN05).

However this fear was overcome by the non-judgemental and warm welcome of the church. "When I walked in the door I felt welcome and unjudged" (GN01). One participant recounted how he had been involved in a conflict with one of the leaders of the church before he first came to church but found the forgiveness of the leader a decisive factor in engagement with the church (GN04).

The Officers were described as being one of the things that the Newcomers found attractive about the church. The preaching, leadership, opportunities and support they provided were

all cited as reasons for finding the church attractive. Although the welcome of the whole church was significant, the role of the Officers emerged as being equally significant.

Although the actions of the Officers were important, equally important to the Newcomer was their character. The Newcomers in the focus group made several references to the authenticity of the Officers: "William & Catherine are not plastic" (GN04). "They don't have a Sunday face" (GN05). In seeking to assess the authenticity of the entire church and its message the Newcomers looked to the leaders and found it.

The opportunity for ministry was cited as a reason for ongoing involvement in the church. In response to the question, "What gives you a sense of belonging?" the responses included, "Probably the doing-ness. If we are doing ministry or we are out there reaching people you are supported" (GN05) and "Just doing stuff to help people" (GN07).

5.2.9 Attender's Experience of Church

Gold Creek Salvation Army is a place where people have opportunity for ministry. This experience was perhaps best described by one of the teenagers in response to the question about what they found attractive about the church:

I would say the opportunities you get it. Like they don't just ... if you come up with a bright idea and you take it to someone they say, "Why aren't you doing it?" If you show a talent or an interest in an area you might get asked to pursue it. You never feel as though you're not working for God. (GN05)

Others said there were always opportunities to do things in the church and the support to do them. The opportunity to participate in the core activity of the church, service, provides the way for people to find a sense of value and significance. The leaders are expressing confidence that the person can "work for God" through the vital and significant activity of the church. It also brings a sense of fulfilment and belonging.

Another common experience is that of friendliness and welcome:

It is encouraged by the local people, not just by the leadership. Genuine friendship. Our first experience of the church was on a hot February morning; it was fairly

crowded. When we walked in - total strangers - and an elderly lady looked up and said, "Come sit with us." We were crammed against a wall, but it was friendship. And it has been the same down through the years. (GL09)

This experience was described as an "atmosphere" (GC02) of friendliness. Others described an atmosphere of warmth (GC03). This reflects that the experience is not just superficial or narrow, but the result of a pervading set of behaviours demonstrated by a significant number of people across the church over a period of time.

Related to this experience of friendliness and welcome is the language of family. "Yes, I would have to say it is a family. Everybody seems to care for one another genuinely. Very open arms and welcoming whoever comes in the door" (GL04). "It's not just a church it's like everybody is part of my family" (GC01). Although the New Testament metaphor of family is spiritual, the experience of attenders is probably more akin to the experience of the biological family.

One person explained the sense of family in terms of frequency of contact: "Because we see each other so often it's like being with a family member"(GC01). Another experience was that the church did not just exist on Sunday, but it was something that happened right through the week.

There's a lot of fellowship that goes on within the church apart from Sunday services. Like the fish and chips night. I think if it was just church services it would be like any other church. It is the stuff that is done outside the church services. (GC04)

Just as biological family is a constant experience, the sense of family expressed in Gold Creek Salvation Army does not just exist on Sundays, but throughout the week.

For the church attenders who have been involved in the church for longer than five years, the growth they have observed, both numerically and spiritually, has proved to be an encouragement. One lay leader commented:

I am excited by the Newcomers who have had a complete change of life in the last five or six years. They have leadership roles in the church which were most unexpected in their lives. It is amazing to see. That brings enthusiasm. (GL09)

As opposed to the experience of being in a church that was stagnant and ageing, these attenders were inspired by the Newcomers.

The overall experience of attenders of the services and preaching is that they are both interesting and vibrant. "The services are uplifting," (GL04) and also accessible: "The services are easily understandable, down-to-earth, not above your head" (GL05). The diversity and unpredictability of the services is appreciated: "You never know what they are going to do or get up to. You never know whether they are going to come in through the front door or the backdoor or through the ceiling!"(GL08).

The preaching was described in two contrasting terms. First, it is experienced as interesting and not dull or boring: "William is really good because if you sort of start to tune out, he always says something interesting to get your attention again" (GN05).

However, it is also experienced as what can be described as "authoritative." There is perceived to be an inherent power in the Officer's preaching. "They have this authority when they're speaking. You know you're not really in trouble but you feel drawn to address that issue. So they're not brutal or judgemental" (GC01). "He can be very forceful - it almost as though God talks through him most of the time" (GN01). William is seen to almost undergo a character transformation when he preaches: "Even though William is supposed to be a bit of an introvert, he is not when he is in the pulpit, he is there for God" (GC07).

5.2.10 Attender's Experience of Leadership

The most often described experience of captains William & Catherine is their energy and enthusiasm. Catherine, in particular, was described as being highly energetic and enthusiastic as she ministered to the youth both in church services and at the youth group. "The 11:30 a.m. services are real fast services - dancing and aerobics and everything and singing and Catherine just goes and goes and goes. She's fantastic" (GC03).

This enthusiasm is infectious in that it inspires others to service: "Their enthusiasm empowers me on its own, they laugh and joke and carry on and get things going" (GL02).

That example of enthusiasm in ministry inspires others:

Some years ago somebody said to Captain Catherine, "Why do you salvos keep coming to the pub? You don't drink. She said to them, "Jesus hung around with people like you so why can't we be here? We have just come to say hello and see how you're going too." And I just think that her personality is inspiring. (GC03)

However, the enthusiasm is also infectious with respect to spirituality:

When you first meet Catherine she has something you want and that is her enthusiasm for God. She has got something that you want because she is just so happy and relaxed and William can be the same if you get him talking. (GL11)

Another common experience described was a sense of authenticity. This was particularly the case with the Newcomers: "William & Catherine are not plastic" (GN04) and "They don't have a Sunday face" (GN05). This authenticity is conveyed through the transparency of their weaknesses.

I liked it when Catherine was really having a bad hair day and she came in and still did the sermon and apologised for being late but she shined through even through the tears and struggle to do the sermon. Her faith carried her through. I was so proud of her for showing that side of herself. People usually put on the face, but she didn't put on a face, she was real, and I hurt for her. (GC01)

This transparency with its resultant message of authenticity is only possible through humility. It is not surprising, then, that attenders described William & Catherine as humble people: "[They are] in no way I puffed up about themselves. They are very humble (GN04)."

Particularly important in creating this experience of humility is that they do not take advantage of the positional authority granted them by the Salvation Army structure. "I like their humble attitude. What they do and how they go about it. They don't put themselves up on a pedestal" (GL02). "We have to accept that they are the preachers and we are the listeners but they are like us too" (GC03).

The sense of humility, despite the inherent authority of being Officers, is possible because people experience William & Catherine as "one of us."

If a newcomer was to come into the church and, say, William & Catherine were in the congregation rather than on the platform, they would not be able to tell that they

were the Officers. They are just a one of us. They are not up there. They are one of us, so people can relate to them - they have these easy relationships with people. They can form the bond really easily because you don't feel like they are someone that you have to bow to on your knees. They are an equal. (GL10)

Attendees also perceive that the Officers encourage them to identify and use their gifts: "They believe everybody has a gift. They're here to help us find what that gift is and to help us develop it and use it. It doesn't matter what the gift is (GC04)." The general experience of attendees, that they are of use and of value in the church described in the previous section, can be attributed to this experience of the leaders. If an authentic, humble leader believes an individual is gifted and able to make a significant contribution to the mission of God through his church, the individual is encouraged and empowered to identify, develop and use that gift.

This identification and encouragement of gifts is often accompanied by a challenge to use them. William & Catherine are often experienced as "challenging."

They are encouraging of you to step out of your comfort zone. I have done things by the grace of God that I would never have thought I could possibly do. But William & Catherine have been God's instruments in giving me the opportunity. (GL07)

And even if people make mistakes in attempting to use these gifts, they do not feel that they have failed irredeemably: "When we fall they pick us up and help us on the way" (GL02). "It is like they are always on your side" (GL11).

Finally, one of the older and long-term members of the corps was deeply impressed by their depth of commitment:

Just unbelievable commitment to work. I have never seen Officers work like these two - whether that is good or bad. Unbelievable. They say that when they leave the Lord will send others, but I've never seen anybody who works like these two - I don't think they are around. (GL06)

5.2.11 Insights from the Questionnaire

Twenty eight questionnaires were completed by the participants from Gold Creek Salvation Army in the focus groups at the conclusion of the groups. The age range of people completing the questionnaire was from teenagers to 80 years. The period of involvement in the church varied from six weeks to 67 years. Even though there were three specific groups: Newcomers, leaders and a general cross-section, they together represent a good sample of the entire church.

The salient findings from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire are presented later in this section. However, the questionnaire also serves on a “simpler” level to give participants the opportunity to describe their experience of the church and the leadership using concepts and language developed by others. The statements most frequently and strongly agreed with are presented in Table 5-3:

Table 5-3 Percentages of People at Gold Creek Salvation Army Agreeing with Statements in Questionnaire

Statement	Level of Agreement
I have a strong and growing sense of belonging to this church	78.6% agreed
This church is a good place for me to be	78.6% strongly agreed
The leaders encourage me to find and use my gifts and skills to a great extent	75.0% agreed
The leaders take into account the ideas of the people to a great extent	67.9% agreed
The leader articulates a compelling vision for the future	64.3% agreed
I feel at home in this church	60.7% strongly agreed
The leader works as hard as he can	60.7% strongly agreed
The leader leads by example	60.7% strongly agreed
The leader helps the church focus on goals	57.1% strongly agreed
The leader frequently, if not always, talks optimistically about the future	57.1% agreed
Leaders here inspire me to action	53.6% strongly agreed

The leader frequently, if not always, expresses confidence that my goals will be achieved	50.0% agreed
The leader frequently, if not always, heightens my desire to succeed.	50.0% agreed

As suggested by their focus groups, the members of this church experience a strong sense of belonging to their church. It was not surprising, then, that many also strongly believe that “This church is a good place for me to be” and “I feel at home in this church.”

The experience of the senior leader was that he encourages them to find and use their gifts and skills to a great extent. The leader takes into account the ideas of the people to a great extent as well. Many perceive that the leader works as hard as he can, strongly agreed that he worked as hard as anyone in the church and that he sets an example by the way he behaves.

The questionnaire also enabled the participants to express the strategic nature of the minister's leadership: he helps the church focus on goals and talks optimistically about the future by articulating a compelling vision. The supportive nature of the leadership was also described.

Although the reliability of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) was good (Chronbach's Alpha = .961) the reliability of the Sense of Community Index (SCI) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) were below the usually accepted standard of .7. This confirms the concerns raised by some scholars about the reliability of the SCI as an instrument (Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006). However, if Question 22 (related to Management by Exception - a non Transformational Leadership behaviour) is omitted from the MLQ, its Chronbach's Alpha rises to .863, making it acceptable.

The full details of the statistical analysis are in Appendix F. However, the salient findings are presented here. Spearman's correlation indicated a strong relationship between the NCLS inspiring leadership question and the ELQ ($r_s = +.685$, $n = 23$, $p < .001$, 2 tailed). Each of the ELQ factors, (Leads by Example, Coaching, Informing, Showing Concern and Participative Decision Making) was also significantly correlated, indicating that inspiring leadership is strongly linked to empowering leadership at this church (see more details in Section 8.7.1.)

However, the NCLS empowering leadership question was not related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.379$, $n = 23$, $p = .075$, 2 tailed) although it was to one of the factors, Informing ($r_s = +.503$, $n = 26$, $p = .009$, 2 tailed). This indicates that although empowering leadership, as defined by the NCLS, is not related to the ELQ model, it is related to leaders sharing information with followers in this church.

The NCLS “leaders take ideas into account” question was related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.482$, $n = 23$, $p = .020$, 2 tailed) indicating that considering the ideas of church attenders is also an empowering behaviour in this church.

Finally, the MLQ indicated that the leaders in Gold Creek Salvation Army also demonstrate Transformational Leadership behaviours which inspire attenders and result in Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction for their followers (see more details in Section 8.7.1.)

5.2.12 Summary

In the midst of an economic and socially depressed area a vibrant church is flourishing. The church is not simply growing numerically, it is attracting and integrating new people into the Christian faith in an area of static population and strong denominational ties. Attenders at the church experience joy and hope often absent from the rest of the community.

The vibrancy of the church is even more remarkable when one considers that it still exhibits many of the traditional features of the Salvation Army. The uniforms, the traditional band, the army language and other cultural artefacts would in many people’s mind make the type of growth that has occurred unlikely.

Yet, the Gold Creek Salvation Army church is remarkably healthy. According to both the National Church Life Survey and the Natural Church Development survey the church is amongst the most vibrant in the nation despite a context which normally makes church health difficult. The population of Gold Creek is neither wealthy nor well-educated, yet this church is able to draw, convert and hold Newcomers at a rate much higher than the rest of the nation.

A number of factors emerge from this case study which promote understanding of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance:

Invitation

In the focus groups, Newcomers indicated that their avenue of engagement with the church was by invitation. In some cases the invitation was made by other members of family (for example, children asking their parents to come to church). The persistent and strong nature of the invitation necessary to bring a Newcomer to church also emerged. The welcoming, non judgemental, joyous and hope-filled atmosphere of the church gives the attenders confidence to invite others.

Positive Experience of Leadership

The Newcomers also indicated that they had a very positive early experience of the leadership of the church. Some were even impressed by the officers before they came to church. Once in church they were positively influenced by the energy and preaching of the leaders.

Sense of Belonging

A high percentage of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they had a strong and growing sense of belonging. Other attenders introduced the language of "belonging," without prompting, in discussion about what they enjoyed about the church. Although the Salvation Army uniforms could be a deterrent to the Newcomer, they actually represent a clear marker of membership to which the Newcomer can aspire. Once they are an enrolled soldier, the Newcomer is thoroughly "in" the community and has a strong sense of belonging. Another contributor to sense of belonging is involvement in ministry. The participants in the focus groups identified that one of the attractive aspects of the church was that they were given opportunities to help others and to serve God.

Acceptance

A number of Newcomers shared that their overwhelming experience of engagement with this church was a sense of acceptance and non-judgement. In the socio-economic context of the church this acceptance of people from all walks of life is crucial and is evidenced by the current makeup of the church.

Training

In order to equip people for involvement in ministry, training has an important place at this church. Often this reflects the “military” type language of the Salvation Army. Prospective adherents and soldiers require training before admission. “Code Blue” is a local leaders training course which is highly valued by the Officers. The Officers themselves receive high level training from church consultants and denominational leaders.

Authentic Leadership

A common experience of the leadership of the church is authenticity as revealed by the leader’s willingness to expose their own weaknesses and struggles. They were also described as being humble and not using the positional power available to them as Officers. The Newcomers, in particular, experienced this authenticity as a sense of the leaders being “one of us.”

Leadership by Example

The leaders of the church were observed to be setting an example in terms of their joy, enthusiasm, outreach to Newcomers and care. The “Lead by Example” factor of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire was also positively correlated to the attender’s sense of inspiration (see Section 8.7.1.) Even the older members of the church were inspired by the leader’s dedication and commitment to their work.

Effective Preaching

The preaching of the Officers is also a factor in the high level of engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The preaching is experienced as interesting and relevant. It is also experienced as authoritative, but not in a negative sense, but in the sense that the preacher is conveying the authority of God through the sermon. Finally, the preaching is effective because it calls for, and receives, a response (conversion). The sermons invite people to become a Christian, on average, about once a month.

Inspiring Leadership

The question, “Do you agree that the leaders of this church inspire you?” was positively correlated to all five factors of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire. Hence, the

leaders at this church inspire through leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing and showing concern. The leaders also demonstrate Transformational Leadership behaviours which produce satisfaction, extra effort and effectiveness from their followers.

5.3 Case Study Two: Wattle Hills Anglican Church

5.3.1 Introduction

The researcher visited the Wattle Hills Anglican Church from Friday the 31st July to Monday 3rd August, 2009. He explored the general nature of the community, the experience of the leaders and the experience of attenders of the church through observation, interview, focus groups and questionnaires.

5.3.2 Community Context

The suburb of Wattle Hills is one of Sydney's largest housing estates. It is bounded by a river and three major roads. The estate was marketed as being carefully planned to cater for the social, economic and recreational needs of its residents. This estate is, apparently, a highly sought-after place to live - especially for its modern facilities and closeness to a CBD and the Motorway.

According to the 2006 Census, the residents of Wattle Hills were primarily young families living in detached houses. The median age of people in the suburb was only 29, much younger than the national average of 37. Sixty three percent were couples with children compared to the national average of 45%. The majority of houses in the area were detached (95%) and most of them were being paid off (58%) rather than owned outright (16%) or rented (22%). The median income (\$669 per week) was substantially higher than the national average (\$466).

5.3.3 The Anglican Diocese of Sydney

There are two main theological traditions within Anglicanism in Australia: the Anglo-Catholic strand and the Evangelical strand (Blombery, 1996). The majority of the Diocese of Sydney, including the Wattle Hills church, is Evangelical or "low church" in tradition. These churches place more emphasis on the Protestant nature of Anglicanism and are characterised by the belief that lives need to be changed and this is achieved chiefly through the preaching of the Bible. There is also a stress on the centrality of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

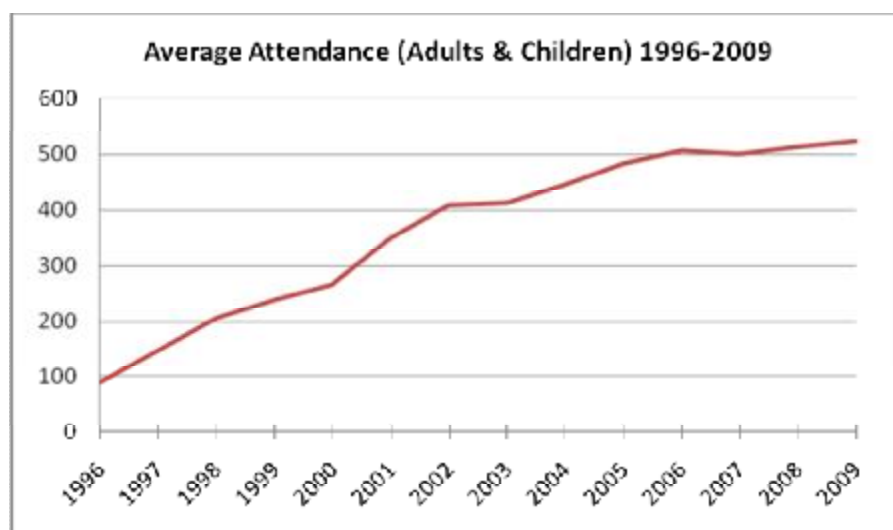
The influence of Samuel Marsden, an early Anglican priest in Australia, has been identified as influencing the tendency of Sydney Anglicans to be independent from ecclesiastical and episcopal authority (Lawton, 2002). As a result, Anglicans in Sydney generally identify themselves primarily with their local congregation rather than a denomination or institution.

An emphasis on the notion of propositional revelation - that we only know about God and can know God through our rational minds - means that ritual, symbolism, ceremonial dress and even a cross inside a church building have a lesser place in Sydney Anglican churches (Porter, 2006). If they use the Book of Common Prayer at all they tend to prefer the services of Morning and Evening Prayer rather than the Eucharist.

5.3.4 Church History

In the 1980s the Anglican Property Trust, seeing the potential development in the area, purchased land in what was to become Wattle Hills. A team from a nearby Anglican Church established the Wattle Hills Anglican Church in 1991 with 16 adults. The church met in the nearby Catholic school. The house, currently occupied by the Senior Minister, was constructed in 1994. Church services were held in the garage. By mid-1996, when Rev. Thomas and Marguerite arrived, the congregation consisted of 40 adults and 40 children and was in the process of constructing the current church building. The church has grown considerably since 1996 as demonstrated by this graph:

Figure 5-2 Wattle Hills Anglican Average Church Attendance 1996-2009



In July 2009 the church offered four services:

- 8:30 am - Morning Church (With crèche and children's programme.)
- 10:15 am - Morning Church (With crèche and children's programme.)
- 5:00 pm - Church @ 5 (With crèche and children's programme.)
- 7:00 pm - Night Church.

The church has completed the NCLS survey which allows for a better understanding of its nature. The results of the surveys are presented in the next section.

5.3.5 The National Church Life Survey

The 2006 National Church Life Survey identified that Wattle Hills Anglican Church was in the top 50 churches in Australia in terms of percentages of Newcomers. The 301 survey forms revealed that 28% of the congregation were Newcomers - 18% were attending after having been absent for a long period of time and 10% indicated that they had never regularly attended church.

The aspects of the church most valued by the respondents to the survey were the sermons, preaching or Bible teaching and the Bible study, prayer groups or other discussion groups, reflecting the emphasises of the Sydney Anglican Diocese. The aspects of church life requiring more attention, according to the respondents, were encouraging the people to discover/use their gifts and ensuring new people were included in church life.

Over 15 years of research the NCLS has developed nine Core Qualities which are indicative of church vitality and high levels of Newcomers (Kaldor, et al., 2002). The summary scores below are based on the responses to the questions in the Survey most closely correlated to the Core Quality. The church's percentages for these questions were converted into a standardised score between 1 and 10. This shows how they compare to the percentages from the other 4,000 churches that participated in the survey. A score of 5 is the average for each summary score.

Table 5-4 Wattle Hills Anglican NCLS Core Qualities 2001 & 2006

Core Quality	2006	2001
Alive and Growing Faith	8.1	7.2
Vital and Nurturing Worship	6.8	7.2
Strong and Growing Belonging	6.1	6.4
Clear and Owned Vision	6.6	7.6
Inspiring and Empowering Leadership	4.3	6.3
Imaginative and Flexible Innovation	6.9	5.8
Practical and Diverse Service	5.5	5.6
Willing and Effective Faith-sharing	6.4	5.8
Intentional and Welcoming Inclusion	5.8	3.7

These results demonstrate that Wattle Hills Anglican Church was slightly above the Australian average in most Core Qualities. It also shows that the church improved in only four of the nine Core Qualities in the period between 2001 and 2006. Although better than average, these results are not outstanding. And so this church provides an interesting contrast to the other high percentage Newcomer churches in this research. The senior leaders of the church are in a unique position to understand the dynamics of this health and describe the strategies used to produce it.

5.3.6 Leader's Perspective

At the time of data collection, the staff of Wattle Hills Anglican Church consisted of Senior Minister, Thomas, a Senior Associate Minister, a Minister for young adults, a Minister for Youth, a Children's Worker and a Ministry Training Scheme Intern. The researcher was able to explore the staff's experience of the Wattle Hills Anglican Church through formal interviews and other informal conversations. The guiding purpose of the researcher was to better understand why this church is so effective at attracting and retaining Newcomers.

The staff were able to identify a number of reasons why the church has so many Newcomers. One of the key features is the non-threatening and a welcoming style of worship. For example, there is an emphasis on avoiding jargon: there are no pews in the church, only seats; it is a "talk" not a sermon; it is the "good news" not the "gospel." "What is culturally in the church, is in the suburb."

The church is also heavily involved in the community. The church regularly does letterbox drops throughout the year. Student ministers are often involved in doorknocking. The church is the major provider of Scripture teachers for the schools and now runs the annual carols by candlelight event. Once a month the church creates a presence in the local shopping centre offering music, singing, face painting, balloons and other community contact activities.

In addition, Thomas is a well-known local identity. He has been living in the suburb since 1996 and writes a weekly article in two local newspapers each carrying details about the church. The discrete nature of the suburb, the high-profile of the Anglican Church and the absence of other active churches means that when a Newcomer decides to come to church, Wattle Hills Anglican Church is the natural choice.

The Bible teaching and friendliness of the church were also identified. The preachers frequently ask for listeners to respond to an invitation to become a Christian. They regularly "preach for repentance" and hold special evangelistic services three or four times a year. They are constantly encouraging people in the church to invite their friends to outreach events or to do the Christianity Explained or Simply Christianity courses. Thomas is identified as having the "gift of evangelism." "One of Thomas' passions is to have a church where Newcomers come."

