

BEING EFFECTIVE CHURCH IN RAPIDLY GROWING  
COASTAL TOWNS

Submitted by

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Introduction**

Since the 1960s Australia has experienced a significant demographic shift as large numbers of people have moved from rural areas and large cities to take up residence in small coastal towns. The resulting populations have a number of distinctive features which make them both a challenge and an opportunity for the Church as it seeks to minister effectively. The underlying proposition of this thesis is that since there are distinctive demographic features of these towns, and since the church is called to minister effectively, there may well be approaches or ministry philosophies which enable the church to be more effective in these populations.

### **Distinctive Populations**

Using data from the 2001 census a comparison between the Australian national figures and those of coastal towns between Newcastle and Tweed Heads showed that overall the population of the coastal towns was older, less formally educated, had lower income levels, more mobile, more likely to be Australian citizens, more likely to be married or divorced, more likely to describe themselves as Christian and members of the Anglican Church than the Australian average.

### **The Survey**

With the assistance of the National Church Life Survey, thirty churches in coastal towns between Newcastle and Kingscliffe, were contacted. These churches (Anglican and Protestant) were those which had had the highest number of 'newcomers' in the 2001 National Church Life Survey. NCLS wrote to these churches on my behalf and invited them to contact me if they were prepared to participate in my study. In the end I interviewed ordained and lay leaders as well as members of six churches. There were a number of features common to these churches including: the ordained leaders had what might be called orthodox theological views; 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 ordained leader – that role was clearly leadership; the welcoming nature of the congregation is vital; and the use of contemporary music and worship style.

### **The Mission of the Church**

Whilst the mission of the church has been seen in different ways over the past two thousand years, it is clear that the central theme of the teaching and practice of Jesus Christ was the Kingdom or Reign of God. By his teaching and very powerfully through his actions Jesus demonstrated the reality of the new in-breaking reality. The early church was clear that it saw itself as being sent by Jesus to continue his mission of proclaiming the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Effective Church**

Given that the mission of the church is to focus on the Kingdom or Reign of God, it is important that this be done in an effective a way as possible. One of the challenges in this is to determine what 'effective' means for the church. For some, being effective means numerical growth in church attenders. For others, being effective means being a 'healthy' church. My conclusion is that being effective, whilst not dismissing church growth or

church health, means an attitude, and that is, being focused on proclaiming the reality of the Kingdom of God. As the church is more focussed on this task, it is effective.

### **Being Effective in Rapidly Growing Coastal Towns**

There seem to be a number of challenges facing the church in rapidly growing coastal towns as the church seeks to focus on the Kingdom of God. If the kingdom is good news for the poor, the question then is: who are the poor of coastal towns? An immediate need in coastal towns is community for those who are newly arrived, or poor, or otherwise on the margins of the society. The church needs to be a welcoming and inclusive place for those in need, and a place which actually helps people with their physical poverty. The church also needs to confront its own operating model in order to be effective. Too often the church is focused on its own survival and not on the kingdom. The church in its local mode seems like a religious small business. Focus on the 'growth of the business' may well lead to a loss of focus on the kingdom.

For the church to be effective in rapidly growing coastal towns the church must take seriously the culture of those towns and seek to express its focus on the kingdom in ways that bring good news to the reality of those communities.

## **Statement of 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 have been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other persons work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

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

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

Assistance was sought and received from the National Church Life Survey in Australia to assist in the identification of suitable churches for this study. National Church Life Survey wrote to churches on my behalf and invited their leaders to contact me if they were prepared to participate in my research.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### The Move to the Coast

One of the very significant population shifts in Australia over the past 40 years has been the movement to what were small coastal towns. There is no doubt that there has also been population drift to the large metropolitan cities from rural towns, but the exodus to the beach has been especially marked.

Anne Davies and Claire O'Rourke in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald of August 9, 2003 said this:

The coast is embedded in the Australian psyche. When Australians dream, it is of beach and blue water-and themselves beside it. As they near the close of their working lives, they seek out their own piece of coast.

Bernard Salt in his recent book *The Big Shift* suggests that the first two hundred years of white settlement yielded two distinctive Australian cultures, the bush and the city or suburbs. He suggests that a third culture emerged in the latter decades of the twentieth century and remains ascendant -- the culture of the beach.<sup>1</sup> Whilst many coastal communities showed strong growth even from immediately post World War II, the large and consistent population boom in the coastal towns began from 1966.

Between 1971 and 1991 the population of the non-metropolitan coastal region of NSW increased by 326,000 and the net migration gain of 256,000 in this region comprised 23% of state population growth. In this period, the region's share of the state population increased from 6% to 11%.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, this rate of population increase was second only to coastal Queensland.<sup>3</sup>

The term used to describe this very significant growth in coastal populations is counter-urbanisation -- net internal migration down the urban hierarchy.<sup>4</sup>

It is not completely clear why this significant population shift has occurred. Some influences might be increasing car ownership and improved roads, which led to more

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Salt, *The Big Shift* (South Yarra: Hardie Grant Books, 2003), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Birney, "Migration, Well-being and Development in Coastal New South Wales", *Australian Geography* Vol 27, No. 1, 1996, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Johanna Kijas, "A Place at the Coast: Internal migration and the shift to the Coastal-countryside", *Transformations* No 2 March 2002, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Burnley, *Migration*, 53 and Kijas, *A Place at the Coast*, 5.

people travelling farther for holidays and so becoming aware of the beauty of the coastal towns. This may well have contributed to the increase in retired people moving to these towns, in that they had holidayed in these locations and so, when retirement time came, wanted to settle permanently where they had enjoyed holidays. The relatively low cost of living in the coastal towns may also have encouraged younger people, perhaps unemployed people or single parent families to move from the more expensive cities. The 'sea change' phenomenon of the baby boomers may also have played a part. Salt suggests that the population move has been influenced by new values and concepts like leisure, entertainment, lifestyle, retirement and financial arrangements like superannuation.<sup>5</sup> Burnley suggests that the population shift has resulted from structural change in the economy, lifestyle shifts, improved transport and communications, and greater personal mobility and accessibility.<sup>6</sup>

Kijas suggests similar reasons for the growth of coastal populations: the centrality of economic structural change that has seen service industries less tied to major cities, improvements in transport, portable communication technologies, the development of a leisure society that has encouraged movement to attractive coastal areas, a dissatisfaction with city living including perceptions of greater safety and healthier living in the country, increased affluence that has allowed greater mobility, portability of social security benefits, cheaper living in regional centres, and new choices in retirement options among the growing population of the aged.<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that common themes are clear -- improved transport, the development of leisure and retirement lifestyles, and the dramatic increase in the cost of housing in the major urban area of Sydney. What is also clear is that this very significant migratory shift has been slow to gain research attention: in Australia it was only fully recognized in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Study of Coastal Communities**

This project aims to examine the church in some of the coastal towns that have grown markedly from the early 1970s until today. There are of course a number of varieties of

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<sup>5</sup> Salt, *The Big Shift*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Burnley, *Migration*, 54.

<sup>7</sup> Kijas, *A Place at the Coast*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Kijas, *A Place at the Coast*, 2.



coastal population. There is the large metropolitan city which is located on the coast, for instance Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth. And there is the sprawling urban development which has largely swallowed small, originally separate, communities creating what might be termed a ribbon of urban development, for instance on the Central Coast of NSW or the Gold Coast of Southern Queensland. A third type of urban community, and the one which will be the focus of this study, is the coastal town or village which continues as a separate urban unit. For the purpose of the study I will be focusing on these communities between Newcastle and the border between NSW and Queensland.

A study of the church in these communities is important for a number of reasons. First, these populations are relatively new in that the towns have existed for a long time, but the substantial growth in population has occurred in recent times. I will also argue that the coastal towns are different from other types of communities. These rapidly growing coastal towns are a new phenomenon. Census statistics indicate that these communities share particular demographic features and differ significantly from national averages. It is my thesis that these communities have features in common which make them quite distinct population groups. The church has not had to deal with these kinds of communities before, since they are neither city nor rural populations in the traditional sense. Although they are growing quickly, and many of the residents have moved from cities, they do not share major features of city living. Nor do they share major features of rural life even though they are set in rural areas, could once have been genuinely termed rural-coastal, and are to some extent populated by residents who have moved from rural towns. Given the rapid growth of these coastal communities and the likelihood the development of these towns is set to continue, it is vital for the church to understand these populations in order to minister more effectively in them. This, at least, is the purpose of my study.

## **Background**

The central question is: How can the church be effective in these rapidly growing coastal populations? Flowing from this central question are other questions:

1. Is it true that these coastal populations are different from other populations? If so, how are they different?
2. How do the differences affect the ministry of the church?

3. What is the major focus of the church's mission and ministry?
4. What attitudes or approaches will help the church to be effective in the life of these coastal communities?

Behind this project lies more than twenty-one years working as an Anglican priest, including two years in Port Macquarie, three years in Sawtell and six years in Ballina --all rapidly growing coastal towns. I have experienced something of the growth of these towns; having arrived in Port Macquarie in 1982 when the population was approximately 27,000 people and seeing the town grow to more than 40,000 by 2004. Large areas of what was bush are now brick and tile houses.

Effective ministry in coastal towns is important for a number of reasons. First, no matter what the context, it is important that the church, being the church of God and sharing in the mission of Jesus Christ, is as effective as possible. Second, the development of coastal towns seems likely to continue. If the demographic trends discussed in chapter two continue to be features of coastal towns -- older population, lower income, more unemployed, divorced and widowed people -- the level of need in coastal towns will only increase. In turn, this challenges the church to develop more effective strategies for ministry.

## **Methodology**

This project is a work of Practical Theology. Practical Theology can be defined as the 'empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society'<sup>9</sup>. Viau suggests that the principal function of Practical Theology is 'to produce a discourse that allows our contemporaries to live faith in a satisfactory manner'<sup>10</sup>. This certainly sums up the aim of this project which focuses on the reality of coastal populations and the challenge for the churches in those communities to be effective mediators of Christian faith in practical and contemporary ways.

This project is underpinned by a number of understandings:

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<sup>9</sup>Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 6.

<sup>10</sup>Marcell Viau, *Practical Theology-A New Approach* (Brill: Leiden 1999), xv.

First: Coastal towns are different from other Australian populations, and the church must tailor its ministry to suit the populations of coastal towns. The issue of culture and mission is discussed later in this chapter. Chapter Two uses Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 census results for a number of towns on the Northern New South Wales coast to demonstrate that there are specific demographic features of the coastal towns which make their populations quite different from the overall Australian situation. This chapter sets the context for the ministry of the church in coastal towns.

Second: In order for the church to minister in coastal towns, the church must be clear about its central task. There is significant debate concerning the task of the church. Chapter three examines the understanding of the early church concerning its role and the priorities of Jesus Christ, the importance of the kingdom of God for the early church, some of the contemporary debate concerning the mission of the church, and the priorities for the church given the centrality of the Kingdom of God.

Third: It is reasonable and indeed very desirable for the church to be as effective as possible in its mission. Chapter Four examines what 'effective' means for the church in the twenty-first century.

Fourth: The church in rapidly growing coastal towns is already grappling with the task of being effective and there will be insights to be gained from that experience. Chapter Five is a summary of a survey I conducted with the assistance of the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). In the survey I interviewed ordained and lay leaders as well as newcomers from numerically growing churches in coastal towns to identify factors which might help the church be effective in these populations.

Fifth: Given the context of coastal towns, clarity of purpose, an understanding of what it means for the church to be effective, and drawing on the experience of people in the field, there will be areas of focus for ministry for the church in coastal towns. Chapter six highlights and examines these areas of focus and

answers the question: How can the church be effective in rapidly growing coastal towns?

### **Culture and Mission**

This thesis concerns the mission of the church. Central to this thesis is the understanding that the culture of a population impacts the way Christian ministry needs to be carried out and that research might help appropriate strategies to be developed to make ministry more effective. Given this understanding it is reasonable to study coastal towns as a subject in themselves to determine their demographic and cultural features and the strategies or areas of focus which will be most appropriate to them. Some might suggest that to take culture into account and to shape ministry in the light of culture, is to somehow reduce the power of God in the gospel and turn the mission of the church into a purely human endeavour. However, I argue that this is not the case at all. Culture is important to the gospel, especially if we take seriously the observation of Denis Edwards: “The image of the church as a community of disciples is not focused only on the way Jesus lived and acted 2000 years ago. It exists to witness to God’s saving action in the world today.”<sup>11</sup>

Culture and the gospel are not some kind of opposites with culture somehow tainting the gospel. In dealing with people, God chooses to interact with them in the various situations in which they live. Sanks suggests that some form of inculturation is implied by the mystery of the incarnation. Christians understand that God’s self-communication takes place in and through matter, in and through human words, symbols and actions.<sup>12</sup>

Luzbetak likewise says:<sup>13</sup>

Whenever God deals with human beings, whether it is in the Bible or in our own times, he deals with them as cultural beings. Every Christian community must experience Christ -- not as a foreigner who somehow after two thousand years has appeared in the communities’ midst, but as 'one of us', as someone sharing the communities’ culture and therefore possessing its very soul.

Jesus lived and taught in a particular situation. His teaching reflected that situation. He used examples that were familiar to the people with whom he lived. In order to be good news the gospel must always be proclaimed in ways that are appropriate to the culture of the people to whom it is presented.

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<sup>11</sup> Denis Edwards, *Called to be Church in Australia*, (Homebush: St Paul Publications 1989), 47.

<sup>12</sup> Howland T. Sanks, “Global Church and Inculturation”, *Salt, Leaven and Light*, ( New York: Crossroad, 1992), 192.

<sup>13</sup> Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 135

There is no doubt that St Paul in his teaching in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), also made use of the culture of his listeners when he used the altar 'to an unknown God' to preach the gospel to the people of that city. The church in its earliest days decided that converts to Christianity did not have to adopt all the forms of Jewish culture (Acts 15:19-21), and has been engaged in the process of what has become known as contextualization or inculturation ever since. Whilst it is common to talk about 'the gospel', almost as if it is a football which can be passed around to all and sundry, in reality 'the gospel' is always 'embodied in a culturally conditioned form of words'<sup>14</sup>.

Culture is important as we consider the work of the gospel. Luzbetak says:

We are concerned about cultures so that the Church may be as perfect a channel of Grace as possible, as worthy an instrument in the hands of God as possible, as good, wise, and faithful a servant as is humanly possible.<sup>15</sup>

Taking culture seriously, and in this case the culture of the rapidly growing coastal town, is doing what is seen both in the Bible and the history of the church. Taking the culture of coastal towns seriously enables the dark places which need the light of the gospel to be clearly seen. Taking culture seriously enables opportunities that are presented by the culture to be taken up. I am sure that taking the culture of coastal towns seriously will help to enable effective ministry in those places.

It is of course clear that any consideration of culture and context does not mean that mission is not God's nor that God continues as the prime mover of it. Jesus made it clear to his disciples after his resurrection that the Holy Spirit would give them the power to be Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8) and that they should stay in Jerusalem and not begin the proclamation of the good news until they had received the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49). In John's gospel the commission for the disciples to be sent as Jesus was sent, was given at the same time as the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:21, 22). The book of the Acts of the Apostles certainly portrays the work of the church as guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8, 4:31, 7:55, 8:39). The mission of the church can only proceed anywhere, including rapidly growing coastal towns, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>14</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: the gospel and western culture* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, 397.

However, it is also clear that there is human participation in the process of mission. Romans 10:14 speaks of the need for a human to proclaim the gospel and there are very numerous examples in the New Testament of God choosing to work through all sorts of people. Likewise Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:6 describes both the activity of humans and God being essential to the gospel: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow”.

Johannes van der Ven describes a principle which he calls ‘non-competition’ to define the process of the human and the divine working together. He says:<sup>16</sup>

What people do in the social context of the church and what God does may not and cannot be subtracted from each other. God does not cancel out the activities of people in the church, but inspires, intensifies, and orients them. ... The principle of noncompetition is founded on the insight into the immanent transcendence of God and not the absolute transcendence.

This principle is important as we seek to understand the culture of coastal towns. I am not suggesting that a greater knowledge of that culture in and of itself will help the church’s work to be more effective. However I am certain that knowledge of the culture of those towns will help the church, led by the Holy Spirit, to be effective. Van der Ven is right -- there is no competition.

Tonna puts it very well when he says:<sup>17</sup>

In the process of planning mission these will be found in the confluence of the impulse that comes from God (mission) and the impulse that comes from humankind (the location). For this discernment to be effective, a profound faith in the hand of God within every human reality is necessary. It is not by accident that the solemn promise, “I am with you always to the close of the age (Matthew chapter 28, verse 20), is an integral part of the missionary mandate.

The task of the church then according to Mike McCoy is to grapple with the ways in which the gospel, the faith community and the cultural context interact. But the strategy is clear: God’s love is to be incarnated.<sup>18</sup> The work of the church is both a human and a divine activity. The prime mover is certainly God whose mission it is, but the missionary God incarnates himself in human society. In seeking to understand the culture of coastal

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<sup>16</sup> J. A. van der Ven, *Ecclesiology in Context* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Tonna, *Gospel to the Cities* (New York: Orbis, 1978), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Michael McCoy, “Going in Peace, or Breaking in Pieces?-Anglican Unity and the Mission of God”, *Intermission* Vol 4, No. 1 February 1998, 30

towns I am not seeking to downplay the importance of God's primary role, but take seriously the way God has chosen to work in the world.

This work of 'grappling with the ways in which the gospel, the faith community and the cultural context interact' is the task of this thesis, as I seek to apply this to rapidly growing coastal towns, always acknowledging that the mission of the church is a partnership -- divine and human.

Whilst the mission of God is the focus, the coastal town is the context, and it is this context that the next chapter examines.

## **Chapter 2: The Context - Rapidly Growing Coastal Towns**

For the purposes of the study I have chosen the coastal area north of Newcastle to Tweed Heads which is the border with Queensland. The coastal towns involved are Ballina, Byron Bay, Camden Haven, Coffs Harbour, Forster/Tuncurry, Harrington, Nambucca Heads, Nelson Bay, Old Bar, Port Macquarie, Sawtell, South West Rocks, Woolgoolga and Yamba. These are most of the towns along this stretch of coast, and include small village-sized communities like Harrington, as well as much larger communities such as Port Macquarie, so that a comprehensive picture of the features of coastal towns is able to be determined.

I have chosen the following census categories for examination: age; median individual and household income; born in Australia, Australian citizens, only English language spoken; employment; mobility – the people who lived at a different address five years ago; marital status; religion; Christian denomination; age left school. There were other categories which I could have included such as house-hold type, but the categories I have included were the most important in determining the features of coastal populations.

The 2001 census results<sup>1</sup> certainly indicate some characteristics which make these coastal communities different from the overall Australian picture.

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics in this chapter are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, CLIB, 2001 Final Summary. The statistics were originally in the form of numbers of persons. I have converted them to percentages using Excel to enable comparisons to be made between the coastal towns in the study.



## 1. The population of coastal towns is older

**Table 1: Age % of population**

|                     | 0-4        | 5-9        | 10-14      | 15-19      | 20-24      | 25-29      | 30-34      | 35-39      | 40-44      | 45-49      | 50-54      | 55-59      | 60-64      | 65-69      | 70-74      | 75-79      | 80+        |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Australia</b>    | <b>6.6</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>6.5</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>7.4</b> | <b>7.5</b> | <b>7.6</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>6.6</b> | <b>5.1</b> | <b>4.2</b> | <b>3.5</b> | <b>3.3</b> | <b>2.7</b> | <b>3.1</b> |
| Ballina             | 4.7        | 5.4        | 6.1        | 6.6        | 4.9        | 4.5        | 4.6        | 5.9        | 6.5        | 7.1        | 6.6        | 5.3        | 5.5        | 5.6        | 6.6        | 6.0        | 7.0        |
| Byron Bay           | 3.7        | 4.2        | 5.1        | 5.3        | 6.2        | 6.7        | 6.6        | 6.4        | 8.1        | 8.0        | 6.5        | 4.8        | 2.7        | 2.1        | 2.2        | 2.2        | 2.8        |
| Camden Haven        | 3.5        | 4.5        | 5.4        | 4.3        | 2.3        | 2.7        | 3.3        | 4.3        | 5.2        | 5.7        | 6.1        | 7.1        | 8.6        | 9.8        | 10.4       | 8.2        | 8.6        |
| Coffs Harbour       | 6.2        | 5.9        | 6.4        | 7.2        | 6.0        | 5.2        | 6.1        | 6.0        | 7.2        | 6.8        | 6.9        | 5.6        | 5.1        | 4.9        | 4.7        | 4.1        | 5.0        |
| Foster/<br>Tuncurry | 4.8        | 5.1        | 5.4        | 5.0        | 3.1        | 4.0        | 4.0        | 4.8        | 6.0        | 5.8        | 6.1        | 7.0        | 7.2        | 7.8        | 8.7        | 7.6        | 6.8        |
| Harrington          | 2.5        | 5.3        | 4.6        | 3.7        | 1.5        | 3.4        | 3.1        | 4.1        | 6.0        | 4.8        | 6.4        | 8.8        | 10.8       | 10.0       | 11.8       | 7.3        | 7.1        |
| Nambucca<br>Heads   | 4.9        | 5.0        | 6.5        | 6.5        | 3.5        | 3.5        | 3.8        | 4.9        | 6.4        | 6.7        | 6.3        | 6.3        | 7.5        | 7.4        | 7.9        | 7.1        | 6.2        |
| Nelson Bay          | 5.4        | 5.6        | 5.4        | 5.0        | 3.8        | 4.9        | 5.1        | 6.6        | 5.9        | 5.9        | 7.0        | 7.4        | 6.4        | 5.8        | 6.2        | 5.7        | 6.0        |
| Old Bar             | 5.3        | 7.3        | 7.7        | 6.9        | 3.5        | 4.7        | 5.0        | 4.9        | 7.2        | 6.8        | 5.2        | 5.4        | 7.3        | 6.4        | 7.2        | 4.9        | 4.9        |
| Port Macquarie      | 5.4        | 6.4        | 7.1        | 5.9        | 3.8        | 4.3        | 5.1        | 6.0        | 7.0        | 6.3        | 6.4        | 6.2        | 5.9        | 6.1        | 6.2        | 5.3        | 5.9        |
| Sawtell             | 7.2        | 8.2        | 8.3        | 7.3        | 4.4        | 4.8        | 5.7        | 7.1        | 7.3        | 7.0        | 6.4        | 5.2        | 4.5        | 4.4        | 4.2        | 3.7        | 3.8        |
| South West<br>Rocks | 5.0        | 5.9        | 5.4        | 4.0        | 2.7        | 3.8        | 4.5        | 5.2        | 6.2        | 5.9        | 6.3        | 7.8        | 9.4        | 9.1        | 7.8        | 6.4        | 3.9        |
| Woolgoolga          | 6.3        | 6.9        | 6.6        | 5.5        | 3.7        | 4.1        | 5.0        | 5.7        | 6.4        | 6.5        | 5.2        | 5.6        | 6.5        | 7.2        | 6.9        | 5.6        | 5.6        |
| Yamba               | 5.0        | 5.1        | 5.9        | 4.9        | 2.7        | 4.0        | 4.1        | 5.2        | 5.9        | 5.5        | 6.7        | 7.4        | 8.8        | 9.0        | 8.3        | 6.4        | 4.3        |

Table 1 indicates the age spread of the populations of the coastal towns in comparison with the national population. What is clear is that there is generally a smaller percentage of the population in the younger age bands in coastal towns compared with the national percentage; and there is a larger percentage at the older end of the coastal population compared with the national figure. The largest population band in the national figures is 40-44 years. However for the towns in the survey -- with the exception of Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Sawtell, Old Bar and Port Macquarie, the largest band is older than the largest national age band. For Ballina the largest band is 45-49 years; for Nelson Bay it is 55-59 years; South West Rocks it is 60-64 years; Woolgoolga and Yamba is 65-69 years; for Camden Haven, Foster/Tuncurry, Harrington, Nambucca Heads the largest band is 70-74 years. What is clear is that the typical population in these coastal towns is older than the national average.

Given this, there are significant and, in some cases, surprising exceptions. Port Macquarie for instance has a large percentage of 10-14 year olds and not surprisingly, a large percentage of 40-44 year olds. Sawtell has a larger percentage of the population in the 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 age groups than the national percentage; but the after-school-age

bands(for instance the percentages in the years 20-34) are significantly lower than the national percentage; however, in the 35-49 years' band the percentage of the population is once again similar to the national figure. What we have in these two towns is a high number of young families, a feature not found in most other coastal towns.

It is also clear from Table 1 that the age profile of the population in coastal towns fall into two groups. Ballina, Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Sawtell have their largest population bands at or near the same level as the Australian national figure, but they still have a very significant percentage of their population in the older bands. Camden Haven, Foster/Tuncurry, Harrington, Nelson Bay, Old Bar, South West Rocks, Woolgoolga and Yamba form the second group whose largest population bands are very definitely and clearly older than the national figure. It may be that Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Sawtell have more people in the younger age bands because those towns (Coffs Harbour and Sawtell are part of a single metropolis) are large enough to support educational and employment opportunities to both retain and attract younger people.

Table 2 further illustrates the reality that the coastal towns, with the exception of Sawtell and Old Bar, have fewer young people than the Australian percentage. Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour are not far behind Sawtell and Old Bar. It should be noted that Woolgoolga, Coffs Harbour and Sawtell are all part of the greater city of Coffs Harbour and, while they are physically distinct and separate from each other, together create a large population base. Some towns, especially Harrington and Camden Haven, have very significantly lower percentages of the population in this younger age group (12.8% and 13.7% respectively).

This picture is further confirmed by Table 3 which shows the percentage of the population aged 15 years and older. Again Sawtell has a significantly lower percentage of the population aged 15 and over, whilst Harrington and Camden Haven have a much higher percentage than is the case nationally.

**Table 2: Percentage of the Population aged 14 years and younger**

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>20.7</b> |
| Ballina          | 16.5        |
| Byron Bay        | 14.1        |
| Camden Haven     | 13.7        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 18.4        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 15.5        |
| Harrington       | 12.8        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 16.4        |
| Nelson Bay       | 17.0        |
| Old Bar          | 20.2        |
| Port Macquarie   | 18.9        |
| Sawtell          | 23.6        |
| South West Rocks | 16.2        |
| Woolgoolga       | 19.8        |
| Yamba            | 16.4        |

**Table 3: Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over**

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>79.26</b> |
| Ballina          | 83.55        |
| Byron Bay        | 85.89        |
| Camden Haven     | 86.29        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 81.63        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 84.55        |
| Harrington       | 87.15        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 83.55        |
| Nelson Bay       | 83.05        |
| Old Bar          | 80.39        |
| Port Macquarie   | 81.09        |
| Sawtell          | 76.39        |
| South West Rocks | 83.82        |
| Woolgoolga       | 80.24        |
| Yamba            | 83.57        |

A population group which is really missing in the coastal towns is the 20-39 age group.

Table 4 illustrates this and indicates that only Byron Bay has a percentage close to the national figure for this age group. The rest of the towns have percentages for this age group much lower than the national percentage. Special reference will be made to Byron Bay at the end of this chapter.

**Table 4: Percentage of the population aged 20-39 years**

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>28.4%</b> |
| Ballina          | 19.9%        |
| Byron Bay        | 26.0%        |
| Camden Haven     | 12.6%        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 23.3%        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 15.8%        |
| Harrington       | 12.1%        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 15.8%        |
| Nelson Bay       | 20.4%        |
| Old Bar          | 18.1%        |
| Port Macquarie   | 19.3%        |
| Sawtell          | 22.0%        |
| South West Rocks | 16.2%        |
| Woolgoolga       | 18.6%        |
| Yamba            | 16.0%        |

The lack of people in the 20-29 age band of the coastal towns is also as illustrated by Table 5.

**Table 5: Percentage of the population aged 20-29 years.**

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>13.5%</b> |
| Ballina          | 9.4%         |
| Byron Bay        | 13.0%        |
| Camden Haven     | 5.1%         |
| Coffs Harbour    | 11.2%        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 7.1%         |
| Harrington       | 4.9%         |
| Nambucca Heads   | 7.0%         |
| Nelson Bay       | 8.7%         |
| Old Bar          | 8.1%         |
| Port Macquarie   | 8.1%         |
| Sawtell          | 9.1%         |
| South West Rocks | 6.5%         |
| Woolgoolga       | 7.8%         |
| Yamba            | 6.7%         |

There is no doubt that some coastal towns have a higher percentage of young people (0-14 years) than the majority of the coastal towns and, in the case of Sawtell and Woolgoolga, higher than the national figure. But it is also clear that there is a major exodus of young adults (20-29) across these towns, probably due a lack of employment and education opportunities. Coffs Harbour, due to its size and developing university, is possibly providing more attraction to keep people in this age group.

Whilst the overall picture for the coastal towns is that the population is older, there are certainly significant exceptions which have been identified above. However, age is really the only category of the census figures where there are some significant differences between the towns. The results for most other criteria indicate quite a uniform situation, enabling a clearer picture of these populations to emerge.

## 2. Coastal Towns have lower income

**Table 6: median weekly individual income. \$**

| <b>Australia</b> | <b>400-499</b> |
|------------------|----------------|
| Ballina          | 300-399        |
| Byron Bay        | 400-499        |
| Camden Haven     | 200-299        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 300-399        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 200-299        |
| Harrington       | 200-299        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 200-299        |
| Nelson Bay       | 300-399        |
| Old Bar          | 300-399        |
| Port Macquarie   | 300-399        |
| Sawtell          | 300-399        |
| South West Rocks | 200-299        |
| Woolgoolga       | 200-299        |
| Yamba            | 200-299        |

Table 6 indicates that, with the exception of Byron Bay, the median individual weekly income in the coastal towns is lower than the median for the nation. Some of the coastal towns have markedly lower individual income: for instance Camden Haven, Foster/Tuncurry, Harrington, Nambucca Heads, South West Rocks, Woolgoolga and Yamba have median weekly individual incomes that are half that of the national median. There is some correlation with these towns in that the income is low and the age of the populations is relatively high. This may be indicative of large numbers of people living on fixed incomes, including some form of benefit.

**Table 7: Median Weekly Household Income \$**

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>800-999</b> |
| Ballina          | 500-599        |
| Byron Bay        | 600-699        |
| Camden Haven     | 400-499        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 600-699        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 500-599        |
| Harrington       | 400-499        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 400-499        |
| Nelson Bay       | 600-699        |
| Old Bar          | 500-599        |
| Port Macquarie   | 600-699        |
| Sawtell          | 500-599        |
| South West Rocks | 400-499        |
| Woolgoolga       | 400-499        |
| Yamba            | 500-599        |

Table 7 continues to show that households in the coastal towns are poorer than the national picture. None of the coastal towns matches the national household income median. Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Nelson Bay are closest, but they are still \$200-299 per week poorer than the national median. Nambucca Heads, Camden Haven, Harrington, South West Rocks and Woolgoolga have median household incomes which are half the national median.

### **3. Coastal Populations are Australian Born**

Another feature of the coastal towns is that a higher percentage of the population in coastal towns was born in Australia indicating a less diverse population in ethnic terms. Multiculturalism is really not a feature of these towns.

Table 8 also indicates that the coastal communities have a higher percentage of Australian citizens than the national figure. Perhaps this mirrors the 'born in Australia' figure, but may also include some immigrants, who have been living longer in Australia, having lived initially in the cities and then moved to the coastal towns later. This longer term residency may result in more people taking Australian citizenship.

**Table 8**

|                  | Percentage Australian born | Percentage Australian Citizens |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>71.8</b>                | <b>87.3</b>                    |
| Ballina          | 85.5                       | 92.6                           |
| Byron Bay        | 63.0                       | 71.0                           |
| Camden Haven     | 85.9                       | 94.6                           |
| Coffs Harbour    | 82.7                       | 90.3                           |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 86.4                       | 94.0                           |
| Harrington       | 89.4                       | 94.5                           |
| Nambucca Heads   | 81.9                       | 91.0                           |
| Nelson Bay       | 77.8                       | 87.6                           |
| Old Bar          | 87.9                       | 94.6                           |
| Port Macquarie   | 83.2                       | 92.1                           |
| Sawtell          | 85.8                       | 92.7                           |
| South West Rocks | 88.3                       | 95.1                           |
| Woolgoolga       | 78.8                       | 91.5                           |
| Yamba            | 86.2                       | 93.9                           |

Table 9 further exemplifies the mono-cultural situation as it shows that the percentage of people in coastal towns who speak only English is substantially higher than the national percentage.

**Table 9: Percentage of the population that speaks only English**

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| Australia        | 79.1 |
| Ballina          | 93.1 |
| Byron Bay        | 73.1 |
| Camden Haven     | 95.5 |
| Coffs Harbour    | 90.7 |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 94.3 |
| Harrington       | 94.5 |
| Nambucca Heads   | 92.3 |
| Nelson Bay       | 87.2 |
| Old Bar          | 95.9 |
| Port Macquarie   | 93.4 |
| Sawtell          | 94.4 |
| South West Rocks | 95.5 |
| Woolgoolga       | 81.6 |
| Yamba            | 95.0 |

#### **4. Coastal Towns have lower employment**

Employment, or rather the lack of it, or lack of participation in employment, is another significant feature of the coastal towns. Table 10 illustrates well the employment picture in these communities.

**Table 10: Employment**

|                     | Full time<br>employment | Part time<br>employment | Not in<br>the<br>labour<br>force | Unemployment<br>rate |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Australia</b>    | <b>28.3%</b>            | <b>14.2%</b>            | <b>27.7%</b>                     | <b>7.2</b>           |
| Ballina             | 17.4%                   | 12.6%                   | 39.2%                            | 12.8                 |
| Byron Bay           | 17.4%                   | 16.8%                   | 23.9%                            | 14.9                 |
| Camden Haven        | 11.4%                   | 9.6%                    | 57.2%                            | 15.2                 |
| Coffs Harbour       | 21.2%                   | 14.4%                   | 34.7%                            | 13                   |
| Foster/Tuncurry     | 16.0%                   | 12.3%                   | 48.2%                            | 11.9                 |
| Harrington          | 12.1%                   | 8.4%                    | 58.1%                            | 15.1                 |
| Nambucca<br>Heads   | 13.9%                   | 10.1%                   | 48.0%                            | 19.8                 |
| Nelson Bay          | 18.8%                   | 14.2%                   | 37.8%                            | 9                    |
| Old Bar             | 18.9%                   | 13.4%                   | 40.5%                            | 10.9                 |
| Port Macquarie      | 19.9%                   | 13.8%                   | 38.9%                            | 10.1                 |
| Sawtell             | 18.4%                   | 14.8%                   | 34.0%                            | 13.7                 |
| South West<br>Rocks | 14.6%                   | 13.0%                   | 47.9%                            | 14                   |
| Woolgoolga          | 12.7%                   | 11.1%                   | 45.6%                            | 21                   |
| Yamba               | 14.9%                   | 11.9%                   | 48.6%                            | 13.3                 |

What is immediately apparent is that a much smaller percentage of the population of the coastal towns is employed compared with the national percentage and there is a much larger percentage of the population not in the labour force in these communities. This is no doubt an indication of the significant number of retired people, but could also indicate that people who may have been unemployed for a long time have withdrawn from the labour market and stopped looking for work. Some communities are stand-outs in this regard. Harrington and Camden Haven have a high percentage of the population not in the labour force. Tables 1 and 3 would suggest that this is an indication of the age of the population of these towns and that there are significant numbers of people who have left the work force due to retirement.

There is also a much higher rate of unemployment in these communities, up to nearly three times the national rate in the case of Nambucca Heads and twice the national rate in Byron Bay, Nambucca Heads, Camden Haven and Sawtell. These factors influence the dynamics of

the populations. First, the coastal communities are poorer than the national average -- this has already been noted in terms of household income above. With fewer people working, more people are dependent on social welfare or invested income, which certainly leads to



a lower household income, and this means that people have less money to spend on housing and other living costs. The combination of a high unemployment rate and low percentage of people in the labour force, for one reason or another probably helps give these towns their ‘slow and relaxed’ atmosphere. It is not just that many of these towns are holidays locations, but also that there is a work ethic missing which would probably be far more evident in populations with higher participation in the work force and lower unemployment.

One of the surprises in these figures is the lower rate of part-time employment in the coastal towns compared to the national rate. Most of the coastal towns are also significant tourist destinations, and it might have been expected that this would have led to more part-time employment in the tourist industry. In fact only Byron Bay exceeded the national rate for part-time employment.

### 5. Coastal populations are more mobile

Another feature of these rapidly growing coastal towns is that a higher percentage of the population lived at a different address five years compared to the national situation. Table 11 illustrates this.

**Table 11**

Percentage of the population with a different address 5 years ago

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>39.5</b> |
| Ballina          | 42.6        |
| Byron Bay        | 44.7        |
| Camden Haven     | 44.3        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 48.8        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 46.2        |
| Harrington       | 40.0        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 40.6        |
| Nelson Bay       | 47.9        |
| Old Bar          | 49.5        |
| Port Macquarie   | 51.2        |
| Sawtell          | 46.4        |
| South West Rocks | 44.5        |
| Woolgoolga       | 41.1        |
| Yamba            | 47.2        |

Whilst across Australia 39.5 % of people had a different address on census night from that of five years before, in coastal communities the rate is significantly higher than that. These towns have large percentages of mobile people. They may be mobile within the community -- having perhaps moved in and used rental accommodation initially whilst locating and purchasing a permanent home, or 'downsizing', due to the death of a partner or increasing age, but it is also very likely that up to half the population did not live in the community at all five years ago. The high mobility rates can lead to real problems for people and a lack of 'community' in the towns.

