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Newfrontiers church planting in the UK: an examination of their distinctives and practices

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Award date:
2009

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Newfrontiers church planting in the UK: an examination of their distinctives and practices

**A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry to the
School of Theology and Religious Studies College of Arts and
Humanities, Bangor University**

Barry Cooper, May 2009.



Abstract

At a time when many denominations and church groups in the UK are declining, one “family of churches” is experiencing growth and opening new churches at an increasing rate. This thesis examines this phenomenon by considering the practice of church planting in the UK within a group of churches known as Newfrontiers, and seeks to suggest reasons for their growth and expansion.

In doing this, it considers four main questions:

- How has Newfrontiers developed and maintained a programme of intentional church planting? (Section 1)
- How does Newfrontiers go about planting churches? (Section 2)
- What might a “successful” church plant look like? (Section 3)
- What makes a “successful” church plant? (Section 4)

In the course of this thesis, two main sources of information are used. They are the primary sources of Newfrontiers (in-house magazines, books, and audio/audio visual material), and empirical research carried out by the author. This research included a series of interviews with senior and other relevant leaders within Newfrontiers, as well as a survey and follow up interviews with leaders of a number of current/recent Newfrontiers new churches.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his thanks and appreciation to the following:

- My supervisors: Dr. Neil Hudson and Dr. William Kay. Without their patience, encouragement and practical help this thesis would not have been written.
- Dr. Keith Warrington and the other faculty members at Regents Theological College for their support and wisdom.
- Terry Virgo, David Holden, David Stroud and the other leaders within Newfrontiers who agreed to be interviewed and have shown ongoing interest in this research.
- All the leaders of the Newfrontiers church plants featured in this thesis. Without their willingness to fill in questionnaires and answer endless questions on the phone, there would have been no material to examine.
- Tony Thompson for reading and helping me make sense of my empirical research as featured in section 4.
- Mike Cornish for reading and helping me to focus my thinking.
- Andrew Greenhalgh for proof reading and helping to get my commas and apostrophes in the right place.
- And lastly to Ruth, my lovely wife for putting up with me, and giving me the space required to carry out this research. Without her constant support, I would not have been able to start, let alone finish this project.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AVM | Audio Visual Media (audio tape, CD, Video & DVD) |
| JEPTA | The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for Social Science |
| Front | Frontline (published from c. 1992 to c. 1996) |
| nfimag | nfimagazine (published from c. 1997 to c. 2002) |
| NFMag | New Frontiers Magazine (published from 1986 to 1991) |
| NFU | New Frontiers Update (published 1986) |
| NMag | Newfrontiers Magazine (published from 1992 to present day) |

Introduction

This thesis considers the practice of church planting in the UK within a group of churches known as Newfrontiers. As will be explored below,¹ Newfrontiers is in some ways unusual in that it is experiencing significant numerical growth largely due to its policy of intentional church planting. This is in sharp contrast to many other denominations and religious groupings that have declining membership and declining numbers of churches. This thesis seeks to suggest reasons for this growth and expansion.

It starts by asking why churches are planted and how it has managed to develop a significant momentum for starting new churches. The second section progresses to examine how Newfrontiers plants churches and what impact they are having. These mainly descriptive chapters then form the foundation for the empirical research that follows.

Before this research can be used to suggest a number of factors that may be statistically significant to the success of a Newfrontiers church plant, the notion of “success” has to be examined. Section three considers this and asks what a “successful” church plant might look like. Once that has been established the final section uses a statistical analysis computer package² to indicate a number of factors that might have a bearing on a successful church plant.

The literature review argues that this thesis involves three strands of study. There is an historical element which seeks to place Newfrontiers into the context of a neo-Pentecostal or charismatic group of churches, an explanation and emphasis on church planting that sits within missiology, and the inclusion of empirical research belonging to practical theology. The literature review also draws a comparison between this thesis and the work of Osmer. In his *Practical Theology – an introduction*,³ Osmer introduces a cycle of research which he

¹ See I.2.

² See Methodology below.

³ Osmer, R. *Practical Theology – an introduction*. (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans. 2008).

describes as the “hermeneutical cycle”. This process has been loosely followed in this thesis.⁴

I.1 Church planting in the UK

The practice and legitimacy of starting new churches, or church planting as this is commonly known, has, at least in some circles, been gaining in momentum since the early 1980s. This is in spite of the increasing decline amongst many church denominations, both in terms of Sunday attendance and in their number of churches. For instance, research from the English Church Census suggests that 11.7% of the population attended church on a Sunday in 1979, while only 6.3% attended in 2005.⁵

It is possible to trace this modern emphasis on church planting back to the work of McGavran and the church growth movement. Writing in 1981, he stated: “Any discipling of the peoples of the earth... necessitates aiming at establishing millions of new congregations. Carrying out the world mission of the church is impossible, it is empty words, unless it rides on the back of multitudes of new congregations...”⁶

Robinson suggests that in the 1980s church planting started to be considered as a deliberate strategy for mission. He describes the development of a church planting movement in the UK through a series of initiatives and conferences leading to the adaptation of the DAWN strategy,⁷ and the launch of Challenge 2000. This was a highly ambitious plan, endorsed by many UK denominations to plant 20,000 new churches by the year 2000. It was also a plan that Robinson says was fatally flawed, and which spectacularly failed to deliver.⁸ Ireland understates this by describing Challenge 2000 as having an “over-ambitious target” and suggests that during the 1990s about 2,000 churches were started.⁹

⁴ See L3.3.