Thomas, in particular, has been exposed to a lot of "outside" influences in his ministry development. The Sydney Diocese has enabled Thomas to travel to the United States for training and exposure to effective churches. He is a member of the Willow Creek Association and attends church leadership conferences regularly. He is also involved in a peer group of Anglican ministers and describes himself as "desperately trying to keep reading."

A key activity in the integration of Newcomers into church life is the "Newcomers Dinner" which is held three to four times a year at the home of Thomas and Marguerite. Any

Newcomers who fill in a Visitor's Card are invited to attend the dinner and receive information about the church. The Newcomers themselves bring the food and so make a quick movement from attendance to contribution. They receive a personal follow up from Thomas or Marguerite. One staff member commented, "They are *relentless* in following people up." Another commented, "Thomas and Marguerite often bring people into the church through their lounge room."

Other factors identified by the leaders as being important for high percentages of Newcomers were:

- Wattle Hills Anglican is a young church, and has made its own traditions.
- The founders of the church have a big "buy-in" and have always been pushing for gospel growth.
- It is a very family-oriented church.
- Christianity Explained is offered every term (Christianity Explained is an introductory course to Christianity composed of 6 x 1 hour lessons which culminate in the opportunity for a person to become a Christian.)
- Thomas has a phenomenal ability to connect. He is known throughout the suburb and his laid-back style suits the suburb. People warm to him easily.
- The church has a good structure for Newcomers - a roll, follow-up list, communication cards and so on.

5.3.7 Researcher's Experience of Wattle Hills Anglican Church

As I drive through the narrow, leafy, streets of Wattle Hills I realise I am in the heartland of Australia. The half height brick wall with the letters "Wattle Hills" at the entrance to the estate marks the transition into upper middle-class suburbia. The blocks are large and the houses new. There is little sign of graffiti or other urban decay. At the centre of the suburb is a large sports field where hundreds of children gather at various times over the week to practice and play a variety of sports. Although other sports are tolerated, this is rugby league country. Minutes from Wattle Hills is a huge Leagues club. Across the road is the football stadium of the beloved local rugby league team.

The Wattle Hills Anglican Church building is largely indistinguishable from the other buildings in the street. Two modest signs identify it as a church but its appearance is perfectly consistent with the rest of the neighbourhood.

Thomas is a friendly, energetic man who talks with enthusiasm about the history and the future of the church. He is dressed in jeans and a pullover and appears just like a typical resident of the suburb. In his office are sporting trophies and posters. Like the building, there is nothing to identify that this man is overtly religious.

I attend the Children's Ministry Training Night. About 20 people, about half of them youth, gather in the hall. The meeting is led by the employed Children's Worker and the devotions are given by the Senior Minister. Obviously ministry to children is considered an important part of this church. The devotion is based on Jonah 4:11 where the Lord says: "But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Thomas explains that without preachers of the Word people do not know their left hand from their right hand. And so he urges the children's workers to preach the gospel to the children because they need to hear it as well.

The training component focuses on whether children can understand and respond to the Gospel message. The resounding answer is "yes" and the children's workers are encouraged to share the gospel with the children as the opportunity presents itself both formally and informally.

There is a prayer meeting at eight o'clock on Saturday morning. Eighteen people gather for breakfast and prayer. Thomas is there again and shares the same devotion from Jonah 4:11. Although there are a number of serious health issues in the congregation, including a couple who have just lost their baby, a man with a brain tumour, a woman with leukaemia, a young man with a twisted bowel and another young man with acute pancreatitis, 45 minutes of the hour-long prayer meeting is focused on upcoming outreach events. There is a Woman's Outreach Coffee Morning on the following Wednesday morning and the same night there is another coffee night where a Christian naturopath will be speaking. These events plus another 24 outreach events scheduled over the next five months are enthusiastically promoted and then prayed for. Even prayer for a successful Town Planning application for

an extension of the building is couched in terms of creating more space for new people to come into the church.

Following this meeting is a Connect Group leaders meeting. There are over 20 small groups meeting across the church and this is where the leaders receive their training. Thomas leads a discussion on the signs of Christian maturity. Studying the Bible and implementing its teaching in one's life is a key emphasis.

As I arrive for church at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday I am welcomed by an older couple. When it is discerned that I am a visitor, I am guided through to a special welcomer, who writes a name tag for me. There is a little confusion about who should write on the name tag and what should be written. I learn a little bit later that this confusion is because today is the start of a new system of identifying and welcoming visitors to church. During the announcements the Assistant Minister says "I need to speak to the regular members of the church for a moment ..." and he goes on to describe that the new system of welcoming has been introduced on a trial basis.

The church service is informal and relaxed. There are no robes, hymn books, prayer books, crosses or crucifixes, stained-glass windows or incense. There does not appear to be any religious items in the room and nothing that would identify this as an Anglican church. Two singers are accompanied by a keyboard and a guitarist. There are four contemporary songs and one older "hymn" although it is sung no differently to the other songs. The words for all of the songs are projected onto a screen with a data projector.

Although Thomas does not lead the worship service he does get up to do the announcements which consist largely of an enthusiastic promotion of various upcoming outreach events that were prayed for at the prayer meeting on Saturday morning.

The Senior Associate Minister brings the sermon on Proverbs 1 and focuses on the nature of Godly wisdom. It is humorous, brief (20 minutes), refers frequently to Bible passages, uses contemporary illustrations and applications and uses visual images from the data projector. The sermon concludes with a question "If you were to die tonight and you were to stand before God, what would you say?" The listeners are urged to be "wise" and to accept Jesus Christ as their saviour and Lord to ensure they can enter heaven.

The 10:30 a.m. service is largely similar with the same sermon and the same enthusiastic promotion of the outreach events during the announcements. The average age of the congregation is slightly younger but both services are attended by a good range of age groups. There is, however, an “Infant Dedication” at this service. This Anglican Church does not baptise children unless the parents explicitly ask for it. Instead, they give thanks for the child and pray for the parents and that the child will one day come to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the early afternoon there is a baptism service in the church building. This is a family who do not regularly attend Wattle Hills Anglican Church. Thomas explains that if they held baptisms in the normal church services they would be overwhelmed. Even so, the parents of the child have to complete the Christianity Explained course and are invited to attend the upcoming outreach events.

The 5:00pm church service, Church @5, is the smallest service of the day but still attracts over 50 young adults and children. The sermon is also on Proverbs 1 but is brought by the Young Adults Minister. Again the “talk” is humorous and strongly relevant. The singing is accompanied by acoustic guitar, bass and drums. As in the morning, Thomas gets up to do the announcements and enthusiastically promotes the 25 upcoming outreach events.

Shortly after the conclusion of Church @ 5 the band arrives for Night Church. The music, which has been becoming louder with each successive service, now reaches its crescendo. The average age of each congregation has reduced as the day has gone on. The band provide music which will connect with the hundred or so young people who will attend the youth service commencing at 7 p.m. The congregation is now quite different from those who gathered at 8:30 a.m. this morning. However, Thomas’ announcements are still the same ...

5.3.8 Newcomer’s Experience of Engagement

There are a number of different processes whereby Newcomers came to engage with Wattle Hills Anglican Church. For some it was their children who were first engaged with the church and they followed. The children were invited on camps or to church ministries and their parents gradually became involved as well. In one case a participant in his 60s said, “My son

said to me one day, 'Why don't you come and try our church?' I said, 'It will be no different to anywhere else.' He said, 'Come.' So I went and I have been here ever since" (WN04).

Some Newcomers identified an important supernatural dimension to their initial contact. They spoke of being at a "low ebb in my life" (WN05) and being prompted by God to seek a church. "It was God really knocking on my door. He just showed me that door and the way to Him" (WN03) For others it was a very much more pragmatic experience:

We lived round the corner and one of the ministers here previously lived on the same street and he casually just walked up the street one day and knocked on the door and had a chat. He introduced himself and we thought, "All right, we will go have a look," and it was quite close so we really didn't have an excuse. (WN07)

However, once this first contact was made, many had a similar positive experience of their first worship service:

We came to church on Christmas Day and I was always used to going to church where you kneeled and did your whole thing and it was very, very orderly and we came to this one, and we brought both of our teenage children, and it was very, very different and it was very enjoyable, so we came back. (WN02)

The prospect of coming to church was described as "scary" (WN05) and "daunting": "I came from non-church background. To walk through those doors was really daunting because I didn't know what to expect" (WN02). However, their first experience of church worship was described as "comfortable" (WN12), and so they came back. One described the process of entering the church as "engaging":

There are multiple levels of engagement: engagement with the Bible, engagement with the people, and you engage with the community. That made it at all relevant. That bit that was missing in the Catholic Church - none of it was relevant to today. So you walked out the church door, [asking] how do you translate it to help the way you live? There was no connection. (WN01)

Especially important was the experience of the Ministers, especially the Senior Minister. Several of the Newcomers were from a Catholic background and found the welcome from,

and informality of, the Ministers just as significant as the informality and welcome of the church service.

At the end of church the priest would go into the vestry and take the robes off and often you would never see them again... On the contrary in this church there is a whole bunch of staff at the back of the church and so they actually make you stay. And so rather than the person in charge of the service disappearing into a room where they are disconnected, the whole Ministry Team hang back and have a chat and a cup of coffee. (WN01)

A number of the Newcomers shared the experience of completing the Christianity Explained course. For others it was the women's Wednesday Bible study which was the mechanism for them to engage in church life. Either way the relational aspects of these studies were important:

[In the Catholic Church] ... you didn't speak to the priest. You didn't think you were worthy - maybe that is the wrong word - but they were a step above. We had Thomas come to our house to do Christianity Explained and it was so bizarre. At first I thought "this doesn't happen" but by the end of it he was just another man that was just talking to us. (WN13)

And this relational and egalitarian setting allowed the Newcomers to ask questions, something they identified as very important:

As a Newcomer we are really encouraged to ask questions which I thought was really important. Anything at all you can think of. Marguerite would do her best to give you an answer you are satisfied with but she wouldn't fob you off. You are always encouraged to ask questions and everybody has questions. You still have questions that you are encouraged to deal with. They don't make you feel silly. (WN13)

5.3.9 Attender's Experience of Church

The dominant experience of the Wattle Hills Anglican Church is as egalitarian. Related to this is the concept of informality.

The other thing that I think is really important is the informality of our church. This is a pretty informal area and we have been to churches that are very formal. But when I came here it was just like, "This is where I belong because it is just so egalitarian." And that is a great description. I think it is a huge factor in terms of people in this area feeling as if they can relate. (WC05)

This egalitarianism manifests itself in a lack of cliquishness and in an equal relationship with the Ministry staff.

There is no "us and them" with the Ministry Team. It is very much... they are leading this team but they are part of it too. They utilise the people who are in it so everybody sort of feels like they are part of it and have a stake in it because it is not just the leadership doing their thing and everybody else turning up and going home but people have a job to do and a role to play. (WC03)

This equality with the leaders of the church means that members of the congregation feel comfortable to express their opinions and to initiate ministries within the church. "People are a voice within the church. If you see a need you can mention it" (WC07). "The Ministry team are not threatened if the suggestion comes from a member of the church, which I think is really important" (WC10).

It also means that people of all ages are equal and so made to feel welcome. There is something for everyone:

I think for a family too, especially when the kids are young adults, because there are different services, the whole family can still come to the same church, if not always at the same time, but our individual needs are met in the same church. (WC03)

The church was described as being child friendly not only because there are good ministries for children but also because there is a general atmosphere of acceptance of children. "I think the other thing is that it is very kid friendly. When the kids were young, if the kids were crying, that didn't matter, you would just take them out and that was fine. It is very welcoming for you" (WC03).

Despite this egalitarianism, attenders did recognise the important role of the leadership in driving the outward focus of the church.

It is very clear that they have goals. You can see the way things develop in the church and the push is constantly there on certain levels and when you know they are aiming at something you can see all the effort that has been put into it, so they are very clear about that. (WL06)

Further, the attenders are very happy to follow the leadership of the Ministry Team because they recognise its quality:

The strength of the Ministry Team, I don't think you can really underestimate that. Particularly starting with Thomas, it is obvious that the selection process that Thomas goes through in selecting the Assistant Ministers has been highly successful. We have always had really excellent Ministers at this church. (WC01)

People at Wattle Hills Anglican described church as more than just what happened on Sunday morning. They participate in a wide range of ministries throughout the week. This builds their sense of belonging.

I think, too, you feel as though you belong when you feel you are part of it. You are not just sitting and observing but you are actually participating and there seems to be so many different areas for people to fit into the church whether it is Wednesday Bible study or youth group or different activities. Building those relationships seems to be how people feel as though they belong and it just increases and snowballs as you feel comfortable in being part of it. (WC08)

Often these ministries are aimed at outreach into the community. The children's ministries were seen as particularly effective at building links with non-church people. But there were also expressions of always seeking to do more.

Nobody rests on their laurels. Certainly nobody in the Ministry Team, nobody rests on their laurels. We are always moving forward, there is always the push to get the Word out into the community. More activities for young people. More activities for older people. More activities for the women. More activities for the men. It is a very busy church. (WC01)

5.3.10 Attender's Experience of Leadership

The most often described perception of Thomas and Marguerite was that they "cared." "They never rush you to think that they haven't got time to talk" (WC07). This care not only manifests itself in taking time to talk with people but in following people up when they did not come to church. "They always follow up, they are very thorough with the follow-up. That is an important part of their ministry" (WN02).

Not only do attenders experience Thomas and Marguerite as caring but also as authentic, informal, "real" (WN12) and "down to earth" (WL01).

They are real people and they share their lives. Like it's not just you get a bit of their lives where they have their church mindset on, it is just Thomas and Marguerite. It's them. What you see is what you get. And it doesn't change whether it is Sunday or Tuesday. (WC04)

This openness was described as inspirational for the whole church. "Thomas is a very strong part of the church in terms of his leadership and his attitudes and openness and it goes all the way through the church (WC04)." Their hard work is also seen as inspirational:

I think they are extremely hard-working. In a way there is a high expectation of their leaders which is not wrong. There is always something going on. There is always a meeting, there is always an outreach, there is always a "something." They are very hard-working and very passionate about making our church open and available to people in the community. (WL02)

But Thomas and Marguerite are seen as examples not just in their "realness" and hard work, but in their whole lives: "I think they are great examples of selfless people. They are forever putting others before themselves. I think that is a great model to follow within the church. To be so God focused. It couldn't ask for better leaders in the church" (WC07).

5.3.11 Insights from the Questionnaire

Forty questionnaires were completed by the participants in the focus groups at the conclusion of the groups. The age range of people completing the questionnaire was from

teenagers to 80 years. The period of involvement in the church varied from 18 months to 17 years. Even though there were three specific groups: Newcomers, leaders and a general cross-section, they together represent a good sample of the entire church.

The salient findings from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire are presented later in this section. However, the questions in the questionnaire also serve on a “simpler” level to give participants the opportunity to describe their experience of the church and the leadership using concepts and language developed by others. The statements most frequently and strongly agreed with are presented in the following table:

Table 5-5 Percentages of People at Wattle Hills Anglican Agreeing with Statements in the Questionnaire

Statement	Level of Agreement
I have a strong and growing sense of belonging to this church.	90.0% agreed
The leader works as hard as he can.	85.0% strongly agreed
The leader frequently if not always leads a group that is effective.	82.5% agreed
This church is a good place for me to be.	80.0% strongly agreed
The leader treats church members as equal.	77.5% strongly agreed
I feel at home in this church.	75.0% strongly agreed
The leader shows concern for church member’s well-being.	75.0% strongly agreed
The leader provides help to members.	70.0% agreed
The leader frequently if not always talks optimistically about the future.	70.0% agreed
The leaders take into account the ideas of the people to a great extent.	67.5% agreed
The leader frequently if not always talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.	62.5% agreed
The leader leads by example.	60.7% strongly agreed

A common experience identified by the questionnaire was an overwhelming sense of belonging. Of the participants, 90% indicated that their sense of belonging to the church was “strong and growing.” This represented a significant increase from 2006 (62%) when

the NCLS asked the same question. Given that about a third of the respondents were Newcomers, who normally have a weaker sense of belonging than longer term attenders, this is a significant result.

Not surprisingly, most of the participants also used the questionnaire to express that “I think my church is a good place for me to be.” They also strongly agreed that they felt at home in the church. This would be partly explained by the fact that 67.5% identified that the leaders of the church take their ideas into account to a great extent (this was up from 52% in 2006).

When it came to their experience of the leadership of the church many strongly agreed with the statement that the Senior Minister of the church “works as hard as he can.” The other questions related to the “Leading by Example” factor of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) also scored highly. This confirms that members of the church perceive and appreciate that the Senior Minister works very hard.

Participants also strongly agreed with the statement that the Senior Minister “provides help to church members.” Although this question occurs within the “coaching” factor of the ELQ it probably reflects the experience of the participants that the Senior Minister “cares.” The Senior Minister shows concern for church member’s well-being and treats church members as equals and individuals rather than just a member of the group frequently, if not always. This reflects the egalitarian atmosphere of the church.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire allowed the participants to describe what the Senior Minister often talks about. He frequently, if not always, talks optimistically about the future and what needs to be accomplished. He also talks about his most important values and beliefs frequently as well. In other words, the Senior Minister is very effectively communicating his values and vision to the church.

Finally, the participants indicated that they believed that the Senior Minister frequently if not always led a group that is effective. This church has been highly effective at attracting and retaining Newcomers and would appear to be growing increasingly healthier since the NCLS survey of 2006. A number of themes emerge from the data which suggest reasons for this effectiveness.

Although the reliability of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) (Chronbach’s Alpha = .922) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Chronbach’s Alpha = .950)

were good the reliability of the Sense of Community Index (SCI) (Chronbach's Alpha = .406) was below the usually accepted standard of .7. This confirms the concerns raised by some scholars about the reliability of the SCI as an instrument (Peterson, et al., 2006).

The full details of the statistical analysis are in Appendix F. However, the salient findings are presented here. Spearman's correlation indicated a moderately strong relationship between the NCLS inspiring leadership question and the ELQ ($r_s = +.508$, $n = 38$, $p = .001$, 2 tailed). Four of the ELQ factors, (Leads by Example, Coaching, Showing Concern and Participative Decision Making) were also significantly correlated, indicating that inspiring leadership is linked to empowering leadership at this church (see more details in Section 8.7.2.)

However, the NCLS question relating to empowering leadership was not related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.284$, $n = 38$, $p = .084$, 2 tailed) although it was to one of the factors, Coaching ($r_s = +.324$, $n = 40$, $p = .041$, 2 tailed). This indicates that although empowering leadership, as defined by the NCLS, is not related to the ELQ model, it is related to coaching followers in this church.

The NCLS "leaders take ideas into account" question was related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.562$, $n = 38$, $p < .001$, 2 tailed) indicating that considering the ideas of church attenders is also an empowering behaviour in this church.

Finally, the MLQ indicated that the leaders in Wattle Hills Anglican also demonstrate Transformational Leadership behaviours which result in Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction for their followers. However, in contrast to the Salvation Army church, the Transformational Leadership behaviours were not correlated to the NCLS inspiring leadership question (see more details in Section 8.7.2.) In this church, inspiring leadership is primarily related to the ELQ model of empowering leadership.

5.3.12 Summary

A number of factors emerge from this case study which promote understanding of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance at this church:

Multiple Community Connections

It would appear that Wattle Hills Anglican Church is *the* church of the Wattle Hills community. Its long-term presence, involvement in the local schools, activities in the shopping centre, carols by candlelight, consistent letterbox campaigns and the community profile of the Senior Minister have all contributed to this high profile in people's minds. This has meant that when Newcomers have considered attending church, Wattle Hills Anglican Church is the church they have gone to. This sort of church-community connection has developed because of the well defined boundaries of the Wattle Hills suburb and the consistent hard work of the church over a number of years.

Effective Contextualisation

The church has not only built a good connection with the community and developed an outward focus, it has adapted its operations to be strongly contextual. The buildings, worship services and outreach events are intentionally informal and egalitarian, so matching the culture of the Wattle Hills community. The “child friendly” nature of the church community has been especially appropriate considering the demographics of the suburb. This has made the transition from non-church to Newcomer relatively easy.

Invitation

In the focus groups, a number of Newcomers indicated that their avenue of engagement with the church was by invitation. The practice of invitation was observed to be highly valued in this church as evidenced by the Senior Minister's emphasis on promoting events to which members of the church could invite their friends and relatives.

Positive Experience of Leadership

The Newcomers also indicated a very positive early experience of the leadership of the church. Of particular importance for the Newcomers was the “down to earth” nature of the ministers. For those coming from a Catholic background the informality of the priests was quite significant.

Effective Preaching

The preaching of the leaders is also a factor in the high level of engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The preachers frequently ask for listeners to respond to an invitation to become a Christian. They frequently “preach for repentance” and hold special evangelistic services three or four times a year. The consistent preaching of the gospel and invitations to become a Christian have not only created a culture in the church but given opportunity for Newcomers to engage in church attendance. The 2006 NCLS for this church revealed that sermons, preaching and Bible teaching were the most highly valued part of church life.

Training

Although not as explicitly obvious as in the other case studies, training is an important value of this church. The Senior Minister is seeking to continually learn more about church growth through reading and conferences. Training courses for ministry were observed during the researchers visit. Even converts do the Christianity Explained “course.”

Leadership by Example

From the church's perspective the strong community connection has been driven by the Senior Minister and his wife. Their personal passion for evangelism has been communicated consistently to the congregation and confirmed by example. Their hard work in building a presence in the community and leading people to Christ has not only been observed but has been inspirational for the whole church. “Thomas the evangelist,” as he was described by one of the staff, has driven this church to a high level of outward focus.

Authentic Leadership

Also highly important in this engagement has been the character, not only of the Senior Minister, but of his wife and of the other Ministry staff members. Their “realness” and willingness to share their own struggles has been of enormous significance in the life of the church. Even though the ministers are Priests in the Anglican tradition they are approachable and friendly.

Inspiring Leadership

Although participants at this church did not use that word “inspirational” to describe their leaders, they did describe a number of inspirational behaviours. The personal example of the leaders, their willingness to take into account the ideas of others and their enthusiastic and optimistic language about the future all inspire members of the church to service. The leaders also demonstrate Transformational Leadership behaviours which inspire their followers to Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction.

Caring Leadership

There was an overwhelming appreciation amongst the attenders of the church of the level of care received from the Senior Minister and his wife. Although the church is quite large there is obviously a widespread perception that the Senior Minister and his wife really do care for everybody in the church.

Egalitarianism

Church attenders have come to understand this “realness” and care as an expression of equality. This egalitarianism creates informality and is therefore highly appreciated by Newcomers and attenders alike. It breaks down the barriers between members and clergy and allows for lay people to ask questions of the ministers, something also highly valued, especially by Newcomers.

Sense of Belonging

The strong sense of belonging at this church is driven by two factors. One is the egalitarianism which creates a sense of personal value and ownership. People do not feel excluded from the decision-making or direction of the church. The second is the high level of lay participation in the numerous ministries. As people participate they feel a sense of ownership of the church and hence belonging.

5.4 Case Study Three: Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes

5.4.1 Introduction

The researcher visited the Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes on several occasions during August 2009. He explored the general nature of the community, the experience of the leaders and the experience of members of the church through observation, interview, focus groups and questionnaires.

5.4.2 Community Context

Sunshine Lakes is a recently developed coastal community in the south-east corner of Queensland. It features long stretches of surf beaches and canal front homes. Demographically, the Sunshine Lakes population is slightly older than the Queensland average reflecting the popularity of the area for retirees. As a consequence, people in the area also more likely to be married and born in Australia than the Queensland average and are more likely to own their own home.