## 6. Marital Status is different in Coastal Towns

The census figures covering marital status also help us to understand the coastal towns.

Table 12 records the marital status of people aged 15 years and over.

Table 12 Marital Status-Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over

|                  | % Married   | % Separated | % Divorced | % Widowed  | % Never Married |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>51.2</b> | <b>3.41</b> | <b>7.4</b> | <b>6.2</b> | <b>31.8</b>     |
| Ballina          | 48.7        | 3.78        | 10.0       | 11.0       | 26.5            |
| Byron Bay        | 31.5        | 3.78        | 11.9       | 4.8        | 47.9            |
| Camden Haven     | 60.0        | 3.28        | 9.2        | 12.3       | 15.2            |
| Coffs Harbour    | 47.5        | 4.14        | 10.4       | 8.9        | 29.0            |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 57.5        | 3.67        | 8.8        | 10.8       | 19.2            |
| Harrington       | 54.5        | 4.30        | 13.7       | 11.7       | 15.8            |
| Nambucca Heads   | 51.3        | 3.69        | 10.3       | 10.7       | 24.0            |
| Nelson Bay       | 55.9        | 4.00        | 8.0        | 9.2        | 22.8            |
| Old Bar          | 56.3        | 3.19        | 8.8        | 8.9        | 22.8            |
| Port Macquarie   | 56.2        | 4.04        | 9.0        | 9.3        | 21.6            |
| Sawtell          | 52.9        | 4.44        | 9.2        | 7.4        | 26.1            |
| South West Rocks | 61.9        | 3.38        | 8.8        | 8.6        | 17.3            |
| Woolgoolga       | 54.7        | 3.81        | 9.5        | 10.5       | 21.5            |
| Yamba            | 60.5        | 3.88        | 7.7        | 8.4        | 19.6            |

The marital status percentages paint a clear and distinctive picture of the populations of the coastal towns. Generally speaking a greater percentage of people are married in the coastal populations compared with the national figures, with places like Yamba, South West Rocks, and Camden Haven having quite high percentages. The percentage of widowed people in the coastal towns is also higher than the national percentage, which is not surprising given the higher age of the population. An interesting feature of the coastal

towns is the percentage of people who are separated, which is slightly higher than the national figure, but even more so the percentage of people who are divorced, which in Harrington for instance, is nearly double the national percentage. This may reflect the situation of people who are divorcing and also moving -- perhaps as part of a 'sea change' or an attempt to 'start again' in a different place. Overall more of the coastal population is married than the national percentage, more likely to have been married at some stage, but also more likely to be divorced. The higher widowed and divorced percentages may also influence the lower household incomes seen above in table 7, as perhaps more people are living alone.

## 7. Coastal Towns have more Christians

**Table 13: Religion- Percentage of the Population**

|                  | Christian    | Non-Christian | No Religion  |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>67.3%</b> | <b>4.8%</b>   | <b>15.3%</b> |
| Ballina          | 76.7%        | 0.9%          | 11.7%        |
| Byron Bay        | 42.3%        | 4.4%          | 20.4%        |
| Camden Haven     | 80.1%        | 0.6%          | 10.2%        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 73.4%        | 1.5%          | 13.1%        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 80.6%        | 0.5%          | 9.9%         |
| Harrington       | 84.0%        | 0.7%          | 8.0%         |
| Nambucca Heads   | 74.8%        | 1.2%          | 11.6%        |
| Nelson Bay       | 73.0%        | 1.0%          | 12.2%        |
| Old Bar          | 79.4%        | 0.6%          | 13.1%        |
| Port Macquarie   | 78.5%        | 1.0%          | 11.1%        |
| Sawtell          | 75.7%        | 0.7%          | 13.1%        |
| South West Rocks | 79.6%        | 0.4%          | 12.1%        |
| Woolgoolga       | 64.2%        | 14.0%         | 10.6%        |
| Yamba            | 77.6%        | 0.5%          | 12.2%        |

Compared with the national figures, more people in the coastal populations describe themselves as Christians than is the situation nationally. The one significant exception is Woolgoolga where there is a substantial Sikh population which contributes heavily to the 14% of the population who identified as non-Christian. The higher Christian identity in the coastal towns may be due to the older age of the population, with older people continuing the traditional adherence to Christianity. It also might be influenced by the domination in the population of people with an Anglo-Celtic background.

Also noticeable is the very low percentage of people who describe themselves as non-Christian, that is, a member of a non-Christian religion. With the exception of Woolgoolga and Byron Bay, the percentage of the population describing themselves as non-Christian is negligible. Again this reflects the older and more ‘Anglo’ population of the coastal towns.

### ...And more Anglicans

**Table 14: Denomination**

|                  | Anglican     | Catholic     | Uniting      | Presbyterian/reformed | Pentecostal |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>20.5%</b> | <b>26.4%</b> | <b>6.58%</b> | <b>3.4%</b>           | <b>1.0%</b> |
| Ballina          | 30.5%        | 26.2%        | 6.74%        | 7.0%                  | 0.9%        |
| Byron Bay        | 15.0%        | 14.9%        | 4.62%        | 3.2%                  | 0.5%        |
| Camden Haven     | 39.8%        | 20.2%        | 9.43%        | 5.3%                  | 0.2%        |
| Coffs Harbour    | 28.3%        | 25.0%        | 6.25%        | 5.6%                  | 1.8%        |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 38.1%        | 24.1%        | 7.62%        | 4.7%                  | 0.6%        |
| Harrington       | 42.9%        | 23.9%        | 9.23%        | 4.9%                  | 0.0%        |
| Nambucca Heads   | 32.5%        | 22.6%        | 7.13%        | 6.5%                  | 0.9%        |
| Nelson Bay       | 30.0%        | 25.2%        | 7.21%        | 4.8%                  | 0.7%        |
| Old Bar          | 35.5%        | 23.5%        | 8.29%        | 5.6%                  | 0.4%        |
| Port Macquarie   | 31.8%        | 26.0%        | 7.63%        | 5.6%                  | 0.9%        |
| Sawtell          | 30.4%        | 24.7%        | 6.81%        | 5.0%                  | 0.2%        |
| South West Rocks | 35.3%        | 24.9%        | 8.60%        | 5.6%                  | 0.6%        |
| Woolgoolga       | 31.0%        | 17.8%        | 6.09%        | 4.5%                  | 0.4%        |
| Yamba            | 33.5%        | 25.1%        | 7.3%         | 7.0%                  | 0.9%        |

Table 14 further highlights the domination of the population by people from an “Anglo” background, as most Anglicans in Australia are. In most of the coastal towns included in the study, the percentage of Anglicans was higher, in some places significantly – for example, Harrington with almost double the national figure and Camden Haven not far behind. In all the towns, the percentage of Roman Catholics was lower than the national percentage, significantly in the case of Woolgoolga and Camden Haven, but much less so in Ballina where the percentage is almost the same as the national percentage at 26.2%. The percentage of Presbyterian/Reformed church members in the coastal towns was also higher than the national percentage, double the national percentage in the case of Ballina and Yamba and the percentage of Uniting Church members was higher than the national average in all the towns with the exception of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga, again

pointing to the “Anglo” nature of these towns. Also noticeable is the small percentage of people who describe themselves as Pentecostal. From personal knowledge of these towns I suspect strongly that the figures do not accurately reflect the actual number of people attending Pentecostal churches. It maybe that some people who attend Pentecostal churches have described themselves as ‘Christian’ or perhaps have placed themselves in their ‘former’ or ‘birth’ denomination.

## 8. Coastal Towns Have Lower Levels of Formal Education

**Table 15 Highest Level of Schooling-% of the population 15 years and over**

|                  | Yr 8 or less | Yr 9 or equiv | Yr 10 or equiv | Yr 11 or equiv | Yr 12 or equiv |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Australia</b> | <b>7.3%</b>  | <b>5.9%</b>   | <b>5.9%</b>    | <b>7.5%</b>    | <b>29.6%</b>   |
| Ballina          | 10.5%        | 10.5%         | 10.5%          | 5.2%           | 20.7%          |
| Byron Bay        | 3.7%         | 4.6%          | 4.6%           | 5.6%           | 31.3%          |
| Camden Haven     | 13.7%        | 13.9%         | 13.9%          | 4.6%           | 14.9%          |
| Coffs Harbour    | 9.0%         | 9.6%          | 9.6%           | 5.4%           | 21.6%          |
| Foster/Tuncurry  | 11.1%        | 12.7%         | 12.7%          | 4.8%           | 16.8%          |
| Harrington       | 16.7%        | 16.2%         | 16.2%          | 2.8%           | 11.9%          |
| Nambucca Heads   | 13.1%        | 12.2%         | 12.2%          | 4.7%           | 15.6%          |
| Nelson Bay       | 7.6%         | 9.2%          | 9.2%           | 5.0%           | 21.7%          |
| Old Bar          | 7.3%         | 10.3%         | 10.3%          | 4.2%           | 17.8%          |
| Port Macquarie   | 8.4%         | 10.1%         | 10.1%          | 5.2%           | 21.5%          |
| Sawtell          | 8.0%         | 9.6%          | 9.6%           | 5.0%           | 18.6%          |
| South West Rocks | 11.5%        | 12.2%         | 12.2%          | 4.7%           | 16.2%          |
| Woolgoolga       | 12.5%        | 10.5%         | 10.5%          | 4.5%           | 17.3%          |
| Yamba            | 9.9%         | 10.7%         | 10.7%          | 5.3%           | 19.9%          |

Finally, the age that people left school gives some further indication of the population in the coastal towns. Clearly, almost all the coastal towns have populations where a greater percentage of people left school early when compared to the national figures. This has probably to do with the era in which the residents grew up, in that there was a tendency in earlier years for fewer high school students to finish year 12, but instead leave school and start work. People who are in their 70s now were at school at a time when it was legal to leave school at 14 years of age. It is clear from the statistics that many did. Overall, the percentage of people aged fifteen years and over who finished year 10 or earlier is higher than the national figure and the percentage that finished year 11 and 12 is lower than the

national figure. It is reasonable therefore to say that populations of the coastal towns are less formally educated than the national average.

### **Byron Bay -- An exception to the rule**

One significant coastal town which I have excluded from the study of the church in coastal towns is Byron Bay. I have done this because the census figures for Byron Bay paint quite a different picture from that of the other towns along the NSW Mid and North Coast areas. Even though Sawtell has a population which is markedly younger than other coastal towns, the other demographic features of Sawtell are consistent with the general coastal picture. Byron Bay though, is certainly different in almost all the categories studied. Religious affiliation is a good example. Instead of having a higher percentage of people identifying themselves as Christian, as is the case for most of the coastal towns, Byron Bay had a very much lower percentage. The national figure is 68%, while Byron Bay has only 42.3%. Whilst the percentage of the population identifying as non-Christian in Byron Bay is almost the same as the national figure (4.4% compared to 4.8%), the percentage of people identifying as having no religion is much higher than the national figure (20.4% compared to 15.3%), and is almost double that of most of the other coastal towns. Significantly the percentage of people in Byron Bay who identified themselves as Anglican is not only lower than the national figure (15% compared to 20.5%), but is also much lower than most of the other coastal towns which are around 30%. This difference may be accounted for by Byron Bay's 'alternative life style' focus.

Byron Bay's age distribution is quite different from either the national figures or the majority of the coastal towns, with a large population band between the ages of 40 and 49. Byron Bay has 16% of its population in this range, compared with 14.6% across the nation and 13.6% at Ballina, only 25 kilometres to the South. Salt suggests that this is because in the 70s baby boomers came to Byron Bay for the Aquarius Festival and did not ever leave.<sup>2</sup> The 1996 census revealed that Byron Bay is Australia's leading boomer town, with 28% of the population born between 1946 and 1961.<sup>3</sup> Byron Bay also has a substantially lower percentage of its population not in the workforce with 23.9%, which is closer to the national figure at 27.7%, but substantially lower than Ballina which has 39.2%.

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<sup>2</sup> Salt, *The Big Shift*, 90.

<sup>3</sup> Salt, *The Big Shift*, 87.

Byron Bay also differed from the other coastal towns in terms of marital status. Nationally 51.2% of people were married. The coastal towns' figures were very similar or greater than this, but not Byron Bay where only 31.5 % of the people were married. The percentage of divorced people in Byron Bay was substantially higher than the national figure (11.9% compared with 7.4%), and substantially higher than most of the other coastal towns. In Byron Bay 47.9% of the population had never married, compared to 31.8 % nationally and 26.5% in places like Ballina. People in Byron Bay also left school later than all the other coastal towns, indicating a higher level of formal education. The median weekly individual income for Byron Bay was actually higher than the Australian median and significantly higher than for the other coastal towns. These factors make Byron Bay such a different population that it is fruitless to include it in this study as I look for influences on effective ministry in coastal towns.

### **In Summary**

It is clear that the move to the beach by huge numbers of Australians has created very distinctive populations in the coastal towns. There is no doubt that the populations of the coastal towns in the study are different -- they are older, with fewer people especially in the 20-39 years band; They are poorer, left school earlier, have higher mobility, less ethnic diversity, and more people who describe themselves as Christian. There are certainly variations between the towns, with some exhibiting more or fewer of the features. There are also some significant exceptions such as Sawtell which, in terms of age-range in the population, is much more like the national average than other coastal towns. However, across all the categories used in this analysis the general picture of these towns remains true.

With the continuing growth of coastal towns seeming to be assured, some major issues exist for the church, especially how the church ministers effectively in these populations. Before that issue can be addressed however, attention must be given to the question -- What is the task of the church? This is the subject of the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3: The Mission of the Church**

If we are going to examine the issue of “Being effective church in rapidly growing coastal towns”, we will need to be involved in some kind of assessment of churches in rapidly growing coastal towns. Before one can assess how effective a church is, it is vital to know what the church is supposed to be doing. Therefore in this chapter the issue being addressed is: What is the role or mission of the church? In seeking to answer the question this chapter will address: the early church’s self understanding, the crucial role that the kingdom of God plays in the ministry of Jesus as understood by the early church, and recorded in the New Testament, the contemporary debate concerning the mission of the church and especially the debate over the priority of evangelism, and the implications for the life of the church today if the notion of the kingdom of God is taken seriously. The mission of the Church has been the subject of much recent writing and in order to convey some of the importance of this writing and the variety of opinion I have included significant numbers of direct quotes along with my own observations.

#### **The Early Church**

In terms of understanding the role of the church today, it is important to see how the early church understood Jesus' own faith, as well as his teaching for his followers, both in terms of their lives as individuals and as members of the community of his disciples.

This task of course is not as simple as reading the New Testament accounts and drawing a completely uncritical picture of Jesus’ ministry. It is clear that the literary style of the New Testament has variations within it, and includes texts that we call ‘gospels’-- writings which purport to be accounts of the life of Jesus, as well as letters from church leaders to groups of Christians and letters exchanged between groups of Christians. The primary source of information about Jesus does certainly come from the four canonical gospels, but these writings have themselves been through a process of refinement and selection. There are for instance other ‘gospels’ that are not included in the New Testament, such as the Gospel of Thomas. There are also other classical documents such



as the writings of Josephus which confirm some aspects of the gospel writings about Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The variations in style and content of the four gospels in the New Testament also point to the fact that they are not simply eye-witness accounts of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The gospels were most likely written well after the death and resurrection of Jesus<sup>2</sup>, recording at best the memories of eye-witnesses. They may well be collections of stories handed down through the church, or writings using source documents which are no longer in existence.<sup>3</sup> It is plain that Luke's gospel for instance was not written by an eyewitness. The author of the gospel speaks of the 'handing on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word' (Lk 1:2), so it is clear that we are dealing with processed information. The content of the gospels may well have been influenced by the context of the church itself, so that some stories were included because they were appropriate to the situation of the church at the time the gospel was finalised. Some stories may have been modified or the emphasis changed for the same reason. That there was some modification is clear since at times the same incident is reported quite differently. For instance the events of the Last Supper are reported differently in the four gospels. The words said by Jesus as he gave the disciples the bread and wine differ and John's gospel, whilst certainly recording the last meal Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion, does not include an "institution of the Lord's Supper" at all.

Another factor in seeking information about Jesus' ministry in the gospels is that the authors of the gospels were not neutral observers but were supporters of Jesus. John 20:30 helpfully notes that not all of the things Jesus did are recorded in the gospel, but that what is included is so, to achieve a purpose. The stated purpose of John's gospel is that "you come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Chapter III of Book XVIII of 'The Antiquities of the Jews' in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, translated by William Whiston. (Halifax, Milner and Sowerby 1853). 392.

<sup>2</sup> For instance Fitzmyer suggests that Luke was written in 'a decade toward the end of the first century A.D.' in *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 14. Brown says that 90-110 is the most likely period for the writing of the Gospel of John in R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, Francis J. Maloney ed. (New York: Doubleday 2003) 215.

<sup>3</sup> The two source theory is the most widely accepted solution today to the issue of variations between the synoptic gospels. This theory argues that the earliest synoptic gospel is Mark and that it was used as a source for Matthew and Luke, and that Matthew and Luke also have access to a further source usually known as 'Q'. Matthew and Luke also have access to material that is peculiar to each, and this is usually known as "M" and "L" material respectively. See Christopher M. Tuckett, "Jesus and the Gospels", in *The New Interpreters Bible*, Vol.VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) 71-86.

may have life in his name” (Jn 20:30-31). Luke’s gospel is similar in that it has a clearly stated purpose -- so that the most excellent Theophilus may know the truth concerning the things about which Theophilus had been instructed (Lk 1:4).

Another issue is that the gospels were written ‘post resurrection’, so all the references to sayings and actions of Jesus which the gospels have occurring before his death and resurrection, must have at least, the likelihood of a post -- resurrection filter. That is, the events before the resurrection are interpreted from the vantage point of the authors who, so to speak, already know the end of the story.

Given the complexities of reading the gospels it is still fact that the four gospels contain material which is substantially similar, and which does allow us to achieve at least some idea of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The gospels continue to be the major source of our knowledge of Jesus, and so need to be taken seriously, although not uncritically.

Bearing in mind the complexities surrounding the gospel accounts, one of the very significant (some would say the most significant) areas of focus that Jesus had in terms of his own faith, teaching and practice, which is reported across the three synoptic gospels, was the *basileia*, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Heaven.

### **Kingdom of God**

According to the gospel writers, Jesus’ own view was that he had come to announce the kingdom. For instance: “The time is fulfilled, and kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mk1:15); and, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43). Wright comments: “We have substantial historical ground under our feet in saying that Jesus’ characteristic message was the announcement of the kingdom”.<sup>4</sup> Dych calls the reign of God ‘the keynote of Jesus ministry’<sup>5</sup>. Fuellenbach is even stronger when he says “the most basic historical fact of Jesus’ life is the symbol which dominated all his preaching, the reality that gave meaning to all his activities, that is, *the kingdom of God*”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 227.

<sup>5</sup> William Dych, *Thy Kingdom Come-Jesus and the Reign of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 19.

<sup>6</sup> John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God-The Message of Jesus Today* (New York Orbis, 1995), 3.

The phrase 'kingdom of God' is most commonly used in the synoptic gospels, but there are sufficient examples of its use in the other writings of the New Testament to indicate that, whilst it is not so common in those writings, the understanding of the reality of the kingdom formed a vital part of the theological background for the early church. It is as though the New Testament writers have Jesus proclaiming the kingdom and the early church living with the coming and present kingdom a reality. For example, Romans 14:17, "For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"; or 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God"; or James 2:5 "Listen my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him"?

One debate has been over how to translate the Greek *basileia tou theou*. Traditionally the English translation has been 'kingdom of God', however it has been suggested that because of other associations it might be better to use the term 'reign' instead of 'kingdom'.<sup>7</sup> C.S. Song argues that:

To render the Greek phrase *basileia tou theou* into the "kingdom of God" does not correctly express Jesus message of God's reign. It conveys notions of national territory, feudal system and monarchical structure, in a word a culture of authoritarianism.<sup>8</sup>

One of the very real issues with the use of "kingdom" is that this title carries the masculine. This is certainly a problem for those who would seek a more inclusive translation of *basileia*.

Van der Ven seeks to avoid the difficulty of an English translation by using the Greek *basileia*. He suggests that the translation 'kingdom of God' or 'monarchy of God' are both problematic because they suggest:

An authoritarian, despotic, monarchical regime in which the emphasis is on obedience and fulfilment of duty on the part of the subjects, rather than on the king to bring happiness and joy.<sup>9</sup>

However recent English translations including the New Revised Standard Version continue to use 'kingdom'. Although 'reign' is no doubt a better term because it does not have the notion of a physical territory implicit in 'kingdom'. To say that 'reign' does not

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 45.

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Song, *Jesus and the Reign of God* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1993), 39.

<sup>9</sup> Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology-An Empirical Approach* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), 69.

carry with it the culture of authoritarianism depends very much on the experience of the hearer. Instead of arguing the toss about the translation of *basileia*, perhaps a better way is to explore the meaning Jesus gave to this reality. Consequently I will (with the NRSV), use the term ‘kingdom of God’.

### **The Kingdom of God and Jesus**

Coming to grips with what exactly the kingdom of God was for Jesus is not a simple matter. Nowhere in the gospels is the kingdom defined. Instead the kingdom is spoken of and illustrated with parables, and also with powerful actions. It is clear from the gospel accounts that Jesus had come to announce the kingdom ( Lk 4:43). The kingdom was obviously central to him, so his teaching needs to be seen in this context. His teaching was not some new philosophy, but announced the reality of the coming kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Jesus taught those who wished to follow him: that the kingdom was *at hand* (Mk 15), how to prepare for the coming kingdom (Mt 4:17; Jn 3:3, 5), what the kingdom is like (Mt 13, Mk 4:26-29), and what it means to be members of the kingdom (Mt 5, 6, 7; Lk 6). He did things which showed its reality already present and breaking into the old order (Lk 10:9). He taught people to pray for its coming (Mt 6:10). Jesus taught by word and deed so that people could begin to come to grips with the new order announced by the kingdom, and be ready for its future fulfilment as well as live in its present reality.

Although incomplete, as the kingdom came into fullness it would be marked by a ‘turning upside down’ of many of the ‘norms’ of human society. This is illustrated by the canticle of praise Luke has Mary offer: “he has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Lk 1:52-53).<sup>11</sup> As the reality of the kingdom was lived out, humble service of others was applauded, forgiveness was to be without limit, prostitutes and tax collectors were entering the kingdom of God before the religious people, turning the other cheek was an appropriate response, relationships were to be faithful, ‘other focused’ love was the key, the Holy Spirit was being poured out on all, ordinary people were filled with a

<sup>10</sup> Song makes the point in *Jesus and the Reign of God* that the term ‘kingdom of God’ was not new and novel and already in the religious vocabulary of Jesus’ Jewish hearers (19). N.T. Wright also comments in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, that ‘the kingdom of God’ was already a familiar phrase to Jesus’ Jewish hearers and was simply a Jewish way of talking about Israel’s God becoming king. When this God became king, the whole world, the world of space and time would at last be put to rights. (203).

<sup>11</sup> Song in *Jesus and the Reign of God* refers to the magnificat as the ‘song of God’s reign’. He says ‘it is the anthem of God’s presence. It is the hymn of God’s salvation’, 235.

new boldness to tell of the glories of God, death was ending, sickness was healed, the excluded were included, people imprisoned by sin, injustice and oppression were set free, a radical godliness was called for; and long established barriers between people were broken down.

Verkyl has attempted to define the kingdom of God in this way:

The Kingdom of God is the new order which began in Christ and which will be completed by him, wherein all relationships will be put right and not only that between God and man (sic), but also those between people, nations, sexes, generations and races and that between man (sic) and nature.<sup>12</sup>

Verkyl's definition is helpful because it highlights the very wide-ranging effect of the coming kingdom. Not only will relationships between humans be put right, but indeed the whole cosmos will be affected when the new order replaces the old.

It is vitally important to recognise that the process of announcing the kingdom was not just one of words -- teaching and preaching. Jesus' actions also showed what the kingdom of God would be like and what life would be like for those who embraced the reality of the coming kingdom. In Luke 4, Jesus quotes from and changes slightly the words of 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 (Is 61:1f.; Lk 4:18-19).

Jesus then applies this to himself when he states: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). When John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to enquire whether Jesus was the 'one to come' (Mt 11:3), Matthew has Jesus responding in terms of his actions -- the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them (Mt 11:5). Certainly in his ministry Jesus' actions showed the in-breaking of the kingdom -- the sick were healed, the dead were brought back to life, and those oppressed by evil were set free.

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<sup>12</sup> J.Verkyl quoted in Orlando Costas, "The Integrity of Mission" ( Harper and Row 1979), in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sudgen (eds), *Mission as Transformation*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999), 40.

### **The Meaning of “the Kingdom of God”**

The membership of the kingdom was also an issue both in terms of Jesus’ teaching and actions. Jesus spent time with the poor and included the excluded and unclean, often healing the unclean and making them clean again, and so able to re-join society. G.G. Soares-Prabhu comments:

A large part of his ministry consisted of such activities as his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, as well as his healings and exorcisms. In his communion with the outcast, Jesus lives out the kingdom, demonstrating in action God’s unconditional love for undeserving sinners.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus’ table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners provides a very potent example of the ‘turning upside down’ of normal conventions that will come and has come with the arrival of the kingdom in Jesus. A key to the gospel is grace, and Jesus’ ministry with people the religious leaders certainly would have thought were undeserving of God’s love, spoke clearly of the kingdom Jesus had come to inaugurate.

### **The Kingdom-Word and Deed**

Interestingly, it was Jesus’ actions that often provided very potent opportunities for his teaching. Some examples of this are: the healing of the paralysed man recorded in Matthew 9 and Luke 5, where Jesus uses the situation of the paralysed man and his healing to declare his authority to forgive sins; Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (Mt 9:10-12), which provided an opportunity for the Pharisees to question Jesus’ disciples about Jesus’ choice of meal companions, and in response Jesus pointed to one the central features of the membership of the kingdom -- he had come to call not the righteous but sinners; and the healing of the demon-possessed man (Mt 12:22ff.), which again drew a challenge from the Pharisees and a response from Jesus stating his authority.

There are also examples of the lack of separation between teaching and actions. For instance, in Luke 4 verse 32 the response of the people to Jesus’ teaching is recorded as: “they were astounded at his teaching because he spoke with authority”. Later in the same encounter Jesus ordered an evil spirit to leave a man (v.35). The next verse comments: “All the people were amazed and said to each other, ‘What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!’”. In this incident it

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<sup>13</sup> G.G. Soares-Prabhu, “The Kingdom of God: Jesus Vision of a New Society” in *The Indian Church: The Struggle for a New Society*, D.S. Amolorpavadass (ed), (Bangalore: NBCLC 1981) p584 quoted in Fuellenbach, 4.

seems that the teaching and the action both worked together to demonstrate Jesus authority and call forth a response.

There are also incidents which are recorded as having no teaching component at all, just the action, for instance the cleansing of the leper (Mt 8:1-4), the healing of many people at Peter's house ( Mt 8:14-16), the healing of the sick (Mt 14:14), the healing of many people ( Mt 15:29-31), the healing of a blind man at Bethesda ( Mk 8:22-26), and the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:11-15). This reality -- the vital place of deed or action in the process of proclamation of the kingdom of God by Jesus is a real challenge to much of the western church which has separated word and deed, and often focuses on preaching and teaching in words as the most important or effective way to proclaim the kingdom. It is really interesting that the early church obviously accepted the emphasis both on word and deed, and indicated this through the gospel accounts of Jesus ministry. For the Jesus of the gospels, both words and deeds of power or compassion were an integral part of the process of announcing the kingdom, and certainly for his audience Jesus' actions apparently gave his teaching even more authority and illustrated his words in ways that astounded, and at times caused either scandal or drew responses of faith.

### **The Kingdom-Now and Not Yet**

Another feature of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, was the 'now' but 'not now' sense to the reality of Jesus' teaching and actions. The Kingdom was at hand and there were signs of its reality, but it had not come fully yet. The disciples were to continue to pray "your kingdom come". Instead of the new age replacing the old, the new had invaded the old without totally displacing it.<sup>14</sup> 'The promise of a time when God will dwell with us and wipe away every tear, when death will be no more, when mourning, crying and pain will disappear (Rev 21), is still to be fulfilled'.<sup>15</sup> However the presence of the kingdom in the person of Jesus was also part of the current reality.

The authors of *Missional Church* comment:

Although the wholeness or consummation of God's reign awaits Christ's coming in glory, even now in the midst of the brokenness of human life the Spirit enables faith in Jesus Christ and thus bring believers to new life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Samuel and Sugden, "*Mission as Transformation-A theology of the Whole Gospel*", 29.

<sup>15</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 154.

<sup>16</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 144.

This ‘now but not now’ aspect to the kingdom must have provided encouragement and challenge to Jesus’ disciples in the post-Pentecost era. On the one hand, God was bringing something entirely new to birth, and there was clear evidence that the world as they had known it was changing, and yet the change was not complete and so they continued to live with much of the ‘old’ world still. In the midst of the transition however, the Spirit continues to work, bringing faith and new life.

### **The Kingdom and the Role of the Church**

Whilst some understanding of the importance of the kingdom of God for Jesus is interesting in its own right, it becomes vital when considering the mission or purpose of the church. This is because it is clear from the gospel accounts that the church understood that the followers of Jesus would continue the process of announcing the kingdom -- doing what Jesus had been doing, and in fact, that Jesus' followers would do even greater things than he had done (John 14:12).

There are a number of examples of the understanding that Jesus’ followers would continue his mission. For instance, Jesus called people to follow him and told some that they would be fishers of people not just people who caught fish (Mt 4:19). In the course of his ministry Jesus sent out both the twelve recorded in Mark 6, and the seventy-two recorded in Luke 10. Both groups were sent out to do the kind of things Jesus had been doing -- “they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them”, (Mark 6:12, 13).

Luke has the sending out of the seventy-two immediately following Jesus' request that they “ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest”. Among the instructions for the seventy-two are: “whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:8, 9).

The four gospels also each record “commissionings” of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection. Matthew has Jesus state:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age (Mt 28:19, 20).



For Mark the disciples' commissioning is:

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned, (Mark 16:15).

Luke's Gospel has a two-part commissioning beginning in Luke 24 which has Jesus saying:

Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:46-48).

This is continued in Acts 1:8, where the risen Christ says to the eleven:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

John's Gospel has the risen Christ saying to the disciples, "As the father has sent me, so I send you. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Jn 20:21-23).

There is no doubt that in the mind of the early church community, as represented by the gospels, Jesus had 'sent' the church to continue the ministry of proclaiming in word and deed, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the coming kingdom. For Matthew the task was to make disciples, in other words, people who shared Jesus attitudes, priorities and theology. For Mark the task is to proclaim the 'good news'. Mark's gospel begins with 'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God', and proceeds to 'roll out' the ministry of Jesus – both word and deed, focussed on the kingdom of God. For Luke the followers of Jesus were to be 'witnesses', in other words representing Jesus to those who had not seen him. For John, the disciples were 'sent as Jesus was sent'. In each case the 'commissioning' and the task the disciples is given focuses very much on Jesus and his priorities. The church is to continue what Jesus had begun.

### **Kingdom and Discipleship**

The idea that the disciples of Jesus were to continue his mission is certainly clear for the gospel writers and the early church. The Acts of the Apostles has the apostles preaching, healing and freeing people from evil (e.g. Acts 5:12-16). Bosch says that:

Harnack in his book, through meticulous research pieced together a remarkable picture of the early Christians involvement with the poor, orphans, widows, the sick, mine workers, prisoners, slaves and travellers. The new language on the lips of Christians, according to Harnack was the language of love. This was practised not as a stratagem to lure outsiders to the church but simply as a natural expression of faith in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that the gospels contain an expectation that the followers of Jesus will continue Jesus' ministry of announcing the kingdom of God in word and deed. What is particularly startling in both Jesus' ministry and his expectations for his followers is just how different the kingdom was to the normal expectations and rules of society. The kingdom was certainly 'good news for the poor', but also effectively tipped upside down the expectations especially of religious people. To respond to the kingdom requires therefore not only faith but also repentance (Mk 1:15). Love of neighbour even extended to one's enemies, even the occupying Roman army. Graham Cray in *Mission as Transformation* suggests that at the heart of Jesus' ministry was the proclamation of the Kingdom of God as good news to the poor (Lk 4:18, 7:22):<sup>18</sup>

In his (Jesus) reply to John the Baptist, the fact that the Good News is preached to the poor is of greater significance even than that the dead are raised. The poor implies the great mass of ordinary people who were economically poor, socially powerless and regarded by such as the Pharisees as outside of God's kingdom. The Kingdom becomes good news now, not just the promise of Good News in a future life. The sick are given back the possibility of an active role in society, the demonized are set free and restored to normal relationships, cleansed lepers come back into their community. Those experiencing untimely bereavement have their loved ones and bread winners restored. Jesus' table fellowship of tax collectors and sinners was the foretaste of their place in the messianic banquet.

The degree of challenge to the norm by Jesus was probably one of the reasons for the opposition which he and later his followers faced. Jesus was a challenge especially to those in power and particularly religious power, for whom the rules and customs of the community 'worked'.

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<sup>17</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Graham Cray, "A Theology of the Kingdom" in Samuel and Sudgen, *Mission as Transformation*, 30.

### The Kingdom and the Church Today

So what does this mean for the church today? It is first important to acknowledge that the church has understood its mission in different ways over the centuries. Phan notes, from a Roman Catholic perspective, that prior to Vatican II at least, mission was:<sup>19</sup>

1. The church's work for the salvation of souls.
2. Carried out for the benefit of pagans abroad.
3. Mainly by priests, religious brothers, nuns and specially commissioned lay folk, mostly from Europe and America.
4. With the financial and spiritual support of the laity back home.
5. By planting the church in these 'mission fields'.

Bosch also traces a change in the understanding of the mission of the church with six different paradigms of missiology: primitive Christianity, the patristic period, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the ecumenical era.<sup>20</sup> Meade also sees a change in paradigms over the centuries and uses the terms 'Apostolic' and 'Christendom' to describe different eras of the church and understandings that the church had of its purpose and mode of operation.<sup>21</sup>

Through history the understanding of the mission of the church has been influenced by the context in which it finds itself.<sup>22</sup> This is to be expected. Christianity is not a 'once for all' delivered in a pre-packaged form and suitable in the same way for all time and times. Jesus was good news as he dealt with people in their situation in Palestine. The incarnation is a central understanding of Christian theology, and the 'enfleshment' of the Son of God in the culture and the context of the day continues to be a vital part of our Christian understanding and mission. This is one of the reasons why it is important to study the culture of rapidly growing coastal towns as was noted in Chapter One.

This reality makes understanding the culture a vital part of answering the question: what is the purpose of the church today? It is plain that the kingdom of God has not yet come in its fullness, and that we continue to pray -- 'your kingdom come'. And the church does that with hope. By word and action in Galilee, Golgotha and the empty tomb, Jesus

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Phan, Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church: What for, To Whom, By Whom, With Whom, and How? Theology@MCAuley. Available from [http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/theology/Issue 2Peter\\_Phan.htm](http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/theology/Issue%20Peter_Phan.htm).

<sup>20</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 189-190.

<sup>21</sup> Loren Meade *Once and Future Church*

<sup>22</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schoeder, *Constants in Mission A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 396.

powerfully and visibly demonstrated God's reign over all of life. That reign is now powerfully among us and will reach its fulfilment at Christ's return.<sup>23</sup> It is plain that the church cannot build or extend the kingdom: the church does not pray "let us realize your kingdom"; it prays rather "may your kingdom come."<sup>24</sup>

The Church looks toward the kingdom of God, waits for it, proclaiming it to the world.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that the primary concern in Jesus ministry was the kingdom of God. It is clear, as Kirk says that "there is good enough evidence for Jesus' belief that those whom he called to be with him would continue his mission of proclaiming and performing God's rule on earth".<sup>26</sup>

Newbigin comments that:<sup>27</sup>

Jesus manifestly did not intend to leave behind him simply a body of teaching. If that had been his intention he would surely have written a book and we should have something like the Koran instead of the book we have. What he did was to prepare a community chosen to be the bearer of the secret of the kingdom.

The key for the church in these days is to see what it means for the church to be the bearer of this secret.

Many writers are seeking to look at the scriptures and see what it is the church is being sent to do in these days. In other words attempting to put into contemporary language the essence of sharing Christ's ministry of announcing the kingdom. I have included references to a number of authors to give some idea of the work that has been done in this direction. Kirk suggests that "The Church continues to be 'a community in response to the *Missio Dei*, bearing witness to God's activity in the world by its communication of the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed".<sup>28</sup> The contributors to *Mission as Transformation*, suggest the church *represents* the reign of God. They suggest that the word "*represent*" can carry two different senses -- a passive and an active sense. The passive sense indicates that one thing stands for another. In contrast, the active meaning of 'represent' indicates the way a person may be given authority to act on another's behalf, or to care for another's interests, such as a lawyer representing her client. Both the active

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel and Sudgen, *Mission as Transformation*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 92.