⁵ Brierley, P. *Pulling out of the nose dive*. (London:Christian Research. 2006) 12.

⁶ McGavran, D. “Try these seven steps for planting churches.” *Global Church Growth Bulletin* 18 (May-Jun 1981) 110.

⁷ Montgomery, J. *Dawn 2000*. (Crowborough:Highland. 1990).

⁸ Robinson, M. *Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today*. (Oxford:Monarch. 2006) 21-29.

⁹ Booker, M. & Ireland, M. *Evangelism – which was now?* (London:Church House. 2003) 155-156.

In more recent years many denominations have put varying emphasis upon starting new churches. A report published in 2006 presented a complex and sometimes contradictory picture of church planting in the UK.¹⁰ It noted the problems of different churches using different terminology and the reluctance of some to divulge current information. Although the research revealed that most denominations had started new churches,¹¹ it also pointed out that many had closed many more churches than they had opened. For instance between 2000 and 2005 there had been a net decrease amongst the Church of England of 140 churches and 413 for the Methodist churches.¹² This is in contrast to Newfrontiers. Newfrontiers is continually and increasingly planting churches, and is not experiencing the haemorrhaging of churches that other denominations are experiencing.

There are generally two reasons given for church planting. Some, such as Hesselgrave and Stetzer, seek to appeal to the praxis of the early church,¹³ and especially the ministry of Paul as recorded in Acts.¹⁴ Others follow Wagner in arguing pragmatically for church planting as the “single most effective evangelistic method.”¹⁵ However, these views are not contradictory and some proponents, including many within Newfrontiers, hold both as equally important motivations for church planting.

The current emphasis upon church planting is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the denominations and groups of churches that are currently growing in numbers of churches are also involved in church planting.¹⁶ Although some “adoptions” of existing churches may still occasionally take place, the majority of new congregations are likely to be church plants.

¹⁰ Campbell, A. *Mission 21 – A report on church planting in the UK since 2000*. (Birmingham:TIM. 2006).

¹¹ For instance between 2000 and 2005: Baptists 75, Church of England 79, and Methodists 60. *ibid.* 8.

¹² *ibid.* 8.

¹³ Hesselgrave, D.J. *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*. (Grand Rapids:Baker. 1980) 20, and Stetzer, E. *Planting new churches in a postmodern age*. (Nashville:Broadman & Holman. 2003) 47.

¹⁴ Allen, R. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or ours?* (Grand Rapids:Erdmans. 1962).

¹⁵ Wagner, C.P. *Church planting for a greater harvest*. (Ventura:Regal. 1990) 11.

¹⁶ Timmis, S. & Chester, T. *The Gospel-Centred Church*. (New Maldon:Good Book Company. 2002) 88.

Secondly, if the non-churched population of the UK is to be affected by Christianity it is doubtful to what extent this will be by established, traditional churches.¹⁷ Instead, the churches that are growing numerically are often the newer churches that have recently been planted. Jackson quotes research carried out amongst Southern Baptist churches in the USA and claims that “church planting and church growth are almost the same thing.”¹⁸

Thirdly, an argument can be made that the church planting movement has a positive effect upon more established churches. Robinson suggests that church plants often involve a “missional experiment”, namely trying new ideas that would prove impossible for older churches. These ideas can then be evaluated and adapted, thereby helping to bring a revitalisation to established churches.¹⁹ Chester and Timmis agree and suggest that: “Church planting should be at the forefront of new ecclesiological thinking.”²⁰

1.2 Newfrontiers

According to statistics released by Newfrontiers in 2006, Newfrontiers in the UK was made up of 24,735 adults, plus 9,278 teenagers and children, worshipping in 224 churches and church plants. This equates to an overall growth in membership since 2000 of 29.3% and a growth in the number of churches and church plants of 41.8%.²¹ Although the membership and the numbers of churches are still not large in comparison with mainline denominations, the growth is significant and contrary to the decline found in the majority of UK churches. Robinson contrasts the fortunes of Newfrontiers with the United Reformed Church, which declined from just over 192,000 in 1972 to under 82,000 in 2004. He writes: “It is possible that in the next twenty years, a group of churches that was not even in being in 1972, Newfrontiers, will be significantly larger than the United Reformed Church. These growing groups are church planting their way into the mainstream.”²²

¹⁷ Shenk, D. & Stutzman, E. *Creating Communities of the Kingdom*. (Scottsdale:Herald. 1988) 13.