5.4.3 The Christian City Church Movement

Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes is a part of the Christian City Church (C3) denomination or movement. Christian City Church International is an evangelical, Pentecostal church movement founded by Pastors Phil and Christine Pringle. The first church was established at Dee Why on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, Australia, and is now located in Oxford Falls (Christian City Church International., 2007).

In May 2009, C3 International consisted of approximately 230 churches throughout Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Region, Asia, Africa, Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and South America. The movement has a vision to have over 1000 churches worldwide with an average attendance of 500 people by the year 2020, this goal being given the title of the "2020 Vision."

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) for the years 1996 and 2001 found Christian City Churches contradicting an overall 7% downward trend in church attendance across Australia

- C3 churches grew overall by 42% to a total membership of 11, 400 (Bellamy & Castle, 2004). Growth of C3 Churches and similar movements has been attributed to their upbeat, modern and relevant approach to religious services (Robbins, 2004).

5.4.4 Church History

C3 Sunshine Lakes was originally an independent Pentecostal church that was established in 1992. It joined the Christian City Church movement in the period between 1994 and 1995. It has met in three different venues in the Sunshine Lakes area during its history. Since 2005 it meets in a newly renovated facility in a light industrial estate but has plans to develop a larger complex on 30 acres of land in the growth corridor. The church is composed of about 500 people.

5.4.5 The National Church Life Survey

The 2006 National Church Life Survey identified that Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes was in the top 50 churches in Australia in terms of percentages of Newcomers. The 204 survey forms revealed that 30% of the congregation were Newcomers - 17% were attending after having been absent for along period of time and 13% indicated that they had never regularly attended church before.

The aspects of the church most valued by the respondents were the contemporary style of worship or music and reaching those who do not attend church. The aspects of church life requiring more attention, according to the respondents, were encouraging the people to discover/use their gifts and small groups focused on Christian growth.

Over 15 years of research the NCLS has developed nine Core Qualities which are indicative of church vitality and high levels of Newcomers. The summary scores below are based on the responses to the questions in the survey most closely correlated to the Core Quality. The church's percentages for these questions were converted into a standardised score between 1 and 10. This shows how they compare to the percentages from the other 4,000 churches that participated in the survey. A score of 5 is the average for each summary score.

Table 5-6 C3 Sunshine Lakes NCLS Core Qualities 2001 & 2006

Core Quality	2006	2001
Alive and Growing Faith	10.0	8.6
Vital and Nurturing Worship	10.0	8.5
Strong and Growing Belonging	8.1	7.2
Clear and Owned Vision	9.9	10.0
Inspiring and Empowering Leadership	6.9	9.0
Imaginative and Flexible Innovation	10.0	10.0
Practical and Diverse Service	7.2	6.0
Willing and Effective Faith-sharing	9.2	7.2
Intentional and Welcoming Inclusion	10.0	6.5

These results demonstrate that this church is well above the Australian average in most Core Qualities. It also shows that the church has improved in six of the nine Core Qualities in the period between 2001 and 2006. As well as having high levels of Newcomers, this church is profoundly healthy according to the measures of the NCLS. The senior leaders of the church are in a unique position to understand the dynamics of this health and describe the strategies used to produce it.

5.4.6 Leader's Perspective

Pastor Seymour

Pastor Seymour commenced as Associate Pastor at C3 Sunshine Lakes in 1992 before he and his wife became the Senior Pastors in 2000. Until recently he managed his own business in a part-time capacity as well as leading the church. As well as leading this church he has responsibility in mentoring and guiding pastors at other C3 churches across Australia.

Pastor Seymour identifies that the key to the high number of Newcomers in the church is a culture of trying to reach out. At every church service he aims to have something for the unchurched. To this end he preaches topically, rather than at a deeper theological level, leaving the deeper teaching to the week day events. The church has six “connect services” (Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day, Australia Day, a “Champions Service,” and a “Business Service”) designed to be a focus for outreach.

The church is also what he calls “visitor aware.” He sometimes walks from the gate of the car park inwards to check that visitors are being welcomed into the church. The church was not so good at this three or four years ago but considerable resources have been poured into addressing this. He, himself, works very hard on Sundays to connect with as many people as he possibly can.

By asking the Newcomers how it was they came to join the church he has discovered that 90% of Newcomers came because of word-of-mouth invitation. Therefore the church has put resources into empowering people to invite their friends to church by creating good quality brochures for members to use to invite people, rather than spending money on mass media advertising.

Sense of belonging is built in the church through creating a culture of talking to one another, inviting one another home for meals, church picnics, social groups and by fostering a general sense of family. He believes that people “belong first before they believe.” He speaks of a “hospitality culture” fostered by barbecues, the Breakie club, the café and so on, supported by a relatively large hospitality budget.

Charles Parham

Charles Parham and his wife Sarah began attending this church after moving from Central Queensland in 2004. At the time of research he was Principal of the Ministry Training College and Director of the Empower Training College offering courses (including the Breakie Club) to the church members. Before retiring Charles was a university lecturer in education.

Charles identifies a number of factors that make this church effective at attracting and holding Newcomers. Many of these factors have been “imported” from other C3 churches. The movement has a strong culture of sharing what works and doesn't work amongst the

churches. There is also a strong mentoring structure in place which ensures that knowledge is passed from pastor to pastor.

Charles identifies a number of factors related to the high percentage of Newcomers. The first factor is the friendliness of the church. Newcomers to the church are asked in the "Discover C3 Sunshine Lakes" course to identify things that appealed to them when they came to the church. The overwhelming one is church friendliness. This has been a major cultural emphasis. For example, at Connect Group Leaders Meetings, Pastor Seymour will say "After church is not the time to talk to your friends. That is the time when you target visitors. Head for the gate and stop them before they sneak out. Make sure you talk to them. If you come in before the service and someone is sitting there, talk to them." Charles says Pastor Seymour is very upfront, pushing this culture. "Don't just say 'hello' but spend time talking with visitors." And Charles says you will notice that Pastor Seymour models it - he does it. He gets around. For example at the church picnic you will see him working the whole crowd and surprisingly even though the church is large, he knows pretty well everyone by name. He is finding it more difficult, but he still does it.

The second factor contributing to a high percentage of Newcomers in the church are the Empower Courses which help Newcomers find a place in the church and develop support networks as well as learning the basics of Christian faith. Since the last NCLS the church has worked hard at developing these courses and they are now much more effective. However, the Empower Courses are only a part of the multiple, highly strategic, structures and programs in the church which are aimed at attracting and integrating Newcomers.

There is also a culture of honouring one another. This influences the way people relate to one another, especially the leaders. Honouring one another is fostered by a culture of servanthood. New people coming in from another church initially just "sit and serve." The leaders want people to prove their servanthood before giving them important positions.

This mutual honouring is expressed across the church. Leaders are honoured by respecting their decisions, even if one does not agree with them. Another example is that, in public, it is always "Pastor Seymour." But the culture extends to honouring volunteers as well. For example, the monthly "Unsung Hero" award.

Another factor relates to the worship services: there is an appeal for conversion at every service. Pastor Seymour is able to do this in a way that does not put people off.

Finally, Charles points to a culture a culture of excellence throughout the church. The new Christians coming in notice the quality of what is offered. This experience was shared by the researcher, as described in the next section.

5.4.7 Researcher's Experience of Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes

The Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes building, like the industrial estate in which it is situated, is modern, new and clean. The wide tree-lined streets and car parks of the estate are empty on a Sunday morning except those near the church, which are quickly filling up. Church "Stewards" dressed in yellow safety vests and broad brimmed hats smile and direct cars into car parks. As I walk towards the building I am greeted with warm handshakes and smiles no less than three times.

Although the church building would have been originally designed for light industry, there is little to reveal its origins. The interior is stylish, neat and comfortable. There are about 20 people wearing matching T-shirts marked "Steward" or "Team" moving purposefully around the facility. Still more people smile and open doors for us as we enter the 450 seat auditorium.

As we find a seat one of the people who had given us a warm smile in the foyer, comes to our seat and asks us, "Are you visiting us today?" I explain the reason for our visit and ask whether it was her job to welcome visitors. "No," she replies "but we are all trained and encouraged to make sure that everybody who comes to the church feels welcome."

I see Pastor Seymour making his way through the auditorium. He is a tall man - charismatic with a ready smile. He floats from group to group giving warm handshakes and hugs. This man is obviously loved, and he obviously loves. He heads towards us. Despite the many demands upon him, he knows who we are and why we are there. He gives a thoroughly warm welcome before moving on to the next group.

The band, composed of drums, four guitars, a synthesiser and four vocalists begin to play. Like so many parts of this church they are excellent. Though clearly contemporary even the

surprisingly large number of retirees in the congregation jump to their feet and begin to enthusiastically sing the words of the songs projected onto the wall by three data projectors. The songs express one of the themes of the church: "Living My Best Life."

Each song is concluded with enthusiastic applause, as is the energetic prayer offered by the Youth Pastor. He is followed on stage by Pastor Jenni, the other half of the husband and wife Senior Pastoral Team. She exclaims, "It's great to be in church! You guys look great today!" The church respond with cheers and applause, clearly expressing that she is not alone in this feeling.

She explains that last Sunday night had been a healing service and one of the men present this morning had been healed from a serious leg injury. He had arrived on crutches but gone home walking. He is invited on stage and interviewed. Pastor Jenni exclaims "God is here to heal every Sunday!" The congregation responds with rapturous applause.

Pastor Jenni invites any visitors to put their hands up, and the congregation spontaneously responds with welcoming applause. Visitors are encouraged to fill in a "Visitor's Card" and hand it in to receive a "Visitors Pack" including information about the church, a pen, drink bottle and cafe voucher.

The offering is announced and the response of the congregation is ... applause. One of the church leaders stands and gives an inspiring testimony about how during the week, despite the impact of the global financial crisis on his business, he has had a large tax debt wiped away and his shares had gone up in value 100% in 48 hours. In response to his faithful giving to the church God has blessed him. He urges the congregation to give to the church and experience similar blessings.

This morning there are three children being Dedicated - the rite of passage for babies in this church. Pastor Seymour joins his wife on stage for this part of the service. The two interact warmly and humorously as they pray for each child and their families. Each family is given a gift and a warm round of applause.

Next is a monthly feature of the worship service: "The Unsung Hero Award." Here one of the church volunteers is singled out for recognition. Commendations from ministry team leaders are read out as the young woman is presented with a bunch of flowers and gifts and

poses for a photo with Pastors Seymour and Jenni. The church warmly affirms the volunteer with applause.

Pastor Seymour brings the sermon on the experience of the disciples in the boat during the storm on the lake of Galilee. He talks about "turnaround moments." He says "You might be waiting on the Lord for a long time for something, but when it happens it happens suddenly. Divine delay builds you up for the *kairos* moment. The feeling in the house (this church) is that we are in that day!" (Applause) "When it doesn't happen straight away, don't go to fear. Don't fear, only believe."

Pastor Seymour now invites people to come forward for healing. He says, "Now this is a bit risky. We don't do this all the time but I sense the movement of the Holy Spirit here this morning. And I don't want our church to be a "safe church" I want us to be a powerful church." He begins speaking in tongues and inviting people to the front for healing. "There is someone here with a chronic knee problem. If that is you please put your hand up." A woman raises her hand and walks to the front. He prays with her for some time. Others come forward. A number of people appear to be healed. Pastor Seymour interviews one woman who testifies to progressive healing of a neck injury over the past few weeks.

At the end of the service Pastor Seymour says, "I want to give the opportunity, as I do at every service, for people to ask for forgiveness and to put God as number one in their lives. If you ask, God will come and live with you ... If you don't have a relationship with God and if you were to die today and if you don't know you would go to heaven, I invite you to invite Christ into your life." He prays and asks for a show of hands of people who have prayed that prayer for the first time. Four people, including a young man, raise their hand and they are invited to the front. Pastor Seymour prays for them in tongues and members of the church join them at the front with Bibles and information cards. As the four new Christians and their Counsellors turn to leave the altar, the congregation responds, not surprisingly, with applause.

After the service we move into the foyer. A number of friendly smiling people wearing "Team" T-shirts move around with a generous serving of morning tea. To one side is an espresso machine where a number of people queue for quality coffee. There is an

information table where one can learn more about the church and a bookshop. A number of people approach us and speak to us.

I return for the Sunday night service. As expected there were a higher proportion of younger people. Mulletts, tight jeans, tattoos and body piercings are a common sight. However, there is still a good percentage of people who appear to be over 50 years old present as well. The music is similar to the morning, as is the enthusiastic prayer of the Senior Associate Pastor. A young woman gives a testimony to the way that God has met her family's financial needs despite the fact that they have been giving sacrificially to the church. She shares how God has blessed them with their own home.

The Youth Pastor brings the sermon: he blows bubbles and reads from an illustrated children's Bible - the young people love him. The message is on "Trust in God for the Breakthrough" and urges those present to "push into" God and trust him to work miracles in their lives.

At the end of the service people are invited to come forward for prayer and to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. About 10 people go forward and as the music plays the Youth Pastor prays in tongues and lays hands on the people who have come forward. A number of them collapse having been "slain in the Spirit." However, two of the young men who have gone forward have accepted Jesus Christ as their saviour for the first time. They are escorted from the building by some church regulars to receive their Bibles and encouragement.

Before attending the morning service I had visited the "Breakfast Club"- a group specifically for new Christians. About six people from the church and six Newcomers to the church gathered for a delicious spread of croissants, freshly squeezed orange juice, brewed coffee and sweet pastries. The group which meets every Sunday for six weeks gathers in the church Board Room. While we eat, the New Christians Pastor leads discussion on the topic of belonging to the church. A number of the longer term members of the church share their own experience of belonging and encourage the Newcomers to commit themselves as well.

Apparently before the current series of breakfasts, Pastor Seymour used to lead these groups. Either way, the Newcomers to the church get the clear message that they are highly valued in their new church through these special functions which are catered for by dedicated volunteers from the church.

A number of words are powerfully reinforced during my experience of this church: awesome, empowered, excellent. Not only are the words used frequently by members of the church, but they are descriptors of the church itself. Although the sceptical would deny the authenticity of the supernatural features of the worship services, there is no denying that the vast majority of people who have gathered at this church is Sunday have experienced the presence of God in a tangible way. There is also no denying that everything has been done to make the visitor feel welcome.

5.4.8 Newcomer's Experience of Engagement

For a number of the Newcomers to this church, the initial stimulus for engagement came because of a crisis in their lives that caused them to ask existential questions. One had just lost her husband, another had also had a family bereavement and the third was recovering from a serious operation. Several received invitations from friends or relatives who were already involved in the church while others simply found their own way to the building. Others were aware of the supernatural guidance of God. However, the common experience, once they came to church, was the presence of God.

The experience of one young man is representative of the engagement of several of the Newcomers:

For me it was very much God aligning people to get me here. With the benefit of hindsight I can see that. So for me what got me to come here in the first place was a combination of my friends being here and the right people challenging me in the right ways at the right times. Any one person could have said something that would have caused me to just reject it but obviously God had control of the whole thing and positioned it such that I opened my mind to the concept ... I didn't believe in God, I was very angry, so if God did exist I was really angry at him. I just got challenged in exactly the right way that I opened my mind and I asked God to show himself to me, and he did, many times in ways that I could not possibly deny. And then I went right, "Okay, I guess I'll go to church," and so I automatically went to the one where my friends were at. And I walked in the door and that sermon was custom-made for me. Every sentence that came out of Pastor Seymour's mouth was designed for me and it

just blew me away and I couldn't not put my hand up at the altar call that very first time that I walked through this door. And it has been fairly much like that ever since. It just keeps blowing my mind. God's working all these miracles in my life and I can't get enough of it. You can't keep me out of this place. (SN10)

For some the first experience of church was not at all what they expected: "I came here and as soon as I walked in it was just a different feeling about it. I was looking for the big organ and the guy with a collar and the incense. It was totally different to what I expected ..." (SN05). However, all the Newcomers were impressed by the quality of the service: "And that was it, I walked in and said 'How good is this?' I get a bit emotional every time I come here" (SN03).

The Newcomers not only felt the compelling presence of God, they felt very welcome. One man described it like this:

I walked in and I knew instantly that this is what I was looking for, and this is where I belonged. The friendliness from the gate right through into the auditorium. It was brilliant. Everyone. It was like you knew them. It was just amazing everyone just greeted you and welcomed you and no one held back. (SN03)

The Newcomer's experience of the Senior Pastors is dominated by a sense of "realness" and equality. "They are real people. They don't sort of place themselves 'up here' and we are all down here, looking. They are funny, relatable" (SN08). This perception is enhanced by the willingness of the Senior Pastors to share about their own lives: "They show their warts" (SN03). This meant the Newcomers were able to relate to the Senior Pastors even though they hardly knew them: "It helps to relate to them. Where before you are thinking that person up there is pure and you have got to try and make that level, here they are actually down with you and you are all doing it together" (SN05).

The Newcomers also have a positive experience of the preaching - it is understandable and relevant: "It is the same with their sermons - when they are talking about certain Scriptures. They break it down and then relate it to today's world and how we can live it every day, not to way back when it happened" (SN08).

5.4.9 Attender's Experience of Church

The dominant experience of the attenders of the C3 Sunshine Lakes is one of acceptance and friendliness: "It feels like a family. It is one big family. And when your families are broken, it is accepting. People are there to make you feel loved and accepted" (SL01). "When you come you are accepted. No matter who you are or what you are, you are accepted" (SL02).

Coupled with this is the non-judgemental nature of the church: "You are not judged. For whatever you have done there is no judgment. It doesn't matter what journey you have had, when you are here you just become a part of something that is just going to enhance and grow you" (SL03).

There is also an overwhelming appreciation of the quality of the church and its services: "I love that we are fresh and modern and welcoming and not so traditional. So people are 'wowed' when they walk in: 'This is not how I expected church to be'" (SL09). In particular, attenders appreciate the sense of presence, and demonstration of the power, of God in the church: "God is in the place" (SC01). For some this was a determinant of their decision to attend:

And Pastor Seymour called my wife and I out and prophesied over us. And it was a picture of where we were. There was also an altar call for baptism in the Holy Spirit and before my daughter even got out to the altar she was baptised in the Holy Spirit. All those things confirmed my experience that this was where we needed to be. (SC02)

One participant made this striking statement about the quality of the church:

I have been in Spirit-filled churches for 48 years and I have been in three major churches and I have been here for 14 1/2 years and this is by far the best church I have ever been in. It is like I have found what I have been looking for all those years and I think, "Thanks God, you kept the best until last." It has just been a delight for us, that this church we have been looking for, does exist. (SL02)

The quality of the church services means that many attenders feel free from "the cringe factor" (SL05) - often for the first time in their church life - and so are able to invite their

non-Christian friends and relatives to attend worship: "This is the first church that I have not felt ashamed or embarrassed, not ashamed, but comfortable. I would love to bring any of my neighbours, family or friends here because you know God is here doing amazing things" (SL03).

However, the attenders realise that this excellence does not happen automatically. They are aware of, or have experienced, the intentional structures and training that make the experience of friendliness and quality possible:

Even if you do not know one person, by the time you have left you have got a buddy system in place, you've got a Connect Group if you would like to join. They put you with families, with people similar to you so that you are followed up with phone calls that week, that month... Everything is put in place for new visitors that you see: write out your details, you are given bags, there is always follow-up, and there is always someone to greet you as soon as we have finished the service, to come and speak with you and join you for tea and coffee and just find out a little bit about your world. (SN06)

One Newcomer reflected:

I found the follow-up really good as well. The first time I came to the church I really enjoyed it and I felt like this was where I was meant to be. But stepping into somewhere new for me, I probably would not have come back, but having [the New Christians Pastor] ringing me, meaning that I knew someone when I next came ... and she always seemed to find me as soon as I came in, so I had someone to talk to. And it has happened with everything. The course I have done - there is always a follow-up, you feel cared about and you feel as though someone is looking out for you. (SN08)

The Empower Courses and the Breakie Club are perceived as being particularly important in integrating Newcomers into the church life. A number shared how much they had benefited from being involved in both of these structured, yet relational, groups. One Newcomer shared a common experience:

... and the involvement of the people in the Empower One course: the people in that, sharing their experiences was very enlightening and that helped me to stay focused

with my relationship with God. And I am also doing the Empower Two course; just the openness of everybody who has shared in those groups - I found it quite enjoyable and I sort of miss it, not doing any of those sorts of groups at the moment, just coming to church. (SN01)

Although a lot of effort goes into maintaining the quality of the church services and the follow-up mechanisms, the efforts of volunteers towards this goal is "honoured" by the church:

There is a real spirit of appreciation when you come. You have that purpose and that vision as part of a team but there is also the appreciation part. You are doing things, but it is not unnoticed and it is recognised ... we have "Unsung Hero" presentation once a month - we honour a volunteer but also there is a spirit of verbal encouragement amongst us, people are constantly encouraging others so it is a real boost to come to be a part of something. (SL04)

As a result, church participants feel a great sense of reward and purpose from their ministry: "It gives you real purpose. I feel purposeful coming to this church. What I am doing actually used for God and is making a difference" (SL09).

5.4.10 Attender's Experience of Leadership

Just as the Newcomers experience the Senior Pastors as "real," so do those in the other Focus Groups. "And what I love about them is that they can get up there on Sunday and preach about what they have been through and have no embarrassment about that to get the point across. And I think that is just really great, people letting us into their lives" (SL06). This realness is related by the participants to integrity: "What you see on Sunday is exactly what's in the office during the week, it is exactly what is at their house when you go there for lunch or dinner. That is it. It is all upfront. You know what they say to you is real" (SN07). "They do everything out of a pure motive" (SC02).

There is also the perception that the pastors are normal people, just like the participants themselves. "He walks the same walk with us, he is not on a different level; they have

everyday lives, everyday needs and all our lives are on one equal level and it is all about our direct relationship with God here as well and it is so evident" (SN06).

This perception of normality has been enhanced by personal interaction with the Senior Pastors. A number indicated their amazement that despite the size of the church Pastor Seymour knew them personally. "Pastor Seymour made a point of coming up every time I was here and he knew my name and that's a really strong thing. He would come and talk to you. He is approachable" (SL01). Another said, "He knows us, every single one of us. He cares" (SN02).

However, just as important as these experiences of equality, integrity and personal relationship is the perception that the Senior Pastors really love the church and are willing to make sacrifices for it. There were several powerful statements like this one: "They love the church. They live and would die for the church" (SL04).

These experiences of the Senior Pastors allow them to challenge and hold people accountable. One person described their experience of church as:

I feel accountable. So you have got people above you to make you accountable and that keeps you on track. So that is to push you, but also when you fall that is to pick you up... because you can just be wandering in this world, and not doing anything really, and I think it has really helped me be effective. (SL09)

But this accountability is seen as compassionate: "They are just very understanding of people and don't have such high expectations that you are not going to be able to achieve them. While they are real they know that you are real too and very understanding" (SN07). There is a common perception that the Senior Pastors are forgiving if members of the church make mistakes: "Someone struggles - hand out [to help them up]. Someone trips over and stuffs up it is repair mode - pick them up and repair, not scorn, mock, kick them out" (SC01).

5.4.11 Insights from the Questionnaire

Twenty-one questionnaires were completed by the participants in the focus groups at the conclusion of the groups. The age range of people completing the survey was from 20 to 70 years. The period of involvement in the church varied from seven weeks to 14 years. Even

though there were three specific groups, Newcomers, leaders and a general cross-section, they together represent a good sample of the entire church.

The salient findings from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire are presented later in this section. However, the questions in the questionnaire also serve on a “simpler” level to give participants the opportunity to describe their experience of the church and the leadership of the church using concepts and language developed by others, as will be discussed below.