<sup>25</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew J. Kirk, *What is Mission?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 133.

<sup>28</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission?* 31.

and the passive meanings are intended when it is said of the church that it represents the reign of God.<sup>29</sup> The same contributors also suggest that the purpose of missional communities is to be a source of radical hope, to witness to the new identity and vision, the new way of life that has become a social reality in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

Küng says that the church should preach not warnings of doom, but the message of salvation, not menaces but the joyful good news, not a declaration of war but words of peace. For him the Church exists not for the pious and righteous, but for sinners and the godless. It must not judge and condemn for all the gravity of its message, but heal, forgive, save.<sup>31</sup> Charles van Engan suggests that:

(Mission) is the people of God, intentionally crossing barriers by any and all acceptable means, from church to non-church, faith to non-faith, to proclaim in word and deed the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, through the churches participation in God's mission reconciling people to God, to each other and to the world, gathering them into the church and discipling them to become responsible members of Christ's church through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit, with a view to the transformation of the world as a sign of the coming kingdom of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>32</sup>

By way of summing up the Church's mission for today, Kirk states:

Following in the way of Christ quite simply (and yet with many obstacles to overcome) requires communicating the good news of Jesus and the kingdom (evangelism), insisting on the full participation of all people in God's gifts of life and well-being (justice), providing the resources to meet people's needs (compassion) and never using lethal violence as a means of doing God's will (the practice of using non- violence as a means of change).<sup>33</sup>

### **Priority in Mission**

What is clear about much contemporary writing about the mission of the church is the apparent rediscovery of the importance of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus, and a holistic understanding therefore of the work of the church. Kirk and van Engan are both good examples of that in that they speak of the work of the church embracing both evangelism and deeds of justice and compassion which point to the transformation God is

<sup>29</sup> Samuel and Sudgen, *Mission as Transformation*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel and Sudgen, *Mission as Transformation*, 145.

<sup>31</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 100.

<sup>32</sup> Charles van Engan, "Specialisation/Integration in Mission Education", *Missiological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Book, the Circle, and the Sandals*, J Dudley Woodberry, Charles van Engan, and Edgar Elliston (eds), (new York: Orbis, 1996), 227.

<sup>33</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission?*, 53

bringing. Neither Kirk nor van Engan prioritise one part of the witness of the church above the other, but see the whole as important. And yet this view is certainly not universal.

Even given what seems to be absolute clarity in terms of the importance of justice for the poor in the preaching and action of Jesus, one of the continuing significant debates over the past one hundred years has concerned the place of evangelism or proclamation by word, and what has been called variously social action, or welfare or proclamation by deed. The debate has been whether evangelism or proclamation by word should have priority over kingdom actions like caring for the poor, healing the sick, seeking justice, caring for the environment. I would argue that to narrow the definition of evangelism to proclamation by words alone is quite false, given that the word evangelism literally means sharing good news<sup>34</sup>. It is very clear that this sharing is done most effectively when it happens both in words and deeds, rather than one or the other. However, in terms of common use, evangelism refers to sharing good news by word.<sup>35</sup> Bosch says,

Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

The task of evangelism continues to be a vital part of responding to the advent of God's kingdom, but surely actions which show the in-breaking and reality of the kingdom are also an essential part of the mission of the church. Dulles gives a good example of this:

The Church announces the coming of the kingdom not only in word, the preaching and proclamation, much more practically and particularly in work in her ministry of reconciliation, of binding up of wounds, of suffering service, of healing.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst Dulles puts his case clearly he too seems to me to be falling into the trap of doing something Jesus did not—giving one expression of the proclamation of the kingdom priority over another.

Whilst maintaining that 'deeds of the kingdom' are important, there is an opinion that evangelism is the primary activity which is required. Connor says:

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), 3.

<sup>35</sup> See the definitions of evangelism in *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, 8-11.

<sup>36</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan 1976), 86.

Jesus came into the world for a number of reasons but the primary reason was to save sinners (Mt 9.13). Saving lost people is God's bottom line; that is the only thing that brought Jesus out of heaven to earth.<sup>38</sup>

Donald McGavran, the father of the Church Growth Movement, expresses a similar priority:

In mission today many tasks must be carried on together yet the multiplicity of good activities must contribute to and not crowd out maximum reconciliation of men to God in the church of Jesus Christ. God decrees that all men (sic) must be saved in the sense that through faith they live in Christ and through obedience they are baptized in his name and live as responsible members of his body. God therefore commands those of his household to 'go and make disciples of all nations'. Fulfilling this command is the supreme purpose which should guide the entire mission, establish its priorities and co-ordinate all its activities.<sup>39</sup>

McGavran also says in criticizing parallelism or holism "world evangelism is a chief and irreplaceable work of the church. It is the greatest and holiest work of the church".<sup>40</sup>

C. Peter Wagner, also a major figure in the Church Growth Movement, says that "both social ministry and evangelism are essential parts of biblical mission"<sup>41</sup>, but "the evangelistic mandate is primary".<sup>42</sup> These authors are representative of an influential school of thought, which although crediting works of compassion and justice as good and valid and important, nonetheless place evangelism above such efforts.

Engel and Dyrness in their book, *Changing the Mind of Missions*, trace the development of this split in the work of the church (the issue of priority in terms of word or deed), to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where they say the American church tended towards two distinctly different poles. One branch (soon to be called liberal) refused to abdicate its optimistic commitment to social transformation as the central mission of the church. The other branch (the fundamentalists) according to Engel and Dyrness, responded by stressing the dangers of the world, the comforts of a separated piety, the centrality of evangelism and an expectation of the end.<sup>43</sup> This analysis is supported by Peter Kuzmic in *Mission as Transformation* who suggests that a change took place in American evangelicalism as premillennialism took over from

<sup>38</sup> Mark Connor, *Transforming Your Church*, (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2000), 48.

<sup>39</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). 43.

<sup>40</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 90.

<sup>41</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, (Ventura: Regal, 1987), 101.

<sup>42</sup> Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> James F. Engel, and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press 2000), 63.

postmillennialism as the dominant view of eschatology. He says that in the two centuries prior to this shift, social work and the preaching of the gospel went ‘hand in hand’.<sup>44</sup> Since premillennialism sees that the second coming of Christ comes before the one thousand year time of peace on earth, the emphasis becomes evangelism -- to preach the gospel to as many as possible before the second coming of Christ. Premillennialists see this world on a rapid course downward, awaiting judgement. “They view it as a sinking vessel whose doomed passengers could be saved only by coming one at a time into the lifeboats of personal conversion”.<sup>45</sup>

It may also be significant that this emphasis on the priority of evangelism was taking place at a time when the church in the West was losing members and prestige. Survival became important, and to survive the church had to have members, thus evangelism for the sake of building the church becomes the priority and the focus of energy instead of evangelism as a part of announcing the kingdom of God. It may also be significant that much of the emphasis on evangelism over social action is happening in churches that might be called ‘congregational’, where the survival and expansion of the individual independent congregation is very important. In earlier years, especially in the west, where churches like the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Lutheran were both influential and not congregational in nature, there may have been more space and welcome for an agenda which included social action – the deed part of the equation.

However the reality is that nowhere in the gospel records does Jesus compare or contrast evangelism or the proclamation of the kingdom in words, with the deeds of the kingdom (healing the sick, freeing the oppressed, raising the dead, including the excluded, ministering to the poor). Nowhere in the gospel records does Jesus prioritize evangelism over any other part of his ministry. His own time was a time of depression and difficulty as Israel was under occupation by the Roman Empire. It was a time of anxiety and in some ways oppression, and yet Jesus never took the ‘lifeboat approach’.

It seems clear that to prioritize evangelism over other parts of God’s mission does not line up with the gospel view of the task. Bosch says:

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Kumzic in *Mission as Transformation*, 140.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Kumzic from Paul C Wilt “Premillennialism in America 1865-1918, With Special Reference to Attitudes Toward Social Reform” (unpublished PhD dissertation The American University, 1970) in *Mission as Transformation*, 145.



Discipleship (for Matthew) involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love, and to obedience to the entire will of God. Mission is not narrowed down to an activity of making individuals new creatures, of providing them with "blessed assurance" so that, come what may, they will be "eternally saved". Mission involves, from the beginning and as a matter of course, making new believers sensitive to the needs of others, opening their eyes and hearts to recognize injustice, suffering, oppression and the plight of those who have fallen by the wayside.<sup>46</sup>

Certainly the comments that Bosch makes seem to be in accord with Jesus' own life and ministry.

Lesslie Newbigin offers a very helpful way to see the relationship between word and deed as the church seeks to continue the mission of Christ:

It is clear that to set word and deed, preaching and action, against each other is absurd. The central reality is neither word nor act, but the total life of a community enabled by the spirit to live in Christ, sharing his passion and the power of his resurrection. Sometimes it is a word that pierces through layers of custom and opens up a new vision. Sometimes it is a deed which shakes a whole traditional plausibility structure. Second it is clear that action for Jesus in the world is not something which is secondary, marginal to the central task of evangelism. Rather it belongs to the heart of the matter. Jesus action in challenging the powers that rule the world was not marginal to his ministry: it was central to it.<sup>47</sup>

David Bosch puts the matter much more succinctly: "The deed without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty".<sup>48</sup>

This certainly echoes my position as I reflect on the mission of the church today. Although I would have to say that my position has shifted over the past four years. It might be an interesting project to investigate just how one's context influences one's theology -- I am sure the influence is great. Certainly when I was a parish priest the emphasis was on growing the church, and the way to do that was evangelism. It is only since leaving parish ministry and having the opportunity to participate in the life of the church in a different way that I have had the space to take a wider view.

It is clear that the mission of the church is the kingdom of God. The task for the church is not to bring in the kingdom itself, since only God can do this. The challenging part of the

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<sup>46</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 81.

<sup>47</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 137.

<sup>48</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 420.

equation is to work through what it means today to serve the kingdom of God. It is clear that the mission of the church is to proclaim the kingdom of God both in word and in deed, and to do so as a community of Jesus' disciples led, inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit.

There will be observable signs as the church seeks to do this. The church will first of all have as its focus the kingdom of God. This will be the overarching norm-the present and coming kingdom of God. The church will have the role, to use Daniel Biles' expression, of 'sighting, signalling, supporting and celebrating the kingdom of God'<sup>49</sup>. In its self-understanding the church will remember that it is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.<sup>50</sup>

In this it is important to remember the role of signalling the reality of the kingdom. The church is not just to proclaim the kingdom, but to live it, to be a foretaste of it, to be a tangible expression of the reality of the kingdom and, in the words of Snyder, 'a kingdom colony'<sup>51</sup>.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Mission of the Church**

The next question is a very practical one – how is the church to signal the reality of the kingdom? The church represents the kingdom, or proclaims the kingdom, or witnesses to the kingdom, or in Newbigin's words -- is the locus of mission<sup>52</sup>; but the mission or purpose of God to bring in his kingdom, is God's work. Whilst reflecting on the role of the church it is vital to remember that what we are talking about is God's work. Even the church, the body of Christ, is God's work. Mission is not something that the church does; it is something done by the Spirit, who is himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey<sup>53</sup>. When Jesus says to the disciples "As the father sent me so I send you", he sends in the power of the Holy Spirit as he himself was sent. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the disciples witnesses. The disciples don't make themselves witnesses by their own choice or ability. Luke has Jesus saying to the disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel V. Biles, *Pursuing Excellence in Ministry*, (Washington: The Alban Institute, 1998), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission*, in *Mission-Shaped Church*, 85.

<sup>51</sup> Howard A. Snyder, "Models of the Kingdom" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) 153, in John Fuellenbach *The Kingdom of God*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret-An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Revised edition, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 18.

<sup>53</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 56.

Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses....” (Acts 1:8). In fact Jesus warned the disciples against beginning any ministry until they had received the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:29). The Holy Spirit continues the mission of Jesus and one way this happens is through the church. The Holy Spirit is not restricted to working through the church – the Spirit blows where the Spirit will (John 3:8).

It is clear that the church does have a role because the church was called into being at Pentecost. It is the Holy Spirit who creates the church. The church is empowered for its task by the Holy Spirit. People become part of the church because of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also the guarantee, the deposit of what is to come, and also creates the foretaste of the reality of the coming kingdom. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the church to share in God’s mission of bringing forth his reign in every situation.

Given the ongoing and continuing work of God the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, I suggest that, as the church lives out its role, there will be observable features or qualities in the life of the church as community and as individuals that will be both proclamation and foretaste. Many of these features will be radically different to the life of the general community, and will themselves demonstrate the over-turning, the tipping upside down of norms, that comes with the kingdom. Many of these features will focus on the quality of the life of the Christian community itself. There will be particular attitudes and quality of relationships that will help the Christian community to be a ‘kingdom colony’.

### **Signs of the Kingdom**

The first of these will be *agape*. For Jesus' followers, love (*agape*) was to be a key. *Agape* is a self-sacrificing, all-giving love, patient, merciful and generous,<sup>54</sup> which seeks the best for the recipient of that love. *Agape* has its basis in God and in God’s action in the redemption of the world – “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). When asked what were the greatest commandments, Jesus replied:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Mt 22:37-39).

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<sup>54</sup>George Buttrick (ed), *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon Nashville 1962 Vol 3), 169.

In each of these verses the word for love in the Greek is *agape*. The startling thing about *agape*, is that it is a quality of love which is completely different from much of human relationship, and is a tangible sign of the overturning of socially accepted norms. Instead of being 'self focused', *agape* is 'other focused'.

Connected with *agape* is reconciliation. It is clear that the gospel writers understood that Jesus had come to bring forgiveness and reconciliation, and that forgiveness and reconciliation between his followers, and the breaking of all barriers between people, were very important marks of life in the kingdom of God. This is expressed in Matthew:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother and sister and then come and offer your gift.(5:23-24).

And again in Matthew:

Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?' 'As many as seven times?' Jesus answered him, Not seven times, but, I tell you seventy-seven times. (18:21-22).

Generous forgiveness and reconciliation then, based on the generosity of God rather than on who deserves forgiveness, will be a second tangible sign of the kingdom.

A third tangible sign is that the church is moving outward and witnessing to the reality of the kingdom of God. In Matthew's gospel this is presented as a command:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. (Mt 28:19-20).

Luke speaks of this outward focus as the outcome of the work of the Holy Spirit:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8).

As Lesslie Newbigin notes, the activities recorded in Acts after Pentecost seem more like the "fallout from a vast explosion rather than obedience to a command".<sup>55</sup> The Acts of the Apostles understands that the disciples witnessed in terms of what they said, especially about the death and resurrection of Jesus ( e.g. Acts 2:22-36), what they did especially in terms of healing in miraculous ways (e.g. Acts 3:1-10), and how they lived together (e.g.

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<sup>55</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, "The Logic of Mission" in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelisation 2* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1994). 16-17.

Acts 2:44-47). In this the church was sensitive to its context. In order to witness effectively the church must use language and symbols and actions which are appropriate to those with whom it is working. The preservation of archaic forms or traditions is not a sign of an outward focussed church seeking to be a witness for Jesus.

A fourth tangible sign is an expectation of the role of the Holy Spirit. The early church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles certainly experienced the Holy Spirit in a dynamic way. The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus for his ministry and continued to do the same in the life of the early Christians. In Acts the Holy Spirit led the disciples, guided the disciples and gave the disciples the words they needed to say in order to witness for Jesus. Being a tangible sign of the kingdom of God means being open to being led by the Holy Spirit as well as depending on that same Spirit for all that is required. The Holy Spirit not only creates Christian communities but sustains them also. Being led by the Spirit means that the church will be ready and open to change. Rather than seeing permanence as a major goal the church will seek to tread lightly, knowing that everything before the kingdom comes is provisional, and must be so in order to serve the coming kingdom. The Holy Spirit calls Christian communities to continually re-evaluate their life in the light of the kingdom and in the reality of their context.

A fifth tangible sign is that the poor are welcomed, the excluded are included, and justice is pursued for all. This was a dramatic part of Jesus ministry and so by necessity, is part of the life of the church today as well. Not as an add-on or extra, or something which has second place to evangelism or evangelization, but as a normal part of the reality of the kingdom.

A sixth tangible sign of the kingdom of God is that the church will be marked by hope. This is not wishful or positive thinking but hope based on the certainty of God's love for God's world, the experience of the kingdom which is present and trust in the coming fulfilment of the kingdom.

A seventh tangible sign of the kingdom of God is the way that the church deals with power and authority. The gospels have Jesus rebuking his disciples a number of times as they try to put themselves in positions of power and influence among their peers. Jesus kept using examples of the powerless, especially children, to show the disciples what the

kingdom is like. In the kingdom of God it is not power or authority that is most significant, but rather service and humility. The church of Jesus Christ will show this in its own life, not seeking prestige and influence, not seeking to mix with the powerful, but rather mixing with the powerless.

An eighth tangible sign of the kingdom of God will be trust. The church will trust that as it focuses on and seeks the kingdom, everything required for its ministry will be provided. This echoes, "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). The kingdom of God is not to be one focus among many for the church, but *the* focus, trusting that as the church does strive first for the kingdom of God, everything that is necessary will be given to it for the task.

## **Conclusion**

This focus on the kingdom of God is a significant challenge to the church today. This should not be surprising as Jesus' call to repentance and faith is as much addressed to the disciples as anyone else and therefore also the church. An honest assessment of the life and focus of the church in much of the world, certainly much of the church in the West, shows a church which is heavily involved with both wealth and power on one hand and focussed on its numerical survival on the other. To speak and model the new order which Jesus inaugurated will involve a profound change for much of the church. The teaching of Jesus challenges not only the unbeliever to repentance and faith, but calls the church to the same thing. So much of church activity is focussed on the church itself. Evangelism or more accurately church growth is encouraged; otherwise, it is said, the church will cease to exist. Many congregations are more like religious clubs than disciples of Jesus. Huge amounts of money are spent on maintaining the church for the benefit mostly of its members. The priority often is on caring for the current members and seeking new like-minded members, with almost nothing which reflects Jesus ministry to the poor and excluded. The church seems not to be good at demonstrating the new order of the kingdom. The kingdom after all is costly and discomforting. Perhaps that is why in some parts of the church there seems to have been a retreat into a focus on Bible teaching, which leads to great knowledge of the Bible and a consequent drive for doctrinal purity, but little action of the kind that Jesus modelled. It is the model that Jesus offers -- his own life, faith and ministry that so clearly provides a guide and challenge for the church.

This chapter began with the question: What is the mission of the church? The answer I believe is, to use Daniel Biles' words, "to sight, signal, support and celebrate the kingdom of God". This focus reflects Jesus' own ministry, and enables the church to be true to its calling of being sent by Jesus as he was sent. To maintain this focus will require significant change for the church. The church will need to resist the temptation to be focussed on itself -- its survival, its health, its effectiveness, its position, its influence, its wealth and instead focus on the kingdom of God, trusting that as it does God will provide all that is required for the church as God wants it to be. I am sure that Meade and others are correct when they describe a profound change, certainly in the western church, as the church moves from the centre of society, from the centre of power to another place. This change is certainly not being universally accepted. Many are seeking to maintain the old situation. However the change is giving the church a great opportunity -- to focus not on itself, but on the kingdom of God. If the church across the world -- including the church in rapidly growing coastal towns -- is able to grasp the vision of the kingdom of God, it has the opportunity to present this new vision to the community. The community in its current state may find such a vision contains new life.

The demographic evidence makes it clear that the communities of rapidly growing coastal towns are places where the vision of new life is needed. These communities are places of dislocation and relocation. They are places of where income is lower and where often dreams lie unrealised. The reality is that in the midst of the leisure lifestyle of the coastal towns, rapid growth, low employment, low wages, high population turnover, high incidence of single parent households means that the coastal towns are not always positive places. They do not reflect the kingdom of God.

The church as it seeks to live out the kingdom in coastal communities will seek to do as Jesus and so the early church did-to make disciples of Jesus, to proclaim in word and deed the good news that was Jesus-the embodiment of the kingdom coming, to represent Jesus and therefore the kingdom to those who had not been eyewitnesses of him.

This means that the 'signs of the kingdom' mentioned above will be seen in the church of coastal towns as it seeks to be effective in its task. The church will be a place where God's love is shown and known, where reconciliation with God is offered and reconciliation between people is enabled, where the focus is outward and not inward, where the leading of the Holy Spirit is welcomed, where the poor and excluded are valued,

where Gods hope is offered, where servanthood is celebrated and where trust in God is visible and vital.



## Chapter 4: An Effective Church

The topic of this thesis is -- “Being Effective Church in Rapidly Growing Coastal Communities”. In earlier chapters we have examined the context of these churches -- coastal towns (chapter 2), and have examined the mission of the church (chapter 3). In this chapter the task is to explore the notion of “effective” -- what does it mean for the church to be effective as it sights, signals, serves and celebrates the kingdom of God?

In this chapter I have surveyed a number significant ways that are used to measure the effectiveness of a church. The survey begins with those who see that numerical growth is the key to measuring effectiveness, and then moves to the healthy church school, which still sees growth in numbers as vital, but sees numerical growth as both just a part of the picture and also the outcome of something else which should be the main aim -- that is a healthy church. After an examination of the healthy church concept the chapter moves to look at other measures of effectiveness which have less to do with numerical growth and more focus on the kingdom of God. In the first part of the chapter I have included lists of ‘qualities’ and ‘features’ suggested by various authors because those lists help to provide insight into the priorities of those who have created the lists. Those priorities in turn reflect the theology of mission that each of the writers has. I have also included these lists because in many cases their authors are significant contributors to the debate on the mission of the church in the current era. After each of the lists there is comment as I seek to analyse the priority of the author and measure those priorities against the mission of the church as defined in Chapter three. Finally, there is my conclusion concerning the most appropriate way to measure effectiveness for the church.

It is probably not surprising to discover that there are many understandings of what ‘effective’ means for the Church, and that the understanding of ‘effective’ is influenced by the understanding of the mission of the church.

George Barna comments (from a North American Protestant point of view)<sup>1</sup>:

We know that many Christians believe that each of the following is an indisputable mark of an effective church.

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<sup>1</sup> George Barna, *User Friendly Churches*, (Ventura: Regal Books, 1991), 16.

- Having a sanctuary (church building) filled with 1000 or more people at the weekend service.
- Raising \$1 million a year for the church's ministry.
- Donating a half million dollars or more annually to global missions.
- Adding buildings or constructing a new campus with at least 100,000 square feet of ministry facilities.
- Sending the church choir to sing in churches, community events and school campuses throughout the nation or overseas.
- Broadcasting the church worship services throughout the city, region or country.
- Offering a wide range of Christian education classes and Ministry programs.
- Having high name awareness in the community at large.
- Adding 100 or more new members in the year".

Whilst some of these are undoubtedly influenced by North American culture, I am sure than many Australian church leaders would be pleased to tick many of those boxes for their church.

### **Effectiveness = Numerical Growth**

There is no doubt that, for many people, the number one measure of effectiveness in a church is growth in numbers. There is a whole school of thought about just this subject -- the Church Growth Movement, which entered North America in the autumn of 1972.<sup>2</sup> This movement was pioneered and led by Donald McGavran. McGavran maintains that:<sup>3</sup>

Among other desires of God-in-Christ, he beyond question wills that persons be found -- that is, be reconciled to himself. However we understand the word, Biblical witness is clear that men are 'lost'. The finding God wants them found -- that is brought into a redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ. Among other characteristics of mission therefore, a chief and irreplaceable one must be this; that mission is a divine finding, vast and continuous. A chief and irreplaceable purpose of mission is church growth. Serving is good, but it must never be substituted for finding.

And again,<sup>4</sup>

Does not the Biblical evidence rather indicate that in the sight of the God who finds, numbers of the redeemed are important? God himself decrees that multitudes be redeemed to himself in the church of Christ. Indeed God commands an ardent searching for the lost in order to find them. The congregation which is not engaged in proclaiming Christ to men and persuading them to become his disciples and responsible members of his church, may be a religious club but it is not the body of Jesus Christ. His body is filled with his spirit and engaged in finding lost men.

<sup>2</sup> C. Peter Wagner *Your Church Can Grow*, (Ventura: Regal Books 1984), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 24.

<sup>4</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 38

Here McGavran not only makes a strong case for the notion of numerical growth but also contrasts numerical growth with what he calls ‘serving’. Serving in this context refers to acts of compassion or justice that Christians do as they follow Jesus’ own example.

McGavran is clear that church growth, or growing the church numerically, (not just growing disciples of Jesus), is ‘a chief aim’, and sets church growth against what he calls ‘serving’. In McGavran’s view it is clear that if the two (numerical growth or serving) are in competition, numerical growth needs to come first. McGavran and the Church growth movement are certainly not alone in their emphasis on numerical growth.

Peter Kaldor and his co-researchers from National Church Life Survey, suggest that the emphasis on growth in numbers may well have been fostered by the changes and declines in church attendance in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to significant pessimism about the future of the church.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that declining numbers present a threat to the church and this certainly makes growing numbers a big issue. Great energy is therefore spent trying to reverse the decline. This effort is not necessarily out of obedience to Jesus Christ, but part of a desire either to keep the doors open, or regain lost ground. I have lost count of the number of church leaders I have heard warning that, “if we don’t engage seriously in evangelism, the church as we know it will cease to exist.” Recent books coming from the Church of England begin by detailing the rate of decline in numbers of people attending Anglican Churches in England. Examples of these are ‘*Hope for the Church*’ by Bob Jackson published in 2002; and ‘*Mission-Shaped Church*’, which is a report from a working group of the Church of England’s Mission and Public Affairs Council published in 2004.

Whilst declining attendances in some parts of the world, most notably the economic North, may have led to a focus on numbers, the question remains whether a focus on numbers is primarily about preserving the church or obeying the Lord of the Church? A second major question concerns whether or not growth in numbers is a reliable measure of effectiveness for the church.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Kaldor, John Bellamy, Ruth Powell, Bronwyn Hughes, Keith Castle, *Shaping a Future* (Adelaide: Open Book Publishers, 1997), 2.

Effective is defined as “successful in producing a desired or intended result”.<sup>6</sup> If, given this definition of effective, churches intend to grow in numbers and do so, they can be described as effective. I would suggest however that growth in numbers in and of itself is not the chief mission of the church, nor is it necessarily a sign that the church is being effective.

There are of course very good reasons why churches do not grow. Shifting and changing populations for instance create difficult circumstances for churches to grow numerically.

C. Jeff Woods says <sup>7</sup>:

The Church still has a problem judging success by means other than numbers. I suppose a primary reason for this is that there was once a time when nearly every church grew numerically every year. That was an age when it did not matter much what the church did. The people still came. The climate has changed. I do not think that pastors work less hard than they did thirty years ago. I contend that the major influences in the decline of church attendance are related to a changing society.

There may be many reasons why churches do grow or do not grow, reasons such as social change as Woods notes, or population growth or decline, population age, the stability of the community, wealth, ethnic make up of the community, and transference of growth to or from other churches.

Some churches seem to be located in areas which might be called Bible belts, where higher church attendance is not simply an outcome of the effort of the church at all. A report written in 1995 by Keith Castle and Peter Kaldor using National Church Life Survey results entitled *Are There Bible Belts in Australia?*<sup>8</sup>, explores this issue in some depth, and finds that in fact there are parts of Australia that have much higher rates of church attendance. Castle and Kaldor found for instance that church attendance rates in stable white collar urban communities were higher than new blue collar urban communities, and that rural service towns had attendance rates higher than the stable white collar urban areas. They also found that attendance rates were highest in South Australia and lowest in Western Australia, and that there were significantly different attendance rates in different cities, ranging from 94 attenders per thousand residents in

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<sup>6</sup> Judy Pearsall (ed), *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, (Oxford: University Press, 1998) 590.

<sup>7</sup> Jeff C.Woods, *User Friendly Evaluation*, (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 1995) 14.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Castle and Peter Kaldor, *Are There Bible Belts in Australia?* (Sydney: National Church Life Survey 1995), 11, 13, and 14.

Toowoomba, just West of Brisbane, to 23 attenders per thousand residents in Darwin. Significant for my study were two towns in the study area -- Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour -- which had 58 and 41 attenders per thousand residents respectively. The results of this report seem to provide a good example of why it is risky to use numerical growth as the sole or even most significant indicator of effectiveness for the church, since some populations, for reasons largely unknown, are more likely to attend church than others.

However whilst numbers alone cannot be the sole focus of the church, neither is it reasonable to avoid the issue of numerical growth. There seem to be significant indications from the gospels that growth of the church was expected and had occurred by the time the gospels were written. Some of Jesus' comments, for instance, seem to indicate this: 'The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out labourers into his harvest.' (Mt 9:37, 38). The writer of Matthew seems to have had some understanding that there was a harvest, and that there would be labourers needed.

As noted in the previous chapter of this thesis, the four gospels contain various 'commissionings' of Jesus followers. Of these, Matthew 28 and Luke 24 certainly include reference to a proclamation to 'all nations'. Matthew 28 seems to include the notion that there should be effort so that 'all nations' become Jesus disciples -- certainly an indication of growth in the community of Jesus' followers. Again in Acts there seems to be an understanding that the church will grow in numbers. Acts 2:41 for example says that on the day of Pentecost about three thousand persons were added to the disciples. Acts 2:47 notes that 'day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved'. Acts continues on emphasising the work of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church, and there certainly does seem to be an understanding that the church would grow -- not as an end in itself, but as a result of the activity of God the Holy Spirit drawing people to faith, and the enthusiastic, sacrificial and strategic proclamation of the kingdom by the Christians. Taking numbers and growth in numbers into some account today seems reasonable, although clearly growth in numbers is a result of both human effort and divine will within a particular social context which may affect the outcome.

### **Effectiveness = Healthy Church**

Numbers of authors do suggest that growth in numbers should be a normal part of church experience, but that this growth comes about not as a result of a focus on numbers but

the development of a healthy church.<sup>9</sup> To be effective then is to move towards being a healthy church. I have included examples of three authors from this field -- Stephen Macchia, Mark Connor and C. Peter Wagner.

In his book, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, Macchia lists nine common indicators of health<sup>10</sup>:

1. Love acceptance and forgiveness
2. Relational integrity
3. Hunger for personal growth
4. Shift from traditional to contemporary worship
5. Prayer
6. Relationship centred ministry
7. Use of personal stories
8. Service
9. Networking

He also suggests ten characteristics of a healthy church:<sup>11</sup>

1. God's empowering presence: the healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit's direction and empowerment for its daily life and ministry.
2. God exalting worship: the healthy church gathers regularly as the local expression of the body of Christ to worship God in ways that engage the heart, mind, soul and strength of the people -- pointing people to God.
3. Spiritual disciplines: the healthy church provides training, models and resources for members of all ages to develop their daily spiritual disciplines.
4. Learning and growing in community: the healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment.
5. Commitment to loving and caring relationships: the healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve.
6. Servant-leadership focus: the healthy church identifies and develops individuals whom God has called and given the gift of leadership, and challenges them to become servant-leaders.
7. An outward focus: the healthy church places high priority on communicating the truth of Jesus and demonstrating his love to those outside the faith.
8. Wise administration and accountability: the healthy church utilises appropriate facilities, equipment and systems to provide maximum support for the growth and development of its ministries.
9. Networking with the body of Christ: the healthy church reaches out to others in the body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing, learning opportunities and united celebrations of worship.
10. Stewardship and generosity: the healthy church teaches its members that they are stewards of their God-given resources and challenges them to sacrificial generosity in sharing with others.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Warren, *The Healthy Churches Handbook* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) vii.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 19-22.

<sup>11</sup> Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 23.

Mark Connor is another writer who is interested in growth in numbers but whose approach is from the *healthy church* perspective. He quotes Rick Warren from *The Purpose Driven Church*:

The Key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth. The problem with many churches is that they begin with the wrong question. They ask, 'What will make our church grow?' The question we need to ask instead is: 'What is keeping our church from growing?' God wants his church to grow. If your church is genuinely healthy, then it will grow.<sup>12</sup>

This understanding is very strong in the healthy churches' movement. The underpinning philosophy is that churches are designed by God to grow numerically and will grow if they are healthy. The task then is to make the church healthy.

Connor suggests that the church needs to make some strategic shifts in order to cope with the changes that are necessary for the church to be healthy and appropriate for our times. He defines a strategic shift as a "change of thinking inspired by the Holy Spirit, resulting in a change of behaviour that produces a greater effectiveness in fulfilling the purposes of God for this moment in history",<sup>13</sup> but does not define what those purposes might be.

Connor suggests that seven strategic shifts need to be made<sup>14</sup>:

1. A power shift -- from self to God.
2. A priority shift from in-reach to outreach.
3. A program shift -- from events to relationship: a group of people networked together in loving relationships rather than an event to go to.
4. A leadership shift from ministers to equippers.
5. A ministry shift -- from consumers to equippers.
6. A world view shift -- from a church mentality to a kingdom mentality (think wider than your own church congregation).
7. A generation shift from the older to the younger -- pass the baton .

What is interesting in this list of strategic shifts is the mention of the "kingdom" in number six. One of the very interesting features of the writers in this field is their lack of reference to the kingdom of God or the kingdom of God issues that were identified as being important to Jesus in the previous chapter of the thesis. Here when Connor talks about a 'kingdom mentality' he is actually talking about a wider view of the church, that is, beyond the local congregation. This may be a significant issue for Christians with a

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Connor, *Transforming Your Church* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2000), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Connor, *Transforming*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Connor, *Transforming*, 23-24.

congregational or independent view of the church, and may indeed be beneficial, but seems to be somewhat less than the kind of understanding of the kingdom that Jesus showed.

Also contributing to the healthy church debate, but still very focussed on growth in numbers, is C. Peter Wagner. He says that it seems one of the signs of good church health is growth.

If a given church is faithful to the Lord, and if it is in a healthy condition, God can be expected to do what he did to the church that came into being on the Day of Pentecost. He will ordinarily add “to the church daily those who are being saved” (Acts 2:47). Seeing new people come to Christ and commit themselves to the Body of Christ is normal for healthy Christian churches.<sup>15</sup>

Wagner suggests seven vital signs of a healthy church<sup>16</sup>:

1. A pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyse the entire church into action for growth.
2. A well mobilized laity that has discovered, has developed and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth.
3. A church big enough to provide the range of services that meet the needs and expectations of its members. To be attractive to newcomers, a church has to serve its members well. If it does it will produce satisfied customers so to speak, who will in turn spread the news that the church is doing things that appeal to outsiders as well.
4. A proper balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell.
5. Growing churches ordinarily find that their memberships are drawn basically from one people group or so called homogenous unit.
6. Evangelistic methods that have been proven effective.
7. Priorities arranged in biblical order.

There are at least two very interesting signs in this list. The first is the focus on members (sign three). Whilst it may be true that keeping the members happy will bring newcomers because the members will tell their friends about how happy they are at church, the focus is still on the happiness of the members. If the newcomers are not made happy they will not stay. So not only do the members need to be kept happy in order for newcomers to come, the newcomers need to be kept happy in order for them to stay. The focus then becomes very much on those who are already in the church community. This certainly sounds very much like a club kind of mentality, and a mentality which could almost lead to a ‘do anything to keep them happy’ kind of approach, including not challenging the

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<sup>15</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1996), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Wagner, *Healthy Church* 16-19.



members to be sacrificial followers of Jesus -- the kind of challenge which may prove difficult or unpopular.

The second really interesting sign is number five. “Growing churches ordinarily find their memberships are drawn basically from one people group or so called homogeneous unit”. There are two issues here – first, is this true? And second, is this homogeneity a ‘vital sign of a healthy church’? In terms of the first question, Robert Warren says that his research amongst congregations of the Church of England indicates that:

Churches that had some engagement with young people, churches that had an ethnic mix and churches that were using the *Alpha* course, were all more likely to be growing than the average church.<sup>17</sup>

Warren’s view is that these churches had developed the ability to incorporate people who were from a different ethnic grouping. Bob Jackson, again from the view of the Church of England says: “It comes as no surprise that the evidence suggests that churches that engage with a variety of cultures are more likely to grow today than those dominated by just one culture or one type of person”.<sup>18</sup> Jackson forms this view from an examination of the results of the 1989 and 1998 Church census, and says that from the data, only 20% of all-white churches grew in the period, but 23% of those with an ethnic mix of between 1% and 23%, and 27% of those with at least a 25% ethnic mix grew. Jackson comments: “The richer the mix, the more likely a church is to grow and the less likely it is to shrink”.<sup>19</sup> Australia’s NCLS also found that effective congregations are characterised by greater heterogeneity and a mix of different ages and backgrounds or at different stages of life.<sup>20</sup>

Whilst from his research Wagner came to the conclusion concerning homogeneity and church growth, it is clear that others such as Jackson and Warren do not agree, and in fact their research would suggest the opposite.

The second question is whether a homogeneous church is a healthy church? Or is it a healthy church because it is growing and a growing church (according to Wagner) is a

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Warren, *The Healthy Churches Handbook*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) 44.

<sup>18</sup> Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church-Contemporary Strategies for Growth*, (London: Church House Publishing), 87.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson, *Hope for the Church*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Kaldor et al, *Shaping a Future-Characteristics of Vital Congregations*. (Adelaide: Open Book 1997), 167.

sign of a healthy church? Given Wagner's enthusiasm for church growth, the answer for him might be the second option. Certainly, it would be difficult to argue from the New Testament that a homogeneous church is necessarily a healthy church. Jesus constantly moved outside 'one people group'. He mixed with, taught, and healed religious people, but also tax collectors and sinners, fishermen and zealots, men and women, Jews and Samaritans, rich people and poor people. His followers included former tax collectors, fishermen, zealots, wealthy women, and women who were known 'sinners'. Other parts of the New Testament also indicate that the early church included all sorts of people. A significant example of this are Jews and Gentiles ( Acts 10), which are certainly different people groups, and in fact, unity between different groups seems to be one of the centre points of life as a member of the kingdom of God (for instance Gal 3:28-29).

Whether Wagner is right about homogeneity and growth, I would suggest that from Jesus' own example and the witness of the New Testament generally, Jesus followers were a mixed group, and the fact that they were mixed and yet part of the body of Christ seems to be considered a good idea, and in fact for Paul, central to the gospel.

A significant addition to the *healthy churches* conversation is Robert Warrens' book *The Healthy Churches Handbook* published in 2004. This book is significant for at least three reasons: first, its context is English rather than North American (where the bulk of writing on this topic originates); second, its author is an Anglican rather than a North American Protestant (Anglicans have not, up to this time, contributed greatly to this literature); and third, the material comes very much with the encouragement and approval of the leadership of the Church of England.

Despite the fact that the healthy churches movement says that it focusses less on numbers and more on the quality of church life, the reality is that churches that were researched in order to discover the marks or signs or characteristics of healthy churches for Warren's work were identified because they grew numerically over a period of time.<sup>21</sup> This does not make the 'marks of healthy churches' without value, but it still starts with growth in numbers. This is not necessarily a bad thing in itself but perhaps only part of the story. If

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<sup>21</sup> Warren, *Healthy Churches*, 13.

the effectiveness of Jesus' own ministry had been judged in terms of numbers he would not have made an appearance in the list of leaders of healthy churches.

Warren has identified seven marks of a healthy church.<sup>22</sup> They are, with their subsections:

1. Energized by Faith (rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive):
  - Worship and sacramental life: move people to experience God's love.
  - Motivation: energy comes from a desire to serve God and one another.
  - Engages with scripture: in creative ways that connect with life.
  - Nurtures faith in Christ: helping people to grow in and share their faith.
2. Outward Looking Focus with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern:
  - Deeply rooted in the local community, working in partnership with other denominations, faiths, secular groups and networks.
  - Passionate and prophetic about justice and peace, locally and globally.
  - Makes connections between faith and daily living.
  - Responds to human need by loving service.
3. Seeks to find out what God wants -- discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone:
  - Vocation: seeks to explore what God wants it to be and do.
  - Vision: develops and communicates a shared sense of where it is going.
  - Mission priorities: consciously sets both immediate and long-term goals.
  - Able to call for, and make, sacrifices, personal and corporate, in bringing about the above and living out the faith.
4. Faces the cost of change and growth rather than resisting change and fearing failure:
  - While embracing the past, it dares to take on new ways of doing things.
  - Takes risks: admits when things are not working, and learns from experience.
  - Crises: responds creatively to challenges that face the church and community.
  - Positive experiences of change: however small, are affirmed and built on.
5. Operates as a community rather than functioning as a club or religious organization:
  - Relationships are nurtured, often in small groups, so that people feel accepted and are helped to grow in faith and service.
  - Leadership: lay and ordained work as a team to develop locally appropriate expressions of all seven marks of a healthy church.
  - Lay ministry: the different gifts, experiences and faith journeys of all are valued and given expression in and beyond the life of the church.
6. Makes room for all -- being inclusive rather than exclusive:
  - Welcome: works to include newcomers into the life of the church.
  - Children and young people are helped to belong, contribute and be nurtured in their faith.
  - Enquirers are encouraged to explore and experience faith in Christ.
  - Diversities: different social and ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities, and ages are seen as a strength.

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<sup>22</sup> Warren, *Healthy Churches*, 47-48.

7. Does a few things and does them well – focussed rather than frenetic:
  - Does the basics well: especially public worship, pastoral care, stewardship and administration.
  - Occasional Offices (weddings and funerals): make sense of life and communicate faith.
  - Being good news as a church in its attitudes and ways of working.
  - Enjoys what it does and is relaxed about what is not being done.

Why these marks? Warren suggests these seven marks are imperative because they reflect the life of Christ.<sup>23</sup> This is a significant development from other healthy church writers as Warren does maintain that behind the ‘marks’ is the primary call of the church to express in its own life something of the life of Christ, and the marks Warren identifies reflect much more than the other ‘lists’ above, the values and styles of the kingdom of God as exemplified by Jesus. Marks such as numbers two, three, five and six do seem to reflect Jesus' teaching in the gospels.

Another form of the quality church movement is *The Natural Church Development* movement pioneered by Christian Schwarz in Germany. He states that there are three significant principles behind natural church development:<sup>24</sup>

1. Natural church development rejects merely pragmatic and a-theological approaches (the end justifies the means), and replaces them with a principle-oriented point of departure.
2. Natural church development has no quantitative approach (how do we get more people to attend services), but looks at the quality of church life as the key to church development.
3. Natural church development does not attempt to ‘make’ church growth, but release the growth automatisms with which God himself builds the church.

The thrust of Schwarz’s argument is that the church is like an organism in that it is designed to grow and given the right conditions, the church should naturally grow.<sup>25</sup> It is significant that whilst Schwartz says that Natural Church Development has no quantitative approach, he still believes that the church will grow and should grow, and in fact the driving force behind Schwarz’s research was to scientifically investigate ‘universal growth principles’ of church growth as opposed to myths.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Warren, *Healthy Churches*, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Mt Gravatt East: Direction Ministry Resources, 1996), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Brian Edgar, “Natural Church Development-the Schwarz method”, *Australian Ministry Digest* Vol 7 No 2 (April-June 2000), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 18.

Schwarz identifies a range of characteristics that are important in the quality of church life.<sup>27</sup>

1. Empowering leadership.
2. Gift oriented ministry -- serving in ones area of giftedness.
3. Passionate spirituality.
4. Functional structure.
5. Inspiring worship service.
6. Holistic small groups -- much of the essence of the church is worked out in the small groups.
7. Need oriented evangelism.
8. Loving relationships.

Interestingly, there is no mention in this list of ministry to the poor, including the excluded, seeking justice, healing the sick, or releasing the oppressed -- features of Jesus' ministry which were very important.

### **Effective = Attitude**

Kennon Callahan comes at the notion of effectiveness for the church from a different angle and gives a description of an attitude which will lead to activity. Callahan suggests that a church is effective if it is a "church of the good shepherd" rather than a "bo-peep church". In other words, a church that goes out to find the lost rather than a church that "leaves them alone and lets them come home wagging their tails behind them".<sup>28</sup> Callahan suggests that this attitude (the good shepherd) will lead the church to be effective because it will become like Jesus -- outward looking, seeking and saving the lost.

Callahan identifies twelve factors which are central characteristics of what he calls successful missional churches,<sup>29</sup>

1. Specific concrete missional objectives.
2. Pastoral and lay visitation.
3. Corporate dynamic worship.
4. Significant relational groups.
5. Strong leadership resources.
6. Streamlined structure and solid participatory decision making.
7. Several competent programs and activities.
8. Open accessibility.
9. High visibility.
10. Adequate parking, land, landscaping.

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<sup>27</sup> Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22-37

<sup>28</sup> Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1997), xxi.

<sup>29</sup> Callahan, *Twelve Keys*, xxii-xxiii.

11. Adequate space and facilities.
12. Solid financial resources .

Interestingly, these factors need not be specific to the Christian church. Apart from number three they could be applied to just about any organization, and if we substituted worshipping God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, with an energetic gathering of like-minded people, perhaps like the annual convention of Nutri-metics sales people, even number three could be applied to any successful organization and not just the church. What is significant in Callahan's list is the single attitude that he discerns. For him it is not the outcome that defines effectiveness but the attitude. This is discussed below.

### **Other Measures of Effectiveness**

There are other ways in which to look at effectiveness apart from starting with the assumption that numerical growth is the primary measure or outcome. Loren Meade for instance does suggest that growth is important but also is convinced that growth happens in ways other than numbers.

He suggests that churches grow in at least three ways<sup>30</sup>:

1. Maturation Growth -- growth in stature and maturity of each member, growth in faith and the ability to nurture and be nurtured.
2. Organic Growth -- growth of the congregation as a functioning community, able to maintain itself as a living organism, an institution that can engage the other institutions of society, and,
3. Incarnational Growth -- growth in the ability to take the meanings and values of the faith-story and make them real in the world and society outside the congregation.

There are of course those who are critical of the emphasis on numbers as a measure of effectiveness. George Barna a researcher into the church especially, but not only in North America, comments: <sup>31</sup>

I'm willing to bet that when the Lord examines the church his criteria will have little to do with attendance statistics, budgeting complexities or program breadth. If his critique of the Pharisees and other religious leaders is an indication, his analysis will hinge on the depth of people's commitment to making their faith real and pure. Tiny congregations composed of people completely dedicated to being a blessing to God and others will probably make the grade".

Barna says:

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<sup>30</sup> Loren B. Meade, *More Than Numbers*, (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1993), 12.

<sup>31</sup> George Barna, *Habits of Highly Effective Churches* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1999), 16.

The Bible suggests that a church is a blessing if it is changing people's lives by bringing them into a deeper relationship with God, through faith in Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The Church that blesses people in this way is a user-friendly church.<sup>32</sup>

He suggests that a ministry is effective when lives are transformed such that people are constantly enabled to become more Christ-like. Effective ministries foster significant and continual changes in how people live. "When your church is able to consistently facilitate a personal metamorphosis among its people, then it is operating in the realm of effectiveness".<sup>33</sup>

Barna suggests that here are six dimensions of ministry that constitute a complete church.<sup>34</sup>

1. Worship.
2. Evangelism.
3. Christian education.
4. Community among the believers.
5. Stewardship .
6. Serving the needy .

And that there are nine highly effective church habits:<sup>35</sup>

1. Rely upon strategic leadership.
2. Organize to facilitate highly effective ministry.
3. Emphasize developing significant relationships within the congregation.
4. Congregants invest themselves in genuine worship.
5. Engage in strategic evangelism.
6. Get people involved in systematic theological growth.
7. Utilize holistic stewardship practices.
8. Serve the needy people in the community.
9. Equip families to minister to themselves.

What is significant about Barna's comments about effectiveness is how individually focussed they are. He is interested in a 'personal metamorphosis' so that individuals are brought into a deeper relationship with God, and says that when this happens a church 'is operating in the realm of effectiveness'. For Barna it is the individual person's relationship with God that is paramount. This is a particular slant on the gospel which appears to be lacking any community or corporate focus.

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<sup>32</sup> Barna, *Habits*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Barna, *Habits*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Barna, *Habits*, 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Barna, *Habits*, 24.

Kaldor and his fellow *National Church Life Survey* researchers use the term ‘vital and effective’ to describe congregations that are going well. They say that "most would agree that the purpose of a congregation is to assist people from within and beyond the congregation to worship God, to respond to the Christian faith and to explore its implications in every day life."<sup>36</sup>

The National Church Life Survey researchers identified twelve core qualities that tend to be present in congregations and parishes that are vital and effective:<sup>37</sup>

1. An alive and growing faith.
2. Vital and nurturing worship.
3. Growth in belonging and involvement.
4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life.
5. Care for young people.
6. A focus beyond ourselves.
7. Serving the wider community.
8. Discussing faith and inviting others to church.
9. Integrating newcomers.
10. A clear, owned vision for the future.
11. Openness to new possibilities.
12. Empowering and inspiring leadership.

The National Church Life Survey has been very significant for the Anglican and Protestant churches in Australia since 1991, and there has been a great deal of resources developed from the survey findings. The most recent survey (2001) occurred in company with a survey by the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, dramatically increasing the number of people involved. Whilst there are many good things coming from the survey results, the understanding of the purpose of a congregation noted above seems rather limp. Whilst “most” might agree that “the purpose of a congregation is to assist people from within and beyond the congregation to worship God, to respond to the Christian faith and to explore its implications in every day life”, that understanding falls a long way short of the faith and life evidenced not only by Jesus but by the early church. Again this seems to be a church- focussed understanding, which also seems to emphasise the individual rather than community. The problem for the NCLS conclusions is that if this is the definition of the purpose of the local church which lies under the indicators of vitality, then they must inevitably be of reduced value, since the NCLS’ view of the mission of the church

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<sup>36</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Kaldor, Keith Castle, Robert Dixon, *Connections for Life* (Adelaide: Open Book Publishers, 2002), 24-25.



appears to be much less than Jesus' example and that to which Jesus continues to call his church.

Daniel Biles, a Lutheran from North America, suggests that what should be pursued is certainly not numbers as a goal in itself, but rather excellence in mission. He says that there are three foundations of excellence:<sup>38</sup>

1. *Mission*: To paraphrase a phrase from "Fiddler on the Roof", mission is knowing who you are and what God expects you to do. Good pastors and congregations have this self-awareness. It is a clear and commonly held understanding of what ministry is and how it is to be carried out in a given parish. It is why, "how to" programs do not work. If the parish does not know what it exists to be and do, no amount of busyness and quick fix ideas will substitute.
2. *Leadership*: The creation and articulation of, the focusing attention on, and the developing commitment to a vision of what God is calling the congregation to be, and the concrete form its mission in the community should take -- marks the excellent parishes. Such leadership is primarily and indispensably exercised by the pastor. It is rooted in the pastor's self-awareness of being called by God to exercise the office of ministry, and refined by training in the various disciplines and tasks of pastoral ministry. It is exercised through an ordained Minister's constant interaction with people in pursuit of bringing the gospel to bear on their lives.
3. *Lay commitment and ownership*: Excellence in ministry is not a one person show. Even with vigorous and dynamic pastoral leadership, long-term excellence in faithfully carrying out the mission of the Gospel occurs only where laity are committed to the vision of what their congregations' ministry can be. In the excellent churches, the laity "own", take responsibility for, and are trusted with carrying out the work of the people of God.

According to Biles there are also three expressions of excellence.<sup>39</sup>

1. *Quality worship*: centring the community's life and source of strength in Word and Sacrament, worship becomes a driving desire to speak and do the gospel in a way which clearly communicates to the hopes and fears of people today and nurtures the faith of the worshipping community
2. *Quality education*: it is aimed at seeing that members, especially adults, are biblically and theological literate in order that they might know what it means to be Christians in today's world and witness effectively.
3. *Quality care and outreach*: this includes both the care of members in congregations by the pastor and fellow members, and the service and witness ministries of a

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<sup>38</sup> Biles, *Excellence*, 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Biles, *Excellence*, 9.

congregation, both to its local community and, through the whole body of Christ, the world.

What is especially significant about Biles' view is that, like Callahan above, he focusses on an attitude, this time the pursuit of excellence in ministry. Whilst this principle could certainly be applied to any organization, it is an interesting example of considering an attitude as being of primary importance.

Engel and Dyrness come especially from a global mission perspective, but a number of their suggestions for the church are similar to those above. They describe "commonalities which can lead to the recapture of the organic nature of the church":<sup>40</sup>

1. A conviction that numerical growth, if it occurs at all, is a spontaneous outcome motivated by the Holy Spirit rather than a goal.
2. A commitment to intentional spiritual formation with particular focus on discovery and use of spiritual gifts in a manner consistent with the mission of Jesus as expressed in Lk 4.18-21.
3. A consistent church identity based on the distinctly countercultural message of Jesus expressed through prophecy and radical love for those who are persecuted and oppressed.
4. A genuine commitment to servant leadership characterized by Christian vision and empowerment.
5. A concept of church programming built around encouraging lay initiative, with church programs limited largely to facilitating an unleashed laity.
6. An expectation that vital leadership requires the accountability, encouragement and support that can only take place through community, expressed in the form of small cells throughout the church.
7. An unwavering commitment to mobilizing the entire body of Christ to fulfil Christ's mandate to make disciples first in ones' Jerusalem, then in Judea and finally in the entire world.
8. A disavowal of modernity's shaping influence on Christian missions, accompanied by a commitment to follow the New Testament model for the ministry as it is adapted to a contemporary world.

What marks Engel and Dyrness's 'commonalities' is just how uncommon they are in comparison with the other material surveyed. Engel and Dyrness, like many of the others are North American Protestants, but their 'commonalities' have much more in common with the ministry of Jesus as expressed in the gospels. Examples of this are commonalities two, three, four, six and seven. These are much more community than individually focussed, and much more focussed on the issues that Jesus in the gospels

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<sup>40</sup> James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000) 120.

seems to emphasise – for instance, the making of disciples, servant leadership, radical love for the persecuted and oppressed, seeking to serve the ministry of Jesus as expressed in Luke 4. Even though Engel and Dyrness do not mention the kingdom of God by name, they certainly express a ministry related to kingdom realities more fully than the other writers surveyed in this chapter.

### **Effectiveness and the Mission of the Church**

There are a number of things that are significant from the views held by most of the writers surveyed in this chapter. First, whilst it is said by some writers that the focus of church life should be on quality or health, it is clear that the underlying expectation is that the church will grow in ways that include growth in numbers. In fact for most of the writers growth in numbers is not just an expectation it is an aim. This is not surprising given the context of the research behind this writing -- the Northern church. It is not surprising that as numbers fall church leaders should be focussed on reversing the trend. Surely though, given that it was argued in the previous chapter of the thesis that the mission of the church was the kingdom of God, any measure of effectiveness should take this aim into account.

Bob Jackson writing from an English Anglican background picks this up -- “The core task of the church is to serve the kingdom rather than recruit people to its worship services”.<sup>41</sup> And this is the core issue. Much of the recent writing on the mission of the church is concerned with the role of the church in announcing the kingdom, and this was highlighted in the previous chapter of the thesis, for instance in Kirk and van Engan, and yet much writing about the church itself, examples of which I have surveyed in this chapter, seem focussed on the church and not the kingdom. This omission of the kingdom of God, is very surprising given the emphasis Jesus gives it. This is especially true of the writers whose focus is growth in numbers. Writers referred to later in the chapter certainly make mention of kingdom values, but in an apparently secondary kind of way. There is almost no mention of healing the sick, including the excluded, pursuing justice, ministering to the poor or freeing the oppressed, although mention is made of serving the needy. Whilst it could be argued that a church needs to be healthy if it is going to serve the kingdom, in reality the survey of the literature I have done seems to indicate a clear

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<sup>41</sup> Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), 17.

focus on the growth of the church itself, with little or no specific reference to the kingdom of God at all, and certainly no evidence that a numerically growing or healthy church will automatically or necessarily serve the kingdom. Of course it is also reasonable to say that a non-existent church will not serve the kingdom well either, however the issue is the focus and the goal. Numbers alone are not a measure of effectiveness because growth in numbers alone is not the intended outcome of the ministry of the church. In fact, there is a disturbing element to a focus on increasing numbers of people attending church. Jackson reminds us that:

In Rwanda leading up to the atrocities, in apartheid South Africa and in Northern Ireland there have been very high levels of church affiliation yet striking amounts of injustice and division. Uganda and South Africa have the highest rates of churchgoing in Africa and also the highest incidence of AIDS. The United States has about the highest level of churchgoing in the West, yet it is not obviously any more Christian in its values than anywhere else. Attendance at church seems to have only a limited impact on the morality and values of the culture in which it takes place.<sup>42</sup>

Large numbers of Christians in a community do not necessarily guarantee that the community witnesses to the kingdom of God.

It seems reasonable to me that the church as it ‘sights, signals, supports and celebrates the coming kingdom’ (Biles) would be involved in activity which certainly includes evangelism, and worship, and the development of community relationships, but also active inclusion of the poor and work amongst the poor and outcast, as well as agitating to change unjust structures and situations in the home community as well as away. What is so clear from the gospels, especially the synoptic gospels, is that the kingdom is good news for the poor, not just the poor in spirit, but for everyone who is outcast and marginalized from society, and yet most of those writing in the ‘effective church’ stream fail to note this in any meaningful way.

This focus on the church rather than on the kingdom also probably reflects the reality that most churches are small in number. Whilst there are some really huge churches, most congregations in Australia for instance are small – more than half have fewer than 50 people.<sup>43</sup> Much of what the surveyed writers in this chapter focus on – for instance,

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<sup>42</sup> Jackson, *Hope*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Kaldor, *Winds of Change-The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia* (Homebush: Lancer, 1994), ix

numbers at worship, worship services, and community, do not figure highly in Jesus' life and teaching, but actually are focussed much more on the survival and viability of an organization which is run (and needs to be run in order to survive), like a small business - the local church as it currently is established -- at least in the West.

### **A Challenge for our Structure**

The whole issue of a congregation needing to pay its way -- pay a clergy person, pay for the purchase, construction or maintenance of buildings, pay a contribution to its parent organization, pay running costs, for example -- impacts on what the church needs to be, and leads to a numbers/growth kind of thinking, and a strong focus on the health of the organization. The focus is also strongly influenced by the clergy themselves whose sense of fulfilment, desire for promotion and call to higher offices (often outside parish life), often depends on their ability to build a parish organization. All of this impacts on what it is they and the church see as effective. In fact the whole way most churches are set up and run in the west, biases them away from the kingdom focus and toward a focus on the church itself. This is heightened in the western context where the church is shrinking overall. The western church has not experienced since Constantine in the fourth century, being a small or insignificant player in society. In the current situation of threat and fear, the pressure is huge to reverse the trend of decline, and church leaders whose parishes/churches do grow numerically are warmly encouraged. In some parts of the western church in recent times, as parishes either cannot afford to pay a clergy person, or a clergyperson is not available, experiments are happening with different forms of ministry. In some quarters these new models are being bemoaned as second best measures, whereas in fact they may be opportunities for freedom for the church which could, if embraced enthusiastically, provide more opportunity for focussing on the kingdom of God.

The dissonance between the mission of the Church as it seems to be expressed in the gospels, and the focus of churches which are concentrating on growing numerically comes out in my own research on churches in the coastal regions. Admittedly, I used growth in numbers as the marker to locate churches with which to work, but what is surprising is the very small place kingdom values seem to have in the ministry of these churches. This can be seen clearly in Chapter Five. In summary, those interviewed from rapidly growing churches were typically not engaged in social action. In fact, some of the

interviews with leaders indicate how low a priority this ministry is. There was much more focus, especially among the Pentecostal churches in the survey, on strategies for church-growth. It was only after the church reached a viable size that there began to be concern (and then only in some cases) for work among the poor and needy.

### **Effectiveness and the Kingdom of God**

How can effectiveness be measured? This depends very much on the definition of effective. It was noted above that the dictionary definition of effective is “successful in producing a desired or intended result”. The question then is: What is the intended result for the church? Biles’ summary of the role of the church is remarkably clear; it is to “sight, signal, support, and celebrate the coming of the kingdom. Having sighted that coming in Christ, the church is to signal it in Word and life.”<sup>44</sup>

The question then is: What does it mean to do this -- given that it is God who brings his kingdom to fulfilment?

In terms of measuring effectiveness I would like to take up and pursue the notion from Callahan and Biles that being effective is about an attitude. For Callahan the key for a church was an attitude which he calls ‘good shepherd’ rather than the ‘bo-peep’<sup>45</sup>. In other words an attitude of ‘seeking’ which Callahan sees in Jesus own life, rather than an attitude of ‘waiting for them to come home’. For Biles the key is the pursuit of excellence.<sup>46</sup> Seeking excellence in ministry is an attitude which Biles believes is the most appropriate for the church to pursue. I would argue that being effective for the church involves two things: 1. An attitude: the attitude of focussing on the present and coming kingdom of God; 2. The achievement of an aim: that is, having embedded firmly in its life the goal of being a sign, signal and support for the kingdom of God. This was Jesus’ focus, and its outworking became clear as he moved around encountering people. For the church today, and especially the church of rapidly growing coastal communities, the embedding of the aim, will have observable outcomes although these will vary greatly depending on the context of the church, the gifts and abilities of the leaders and members, and the church’s stage of development. This focus on serving the kingdom of God may lead to growth in numbers, but it also may mean decline in numbers, as people are challenged, offended and scandalized by the radical nature of the change the kingdom

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<sup>44</sup> Daniel V Biles, *Pursuing Excellence in Ministry* (Washington: The Alban Institute, 1998), 20

<sup>45</sup> Callahan, *Twelve Keys*, xxi.

<sup>46</sup> Biles, *Excellence*, 8-9.

does and will bring. This, however, should not be a surprise to people who have read of Jesus' own life and ministry.

In our 'hard facts' kind of community this understanding of effective may seem something of a 'cop out'. The problem however is that given the wide range of contexts in which the church operates, and the nature of the task of witnessing to what God is doing as he brings his kingdom to fulfilment, many measures of effectiveness which depend on numerical growth (and many of them do), are only talking about half the story in terms of what the church should be doing. The key to determining effectiveness for the church is to start with the kingdom rather than starting with the church. That is, to examine Jesus' life, Jesus' faith, Jesus' teaching and Jesus example and discern what it means for the church to participate in those as we continue to be sent as Jesus was sent.

This understanding of church effectiveness focussed on the present and coming kingdom of God is not about letting leaders off the hook in terms of doing their job. In fact it might be putting leaders on the hook. From my own experience as a church leader in a rapidly growing coastal town, I know that it is enormously tempting in today's context for leaders to focus on the church for the happiness of its members, and to focus on numbers because numerical growth is easily measurable and widely appreciated, all the while actually being very wide of the mark as we look at Jesus, own ministry. Depending on where the church is located and the gifts of the leader, it might actually be easier to grow the church numerically than to participate in ministry which mirrors the ministry of Jesus.

What might mark a church which has as its goal a focus on the reality of the kingdom of God? Primarily the church will be marked by something not often seen in many churches -- an awareness that we are participants in the emerging kingdom of God. Life and ministry will be seen through the 'kingdom lens', and this will influence the life of the church. What this means will differ according to the context of the church but may include some of the following:

- Perhaps there will be advance in numbers. If Jesus' own example is anything to go by there will be opposition and misunderstanding.
- The church will proclaim confidently the death and resurrection of Jesus and encourage others in repentance, and faith in Jesus as Lord.

- There will be people whose lives are being made whole by experiencing God's love, forgiveness and acceptance.
- The church community will be one of hope and expectation, and decisions of the church will be influenced by this dimension.
- The church will include people who are excluded in society, as well as the poor and marginalized, including people who have been marginalized by the church itself. This may seem contradictory, but Jesus' own followers included people who were excluded by the good living religious people of Jesus' own society. The institutional church of today as part of its own life preserving nature, may well exclude people who would be included by Jesus. This is a challenge for the kingdom focussed church.
- The kingdom focussed church will reflect its own community and will not be homogeneous unless the society of which it is part is homogeneous.
- The church will be conscious both of the leading of the Spirit for the church and the working of the Spirit outside the church.
- The church will also strive to make disciples of Jesus: people who follow Jesus and have his faith and life as their model.
- The church will not be focussed on its own survival and growth--that's actually a sign it's on the wrong path.
- The church will be a place where unity is sought and where forgiveness is given freely but not without cost.
- The church will consciously seek to be an inclusive community where people not only are welcomed but feel like they belong.
- The church will be committed to radical godliness and the way of the cross that Jesus lived.

Having these activities and being influenced by these attitudes will lead to the church in coastal towns displaying the kinds of 'signs of the kingdom' referred to in the previous chapter, these are: love, reconciliation, an outward focus, a high expectation of the role of the Holy Spirit, the inclusion of the poor and excluded, hope based on God, service and trust. It is these activities and attitudes which will mark effective churches in coastal towns.



Given the realities of the coastal communities there are some signs of effectiveness that are particularly relevant: the ability to be outward looking; the ability to welcome and offer community; the ability to focus well on communicating the good news that is Jesus; reliance on the holy spirit; the opportunity to welcome the excluded.

It should be noted that these outcomes might come from a focus on the kingdom of God, and a participation in its present and coming reality. The list above is not a list of tasks that needs to be done, and so ticked off, in order to have that focus. I would argue that the process actually works the other way around. A church is effective when it focuses on the kingdom of God with trust, enthusiasm, and commitment, asking God to lead it so that it might focus on the kingdom in the most appropriate way for its context. The outcomes are left to God who uses the church to point to the kingdom.

As noted in Chapter One, the definition of practical theology is: empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society. Given the importance then of the empirical nature of practical theology and the importance of the reality of contemporary society to any practical theology work, it is important to examine the experience of Christians in coastal towns. This will be carried through via a survey of leaders, members and newcomers in a number of coastal towns. The results of the survey are the subject of the following chapter.

## Chapter 5: The Church in Rapidly Growing Coastal Towns

In order to gain an understanding of elements which might contribute to a church in rapidly growing coastal towns being effective, I decided to survey some churches in the study area. The first issue I faced was how to locate effective churches for the survey. To assist with this I contacted the *National Church Life Survey* (NCLS). The NCLS is a joint project of Anglicare NSW, the Uniting Church Board of Mission in NSW and the Australian Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church. NCLS conducted congregational surveys across the nation in 1991, 1996 and 2001. The 2001 survey included congregations from the Anglican Church, Baptist Church, Catholic Church, Churches of Christ, Christian City Church International, The Apostolic Church, Reformed Churches of Australia, the AOG Church, Vineyard Fellowship, Christian Revival Crusade, Lutheran Church, Christian & Missionary Alliance of Australia, The Presbyterian Church in NSW, QLD and S.A., The Salvation Army Eastern and Southern Territories, The Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church and Wesleyan Methodist Church. Church attenders in all participating congregations were surveyed in May 2001 via a written survey completed during church services on that day. Over 435,000 church attenders in more than 7,000 congregations were surveyed making it one of the largest surveys of its kind in the world.<sup>1</sup> Church leaders were separately surveyed as were congregational leaders.

I approached the NCLS to ask for assistance in locating churches which might be more effective than others in rapidly growing coastal towns. In terms of criteria, I suggested that NCLS use the number of new members (newcomers) who had joined the church in the five years previous to the survey. NCLS defines newcomers as people who had joined the church in the previous five years, and did not previously actively participate in any church.

The limiting factor of this criterion was apparent right from the start of the project. It was clear that numerical growth represents only part of any measure of effectiveness, but I found the task of developing a measure for other facets of effectiveness very difficult. Using newcomers as the measure of effectiveness does at least measure numerical growth of people new to the life of the church rather than people who switched from one church

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<sup>1</sup> Kaldor, *Connections for Life*, 96.

to another. It is also an objective rather than a subjective measure which might deal with congregation members' feelings about the congregation. Whilst numerical growth is only part of the picture, and does not directly measure effort in evangelism, nor even effectiveness in evangelism (since my interviews indicated that the newcomers were not often the results of intentional evangelism), nor involvement in efforts to seek justice or help for the poor, numerical growth, as my interviews showed, does reflect the sense of vision and effective welcome and incorporation that a church has. I also discovered that even though the identifier for locating these churches was numerical growth, these growing churches also displayed many of the 'signs of the kingdom' or marks of the kingdom referred to in chapters 3 and 4 above. For the purpose of this survey I am using the word "church" to describe a congregation.

NCLS agreed to identify on my behalf the thirty churches in coastal towns between Newcastle and Tweed Heads of any denomination which had the highest percentage of newcomer growth in the five years previous to 2001, and write on my behalf to those churches inviting the leaders to contact me if they were prepared to participate in my study. I could have approached churches in the target coastal towns that I thought might be more effective and interviewed people from them, but that certainly would have reduced the random nature of this sample and could have led to me skewing the results through my own choice of churches.

In the end, eight churches contacted me and I arranged to interview the senior ordained leader, two non-ordained church leaders and one newcomer from six of those churches. I did not interview people from two of the churches because the leaders of those two churches were very new to their position, and had not been the leader when the NCLS survey had been done. I taped the interviews and transcribed the results.

The aim of the interview questions was to focus on the leadership of the church as well as issues that might be factors in the church attracting newcomers. I used a set series of questions, but also added questions as seemed appropriate to each interview. The six churches included three churches whose leaders described themselves Pentecostal, one whose leader described himself as charismatic evangelical and two who described themselves as Anglo-catholic. It is hard to say whether the larger number of Pentecostal churches that responded means that the Pentecostal approach is more effective, or

whether their style makes them more open and interested in the kind of approach I was using and research I was conducting.

In summary the major features I discovered from the interviews included:

1. Five out of six ordained leaders had formal theological study before ordination.
2. Five out of six ordained leaders were the same age as the largest age group of their congregation.
3. Five out of six ordained leaders had been ordained for longer than seven years
4. All the churches celebrated Holy Communion regularly -- four weekly, one fortnightly, and in one of the churches, the activities planned for the service determined whether or not communion was conducted. In other words if there was 'a lot going on' in the service, communion might not be offered. Or if the sermon theme made communion particularly appropriate then communion would certainly be offered.
5. None of the leaders saw communion as a barrier to newcomers so long as the meaning of communion was explained.
6. All the churches had their major services on Sunday morning. Large evening services were not a feature of any of these churches. One church had its youth service (which included communion) on a Friday night and another on Tuesday night.
7. All the ordained leaders had what might be termed orthodox and conservative views about 'the gospel', salvation, the resurrection of Christ, hell and the Bible.
8. In all the churches the lay people reported that the role and quality of the ordained leader was very important.
9. Those whose main area of growth or whose largest age group was younger used contemporary music in worship services
10. The welcoming nature of the congregation was vital, as was a sense of purpose and enthusiasm.
11. One of the churches specifically targeted the age group 35-45 years and the program of the church focused on this group. It was also the senior ordained leaders' own age group.
12. The majority of the ordained leaders saw their role as offering leadership, vision, direction and inspiration using descriptions such as -- team building, being a gatherer, keep the fires burning, motivation, see the vision and help others see as I

see. Five of the leaders were aged under fifty years. The pastoral role was part of the leadership role but not the primary role.

13. Most leaders are not involved in the wider community -- their time was more than fully occupied by the church.
14. None of the churches had significant social welfare/social outreach programs or emphasis.
15. Four out of six churches had sermons lasting twenty minutes or longer.
16. Most of the newcomers came either because of a need they had or because they were invited by or had some contact with a church member.
17. The role of the pastor's spouse was critical in only two of the churches. In those the spouse was co-pastor.
18. Four of the churches included blocks of praise singing in their worship services
19. Generally the ordained leaders conduct the preaching.
20. Two churches had rosters of lay people presiding over Holy Communion. In the other four churches, the ordained leader presides: two out of convenience, two because the church denomination dictates that practice.
21. Two of the churches reported that they had tried hard to reach out to the needy, but found that actually, the needy and poor were very difficult to deal with and did not fit in at all easily and ended up drifting away.
22. Only one of the churches reported that a significant percentage of the congregation was unemployed.
23. The "who you want to attract" question is an important one. Churches can grow using a traditional style but they will tend to grow by attracting older people. A more modern contemporary style will attract younger people.
24. All but one of the churches had a very relaxed membership policy.
25. The aim of the worship services was to help people experience/encounter Jesus, about coming into a closer relationship with God together, come into Gods presence.
26. Whilst all the churches had house-groups or other kinds of small groups, all expressed difficulty in persuading people to become part of them. Perhaps this is part of the anti-commitment feature of these populations.
27. The key in rapidly changing and growing towns is a church that welcomes people, includes people and which excites its people enough to invite others to come along.
28. There was a variety of outreach activities used, but major events were a feature of only one church.

29. All had a dynamic understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Descriptions of the Holy Spirit included: the spirit with us, active, enabling us to do things now today.
30. Length of service didn't seem to be an issue. Services ranged up to two hours in length. However three churches had a coffee break in the middle included in the two hours.
31. Newcomers valued: visionary leadership, good structures which help people as they become Christians and grow in faith, acceptance and warmth of welcome, that church wasn't boring.
32. Newcomers even from a non-church background value communion highly.
33. Concerning leaders, newcomers valued leaders' vision and their relationship with God/Jesus, good caring attention and sincerity.
34. Lay leaders of these churches showed a high level of agreement with the ordained leader in terms of the aim of the church. Also, the view of the lay leaders of the success and effectiveness of their church closely mirrored that of the ordained leader.
35. The lay leaders all agreed that at least part of the main role of the ordained leader is leadership-taking people with them, leading by example.
36. A number of the churches specifically referred to the importance of building relationships between members, one referred to itself as a relational church.
37. A couple of the churches focussed not on traditional evangelistic events but on events to which non-church people, family or friends can be invited, so that relationships are made and people connect.

What might these observations mean in order for the church to be effective in rapidly growing coastal towns?

### **Ministry Focus**

Given that none of the churches that were identified was involved in large-scale social welfare or social outreach programs, it may well be that it is very difficult for churches to grow both numerically and engage actively in social welfare or social outreach programs. The focus of the leader and the priority of the leader in this may well be very important. Churches that see numerical growth as important need to have a leader with the same priority. Churches that see other forms of ministry as key may need to have leaders who have the same priority. The role of leaders, especially the ordained leader, is absolutely

crucial. This issue of a lack of focus on social welfare, social justice and the inclusion of the poor is the particular area of a kingdom focused church which was missing in the churches I surveyed. Whilst all of the church leaders interviewed would say that they were keen to develop a church that welcomed the excluded, the reality is that the area of ministry to the poor which was a major focus of Jesus' ministry is missing here.