The statements most frequently and strongly agreed with are presented in the following table:

Table 5-7 Percentages of People at 3C Sunshine Lakes Agreeing with Statements in the Questionnaire

Statement	Level of Agreement
I have a strong and growing sense of belonging to this church.	100% agreed
This church is a good place for me to be.	100% strongly agreed
I feel at home in this church.	100% agreed
The leader frequently if not always leads a group that is effective.	95.2% agreed
The leader frequently if not always articulates a compelling vision for that future.	95.2% agreed
The leader leads a group that is effective.	95.2% agreed
The leader frequently, if not always, expresses confidence that goals will be achieved.	95.2% agreed
The leader frequently if not always talks optimistically about the future.	95.2% agreed
The leader frequently, if not always, heightens my desire to succeed.	90.5% agreed
The leader treats church members as equals.	90.5% strongly agreed
The leader sets a good example by the way he behaves.	90.5% strongly agreed

The leader shows concern about church member's well-being.	90.5% strongly agreed
Leaders here inspire me to action.	90.5% strongly agreed

The first thing to emerge from the questionnaire is a powerful sense of belonging. All of the participants indicated that they had a "strong and growing" sense of belonging. There is also a unanimous sense that this church is a "good place for me to be" and that "I feel at home in this church." It is not surprising then, that the respondents thought it was very important to attend this particular church and that they expected to be in this church for a long time.

The participant's experience of the leadership of the church was dominated by five themes. First, was a strong conviction that the Senior Pastor leads by example. For example, many respondents strongly agreed that he sets a good example by the way he behaves. Further, many agreed that the Senior Pastor works as hard as anyone in the church. This is probably why respondents indicated that he frequently, if not always, heightens their desire to succeed.

The second thing to emerge about leadership was that it was visionary. The Senior Pastor talks "frequently, if not always" optimistically about the future and frequently articulated a compelling vision for that future. The subsequent church goals were explained and held in focus. The Senior Pastor was also able to frequently, if not always, express a "confidence the goals will be achieved."

Participants also sensed that the Senior Pastor showed concern. This was not just concern about their well-being, but that he showed concern for church member's success. This concern was expressed through frequently, if not always, spending time teaching and coaching and helping them develop their strengths.

Overall, the Senior Pastor is frequently, if not always, acting "in ways that build my respect." This was probably because many strongly agreed that he treats church members as equals and gives church members honest and fair answers.

Finally, the questionnaire also revealed that participants experienced the leadership as decisive, with many agreeing that the Senior Pastor never waits for things to go wrong nor

allow problems to become chronic before taking action. Everyone agreed that he never avoided making decisions. The result was that he “leads a group that is effective.”

Although the reliability of the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) (Chronbach's Alpha = .883) and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Chronbach's Alpha = .753) were good, the reliability of the Sense of Community Index (SCI) (Chronbach's Alpha = .318) was below the usually accepted standard of .7. This confirms the concerns raised by some scholars about the reliability of the SCI as an instrument (Peterson, et al., 2006).

The full details of the statistical analysis are in Appendix F. However, the salient findings are presented here. Spearman's correlation indicated a weak relationship between the NCLS inspiring leadership question and the ELQ ($r_s = +.443$, $n = 21$, $p = .044$, 2 tailed). Two of the ELQ factors, (Coaching and Showing Concern) were also correlated, indicating that inspiring leadership is linked to empowering leadership at this church (see more details in Section 8.7.3.)

However, the NCLS question relating to empowering leadership was not related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.301$, $n = 21$, $p = .185$, 2 tailed) although it was to one of the factors, Coaching ($r_s = +.434$, $n = 21$, $p = .049$, 2 tailed). This indicates that although empowering leadership, as defined by the NCLS, is not related to the ELQ model, it is related to coaching followers in this church.

The NCLS “leaders take ideas into account” question was not related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.215$, $n = 21$, $p = .349$, 2 tailed) indicating that considering the ideas of church attenders is not a factor in empowering leadership behaviour in this church.

Finally, the MLQ indicated that the leaders in 3C Sunshine Lakes also demonstrate some Transformational Leadership behaviours which result in Extra Effort, Effectiveness and Satisfaction for their followers. In particular, Individual Consideration produced Effectiveness and Satisfaction in attenders. Inspirational Motivation and Idealised Influence were also moderately correlated to the NCLS inspiring leadership question (see more details in Section 8.7.3.) In this church, inspiring leadership is related to the ELQ model of empowering leadership and Transformational Leadership.

5.4.12 Summary

A number of factors emerge from this case study which promote understanding of the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance:

Friendliness

The common experience of this church, by both Newcomers and regular attenders, is “friendliness.” This was confirmed not only by the language of the participants but by the church’s own internal research with Newcomers. The desire of the church to welcome Newcomers is expressed through a large number of people throughout the church deliberately initiating conversation with people they do not know. It is also expressed through an emphasis on hospitality.

Invitation

In the focus groups, a number of Newcomers indicated that their avenue of engagement with the church was by invitation. This was confirmed by the Senior Pastor who indicated that rather than advertising in the mass media, he put resources into developing “Connect Events” and related promotional material which members of the church could use to invite their friends and relatives.

Positive Experience of Leadership

The Newcomers also indicated that they had a very positive early experience of the leadership of the church. They were particularly impressed by the “realness” of the pastors and the preaching, which powerfully impacted them.

Sense of Belonging

Friendliness is not only expressed to Newcomers, it is experienced by all attenders of the church, as reflected by the unanimous strong and growing sense of belonging. The unanimous sense that this church was a good place to be and that participants felt at home in this church also reflect this very strong sense of belonging.

A Keen Awareness of the Supernatural

There is also a widespread sense of the powerful presence of God throughout the church. Once again this is experienced by both Newcomers and longer-term attenders. There is a

strong expectation that God will move powerfully both through miracles and through conversion of people to Christian faith. There is also an expectation that God will help members of the church be financially successful as well.

Effective Preaching

Attendees at this church are powerfully influenced by the preaching. There is a widespread expectation that God will speak or move through the anointed preacher. The preaching is also described as highly relevant to people's lives.

A Culture of Excellence

A culture of excellence is strongly manifested, especially in the facilities, music and children's ministry of the church. This excellence means that attendees at the church are "cringe-free" and therefore confident to invite their non-Christian friends and relatives to attend, fully expecting that they will be "wowed" by the experience and made welcome.

Training

This excellence is achieved through a culture of training. Each person in the church is expected and helped to get better at their ministry. The training is formalised through the Training College, but all attendees, from the Senior Pastor, who is mentored by a more senior pastor, through to the Stewards in the car parks, are well trained.

Intentionality

The powerful features of the church are not accidental. The church leadership is very strategic and the church is extremely well resourced through the financial contribution of its members. Over 69% of the respondents to the NCLS in 2006 indicated that they regularly gave 10% or more of their net income to the church. This high level of giving means there are resources available for facilities and the employment of pastors to train and organise the volunteers. The outcome of this is excellent welcome, training (e.g. the Empower Courses) and follow-up procedures which foster the experience of excellence and friendliness.

Authentic Leadership

Despite their widely perceived "anointing" for spiritual leadership of the church there is a strong awareness of the "realness" of Pastor Seymour and his wife. Although there is a

widespread perception of their success both spiritually and in the business world, there is also an appreciation of their self disclosed weaknesses.

Leadership By Example

The leaders in this church are perceived as setting an excellent example in evangelism and service. However, they are also seen to be excellent examples in the way they are able to achieve success not only in the church but in their family and business lives.

Caring Leadership

Despite the size of the church, Pastor Seymour is experienced as being caring. This is possible because he is able to remember the names of just about each person in the church. It is also perceived that both Pastor Seymour and his wife are passionately committed to the church and the people in it. Not only that, he honours (builds respect and treats as equals) members of the congregation and so inspires them to service and success.

Inspiring Leadership

The leaders at this church inspire through example, vision, coaching and showing concern. The MLQ also demonstrated that Individual Consideration produces Effectiveness and Satisfaction in attenders. Although the leaders do not largely inspire through the empowering leadership behaviours described by the ELQ model, they are still highly inspirational.

5.5 Summary of Findings From Case Studies

Because of the contextual and theological diversity of these three high percentage Newcomer churches they have a variety of features. Some of these features have been identified by this research as factors in the engagement of Newcomers. The headings used in the summary at the end of each Case Study can be used as an aid in the synthesis of the findings. These factors for each church are presented together in Table 5-8.

The factors emerge from the data produced by the research methods. The research method(s) which helped identify a factor are listed after each factor in the table. They are coded as follows:

- Q = Questionnaire.
- O = Observation.
- F = Focus Groups.
- I = Interview.

Sometimes the same factor looks superficially different, and is described with different language, in different churches. This is a reflection of the different traditions of the churches. The terms "accepting," "egalitarian," and "friendly" can all be grouped together under the heading of "welcoming." At the Salvation Army church, this welcoming was expressed by acceptance. At the Anglican Church welcoming was expressed by equality. At the Pentecostal church welcoming was expressed in friendliness. Each church also has some distinctive characteristics which contribute to its effectiveness at reaching and retaining Newcomers.

Table 5-8 Summary of Findings From Case Studies

Gold Creek Salvation Army	Wattle Hills Anglican Church	Christian City Church Sunshine Lakes
Newcomer's Experience of Engagement		
Invitation (F)	Invitation (F, O)	Invitation (F,I)
Acceptance (F,O)	Egalitarian (F,Q)	Friendly (F,I)
Opportunity for ministry (F, I)	Opportunity for ministry (F, O)	Opportunity for ministry (F, O)
Supernatural (F)	Supernatural (F)	Supernatural (F, O)
Positive experience of Leaders (F)	Positive experience of Leaders (F)	Positive experience of Leaders (F)
Church Characteristics		
Sense of Belonging (F,Q)	Sense of Belonging (F,Q)	Sense of Belonging (F,Q)
Hospitality (O,I)	Hospitality (O,I)	Hospitality (O,F,I)
Training (O,I)	Training (O,I)	Training (O,I)
	Multiple Community Connections (O,F,I)	
	Effective Contextualisation (O,F,I)	
		Keen Awareness of the Supernatural (F,O)
		Intentionality (F,O)
		Culture of Excellence (F,O,I)
Leadership Characteristics		
Authentic (F)	Authentic (F)	Authentic (F)
Lead by Example (F,Q)	Lead by Example (F,Q)	Lead by Example (F,Q)
Authoritative & Relevant Preaching (F,O)	Authoritative & Relevant Preaching (F,O)	Authoritative & Relevant Preaching (F,O)
Inspiring (F,Q)	Inspiring (F,Q)	Inspiring (F,Q)
	Caring (F,Q)	Caring (F,Q)

(Note: the absence of a factor in a church does not preclude its presence but does indicate that it was not as salient as other factors in that church.)

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings made in this research into the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The following research questions, emerging from the literature review, were used to focus the conduct of the study:

1. How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?
2. How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and “a strong and growing sense of belonging” experience this sense of belonging?
3. How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

A number of factors related to Newcomer engagement emerging from the findings derived from each case study are identified in Chapter 5. A summary of the factors identified in each case study are presented in Table 5-8. In this chapter, the factors are discussed in light of the Literature Review (Chapter 2), the Theological Framework (Chapter 3) and the research questions. Some of the concepts discussed below emerge from the actual language of the participants. However, others are suggested by the literature review and theological framework or derived from observation and the other collected data.

The structure used to discuss the findings is based on the Research Questions:

- The Newcomer’s experience of church engagement.
- The attender’s experience of high percentage Newcomer churches.
- The attender’s experience of leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches.

6.2 The Newcomer's Experience of Church Engagement

6.2.1 Invitation

"My kids started coming to Sunday School and started begging me to come to church" (GN02).

This research confirms that invitation plays a crucial role in the engagement of many Newcomers in church attendance. Sometimes it is children, already engaged in the church, who ask their parents to attend as well. Sometimes it is a clergyman or his wife who issue the invitation. The invitation sometimes coincides with a life crisis which prompts the Newcomer to respond. But few of the Newcomers in this research indicated that they came to church without invitation from someone they knew. Hence, this research reinforces the sociological perspective that invitation usually occurs amongst pre-existing friends or relatives (Cornwall, 1989).

A number of Newcomers indicated that they did not respond immediately to the invitation, but only after some time or several requests. The engagement of Newcomers is a difficult process and so the invitations that are successful in bringing a Newcomer into church life are often persistent.

These high percentage Newcomer churches have a culture of invitation, following the pattern of New Testament churches who saw their role as inviting outsiders to join the banquet of the Kingdom (see Section 3.3.3.) All three churches put effort into creating events other than the Sunday worship services that the attenders can invite their non-Christian friends and relatives to attend. However, attendance at the worship services is the primary marker of engagement and many Newcomers do not attend an outreach event before beginning to attend a church worship service. Although these events do provide an alternative to church that attenders can invite their friends to, they also serve the function of creating an outward focus.

The sharing of food is a feature of these churches, not just in Communion, but before and after worship services and at various times during the week. The Newcomer experiences the family of God as they gather for meals. Sometimes these meals are especially for Newcomers. "Making a fuss" of Newcomers is an important activity of high percentage Newcomer churches. It is one thing to say Newcomers are welcomed and valued, it is

another to be able to express that meaningfully. One way high percentage Newcomer churches are able to do that is through hospitality. Just as Jesus invited outsiders to experience the Kingdom through a shared meal (see Section 3.3.3.), so invitation to hospitality is a key feature of the experience of Newcomer engagement.

6.2.2 A Non-Judgmental Welcome

“I was scared, I was scared of being judged, being told I wasn't good enough for this church” (GN01).

“It was just amazing - everyone just greeted you and welcomed you and no one held back” (SN03).

Before engagement with churches, Newcomers experience anxiety – they sometimes describe it as “scary.” This is largely due to a fear of judgement and rejection. The origins of these expectations were not explored. Perhaps it is media portrayal of the church, or past experiences, however, the implication is clear: potential Newcomers are scared of coming to church because they believe they will be judged and rejected. Churches need to be proactive to make sure this perception is not reality.

However, once the Newcomers to these high percentage Newcomer churches actually visit the churches they experience a strong sense of welcome. The welcoming attitude of church members towards Newcomers finds expression in very specific and powerful ways. At the Salvation Army church many of the Newcomers experience welcome through strong expressions of acceptance and non-judgement despite the expectation that this is not what they would encounter in a church. This is especially important in this context because of the marginalised background that many of the Newcomers come from. At the Anglican Church, which is in an upper middle-class context, welcome is expressed not so much through acceptance as through an experience of equality with others in the church. The welcome in the C3 church is expressed through persistent friendliness. Regardless of how it is expressed, this welcoming is often very surprising to the Newcomer.

This sense of welcome is created by more than a warm handshake on Sundays. Hospitality not only serves as a focus for invitation but provides an ongoing environment for integration.

At the Salvation Army, morning tea and supper are highly valued. At the Pentecostal church, Newcomers have a special "Breakie Club" where they not only get personal attention from senior leaders of the church but also receive basic discipleship training and a free meal. The Anglican Church has a "Newcomers Dinner" three times a year at the Senior Minister's home.

Newcomers (and regular attenders) also spoke of how their church involvement stretched throughout the week. The deeper sense of welcome described by the Newcomers is not something that can just be fostered in the task oriented environment of Sunday services. It is necessary for there to be space on days other than Sunday where people from the church can get together and form deeper friendships. The home groups, Bible studies and ministry teams of these churches provide these opportunities for significant and welcoming friendships to develop with Newcomers.

The ability of church friendship networks to incorporate Newcomers declines as average tenure of attenders, and number of church friends, increase (Olson, 1989). As expected, in these high percentage Newcomer churches the average tenure of the attenders is quite low due to the relatively young age of these churches (except the Salvation Army church) and because so many of the attenders are Newcomers. As a result the church attenders have a greater capacity for additional friends and are more inclined to invite and incorporate Newcomers. Churches that have been in existence for a longer period of time are at a disadvantage in terms of attracting and holding Newcomers unless they can inspire the attenders to begin to invite potential Newcomers into their friendship networks.

It is noted that all three churches had almost exactly the same percentage of Newcomers - 30%. It could be that this is the maximum proportion of Newcomers that churches can handle before the new-friendship capacity is exhausted. In any case, the attenders at these high percentage Newcomer churches are deliberately and effectively friendly, not just amongst themselves, but to Newcomers. Although present to a varying extent, there is an emphasis on motivating and training regular attenders at the church in the use of skills related to making others feel welcome. The welcoming of Newcomers is not just left to chance.

The churches also demonstrate successful contextualisation. The language in the services does not contain religious jargon; the dress of the leaders is not different from the Newcomer's (except in the Salvation Army); the buildings are not traditional church structures; and, children are welcomed and embraced both through attitude and through programs. The overall atmosphere of the services is informal, egalitarian and relaxed. Newcomers feel welcome at these churches because the efforts of the churches to fit their context mean a number of things that could make Newcomers feel different and excluded are not present. In this way these churches recognise the likelihood of unbelievers in their midst during corporate worship, as did Paul (see Section 3.3.3), and use the opportunity for evangelism.

The friendly welcome is also manifest in a willingness to have the Newcomer involved in church ministry very early on in their engagement. The verbal expressions of acceptance are reinforced by physical acts demonstrating that acceptance in ways like trusting a Newcomer with responsibility for a ministry. Both the leaders and the Newcomers identified that early involvement is something they encourage and experience.

Previous research has identified that one of the primary reasons that people do not attend church in Australia is because it is "boring and irrelevant" (Bellamy, et al., 2002). However, this research suggests people have the expectation that when they enter a church they will be judged, rejected or looked down upon. They are pleasantly surprised when they experience exactly the opposite - a warm, pervasive non-judgemental welcome - in these high percentage Newcomer churches.

6.2.3 An Experience of the Supernatural

"It was God really knocking on my door. He just showed me that door and the way to him" (WN03).

Many Newcomers experience a supernatural dimension to their engagement in church attendance. For some this supernatural activity occurs before they begin to attend the church. The process often involves a crisis or low point which prompts them to seek out God, reflecting the strain theory of conversion. But they also tell stories of invitation by a friend and how God led them to come to the church. This is the "transcendent providence"

described by Hay and Hunt (2000) - a patterning of events in a person's life that convinces the person that in some strange way those events were meant to happen.

For others the supernatural experience occurs when they are actually in church. Often they experience God speaking powerfully through the leader of the church in a sermon or other context. Sunday worship is a time where they corporately experience the presence of God, often bringing healing in their lives.

Although the Pentecostal church has a greater emphasis on powerful encounters with God, Newcomers at all three churches described a sense of God at work in their lives in the language appropriate for their denomination. There is an expectation that God will tangibly change the lives of those who surrender themselves to Him.

These high percentage Newcomer churches are unapologetic about claiming that the supernatural is present in a special way in their church. Many Australians do not have a fundamental problem with spirituality, although their definitions would vary widely (see Section 2.4.1.) The issue is that many Australians do not associate their spirituality with their local church. The regular attenders at these churches expect to encounter God at corporate worship and Newcomers come expecting the same.

Similarly, these churches are unapologetic in their literalist approach to the Bible. The Word is definitive and authoritative. Preaching in all three churches focuses on a passage of the Bible and strongly implies that God is speaking directly to the listener through it. This fundamentalist certainty of authority provides comfort for those who are looking to reduce the anxiety of not knowing (see Section 2.4.2). Even though Newcomers come from a background where the Bible is not normally an important part of their lives, once they engage with these churches they consider that God speaks through it and it becomes a source of great authority.

However, even though the churches are literalist, Newcomers are not explicitly looking for that particular approach - they probably do not even know what the term refers to. As pointed out in the literature review, Newcomers in North American churches are more likely to indicate that they were attracted to a church because of its theological beliefs and doctrine (Rainer, 2001). This is not the case for Newcomers in Australian churches - none of the participants in this research indicated that a particular theological belief or doctrine was

important. This contrast between North America and Australia probably reflects the more secular nature of Australian society.

The visit of the Newcomer to these churches means they are exposed to the public witness of the worshipping community. This environment is a tangible manifestation of the Kingdom of God where humans submit themselves to the reign of God and express Kingdom values in their relationships with one another and with the Newcomer. As identified in Section 3.3.3, corporate worship is a moment of evangelism whether Christians like it or not. For the Newcomer this can be a supernatural experience of God and His people.

6.2.4 A Positive Experience of the Senior Leader

“They are real people. They don't sort of place themselves ‘up here’ and we are all down here, looking. They are funny, relatable” (SN08).

Especially important for Newcomers during their engagement is their experience of the clergy. Newcomers spoke of their positive memories of their first encounter with the Pastor/Officer/Minister. The welcome from, and informality of, the clergy is just as significant as the informality and welcome of the church service. Their impression of the leader is identified as an important part of the decision to engage. This impression is not always experienced (at least initially) in a one-on-one conversation with the leader, but comes from impressions received from the leader's preaching and leadership of worship.

The importance of this impression of the leader is explained by the fact that in the earlier stages of a person's relationship with a church, transference goes on between a Newcomer and the senior leader (Oswald & Leas, 1988). Newcomers hope that somehow the church leader might be able to give them help in discovering that life has order or meaning or purpose, or that it can be fulfilling and rewarding, or that they can, and will, know the love and acceptance of God. Further, early in their relationship with the church, the Newcomer looks to the leader more than anyone else for clues that it is possible to believe and that belief is efficacious (Oswald & Leas, 1988).

Attendees at these churches identified that they experienced their leaders as authentic, inspiring, empowering and caring. They also perceive that God speaks through the leaders

when he/she preaches or teaches. The Newcomer takes these characteristics of the leader as representative of the whole church. Hence these positive leadership behaviours are crucial in the Newcomers developing a positive opinion of the whole church.

Clergy are important not only in the running and the morale of the church but also in the personal lives of the people they encounter, both inside and outside the life of the church. In seeking to assess the authenticity of the entire church and its message the Newcomers looked to the leaders, and found it. Church leaders need to be keenly aware of this dynamic when considering how they conduct their ministry.

6.2.5 Summary

These churches are places where people discover the reality of the Kingdom of God through Christian community. As churches meet their theological mandate to be evangelising, inviting, hospitable, worshipping and caring communities they form a persuasive environment where the claims of the Kingdom become visibly manifest and experienced. The Newcomer is invited, welcomed, accepted, valued and understood, called “brother” or “sister,” declared useful and invited to become a permanent member (Manriquez, 2008). Their needs are considered, support is provided and they are incorporated into the collective rituals of the community. The Newcomer, experiencing the family-like community, is powerfully motivated to embrace all that it offers.

6.3 The Attender’s Experience of High Percentage Newcomer Churches

6.3.1 A Strong and Growing Sense of Belonging

“I think, too, you feel as though you belong when you feel you are part of it. You are not just sitting and observing but you are actually participating...” (WC08).

High percentage Newcomer churches typically have high levels of attenders who feel as though their sense of belonging is strong and growing (Bellamy, et al., 2006). This is certainly true at these churches, scoring 78.6%, 90%, and 100% on this NCLS question.

However, this research identifies that sense of belonging is not related to a physical place, as suggested by some (Krause & Wulff, 2005; Lytch, 2004). The Anglican and Pentecostal churches have been in their current buildings for less than 20 years and were speaking quite clearly about new buildings as part of their vision for growth. Even though the Salvation Army church has been in its buildings for many years, it too spoke openly of moving to a new and larger building. None of the attenders expressed affection for their church buildings. Although there would be some anxiety associated with moving, the sense of belonging is not to the building but to the people who occupy it.

Nor is sense of belonging connected to length of tenure. Many of the participants are quite new in the life of the church. Sense of belonging is something that springs to life quite early in these churches. Some Newcomers even expressed a sense of belonging on their first visit to the church.

Sense of belonging in these churches is strong because the church feels like a family. Although some participants used the term “belonging” to describe their experience of church life, they were more likely to describe it in terms of being part of a family. The SCI question relating to “I feel at home in this church” scored very highly in all three churches reflecting the family motif and that home is a place where you feel like you belong.

The metaphor of family has been previously used by researchers to describe and understand the nature of churches (Brasher, 1998; Frykholm, 2004). The language of “home” and “family” echoes the Biblical metaphors for church community (see Section 3.3.2.) Just as a family is a place where you feel like you belong because of its clear boundaries, hospitality and strong relational ties, a church where the attenders and Newcomers feel a strong and growing sense of belonging is merely fulfilling the New Testament model for church life.