### **Leadership**

A key feature of these churches was that the ordained leaders saw themselves as leaders and the lay leaders saw the ordained role as having a focus on leadership. This leadership is not dictatorship, but the ability to discern a vision and help others to see the vision and join the journey. The ordained leaders also spoke of pastoral care and teaching as important roles for them, but these roles were seen as integral to the task of leadership.

Also evident was the high level of agreement between the view of the lay leaders and the ordained leaders interviewed, concerning the aims and goals of the church as well as an assessment of the success in reaching those goals. In some cases, the responses were almost word for word between the lay and ordained leaders (even though they were interviewed separately). In most cases there was also significant agreement between the lay and ordained leaders concerning the role of the ordained. The majority of the lay people saw the role of the ordained primarily in terms of providing leadership.

A further observation is that new members of churches also saw leadership and visioning as a key area of responsibility for the senior ordained leader.

Another significant factor is that like appears to attract like. In all but one of the congregations, the leader was the same age as the largest age group of the church. The NCLS found that there was a 'like attracts like' effect -- where there are significant numbers of one age group there is a critical mass which attracts more people of the same age. This is especially the case with young people.<sup>2</sup> My interviews and observations indicate that perhaps if a church wishes to attract numbers of a particular age group, or socio-economic grouping, attention should be given to the age and socio – economic background of the senior ordained leader. There is a particular challenge in this for most

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<sup>2</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping a Future*, 79.

congregations which wish to grow, especially in terms of young people, given that more and more candidates for ordination in mainline churches are older.

### **Theological Views of Leaders**

The leaders had what might be called orthodox or conservative theological views. When asked about their understanding of or belief in the resurrection for instance, the responses included the following: the resurrection is pivotal; Christ triumphing over death enables our salvation; the power and authority Christ had over death gives us hope facing our own death; the resurrection is absolutely paramount to the gospel and what we believe, because by his resurrection is the guarantee that Jesus died for our sins; if he didn't rise from the dead, we are still in our sins because he would have just been paying the price for his own sin; I believe that Jesus is alive and I do believe that there was an empty tomb; "I believe it (the resurrection) historically happened and it is vital to the Christian faith; I believe it (the resurrection) happened -- bodily and spiritually.

When asked their opinion about the Bible the responses from the ordained leaders included: The Bible is the inspired word of God; blueprint for lifestyle; way for us to find a relationship with God; gives us all we need to know about how we find a relationship with God; written word of God; it is the infallible word of God; I believe it is 100% God inspired; the inspired word of God; the story of God and his people; infallible authoritative word of God; inspired by the Holy Spirit and scribed by men; infallible word of God. In-errant.

When asked, "What does salvation mean for you?" the responses included: being saved from ourselves, Satan, death, to have an eternity with Christ; we are slaves to the world and sin and we are rescued from that; salvation is a living relationship with God now and into eternity; we have the opportunity to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ; salvation is where coming into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ people are able to find that state of mind where they are not controlled through sin and the threat of death. They find fullness of life through Jesus Christ without the burden of sin weighing them down; salvation means to be saved from that eternal damnation so it's crucial in the Christian walk; when someone is saved they are saved from their sin and from hell and destruction.



To the question, "What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel?'", the responses included: The good news of Jesus Christ -- how we can come into a relationship with God. Have that relationship restored with God because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and resurrection; the good news that Jesus has made the way by dying for us on the cross and all our sins are forgiven-- past present and future; the good news of Jesus Christ -- we have been given through Jesus death and resurrection the gift of grace and salvation; the person and the work of Jesus Christ as presented in the gospels; the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, that he came to heal the broken hearted, set the captives free, provide eternal life for those who believe in him, so the gospel literally means good news; the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. His offer of salvation through the cross.

The ordained leaders also had understandings of the work of the Holy Spirit that described the Holy Spirit's role as being dynamic. To the question -- "How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?" those interviewed responded: Enables us to walk as Jesus did and to carry on effectively advancing the kingdom of God. He empowers us for service, gives gifts to the church. Enables us to respond effectively in any given situation. The miraculous gifts of the spirit are part of the Holy Spirit's work. To lead us to Christ. To comfort us. To enable us in ministry; we are born again by the Holy Spirit. Whoever is born again has the Holy Spirit inside them. But there was an extra baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us and convicts us of sin. He speaks to us; the uniter, the healer, the teacher, the empowerer, can bring peace; in a broad sense to draw people to the person of Jesus Christ. Having done that then the work of the Holy Spirit is one of giving us the opportunity to have a personal relationship with God. So he is that bit of God if you like that we get in touch with personally on a regular basis; he is the one who does the convicting of people. He is the one who does the pre-emptive work of salvation. He is the one who enters people's lives when they receive Jesus. He does the changing process. He is the one who empowers people for Christian ministry.

To the question "Do you believe that hell exists?" The ordained leaders interviewed replied: Yes, but I am uncertain about what form hell takes. It's separation from Christ for eternity; yes. Scripture points to something very unpleasant and eternity without Jesus would be hell; I believe that hell is where God is not. So if there is a place where God is not then that is hell. So I think that there is probably a place where at least there is a lack of sense of God at least; hell is the opposite of eternal life, its eternal judgement, and its

eternal damnation if you like; hell is being totally cut off from God, the love of God, the blessings of God.

### **Leaders Age and Experience**

A further issue may be the age of the leader. Most of the leaders in this survey were under 50 years of age. Significant energy is required for the process of leadership and age may be a factor in the energy that is available. A second issue may be experience. Five out of the six church leaders had been ordained for longer than seven years, but none longer than twelve years. For two of the leaders their current church was their first ordained leadership role. Five of the six leaders had had formal theological education prior to their ordination, with the sixth leader completing what he described as an on the job qualification just after ordination.

### **Leaders Involvement in the Wider Community**

Only one of the leaders had any kind of significant involvement in the community other than in their role as church leader. The one leader who did have an involvement had that involvement through membership of a service club. A number of the leaders expressed a wish that they might be more involved, but said that their church leadership role consumed all their available time and energy.

### **Newcomers Coming**

Another key factor is the way that newcomers connected with the church. The newcomers interviewed did not start attending the church through some large scale event, but in an attempt to meet a perceived need. In most cases friends, relatives or acquaintances that were already part of the church were important, either by inviting them to church services or other events, or by being at the service when the newcomer first attended.

In a number of cases the newcomers interviewed said that at first the worship service or culture of the church was puzzling, but that did not put them off. Their own religious search, their need, or the quality of the welcome was sufficient to keep them coming. One of the ordained leaders interviewed described his regular practice of explaining what was happening in the service specifically to help newcomers. Not understanding what is happening however, does not seem to be a deterrent for newcomers, especially if there are avenues for education in the culture of the church. The quality of welcome and the next

step of inclusion is especially important in the kind of coastal community where there is great mobility. The quality of welcome was the one major consistent feature across all the churches. This is not just welcome at the door, but follow up as well, and incorporation into the life of the congregation.

### **Communion**

The place of communion within the worshipping life of the church was also interesting. All the churches reported they had communion at their main services; the majority weekly, one fortnightly and one whenever the pastor saw that communion fitted in with the theme of his sermon. None of the leaders and none of the newcomers reported that communion was a barrier to newcomers. Two newcomers reported that communion was the most valuable part of the service for them. One feature of the majority of the churches was the way communion was conducted. Two of the churches had lay people on roster to conduct the communion part of the service, and the person leading the communion gave a short reflection on the meaning of communion to them, and did not use any form of set prayer or rite. In two of the churches the ordained leader conducted the communion because they found this more convenient; and in two of the churches the ordained leader conducted communion because that was the expectation of the denomination. The majority of the churches did not use a set form of prayer or liturgy for communion, although all had a pattern which they tended to follow.

### **Casual or Formal**

A feature of the churches that I observed rather than determined via interview, was the casual nature of a number of them. The ordained leaders of churches that were growing in numbers of older people tended to dress in distinctive clerical attire. The ordained leaders of churches that were growing in terms of younger people were dressed much more casually, and not in distinctive clerical attire.

### **Service Issues**

The time of church services may also be a factor for the coastal populations. In city congregations it is often the case that attendance at Sunday evening youth services is among the largest if not the largest of the week. However none of these coastal churches reported a large Sunday evening service though most had them. In each case the largest service attendances were on Sunday morning. Two churches had separate youth services,

one on Friday night and the other on Tuesday night, but the number of people attending was still lower than on Sunday morning. This may be a significant difference between churches of coastal areas and churches of major cities.

The majority of the churches were very clear that the aim of the service was connection with God/Jesus, and in the majority of cases large time blocks were spent in singing. Each of these (four from six) saw singing as very important and the music which was used focused on enabling praise and worship. An emotional response through music was part of the event.

The length of sermons did not seem to be a major factor. The majority of the sermons were longer than twenty minutes, but this was not recognized as negative and in fact some people interviewed commented favourably on the quality of the preaching.

In most cases the quality of welcome, and the quality of the atmosphere, for instance there was an expectation that 'something good is happening here', as well as the quality of fellowship and incorporation were noted as being very important. One church reported that it intentionally seeks to maximize what it calls the 'wow' factor. It has parking stewards helping people park their cars (the church is located in an industrial area where there was basically only street parking available); on rainy days the parking stewards have umbrellas and bring people into the church under the umbrella. The goal is that when people first encounter some rostered person from the church their reaction is 'wow!'. A lot of attention has also been paid to the interior of the church so that the response of a newcomer as they walk in to the building is 'wow'. When the music starts the music and sound system is of a high quality so that the response is 'wow'. When the sermon is preached, again it is intended to produce the 'wow' response.

The interviews produced some results that were very surprising to me, as well as some which because of my experience of coastal towns was not surprising at all. For instance I was not surprised at the degree of importance that was attached to the task of welcoming. This is not just a friendly greeting at the door of the church, but the process of incorporation so that people felt that they belonged.

Also not surprising was the differing approach of the churches. The more mainline churches saw themselves as seeking to include the widest possible age range, whereas one of the Pentecostal churches was focused on targeting a fairly narrow age range of 35-45 years. This church was in a town whose population is big enough to sustain such a narrow target. This targeting almost certainly makes the task of outreach more simple as the church can cater for a specific group more easily than if the target is a wider age range. It is interesting though that despite the church targeting the fairly young age group, substantial numbers of older people were attracted to the church because they too liked the young approach. I was also not surprised that the churches which used a contemporary style of worship, especially contemporary music, were more effective in attracting younger people. This is a major issue for churches which have an older membership but which want to attract younger people. If it is the case that the church has older people and traditional music, the question will be: Are the current members prepared to pay the price of change which will be required to grow a younger congregation, or does the church have the resources to start another service?

Although not surprised by some of the findings, there were some outcomes which I was not expecting. For instance, I did not expect the newcomers would find communion as valuable as they reported. This certainly runs counter to popular belief, especially in the Anglican Church, that communion and the inclusion of newcomers somehow don't fit together. I was also surprised to find that fairly long services did not seem to be a negative issue for newcomers -- as long as the service was not 'boring'; nor was the length of the sermon a particular issue. It is interesting to note though that a number of the churches which had longer services (up to two hours in length), actually had a coffee break in the middle, rather than having refreshments at the end of the service as is the practice of many churches.

It is interesting to note that many of the findings of my interviews are echoed in the most recent National Church Life Survey results. Peter Kaldor and his fellow researchers suggest from the 2001 survey: that the willingness of current attenders to invite new people to church is more important than the visibility of church buildings;<sup>3</sup> theologically conservative churches are growing;<sup>4</sup> congregations that successfully retain young adults

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<sup>3</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 182.

<sup>4</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 220.

and attract newcomers are more likely to make use of contemporary music and contemporary worship styles;<sup>5</sup> congregations with high levels of attenders who want to share their faith are more likely to have leaders with a vision for the future;<sup>6</sup> effective leaders need to help a congregation develop and own a vision.<sup>7</sup> NCLS did not reveal any strong relationship between service length and congregational vitality. The length of the service is not a barrier to newcomers if other aspects of their experience are positive.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of the similarities between my survey results and those of NCLS may be that the issues are the same for numerically growing churches no matter whether they are in rapidly growing coastal towns or anywhere else in Australia. The key is to put those issues over the demographic realities of rapidly growing coastal towns, to see how the church can be effective in its mission of witnessing to the kingdom of God, including the task of attracting newcomers, in the context of the realities of coastal populations and this is the task of the final chapter of the thesis.

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<sup>5</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 52,62,64.

<sup>7</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 145.

<sup>8</sup> Kaldor, *Shaping the Church*, 85.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

As has been identified in Chapter Two, the populations of rapidly growing coastal towns in the study are generally older, poorer, less culturally diverse, with less formal education, more likely to be Australian born and Australian citizens, have lower participation in the workforce and have higher unemployment, more likely to be married, widowed or divorced and more likely to describe themselves as Christian than is the overall Australian population. The coastal towns are unique populations, and the question for this study has been: how can the church in these rapidly growing coastal towns be effective?

In Chapter Three the task of the church was described as focusing on the kingdom of God. This was summarized in the words of Daniel Biles' -- sighting, signalling, supporting and celebrating the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> This living the reality of the kingdom should be reflected in actions and attitudes. I suggested that there might be eight 'signs of the kingdom' that are important: love, reconciliation with God and people, an outward focus, and expectation of an active role by the Holy Spirit, the welcoming of the poor and excluded and the pursuit of justice for all, hope in God and trust in God.

In Chapter Four the notion of 'effective' was described in terms of an attitude -- that is, the church is effective when it is focused on the kingdom of God, and sees its life in terms of serving the kingdom. As also noted in Chapter Four, this does not mean that the church will be passive as it waits for God to bring in his kingdom; rather the church will seek to do as Jesus did, that is, proclaim the reality of the kingdom and live the reality of the kingdom in the context in which it finds itself. In chapter four I developed the 'signs of the kingdom' into actions which seek to give practical expression to those signs. These include: a confident proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus and an encouraging of repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord; an experience of people finding wholeness and healing through Gods love and forgiveness; decisions of the church will be influenced by hope in God and expectation of God's presence and leading; a welcoming and including of the poor and marginalized in society; a church community which reflects its wider community; a focus on the making of disciples for Jesus; a repudiation of a focus on the survival of the church itself, but instead a focus on living the reality of the kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Biles, *Pursuing Excellence*, 103.

Chapter Five examined the results of a survey of six churches in the rapidly growing coastal towns, and also highlighted some of the issues that are important certainly in terms of encouraging numerical growth in the churches of the coastal towns.

In light of this study, the final chapter aims to clarify elements of the church's mission in coastal towns with particular focus on demographic and cultural features. In the light of the experience of a number of ordained leaders, lay leaders and newcomers in coastal churches, insights are provided on significant issues for ministry in rapidly growing coastal towns.

### **Challenges**

Rapidly growing coastal towns present definite challenges. For instance, as shown in Chapter Two, residents of the coastal towns are generally older, and certainly have lower income, so raising financial support for the work of the church is more difficult than in affluent urban communities. More members are required for a church in a coastal town to be self-supporting and engage paid staff. The 'retirement mentality', beautiful coastal location and holiday focus of these towns also mean that they are slower paced and much more focused on a leisure lifestyle. From my own experience I would certainly say that people in these towns are hesitant to make commitments to any organization, the church included. For many residents moving to the coastal town gave them a chance to exit volunteer commitments including the church. Those who are retired often want to travel and are away for long periods of the year either on holiday or visiting family in other places. The 'grey nomads' who are seen on Australian roads especially during the winter months, are often visiting these coastal towns. Others are residents of these towns on their way to holiday in another location.

The relative absence of universities or other tertiary education opportunities, and high unemployment mean that people in their late 'teens' and early twenties often leave the coastal towns. This means that the experience of the church is one of consistently losing young people who might otherwise be in a good position to help the church as resource people, for instance, musicians, and young leaders. Churches in coastal towns often find youth and children's ministry more difficult on account of the fact that many able and energetic young adults, who might otherwise share in a volunteer children's or youth ministry, have left the town for a larger city.



The high mobility of coastal towns brings both positive and negative results. In a positive way the high mobility means that it is likely new people will come to the church. However, most coastal churches also experience large numbers of members moving to another location. This movement hinders the development of trained, accepted and experienced lay ministry in coastal towns.

The church in most coastal towns also does not have the same opportunity of part time employees -- people who might be studying at a tertiary institution and wanting to work part time, as does the church in large cities. The fact that there are no theological colleges/seminaries in any of the coastal towns in the region means that the churches of the coastal towns, unlike those of cities such as Sydney, find it impossible to have theological students on placement or for part-time employment and thus again miss out on an important labour option.

One final example of challenge for the churches of the coastal towns is church music. Since few churches can afford full-time musicians, most church musicians are at best working part time for the church whilst supplementing their income with work in other areas of music. Once again, because of their relatively small size, coastal towns have fewer regular employment options for musicians and this usually means that the church has less access to these kinds of important resource people than does the church in major cities.

The church is faced with a challenge and an opportunity -- being part of rapidly growing populations, in some of the most beautiful parts of the country, but with very few resources to work with, especially when compared to the church in the large cities. After living in Sydney now for four years, I am particularly aware of these advantages that the city has over the coastal towns. The challenges however, in some cases also provide opportunities for the church to proclaim the kingdom of God.

### **Ministry Opportunities**

If the kingdom is good news for the poor, important questions arise. Who are the poor of the coastal communities? What aspects of life in coastal communities do not reflect the kingdom of God? How can the church be a foretaste of the kingdom in this context?

One of the immediate areas of need is that of community and relationship. A dramatic feature of the populations of these coastal towns is that a high proportion of the population has moved to a different address within the last five years. Another feature is the higher percentage of widowed and divorced people compared to the overall situation in Australia. It follows that an important issue to be addressed in these towns is the issue of community life. People who are new to a town, those who have experienced major life-changes such as the death or divorce of a spouse, may have particular need of community. People may well be lonely, isolated and excluded. Towns that are in physically beautiful locations can also be very unhappy places for some of the residents.

The opportunity for the kingdom-focused church is to model and offer a welcoming, open, inclusive and supportive community and so witness to the reality of the kingdom of God. The importance of this ministry focus was very clear in the survey, where all the newcomers (people who had joined the church within the past five years and had not had a background in church attendance) identified the welcoming nature of the church they had joined as a vital part of their joining and remaining a part of that church. In this we are not talking just about a friendly face at the door of the church, although that certainly helps. What is crucial is what happens beyond the initial 'hello' -- the way that newcomers are included in the life of the church so that they feel they belong. A welcoming community has as part of its purpose, the aim that all people may experience God's love and know they are included. In the process of being part of such a community its members hear the gospel in words and experience the gospel in the life of the community. This issue of welcome and inclusion is absolutely crucial for the church in rapidly growing coastal towns. As I reflect on Jesus' ministry portrayed in the gospels, so much seems to concern welcome. Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus welcomed children. Jesus welcomed the poor. Jesus welcomed the sick. Jesus welcomed women. In other words, Jesus welcomed powerless people and people whose situations, lifestyle or physical condition isolated them from the rest of society.

Of course, people cannot be part of a welcoming community if they do not know it exists. An important issue confirmed in the interviews is the way that newcomers join the church. For most newcomers interviewed, the reason they joined was not because the church building was highly visible or because the church had great publicity or ran major outreach events. The reason that most people joined was that they had some personal

connection -- either they knew someone already attending the church who invited them, or, when they attended the church because of a need they had, they discovered they knew someone who was already attending the church. Only one of the newcomers interviewed said that she had joined the church 'cold'. That is, she moved into the town and since she had been a church attender in her previous community, she went to the local church of her denomination when she arrived in her new town. The movement of new people into the coastal towns provides significant opportunity for the church. These findings have at least two implications. First, community contacts are important. If current church members have few friends or relatives who are not already members of the church, they have few people to invite to church. Churches therefore that have so many programs and so much activity that their members do not have time for activity outside the church community, may in the long run be hindering their ministry. The second implication is that existing members need to be sufficiently excited by and confident in their church to want to invite others to be part of the life of the church. Church members will not invite friends or family to church if they are not confident that the experience will be positive for the visitor.

Another area where the church in coastal towns has a particular role in living the kingdom is in helping the physically poor. Coastal towns all have lower levels of individual and household incomes, lower participation in the workforce, higher unemployment and mobility, all of which lead to higher levels of poverty and need. There are a number of ways in which the church can be effective in signalling the kingdom of God amongst the poor -- demonstrating that the kingdom is good news for the poor as well as living out God's bias toward the poor.

First, the church can seek to deal generously with the immediate physical needs that people have, by sharing the resources of the church. Although, given the 'small business' nature of many churches and the fact that the running costs have to be paid first, chances are that funds for distribution to the poor will almost inevitably have to be made from the 'surplus' and in most churches this is not large.

Second, the church can advocate on behalf of the poor for a just sharing of community resources. This can occur on both a local and global level.

Third, the church can encourage the development of employment opportunities and the extension of university or vocational courses for the coastal towns.

Fourth, and possibly most difficult, the church can work on developing communities which genuinely do welcome and include people that society and even the church regard as failures. In our society where people tend to be defined by what they 'do', being unemployed is socially very isolating. In our consumerist society people who are materially poor run the risk of feeling left out, or spend on credit beyond their means, thus worsening their poverty problem. The church itself can, without realizing it, contribute to the sense of failure for some people. For instance, the church's teaching on marriage means that people who are divorced or who are single parents can feel as though the church views them as failures or worse. Many churches talk about 'family' and use as examples the 'husband, wife and children family'. However those who have been married but are now divorced, or who are widowed or single parents or just single people can feel very left out. The development of Christian communities who genuinely welcome 'sinners', 'failures', and those who do not fit the 'normal' pattern -- and which genuinely make space for these people -- would certainly be modelling Jesus own ministry. Welcoming here means providing a belonging community, but also providing a situation where people are able to worship and grow in faith and service in ways appropriate to them. This involves using language, and opportunities and symbols which speak to people in ways appropriate to their situation.

In order for this inclusive culture to develop the church needs to have a particular mindset. Instead of being centred on itself and the spiritual happiness and success of its own members, the church needs to see itself as a 'kingdom colony'<sup>2</sup> the place where the kingdom is seen and known, the community where a foretaste of the kingdom can be experienced. This is not a 'walled colony' however, with firm barriers to keep the outside world at bay. This is a colony which is very mindful of being 'sent' as Jesus was 'sent'. This mindset would lead to a church which is a 'ministering community' not a 'ministered to' community. This church would have not just one or a couple of 'ministers' or 'pastors', but have a situation where all the members of the church are

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<sup>2</sup> Howard A. Snyder *Models of the Kingdom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) 153, in John Fuellenbach *The Kingdom of God* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 15.

encouraged to see themselves as and be equipped to be people who offer God's love, acceptance, forgiveness and healing to all with whom they came into contact.

It is significant that none of the churches interviewed had any kind of developed 'social outreach' or social welfare ministry. This could be because the criterion I used to identify these churches was numerical growth, and so churches with significant social welfare ministry were not necessarily highlighted. It could also be that leaders of churches that grow numerically have that growth as their prime focus and that focus consumes all their available energy. It is significant that only one of the church leaders interviewed had what they called significant community involvement apart from the church community. The others all said that they wished they had more community involvement but that their work with the church took up all their available time.

One of the particular benefits the church in coastal towns has is that the people who are part of the church community generally live in the town, and those who are in paid employment usually also work in the town in which they live and participate in church. It is also usually the case that people in coastal towns participate in leisure activities in and around the town itself. This gives substantial opportunity for the development of community contacts for the church. Church members can be encouraged to see their daily lives as opportunities to reach out to people who can experience the life of the kingdom.

Another advantage the church in coastal towns has is that a higher percentage of the population describe themselves as Christian. This means that for important times of transition for instance, birth, marriage and death, the church is more likely to be involved. In coastal towns this is especially the case for funerals. Large numbers of older people, most of whom describe themselves as Christian, means that funerals very often happen within the context of a church facility, or at least where the rite is led by a Christian minister. This leads to significant opportunity for the church to offer its ministry to the bereaved. City churches do not often have the same opportunity for connecting with people and offering care and welcome in the Christian community. It is important that churches in coastal towns seek to maximize the opportunities that this facet of coastal populations gives.

Additional opportunity comes because of the small size of most of the coastal towns. Most of the towns have some kind of hospital facility but most do not have big enough hospitals to warrant or access public or church funding for full time hospital chaplains. This means that the local church has opportunity to minister to patients and staff in the hospitals through visits by lay or ordained people.

A significant issue for the churches of coastal towns is the way the churches worship. The use of contemporary or traditional music and style significantly determines those whom the church is able to reach. The results of the interviews confirm what NCLS also discovered. If churches want to reach out to include younger people, contemporary music and forms of worship are important. Churches that continue to worship in older or traditional styles are less likely to be effective in connecting with younger people. Although the populations of coastal towns tend to be older (with some significant exceptions), there are still substantial numbers of younger people resident. My own experience says that the mainline churches have congregations that do not reflect the demographic shape of the community -- the congregations are older than the population of the town. A key way for the church in coastal towns to change this situation will be to introduce contemporary music and worship styles. Of course, this is somewhat easier said than done and comes with significant challenges. Most clergy for instance, have not been trained in this style of worship, and their age and experience probably means they are less comfortable with it anyway. Many coastal churches do not have the people to adequately resource contemporary worship with its emphasis on multiple musicians. The success of introducing contemporary worship will depend on either the existing congregation embracing the change or the church having the resources and opportunity to begin new contemporary services. Either way this is an inescapable issue but also an opportunity for the church in rapidly growing coastal towns.

There is, of course significant diversity in opinion concerning styles of worship. Whilst NCLS and my own research confirm that churches with higher numbers of young people and newcomers tend to use contemporary music and worship styles, it is also important to remember that different styles of worship are effective for different people. Some newcomers may well respond very positively to very traditional styles, and this needs to be considered as the church plans its worship.

Another ministry opportunity for the church in coastal towns is to minister in an intentional way with older people. From my experience churches tend to want more younger people, even if they are not prepared to pay the price to make this happen. However, one of the opportunities the church in coastal towns has is to work to include more and more of the largest population group the towns have -- older people, and so offer welcome, inclusion, love and community to older people who may, because of significant life transitions, be very open to and in need of, that experience of the kingdom of God.

### **Model of the Church**

One of the very significant issues for the church in coastal towns is the model of church that most use. The local church is mostly run like a small business or franchise. The pressure therefore is to build the congregation, not necessarily focus on the kingdom. This was discussed in Chapter Four. Success is therefore measured by the size of the congregation, the size of the budget and the number of people on the staff. Alongside this is the fact is that in terms of costs, by far the largest expense of the church is in paying its staff. This may be acceptable if the focus of the staff is on training/equipping the people of the church so that the ministry of the church is focused on the kingdom of God. However, for many church staff, the focus is either building the size of the church operation, or looking after the current membership -- a form of passive chaplaincy. This model of church as small business presents one of the greatest challenges for the church in coastal towns. I am sure that church leaders do not intend this model to work as it does. I am sure that all would desire a focus on the kingdom, but that is not necessarily reflected in practice. Whilst ever the small business or franchise model is operating, the emphasis will be on numbers and income, since this model of church needs both to function. This makes a focus on other parts of the kingdom ministry, which may not result in more money or people, very hard to sustain. The interviews indicated that for some of the church leaders it was a case of 'build up the church first until it is viable, and then focus on other things'. The difficulty is that once viability is achieved, sustaining it requires very significant effort, and so the development of social action ministry does not often happen.

There are a number of ways that a change of model can be addressed, but all require a different approach so that the focus is not on the church as the main end in itself, but on

participation in the coming kingdom of God. Perhaps the first part of tackling the issue is realising that it is one. This may well lead both to reflection on the problem, because I believe it is a problem, and creative solutions to it.

Perhaps one way to more effective kingdom-oriented ministry could be found if the church worked either regionally among congregations of the same denomination or ecumenically among the churches in the same town. It is likely that the most effective way would be to work ecumenically due to the reality that in most of the coastal towns there is only one church of each denomination and, whilst distances between the towns are not huge, they are significant when it comes to working together. Some pooling of scarce resources might lead to more effective ministry, and a reduction in frustration for individual churches. I realize that this really does cut across the 'ownership' of most churches where each wants to run its own youth group/children's ministry/bible study/soup kitchen and so on. But this may be a way forward and would, if it were possible, be a more effective expression of the church witnessing to the kingdom of God.

A second way forward may well be to use public buildings instead of church-owned buildings and so release more funds for ministry, but also allow more flexibility in responding to new opportunities and ministry needs. Congregations and other forms of ministry could begin or close with much less difficulty than is often the case. Schools, public halls, club facilities (RSL clubs are often the largest buildings in these towns), all may offer viable alternatives. This is not a new idea. The church in Australia has in many rural areas, for much of its' history used private homes, public halls, schools and local pubs as venues for services and other meetings.

A third way forward may be to investigate other models of church. These may include unpaid or part-paid ordained leaders, or teams of voluntary leaders rather than one or two paid leaders. This model has been and is being tried, certainly in some parts of the Anglican church at the moment<sup>3</sup>, but is often being developed because falling congregation numbers mean that there is insufficient income to pay the costs of the usual small business model, rather than through a conscious effort to be more effective in serving the kingdom.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Total Ministry* by Stuart C. Zabriskie (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 1995).



Other models may also include the encouragement of house churches -- the multiplication of smaller churches rather than a focus on a larger organization, with the minister/pastor/priest providing vision, oversight and training as well as acting a focus for unity in what might be a network of fellowships. In this arrangement house churches might gather on Sunday or some other day, either weekly or with some other frequency, for a celebration together to emphasise they are part of a larger Christian family. One of the significant contributions to this discussion in recent times is *Mission Shaped Church-Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*. Published in 2004, this is a report from a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council. The authors of this report make some interesting suggestions, some of which certainly apply to the church in coastal towns, including the establishment of new styles of church, for instance café church, and the development of church fellowships focussing on cultural or social networks. In coastal towns sporting networks such as golf, bowls, surf or other clubs may well provide opportunities for the development of house or club church gatherings. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said that 'church is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other'<sup>4</sup>. This definition of church lends itself to gatherings of people who share common networks and who gather to encourage each other so that they may witness to the kingdom. An important underpinning in the development of these fresh expressions of church is the move from what has been called 'attractional' to 'missional' churches. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch make this distinction in their book *The Shape of Things to Come-Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church*.<sup>5</sup> Frost and Hirsch believe that the time has come for the church to move from working to encourage people to come to the church building or activity (attractional model), and instead, seek to engage people where they are and where they already gather (missional model). The difficulty for this change is that the 'attractional' way of operating is so deeply embedded in the psyche of the church and is very closely connected with a view that numerical church growth is the most important measure of church effectiveness.

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<sup>4</sup> Mission - Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) vii.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come-Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Press, 2003).

Other possibilities for coastal towns include mid-week services -- either in the day time or evening. In towns which have church schools, the school could provide a network for a new church gathering to commence and be developed.

It is important that if any of the models are tried, the change be seen as a move to be more effective in focussing on the kingdom of God, rather than as a rationalisation or experiment because times are tough, with an expectation that when the situation for the church improves the small business model will be adopted once more. It is also important to note that some forms of church may be more flexible than others. For instance, independent or congregational churches may be able to be more flexible in terms of organisation, operation and doctrine than the Episcopal or Synodical churches, which tend to be more centrally controlled and collectively influenced.

### **Leadership**

The issue of leadership has already been raised and identified as being the most crucial issue for the churches of coastal towns. My interviews certainly indicated that the ability of the leader to work with the congregation to discern a vision, and then continue to communicate that vision, was very important. Newcomers indicated that this ability was vital, but so also did the lay leaders interviewed. In order to be effective in coastal towns, the church leader needs to be focused on the kingdom of God and not just on the building of the church organization, although the temptation and sometimes the pressure to focus on growth in numbers can be huge.

An important key to effective leadership is understanding the culture of the people the leader is leading. In terms of particular style, the coastal towns are casual and informal, so a leader who can operate this way is likely to be more appropriate than someone who is by nature more formal. The coastal towns are on the whole fairly small relational communities where the church continues to play a significant civic and social role. It is important therefore that a church leader in the coastal towns is able to appreciate this role and encourage positive relationships across the community. Opportunities such as conducting ANZAC Day services with the RSL, continue to be available to church leaders in coastal towns, and these opportunities need to be used in a positive way.

Church leaders in coastal towns, as in other places, need to be able to encourage members of the church in the development of their gifts and abilities so as to share in the

ministry of the church in either a formal or informal way. However, leaders in coastal communities need to remember that because significant numbers of their congregation are retired, church members may well take the opportunity to travel and so be absent for large blocks of time. The leisure focus of the coastal towns may also mean that commitment to voluntary tasks is difficult to obtain or maintain.

Church leaders in coastal towns also need to be aware of the educational background of the population. It was clear from the demographic analysis of the coastal towns that a much larger percentage of the population of coastal towns had left school at or before year ten, than for the nation as a whole. Whilst formal education is only one part of the educational equation, church leaders in coastal towns need to consider the level of formal education of the communities when designing communication strategies for their church.

Another factor for church leaders in coastal towns is that unlike their city colleagues it is likely there will be only one congregation of a denomination in each town. In the city it is possible for people to search for a church of their denomination which suits them; however in coastal towns this is not usually possible. Another factor to be considered is that the rapid immigration into coastal towns is from a wide range of other towns and cities. The impact of this for mainline church leaders is that it is less appropriate to develop 'boutique churches', or, in other words, churches of a particular style. What is required is the ability to work with a wide variety of church style. This is particularly an issue for the Anglican church, which, probably more than other mainline denominations, has a very wide range of worship style and even theology within it. Church leaders of Anglican churches in rapidly growing coastal towns will be more effective if they are flexible and open to a wide range of the Anglican spectrum.

In terms of choosing a leader, one of the features that came from my interviews was that the six leaders I spoke with all had what could be termed conservative or orthodox theology and understanding of the Bible. Also coming from the interviews was the fact that the leader of each of the six congregations was the same age as the largest age group in the church. This may well be an important factor when choosing a church leader, given the opportunity of choice.

Church leaders usually need to make decisions concerning worship. In terms of coastal communities, and given the comments above concerning contemporary worship, the interviews I conducted indicated that a number of other issues might be important for coastal churches. These include focusing energy on Sunday morning services, as Sunday evening services did not seem to be a very positive option in all the churches I surveyed. The use of communion also seems to be positive in that none of the church leaders or newcomers I interviewed saw communion as a barrier. The newcomers valued communion highly, with two of the newcomers indicating that communion was the part of the service they valued most highly. Whilst there were some parts of the service they did not understand, and some parts of church culture they found puzzling, they found great value in communion.

### **Summary**

There is no doubt that rapidly growing coastal towns have their own distinctive culture marked by a leisure lifestyle in mostly beautiful locations. The reason I began this project, was that, as a parish priest in a coastal town, I was concerned to understand ministry in these towns with a view to the church being more effective in its work.

It is clear that the church can grow numerically in coastal towns. I interviewed people from six churches that were doing just that. The insights gained from those interviews were very important, as numerical growth is a positive thing. The issue however is that the mission of the church is wider than numerical growth. The mission of the church may lead to numerical growth, but numerical growth as an aim in itself falls well short of the mission of the church as the community called into being by the Holy Spirit and sent to continue the mission of Jesus.

Being effective church in rapidly growing coastal towns means first hearing Jesus message of the kingdom and then, being inspired and changed by that vision, living as a community which witnesses both to the coming kingdom and to Jesus Christ who is the kingdom in person. This living is not done in a vacuum, but will be incarnated in the particular culture of the coastal towns. The church, led and equipped by the Holy Spirit, will be focussed on the kingdom in the midst of the culture of the coastal towns, so that the poor are ministered to, the excluded are included, the hopeless given real hope, the sick are healed and repentance and faith in Jesus are preached. There are certainly many challenges for the church in coastal towns. There are also many opportunities for

kingdom-focussed ministry. It is to this that the church in coastal towns is called. In order to be effective, the church in coastal towns must take seriously the culture of those populations and design a ministry to suit the situation. Models of ministry which have 'worked' elsewhere need to be carefully examined, but in the end, the church of each coastal town must be genuinely the church of that town and not a copy of the church in another place.

Coastal towns are usually places of great beauty, but also places which need to know the reality of the coming kingdom. Just as Jesus offered hope to the sick, the lonely and the downcast so the church must do the same. Just as Jesus offered connection with God and with each other, so the church in coastal towns must do the same. Just as Jesus pointed beyond himself to the new reality, so the church in coastal towns must do the same.

As the church of coastal towns becomes more fully focussed on the kingdom, so it will be effective in rapidly growing coastal towns.

## Human Research Ethics Committee

### Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Gerard Hall Brisbane Campus

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Rev. Geoffrey Martyn Smith Brisbane Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Being Effective Church in Rapidly Growing Coastal Towns

**for the period:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2002 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** Q200203 23

**The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) 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 minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum 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.



Signed: .....

Date: 25 November 2002  
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

## **INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

**TITLE OF PROJECT:** BEING EFFECTIVE CHURCH IN RAPIDLY GROWING COASTAL TOWNS

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:** DR GERARD HALL

**NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:** GEOFFREY SMITH

**NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED:** M.PHIL

Thankyou for being prepared to be part of my research project.

I am a part time M.Phil student with the Australian Catholic University-Brisbane Campus. The proposed title of my project is –Being Effective Church in Rapidly Growing Coastal Communities. My full time job is National Director of the Anglican Board of Mission-Australia (ABM).

For 18 years I was a priest in the Anglican Diocese of Grafton, and am very aware of the rapid growth in communities between Newcastle and the Queensland border, which were once small fishing or holiday villages, and now are changing in character very rapidly. I am also very aware of the ministry challenge that these communities are for the church. These growing populations are neither ‘urban’ in the established context that we have known in the past, nor are they ‘rural’ in the proper sense of the word. It is my theory that these communities are rather unique, with particular features, for example, in comparison with the national average: a higher percentage of mobility, lower household income, higher numbers of single parent families, higher percentage of people born in Australia, higher unemployment, less participation in the work force, higher percentage of Christians, higher percentage widowed separated or divorced, lower school leaving age and higher average age.

It is also my observation that the church generally has not been very effective in ministering in these communities. Certainly in terms of numbers involved many congregations have grown, but I suspect they have not grown even at the rate of population increase.

I believe that these communities are already an important part of the Australian landscape, and will become even more important as people from cities move to these coastal communities, both in retirement and in search of a ‘sea change’, and also as rural populations move to the coast. Given my experience I am really keen that the church is as effective as possible in these areas, hence the project.

In my thesis I will be attempting to demonstrate the unique nature of these coastal communities and trying to discover whether there may be issues which help the church to be more effective in these populations. These may be issues of theology, practice, leadership style etc. NCLS has identified your congregation as one which shows high

levels of new members, so I would like to make an appointment with you so that I can seek to understand the factors which might make your congregation more effective.

Your own input will remain confidential as I will not be identifying any particular church or individual but rather seeking trends in my study.

I expect that the interview will take around one hour, and will be at a time and place which is mutually convenient.

I am hoping that the results of my research will help the church across these populations be more effective. If the results are as helpful as I hope they will be, I hope to make the research available to the church generally as it ministers in coastal communities.

You are of course free to refuse consent to participate in this research without having to justify your decision. You are also free of course to withdraw from the process at any time should you wish to do so.

I will be taping the interviews on audio tape so as to guarantee the accuracy of your input, and the tape itself will be marked only with a number. I will keep a list of tape numbers that coincide with the names of those interviewed, but the list will be kept separate from the tapes. I do not expect that your input will be sensitive, however I am keen to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any questions concerning this project please contact either my supervisor Dr Gerard Hall or myself. Dr Hall is the head of the School of Theology at the McAuley Campus of the Catholic University of Australia. His phone number is 07 38557254, and the campus address is PO Box 247, Everton Park Qld. 4053.

I will be happy to send you a copy of a summary of the results from the survey when the project is completed. I will contact all participants at that time.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

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 Supervisor or Student Researcher has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit at the following address:

Chair, HREC  
C/o Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Campus  
PO Box 247  
EVERTON PARK QLD 4053  
Tel: 07 3855 7294  
Fax: 07 3855 7328



Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, (and I really hope you will) you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me at 52 Allen Street Glebe 2037, as soon as possible.

Thanks

Geoff Smith

# CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: BEING EFFECTIVE CHURCH IN RAPIDLY GROWING  
COASTAL TOWNS

NAMES OF SUPERVISOR: Dr Gerard Hall

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER : Geoffrey Smith

I ..... (*the participant*) have read (*or, where appropriate,*  
have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Letter to  
Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree  
to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw 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 in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....  
(block letters)

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:.....

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: .....

DATE:.....

## Newcomer Interview A

1. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
1 year. A member of a church for the first 15 years but then fell away until recently
2. **What brought you here?**  
My wife became a Christian 4 years before me so through that our children were involved, and by dropping the children off, by going to some functions, getting to know people in the church. These four years were difficult with me questioning and refuting Christianity and looking for answers for myself.
3. **When you think about it-looking back, what were the things the church did to help bring you on board?**  
Firstly it was to do with how I wanted my children to grow up-I wanted them to grow up with real morals and with credibility and character. And as I learnt more about Christianity I saw that the Bible provided those rules.  
The church provided good programs for the kids.  
Then the friendliness of the people. The way the church didn't judge me for not being a Christian. Encouraging but not pushy. Very accepting. Very friendly. Very kind. I could see in them something that I didn't have.
4. **What events were you invited to?**  
Just family things really. Family BBQs and get togethers. Sometimes a visiting speaker would come along who was more non Christian and my wife would invite me to that.
5. **What influenced you to stay?**
6. **Have there been times when you thought about leaving the congregation/church?**  
No never
7. **What is the greatest strength of the congregation?**  
Great leadership. Visionary people who see a vision and help everyone see it. Not just an individual vision it becomes a shared vision. Good structures in place to help people as they become Christians and grow as Christians Home groups-they are for a reason, short period of time-5 or 6 weeks. The servant hood in the church is amazing-people give of themselves and make sacrifices.
8. **What is the greatest strength of the ordained leader?**  
A great vision. His relationship with Jesus. He can see ahead. He is not a person that wants to do the practical things-the pasturing things. The way he leads and his passion for church growth.
9. **What is the greatest area of weakness of the ordained leader?**

- 10. Are the members of the congregation encouraged to be part of the ministry of the congregation?-if yes, how?**

Yes everyone is encouraged to join a house group and do a job in the church. People are encouraged to come to church, join a house group, do one job-helping in the kitchen helping with kids church, taking up the offering etc straight away

- 11. What do you value most about the worship services of the congregation?**
- 12. What efforts were made to include you when you first started attending this church?**
- 13. What do you think is important for a church to be effective?**

## Newcomer Interview B

1. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
I started with home communions 2.5 years ago. I was looking after my mother and I rang and asked for home communion. She went to a nursing home and then my daughter and I started coming to church. My daughter has schizophrenia and cannot sit in the normal congregation so we come to the Saturday evening service which is very small.
2. **What brought you here?**  
My request for home communion was received very well and there was no problem.
3. **How have you found the people of the congregation to be?**  
Very warm and caring and accepting, especially with my daughter with her problems.
4. **What influenced you to stay?**
5. **Have there been times when you thought about leaving the congregation/church**  
No
6. **How important has the role of the ordained leader been in your becoming part of the attending congregation?**  
Quite important. But it wasn't the current leader that brought us to the church
7. **What is the greatest strength of the congregation?**
8. **What is the greatest strength of the ordained leader?**  
Very caring, dedicated. You are not just one of the crowd but are treated as an individual and you do get individual attention
9. **What is the greatest area of weakness of the ordained leader?**  
The weakness is that she doesn't have enough time. There are so many things that she has to do.
10. **Are the members of the congregation encouraged to be part of the ministry of the congregation?-if yes, how?**
11. **What do you value most about the worship services of the congregation?**  
I appreciate the whole service. It's hard to take a part out of it because it's a whole and each part has its own meaning.
12. **What efforts were made to include you when you first started attending this church?**  
People talk to me. People didn't turn their backs and walked away. I just felt that we belong and weren't outsiders.
13. **What do you think is important for a church to be effective?**

## Newcomer-Interview C

1. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
2 years
2. **What brought you here?**  
I moved here from another place and I went to church there and so I started going to church here
3. **When you moved here did you start to go to church straight away or was there a gap?**  
After about a month-after we'd settled in
4. **What influenced you to stay?**  
The service is different the books are different, but I'm a Christian so I had to go somewhere and it was the nearest one and Anglican
5. **Have you found the move and the settling in easy?**  
Yes I've found it easy. I started Bible study and got to know a few people
6. **Did someone invite you to the Bible study or did you take the initiative?**  
I took the initiative
7. **Have there been times when you thought about leaving the congregation/church?**  
No not really
8. **What is the greatest strength of the congregation?**  
I really don't know. Everybody's very friendly and very dedicated to going to church. It seems to be mainly the same congregation each week. and being a holiday place we get holiday makers especially in the main holiday periods. I think the minister has a lot to do with it to. He seems to be a nice friendly dedicated man.
9. **What is the greatest strength of the ordained leader?**
10. **Do you think the minister plays an important role in a church being effective?**  
Yes I do. I lost my husband just at Christmas and I found the minister was very caring of me. I found I just to ring him up and he was on my doorstep and I don't think honestly that my Rector in Sydney would have been there.
11. **What is the greatest area of weakness of the ordained leader?**  
I haven't found one yet that I can think of. But I go to one of the daughter churches so the senior minister might only come every second week.
12. **Are the members of the congregation encouraged to be part of the ministry of the congregation?-if yes, how?**
13. **What do you value most about the worship services of the congregation?**  
Usually I go to Holy Communion. I think the asking for forgiveness is important. The forgiveness and just being able to be there I think. I think that communion is

really important but then I'm an older person. A lot of younger people would appreciate not having communion.

**14. What efforts were made to include you when you first started attending this church?**

Not many at all. Being a holiday place there are lots of strangers. I wore my name tag. I go to one of the daughter churches (reflection-maybe the church at Tuncurry is more old fashioned and settled rather than the main church). And I blotted out the name of my old church. For the first month different people were preaching so I didn't really get to know who was the main person. I read in the newsletter about the Bible study and I made contact when I saw her name on her name tag

**15. Would you automatically go to the local church, or would you be prepared to shop around to find a church that was good?**

No I'd go to the local one I think. The first few times I went it was hard to get to the new service, but now I'm used to it. The one thing I still have trouble with is the peace part because we didn't have that in Sydney.

**16. What do you think is important for a church to be effective?**

It needs to grow.

**17. In these kinds of towns in order to grow what do you think the church has to do?**

I really don't know because lots of people don't like being pressured. If you start speaking to them about going to church they immediately back off unless they have had some other church experience.

## Newcomer Interview D

**1. How long have you been a member of this congregation?**

Approx 3.5 years

**2. What brought you here?**

My wife and I were having a bad time and she discovered this church through friends of hers who came to this church. She brought me along. She didn't think I'd be interested but when she mentioned church I was interested for some reason or other. I'd never had this curiosity before.

**3. Do you remember what was it about this church that encouraged your wife to come?**

I think my wife has always been searching for something and she has found it within this church. She went other ways including looking at the new age and I didn't like that at all.

**4. When you started to come to this church what was it that you remember that were positive?**

It was a very happy group. I've always known that church people were happy people. I just loved it here. Not the first time though. I left in a state of confusion and I told the pastor that I was confused about the spirit. It had been a long long time since I had been to any sort of church. Mind you as a child I used to like to pay a visit to church. I liked churches. I used to go and sit in the peace and quiet.

**5. So that first Sunday, what do you remember of that first Sunday?**

Not a great deal really. I felt like everyone was looking at me. I remember shaking the pastors hand and saying thank you very much, but I am a bit confused. But I've only missed 4 Sundays since, 2 Sundays when I was sick and didn't want to spread germs, 1 Sunday I had a row with my wife and didn't want to appear, 1 Sunday when I couldn't tithe and I was too embarrassed to come. But now I understand, that was in the early stage. Now I have something to say to people and I want to say it.

**6. what do you want to say to people?**

Well I was reading in the scriptures come anybody who thirsts, drink of the rivers, and I jumped in and made a pig of myself and I want to say to people-you've got to get to church. I want to fill this church.

**7. What influenced you to stay?**

There is nobody bored here. It is not a hum drum church. Perhaps at my age (70) I should be quietening down but I am not, the music goes, the spirit hits me I am away. It's not a boring church. The moment you walk into the church you can feel the spirit hit you. We have a small prayer room and we get in there and get into prayer in there and tongues in there and we just power on. So by time we get into church I just want to-up the wall.

If you never heard the pastor preach, the sincerity of the man is just incredible. He is just a quiet sincere bloke. He preaches the gospel and preaches it beaut. You know he understands it he understands he's got a young church and he explains it piece by piece. Perhaps sometimes he gets impatient with me, but that's me.



**8. So its not a boring, not a humdrum.....?**

It's not a stagnant church. There is nothing worse than going into those big old cathedrals and seeing the guys all dressed up and its all full on, heavy duty.

**9. This looks like a fairly casual church**

It is a casual church. I've never worn long pants here. It's a great place to be. It's a great place to come. We have BBQs here, we all sorts of things. I said to the pastor the other day-the church is not run on committees, the church is run on commitment. If each and everyone of us commits ourselves to do something then its great. If I could more I would. We are a real little community here.

**10. Have there been times when you thought about leaving the congregation/church?**

That's a hard question. I don't think my nose has been put out of joint once here. No I quite like the place. I'll never leave this church. I'm committed to this church.

**11. What is the greatest strength of the congregation?**

Its solidarity and comradeship. Its good. They are just all good people

**12. Is there a strong men's ministry here?**

I can't compare it with anywhere else because I've been nowhere else. But I believe that the boys here very good. The roof had to be put on, so we all got together and put the roof on-boom. Its very good.

**13. What is the greatest strength of the ordained leader?**

His solidarity. In my view his greatest strength is his sincerity. He is a pastor of sincerity. He is a very very good man.

**14. What is the greatest area of weakness of the ordained leader?**

He can't play piano, but apart from that.... He reminds me sometimes of a very bad comedian. Sometimes he mixes up his words up there. But he is great. He has good kids, and a good family and a mortgage.

**15. Are the members of the congregation encouraged to be part of the ministry of the congregation?-if yes, how?**

I think the pastor does everything-poor bugger. I am not informed about anything else.

**16. What do you value most about the worship services of the congregation?****17. What efforts were made to include you when you first started attending this church?****18. What do you think is important for a church to be effective?**

The church should be a community church. You know in the old days you'd go into a town and you'd see a church, or a scout hall. We've got to take over that role now in the community. We've got to look after our elders, and well I'm going to go to Woolworths or Coles and get donations-old cakes and set up a soup kitchen here. Pick people up and bring them here. I want the people of this community to come as

a point of being together and having a happy time. And there is the pastor and councilors here and people will get to know about it. The aim for the church is to look after our older people and our younger people with their surfboards, that keep them away. The only way is by bringing them to church-by giving them a touch.

## Newcomer Interview E

1. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
2 years. I came here on 4.2.01 and it was 2 or 3 months after that that I filled in my membership form
2. **Where you a member of a church previous to this?**  
No. Only weddings funerals and the odd Christening
3. **What brought you here?**  
12 months to the day previous my mother had passed away. I had a lot of issues with a marriage that had dissolved. I had gambling issues. Basically 12 months previous to walking into the church my world exploded. My mum had passed away and I didn't really have anything to fall back on. I started going to GA through 2000 and all of a sudden there is this higher power involved, and it took me near on 12 months to want to find out more about this higher power. The family home is just across the road from the church so I'd been walking past this place for near on 15 years and never noticed what it was called, basically never even thought about the place. I'd effectively made a list of the 'isms' I wanted to look at and as the anniversary got closer there was building tensions at that time. I came over to the shop and have to go past the church to get to the shop and I looked up and saw the name of the church and thought-here is an opportunity to find out.
4. **So what was it like when you came here the first Sunday?**  
The first 2 people I met I had met one of them previously in the job I'd had and thought he was a nutter then. On meeting him again that confirmed that. The next person I met was only a little bit better. I had this image of Christian people that are out there-raising hands and clapping and singing and all that was foreign. I didn't understand it. I had this image of hat goes on at church and the first two people I met confirmed it that only strange people come to church. It was almost like I said-if you are real God you need to show me someone normal, and then pretty much a few minutes later there was someone that I knew from school that I knew was normal. And she filled me in on what happens through the service.
5. **So did you find the service good /bad/odd?**  
There were a few things that happened that day that I would class as Godincidences. The first was finding someone normal that I knew. It was not a pastor led sermon but a visiting person and she told about her battle with anorexia, and she gave a testimony, it was about relationships and lots of chords struck with me, it was a set up for me. It was huge.
6. **So what did you do next?**  
I had coffee with the senior pastor. Effectively I was on a mission to find out, and I figured that the only way I was going to find out was talk to people who knew-and that was the senior pastor and associate pastor. Within a short time I struck up a good relationship with the associate pastor and within a month I was going to his home group on a Monday night. Meeting some of the congregation who were more normal.
7. **What influenced you to stay?**

8. **Have there been times when you thought about leaving the congregation/church?**  
No
9. **What is the greatest strength of the congregation?**  
Probably the openness and friendly nature of the leaders. Their willingness to share and the fact that they are accessible. The pastors and leaders are accessible
10. **What is the greatest weakness with the congregation**  
The lack of a structure to deal with new people-non Christians. There is no structured teaching structure there. When people come new they get fussed over a lot in the first few weeks and then it's pretty much left up to them after that where they take that.
11. **What is the greatest strength of the ordained leader?**  
His relationship with God
12. **What is the greatest area of weakness of the ordained leader**  
His relationship with God. In his knowledge he sometimes neglects to include everyone in the congregation. He assumes a certain amount of knowledge in some of his teaching. Sometimes that can be a concern.
13. **Are the members of the congregation encouraged to be part of the ministry of the congregation?-if yes, how?**  
Yes and the senior pastor is really pushing for that.
14. **What do you value most about the worship services of the congregation?**  
Communion. Then the sermon.
15. **Why communion?**  
Ever since I have walked into the church there has been a strong theme basically around the words amazing grace, and communion and amazing grace tie in. I am not worthy of any of it. And Gods sacrifice. It pulls the heart strings the most. I feel closest to God.
16. **What about the church services did you find them odd? Have you become used to them?**  
No they are still odd. People's spirituality I supposed would be the way to put it. I accept it now, but I still think its odd and I'm talking about things like talking in tongues, dancing, slaying in the spirit. I am aware of the presence of God during worship and intermittent periods during the service. I'll sit there through the service and roll on with it. But still think it's odd.
17. **But despite the odd-ness you are still here?**  
I'm not scared of it. The way I look at it is that it's effectively a journey and I'll find about that when I need to find out about it.

**18. What efforts were made to include you when you first started attending this church?**

There was some financial assistance. Other than that there didn't seem to be any kind of structured plan to welcome people into the church. I have spoken to the senior pastor about this. Because it is important. Having said that the sermons as the time were a bit like-topical sermons each week.

**19. What do you think is important for a church to be effective?**

The church needs to empower the people in the congregation and help them to go out and let people know that there is an alternative to what ever they are doing.

## Non-ordained leader Interview A

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Elder-elected as a spiritual help to work beside the ordained leader. One of 2 elders.
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
18months. Attending for periodically for 4.5 years because we were living away from here but still come here from time to time
3. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
Yes
4. **If it does what is it?**  
To be a loving family, a healing hospital and a mighty army. We want to be prayerful. Evangelism is also important for us. Worship is also important for us.
5. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
Probably hard to say from the inside. But I've seen people coming along and I've seen growth. I've seen people coming with little self esteem and be helped. Haven't seen great results of the mighty army yet.
6. **What is good about your congregation?**  
We have vision. People are genuine. Variety of people-ages etc. Passion for God, passion for worship, but passion for reaching out-we have a school attached to this school. A drug rehab centre attached to this church and we have missionaries attached to this church.
7. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**
  - a. an intimate relationship with God
  - b. a godly person who can get a team around them. No such thing as the perfect person, and so any ordained person needs others around them and to form a team.
8. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**  
I don't put importance on one particular thing. Singing is really important. We sing for about 40 minutes in a block. But it's the family coming together and doing things together.
9. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
Hearing from God. Being a godly person and then passing it on to us. Guiding us into godly ways
10. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**  
Really haven't been many conflicts. Since I've been here he has dealt with the conflict at its source.
11. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**  
Exactly the same as Christ. Exactly the same as the father he is a person who comes into our life and fills us, gives us power and understanding, guides us into truth.

Leads us to make right decisions. Tell us through prayer what the father wants us to know. His role is exactly the same as Christ but he not restricted by a body

**12. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

House groups, alpha and then a group for further teaching.

**13. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

Average service about 1.5 hours. We sing for about 30-40 minutes then children go to the hall for children's church.

Pattern-sing for 30-40 mins; collection; announcements; praying for people; communion; prayer time; sermon (sermon is 30-40 minutes); finish with time for prayer, last song. The music is modern.

## Non-ordained leader interview B

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
A deacon/ secretary treasurer and the pastor's secretary
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
A participant for 22 years and a registered member for 10 years and a leader for 10 years.  
To become a registered member you apply for membership so that you can have voting rights and be in leadership and be on the school board. To qualify you have to read the constitution make a statement of commitment to the church.
3. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
Yes
4. **If it does what is it?**  
To become a loving family, a healing hospital and a mighty army for God.
5. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
I think we have been rather inward focused, but we are becoming more outward focused.
6. **What is good about your congregation?**  
An acceptance factor. We try to encourage and nurture and love people
7. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
Pastor the members and equip them to see a gift in someone and encourage them
8. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**
9. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
Teaching and love for the people
10. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**  
Better now than he used to, because now he listens to God rather than the people around him.
11. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**  
I'm very aware of his presence. It makes me shake during prayers and during worship
12. **What Christian education is available in the congregation?**  
Alpha, house groups, network,
13. **Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**  
Contemporary. The age range-good mix probably from 25 up. 170 people come to church. The morning service is the biggest with about 150 people



**14. What's the role of the pastor's spouse if the pastor's spouse has a role?**

The pastor's spouse doesn't attend this church. But I don't believe there should be an expectation of a role. The spouse should just come and be one of us.

## Non-ordained leader Interview C

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
I work in the office as office manager and worship leader
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
5 years
3. **Where you part of a church before that?**  
No
4. **So what was it that drew you here?**  
I wanted to know God. I wanted answers. Also one of my family members my uncle was going here and he invited us (my family) along and we came along and checked it out and we loved it.
5. **What was it that grabbed you?**  
The realness. The people were real. It wasn't just some fake thing. Really friendly not too pushy or overpowering. It was powerful. The moment you walked in you sensed the power of God. Love. When the senior pastor started it was about real stuff that you could understand.
6. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
Definitely
7. **If it does what is it?**  
To save the lost, to make disciples, to empower the saints. Reaching our community
8. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
Very effective. We try to involve ordinary people not church people. We bring in international business or motivational speakers.
9. **What is good about your congregation?**  
Friendly, bright, relevant
10. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
Make disciples. Look after the flock. Grow the leaders. Grow a team.
11. **Is it the pastor who discerns the vision?**  
Yes I think so.
12. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**
13. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
Leadership ability. His ability to grow leaders and impart into leaders. Systems.
14. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**  
Pretty well really. Confidentiality is pretty big. It all depends on the conflict really. If it's small it's handled by the pastor. If it's bigger then most of the leaders would be involved.

**15. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

To lead, guide, walk beside you, help in what you do.

**16. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

GROW course for new Christians. Bible studies. Bible College

**17. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

Contemporary. Today's music

**18. Does the senior pastor's spouse play an important role in the church?**

Yes she works alongside the pastor. She does women's ministry. Follows up new people. If the senior pastor is away then the spouse runs the services.

## Non Ordained Leader Interview D

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Accounts manager, pastoral care member
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
Years
3. **What made you chose this church?**  
Moving from western NSW the decision was based on personality. We had a holiday home in the area so we had friendships with people who live here, and they highly recommended this church. And so when we came on holiday we came to this church. The man in charge here made it his undertaking to ring us from time to time in western NSW where we lived and we were very impressed by that.
4. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
The leadership of the church has a clear vision-this church has a lot of activity and there are lots of ways that people can touch base with this church.  
We are committed to growth. To reach the unreached. To have a church that attracts particularly the young. To save the unsaved. There is always an altar call. There are highly skilled musicians. Also to build a new church and plant-1000 seat auditorium. The preaching is topical.
5. **How many services are there?**  
One at 10 on Sunday morning then 6pm Sunday night then the youth run a service on Tuesday nights. The biggest service is 10am. We meet in a converted industrial building.
6. **If it does what is it?**
7. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**
8. **What is good about your congregation?**  
There is an air of freedom here, and people are really encouraged to mix with new people. There is still work to be done on relationships between people. Sometimes relationships are a bit superficial.
9. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
Leadership. Leadership energizes us. Pastoral role. Connection with his leaders. He puts a lot of time into his leaders.
10. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**  
Singing music-praise and worship bringing us into the presence of the Lord. I enjoy communion also. Communion isn't on a regular basis but usually linked to a message which is appropriate.
11. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
Ability to articulate the scriptures. Lots of energy and enthusiasm, Ability to lead people

**12. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**

When there is conflict it's dealt with. The senior pastor speaks to the person involved directly.

**13. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?****14. What Christian education is available in the congregation?****15. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

## Non Ordained Leader Interview E

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Peoples warden and play the organ, work in the op shop
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
48 years
3. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
Our first goal is to keep the church alive and attract new members
4. **If it does what is it?**
5. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
We aren't attracting the young people were hoping too. We are not losing people but our congregation is an aging one. We are attracting new members as new residents come but new residents tend to be semi retired or retired.
6. **What is good about your congregation?**  
Very loyal. They are really there because they have been touched by the Holy Spirit. Fellowship is really great. Very hardworking.
7. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
Guide us and conduct our worship and guide us and lead us spiritually.
8. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**  
Prayers, confession, forgiveness, receiving the sacraments
9. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
The ability to reach all people. To be adaptable and to be able to meet each person on their own terms. To be able to communicate well-especially people at weddings and funerals and baptisms. Our leader is also a good leader-helps people to go with her.
10. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**
11. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**  
Comforter, guidance.
12. **What Christian education is available in the congregation?**  
SRE, Alpha, Bible studies,.
13. **Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**  
The music-we are trying to introduce more modern hymns-modern words with old tunes. We try to have 2 and 2. We have children's prayer books. A nice happy bright hymn at the end and give children musical instruments for them to play.

## **Non- Ordained Leader Interview F**

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
I am the Rectors warden. synod rep, parish council,
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
17 years
3. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
I don't know if I'd use the word clear. There certainly are goals and aims and visions. But because our parish consists of 5 centres and those centres are different in their situation and constituents, it's a little bit difficult.
4. **Lets wind it back to the congregation that you are a part of that is in a costal town.**  
We are the growing centre of the parish. Our congregation has a vision-to be growing and reaching out to those who are coming, but at this stage our numbers aren't increasing as perhaps we'd like them too. So we are looking at where we need to move to bring those people into the church
5. **What sorts of things are you doing to try to reach out to those people?**  
We've looked at service times and that's a real nightmare in this parish. WE offer a Saturday evening service time as well.
6. **Are there many younger families in the town?**  
Yes. There is a pre-school of 25 children. Our infant's school has 78 students. 2 buses go out of town taking students to high school.
7. **If it does what is it?**
8. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
Not very effective but steps are being taken all the time. We have a ministry centre established now-the old rectory. The ministry centre has an op-shop which is significant outreach to the community with volunteers who are not part of the church working at the op-shop. We also have plans to use the ministry centre to show videos to Kids and we hope to start a video morning for the elderly, because there are many who are alone in their homes.
9. **What is good about your congregation**  
They are very loving, accepting. Very faithful. Prayerful people
10. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
Reach out to people in a pastoral role. People need that contact. Teaching. Leadership.
11. **For you what is the most important part of worship services**

**12. What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**

Very loving and giving. Good organizer. Unifier/leadership through changing the way the finances are run. Each centre had its own books and money. She has now managed to get each centre but one to put the money in the pool.

**13. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict**

They have always made everything very open. There has been very little conflict since our present priest has been here. Our priest is quite directive, although our priest always asks peoples opinions

**14. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit comes into our life and leads us we allow him to do the work he wants us to do.

**15. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

Alpha and some bible study groups, Bible reading notes are available.

**16. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

Sunday morning is traditional second order communion from the prayer book. We are partly high church. The Saturday night service is aimed to be a bit more casual. If everyone comes the attending number would be in the 30's Average attendance would be in the high 20's. Music is mostly straight organ.

**17. Is anything provided for kids in either service?**

No not really

**18. what needs to happen here for the church to be more effective do you think?**

I really think we need more people. I think we have gotten into a rut. Our priest is often challenging us about this. Our worshipping community here has an average of 72. People are tired. Because it's a small town, all of us who are part of the church community are also involved in running other things in the community, other community organisations –school, CWA etc etc.



## Non-Ordained Leader Interview G

**1. What is your leadership role in the congregation?**

I am a church warden. Co-coordinator of the Alpha program. Part of a new welcoming committee; synod rep, presentation board members

**2. How long have you been a member of this congregation?**

19 years

**3. Where you a member of a church previously?**

Yes. We moved here from a rural town, but not from this denomination

**4. How did you end up coming to this Church**

Because we had been living here for a year and going to another denomination, and I was one of the very young members in the congregation and we went every Sunday with our 3 school age children and the local older people all clustered together after the service and I was left standing alone and even though I had just been asked by the minister in fact I had become an elder in the church, despite that, we knew because of our children, people in this church that we are attending now, and so come January we decided to go and try this out. And we were met at the door by someone else by someone I knew and he greeted us like we were the greatest thing ever to walk through the door and sat us down and we just continued to worship there. And that man still attends this church. I had a notice in the diary last weekend asking people to come to this meeting this afternoon, and interestingly I got an email this morning from a lady saying that she didn't want to be a welcomer but she told of her experience coming to this church in the last couple of years the person who greeted her with open arms was not one of the official welcomers but this same fellow which is amazing. However she also went on to say that he had asked her to put her name in the new parishioner's book and someone had then invited her around to dinner, which we don't do officially but happened on this occasion and that first day she was introduced to the ordained leader and had a chat to him. However she went on to say in her email that a couple of ladies she has spoken to are still finding it difficult because no one has invited them to do anything.

**5. Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**

Probably has a clear aim to preach the gospel and bring people to Christ but whether in its practices it's..... The first one yes, but the other one.. to bring people in, a lot of the congregation probably aren't doing much to bring this about

**6. What are the main inhibitors do you think in the parish being more effective?**

For the last three years the biggest drawbacks we've had are... at the moment, this weekend we are losing our associate priest, he's going back to England, and there are all sorts of reasons given, but the main reason is that he and our main priest cant get on together. Prior to this person coming 8 months ago we had a period without anybody and prior to that we had a new priest straight from college who was with us for 12 months and then left because, at the same time he left his wife and three young children and even though he appeared to get on reasonably well with our senior ordained leader nobody knew anything about this. And so there was huge hurt and for ages afterward people were saying what a wonderful man this person was and isn't it a great shame because they didn't know the full story because the

bishop at the time felt he couldn't tell the full story because he could be liable to ... In fact that person and the person who is about to leave this weekend had one thing in common-they both had huge charisma, they were wonderful preachers and everybody loved them. Except the main priest. Last time it left a lot of hurt, this time it's left the church blown to pieces.

**7. If it does what is it?**

**8. How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal? It seems to me from what you have said that the congregation is not as effective in reaching its goal as it could be. Is that because there is not enough participation?**

There is big participation from the congregation in lots of things but most of them are inward focused. At the moment there is a service happening in the church which is for shut ins. Most of them come from one aged hostel, and it's a wonderful thing that's happening because most of the people up there are there with walkers and in the last year or two of their lives whereas there is a population out there of 20,000 people who we could be doing far more with.

**9. Have a dream; what would you like to do. How could you make things different? How could you be more effective?**

At the moment we have 5 centres. At the moment they all have the same type of service, the same type of communion service. And the style is till robes and candles which is great for the majority of our congregation which is probably aged average age 70. One of the great benefits of the priest who is leaving us this weekend is that we have been having a fortnightly spirit and truth service, a contemporary service at 5pm on Sunday nights because he is such a great showman and great musician as well and his wife is a beautiful singer and his daughter plays musical instruments it grew from average 30 people to average 60 people in a month, but even so that it still only second and fourth Sunday, and that is only in one church, the other five churches are virtually doing the same thing. So we are not providing enough variety. But we have five churches and only two paid clergy

**10. Tell me about Alpha and its role in the parish?**

We did Alpha with the previous Rector five years ago where we had about 45 people; we did it in the hall and had a meal which was very good except at the time they decided not to do the Holy Spirit weekend, mainly because they thought it was too hard. They then ran Alpha again, a year or so later and then they ran it again at one of the country churches. And then it didn't run again here. It's only started again this year where again we had decided to do it again and this time with the Holy Spirit weekend and do it in homes. In fact one of the Alphas we did at Probus.

**11. What is good about your congregation?**

It is a very happy friendly caring lot of people. And there are lots of things happening for people to be involved.

**12. So it's been a happening kind of parish earlier than the incumbency of the current ordained leader?**

Definitely.

13. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
To lead the congregation and to encourage the congregation to do all sorts of things. The ordained leader can't possibly do everything that has to be done, so he should be there to encourage and lead
14. **What does lead mean?**  
Lead means to lead by example, to come up ideas to do things that he feels will encourage them. And to encourage people by his or her example.
15. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**
16. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
Preaching. Resource management. Very caring person.
17. **How vital do you think is the role of your current leader is to the success of the parish?**  
This shouldn't be so but if the leader doesn't preach good sermons and isn't a likeable person a lot of people are not happy.
18. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**  
Not well. In the current situation earlier this year he had a huge amount of depression and didn't know how to handle his associate. He was threatened by his associate. This seems to be a common problem among other clergy. Very few clergy have experience with assistants.
19. **What's the role of the ordained leaders spouse if any?**  
The current spouse is a very bubbly person. There is no formal role but she goes around before the service shaking hands and asking people how they are going. She is involved in the Sunday school and she is always there with the ordained leader. He runs the youth group every second week and she is always there to help with the cooking. She doesn't work, she has four children.
20. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**
21. **What Christian education is available in the congregation?**  
Bible studies, Alpha, SRE in schools,
22. **Talk about the style of worship in the congregation-what is the music like**  
In nearly all the services organ music backed up piano. In the spirit and truth service there have been many instruments a lot of them from the associate and his family but other like age people have been attracted to that service
23. **Is there anything that you think contributes to the effectiveness of this parish that we haven't talked about yet?**  
The current leader has been having new parishioner's dinner over the past six months. Our leader has also introduced grief dinners once a month and he also has a healing service once a month which has grown. What we do marvelously is to welcome new people and visitors.

## Non-Ordained Leader Interview H

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Lay reader. Mission secretary. Choir organizer
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
15.5 years.
3. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
We have a vision
4. **If it does what is it?**  
The vision is to try to expand the witness of the church among the people outside the congregation. We do various things e.g. we have a bookshop which brings people into the area of selling and buying books and there are always things in the bookshop which can be given out to alert people to this parish. We have an opshop for the same sort of contact with the community. We run a court house ministry on 2 days a month, we offer free cup of tea or coffee to people attending the court house. In addition to that there is the usual scripture in schools and prayer and praise meetings. We do things in this parish that I am not aware of happening in other places. For instance we have a new parishioner's dinner twice a year to which we invite all the new people to come, and meet key members of the congregation who explain their role and their ministry in the parish. We also have a grief and sorrow dinner on a regular basis. People who have lost their loved ones and we come into contact with them through funerals and they come to meetings and have a dinner every second month. So we are doing things that like and trying to reach people outside our normal congregation
5. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
It's not terribly effective as far as the existing population of the town is concerned but it is effective for people who have just moved into the town and find a church which is willing to put a hand out to those who have just arrived.
6. **So that seems to be a crucial time-when people have just arrived?**  
I think so. We have two visitors' books at the church. One is a normal visitor's book and the other is a book for people who are just moving in to begin a new life here. We also have welcomers who stand at the door and the moment a person comes in who is a stranger that person's name is taken and from there they have come and we put a little plastic dove on their lapel so that they can be easily recognized, they are given a welcome, in the church service they are invited to a cup of tea and coffee and the congregation is urged to make sure that a person with a white dove is not left by themselves, but someone will go and introduce themselves and welcome and them and try to make them feel welcome. That happens irrespective if they are just here for the week or if they have just moved in. It's an ongoing attitude which has been happening here for some years.
7. **And what is the follow up process?**  
It depends on the person who makes the person who makes the contact.

**8. What is good about your congregation?**

I think it's a very loving and caring congregation, where people welcome, where people will go out of their way if someone is sick, or in hospital to offer to transport them, there will be someone who will take meals to the wife or husband at home. I think it's the most caring congregation I have ever been in.

**9. What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**

To encourage lay people in a ministry which is expansive beyond the time limits of the ordained person. To me the encouragement and willingness to walk with them in any task they perform should be the principal role of the ordained person

**10. For you what is the most important part of worship services?****11. What is the style of the music at the biggest service in the parish?**

It varies. We have a mix at every service of traditional and more modern choruses. Normally 3 traditional and 2 modern.

**12. Does the congregation cope ok with the mix?**

Yes the choir leads.

**13. Is it a robed choir?**

We robe once a month on what we call choir day or any special event. Other Sundays we sit in the choir stalls but we don't robe. On the choir Sundays we have the sung Eucharist on non robed Sundays we have the spoken Eucharist.

**14. How are children dealt with at that service?**

We have what's called kids church and they go into the hall and they have their own lessons and songs etc. They normally come back into church at the singing of the third hymn (offertory), and normally two of them bring the elements forward and from then on they sit in the front two pews with their church leaders and they are made very welcome at the communion rail. Children are brought into the holy communion at an early age in this church around 6-7. Each child is given a card and an individual blessing

**15. How many people usually come to that service?**

120 is about our normal congregation on a normal Sunday

**16. How many kids do you reckon?**

It fluctuates according to the season. Minimum of 6-8. Maximum of 12-14

**17. Teenagers?**

Very few. We have one family of two boys which are fairly regular.