The church at its best reflects all that is noblest and most worthwhile in human family life: attitudes of caring and mutual regard; understanding of needs, whether physical or spiritual; and above all the “sense of belonging” to a social unit in which we find acceptance without pretence or make-believe. (R. P. Martin, 1979)

In their church, believers are linked, through faith, to other attenders. From this connection, along with all of the activities that it entails, attenders develop strong emotional bonds that feel to them like family bonds. These social connections develop at odds with a culture bent

on individualism (Frykholm, 2004). In these churches, one is a member of a collective; one submits to an authority other than one's own but receives, in exchange, powerful social rewards.

The "home" motif reflects the fundamentalist characteristics of these churches. They are a place of protection from the confusion and difficulty of a pluralistic and morally complex society. The church is a place where attenders can palpably sense and experience the peace, order and harmony that are supposed to emanate from the home (Brasher, 1998).

But these churches are "open" families and homes. Many churches would argue that they are a friendly family. However, it is only a very small percentage of churches which are able to attract and hold high percentages of Newcomers. The reality is that many churches are friendly, but that friendship only exists between the existing members and there is little if any "friendship capacity" left to embrace Newcomers. In contrast, these high percentage Newcomer churches are genuinely an open family, not only for themselves, but for Newcomers.

However, high percentage Newcomer churches are also "tight" families. They have strong sibling and filial bonds fostered by a sense of common purpose, fierce loyalty to the heads of the family (both father and mother) and a powerful set of common rituals which bind them together. They are also egalitarian and empowering families where each member is encouraged to contribute to the life of the family. Like many close families, these churches have high expectations of their members. They are "strict" (see Section 2.6.2). As with any well functioning family, members of these churches have tasks that they are expected to complete in order for the family to function. On a superficial level these tasks may seem costly and a deterrent from involvement. But because they are performed in the company of brothers and sisters and attenders see how they contribute to the fulfilment of the church vision, these tasks actually give them value and sense of belonging. There are no "free riders" in these church families - Newcomers are quickly given tasks to do and they enjoy doing them. It confirms they are part of the family, not just a visitor.

This is confirmed by the fact that when asked what built their sense of belonging to their church, attenders indicated that being able to get involved and to serve made them feel as though they were a part of the church, even if they were a Newcomer. Being asked to be

involved communicates a sense of being valued - a component of sense of belonging (Hagerty, et al., 1992). Personal investment in an organisation also creates a sense of ownership and involvement with other people, which builds bonds of friendship and belonging.

The strong and growing sense of belonging is also enhanced by other factors. The egalitarianism of these churches means that there is no sense that the leadership is separate or different. All attenders, whether in formal leadership positions or not, have an equal status and part to play in the life of the church. There may be different roles but there is still equality. There was no "us and them," it is just "us."

Another source of a sense of belonging is the activities that go on during the week. These high percentage Newcomer churches build this sense of family and belonging through a structure that gives attenders a strong sense of connection and relation. Church for the attenders is more than just what happens on Sunday. The home groups, ministry teams and other informal social gatherings mean that people have a real opportunity to get to know one another in meaningful ways which promote belonging.

The contribution of empowerment towards sense of belonging was inferred in the literature (Miers & Fisher, 2002). Empowering leadership may provide the opportunities and support structure to allow members to contribute to the community and so feel as though they belong. The attempt to confirm a relationship between empowerment and the Sense of Community using the SCI and the ELQ was inconclusive due to the low reliability of the SCI. However, there was a correlation between the two instruments at one church *suggesting* there may be a relationship between empowering leadership and a Sense of Community amongst followers. Further research with a refined SCI is likely to indicate that the two are interdependent.

The low reliability of the SCI also hindered the attempt to confirm a relationship between Sense of Community and growing belonging. However, the language of the attenders at the these churches suggests that they do experience psychological Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The four components of Sense of Community, membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection are demonstrably present in these high percentage Newcomer churches, as discussed below:

Membership

To have a Sense of Community, people must feel that are members of that community. There are five attributes of membership:

- Boundaries.
- Emotional safety.
- A sense of belonging and identification.
- Personal investment.
- A common symbol system.

First, high percentage Newcomer churches have a clear *boundaries*: there is a shared understanding of who is “in” and who is “out” of membership. Although the boundaries vary from church to church, they are all strong. In the Salvation Army Church the uniform or Badge of Adherence is the significant marker of membership. In the Pentecostal church the mark of membership is baptism of the Holy Spirit, but there is also a wide use of “Team” T-shirts which serves as a uniform of sorts. In both the Salvation Army and Pentecostal churches the “rite of passage” into membership of the church is the public response to an altar call. Although the Anglican Church does not have the same public rite of initiation, conversion marks membership. And so, even though the boundaries of belonging for these high percentage Newcomer churches are strong and clear, the pathways into these churches are also very clear. Each emphasises that in order to belong to the church, conversion is necessary as was the practice in early churches (see Section 3.2.) The process whereby this occurs varies in each church, but again, the way one becomes a Christian, and so enjoy the benefits of full membership of the church, is very clear.

The appeal of membership seems to be independent of the socioeconomic situation of the community in which these churches exist. These churches represent three quite distinct demographics. The Salvation Army church is in a depressed rural region with much social dislocation. In contrast, the Anglican church is in an upper middle-class area where there is a very high percentage of nuclear families. The Pentecostal church is in an area where there are not only a large number of nuclear families but

also retirees. Hence, the desire to belong to a community is appealing regardless of demography.

The membership component of sense of belonging is also apparent because these churches are also an *emotionally "safe"* place to be. All attenders, but especially Newcomers, are pleasantly surprised by the level of acceptance and non-judgemental nature of these churches. Others speak of how they are confident to try doing things because if they fail they are not condemned by the church leadership - they are simply encouraged to try again in a different way. These churches are a safe place where, following the example of the leadership, you can be real - it is safe to be yourself.

The members also make a considerable *investment* of time and money in the life of the church, confirming their membership. These churches make large demands of their members in terms of time and money. As people invest in the church their sense of ownership increases and so does their sense of belonging to the community.

Finally, these high percentage Newcomer churches have strongly defined *common symbol systems*. Some of these symbols are physical, for example the uniforms in the Salvation Army church. Others are frequently repeated rituals. But what is most striking is the common language used by people in each of these churches. Certain words are used frequently by people in the churches, often repeating the articulated vision of the leaders. This common language symbolises a common understanding of the world which also creates a Sense of Community amongst the members.

Influence

The attenders at these high percentage Newcomer churches indicate that they believe the leaders of the church are open to their suggestions and comments. This is reflected by a high percentage (average 94.4% across the three churches) who indicated in the questionnaires they believed that the leaders of the church took their ideas into account to some extent or a great extent. To have a Sense of Community, an individual must feel they have some control and influence over the group.

In reality, none of these churches are “democratic” in the sense that the members directly control the church. There are no constituted members meetings, as in Baptist churches, for example, which are the ultimate authority (under God) in the church. These churches are either governed by a small group of non-elected elders (C3) or by a denominationally appointed leader(s) (Anglican and Salvation Army). As a result this sense of influence does not come from the structures of the church but from a perception. The leaders are able to communicate that they *do* listen to the members and that their ideas are a significant influence on decisions made in the church.

Integration and Fulfilment of Needs

Although they did not use this language, the attenders at these churches are “proud” to be associated with their church and its leaders, fulfilling a need to be associated with success. For a community to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual group association must be rewarding for the individual members. Some of the more common reinforcers include status of membership, success of the community and the perceived competence of other members. All three of these are present in the case study churches: membership is highly valued, as is the success of the church, demonstrated through its growth. The leadership are held as especially competent, with part of that competence derived from their ability to equip and develop members of the congregation to be successful.

Attenders also say they feel the care of the leaders and other members of the church indicating their emotional needs are being met. Finally, their growing confidence, due to the identification, development and use of their gifts, fulfils the need to feel valued and have purpose. It feels good to be a part of these church communities.

Shared Emotional Connection

Just as Newcomers experience friendliness as they engage in church attendance for the first time, regular attenders at high percentage Newcomer churches have a

strong sense of being amongst friends. This experience is described as an “atmosphere” of friendliness. Some describe an atmosphere of “warmth.” This reflects that the experience is not just superficial or narrow, but the result of a pervading set of behaviours demonstrated by a significant number of people across the church over a period of time.

Hugs and kisses are a frequent occurrence in these churches. These people do not relate to one another on just a superficial level. Again it would seem to be a factor of leadership: the leaders themselves model care and involvement at a deep level with members of the church, and the members of the church offer the same intimacy to one another. Because there is a high level of honesty about life's struggles in these churches, as modelled by the leaders, people share their experiences with one another. These deepen the bonds of intimacy and build Sense of Community.

Hence the four components of psychological Sense of Community (membership, influence, need fulfilment and shared emotional connection) are demonstrably present in these high percentage Newcomer churches. This strong Sense of Community is built upon the empowering, caring, accepting, egalitarian and family-like nature of these churches and is experienced by individuals as a strong and growing sense of belonging.

6.3.2 Corporate Confidence

“This is the first church that I have not felt ashamed or embarrassed, not ashamed, but comfortable. I would love to bring any of my neighbours, family or friends here because you know God is here doing amazing things ...” (SL03).

Attendees of these high percentage Newcomer churches are proud to belong to their church. NCLS research shows that attendees at high percentage Newcomer churches are likely to express strong positive sentiments about a range of church life issues (Sterland & Castle, 2004). According to the 2006 NCLS, the “things most valued” were different at each church. The aspects of church most valued by the respondents in the Pentecostal church were the contemporary style of worship or music and reaching out to those who do not attend church. The aspects most valued by members of the Salvation Army church were the ministry to youth and children, their wider community care and social justice emphasis and

their reaching out to those who do not attend church. In contrast, the aspects most valued at the Anglican Church were the sermons, preaching and Bible teaching.

Participants at the Pentecostal church often expressed pride in the “excellence” of their worship services and facilities. However, worship services and facilities of the Anglican and Salvation Army churches were not the same quality as the Pentecostal church, yet the people were still proud to be associated with their church.

And so, Corporate Confidence in these churches is not simply related to factors such as the quality of the services or the facility, but something more intangible. That factor is the sense of belonging: it feels good to belong to something powerful and good and so these people are willing to invite others to come and share their experience (Kaldor, et al., 2002). The element of the church life which they think will be most attractive to their non-Christian friends and relatives is actually the quality of the relationship they have with God and their fellow believers through their church.

However, this Corporate Confidence comes at a cost. In order to have the effectiveness that these churches demonstrate, it requires high levels of commitment from the church members themselves. The values of training, giving and hard work are prevalent amongst both leaders and attenders. All must be prepared to undergo training and be willing to use their skills in order to make their churches welcoming for Newcomers. The churches are strict, not so much in terms of morality, although this is present, but in terms of an expectation that everybody in the church will do their best. There are few if any “free riders” in these churches. Rational Choice Theory reigns: the more individuals sacrifice on behalf of their religion, the more benefits they receive (Roozen, 2004).

6.3.3 A Sense of Empowerment

“It gives you real purpose. I feel purposeful coming to this church. What I am doing is actually used for God and is making a difference” (SL09).

This research confirms previous findings that religious organisations can be empowering communities (Maton & Rappaport, 1984; Maton & Salem, 1995). For the purpose of this research, personal empowerment has been defined as the extent to which people develop a

personal sense of being able to achieve important life aims, and/or acquire psychological or material resources necessary for the accomplishment of those aims, and/or actually achieve, or make progress towards achieving, personal aims (Maton & Rappaport, 1984).

Empowering organisations generate personal empowerment among members for goal achievement (Zimmerman, 1995). The high percentage Newcomer churches studied in this research demonstrate the four characteristics of empowering communities: a strong group based belief system, an opportunity role structure, well developed support systems and inspirational, talented, shared and committed leadership (Maton & Salem, 1995) (see Section 2.6.3):

A Strong Group Based Belief System

A belief system refers to a community's ideology, values or culture. In each of the three churches a strong group based belief system is in place that inspires growth, is strength based and focused beyond self. The belief system is personally challenging and motivating and clearly defines important goals (for example, saving the lost or a happy marriage), and the means of achieving those goals (for example, training courses or prayer), are accessible. It is believed that each member, including Newcomers, has the capacity (strengths and resources) to achieve goals through the power of God now available to them. Further, each person represents a valuable resource to God and his church. Members are encouraged to look beyond themselves and to view themselves as part of the larger mission of the Church by the emphasis on personal evangelism.

Opportunity Role Structure

Sense of empowerment is derived from attender's involvement in ministry. They feel the opportunity and the training exist to enable them to serve God and the church in a meaningful way no matter how long they have been involved in the church.

There are obvious and meaningful opportunities for individuals to develop, grow and participate in these churches. In each church the role structure is pervasive in that it offers a large number of roles at multiple levels of the organisation. Roles as diverse as worship leader and car park steward are on offer. The roles are highly accessible because they require varying levels of skill, responsibility and self-confidence.

The role structures also contain many opportunities for skill development and learning, skill utilisation and the exercise of responsibility - each of the churches has an emphasis on training courses and classes to help Christians develop and mature and also develop skills for ministry. The "Code Blue" training course in the Salvation Army, the ministry training events at the Anglican Church and the Training College at the Pentecostal church were tangible demonstrations of a commitment to personal and organisational empowerment.

The fact that these churches are empowering communities, rather than just places where people are empowered, creates a multiplier effect. In recipient roles, members develop instrumental and psychological competencies, and in provider roles, self-efficacy is enhanced through skill utilisation, helping others and contributing to goal setting (Maton & Salem, 1995). In other words, those who are being taught and encouraged are empowered by the skills they learn and the support they receive and those doing the teaching and encouraging are empowered by the successful use of their skills. This empowering environment exists not just in the Sunday worship services, but in the home groups and other activities that occur throughout the churches throughout the week.

Well Developed Support Systems

All three churches provide social support resources to contribute to quality of life and ability to cope with stressful situations. In each of the three settings there are a wide variety of types and sources of support available (pastoral visit, Bible study groups, support groups). In particular, the small groups provide the opportunity for the sharing of religious beliefs, spiritual challenges and life struggles. The support systems are both proactive and reactive. For example, the churches keep rolls to ensure that members are in regular attendance and if they are not, they are followed up. The support systems are largely peer based but the systems also allow for the clergy to be involved in care where necessary. As a result of this well developed support system, a number of the participants reflected upon the way that they had felt supported by their church through difficult times.

Inspirational, Talented, Shared and Committed Leadership.

The questionnaires indicated that the leaders of these high percentage Newcomer churches inspire by presenting a dynamic vision of an active, powerful God involved in developing the church and transforming of members. Additionally the leaders are, themselves, inspirational role models embodying a faith-based and personally rich life to which members aspire. The leaders are seen by the congregation to have tremendous personal integrity and personal commitment to the cause. "They love the church. They live and would die for the church" (SL04).

The concept of shared leadership is especially important. Not only are the male leaders of the church willing to share leadership with their spouses, but members of the churches feel the leaders are willing to share it with them as well. The leadership structure varied from church to church, but the attenders of all three churches consider that the leader "takes their ideas into account to a great extent" (70.8% across the three churches). However, the scores for informing behaviours, for example "explains his decisions and actions to the church" were much lower (only 36.0% strongly agreed). It appears that explaining decisions is not as important as demonstrating that the ideas of attenders have been taken into account. This idea is confirmed by the fact that decisive leadership is greatly valued: attenders at these churches strongly disagreed that their leaders avoided making decisions (66.3%) or wait for things to go wrong before deciding (67.4%).

Hence, all four elements of the empowering communities model (Maton & Salem, 1995) are present in these churches. However, these churches are also empowering because of the leadership style. The NCLS construct of empowering leadership is based upon the extent to which the leaders encourage participants to find and use their gifts and skills (Bellamy, et al., 2006). According to this definition the leaders of these high percentage Newcomer churches are empowering. Attenders of these churches often feel this is the case to a "great extent" (68.5%).

However, there is more to empowering leadership than just identification, and coaching in use, of gifts and skills. The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) also demonstrated that the leaders of these churches empower members through a range of other

empowering behaviours. The leaders scored well above average for all the factors of the ELQ. Their empowering behaviours were also described by participants in the focus groups. These empowering leadership behaviours are discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.3.

6.3.4 Summary

Attendees of high percentage Newcomer churches feel a strong and growing sense of belonging and a sense of empowerment. Their sense of belonging can be better understood by looking at it through the lens of psychological Sense of Community which present in these churches. Their sense of empowerment comes from the empowering nature of their community and also the behaviours of their leaders. As a result of their sense of belonging and empowerment they are proud of their churches and proud that they are able to make a meaningful contribution to them. These features of church life are shaped by the leadership in these churches, which will now be discussed.

6.4 The Attender's Experience of Leaders In High Percentage Newcomer Churches

6.4.1 Authentic

"They are real people and they share their lives" (WC04).

Attendees and Newcomers at high percentage Newcomer churches experience the leaders of the church as "real" people - just like them. "They don't have a Sunday face" (GN05). This experience is in contrast to the real or perceived nature of clergy in other churches. Newcomers described perceptions of other clergy as unapproachable in contrast to the highly approachable nature of the leaders in the high percentage Newcomer churches.

This realness is created by the openness of the leaders to describe their own weaknesses and struggles. It is enhanced by the strong commitment of the leaders to be personally involved in the lives of many people in their churches, even if the churches are quite large.

Despite this realness, or probably because of it, the leaders of high percentage Newcomer churches are held in high esteem by attenders and Newcomers alike. The importance of personal character in successful leaders has long been recognized. The New Testament passages about leadership do not focus on “what” church leaders should be doing so much as on “who” they should be (see, for example, 1 Timothy 3:2-7). This has recently been reconfirmed (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). For people to be willing to follow a leader, the leader’s key characteristic must be honesty. Indeed, three of the first four characteristics of admired leaders (honest, competent, inspiring) make up what can be called “source credibility.” People only believe the message if they believe the messenger is credible.

Source credibility is crucial to the successful leadership of these high percentage Newcomer churches. When people perceive their leader is credible they are more likely to:

- Be proud to tell others that they are part of the organisation.
- Feel a strong sense of team spirit.
- Set their own personal values as consistent with those of the organisation.
- Feel attached and committed to the organisation.
- Have a sense of ownership of the organisation (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

And so, the credibility of the leader is a key factor in whether attenders are willing to invite others to church (bullet point 1) and their sense of belonging (bullet points 2-5) - two features of high percentage Newcomer churches vital to their success.

The leader’s honest transparency is a key component in building this credibility. This transparency, with its resultant message of credibility, is only possible through humility. In order to appear real, leaders must be willing to acknowledge their weaknesses. It is not surprising then that attenders experience the leaders as humble people: “[They are] in no way puffed up about themselves. They are very humble” (GN04). This humility is a component of the Biblical model of servant leadership:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8)

The authenticity of these leaders also serves another purpose. A precondition of effective role modelling and of generating viable vision is that leaders need to be knowledgeable about the realities of life for those served (McLaughlin & Heath, 1993). Leaders must be seen to be broken and human as well, or their examples and encouragements to invitation and service are hollow. Church leaders can only be inspirational role-model leaders if they are first seen to be human. In order for this perception to develop the leaders must also be open and humble to share their weaknesses and struggles.

6.4.2 Inspirational

"I think they are great examples of selfless people. They are forever putting others before themselves. I think that is a great model to follow within the church. To be so God focused. I couldn't ask for better leaders in the church" (WC07).

Leaders of high percentage Newcomer churches are inspirational: when the questionnaires were combined, 61.8% of attenders said they strongly agreed with the statement that "leaders here inspire me to action," while another 23.6% agreed with the statement (see Appendix F).

Although the correlations varied between the churches, in each case the Transformational Leadership behaviours (Avolio & Bass, 2004) produced either some or all of the positive outcomes (Extra Effort, Effectiveness, Satisfaction). When the questionnaire results from each church were combined, all of the behaviours and outcomes were correlated (see Table

8-29). Each of the Transformational Leadership behaviours was also observable, as will now be discussed (Avolio, et al., 1999).

Idealised Influence

The leaders in these churches are charismatic - they are admired, respected, and trusted and thus have a strong influence on their followers. The followers identify with, and want to emulate, their leaders and their mission. They also have strong feelings about their leaders, in whom they invest much trust and confidence. Among the things the leader does to earn credit with attenders is to consider followers' needs over his or her own needs. These leaders share risks with followers (for example, by inviting others to church) and are perceived to be consistent in conduct with underlying ethics, principles, and values.

Inspirational Motivation

The Transformational leaders in these churches also motivate attenders to do more than they originally thought possible. The leaders of all three churches were frequently identified as being imparters of vision. Of the 45 questions in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), some of the highest scoring questions related to vision. The MLQ revealed that the leaders of these high percentage Newcomer churches frequently, if not always, "talk optimistically about the future" (see Table 8-31). They also "articulate a compelling vision for the future." The leaders in these churches enunciate powerful visions of the future which motivate and inspire the attenders to greater levels of outreach and service. Although credibility is a crucial factor in leadership, being forward-looking it is also admired (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Leaders are expected to have a sense of direction and a vision of the future. People are unwilling to commit themselves to an organisation where the leaders do not have a clear idea of where it is going. The attender's perceptions of self efficacy or confidence, as well as their developmental potential, are enhanced through the confidence expressed in them by their leaders. The leaders also motivate followers to transcend their own immediate self-interest for the sake of the mission and vision of the organization.

Intellectual Stimulation

In addition to Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation, these Transformational leaders also stimulate followers to think about old problems in new ways. According to the questionnaire, followers are encouraged to question their own beliefs, assumptions, and values, and, when appropriate, those of the leader, which may be outdated or inappropriate for solving current problems.

Individualized Consideration

These leaders also show Individualized Consideration: they understand and share in the concerns and developmental needs of each individual. They not only recognize and satisfy the attendee's current needs, but also attempt to maximize and develop their full potential. They do this by knowing people's names, assigning tasks on an individual basis and providing opportunities and an organizational culture supportive of individual growth.

And so, the leaders of these church inspire through Transformational Leadership behaviours. Rather than using authority or rewards to coerce people into action (Transactional Leadership), they intrinsically motivate people.

One tool they use to inspire is language (Conger, 1991). The leaders in these churches, both male and female, are outstanding communicators. They "frame" the organisation's purpose with accompanying values and beliefs in such a way that it is an appealing and motivating force for change and transformation. Then they use symbolic language ("rhetorical crafting") to give emotional power to his or her message (for example, "Storming the Fortresses of Darkness"). While the message provides a sense of direction, rhetoric heightens its motivational appeal and determines whether it will be sufficiently memorable to influence day-to-day decision-making (Conger, 1989). While the leader's message is critical, the process by which it is communicated appears to be just as significant.

Inspiration in each of the these churches is also related to the empowering leadership model described by Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow and measured by the ELQ (Arnold, et al., 2000). When the results from each church were combined it was found that the ELQ was correlated to the inspiring leadership question ($r_s = +.603$, $n = 89$, $p < .001$, 2 tailed). Each factor of the ELQ (Coaching, Informing, Leading By Example, Showing Concern/Interacting

with the Team, and Participative Decision-Making) was also correlated (see Table 8-27). Empowering leadership and inspiring leadership are closely related in these churches. Empowering leadership is now discussed further.

6.4.3 Empowering

“It is like they are always on your side” (GL11).

Although high percentage Newcomer churches are empowering communities, a key part of creating this environment for empowerment is leadership. Leaders not only create the structures and culture for empowerment in a community, but the individual’s experience of the leaders is also a crucial factor in whether a member of the church feels empowered or disempowered.

The leaders in these churches practice the empowering leadership principles described by Conger (1989). They provide a positive emotional atmosphere through speaking positively about the future and through their example of enthusiasm for the cause. They also reward through encouraging and visible ways, the prime example being the “Unsung Hero Awards” at the Pentecostal church. The award winners received some gifts from the church in recognition of their service but equally important was the opportunity to have a photograph taken with the Senior Pastors. Hence, they empower by allowing relatively close contact to themselves, as those in authority, and expressing approval from that position. These leaders also express their confidence in people during sermons, meetings and casually. They persuade people that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks and so promote greater sustained effort. The focus groups confirmed that the leaders foster initiative and responsibility. People in these churches feel free to make suggestions and fail. Participation in meetings and decisions, appropriate resources and network forming opportunities are all present in these churches. Finally, these leaders build on success. They use the success of the church, and individuals in it, to empower others to strive for success as well.