**18. Has the ordained leader got children?**

Yes

**19. What age are they?**

15-16 going down to 5. There are 3 girls and a boy

**20. What role if any does the ordained leaders spouse have in this church?**

As a most loving person who every Sunday is in the church going around saying hello to people particularly if she is aware that someone has been away, or someone has not been feeling well she will go and speak to those people. She does that every Sunday.

**21. Does she have any other leadership roles?**

In the kids church she plays a leading role. She takes a role in the welcoming dinners and grief support.

**22. What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**

Willingness to take on new schemes. He thinks them through well. He encourages lay people. He is able to select the lay person he thinks will be best suited to that role and encourages them in that role. I think he is effective in that ministry. He is also a good teacher.

**23. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**

He is a forgiving type of man but he also encourages his lay people that he knows can offer help to people who are feeling discomforted, to try and utilize them to overcome the problem.

**24. Some churches are marked by conflict. Some churches are conflictual. Has conflict been a part of this church in the past 2 or 3 years**

There have been cases where individuals have fallen out and we are going through a trying present time. But we have overcome them all.

**25. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit is to teach and encourage us in our ministry and remind us of everything Jesus has said.

**26. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

There are 4 bible study or video discussion groups within this parish that meet within this centre that meet on a weekly basis. There is another bible study group that meets in the adjacent church and 2 of the 3 country centres have bible study groups, 2 in one and 1 in another,

**27. And they are led by lay people?**

Each one yes?

**28. Any other formal education opportunities?**

Apart from scripture in school no.

**29. If this church is more effective than most what do you think the main reasons might be?**

Because there are a committed number of people in senior lay roles who do a lot of lay ministry within the parish and they are the people who get things done in the place. They are committed and strong in their faith and they have in their bible study groups have convinced and convicted people in their own faith.

**30. How many worship services are there here on a Sunday?**

We have 5 centres in this parish. Two have services every Sunday. The other three which are in the country have services every second Sunday. At this church there is a 6pm on Saturday night and another at 9am on Sunday morning. And the other church where we meet every week is held at 7.30am every Sunday.

**31. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

The diocese is Anglo-catholic but the majority of people who come to this church would have come from other dioceses, and a lot have come from Sydney diocese. We have been very fortunate over the past 15.5. years because we have had three priests who have recognized the different style of worship which so many of their congregation has been accustomed too and they have fitted their ministry in to satisfy a broad band of parishioners. Its low anglo catholic and one of the strengths of this parish is the diversity of the traditions that exist within it.

**32. What was it about the parish that helped you stick?**

I think it's welcoming. We arrived here on the Wednesday afternoon and we went to church and they had a morning tea afterwards, and I have a fairly powerful voice as does my wife and after that service I was asked whether I would be willing to join a choir which was being formed for the purpose of the service for the consecration of the new church.; We said that we'd love to so we went to choir practice and met 20 or so parishioners straight away. Three or four weeks later this new church was finished. They were forming a gardening group to keep the grounds in order and I joined that. We were made so very welcome when we first came here that we just loved coming here. People coming into the church are given more than the opportunity of just attending a church service.

## Non-Ordained Leader Interview I

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Lay pastor, and I head up the counseling department, I co-lead a cell group, and I'm also on the board of the church.
2. **Counseling department, can you tell me a little bit more about that**  
Its in its infancy. Basically I'm here 2 days a week doing one to one counseling.
3. **Is that a paid 2 days a week**  
yes. Its fee for service, but its under the auspices of the church so its on a sliding scale. I also developed quite a few groups last year that we on issues such as boundaries, we've done programs for women who have been sexually abused. We are developing a group next year around the concept of friendship and effective relationships. We are in the process of training up 3 other people to take some role in that as well. They are not doing one to one counseling, but co-facilitation.
4. **And are you finding that those 2 days are being filled up**  
Definitely, yes.
5. **So what are people presenting with in terms of one on one counseling**  
Numerous issues. There are people who identify themselves as Christians and also people who identify themselves with no specific belief from the community. Its just basically word of mouth. I've worked for the last 7 years as a sexual assault counselor with community based organizations. So some of those issues around abuse such as sexual abuse and current domestic violence and past sexual assault. Some of that is referral, some is not. Also working with some young people with depression. The major issue is depression and lots of issues come from that. Because I am identified as a person with a lot of experience in sexual assault and domestic violence, there have been quite a few referrals in that area.
6. **So that's in its infancy. How long has it been going**  
I've only really started doing since March this year (2002).
7. **You are a professional counselor, how will you train the other counselors, will they be accredited?**  
Yes all the people that'll be working are either presently or have completed or are completing to degree level. The two people I have in mind, one already has an advanced certificate in social welfare, so that is a tertiary level; and that would qualify them to co-facilitate groups and work in crisis counseling situations, referalls. They are going on to degree level to do a social science degree majoring in counseling, and the other person is already two thirds through that degree and are at present working in disabilities and doing groups with me.
8. **Does this church see counseling as an area that it wants to be heavily involved with in the future?**  
They see it as very important and an integral part and its been a growing aspect of the ministry. They see it as important to be able to access someone or some bodies that are qualified but who also come from a Christian perspective as well. For



people who are already members of the church but they also see it as a valuable service to the community.

**9. How long have you been a member of this congregation?**

9 years

**10. Were you a part of a church before that?**

Yes

**11. Similar style church?**

A pentecostal church but different in style. Not as relaxed as this congregation. Probably a little more traditional in style.

**12. Traditional Pentecostal?**

Yes. That sounds like a paradox doesn't it. But it isn't.

**13. I think it's a really interesting thing that some Pentecostal churches are seen as more traditional**

I suppose it's like any denomination, and when you use the term Pentecostal it encompasses many styles, so I would say that this church is much more contemporary in outlook and thought

**14. What does contemporary mean?**

I suppose again it encompasses a lot more diverse ways of people relating from different backgrounds cultural and socio groups. There's more emphasis on relationship, and I suppose the whole issue of counseling. Music and the style of music and worship, ways in which outreach and evangelism are conducted. Its quite different. Its not based on the traditional, you know when you look at some Pentecostal churches, more going out and here we are in the community with our message type of attitude, where this church is more forward thinking, building relationships, having different events, doing things that people feel more at ease in coming to. More in line with the community and wanting to know the communities needs.

**15. And then serve those needs?**

Yes, to the best our ability, and always improving and looking for ways we can do that, because the community changes and evolves quite a lot really.

**16. It appears to be a relaxed kind of a church?**

Yes. I suppose accepting would be what I'd say people are able in something like dress. People dress the way they feel comfortable. There is the sense where people don't have to dress the same way or live the same way, you know that pigeon holing people.

**17. Do you think that this church does particular things because of the kind of population that is here, or would this church do the same thing if it was in an entirely different population?**

Probably not. The people who are draw to this church are part of this community so there is a sense of doing things that fit with the community. And I know other branches of the same movement and they all have the same contemporary sense

about them, but they look at in general to fit in with the community instead of the community fitting in with them. So for example if you were in an urban setting maybe a faster pace there would be a measure of that in the church because there would be people involved in the church involved in that lifestyle.

I believe that there is a sense where you are placed in a community because you have a heart for the community and can meld with the community anyway. I suppose I can only talk from my experience. I have grown up on the coast, I've always lived on the coast so I am drawn to those coastal communities.

- 18. What I am interested in exploring is-does a church look at its community and say-ok what is our community what are the unique things about our community, how can we connect with those features?**

I think that we do to some degree say that in this church, I think that's become more and more. I think its always been if you like the nucleus of that idea and its evolved more and more and grown more and more as we've developed more of a presence in the community, and I think that we are doing that more and more as people become involved. All that makes it more contemporary and relevant.

- 19. When you joined this church was the church you were previously in also in this community?**

No it was on the North coast, but not here.

- 20. What was it about the church that you found positive when you joined?**

There were a lot of things. Part of the reason that very close friends of ours were part of the team that came from another church to plant this church. So we knew them well and had a good relationship with them and trusted to some degree their judgement. We came along a few times and we felt that the pastors were people who were relatable, that when they started to articulate what their goals and visions were they seemed in a lot of ways similar to what we felt. There was a sense of freshness and a commitment to the community of outreaching.

- 21. Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**

Yes, I supposed its encompassed in the mission statement. The main goal is to see people won to Jesus. That is the overriding vision or goal

- 22. Can you tell me what the vision statement is?**

I cant tell you off by heart. There it is up there. And as in all good mission statements no one reads them. Its bringing the gospel to people. The fact that the gospel itself never changes but the way you bring the gospel to people changes.

- 23. What is the gospel?**

The gospel is that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, that he is God in human form , that if you accept that sacrifice and ask him to forgive you of your sins that you will come in to relationship with him. And be born again, and once you are born again its like I suppose your responsibility to go and share that message with others and relate that with others. That's basically the gospel in a nutshell.

The mission statement is about making a commitment to Jesus but then there is that sense of empowering people, teaching people, people feeling empowered themselves, people being enabled to find their gifts to become a vibrant part, that

growing organize type thing. And for us to be an effect part of the community, and for us to be able to outreach to the community in a lot of different and varied ways, informed by the needs of the community to a degree

In the structure of the church there is the senior pastor and his wife, then 2 couples who are lay pastors and then the leadership team. And then a music director as well.

**24. How did you and your husband get to be lay pastors?**

That's an interesting question. I suppose just by basically being involved in the church, I mean we always been involved ever since we've been married and individually before that involved in various groups, and always had groups in our home. And just being involved at that level and just generally serving and just over a period of time I suppose picking up and doing things and then being given more responsibility over time and then its just that general sense, its probably about 18 months ago, because there wasn't lay pastors before then, but as the church has grown and evolved and the senior pastors asked us if we would be interested in taking on that role.

**25. Is there a definable role?**

Yeah there is, I think that some has been written and some hasn't, as always, a bit on the run. I suppose generally any sort of leadership role involves actually leading something. So actually being actively being involved in leading something-either a small group, being involved in some role in the church.

We take on more of a support role to the senior pastors, and to be sounding boards, to be more part of the overall planning within the church, taking on that more responsibility. My husband will often preach at times when the senior pastor is called away to do things or at other times. I am also involved in the womens ministry, supporting the female senior pastor (husband and wife co pastor team) in that, and often doing Bible studies and developing things. So there is that more responsibility or I suppose more work involved.

**26. Do you think that the senior pastors wife's role is important?**

Most definitely.

**27. In this church structure she is a co-pastor?**

Yes its equal.

**28. So in a sense, and this is not trying to put it crudely, the church gets 2 for 1.**

Yeah I suppose they do

**29. And that could be a crucial issue, for church life, because in other denominations we don't have that same kind of husband-wife involvement**

Yeah I am aware of that.

**30. How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**

I think we are getting there. We are growing in that. There has been periods of time where we have been very effective. I see it mainly through friendship relationship building and inviting people along to church and church functions and building relationships with people. And that's mainly how people come into the church. I think we are growing more and more in that. We do events, but not traditional evangelistic events. This year we are going to be doing a women's conference and

we've done different music things and get involved in the community around Christmas time, or we've done a blues and jazz thing, and those type, we used to have an afternoon session at the Kingscliffe pub, so we've tried lots of different things.

**31. Did any of them work really well**

I'd say they've had moderate success. The most effective I think has been people building relationship with other people. And bringing them along to church or to something. The other things have been moderately effective. I think we are moving into a phase because we've got more people, where the events will become more effective.

**32. Does the church have a high profile? Does the church advertise in the press?**

We don't advertise in the press-like Sunday services, but when we have events, and groups we have advertised.

**33. What is good about your congregation?**

Very accepting, welcoming. There doesn't tend to be that closed sense when new people come into the church. There is a lot of openness. People are also very open to God, they are very open to worship, and being quite vocal about their love of God and their relationship with God, but in an appropriate way. There is a vibrancy and enthusiasm about peoples faith in general.

**34. What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**

Quite a few. Probably an evolving role. Certainly to be visionary. To have the big picture. To be able to draw people in and encourage them to reach their potential in God. To be able to identify peoples gifts and encourage people to function in the roles that they are most suited too. To bring people together in a positive way, so that people feel they are part of a team. They are working together towards a positive goal. That everyone's important in that. There are two sides-there is the relational side, you don't have to be a real party person or over the top extravert, but someone who is relational, and enjoys getting with people, and who has an encouraging welcoming way, so there is that relational side, but also someone who can be task oriented as well, who has the long term goals, has the short term goals, is able to get the resources and bring those in.

**35. For you what is the most important part of worship services?**

**36. What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**

He has a lot of gifts. He is an all round nice guy-very approachable. A quiet achiever. Very enthusiastic, warm and welcoming, he is someone you can trust but he doesn't demand that trust. He isn't a pushy person. He is very encouraging. He is also a visionary person, he is someone who sees the big picture but is also quite patient. He doesn't try to get people to take on too much.

**38. What are the senior pastors weaknesses?**

He found it difficult to exercise strong leadership with certain pushy people.

**39. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**

Quite well. He is fairly calm. He listens to all sides of the story. He'll often bring mediation in. He is open to that. He is quite open to hearing differing points of view. He probably welcomes that.

**40. Sometimes conflict can mark a church's life. Some churches have a history of conflict. Would you say that that's the way it is with this church?**

There certainly has been conflict, but I don't think it's marked it or marred it. I think by responding in positive ways it's actually strengthened the church.

**41. Have many people left in conflict situations?**

There's been a few. I wouldn't say there's been a great deal. I think there is a strong commitment to dialogue with those issues but not everyone has wanted that.

**42. One of the features of Pentecostal churches has been a large number of people coming in the front door and a large number of people going out the back. How does this church seek to minimize the number of people going out the back door?**

Through relationship building instead of ministry. People have been more focused on doing rather than being. So there has been a big emphasis on relationship building, and I suppose in a practical sense the cell groups are important in that. Church isn't about Sunday, it's about people being able to connect with others.

**43. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

Well I see the Holy Spirit as personal. The HS empowers us. So if we are not calling on the power of the HS it's not easy to walk our Christian walk and fall into a works based type of situation. The HS empowers us, giving us a sense that we are not doing things in our own strength. There is that encouragement counsel, an understanding of the word of God. Getting revelation out of the word for ourselves personally. Usually we try to get the person who brings the person along to church to take them through that because there is already a trust built up.

**44. Do you use particular material to guide that?**

Yes there has been. Christianity explained, and the Jesus video. The people are given info about cell groups and encouraged to get involved.

**45. Are there any other courses?**

We are starting up bible college courses in 2003 from Hillsong.

**46. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

When people first become Christians there is a new Christian course one on one or in a group.

**47. What do you think is the most important feature of the church gathering on Sunday?**

The sense of celebration and getting together as an identified group, body, whatever. For encouragement of people. To get together corporately and praise and worship God. There is a sense of fellowship, but Sunday is about feeling part of something bigger than themselves. And to a degree teaching.

**48. To what degree?**

Well with the word being preached there is a sense, sometimes there is a teaching element, sometimes an evangelistic element too. But the teaching aspect goes on through the week too. So I think its more getting together, in that big corporate group and identifying, as being something bigger.

## **Non-Ordained Leader Interview J**

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Leading prayer meetings (1 hour duration), oversight of a cell group
2. **Are cell groups important in the life of the church?**  
Yes definitely, they are the life of the church.
3. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
10 years. Prior to that another congregation of the same denomination for ten years
4. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
Yes
5. **If it does what is it?**  
Reaching people in our community. Heal the broken hearted and see people come into a knowledge of Jesus. Forwarding ourselves as a church-to go larger. To equip people for the Lord. Counselling service which offers professional counseling.
6. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
Being effective. Always could be more effective.
7. **How could we measure the effectiveness of the church?**  
Yes we could do an analysis of the church. We are doing an analysis now of peoples giftings, so that people can move into their area of gifting.
8. **Your mentioned the church getting bigger as one of the aims. Do you see this happening?**  
Yes. People are drawn to this church. I believe that Jesus draws people. But there is also a strategizing of evangelism so that every person is part of the event. Friendship evangelism is more appropriate. But I see a growth in our church over the past years. We started with 9 people and there are now around 150 people.
9. **What is good about your congregation?**  
Love is of the prime essence. People feel accepted and loved within our church.
10. **As far as you are aware does this church have much involvement with other Christian churches in the town?**  
Not so much with the other churches. But if there is a seminar we are running we invite them, but a lot of times they are focused on what they are doing
11. **You mentioned that it was the senior pastors role to discern the vision for the church. Are there other people involved in the process or just the senior pastor?**  
Other people can confirm what God is saying to the senior minister. I have heard it said that a person with 2 heads is a monster. Having 2 people trying to rule the church would be very difficult. Leadership has full confidence in the senior minister that he is hearing from God and that the way he is going is a God direction. I am sure that the senior minister says this is what I am sensing. Senior minister has the final say about the calling of God on the church.

**12. What other roles do you think are really important for the senior pastor**

Direction from God is the main cornerstone for the church for the senior minister. Also the nurturing and raising up other key leaders around him to go forward with the church. One man and one wife cannot take forward a church. It needs good key leaders and good men and women who have a fear of God and a reverence for God that can take the church forward as a team. It's a team effort not a solo effort.

The senior pastor oversights the Sunday service, and every avenue the senior minister oversights. He has his ear to the ground because he is answerable to God. He needs to be active and proactive in regards to everything in the church. It's his role and his wife's role. It's a team thing. Preaching of the word on Sunday. Oversight of worship on Sunday morning.

**13. For you what is the most important part of worship services?**

The most important part is to be able to take people away from how they actually are feeling and away from their problems and releasing themselves so that they can just see Jesus. The worship in our church is a major criteria of our church life.

**14. You talk about worship, what happens at worship here?**

Our worship here is we usually have a couple of songs-bubbly type songs and then we usually have real worship that takes us into the presence of God. There is a change over. There is a transition that people move into and it's a transition of the spirit realm.

**15. So you have a bouncy couple and then maybe three songs of more of a beautiful type of crescendo type of worship, so what happens after that?**

Usually we try to lower that worship in a very peaceful time where people can have their eyes closed and reflecting on Jesus

**16. So the aim of the game is to connect with the Lord through singing**

Yep

**17. Connecting with God through singing, worshipping God, praising God, are those words appropriate?**

Yep. And then we find the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit comes upon people. Even though we know that the presence of God is in a person we sense the tangible presence coming over them in a wave of what we call the anointing, which is a tangible presence of God.

**18. Just for help later on, would you call this church a Pentecostal church?**

Yes it is Pentecostal.

**19. In terms of time, we have had a couple of bouncy songs, maybe 3 and then some more worshipful ones?**

A lot of time what we do is do the announcements so the worship can go for around 20 minutes, half an hour-that's the bouncy songs and the quiet ones, and then we do the announcements and then tithe and then the communion, and if the senior minister feels we need to worship a little bit more, sometimes we will worship a little bit more just sensing on what the Holy Spirit wants to do and then the senior minister will share 15-20 minutes of the word.



**20. How long is the worship service all up?**

Usually an hour and a half-9.30-11.00. Its quite short.

**21. So there is Holy Communion every Sunday?**

Yes unless there is a guest speaker. If we have a guest speaker we don't usually have communion then to give them more time.

**22. At communion is wine or grape juice used?**

Grape juice

**23. Is there a reason why grape juice is used?**

I suppose it's the closest thing that we could get that is closer to wine really closer to the blood, you know the color of the grape juice tends to look more towards the symbolic color of the blood

**24. Why is wine not used?**

I probably would think that wine would not be used more for the reason that if you do actually have alcoholics at a church service they could be a little bit offended that wine would be used. And the Bible is quite clear not to put a stumbling block or offense before your brother or sister. Even though one would say-who would get drunk on a tiny little bit of wine, but I think that for some alcoholics no wine, they would request. So that's probably an aspect that we look at.

**25. What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**

In quietness and strength is his strength. He is very quiet and this a strength. He is not hasty. He will ponder and think on things carefully. He is a very good leader in regards to hearing from God and that is a high priority. His very close strength is a brilliant wife, supportive wife very in tune with God, and her involvement is with the women. She oversees the women. The team is husband and wife. Strong relationship within their own marriage, is imperative. Both of them are loving people towards the congregation and people sense that love and genuineness from the senior minister and his wife.

**26. Not all churches have such a significant role for the pastors wife, so it seems to be a significant issue for this church?**

Most definitely. Most definitely. I think it would be dangerous for the man to think that he could run everything with his wife in the background. I think it's a dangerous thing. It could really cause a lot of problems. But having the wife totally on board and her heart totally for building Gods kingdom and Gods people, is definitely their strength.

**27. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**

Because of his quietness and strength and wisdom, he is never ever too hasty when it comes to making decisions. Situations of conflict that do arise he has been very gracious in regards to the conflicts and he sees them for what they really are. The conflict should always be in terms of building up the person not showing them the door and saying see you later. It always is about bringing about a resolution.

- 28. Have many people left this church over the years that you have been aware of?**  
Do I have to answer that? Should I answer that?

**29. You don't have to answer that**

To be honest, yes there has been and I think that all churches go through that. People that move on because of conflict. Yes there has been a few and key leaders that have left. But through my knowledge its usually people that do not want to deal with aspects within their own life and they want to avoid the real issues and move on rather than looking at the real issue and dealing with it.

- 30. Some churches have a sad history of having major chunks of congregation disappear through splits and things like that. Has that been a part of the history of this church?**

No it hasn't And I hope it never is, and its always very sad thing to see. You said a split or division you could call it. I don't like to see any churches go through that split or division. And usually they are power and control roles and they usually get people onside to formulate a split just because I want to be right. It's a control thing-power.

**31. How do you understand the work of the holy spirit in a person**

The holy spirit is God, he is our advocate and an advocate is one that comes alongside us to help us, and the Bible in John 14 or 15 talks about the helper lives within us, and he brings to our remembrance really how to live in a love filled way and he guides us and leads us in the paths of righteousness. That's the work of the holy spirit in us, to lead us and guide us to all truth. Jesus is the way the truth and the life but Jesus being crucified on the cross then gave us the helper which is the holy spirit to lead us always in truth.

I suppose the Holy Spirit is the be all and end all of a Christians life because he is the one who has been left to us. In the Old Testament days they never had the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was only given after the crucifixion and the holy spirit is the god that we listen too within our hearts for all direction and all guidance. We do have the word which is synonymous with the holy spirit because the word is God, but because the Holy Spirit also helps us and guides us.

**32. So when you said the word, what do you mean by the word?**

The word is the logos which is the word of God, Gods word the Bible.

**33. The Bible?**

Yes

The Bible be quickened to us by the Holy Spirit

**34. Is there anything more you'd like to say about that, I don't want to cut you off**

Just a major emphasis on the Holy Spirit. It's the main outworking that we rely on the holy spirit when we have worship we rely on the holy spirit to speak into everybody's life and the holy spirit speaks through our pastor and when people listen to the holy spirit he is the one that will speak into people. It's the holy spirit that we come to commune with.

**35. What opportunities are given to people this congregation in terms of Christian education?**

At this point in time we have the cell groups to actually, and myself as the leader of a cell group to actually teach the younger Christians in regards to the things of the Lord. Also we are setting up a part time Sunday night teaching program which will run for 18 weeks. But we do encourage also for those who do want to do full time learning of the Bible they can do full time courses such as vision bible courses, Oxford falls Bible college which is in Sydney, so we do try to cater for everyone's need for everyone who want to grow in their knowledge of God.

The leaders within the church have been around Christian circles for quite some time and they do have quite a knowledge of God that they can convey anything that we get stuck on we can glean off each other to be able to answer the majority of questions that are asked within church life.

**36. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation is there one service on Sundays here?**

Yes.

**37. Is there anything else that you can think of which contributes to this church being effective?**

I think the main factor is love within the church life. People that walk in through our doors need to sense that love that one has for another and a genuine love and a genuine care and a genuine nurturing, within church life. The major factor of our church life is the worship and ministry on the altar call and communion.

**38. So people come forward and are prayed for?**

Yes that's right and are prayed for and the aspect of the supernatural, the laying on of hands and the casting out demonic forces supernatural-what Jesus did we can do, and that is in the guidance of the Holy Spirit also. You don't just step out and do something for the sake of doing it-you know that it is the right time to step out and actually pray for someone, and that they be ministered too. Personally I've seen many many miracles of blind eyes healed, lepers being healed. In India when I was in India so I've seen the supernatural at work and I have faith, belief that God still brings those miracles within our church.

**39. This church is involved with evangelism by encouraging the members of the church to be involved with friendship evangelism**

Yes. We are finding at this time its more friendship evangelism. I can remember probably about 15 years ago we did tent crusades and that was effective to a certain degree, but we just find that friendship evangelism on a whole church scale is .... Like if one person brought one person to Jesus each year our church would double. That's a pretty simple thing that we could believe that we could reach one for the year. And that's friendship evangelism and that's what we mainly look at at this point in time, but we are open to doing more things, and doing more things overseas.

## Non-Ordained Leader Interview K

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
Part of the leadership team. Responsibility is for prayer in the church.
2. **How many people are there in the leadership team?**  
There is a smaller team around the head pastor, of the two pastors and three lay people, they meet every fortnight for breakfast. Then there is the normal leadership team the same as you would have in a parish council, including the smaller team and I think at this time there are 12 in the larger group.
3. **How often does the bigger group meet?**  
About 6-8 weeks
4. **How do you get to be part of the bigger group-are you elected?**  
Appointed by the senior pastor, for a no limit time. He decided he doesn't want you or the person decides they no longer want the responsibility
5. **Has the senior pastor de-appointed many people in your experience?**  
Not at all the idea is that the leadership group is appointed by the pastor and is a group of people that he likes and knows he can work with. They are appointed for their particular skills. And it is a group of people who are friends with one another and have a good relationship with one another and work together as such.
6. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
Since it started -7 years ago
7. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
I think its working toward that. I think with a new church it's often hard to find out what your role is in the community. We've tried lots of things in 7 years without great success in some areas. I think it takes a while to find out really who you are and find out what your gifts and talents are, and we are starting to head to that place.
8. **What is the place do you think that you are heading too?**  
I think that we are a church that offers a great deal to the community itself working within the community. Its interesting that a number of leaders of groups within this community such as different men's ministries, women's aglow other ecumenical ministries, a lot of the leadership of those things actually come out of this church. I think we a good role in teaching and encouraging talent within our church to go out and serve the community rather than a specific charitable type role where we have a soup kitchen, our location is not conducive to reaching people in the town, being a bit further out of town and we have a pastor who reaches well out into the community and well within the other churches and I think we have a leadership that does exactly the same and I think for unity within the body within this town we are making a pretty good contribution in that way. We have looked at all sorts of other things that we could be doing but we've realized that what we are doing we are doing quite well. And there are other churches in the community that are doing other jobs well and that we really shouldn't be doing what they are doing.
9. **If it does what is it?**

10. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**
11. **What is good about your congregation?**  
The openness of it. We have a pastor who has never been threatened by other people's gifts and talents so people have an opportunity to grow. I think it has genuine warmth and openness and a pretty good cross section of the community
12. **What is it about this church that might contribute to its being effective**  
We are a very welcoming church. We are looking for people who have a talent to welcome and encourage people and invite people whom for lunch.
13. **What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**  
To have the freedom to follow his gifts and talents for where he would like to see the church go. That has been a particular emphasis of the smaller group.
14. **For you what is the most important part of worship services?**
15. **What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**  
I see his greatest gift as a person has the ability to reach out into this community and beyond this community. He is an evangelist. He loves mentoring and encouraging people and he has many ways of doing that.
16. **How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**  
The advantage of having a leadership time that has good relationships is that conflicts if they are within the leadership team don't seem to go anywhere.  
Conflicts within the church have been dealt with directly by the senior pastor addressing the issue or going to see the people involved.
17. **What is the process. Does the senior pastor compromise on things, or is it basically if you don't like the way things are then it is suggested that you should be someplace else.**  
I can think of an issue about 18 months ago where some people were doing something which was out of line. I don't think those people were ever asked to leave but people have left of their free will because they cannot get their own way. But we are great believers that issues need to be addressed and addressed promptly.
18. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**  
Leads and guides. Ministers to.
19. **What Christian education is available in the congregation?**  
We have a course called heroes of the faith (bible study to bring out leadership qualities based on leaders in the Bible) to which people are invited and he also invites people with future leadership possibilities to teach and encourage. He also has the bible college. Also a ladies group, home groups
20. **You came to this church from a mainline church. What do you think is the greatest difference between this church and the previous one?**  
Freedom in leadership. I have seen before that in mainline churches the pastor can often be limited by his leadership team in his dreams and visions for the church. I think that basically that is the most important.

**21. Think about the role of the spouse of the senior pastor. Does that person have a clear leadership role in the church? What's the expectation of the church?**

If she wants to. The expectation of the church is round pegs in round holes. People initially expect the pastor's spouse to be in leadership or to be this or to be that. Initially our pastor's spouse was a part of the leadership team which was not in line with her gifts and talents and in fact she loathed the role. The pastor realized a few years ago that he was putting expectations on people who didn't want to be there.

**22. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

## Non-Ordained Leader Interview L

1. **What is your leadership role in the congregation?**  
One of the 7 church leaders. My specific role is in the area of evangelism and men's ministry.
2. **How long have you been a member of this congregation?**  
Since its inception-7 years
3. **Where you a member of another church before that?**  
Yes I was – a member of a mainline church
4. **Does your congregation have a clear goal or aim?**  
It's emerging. It started off with a clear aim, but a clear goal is emerging now and that is that we are a relationally based church. We try very hard to measure things by relationship. We have been a church trying to reach out into the community in terms of help and support, but now we are moving into being a relationally based church, and our main role is to see people saved and healed and come into some form of discipleship.
5. **You mentioned that at the start of this church there was a different view. Do you remember what that was?**  
I do. WE probably came together with the view that were going to be a church that reached out into the community in all aspects, outreach to the poor and the broken and the downtrodden and that's still a priority to make sure that we are available to those but our role has changed dramatically. And we don't seem to attract and when we do attract those people we don't seem to be able to hang onto them. For what reason we don't know, except that that's probably not our role. Other churches probably do that better than us. We find that our best role seems to be in discipling.
6. **So what kind of people does this church tend to attract-who stay?**  
Our major growth has been in more mature Christians. Not too much conversion, but its coming, but more of a bit of church floatation but with good talents and skills.
7. **If it does what is it?**
8. **How effective do you think your congregation is at reaching its goal?**  
We are growing into it. We are emerging into a stronger role of discipling and relationships. Our programs are being measured as to whether they encourage relationships and maturity.
9. **So relationships between people in the congregation are important?**  
Very important in my opinion. Right from the leadership down.
10. **What is good about your congregation?**  
Very much Bible based. Biblically based theology. Prayerful church. Charismatic church. We believe in the Holy Spirit but at the same time we realize that there is a tendency to exaggerate that and that can impact on other people, so we are sensitive to peoples styles but at the same time we encourage a holy spirit led church but we

are sensitive that everybody is not in that position. I think we are one of the few churches that can embrace the Holy Spirit and still do it with sensitivity.

**11. What do you think the main role of the ordained leader is?**

Not administrative. Primarily ministering to the congregation in all aspects. Being available to the congregation in the sense of preaching, leadership role, relationships, nurturing growth, nurturing the educational side of the leadership, the cell groups and so on. Making sure the health of the church in terms of Biblical based and moving on in that direction

**12. For you what is the most important part of worship services?**

All of it, for different reasons. Some people can enter worship well. Other people hang on the sermon. Other people appreciate communion more than others. If you put too much emphasis on one part or another it's going to impact on someone because of their own interpretations. Encourage a mood of worship. A sense of reverence but at the same time keep it light enough so that people enjoy the service. Enjoyable but relevant.

**13. What is the greatest gift your ordained leader has for ministry?**

Grace. Compassion and love. Primarily really reaches out in love. He has tremendous grace. The ability to get along side people and communicate and be tolerant to where they are at, and allows them the room and the freedom to grow. Particularly allows the freedom to the congregation to minister to each other. We are not a leader based church as such. The church ministers to each other. And our pastor has the ability not to be threatened by that, he is not threatened by much at all.

**14. How does your ordained leader deal with conflict?**

Very well. Takes it head on. Doesn't compromise. Addresses it biblically. Takes it directly to the person and tries to resolve it. If it's not resolved then sometimes people have to move on. He will not compromise.

**15. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

Empowering. In terms of ministry you have to minister in the Holy Spirit.

**16. What Christian education is available in the congregation?**

ALPHA, Vision College in which people can study part time, history makers which is teaching to those in leadership or home group leadership or potential leadership-a weekly teaching. Home groups-about 10-15% of the congregation

**17. Talk about the style of worship in the congregation?**

Based around songs. A few golden oldies- a classic hymn at offering time. But we are based around sensitive worship-not too loud but more along the lines of a charismatic almost Pentecostal style worship. We encourage band type participation, multitude of singers and very much encourage people to move into a deep time of worship usually half an hour. At the beginning. We decided to lead worship into the sermon so that people were in a responsive mood.

**18. Is holy communion part of the worship pattern here**

Yes it is. It wasn't. About 2 years ago we realized that it was an integral part of the church and we also realized that we had more and more coming into the



congregation that enjoyed holy communion and understood the depth of it. WE used to have Holy Communion once a month, we have it now weekly. And we usually share that task. We pick people from the congregation and ask them to lead it. It encouraging to see the effort people put into it and the different insights they have into Holy Communion. There is no set prayer, they decide what to do. The take a bible reading applicable to the communion and a short sharing about communion.

## Ordained Leader Interview A

1. **How long have you been ordained?**  
12 years
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation?**  
7 years
3. Before ordination training and before I was married I traveled a lot, and worked at odd jobs to get money to travel prior to going to college I ran my own business-an art gallery and graphics business.
4. **What formal training for ordination did you have?**  
4 years full time study
5. **What formal post ordination training have you had?**  
No formal training just reading and conferences
6. **What does your ordination mean to you?**  
Not a lot really. Going to college was the main thing-having a greater understanding. It means a full time commitment.
7. **What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel'?**  
The good news of Jesus Christ-how we can come into relationship with God. Have that relationship restored with God because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and resurrection.
8. **What does salvation mean for you?**  
Being saved from ourselves, Satan, death, to have an eternity with Christ. We are slaves to the world and sin and we are rescued from that
9. **What is the central task of the church?**
10. **What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ?**  
Pivotal. Christ triumphing over death enables our salvation. The power and authority he had over death gives us hope facing our own death.
11. **How does a person become a Christian?**  
Encourage them to know what they believe-Jesus is son of God. Are they willing to pay the cost of following him-death. Death to self. Giving control of their life over to Christ. Salvation is a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. People accept Jesus through faith and repentance,
12. **What do you understand happens at baptism?**  
Baptism is a directive we are given in scripture in order to publicly declare what Christ has already done for us in our life. Once we believe in him we publicly display that belief. In a sense baptism is a pantomime of what God has done for us. As you go into water it's a symbol of death. As you come out it's a symbol of resurrection.

**13. Do you think that baptism is necessary for salvation?**

No

**14. Do you accept infant baptism?**

No

**15. If not why not? If yes, why yes?**

Baptism is for believers. Infants can't have belief. Scripture teaches believers baptism.

**16. How do you understand 'eternal life'?**

Living eternally. No more death. Eternal life starts as soon as you accept Christ.

**17. Do you believe that hell exists?**

Yes but I am uncertain about what form hell takes. Its separation from Christ for eternity

**18. How would you describe the Bible?**

Being the inspired word of God. Blueprint for lifestyle. Way for us to find a relationship with God. Gives us all we need to know about how we find a relationship with God.

**19. What is your understanding of the aim of worship services?**

As a church we come together to worship God together. To corporately bless God. We can also be encouraged by each other and build each other up. Through the word we can be built up and encouraged. We interact with each other and strengthen each other. To honor God. I don't believe that the worship service is primarily an evangelistic event. It's for those who know him to worship together.

**20. What is most important to you in worship services?****21. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

Enables us to walk as Christ did and to carry on effectively advancing the kingdom of God. He empowers us for service, gives gifts to the church. Enables us to respond effectively in any given situation. The miraculous gifts of the spirit are part of the Holy Spirits work. To lead us to Christ. To comfort us. To enable us in ministry

**22. How do people become members of your church?****23. How do you understand the church?****24. What is your understanding of your role?**

To equip people for works of service, to encourage, shepherding role, get beside people, care for them, offer the best feed I can. But not taking on that role solely. The role that is particularly mine is leadership and direction. Be a visionary.

**25. What is your understanding of Holy Communion?**

A privilege of grace. We have communion every fortnight. It's an understanding and time of remembrance of the covenant relationship. God used meals all through

history to remind people. It's a time of fellowship for the family. Come together around the table. Time of empowering Time of healing. I lead the communion.