The ELQ was also used to examine empowering leadership in these churches. It was found that each of the leaders of these high percentage Newcomer churches scored well above the average for all five factors of the ELQ. Their empowering behaviours were also described by participants in the focus groups.

The first factor, *Leading by Example*, is particularly important. The example of the leaders was often cited in the focus groups as a strong motivator for participants. Setting an example of hard work emerged as particularly significant. The attenders of all three churches highlighted this aspect of their leaders through the questionnaire. It is perceived that the leaders set high standards for their own performance, work as hard as they can, set a good example in their behaviour and lead by example (see Table 8-31). Participants told stories of how the leaders themselves had been, and still were, directly involved in leading people to become Christians and involving them in the church. All three leaders set an example in their community involvement and efforts to invite non-Christians to attend church. Although the leaders in these churches are inspiring preachers, it is in actually “living out” their teaching that they move their followers to action.

Of course, the attenders do not know for sure whether the leader does work hard, as many would only see him for a couple of hours per week. However, the clear perception is that they are. This perception is generated by the stories of their own evangelistic activities and their personal involvement in outreach events. Whether the church leaders consciously foster this perception or not, the outcome is the same.

The leaders also encourage a second empowering factor - *Participative Decision-Making*. Not surprisingly, this ELQ factor was correlated to the NCLS question related to “Taking the ideas of people into account” in each church (see Appendix F). This behaviour communicates to the attender that they are competent and valued and so gives them confidence to participate in the activities of the church through their psychological empowerment. As discussed earlier, these churches are not democratic in the sense that they make decisions based on the opinion of the majority of the members. However, the leaders are able to create the perception that they personally value the ideas of all attenders in the decision-making process. The way that they do this is worthy of further research.

The ELQ and the NCLS construct of “empowering leadership” (“Have this congregation’s leaders encouraged you to find and use your gifts and skills?”) were not positively correlated in any church. Nonetheless, two ELQ factors were correlated in one or more church - *Coaching and Informing* (see Appendix F). Coaching refers to a set of behaviours that educate team members and help them to become self reliant. This category includes behaviours such as making suggestions about performance improvements and helping the

team to be self-reliant. Informing refers to the leaders dissemination of company wide information such as mission and philosophy as well as other important information (Arnold, et al., 2000).

Given that the NCLS empowering leadership question actually relates to the extent that the leader encourages the participant to find and use gifts and skills, the correlated factors, Coaching and Informing, are not surprising. It is as leaders *inform* participants about the mission and philosophy of the church (for example, ELQ 24 “Explains how my ministry fits into the church”) they can see where they and their gifts fit in. As they equip (*coach*) them and help them become self reliant (e.g. ELQ 16 “Provides help to the church members”), attenders of the church feel empowered by the leaders.

This finding provides an important insight into the NCLS construct of empowering leadership. It explains how these empowering leaders of high percentage Newcomer churches are able to encourage the attenders to find and use their gifts and skills. Explaining how their ministry fits into the mission and values of the church and helping members become self reliant are the essence of this empowering leadership activity. Casting vision is an important part of leadership, but equally important is showing followers how they can contribute to the fulfilment of the vision and equipping them to be able to make that contribution.

The leaders also empower by “Showing Concern.” As discussed in the next section, this is achieved not only through knowing the names of many people in the church but treating them as equals.

6.4.4 Caring

“They never rush you to think that they haven't got time to talk” (WC07).

This research indicates that attenders of these high percentage Newcomer churches have a strong sense of being cared for by the leadership, even if the church is quite large. The leaders at all three churches were observed by the focus groups and the researcher to have meaningful personal relationships with a very large number of attenders. Whether this is a

natural gifting or something which they deliberately work at, the outcome is that most people in the church have a meaningful connection with the leader.

The empowering leadership construct contains the factor of Showing Concern, referring to the ability of leaders to demonstrate a general regard for members wellbeing and taking time to discuss their concerns (Arnold, et al., 2000). Transformational Leadership theory suggests that Individualized Consideration (i.e. being concerned about the welfare of followers and attending to their individual needs) results in followers believing the leader cares about them as people rather than as means to an end (Bartram & Casimir, 2007). Both theories suggest showing care for followers is a crucial leadership function.

It would be possible for a church leader to rationalise that the size of the church makes it impossible to know many people in the church at a significant level and so they do not attempt it. However, in order to be able to lead effectively, as these leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are doing, leaders need to recognize the importance of having meaningful relationships with a large number of people in the church. By meaningful, this does not mean hours of investment in each person, but the remembering of names, some personal circumstances and details of the attender, physical contact and a smile. This seems to be sufficient to communicate care to the attender and this experience is extremely significant in their lives.

In the same way that credibility allows for effective communication from leaders to followers, this expression of personal care creates the environment where the leader can influence church attenders. Until people know leaders care, they don't care what leaders know. When they know that the leader cares for them personally they are more open to accept advice and guidance and to make personal sacrifices.

6.4.5 Husband-Wife Teams

"An outstanding partnership - I have never seen anything like it, between a Minister and his wife" (WL05).

The wives of the clergyman in the three high percentage Newcomer churches all had a very high profile in the life of the church. It has been asserted that the sustainability of

community in fundamentalist churches depends on the acceptance of male authority and rigid conceptions of gender roles (Frykholm, 2004). According to this view, as much as the weekly church services work to reinforce community relations, they are simultaneously rituals of patriarchal display. The ideology of domesticity is acted out and reinforced in a way that is no longer possible in the world outside the church.

However, power is more broadly shared in churches than is evident on the surface. Women can be powerful people in church settings often understood to be organized around their disempowerment (Brasher, 1998). Women in these high percentage Newcomer churches have powerful, but sometimes less visible, influence. While the male leaders have the ultimate power, there is plenty of feminine power on display as well. The women-only activities in churches create and sustain a parallel world within the organisation where women exercise leadership and are able to alter the patterns of congregational life (Brasher, 1998). Women leaders in these high percentage Newcomer churches play a significant leadership function, often leading men, in their role as Pastor or Officer.

In the Salvation Army church the woman has the status of "Officer" although the man is recognized as the "Senior" Officer. But there is a widespread perception in the church that this is a team effort and ministry of the wife is fully validated and recognized by the church.

Even though the Sydney Anglicans do not ordain women or grant them authority to be solo leaders of the church, clearly the wife of the Anglican minister exercises powerful leadership in the church. Not only does she lead a group of 70 women in a mid week Bible study but many in the church recognize that she has not only a contributory role, but a leadership role in the church, albeit only informally.

Again at the Pentecostal church, even though they hold to "male headship" of family and church, the Senior Pastor's wife also carries the title "Pastor" and is clearly a very high profile leader in the church. She appears next to her husband in most of the promotional material of the church, plays a significant role in church worship and is held in equally high esteem as her husband throughout the church.

Even though all three churches have theologically conservative positions relating to the role of women in leadership, all three, whether formally or informally, clearly benefit from not

only the teamwork produced by having a husband/wife team in the senior leadership position, but from the individual leadership of the women.

The more liberal denominations which have championed the leadership of women and placed them in formal leadership positions in churches through ordination and the like may have misunderstood the issue. Even though these conservative churches have not officially placed the women leaders in the senior leadership role, as some liberal denominations have, they have enabled the women to lead powerfully and effectively within the existing structures of the church. The lesson to be learned may well be that the issue is not female leadership or male leadership, but team leadership.

6.4.6 Authoritative & Relevant Preachers

“He can be very forceful - it is almost as though God talks through him most of the time” (GN01).

“It is the same with their sermons - when they are talking about certain Scriptures. They break it down and then relate it to today’s world and how we can live it every day, not to way back when it happened” (SN08).

Part of the supernatural experience of high percentage Newcomer churches for many Newcomers is the preaching of the leaders. It is the experience of attenders in all three churches that God speaks powerfully through the sermons. Because the Newcomer perceives that the leader represents the whole church (Oswald & Leas, 1988) this power in the preaching is significant in their engagement.

However, the source of this power varies from church to church. In the Pentecostal church attenders speak in terms of the “anointing by the Holy Spirit” on the Senior Pastor’s preaching. He also demonstrates this power by bringing healing to members of the church by the laying on of hands. There is also an element of the “prophetic” whereby the leader is supernaturally able to know things about church attenders and their future and so make the preaching powerfully relevant to the individual.

In the Anglican Church the authority in the preaching is derived from the authority of the Bible. Since the Sydney Anglican Diocese is a “low church” Evangelical diocese, they place a

great deal of authority in the Bible. The perceived high-quality theological training given by Moore College is also a factor in allowing a preacher to be recognised as having the authority to preach in the church.

The authority of the preaching of the Officers in the Salvation Army church is more complex. Again there is a derived authority from quoting the Bible but there is also an authority that comes from the life of the Officers themselves. Given the value of social welfare work in the Salvation Army, the fact that the Officers are so heavily involved in helping people contributes to their authority to speak in the church.

However, these explanations do not exclude the possibility that there is simply an intrinsic or supernatural dimension to the preaching of the leaders that comes from a gifting through power of God. This is the independently described experience of the Newcomers and should not be dismissed as merely self-delusion.

6.4.7 Summary

Leadership in these high percentage Newcomer churches has two dimensions: public and personal. At a public level, the leaders create the environment for empowerment and community whereby Newcomers and church attenders feel value and belonging. They also exercise inspirational and empowering leadership behaviours. This research suggests these two sets of behaviours are related. It is not possible to identify the causal link, but their relationship suggests there are a range of leadership behaviours which, regardless of which model they are attached to, produce both empowering and inspired communities which are highly effective at engaging Newcomers. Coaching, informing, leading by example, showing concern, participative decision-making and the Transformational Leadership behaviours are crucial elements of inspiration and empowerment in these churches.

However, there is also a personal dimension to the leadership. The leaders' influence lies not just in what they do, but who they are. Their character and example, in itself, is highly inspirational and empowering to regular church attenders and engaging for Newcomers. Through their authenticity, humility and care, these leaders are able to create the highly functional communities described in the New Testament where Newcomers find acceptance, conversion and family.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. The purpose of this chapter is to draw together conclusions from the study, identify contribution to theory and offer recommendations. The chapter first reflects on the study's purpose and research design. A summary of the research findings is also presented, organised around the research questions. This is followed by the research conclusions and recommendations for further research and study.

7.2 The Purpose of the Study

The problem generating this research is that despite an overall fall in church attendance in Australia, some churches are attracting and retaining high levels of people who have never previously attended church. In order to explore the engagement of Newcomers, the study seeks to understand the experience of Newcomers, the process of their engagement and the nature of the churches with which they engage. Participants for this research were invited from among the attenders and Newcomers at three high percentage Newcomer churches. Participants were asked to describe their experiences of entering church life, and/or their experience of the church. Participants were also invited to reflect on their experience of the leader in the church.

And so, the research questions that focussed the conduct of the study are:

- How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?
- How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and “a strong and growing sense of belonging” experience this sense of belonging?
- How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church in which they are now attending?

7.3 Research Design of the Study

Since the research questions address the *experience* of the participants (the church attenders and Newcomers) the epistemology of constructionism was an appropriate choice

(Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Consistent with this epistemology, interpretivism was employed as the theoretical perspective (Schwandt, 1994). In particular, the interpretivist lens of symbolic interactionism was appropriate in generating a deeper understanding of how church attenders experience church engagement, sense of belonging and the church's leadership (Blumer, 1969). In order to develop a depth of understanding the methodology of purposeful study of atypical cases was used. This methodology orchestrated selection of interview, focus group, observation and questionnaire to collect the data necessary to address the research questions.

The 50 churches with the highest percentage of Newcomers in Australia were invited to participate in this research by the NCLS. Of the churches that responded, three churches from three different states and three different denominations were selected for case study and visited by the researcher. Leaders in each church were interviewed, and a total of 89 people were involved in focus groups and completed questionnaires.

The tentative grasp of emerging themes from the focus groups was confirmed and refined through further interaction with the participants during each case study. Triangulation was achieved by reference to observations made by the researcher, interviews with leaders and the questionnaires. Reflection, informed by the Literature Review and the Theological Framework, enabled the evolution of a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomena which incorporated the language of the focus groups and interviews but also utilised other findings, language and concepts. A number of factors related to the engagement of Newcomers emerged from this process and form the basis of the Discussion of Findings in Chapter 6.

The shortcomings of the case study method used in this research are acknowledged (Abercrombie, et al., 1994). However, the purposeful selection of the cases, the verification methods used, and the diversity of the cases mean that conclusions about this phenomena can be carefully derived. Although the findings cannot be generalised to all churches, they do contribute to theory and suggest areas where further research may be focused (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

7.4 Research Questions Addressed

This section presents a summary of the findings related to the three specific research questions.

7.4.1 Research Question One

The literature provides insights on the nature of Newcomers and their engagement with churches. It suggests that certain factors play an important part in engagement. In contrast, the first question seeks to understand the *experience* of Newcomers as they engage with churches. The question asks:

How do Newcomers experience their engagement in church attendance?

Church engagement for Newcomers is a supernatural experience. In the post modern era Newcomers are open to experiences which are not necessarily rational. The nature of their experience is often an awareness of the guidance of God in their engagement process and sometimes follows a crisis in their life. This supernatural awareness extends into their perceptions of the preaching. Although they are not seeking any particular theological emphasis or doctrine the authoritative and relevant preaching is interpreted as the voice of God speaking directly to them.

At the practical level, the role of children in the engagement of adults in church attendance is identified. In several cases the Newcomer's first contact with the church is through ministry to their children. It is as the children invite their parents to come to church that the Newcomer begins to be engaged. Ministry to children not only expresses acceptance of children, but is a useful tool to foster church engagement for their parents.

One of the key reasons that Newcomers hesitate about coming to church is they are scared of what type of reception they will face. The fact that the Newcomers are actually made to feel welcome through non-judgemental acceptance, friendliness and equality is crucial in their decision to engage. Many secular Australians perceive church to be boring or irrelevant, but a big barrier for some Newcomers is fear of being judged or rejected.

Hospitality is also an important factor in the successful engagement of Newcomers. Reflecting the New Testament Church use of hospitality in evangelism, Newcomers are drawn into the family of the church through sharing meals together and other forms of

hospitality. The common meal powerfully expresses acceptance, value and warmth to the Newcomer and influences their decision to engage.

Engagement is usually followed by conversion, rather than preceding it. As the Newcomer experiences the family-like community with all its benefits, he or she decides to embrace both the community and its gospel message. The motivation is the promise of a better life. Full engagement involves a public declaration of conversion in whatever form is appropriate for the particular church's tradition. At this point the symbols of membership are given to the Newcomer and full membership granted.

Another factor in successful engagement is the early involvement of Newcomers in church ministry. This involvement expresses acceptance and conveys a sense of competence and value to the Newcomer which builds an early and strong sense of belonging. It also generates social capital through investment in the organisation and relationships.

The particular aspect of the leadership that is important to the Newcomer is their "realness" or authenticity. Newcomers look for leaders who are credible and, to some extent, are like them. This authenticity is expressed through activities such sharing of personal weaknesses and humour. The informality and humanness of the leaders symbolises to the Newcomer the character of the whole church and enables engagement.

7.4.2 Research Question Two

The second research question investigates perceptions and understandings of the attenders at high percentage Newcomer churches of their experience of being part of their church. The question asks:

How do attenders of churches with high levels of Newcomers and "a strongly growing sense of belonging" experience this sense of belonging?

Strong and growing sense of belonging does not come by attachment to buildings or length of tenure but from the experience of being accepted and welcomed by a loving family. This experience is enabled by the intentional efforts of the church to build this culture. An important feature of the culture are the values of invitation and hospitality, not just at church but throughout the week.

Sense of belonging is also enhanced by personal, costly investment in the life of a church. This investment makes the attender feel valued and also creates ownership and hence belonging. When attenders get involved and serve it makes them feel as though they belong to the church, even if they are a Newcomer. Involvement in ministries, Bible studies and social groups takes place throughout the week, not just at corporate worship, and builds further investment.

Egalitarianism and informality are also a key feature in building sense of belonging in churches. When attenders perceive themselves to have an equal value and an equal part to play in the life of the church as others, their sense of belonging is enhanced. Egalitarianism gives attenders a strong sense of influence in their church even though they do not have direct (democratic) control over it. Members believe that the leaders take their ideas into account to a large extent indicating it is the perception that is important, rather than the reality. The result is that there is no awareness of "us and them," only "us." Leaders who create the clear impression that they take the ideas of the attenders into account, thus confirming their value and equality, build sense of belonging.

Churches with a strong sense of belonging also have very clear boundaries which give a shared understanding of who is "in" and who is "out" of membership. These boundaries are made more defined by the strictness of the church. Members are expected to be highly committed, abstain from certain practices and make a large contribution to the church in time and/or money. Entrance into membership is only in a manner prescribed by the church - a costly and public process. This not only makes these churches more effective, but deters "free riders" who are not fully committed to it. These clear boundaries give a very strong sense of identity and membership, and hence belonging, to these churches.

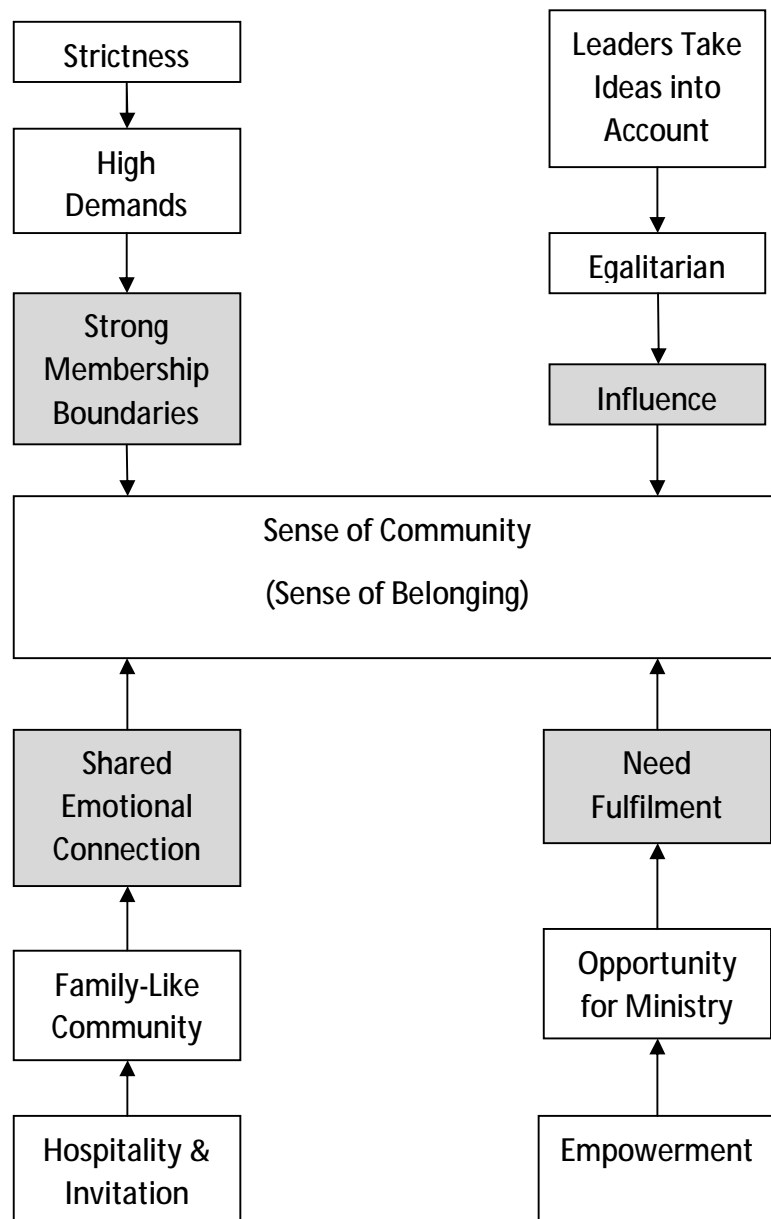
The characteristics of empowering communities are identifiable in high percentage Newcomer churches. A strong group based belief system, an opportunity role structure, well-developed support systems, and inspirational, talented, shared and committed leadership empowers people in these churches. Empowerment enables attenders and Newcomers to minister, and so builds value and investment, and hence belonging.

Churches with a high percentage of Newcomers and a strong and growing sense of belonging also have a Sense of Community. (Although the correlation between sense of

belonging and Sense of Community could not be statistically demonstrated, the components of the model were present.) The model of Sense of Community provides a lens to help understanding of the phenomenon of strong and growing sense of belonging.

The enhanced understanding of the NCLS concept of Sense of Community, gained by examining it through the lens of Sense of Community, and discussed in Section 6.3.1, is presented in Figure 7-1. The four components of Sense of Community are shaded:

Figure 7-1 A Model of Growing Sense of Belonging



This model enables a better understanding of the link between sense of belonging and willingness to invite others to church. Although there is a very high standard of music and facilities in one of the churches, that is not the case in the other two. Each church values different aspects of its life. And so, it is not the quality of the worship services *per se* which gives attenders confidence to invite, but the perceived quality of their *church community*. In particular, it is the quality of their *relationships* with God and other attenders, fostered by their sense of membership, influence, emotional connection and fulfilment, which gives them a powerful sense of belonging to a community. It is this positive experience which motivates them to invite others to church. And so, it is not the Pentecostal style of worship or the quality of their facilities which is crucial to their success but the *overall quality of their relationships* which is enhanced by these other features.

7.4.3 Research Question Three

The third research question investigates attender's perceptions and understandings of the leaders of high percentage Newcomer churches. The question asks:

How do attenders and Newcomers of churches with high levels of Newcomers experience the leadership of the church which they are now attending?

The leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are "real" or authentic. "They don't have a Sunday face" (GN05). The importance of this characteristic is explained by the concept of "source credibility." If people are going to follow someone they must first assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust. Also related are the concepts of transparency and humility. Leaders must be seen to be broken and human, like those they seek to lead, or their examples and encouragements lose their power.

The egalitarian nature of churches is also psychologically empowering to the attenders. Despite the apparent "success" of the leaders in their personal lives and evangelism, they are also "just like the rest of us," thus providing hope that each member in the church can be as successful as the leaders.

The perception of caring is also an important leadership characteristic in these high percentage Newcomer churches. Given the size of some churches, it would be impossible

for the senior leader to be able to adequately care for the whole congregation, so the issue is actually the perception. The importance of knowing people's names and greeting them in a personal manner does not feature prominently in church leadership literature, yet it is crucial.

The preaching of the leaders in these churches is experienced as authoritative and relevant. The authority comes from the example and the quality of the leader's lives. It is also enhanced by the belief that God speaks through the leader as he/she preaches from the Bible. However, the preaching is also relevant and practical.

Given that the male chauvinist label which is often placed on Conservative/Fundamental churches (Brasher, 1998) like those examined in this research, the high profile role of the wives of the senior leaders in these churches is significant. These women, although not in formal leadership positions, exert a tremendous influence in these churches. However, the value of their leadership is not just in their own ministries, but in the way they supplement the ministry of their husbands and with them form a powerful leadership combination.

The empowering leadership behaviours of the leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are more diverse than just encouraging the use of gifts and skills. Through coaching (helping followers become self-reliant) and informing (explaining how their ministry fits into the mission and philosophy of the church), as well as leading through example, the leaders empower their followers towards personal and organisational success.

The leaders also use Transformational Leadership behaviours which produce positive outcomes, such as extra effort, effectiveness and greater satisfaction from the attenders. The leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches inspire through their charisma, inspirational motivation, expressions of confidence, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of their followers.