26. **How would you describe your church e.g. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**  
Charismatic evangelical
27. **What sustains you in your ministry?**
28. **What kind of outreach does your church do?**  
We are reworking that at the moment. We have been doing this largely through mercy ministries. We had a street van and gave food and help to people on the street. It was very effective in reaching people. People did come to church as a result of drug addicts and people with all sorts of problems. We had a sausage sizzle every Saturday afternoon and fed up to 150 people free of charge. That was a good ministry. But we found those people actually very hard to deal with. They just found it very hard to fit in. That's now finished and we are refocusing. At the moment we are having monthly evangelistic movies in the church. Prayer walking every Saturday morning. We are looking at setting up a café/dropping centre in the hall.
29. **What is the aim of your congregation?**  
Loving family, healing hospital mighty army
30. **How many members does your congregation have**  
175 people attend church on average. 150 in the morning. 25 in the evening but many of those are coming for a second time.
31. **What is the socio-economic level of members of your congregation?**  
A large percentage unemployed or part time
32. **What is the average age of the congregation?**  
Biggest block is my age 45-55
33. **How important is preaching to you?**
34. **Are you involved in the general community-how**  
Not as much as I'd like to be

## Ordained Leader B

1. **How long have you been ordained?**  
7 years. I have been a Christian for 23 years from a totally un-churched background
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation?**  
7 years
3. **What formal training for ordination did you have?**  
3 year full time diploma of ministry
4. **What formal post ordination training have you had?**  
None
5. **Does the denomination involve you in regular conferences?**  
Absolutely. It's very key to the movement
6. **What does your ordination mean to you?**  
I don't view being ordained very differently to being a lay leader. My wife and I have always been very involved and committed so we viewed ourselves in full time ministry from day dot.
7. **But it changes it from the congregation perspective?**  
Yes, sometimes that's positive and sometimes that's negative
7. **What's negative about it?**  
Just having to break the whole pastor laity mindset. The pastor is the man of God and that kind of thinking, which we have broken down to a great degree.
8. **What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel'?**  
The good news that Jesus has made the way by dying for us on the cross and all our sins are forgiven-past present and future.
9. **What does salvation mean for you?**  
Salvation in a living relationship with God now and into eternity.
10. **What is the central task of the church?**
11. **What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ?**  
Absolutely paramount to the gospel and what we believe, because by his resurrection is the guarantee that Jesus died for our sins. If he didn't rise from the dead, we are still in our sins because he would have just been paying the price for his own sin.
12. **How does a person become a Christian?**  
I would give them the short answer and explain the new birth and understanding and believing-death burial and resurrection of Jesus.

**13. What do you understand happens at baptism**

Declaration of our new birth that we have died with Christ and risen to new life with him. It's a declaration of something that has already happened. Salvation need not be instant, but can be over a longer time. A sinners prayer can be a marker and that can be helpful. Water baptism is not washing-going under the waters is death. It's the death to the old life and coming up to new life in Christ.

**14. Do you accept infant baptism?**

No. But we baptize some children

**15. If not why not? If yes, why yes?**

They have no understanding of what they are doing.

**16. How do you understand 'eternal life'?**

The God kind of life. We enter into it now. More than time its quality. Its relationship with God. Starts by being born again.

**17. Do you believe that hell exists?**

Yes. Scripture points to something very unpleasant and eternity without Jesus would be hell. Hell in itself as a starting point whether it's a literal lake of fire or not, hopefully I'll never find out.

**18. How would you describe the Bible?**

Written word of God. It is the infallible word of God. I believe its 100% God inspired.

**19. Run me through the main Sunday worship service here**

The main service is Sunday morning. It runs for 2 hours and starts at 10am. We start with 40 minutes of praise and worship, led by song leaders. Our band is fairly small-strict auditioning. Not a have a go night. We have 2 main bands.

Then announcements. Then a coffee break in the middle of the service which goes for about 30 minutes and then preaching which goes for about 30 minutes, ten minutes of praying for people at the end. We do communion about once a month.

We used to have communion each week, personally I would still do it every week, it changed mainly because as we got bigger as a church the coffee break got longer and the coffee break is an integral part of what we do. Its community time. We realized in the beginning that new people and fringe people leave at the end of the service-they don't hang around, so now we don't let them go. We trap them, and we have trained our leaders that coffee time is ministry time, not catch up time. It's for us to look for new people. We have a large courtyard with sails and seats. We have good coffee. Its part of our slogan-real people, real coffee, really good music.

**20. What is your understanding of the aim of worship services?**

Help people experience Jesus-that's different for all different people. We are trying to present the wow factor. We have a target market-his name is motor mechanic Mick, between 35-45 married with three kids and runs his own small business. He works 60 hours a week. He loves sport, he loves his kids, he loves his wife. He loves cold chisel and pink Floyd. And our church is based on friends bring friends to church and they get saved and that's how it works. So why would someone bring motor mechanic Mick to our church. And if motor mechanic Mick did come to our

church why would he buy in? We have addressed that by the wow factor. So everyone from the car park steward is trying to create an impact on people's lives going-wow this is good, to the building-we spent 150K renovating a factory, and why we spend 15K on the PA when it didn't need it. Because we want the Wow factor in everything we do-the welcome at the door, the newsletter, the building, the band everything. We have thought through everything to that end. We are not seeker sensitive. We are talking about impacting people, we believe in the gifts of the spirit. Experience sensitive. We have lots of explanation for everything so nothing is weird for people. So people know if they bring friends I'll explain things so their friends won't think it's all weird. Not being ashamed of who we are but up front.

**21. What is most important to you in worship services?**

**22. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

We are born again by the Holy Spirit. Whoever is born again has the Holy Spirit inside them. But there was an extra baptism in the Holy Spirit. I tend to see it as an out flowing. The Holy Spirit empowers us and convicts us of sin he speaks to us.

**23. How do people become members of your church?**

We don't have a formal membership. People become regular attenders and when they indicate they want to be on our database we put them there. We have minimized commitment to one Sunday service and one mid week meeting. We are trying to get people to focus outward in the community.

**24. How do you understand the church?**

**25. What is your understanding of your role?**

Visionary-to see, and to get others to see as I do. Motivation. Team building. Meeting with leaders and casting the vision

**26. What is your understanding of holy communion**

**27. How would you describe your church e.g. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**

Pentecostal

**28. What sustains you in your ministry?**

**29. What kind of outreach does your church do?**

Friends bring friends to church and they get saved. The most evangelistic thing we do is our Sunday morning service. Motor mechanic Mick has to be able to understand all the language that we use. Church in the pub-4 or 5 times a year. WE take one of our bands and a speaker who speaks for about 10 minutes. It's more like a pub gig. Not a church thing. It's a bridging event.

**30. What is the aim of your congregation**

**31. How many members does your congregation have?**

About 500

**32. What is the socio-economic level of members of your congregation**

**33. What is the average age of the congregation?**

**34. Does this church do much social welfare?**

All we do is driven by leaders-if you come up with ideas-you do it. If we don't have a leader we don't do it. At the moment we are not doing a lot in that area because we don't have a leader. I don't see it as an integral part of the life of the church. although it is a good thing to do. The priority is church-helping people to experience Jesus and understand grace

**35. How important is preaching to you?**

Very important but the preaching is more like life skills. Things that will help people go better in their life-better parent, husband. Dealing with reality etc. Value for peoples lives. Overcoming. I am the main preacher.

**36. Are you involved in the general community-how?**



## **Ordained Leader Interview D**

(much of the interview unavailable as the recording was of low quality)

1. **How long have you been ordained?**  
3 years
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation?**  
18 months
3. **What formal training for ordination did you have?**  
B.Th three years. Grad Dip in Pastoral counseling
4. **What formal post ordination training have you had?**  
We are required by the diocese to attend post ordination training three times a year- 2.5 days x per year.
5. **What does your ordination mean to you?**  
A way of life. Being sent into the midst of the congregation using my gifts for ministry and being able to help other people use their gifts
6. **What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel'?**  
The good news of Jesus Christ-we have been given through Jesus death and resurrection the gift of grace and salvation
7. **What does salvation mean for you?**  
We have the opportunity to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ
8. **What is the central task of the church?**
9. **What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ?**
10. **How does a person become a Christian?**
11. **What do you understand happens at baptism?**
12. **Do you accept infant baptism?**
13. **If not why not? If yes, why yes?**
14. **How do you understand 'eternal life'?**  
We have a life on earth it's a continuation of our journey of faith here
15. **Do you believe that hell exists?**
16. **How would you describe the Bible?**
17. **What is your understanding of the aim of worship services?**
18. **What is most important to you in worship services?**
19. **How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**
20. **How do people become members of your church?**
21. **How do you understand the church?**
22. **What is your understanding of your role?**
23. **What is your understanding of Holy Communion?**
24. **How would you describe your church e.g. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**
25. **What sustains you in your ministry?**
26. **What kind of outreach does your church do?**
27. **What is the aim of your congregation?**
28. **How many members does your congregation have?**

- 29. What is the socio-economic level of members of your congregation?**
- 30. What is the average age of the congregation?**
- 31. How important is preaching to you?**
- 32. Are you involved in the general community-how?**

## Ordained Leader Interview E

1. **How long have you been ordained?**  
Deaconed in 1993, priested 1994
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation?**  
Three years on the 15<sup>th</sup> July
3. **What formal training for ordination did you have?**  
Three years full time at St Johns Morpeth and since that time I have continued to study part time. Dip Theol at College
4. **What have you been studying?**  
Made the Dip Theol into a BD, now a Master of Arts Theology through the ACU
5. **Was that study at your initiative or a requirement of the denomination?**  
St Johns was a requirement the rest is my initiative
6. **Does the diocese provide formal post ordination training?**  
Yes but it's been rather spasmodic, and I am now long enough ordained for that no longer to be compulsory for me. But each year in May there is a clergy school.
7. **What formal post ordination training have you had?**
8. **What does your ordination mean to you?**  
Recognition by the church of a call to leadership and ministry, and it involves the leadership and administration of the sacraments here, not much preaching role because there are lots of lay preachers here, so its not exclusively an ordination gift-to preach.
9. **So the primary ordination gifts are administering the sacraments?**  
Yes and also responsibility and care for those people who are in this area
10. **What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel'?**  
The gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ as presented in the gospels
11. **What does salvation mean for you?**  
Salvation is where coming into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ people are able to find that state of mind where they are not controlled through sin and the threat of death. They find fullness of life through Jesus Christ without the burden of sin weighing them down.
12. **What is the central task of the church?**  
To be a mediator of Gods love for the world to the world. Always being guided by Jesus as we meet him in the gospels.
13. **What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ?**  
I believe absolutely that Jesus Christ is alive and that's really enough. A lot of what is written about the resurrection is very challenging. We receive the resurrection by

faith and the historical side of it is not all that important, but I do believe that Jesus is alive and I do believe that there was an empty tomb. But we certainly don't know much more about it than that.

**14. How does a person become a Christian?**

I am not prepared to say that baptism isn't a big part of it whether its baptism as a child or not. I know that it's very fashionable to say today that you have to have a moment of personal conversion, but I think that in baptism God acts and whether we see it that way or not doesn't matter, what matters is that God has claimed us at baptism. But to be recognizable as a Christian means that we have an association with a community of faith as well.

**15. What do you understand happens at baptism?**

**16. Do you accept infant baptism?**

Yes

**17. If not why not? If yes, why yes?**

First because it's a tradition of the church. Second because I believe that God brings that situation about. I believe that God actually brings parents to seek baptism for their children and that God's holy spirit works in baptism and has a real impact even if its not discernable for us, God is at work in that kind of baptism. In all baptism but in infant baptism as well. I am not about putting limits on God and saying that because it's an infant God can't act. God is able to reach out to all kinds of people. So I would look for the opportunities when I am preparing the parents for baptism I believe it's an evangelistic opportunity to try and link those people who maybe haven't been true to their baptism promises to this point to remind them of what they are and talk to them about what God has done for them in baptism. But I also accept the baptism of adults as well.

**18. How do you understand 'eternal life'?**

Life in relationship with God. The Johannine one-it begins in this life and as St Paul says-nothing can separate us from God.

**19. Do you believe that hell exists?**

I believe that hell is where God is not. So if there is a place where God is not then that is hell. So I think that there is probably a place where at least there is a lack of sense of God at least.

**20. How would you describe the Bible?**

The inspired word of God. The story of God and his people

**21. What is your understanding of the aim of worship services?**

We come into God's presence. We pray for the world. We affirm that God is God. We are acknowledging God's greatness and our smallness. We seek to renew our relationship with God-this is Eucharistic worship, and we seek to strengthen our relationship with God and to receive spiritual strength for our own Christian journey through the sacrament of the Eucharist

**22. What is most important to you in worship services?**

I look at wholeness. Probably think that being real. If we come to worship and we are still thinking about the washing at home, then it doesn't matter what happens at worship we are not really there for an encounter. So probably coming to worship with a mindset that we are going to have an encounter with the divine is probably the most important thing. If we don't do that all that we do is debased I think.

**23. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

The uniter the teacher the empowerer the healer, can bring peace

**24. How do people become members of your church?****25. How do you understand the church?****26. What is your understanding of your role?**

Leadership role-an amount of direction. A gathering role. Caring role. Particularly thinking of the healing ministry. I think that that's my role to call people into that part of their life where they seek Gods healing. Teaching role. The big 2 are leader and gatherer.

**27. What is your understanding of Holy Communion?****28. How would you describe your church e.g. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**

We are a mixture here because we have people from a number of areas. 60% middle of the road moderate Anglo Catholic. 10% evangelicals. 5% very anglo catholic and another group charismatic.

**29. What sustains you in your ministry?**

My wife is amazing and the fruits of the ministry itself. I do a lot of things with my family and seeing my kids growing up with a relationship with God and that sustains me enormously.

**30. What kind of outreach does your church do?****31. What is the aim of your congregation?**

To be worshipful and to care for each other. To search the scriptures for what we should be doing

**32. How many members does your congregation have?**

We have 5 centers. We should have about 14,000 communicants per year.

**33. What is the socio-economic level of members of your congregation?****34. What is the average age of the congregation?**

Probably 55-60

**35. How important is preaching to you?**

**36. Are you involved in the general community-how?**

Not really. Although I wish I did but I don't have time.

**37. What kind of organized outreach does the church do?**

Well we are preparing a pamphlet to distribute to people who live on properties outside the towns. Service for the oldies. Divorce recovery meetings. Healing from grief sessions and dinners. Our work in schools.

## Ordained Leader Interview F

1. **How long have you been ordained?**  
10 years
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation?**  
10 years. First church.  
I became a pastor as a result of this church. This church started as an outreach from a church about 20 minutes north of here, and I came down to lead the team that was doing an outreach work, just to test the waters, and see how effective and if it was going to be viable or not. And so we had a 12 month window. And I was doing full time Bible college at the time so they asked me if I would be prepared to head the time down here so I said yes, so that was the extent of it. So I didn't get ordained till I was probably 12 months after we started down here that I got ordained. So I have been ordained 9 years.
3. **You were effectively the full time leader of the church from the start of its life?**  
Yes
4. **What formal training for ordination did you have?**  
Advanced diploma in Christian ministry from Mt Hannon school of ministries. When I started down here I didn't have a formal qualification at that point of time, but we started here in Sept and I graduated in December of that year.
5. **What is its full time equivalent?**  
It's a work place training qualification rather than a higher studies. The qualifications I've got for this really aren't tertiary qualifications.
6. **In terms of continuing professional development, does the church encourage you in that?**  
That's probably a more personally driven thing and more a denominational thing. Our credentials are reviewed annually and we have to sign a statement and part of that is an ongoing commitment to the ethos and relational connections of the movement. So new need to continually be in relationship with other pastors and our overseers, and part of that relationship is outworked through a number of conferences that we go to. So if we aren't doing that there would be cause for concern and so the continued professional development is ongoing in that way and in terms of personal spiritual development, its probably more a self monitoring thing. So anything that I would do is initiated more by myself and my overseers than the church.
7. **What happens if as part of the accreditation process the overseers did not believe that you had met the requirements?**  
Our credentials probably wouldn't be renewed.
8. **So what would happen then?**  
I am not aware of that happening. But it wouldn't happen out of the blue because there are relational things in place so the oversight would be picking up that these guys are not traveling well or whatever and get alongside. So processes would be in place to try to avert that from happening

**9. What oversight is provided from within the movement**

I have an overseer, and that overseer is responsible for half a dozen churches or so, so I am accountable to him, and directly over him is the Queensland overseer, and then there is the national or secretary of the movement. But our immediate overseer, we would talk on the phone maybe every week, at least every fortnight, we'd get together, its not structured, it just out of relationships.

**10. And is that person also the senior pastor of a church?**

Yes. Yes everybody is. The only person who isn't is the secretary of the movement-internationally. Even the national director of Christian City Church, he pastors a large church in Brisbane.

**11. How many churches are there in the movement in Australia?**

About 65

**12. How is the church structured? Its part of the movement, who owns the assets?**

This church is totally autonomous in terms of finance and government, so we have 2 entities, there is the unincorporated association which is the gathering of people, and there is a property limited company which is a company limited by guarantee and that's the entity that owns the property. And the board members are part of the church locally.

**13. What does your ordination mean to you?**

Do you mean like for me personally, or like how valuable is it?

**I think for you personally**

It's something that I don't take lightly. It's a big responsibility. And an incredible honor

**14. Do you see it as a life long thing or is it something that is related particularly to this work in this place**

I think that ordination is just a recognition of the people in authority over me that there is a gift and a call to be outworked, and I consider that vital. If that recognition wasn't there I would not want to be out doing what we are doing. But if this whole thing was taken away there would still be a call of God there that would have to be outworked somehow or other

**15. As a pastor?**

Yeah. I think the call isn't tied to the ordination but the ordination is an important thing. It safeguards the movement safeguards me, safeguards the people of the church, and I think in terms of community recognition, the community needs to know or have you know there needs to be that set-apartness if you like of that office.

**16. What do you understand by the phrase 'the gospel'?**

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, that he came to heal the broken hearted, set the captives free, provide eternal life for those who believe in him, so the gospel literally means good news.



**17. What do you understand by eternal life?**

Every person is made up body soul and spirit, there is an eternal part of all of us-our spirit, and so that is going on into eternity, so we have an opportunity to choose where we are going to spend that eternity.

**18. And eternity equals eternal life?**

Yeah, if its heaven.

**19. So eternal life is life in heaven?**

Yeah

**20. What about hell? What do you think about hell? Is hell for real?**

Absolutely.

**21. What is hell?**

It's the opposite of eternal life, its eternal judgement, its eternal damnation if you like.

**22. What is the role of the cross of Christ, what part does the cross play?**

It is the means by which we can enter into eternal life, rather than eternal damnation, so that is the point in history where God provided the means by which man in his fallen state is able to make that choice. History hinges and focuses around that and so for individuals we have a choice to make. Its because of what happened at the cross of Calvary that you can do that

**23. What does salvation mean for you? What does it mean to be saved?**

Salvation means to be saved from that eternal damnation so its crucial in the Christian walk. Salvation is what its all about

**24. What is the central task of the church?****25. What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ?**

I believe it historically happened and its vital to the Christian faith. It's a key aspect of it

**26. So the resurrection occurred?**

Absolutely

**27. How does a person become a Christian?**

By repenting from the ways that have separated them from God and deciding to follow him for the rest of their life in obedience and accepting Jesus into their heart and life-totally surrendered to him.

**28. How does one do that?**

It's a personal prayer of repentance first and foremost where you say sorry God that I have lived my life my own way, I am now coming to a place where I want to turn around and live it your way, so it's a point of decision where a person makes that choice to follow God by inviting Jesus into their heart and life.

**29. Where does baptism fit into the process?**

Saved, baptized go on from there.

**30. What do you understand happens at baptism?**

It's an act of obedience to Christ. We are following the example he set. It's a public declaration so that we are saying that I am dying to my old life its been washed away I'm a new creation, a new creature in Christ and I am coming up clean and cleansed, and symbolic of washing away of the old coming up of the new, and it's a choice a person makes and they decide they want to do it. And it flows on from salvation.

**31. I don't want to be baptized. What do you say to me?**

That's fine

**32. So my salvation isn't impeded or reduced by not being baptized.**

No. My response would be why don't you want to be baptized.

**33. Do you get many people who say that**

No, because the people we are working with want all they can of God. They want the whole kit and caboodle.

**34. Do you accept infant baptism?**

We do infant dedication and adult baptism

**35. Is adult baptism by full immersion?**

Yes

**36. Why would the church not baptize infants?**

We dedicate infants so we see that as being a more relevant approach and the dedication is probably as much if not more for the parents and family than for the baby itself. The infant doesn't know whats happening to it and doesn't have a choice in whats happening to it but in infant dedication it's the parents bringing the child and saying-we are dedicating this child back to you God, that you have entrusted to us and to the best of our ability we are going to strive to bring this child up in the Christian faith and so that's a dedication on the part of the parents of this young life that they've been entrusted with . So I don't see the relevance of infant baptism because there is no choice on the part of the child involved in that. They can make that choice at an older age.

**37. How would you describe the Bible?**

Infallible authoritative word of God. Inspired by the holy spirit and scribed by men.

**38. So you would interpret the Bible fairly literally?**

Fairly literally yes. Very literally probably. But it depends on which portion of scripture you are talking about. Its not easy to say-you interpret the scripture literally. Because you've got to look at it in context and in the big picture of it so the whole science of it as you understand.

**39. So you are preaching on a passage-one of the gospel passages. What's the process in putting together the address**

I read it a number of times and then research-see what the commentaries and concordances have got to say and then I just during the course of that sense what God is wanting to impart to our church at this point of time. So I do it that way.

**40. What is your understanding of the aim of worship services?**

To provide people with an opportunity to connect with God.

**41. How?**

That probably depends on the individual . For some the connection might be welcomed into a friendly environment and just being accepted. For other people it might be an experience of worship. For other people it might be the opportunity to give financially. For other people it might be the preaching of the word. For some people it might be all of the above. For other people it might be the opportunity to get prayer for specific needs that they might have

**42. In terms of the pattern of the worship service, is there a routine?**

Yes. Most Sundays it starts out with some lively praise, and then some worship, announcements

**43. What is worship when you say worship what is happening there?**

The music probably takes a different... The praise is more lively, energetic declaration thanksgiving, the worship is more devotional probably a bit more private and allows people to get lost in the presence of God. Or just connect with that dimension of God

**44. So we are still singing at the moment?**

Yeah. Or you might not be, but the music is happening there is singing from the stage.

**45. Tongues happen there?**

Depends. Some people might be singing in the spirit, in tongues. Yes. They might be. And then we bring the worship down, land the worship.

**46. What does land the worship mean?**

You bring people back down, closing it down, make them transition into the next aspect of the service. Because you need to have the transition to have the sense of flow in the meeting. And then there might be announcements, the offering, the communion, might be a testimony, might be an item, any one of a number of different things might happen. And they might happen in a different order and then we usually move into the preaching of the word, and then finish with some more praise and worship and an altar call or whatever.

**47. Contemporary music?**

Yes. Electric guitar, bass, drums, vocals amplified.

**48. Who leads the service?**

Generally there is an mc, and within the context of that there is the worship leader who takes responsibility for the music side of the service . And the mc is usually me. If I'm here. The mc makes the transitions.

**49. Are you the only full time paid person?**

Yes

**50. Is the music director not paid?**

No

**51. And who would normally give the sermon**

Normally me.

**52. Are there other people who do that if you are away**

We have a few people in house who can do it and we are looking to raise up a few more. That's part of the developmental process. But probably on average once a month would get an outside speaker in.

**53. From?**

Usually from within the movement.

**54. So you'd be there and they'd be here, or do you do a swap?**

Can happen both ways but I try to be here most of the time.

**55. Communion every Sunday?**

Most Sundays. If we a visiting minister I don't usually have communion then just to give a bit more space in the service for them. We have a roster of people who present communion.

**56. What is the meaning for communion for you. Why have communion every Sunday?**

Do this in remembrance of me. So it's a focusing thing. This is what its really all about-what Jesus did on the cross for us, and just keep it focused

**57. And the bread and is it grape juice?**

Yes grape juice

**58. Why grape juice and not wine?**

I don't know really. Before being involved in the Pentecostal church I was involved in the Baptist church and they had a fairly low tolerance with alcohol so maybe it's a legacy from that. I don't have a problem with Anglicans having wine.

**59. Is it a movement wide thing?**

As far as I know but its not legislated.

**60. What is most important to you in worship services?**

**61. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?**

In a broad sense to draw people to the person to the person of Jesus Christ, He is at work out there to draw people to the person of Jesus Christ. Having done that then the work of the Holy Spirit is one of gives us the opportunity to have a personal relationship with God. So he is that bit of God if you like that we get in touch with personally on a regular basis. So you know for me he is integral with my walk with God. Cant live without it, without him.

**62. How do people become members of your church?**

We have a fairly loose arrangement in terms of formal membership. Again it's a relational thing as much as anything. To be a formal member of the church you are probably looking at things like-baptised in water, we have a list of basic tenets that we are about, and so I suppose if you wanted to be a member of the church you would probably be in agreement with those and willing to participate. I think that they key thing would be participation in the life of the church. Financial support of the church. Submission to the leadership of the church. Belief in the vision and direction of the church and the value system of the church. So we haven't got a formal policy in place.

**63. Is there a public recognition when someone chooses to become a member?**

No

**64. How do you understand the church?****65. What is your understanding of your role?**

In my top 3 roles- if you look at the priests of the old testament their job was to keep the fires burning, so I see that a major part of my role is to keep the fires burning-keep people fired up in their walk with God. I guess to really it's a leadership function, so my role as a leader of this congregation is to hear from God about what it is he wants us to do, and where he is wanting us to go and how we are going to do that. So leadership, inspiration, pastoral-looking out for the crew.

**66. In the structure of then church is it true to say that a great deal of authority is vested in the senior pastor-who to ordain, who is appointed to leadership and other roles.**

Yes

**67. How would you describe your church eg. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**

Pentecostal

**68. What is the aim of this church?**

Build the church, save lost people, make disciples, empower the saints

**69. What sustains you in your ministry?**

Personal time with the Holy Spirit. Relationships with other pastors, the friendships we have as pastors, conferences we go to sustain us, having my wife intrinsically involved. Not taking it all too seriously at the end of the day.

- 70. What kind of outreach does your church do?**
- 71. What is the aim of your congregation?**
- 72. How many members does your congregation have?**  
150
- 73. What is the socio-economic level of members of your congregation?**
- 74. What is the average age of the congregation?**  
38 years of age.  
Female 55%, male 45%  
Congregation growth-joining the last five years-20%
- 75. Do you consciously look at the population features of this community and take those factors into account?**  
Yes we do.
- 76. How would you describe who you are, and therefore the culture of the church?**  
Fairly relational. Passionate about God. Passionate about the local, and committed to building the local church. Don't take myself too seriously, and I'm on a journey like everybody else, so it's a matter of helping people to pick up the journey were they are and help them grow from where they are at just as we are growing from where we are at.
- 77. What's your wife's involvement in the life of the church?**  
Critical. Co pastor
- 78. So that's a being kind of role, rather than a doing kind of role**  
I think that that's the next transitional step we have to make in order to grow as a church is for us to make that transition from doing to being. Because in a smaller church situation you end up having to do a lot of the doing. But I think that part of what we are having to learn to do is enable other people to be doing the doing and we continue to do the being part.
- 79. How important are house groups or cell groups in this church**  
I'd like to think they were really important but the reality would suggest that maybe they're not. I would like them to be more important than they are, and we are working towards that a little bit.
- 80. What percentage of the congregation do you reckon would be part of a house group?**  
In a small group. 40%
- 81. Are people actively encouraged to join a cell group**  
Actively but not heavily

- 82. Some churches almost make membership of a cell group an integral part of being a member of the church.**

I'd like to be that way, but I'm not. I think that those sort of things come out of churches that are not on the coast. I think that's a demographic function. Trying to get people to commit to those sorts of things is really hard in this area.

- 83. Do you find trying to get people to commit to anything is hard?**

Yes. I really think that that's part of the challenge of the coastal area

- 84. What other things do you think are part of the challenge of a coastal area**

I think it's all tied up with that mindset because up here there are a lot of people who have moved up here to escape from things or get their heads together and there is almost an escapist mentality and I think that sits over a lot of this sort of area. So if you compare it to upper north shore where you have a high work ethic, you've got a high professional aspect, you don't have that here.

- 85. So in the next five years, what are the sort of things you are going to work on order to help this church be effective or more effective**

I think a lot of it is having effective leadership

- 86. What's effective leadership?**

Effective leadership is having leaders in the church who have that inside them. They are as passionate about the church as I am.

- 87. That cant be taught? You've got to have it inside?**

I think it can be imparted. And that comes down to motivation and that kind of thing. But there is a deeper passion that comes, a deep rooted belief of a purpose in God to build this church.

I think we'll be raising and releasing leaders. People who can express what God has put within them, finding expression for that in the life of the church. And certainly to raise our influence in the community.

- 88. How important is preaching to you?**

- 89. Are you involved in the general community-how?**

Soccer club through the kids but apart from that not really

- 90. In what way does this church seek to serve the poor, if it does?**

We do seek to serve the poor. We give out food vouchers. We don't have an intensive program in that regard. We are developing our counseling ministry which might help the poor. We are working towards two work for the dole projects. We would like to set up a youth retreat on the six acres out the back.

- 91. I can read for the sake of the record, that on the wall is a statement of the vision and mission of this church.**

It reads: the vision of the church is to build the church

The mission of the church is to save lost people, make disciples, empower saints

Culture: vibrant, positive, friendly

Message: faith hope and love

Values of the church: empowering, gift oriented, passionate functional, holistic, inspiring, need oriented.

**92. What might the markers be that make you think you are an effective church?**

It's a difficult question. We want to be as effective as possible, I think that really making an inroad into the community, would be a key for us, seeing lost souls won for the kingdom. We are not doing that as effectively as I would like.



## Ordained leader Interview G

1. **How long have you been ordained**  
29 years
2. **How long have you been with this parish/congregation/church**  
7 years. Having left one mainline denomination and begun a new church described as interdependent. The church began 7 years ago.
3. **What formal training for ordination did you have**  
3 years Dip Theology at Moore College
4. **What formal post ordination training have you had**  
None
5. **What does your ordination mean to you**  
A little difficult to answer because of the change in churches, but basically ordination is a confirming of a calling of God to Christian ministry. Ordination means a commissioning for a particular role in a particular place. Ordination happens by laying on of hands by the senior pastor and the eldership of the church.
6. **What do you understand by the phrase-the gospel**  
The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. His offer of salvation through the cross.
7. **What does salvation mean to you**  
When someone is saved they are saved from their sin and from hell and destruction. Saved by grace as a sovereign act of God. It comes about by a person receiving Jesus as their personal Lord and saviour, in other words they must be born again of the spirit. If people haven't received Jesus as their Lord and saviour their salvation is in doubt. However, many people have had very personal encounters with God although they wouldn't use the language-received Jesus as their Lord and savior or born again. So in the end the test is the fruit of their life  
To receive Jesus as their Lord and savior involves the reality of an encounter at some point with God in some spiritual way and made a decision that they were going to follow Jesus, at the point of their understanding at the time. People can make many decisions over their life to follow Jesus, but each time they are responding according to their understanding at the time.
8. **What is the central task of the church**  
To fulfill the great commission that Jesus gave us-to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. The church is primarily the agent that is meant to be infiltrating the world for Christ.
9. **What do you believe about the resurrection of Christ**  
It happened-bodily and spiritually
10. **How does a person become a Christian**  
By acknowledging that they are not might with God, they need help and cant save themselves, pray the sinners pray asking Jesus into their life, do something to go on with that new life-coming to church, reading the Bible etc

**11. What do you understand happens at baptism**

Baptism is a proper process. Adults are baptized. Children are dedicated. Believer's baptism only. Baptism is recommended and encouraged-an outward sign of what's already happened in peoples hearts.

**12. Do you accept infant baptism**

No

**13. If not why not? If yes, why yes?**

It's not relevant. Infant baptism presents a great problem to conversion because people who had been baptized as infants thought they were saved because of their baptism. Someone who has not been baptized as a child, and not been baptized at all will readily respond to the gospel.

**14. How do you understand eternal life**

Eternal life is being in a relationship with God forever. It begins in this life after you make a commitment to Jesus. Enter into it fully when you die or when Jesus comes again

**15. Do you believe that hell exists**

Yes. Hell is being totally cut off from God. The love of God, the blessings of God. In this world lots of heaven on earth-God provides rain for the godly and ungodly etc.

**16. How would you describe the Bible**

Infallible word of God. Inerrant. I Seek to read the Bible every day

**17. What is your understanding of the aim of worship services**

Worship is about coming into a closer relationship with God together. The format of the Sunday gathering: 15 minute bits and pieces session. People often come to church in a not well prepared way. Bits and pieces means a song, couple of announcements, then the Lords supper. Bring people into a right relationship with God through the blood of Christ. Take the collection. Then a ten minute coffee break. Then the children go to children's church and the adults worship the Lord for 20-30 mins. Followed by a sermon of 20-30 mins. Followed by ministry however God directs. Follow the vineyard model of a coffee break in the middle. Believes that most people go to church for relationships, so cup off tea is a great chance for people to socialize, not as an added extra but a part of the worship.

Lords Supper is led by congregation members. They are asked to read some scripture. It's not a sermon -more a 5 minute thought. Use either a cup with juice so they instinct or little plastic cups. Focus on what Jesus did for us on the cross.

No formal set time of intercession. Sometimes people speak in tongues but there is always an expectation of interpretation. If someone speaks in tongues the worship stops and waits for an interpretation. So there is not just a babble of tongues without an edification for the body. The senior pastor or his choice leads the service. There are four or five men who lead the service as well as the pastor or assistant pastors or youth pastor. There is no philosophical commitment to only have men doing the leading and three women preach. Not sure if he has a problem with women leading the service. Women can teach the word as long as they are under the authority of a

male. What qualifies people to preach?-senior pastor chooses people who have the ability. Have a program called young guns program and every two months or so 3 young people are invited to give 3 ten minute sermons on a Sunday night. They are given a preaching guide so they are aware of a structure.

Music at church-older style on Sunday mornings-quieter, chorus type. More emphasis on worshipping God than 'I' stuff. At every service there is a 'golden oldie' one of the good old hymns of the past.

At night the service is cranked up-youth oriented. Bigger band. Drums

**18. What is most important to you in worship services**

To prepare us to go out into the world and be Jesus there

**19. How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit**

He is the one who does the convicting of people. He is the one who does the pre-emptive work of salvation. He convicts people of sin. He is the one who enters people's lives when they receive Jesus. He does the changing process. He is the one who empowers people for Christian ministry. This church encourages and teaches baptism in the Holy Spirit. Which can be on numerous occasions-we need to be filled and continually filled. Baptised in the HS every day. Sometimes it's more dramatic or significant.

**20. How do people become members of your church**

Very low key. Don't recruit. If people agree with the doctrinal statements, agree to worship and be part of home groups program, they put a card into the collection basket on Sunday as an act of worship. Then they are followed up.

**21. How do you understand the church**

An effective church is a church which is seeing people growing in the Lord-becoming more holy; effective in reaching out to the lost; impacting the community in a positive way-doing something that would bless the community.

Can't effectively preach and reach out with the gospel unless you are also showing the love of God to the community. Can't be effective unless both are happening. Can't reach out with the love of God unless you are proclaiming the gospel. Can't proclaim the gospel unless you are reaching out with the love of God.

**22. What is your understanding of your role**

Visionary, leading the church, keeping an overall eye on the practical functions of the church. Learning to delegate. Senior teacher, senior guide to people. Father and discipler to a number of people. Raising up leadership. Duplicating ministry.

Five or six home groups in the church. 25-30 teenagers in the Saturday night. Young adults group Monday night.

**23. What is your understanding of holy communion**

**24. How would you describe your church e.g. Evangelical, liberal, catholic, charismatic?**

Low key Pentecostal but evangelical. Middle ground church. Third wave-evangelical church become Pentecostal therefore it is charismatic.

**25. What sustains you in your ministry**

Great emphasis on Bible reading-quiet times. 2 hours most days for prayer Bible reading, reading devotional books. Met with other people. Has an accountability group-every second Thursday morning at 6.15am. Goes walking with some men of the church. Wife is best friend and confidant. Day off and time out from time to time.

**26. What kind of outreach does your church do**

Invite people at every service for people to give their lives to Jesus Christ congregation members are encouraged to share their faith with others once a month free cappachino give away at the town green. But it's mostly tourists there free BBQs and outreach into the caravan park next door, but it has been very difficult. Church is middle class and that is not the style of the caravan park

U-turn program. Christian version of alcoholics anonymous. However after a short while of going well this program is in recess because of a lack of demand.

Quandary about outreaching to the poor, but the church is being identified as a middle class church, so poor people find coming to the church not comfortable. The focus of the ministry of the church is on the site. A number of attempts to go out have not proved fruitful.

The church is re-thinking its focus. Maybe the aim of this church is to raise up leaders for areas of society. Programs of evangelistic outreach and feeding programs have not worked so maybe the role of this church is different to this.

**27. What is the aim of your congregation****28. How many members does your congregation have**

150

**29. What is the average age of the congregation**

Majority are around 35-55. Including 25 children. What percentage of the congregation have not been members of churches before or not during the past five years?-10%

**30. How important is preaching to you**

Very important. It is the expounding of the Bible-the word of God.. Its Gods word that changes peoples lives or converts.

**31. How are you involved in the general community**

Member of Rotary for the last 15 years.

**32. What is the place of home groups in your church**

Would like everyone who joins the church to be a member of a house group because the caring element of the church is a house group.

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