Empowering leadership behaviours are related to Inspiring leadership in these churches. The relationship suggests there are a range of leadership behaviours which, regardless of which model they are attached to, produce both empowering and inspired communities which are highly effective at engaging Newcomers. Coaching, informing, leading by example, showing concern, participative decision-making and the Transformational Leadership behaviours are crucial elements of inspiration and empowerment in these churches.

7.5 Conclusions

This study has five major conclusions. The first relates to the experience of Newcomers as they engage with churches. Although there has been some insights into the engagement of Newcomers through statistics and overseas study, this research has highlighted the unique experience of Australian Newcomers during the engagement process. Their descriptions of entry into church as "scary" because of fear of rejection and their acknowledgement, and expectation of the work of the supernatural in their lives before and after they enter into church, are significant pieces of knowledge which will help churches make the engagement process less difficult. Churches need to work hard at expressing acceptance and non-judgement but they need not be ashamed of claiming the presence and activity of God in the worship services. The role of hospitality and early involvement in ministry in developing sense of belonging for a Newcomer is also a significant finding.

The second major conclusion relates to the family-like nature of high percentage Newcomer churches - it is their defining characteristic. Although the language of family is drawn from the New Testament metaphor of church as the family of God, the experience of Newcomers is like the experience of being adopted into a biological family. It is this family-like nature of the relationships in church communities which is pivotal in their ability to attract and engage Newcomers. This research confirms that the Biblical model of the church, as described in Chapter 3, when it is fulfilled, is highly effective at attracting and retaining Newcomers.

The third major conclusion relates to sense of belonging in high percentage Newcomer churches. The model presented in Figure 7-1 represents a major elaboration of the concept of strong and growing sense of belonging developed by the NCLS. The use of the lenses of Sense of Community and empowering leadership has helped develop an understanding of the role of strictness, leaders taking ideas into account, egalitarianism, non-Sunday church activities and the opportunity to minister, in growing sense of belonging. This has enabled a more sophisticated understanding of this very important factor in church vitality and Newcomer engagement.

The fourth major conclusion relates to the style of leadership in high percentage Newcomer churches. This research confirms that effective leaders are inspiring and empowering and that they transform their followers and organisations through their charisma, expressions of

confidence, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration of church members. However, the leaders of these high percentage Newcomer churches are also experienced as authentic, humble and caring. The power of the leader's example in inspiring church members is also identified. The emergence of these "softer" leadership characteristics highlights the complexity and subtlety of the leadership in organisations like churches. The role and significance of the leadership of the wives of the senior leaders in these churches is also noteworthy.

The fifth major conclusion relates to the motivation of attenders to invite Newcomers to church. It is not only the quality of the worship service or facilities which can motivate a church goer to invite someone else to church. Different churches value different aspects of their church life. However, the quality of the family-like relationships and the presence of God in the church is identified as a consistent motivator.

In addition to these major findings, it is also noted that the research method adopted in this study has allowed for a more intimate understanding of the phenomenon of Newcomer engagement than that provided by just statistical research. This research provides a filling out of the framework of knowledge provided by the positivist approach. It has allowed for the belief systems of the participants, and the faith dimension of the churches and the Newcomers, to be interpreted through the experience and sympathetic perspective of the researcher and thus provide a more subtle understanding of the phenomenon.

The research also represents an important integration of social scientific, statistical and Evangelical theological scholarship. The theological framework developed in Chapter 3 provides a previously neglected lens for a scholarly observation of this phenomenon. The blending of these three perspectives by a church practitioner in three different church contexts produces a more sophisticated, yet still practical, understanding of the phenomenon because it is informed by all three strands of learning, rather than just one.

7.6 Summary of Contribution to Theory

Theory is something which holds explanatory power. In traditional scientific work, theory typically allows one to move from the specific to the general. Because this research is based

on case study the generalisation of findings must be done carefully. However, the research confirms some theories in high percentage Newcomer churches and also adds to theory, albeit tentatively, as outlined in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1: Summary of Contribution to Theory

Existing Theory	Contribution
Invitation is an important factor in Newcomer engagement (Sterland, et al., 2006).	Children can be important in inviting their parents to church.
Many Australians have an innate spirituality (Bouma, 2006).	Newcomers are keenly aware of the supernatural dimensions of their engagement with church.
Newcomers are tentative about engagement with church because they perceive it to be boring and irrelevant (Bellamy, et al., 2002).	Newcomers are tentative about engagement with church because they are scared they will be judged and rejected.
Newcomers develop a sense of belonging slowly (Sterland, et al., 2006).	Newcomers develop a sense of belonging through early involvement in church ministry because it makes them feel valued.
Newcomers' perceptions of the senior leader in the church are an important factor in their engagement (Oswald & Leas, 1988).	Newcomers who have engaged in churches find the authenticity of the senior leaders as a key perception.
High percentage Newcomer churches have a strong and growing sense of belonging (Sterland, et al., 2006).	Egalitarianism and the perception that leaders take their ideas into account are important in building sense of belonging in churches.
High percentage Newcomer churches have a strong and growing sense of belonging (Sterland, et al., 2006).	Churches with a strong and growing sense of belonging also have a strong Sense of Community.
High percentage Newcomer churches have a strong and growing sense of belonging (Sterland, et al., 2006).	Church strictness builds strong membership boundaries which strengthen sense of belonging.

Corporate Confidence is related to willingness to invite others to church (Sterland, et al., 2006).

Corporate confidence is related to quality of relationships to other attenders and God rather than just the quality of worship services or facilities.

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are empowering (Sterland, et al., 2006).

High percentage Newcomer churches are also empowering communities.

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are empowering (Sterland, et al., 2006).

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches empower through helping followers become self-reliant and explaining how their ministry fits into the mission and philosophy of the church.

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are described as inspiring (Sterland, et al., 2006).

Authenticity, care and example are important features of leadership in high percentage Newcomer churches.

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches are described as inspiring (Sterland, et al., 2006).

Leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches demonstrate Transformational Leadership and empowering behaviours.

7.7 Recommendations

The conclusions of this study have implications for both theory development and practical application. The recommendations will be grouped under three headings: churches, leaders and researchers.

7.7.1 Recommendations for Churches

At a theoretical level churches need to seek to exemplify the New Testament metaphor of being a welcoming family. Churches should consider the following strategies:

1. Create a Culture of Friendliness and Acceptance

Churches can be friendly families but not for Newcomers unless there is a deliberate emphasis on being outwardly focused. This involves training and motivating existing church attenders to be accepting and friendly, so reflecting the Biblical mandate of hospitality. The leaders also need to model these values.

2. Create a Culture of Invitation

Being accepting and friendly is meaningless unless this is accompanied by invitation. Church attenders need to be encouraged to appreciate the quality of relationship they enjoy with God and with one another in order for them to be confident to witness to others what God has done and invite others to join their family.

3. Expect the Presence of God at Worship Services

It is ironic that Newcomers will often expect to meet God at a corporate worship service, but some of the regular attenders may not. Churches need to be expectant that the voice of God will be heard through the authoritative preaching of the Word and through the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit during corporate worship. This does not mean that all church services should be of a Pentecostal style, but that church attenders have the expectation that God will be present and act in whatever way is appropriate in their tradition.

4. Build Sense of Belonging

A strong and growing sense of belonging is crucial not only for a healthy church but for attracting and retaining Newcomers (Sterland, et al., 2006). In order to build sense of belonging churches should work hard at involving people in ministry, even if they are Newcomers. This high expectation not only enables the church to minister effectively but builds community through making a person feel valued and competent and through building their personal investment in the life of the church. Sense of belonging is not created by reducing membership boundaries, but by emphasising them. However, the pathway into church membership should be strongly promoted as should the appropriate symbols of membership. Belonging is also strongly enhanced when it is perceived that the leaders take the ideas of the members into account when making decisions.

5. Build Empowerment

In order to build a strong sense of belonging and community and build effectiveness, churches should foster a culture of empowerment. This is achieved not only through

empowering leadership behaviours but through fostering an expectation that everybody can grow, not just spiritually but in other areas of life (a strong group based belief system), an opportunity role structure and through a well developed support system. Training is also a crucial aspect of empowerment.

7.7.2 Recommendations for Church Leaders

Quality leadership is crucial in high percentage Newcomer churches. However, the focus should be not so much on what leaders do, but on who they are:

1. Be Inspiring

The Transformational Leadership model provides a good basis for inspiring leadership. However, visionary communication and public example are also highly effective at inspiring people in the direction of group goals.

2. Be Empowering

An empowering leader in churches helps followers become self-reliant and explains how their ministry fits into the mission and philosophy of the church. Empowering leaders also create the impression that they take the ideas of their followers into account in decision-making. It is possible for a dis-empowering community to have an empowering leader. But it is impossible to create a culture of empowerment if the leader is not empowering.

3. Be Authentic

Ironically, if leaders appear to be too strong their influence on followers weakens. Effective leaders in churches are willing to be transparent and allow church attenders to see their weaknesses and struggles. They also exercise humility. These qualities enable followers to identify with their leaders and thereby be empowered to seek to emulate the lives of the leaders whom they admire.

4. Be Caring

Leaders must work hard at creating the perception that they care for each individual person in the church. Even in larger churches it is important that each member feel as though they are cared for by the senior leader. This may involve the use of systems to help them be able to remember names and faces.

5. Be Team Oriented

Leadership is a team activity, whether that be with other members of staff or with a spouse. The most effective leaders are complemented by others and so achieve results far greater than could be achieved by themselves. The importance of husband-wife teams in church leadership should not be underestimated.

7.7.3 Recommendations for Researchers

Given that this research is only an elementary examination of Newcomer engagement, the theoretical assertions that have been made are all worthy of further investigation and possible confirmation, disconfirmation or refinement.

With respect to Newcomers, further investigation of their experience of the activity of God in their lives before, during and after their engagement with church would reveal more helpful information from the contemporary Australian context. The role of the supernatural during the actual engagement process appears quite tangible and is worthy of further exploration. The reasons why Newcomers felt scared to attend church should also be further examined. Where did their perceptions that they would be judged and rejected come from? How can they be corrected?

With respect to high percentage Newcomer churches, the relationship between Sense of Community and sense of belonging is worthy of further investigation. The use of a more reliable instrument than the Sense of Community Index should confirm the close relationship between these two constructs (Obst & White, 2004). The relationship between sense of empowerment and sense of belonging/community should also be explored. Further application of the model of Sense of Community to the church context would reveal many useful strategies for building sense of belonging in churches. This research also raised

questions about Corporate Confidence and willingness to invite to church. The importance of quality relationships in invitation is suggested. Further research is needed to better understand what it is about their churches which gives attenders the confidence, or willingness, to invite others.

With respect to leadership, the concept of empowering leadership in churches is worthy of further investigation. Given that empowering leadership behaviours are used in these churches, questions like “How do leaders help their followers to become more self-reliant?” will reveal more practical implications for this leadership style. Similarly, with many of the Transformational Leadership behaviours and attributes, observation and analysis of their functioning in local churches will shed light on this crucial aspect of high percentage Newcomer churches.

The NCLS is looking to perform another nationwide survey in 2011. This type of survey would allow for the validation of many of the theoretical assertions in this research. For example, rather than asking a single question about empowering leadership, the four factors of the empowering leadership construct (Arnold, et al., 2000) could be adapted to give a more refined set of findings.

7.8 Epilogue

While churches may demonstrate the qualities of a family, some families are open to Newcomers while others are not. As discussed in the Theological Framework, Jesus frequently compared the kingdom of God to a banquet to which God wanted his followers to invite others. In Luke 15 there is a banquet set in a story of rebellion, lostness, reconciliation and restoration. The original context of the parable was that some tax collectors and “sinners” were gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:1).

As such the story serves to highlight the difference in attitude between God (Jesus) and the Pharisees towards the irreligious. But the story also serves to clarify the issues related to church engagement through the metaphor of family reconciliation.

Jesus told the story of a father and two sons. The younger son claimed his inheritance and travelled to a distant land where he squandered his wealth on wild living. However, the time

came when he reached “rock bottom” and decided to turn away from his life of sin and re-engage with the Kingdom (come under the authority) of his father. The son, like the Newcomer, suspects that life can be better by engaging with community, but is unsure what reception he will receive. He thus, hesitantly seeks to re-engage with his family.

Through this part of the story Jesus was also highlighting the importance of repentance and conversion for entry into the Kingdom of God. The son is described as “coming to his senses” and turning back to his father for forgiveness and, hopefully, restoration.

As the son decides to return home, the focus of the story shifts to the response of the father and the older brother. The father is described as scanning the horizon, on the lookout for his “lost” son. When he sees him he runs to him - something scandalous for a patriarch to do. The prodigal son concedes that he is no longer worthy to be a part of the family but asks if he can come and work as a servant. But the father gives him the best robes, a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet reflecting a return to the status of full family membership. In contrast, the older brother rejects his father’s embracing of the prodigal son, instead pointing to his own faithfulness to right practices during the younger son's absence.

In many ways the father and the oldest son represent the approaches of two different types of churches to Newcomers. One group of churches, represented by the older brother, focus on faithfulness and right practice but do not look to embrace those who were “lost.” However, those churches represented by the father, scan the horizon and seek constantly to engage the lost in the full life of the family.

Like many Newcomers, the prodigal son expected that he would be judged and rejected by the family. However, his experience was exactly the opposite. The father as representative of the family, warmly embraced him and quickly sought to involve him in the life of the family by throwing a banquet which the whole family were expected to celebrate. The other members of the family followed the father’s example and were hospitable towards the prodigal son. The leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches play a similar role.

In his state of high anxiety the prodigal son was unsure of his status. The father sought to emphasise his membership of the family through presenting him with symbols of membership. In the same way high percentage Newcomer churches seek to bestow clear symbols of membership on Newcomers anxious to assess their membership. Just as the

restored younger son was able to clearly provide evidence of his membership of the family in his robe, sandals and ring, so Newcomers in high percentage Newcomer churches are able to point to their own symbols of membership.

And so the parable of the prodigal son suggests an overarching theory of Newcomer engagement. The outstanding work of the NCLS has laid the foundation for a theoretical understanding of this phenomenon. Their identification of willingness to invite, strong and growing sense of belonging and inspiring and empowering leadership in churches with high percentages of Newcomers are the starting point of a general theory.

The metaphor of church as the family and household of God conveys the attractive and welcoming power of an effectively functioning church community. The metaphor of the prodigal son describes the journey of the Newcomer. The metaphor of the father reflects the authenticity, care and example of the church leaders in high percentage Newcomer churches.

A theory of Newcomer engagement can then be thought of in terms of the roles of the various “players” in the Luke 15 story in the process of engagement as presented in

Table 7-2:

Table 7-2: A Metaphor of Newcomer Engagement

The Newcomer	The Church	The Leader
The Lost Son	The Welcoming Family	The Searching Father
Lost	Inviting	Authentic welcomer
Repentant	Accepting	Bestower of symbols of belonging
Incomplete knowledge of the love of God	The body of God	The voice of God
Hesitant	An Empowering community	Inspiring
Relationally hungry	Hospitable	Caring

This framework is presented not as the ultimate explanation of Newcomer engagement, but as an instrument of tentative understanding and may be the basis for further research.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A - Ethics Approval Letter

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Balarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin Brisbane Campus
Co-Investigators: Dr Jan Grajczonek Brisbane Campus
Student Researcher: Mr Ian Hussey Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
The engagement of Newcomers in church attendance

for the period: 22 May 2009 to 31 December 2009

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: Q200708 44

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Paschke'.

Signed: _____ Date: 22 May 2009
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

C:\Users\lan\Documents\Doctorate\Ethics\Approval Form.doc

8.2 Appendix B - Participant's Information & Consent Forms



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Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
Facsimile: 07 3623 7337
Email:
d.mclaughlin@mcauley.acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER AND REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Education

Dear Church Leader,

God Has Been at Work in Your Church!

Across Australia there are a number of churches which have higher levels of Newcomers - people who have joined the church in the last five years and never previously attended. **Your Church is one of those churches.**

As part of my doctoral studies I am seeking to better understand what God is doing in high percentage Newcomer churches and what makes them so effective at attracting Newcomers. Would you be interested in allowing your Church to participate?

I am hoping that the research will help me to learn about the special characteristics of your Church and why it is so good at attracting Newcomers. I further hope that it will enable me to develop some principles which will help other churches in Australia to be more effective at our God given mission.

If appropriate, I would be looking to visit your Church over a couple of weekends to do six things:

1. interview staff members (including yourself);
2. hold a focus group with a maximum of 12 Newcomers;
3. hold a focus group with a random selection of church attenders (maximum of 12);
4. hold a focus group with the lay leaders of the church;
5. ask these focus group participants to fill in a questionnaire, and
6. to do some general observation of the church.

I would also be asking for the assistance of somebody in the church to organise the focus group participants for me - possibly the office secretary.

The interviews would take less than an hour, as would the focus groups. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to fill in. I would be looking to attend as many worship services and other activities in the Church over the weekend as would be possible.

Participants will be asked to consent to audio recording of their comments made in the focus groups and interviews. The actual identities of the participants will be confidential to the researchers and not disclosed in any report. Participants will be advised, however, that their identities may be deduced from their comments.

Church attenders will be free to refuse to be involved in the research without having to justify their decision, or to withdraw their consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without a given reason.

I will, of course, be more than willing to share findings of my research with you if you are interested.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator or to the Student Researcher:

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin School of Educational Leadership 07 3623 7154 Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo) 1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014	Student Researcher: Ian Hussey 07 3602 5344 24 Twenty-First Avenue, Brighton, Queensland, 4017 ihussey2@gmail.com
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In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee:

Chair HREC
c/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University

Brisbane Campus
PO Box 456
Virginia, Queensland, 4014
Tel: 07 3623 7429
Fax: 07 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you should agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the attached Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher.


Principal Investigator


Student Researcher

.....
Principal Investigator

Student Researcher

Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
Facsimile: 07 3623 7337
Email:
d.mclaughlin@mcauley.acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

CHURCH PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

I, have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. I am authorised to, and give permission for this research to occur in Church. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to allow Ian Hussey to:

- interview staff members (including myself);
- hold a focus group with a maximum of 12 Newcomers;
- hold a focus group with a random selection of church attenders (maximum of 12);
- hold a focus group with lay leaders of the church (maximum of 12);
- ask these focus group participants to fill in a questionnaire, and
- to do some general observation of the Church.

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me or this Church in any way.

SIGNATURE

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR


Principal Investigator

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....



DATE:.....

Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
Facsimile: 07 3623 7337
Email:
d.mclaughlin@mcauley.acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER AND REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Education

Dear Participant,

God Is Doing Something Exciting at Your Church!

Across Australia there are a number of churches which have higher levels of Newcomers - people who have joined the church in the last five years and never previously attended. Your Church is one of those churches.

As part of my doctoral studies I am seeking to better understand what God is doing in high percentage Newcomer churches which makes them so effective at attracting Newcomers. Would you be able to help me through allowing your church to participate?

I am hoping that the research will help me to learn about the special characteristics of your Church and why it is so good at attracting Newcomers. I further hope that it will enable me to develop some principles which will help other churches in Australia to be more effective at our God given mission.

I am asking if you would be willing for me to interview you about some characteristics of your church and then to fill in a questionnaire. The interview will take less than an hour and the questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to fill in.

You are free to refuse to be involved in the research without having to justify your decision, or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without a given reason.

You will be asked to consent to audio recording of your comments. The actual identities of the participants will be confidential to the researchers and not disclosed in any report. You should be aware, however, that your identity may be deduced from your comments.

I will, of course, would be more than willing to share findings of my research with you if you are interested.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator or to the Student Researcher:

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin School of Educational Leadership 07 3623 7154 Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo) 1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014	Student Researcher: Ian Hussey 07 3602 5344 24 Twenty-First Avenue, Brighton, Queensland, 4017 ihussey2@gmail.com
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In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher has (have) not being able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee:

Chair HREC
c/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane campus
PO Box 456
Virginia, Queensland, 4014
Tel: 07 3623 7429
Fax: 07 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you should agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the attached Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher.



Principal Investigator



Ian Hussey

Principal Investigator (or Supervisor)

Student Researcher

Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
Facsimile: 07 3623 7337
Email: d.mclaughlin@mcauley.acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

CONSENT FORM – INTERVIEW

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

I, have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to be involved in this research by being interviewed and completing a questionnaire and to the audio recording of my comments.

I acknowledge that the interview will take approximately one hour and the questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to fill in. Although my identity will be confidential to the researchers and not disclosed in any report, I am aware that my identity may be deduced from my comments due to the small sample of participants.

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me or this Church in any way.

SIGNATURE

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:


Principal Investigator

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

Jan Hussey

DATE:.....

Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
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INFORMATION LETTER AND REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctorate of Education

Dear Participant,

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Across Australia there are a number of churches which have higher levels of Newcomers - people who have joined the church in the last five years and never previously attended. Your Church is one of those churches.

As part of my doctoral studies I am seeking to better understand what God is doing in high percentage Newcomer churches which makes them so effective at attracting Newcomers. Would you be able to help me through allowing your church to participate?

I am hoping that the research will help me to learn about the special characteristics of your Church and why it is so good at attracting Newcomers. I further hope that it will enable me to develop some principles which will help other churches in Australia to be more effective at our God given mission.

I am asking if you would be willing to participate in a focus group composed of 12 people or less to discuss some characteristics of your church and then to fill in a questionnaire. The focus group will take less than an hour and the questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to fill in.

You are free to refuse to be involved in the research without having to justify your decision, or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without a given reason.

You will be asked to consent to audio recording of your comments. The actual identities of the participants will be confidential to the researchers and not disclosed in any report. You should be aware, however, that your identity may be deduced from your comments.

I will, of course, would be more than willing to share findings of my research with you if you are interested.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator or to the Student Researcher:

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin School of Educational Leadership 07 3623 7154 Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo) 1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014	Student Researcher: Ian Hussey 07 3602 5344 24 Twenty-First Avenue, Brighton, Queensland, 4017 ihussey2@gmail.com
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In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher has (have) not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee:

Chair HREC
c/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane campus
PO Box 456
Virginia, Queensland, 4014
Tel: 07 3623 7429
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Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you should agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the attached Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher.



Principal Investigator

Principal Investigator (or Supervisor)



Student Researcher

Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
1100 Nudgee Road Banyo Qld 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Qld 4014 Australia
Telephone: 073623 7154
Facsimile: 07 3623 7337
Email:
d.mclaughlin@mcauley.acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

CONSENT FORM – FOCUS GROUP

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Engagement of Newcomers in Church Attendance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ian Hussey

I, have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to be involved in this research by participating in a focus group and filling in a questionnaire and to the audio recording of my comments.

I acknowledge that the focus group will take less than an hour and the questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to fill in. Although the actual identities of the participants will be confidential to the researchers and not disclosed in any report, I am aware that my identity may be deduced from my comments due to the small sample of participants.

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me or this Church in any way.

SIGNATURE

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR :


Principal Investigator

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

Jan Hussey

DATE:.....

8.3 Appendix C - Focus Group Questions - Newcomers

1. How was it that you came to be involved in this church?

2. What was it about this church that you found attractive?

3. What was your experience of engaging with this church?

4. What gives you a sense of belonging to this church?

5. What was your experience of the pastors/ministers as you engaged with this church?

Probe questions:

What do you mean by that?

Can you explain that to me, please?

Can you give me some examples?

8.4 Appendix D - Focus Group Questions - Attenders and Leaders

1. What is it about this church that you find most appealing?
2. What is your experience of being part of this church?
3. What gives you a sense of belonging to this church?
4. What is your experience of those who lead in this church?
5. How do the leaders of this church inspire & empower you for ministry?

Probe questions:

What do you mean by that?

Can you explain that to me, please?

Can you give me some examples?

8.5 Appendix E - Case Study Verification Form

The purpose of this document is to verify the data collected during the case study by presenting it to key participants for verification.

During data gathering, questions informed by the literature review were used to stimulate discussion. The in-depth interviews and interactions in the focus groups were recorded and substantive statements, that is, "statements that really say something" were transcribed.

Initial interpretation and organisation of the data occurred through the researcher's familiarity with the data and the literature. The developed themes reflected the purpose of the research and the constructs presented by the participants. The large amount of data generated during the fieldwork was also managed with the assistance of the NVIVO computer software. Using this tool, analysis was undertaken to identify themes and recurring patterns of meaning embedded in the data.

Over time, as transcripts were read and reread, themes were refined and confirmed or discarded or explored in greater depth. The observations of the researcher were used to confirm or clarify emerging themes and meanings identified by the participants.

However this tentative grasp of the meaning of the phenomena needs to be confirmed and refined through further interaction with key participants. Hence, the tentative findings of the research are presented back to key informants for comments and verifications in this document. This ensures that the interpretations of the researcher are consistent with the constructed understanding of the participants and provides an opportunity to correct any biases that the researcher brings to the research process.

Please read through the data and themes presented below and identify any factual errors, misinterpretations or biases that you detect. Please use the attached "Case Study Verification Sheet" as a basis for your response.

Thanks again for all your help

Ian Hussey

Key Participant Case Study Verification Sheet

Are there any factual errors in the Case Study?

Are there any misinterpretations or biases in the Case Study?

What aspects of the Case Study reflect your perception of the church? *(In other words, what aspects of the case study "resonate" with you?)*

What aspects of the Case Study do not reflect your perception of the church? *(In other words, what aspects of the case study do not "resonate" with you?)*

Are there any aspects of your perception of the church which are not reflected in the Case Study?

Do you have any other comments to make about the "trustworthiness" of the Case Study?

Name:

Signed:

8.6 Appendix F - Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to provide me with information regarding the engagement of Newcomers in church attendance. In order to gather such information a number of people from churches with high percentages of Newcomers have been asked to complete this questionnaire. The result of the study will be used to gain a better understanding of Newcomers and the churches they attend.

Expected completion time: Between 15 and 20 minutes.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

Information contained on individual questionnaires remains strictly confidential.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary.

Your name and your churches name is **not** to be indicated on this form.

Please give your completed questionnaire to me.

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your participation will enable me to be better able to understand what God is doing in your church. Your attitudes, understandings and opinions are important to this study; they will be kept strictly confidential.

Ian Hussey

Directions: Please read each question carefully. Answer the question by filling in the appropriate box(es) that represents your response or responses.

Section 1 – General Information

1. How long have you been a part of this church? _____

2. Which one of the following best describes your involvement at this church?:

Ministry leader

Newcomer – attender here for 5 years or less and before coming here I had never regularly attended church or I had not been attending church for several years

Regular attender for 5 years or less after switching from another church

Regular attender for 6 years or more

Section 2 - Questions about Your Church

2.1 Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this congregation?

Yes, a strong sense of belonging, which is growing

Yes, a strong sense – about the same as last year

Yes, although perhaps not as strongly as in the past

No, but I am new here

No, and I wish I did by now

No, but I am happy as I am

Don't know/not applicable

This section explores your sense of belonging at this church. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your church? Indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate option:

SD if you Strongly Disagree with the statement

D if you Disagree with the statement

N if you neither agree or disagree or are not sure

A if you Agree with the statement

SA if you Strongly Agree with the statement

1. I think my church is a good place for me to be	SD	D	N	A	SA
2. People in this church do not share the same values	SD	D	N	A	SA
3. My friends and I want the same things from this church	SD	D	N	A	SA
4. I can recognise most of the people who attend my church	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. I feel at home in this church	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. Very few of the other people in this church know me	SD	D	N	A	SA
7. I care about what the other people in this church think of my actions	SD	D	N	A	SA
8. I have almost no influence over what this church is like	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. If there is a problem in this church, people who attend here can get it solved	SD	D	N	A	SA
10. It is very important to me to attend this particular church	SD	D	N	A	SA
11. People in this church generally don't get along with each other	SD	D	N	A	SA
12. I expect to be in this church for a long time	SD	D	N	A	SA

Section 3 - Questions About the Leaders of Your Church

3.1 Have this congregation's leaders encouraged you to find and use your gifts and skills here?

Yes, to a great extent

Not at all

Yes, to some extent

Don't know

Yes, to a small extent

3.2 To what extent does the minister, pastor or priest take into account the ideas of the people here?

A great extent

Not at all

Some extent

Don't know

A small extent

3.3 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?:

"Leaders here inspire me to action":

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neutral/Unsure

Section 4 – Questions About The Senior Pastor/Minister of your church

This section explores some of the **pastoral behaviours** of your **Senior Pastor/Minister**.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your **Senior Pastor/Minister**? Indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate option:

- SD if you Strongly Disagree with the statement
- D if you Disagree with the statement
- N if you neither agree or disagree or are not sure
- A if you Agree with the statement
- SA if you Strongly Agree with the statement

1. Sets high standards for performance by his own behaviour	SD	D	N	A	SA
2. Works as hard as he can	SD	D	N	A	SA
3. Works as hard as anyone in the church	SD	D	N	A	SA
4. Sets a good example by the way he behaves	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. Leads by example	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. Encourages church attenders to express ideas/suggestions	SD	D	N	A	SA
7. Listens to church members ideas and suggestions	SD	D	N	A	SA
8. Uses church members suggestions to make decisions that affect us	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. Gives all church members a chance to voice their opinions	SD	D	N	A	SA
10. Considers church attenders ideas when he disagrees with them	SD	D	N	A	SA
11. Makes decisions that are based only on his own ideas	SD	D	N	A	SA
12. Helps church members see areas in which we need more training	SD	D	N	A	SA

13. Suggests ways to improve our church's performance	SD	D	N	A	SA
14. Encourages church members to solve problems together	SD	D	N	A	SA
15. Encourages church members to exchange information with one another	SD	D	N	A	SA
16. Provides help to church members	SD	D	N	A	SA
17. Teaches church members how to solve problems on their own	SD	D	N	A	SA
18. Pays attention to our church's efforts	SD	D	N	A	SA
19. Tells our church when we perform well	SD	D	N	A	SA
20. Helps our church focus on our goals	SD	D	N	A	SA
21. Helps develop good relations among church members	SD	D	N	A	SA
22. Explains church decisions	SD	D	N	A	SA
23. Explains church goals	SD	D	N	A	SA
24. Explains how my ministry fits into the church	SD	D	N	A	SA
25. Explains the purpose of church policies to my group of friends	SD	D	N	A	SA
26. Explains rules and expectations to the church	SD	D	N	A	SA
27. Explains his decisions and actions to the church	SD	D	N	A	SA
28. Cares about church members personal problems	SD	D	N	A	SA
29. Shows concern for church member's well being	SD	D	N	A	SA
30. Treats church members as equals	SD	D	N	A	SA
31. Takes the time to discuss church members concerns patiently	SD	D	N	A	SA
32. Shows concern for church member's success	SD	D	N	A	SA
33. Stays in touch with church members	SD	D	N	A	SA
34. Gets along with church members	SD	D	N	A	SA
35. Gives church members honest and fair answers	SD	D	N	A	SA
36. Knows what work is being done in my ministry area	SD	D	N	A	SA
37. Finds time to chat with church members	SD	D	N	A	SA

This section of the questionnaire is used to describe the **leadership style** of your Senior Minister/Pastor **as you perceive it**.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed below. Judge how frequently each statement fits the person you are describing. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank. Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

1. Provides me with assistance in return for my efforts	0	1	2	3	4
2. Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	0	1	2	3	4
3. Fails to interfere until problems become serious	0	1	2	3	4
4. Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions and deviations from standards	0	1	2	3	4
5. Avoids getting involved when important issues arise	0	1	2	3	4
6. Talks about his most important values and beliefs	0	1	2	3	4
7. Is absent when needed	0	1	2	3	4
8. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	0	1	2	3	4
9. Talks optimistically about the future	0	1	2	3	4
10. Instils pride in me for being associated with him	0	1	2	3	4
11. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets	0	1	2	3	4
12. Waits for things to go wrong before taking action	0	1	2	3	4
13. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	0	1	2	3	4
14. Specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	0	1	2	3	4

15. Spends time teaching and coaching	0	1	2	3	4
16. Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	0	1	2	3	4
17. Shows he is a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"	0	1	2	3	4
18. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group	0	1	2	3	4
19. Treats me as an individual rather than just a member of a group	0	1	2	3	4
20. Demonstrates that problems must become chronic before taking action	0	1	2	3	4
21. Acts in ways that builds my respect	0	1	2	3	4
22. Concentrates his full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints and failures	0	1	2	3	4
23. Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	0	1	2	3	4
24. Keeps track of all mistakes	0	1	2	3	4
25. Displays a sense of power and confidence	0	1	2	3	4
26. Articulates a compelling vision of the future	0	1	2	3	4
27. Directs my attention towards failures to meet standards	0	1	2	3	4
28. Avoids making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
29. Considers me as having different needs, abilities and aspirations from others	0	1	2	3	4
30. Gets me to look at problems from many different angles	0	1	2	3	4
31. Helps me to develop my strengths	0	1	2	3	4
32. Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	0	1	2	3	4
33. Delays responding to urgent questions	0	1	2	3	4
34. Emphasises the importance of having a collective sense of mission	0	1	2	3	4
35. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations	0	1	2	3	4
36. Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	0	1	2	3	4
37. Is effective in meeting my job related needs	0	1	2	3	4
38. Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying	0	1	2	3	4
39. Gets me to do more than I expected to do	0	1	2	3	4

40. Is effective in representing me to higher authority	0	1	2	3	4
41. Works with me in a satisfactory way	0	1	2	3	4
42. Heightens my desire to succeed	0	1	2	3	4
43. Is effective in meeting organizational requirements	0	1	2	3	4
44. Increases my willingness to try harder	0	1	2	3	4
45. Leads a group that is effective	0	1	2	3	4

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

8.7 Appendix G - Statistical Analysis of Questionnaire

8.7.1 Gold Creek Salvation Army

Reliability of Instruments

Table 8-1 Reliability of Instruments Used in Questionnaire - Gold Creek Salvation Army

Instrument	Chronbach's Alpha
Sense of Community Index	.675
Empowering Leadership Questionnaire	.961
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire	.665

Correlations

Table 8-2 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Growing Sense of Belonging" Question and SCI Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

	SCI Factor			
	Need Fulfilment	Group Membership	Influence	Emotional Connection
NCLS Growing Belonging	.129	.534**	.197	.479*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	.006	.324	.012
N	28	25	27	27

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-3 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Empowering Leadership" Question and ELQ Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS Empowering Leadership	.382*	.384	.503**	.377	.479*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.058	.009	.058	.013
N	28	25	26	26	26

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-4 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Leaders Inspire" Question and ELQ Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS "Leaders Inspire"	.586**	.596**	.712**	.685**	.724**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.002	.000	.000	.000
N	28	25	26	26	26

Note.

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-5 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account" Question and ELQ Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account"	.558**	.311	.639**	.558**	.675**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.130	.000	.001	.000
N	28	25	26	26	26

Note.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-6 Spearman Correlation Between MLQ Leadership Behaviours and Outcomes - Gold Creek Salvation Army

Leadership Behaviour	Leadership Outcomes		
	Extra Effort	Effectiveness	Satisfaction
Attributed Idealised Influence	.631**	.786**	.807**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000
N	23	20	24
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.489*	.471*	.370
Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.042	.082
N	21	19	23
Inspirational Motivation	.576**	.630**	.764**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.002	.000
N	24	21	26
Individual Consideration	.513*	.554*	.798**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.011	.000
N	22	20	22
Intellectual Stimulation	.555**	.723**	.709**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.000	.000
N	21	20	23

Note.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-7 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Leaders Inspire" Question and MLQ Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

MLQ Factor	NCLS Leaders Inspire
Attributed Idealised Influence	.652**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
N	24
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.483*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.020
N	23
Inspirational Motivation	.550**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
N	26
Intellectual Stimulation	.606**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
N	23
Individual Consideration	.489*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.018
N	23

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-8 Spearman Correlation Between SCI and ELQ Factors - Gold Creek Salvation Army

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
SCI	.279	.368	.218	.476*	.239
Sig. (2-tailed)	.187	.101	.330	.025	.285
N	24	21	22	22	22

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

8.7.2 Wattle Hills Anglican

Reliability of Instruments

Table 8-9 Reliability of Instruments Used in Questionnaire - Wattle Hills Anglican

Instrument	Chronbach's Alpha
Sense of Community Index	.406
Empowering Leadership Questionnaire	.922
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire	.950

Correlations

Table 8-10 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Growing Sense of Belonging" Question and SCI Factors - Wattle Hills Anglican

	SCI Factor			
	Need Fulfilment	Group Membership	Influence	Emotional Connection
NCLS Growing Belonging	.160	.098	.265	.208
Sig. (2-tailed)	.325	.547	.099	.199
N	40	40	40	40

Table 8-11 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Empowering Leadership” Question and ELQ Factors - Wattle Hills Anglican

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS Empowering Leadership	.291	.324*	.287	.170	.108
Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	.041	.073	.295	.505
N	39	40	40	40	40

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-12 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Leaders Inspire” Question and ELQ Factors - Wattle Hills Anglican

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS “Leaders Inspire”	.424**	.427**	.307	.428**	.381*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.006	.054	.006	.015
N	39	40	40	40	40

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-13 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account" Question and ELQ Factors - Wattle Hills Anglican

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account"	.267	.618**	.444**	.370*	.705**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.101	.000	.004	.019	.000
N	39	40	40	40	40

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-14 Spearman Correlation between MLQ Leadership Behaviours and Outcomes - Wattle Hills Anglican

Leadership Behaviour	Leadership Outcomes		
	Extra Effort	Effectiveness	Satisfaction
Attributed Idealised Influence	.462**	.433**	.431**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.005	.006
N	40	40	39
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.607**	.410**	.435**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.009	.082
N	40	40	39
Inspirational Motivation	.287	.235	.355*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	.144	.027
N	40	40	39
Intellectual Stimulation	.664**	.501**	.417**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.008
N	40	40	39
Individual Consideration Sig. (2-tailed)	.592**	.552**	.379*
	.000	.000	.017
N	40	40	39

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 8-15 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Leaders Inspire" Question and MLQ Factors
- Wattle Hills Anglican*

MLQ Factor	NCLS Leaders Inspire
Attributed Idealised Influence	.240
Sig. (2-tailed)	.135
N	40
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.115
Sig. (2-tailed)	.481
N	40
Inspirational Motivation	.180
Sig. (2-tailed)	.268
N	40
Intellectual Stimulation	.102
Sig. (2-tailed)	.530
N	40
Individual Consideration	.079
Sig. (2-tailed)	.629
N	40

Table 8-16 Spearman Correlation Between SCI and ELQ Factors - Wattle Hills Anglican

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
SCI	.346*	.436**	.404*	.283	.354*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.006	.012	.086	.029
N	37	38	38	38	38

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

8.7.3 3C Sunshine Lakes

Reliability of Instruments

Table 8-17 Reliability of Instruments Used in Questionnaire - 3C Sunshine Lakes

Instrument	Chronbach's Alpha
Sense of Community Index	.318
Empowering Leadership Questionnaire	.883
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire	.753

Correlations

Table 8-18 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Growing Sense of Belonging" Question and SCI Factors - 3C Sunshine Lakes

	SCI Factor			
	Need Fulfilment	Group Membership	Influence	Emotional Connection
NCLS Growing Belonging	.059	.307	.134	.199
Sig. (2-tailed)	.800	.175	.563	.387
N	21	21	21	21

Table 8-19 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Empowering Leadership” Question and ELQ Factors - 3C Sunshine Lakes

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS Empowering Leadership	-.038	.282	.434*	.267	-.111
Sig. (2-tailed)	.871	.215	.049	.242	.633
N	21	21	21	21	21

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-20 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Leaders Inspire” Question and ELQ Factors - 3C Sunshine Lakes

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS “Leaders Inspire”	.235	.512*	.351	.467*	.387
Sig. (2-tailed)	.305	.018	.118	.033	.136
N	21	21	21	21	21

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-21 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account" Question and ELQ Factors - 3C Sunshine Lakes

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS "Takes Ideas into Account"	-.014	-.092	-.061	-.068	.439*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.951	.693	.792	.769	.046
N	21	21	21	21	21

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-22 Spearman Correlation between MLQ Leadership Behaviours and Outcomes - 3C Sunshine Lakes

Leadership Behaviour	Leadership Outcomes		
	Extra Effort	Effectiveness	Satisfaction
Attributed Idealised Influence	-.151	.171	.500*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	.459	.021
N	21	21	21
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.302	.232	.272
Sig. (2-tailed)	.183	.312	.232
N	21	21	21
Inspirational Motivation	.430	.153	.618**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.507	.003
N	21	21	21
Intellectual Stimulation	-.093	.168	.365
Sig. (2-tailed)	.689	.466	.103
N	21	21	21
Individual Consideration	.004	.723**	.709**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.986	.000	.000
N	21	20	23

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 8-23 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Leaders Inspire” Question and MLQ Factors
- 3C Sunshine Lakes*

MLQ Factor	NCLS Leaders Inspire
Attributed Idealised Influence	.469*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
N	21
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.546*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.010
N	21
Inspirational Motivation	.610**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
N	21
Intellectual Stimulation	.135
Sig. (2-tailed)	.560
N	21
Individual Consideration	.250
Sig. (2-tailed)	.275
N	21

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-24 Spearman Correlation Between SCI and ELQ Factors - 3C Sunshine Lakes

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
SCI	.160	.311	.231	.424	.279
Sig. (2-tailed)	.489	.170	.170	.056	.220
N	21	21	21	21	21

8.7.4 Statistical Analysis of Combined Churches Questionnaires

A total of 89 questionnaires were completed by the participants from the three churches in the focus groups at the conclusion of the groups. The age range of people completing the survey was from 16 to 80 years. The period of involvement in the church varied from six weeks to 67 years. Even though there were three specific groups at each church, (Newcomers, leaders and a general cross-section) they together represented a good sample of the entire church in each case.

The Sense of Community Index (SCI)

The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the responses to the SCI questions by the participants in this research was only .505, which falls below the usually accepted standard of .7. Even if some of the questions are omitted, the highest level of reliability is .557. This confirms the concerns raised by some scholars about the reliability of the SCI as an instrument (Peterson, et al., 2006). However, there is no sacred level of acceptable or unacceptable level of alpha (Schmitt, 1996). In some cases, measures with (by conventional standards) low levels of alpha may still be quite useful. Hence, some tentative conclusions about the Sense of Community and its relationship to growing sense of belonging can still be made, but the reliability issues are acknowledged.

The SCI and NCLS Sense of Belonging

The questionnaire sought to compare the National Church Life Survey question relating to sense of belonging to the Sense of Community Index (SCI). The NCLS question indicated that people in the three churches had a strong and growing sense of belonging.

Table 8-25 "Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this congregation?" - Combined Churches

Response	Frequency	Percent
No, but I am happy as I am	1	1.1
No, but I am new	1	1.1
Yes, not as strong	4	4.5
Strong & same	5	5.6
Strong & Growing	78	87.6
Total	89	100.0

Even though the questionnaire indicated that the SCI was overall significantly correlated to the NCLS concept of growing sense of belonging ($r_s = +.348$, $n = 83$, $p < .001$, 2-tailed), none of the individual SCI factors were correlated. This finding confirms other research which suggested that the SCI be used as a one factor, rather than a four factor, scale until better items can be developed (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999).

The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ)

The Chronbach's alpha measure of reliability for the combined responses to the ELQ questions was .618, but if question 11 is deleted the reliability improves to a very acceptable .931. Question 11 is the only negatively worded item in the index and obviously confused some participants. Hence, despite this shortcoming, the ELQ is a quite reliable instrument for understanding empowering leadership in these churches.

The ELQ and the NCLS Construct of Empowering Leadership

The combined questionnaire results show that the empowering leadership behaviours examined by the ELQ and the NCLS concept of empowering leadership are positively, but weakly related ($r_s = +.270$, $n = 82$, $p = .014$, 2 tailed). There is also a weak relationship with two of the factors, coaching and informing, as presented in this table:

Table 8-26 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Empowering Leadership" Question and ELQ Factors - Combined Churches

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS Empowering Leadership	.201	.338**	.375**	.211*	.225*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	.001	.000	.049	.036
N	88	86	87	87	87

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The ELQ and the NCLS Construct of Inspiring Leadership.

The NCLS question "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: 'Leaders here inspire me to action,'" was moderately related to the ELQ ($r_s = +.603, n = 82, p < 0.01, 2$ -tailed.) The relationship between the individual factors of the ELQ and the two components of the NCLS construct of inspiring leadership are presented in this table:

Table 8-27 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Leaders Inspire" Question and ELQ Factors - Combined Churches

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS "Leaders Inspire"	.484 **	.544 **	.475 **	.578 **	.506 **
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	88	86	87	87	87

Note.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The ELQ and Taking Ideas into Account

The NCLS question relating to how much leaders “take into account the ideas of the people here” is also weakly related to the ELQ: ($r_s = +.445$, $n = 82$, $p = .000$, 2 tailed) as are each of the ELQ factors:

Table 8-28 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS “Takes Ideas into Account” Question and ELQ Factors - Combined Churches

	ELQ Factor				
	Leads By Example	Coaching	Informing	Showing Concern	Participative Decision Making
NCLS “Takes Ideas into Account”	.313**	.367**	.410**	.354**	.621**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.001	.000	.001	.000
N	88	86	87	87	87

Note.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As expected, the ELQ factor of “Participative Decision Making” is most strongly correlated to the NCLS “takes ideas into account” question.

Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Chronbach's Alpha measure of reliability for the MLQ for the combined churches is .917. This indicates that the instrument is very reliable.

The Transformational Leadership behaviours (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration) are all correlated to the positive leadership outcomes in these high percentage Newcomer churches.

Table 8-29 Spearman Correlation Between MLQ Leadership Behaviours and Outcomes - Combined Churches

Leadership Behaviour	Leadership Outcomes		
	Extra Effort	Effectiveness	Satisfaction
Attributed Idealised Influence	.397**	.453**	.565**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	84	81	84
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.518**	.362**	.433**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	82	80	83
Inspirational Motivation	.465**	.314**	.581**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	85	82	86
Individual Consideration	.503**	.531**	.474**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	83	81	82
Intellectual Stimulation	.412**	.583**	.515**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	82	81	83

Note.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The MLQ and NCLS Inspiring Leadership

The transforming leadership behaviours, except intellectual stimulation, are correlated to the NCLS "Leaders Inspire" question.

Table 8-30 Spearman Correlation Between NCLS "Leaders Inspire" Question and MLQ Factors - Combined Churches

MLQ Factor	NCLS Leaders Inspire
Attributed Idealised Influence	.447**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	85
Behaviour Idealised Influence	.394**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	84
Inspirational Motivation	.452**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
N	87
Intellectual Stimulation	.290**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
N	84
Individual Consideration	.334**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
N	84

Note.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8-31 Percentages of People Agreeing with Statements in the Questionnaire

Statement	Level of Agreement
I have a strong and growing sense of belonging to this church.	87.6% agreed
This church is a good place for me to be.	84.3% strongly agreed
The leader works as hard as he can.	76.4% strongly agreed
I feel at home in this church.	75.3% strongly agreed
The leader frequently if not always leads a group that is effective.	75.3% agreed
The leader leads by example.	75.3% strongly agreed
The leader sets a good example in the way he behaves.	75.3% strongly agreed
The leader works as hard as anyone in the church.	74.2% strongly agreed
The leader treats church members as equals.	71.9% strongly agreed
The leaders take into account the ideas of the people to a great extent.	70.8% agreed
The leader frequently if not always talks optimistically about the future.	69.7% agreed
Leaders encourage me to find and use their gifts and skills to a great extent.	68.5% agreed
The leader frequently if not always articulates a compelling vision for that future.	68.5% agreed
Leaders help our church focus on goals.	68.5% strongly agreed
The leader shows concern about church member's well-being.	67.4% strongly agreed
Provides help to church members.	66.3% strongly agreed
Leaders here inspire me to action.	61.8% strongly agreed

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