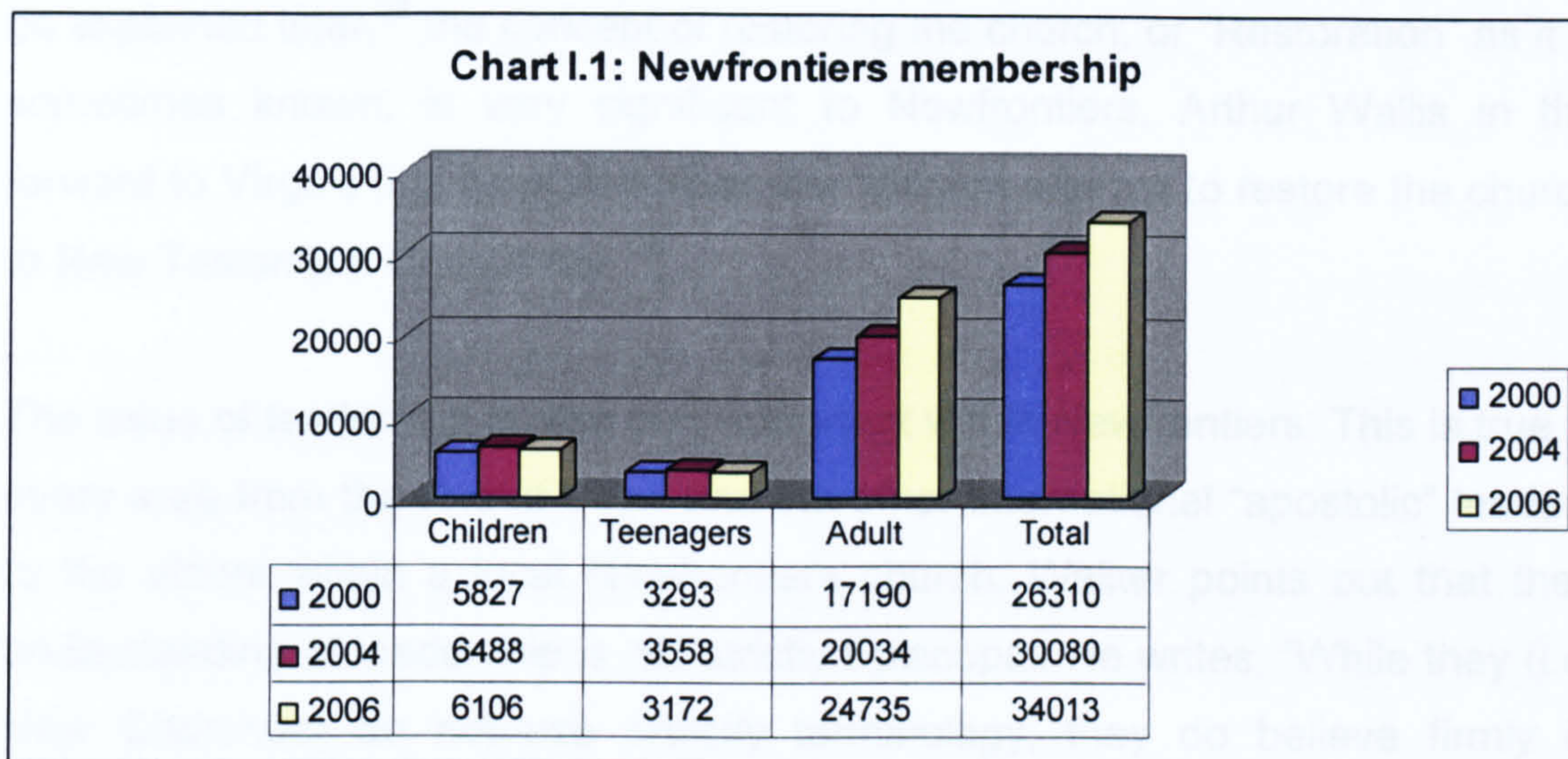
¹⁸ Jackson, B. *Hope for the Church*. (London:Church House. 2004) 133-134.

¹⁹ Robinson, 31.

²⁰ Chester, T. & Timmis, S. *Total Church*. (Nottingham:IVP. 2007) 93.

²¹ These figures relate to 2006 and are of “membership” (defined as those “committed in heart and vision”) not Sunday attendance which would probably be higher.

²² Robinson, 30-31.



The history of Newfrontiers is explored in chapter one by looking in particular at the life of its founder, Terry Virgo, and the influence he has had, as well as a series of “prophetic words” that have been foundational to the way it has developed. This will reveal Newfrontiers as belonging to a group of churches variously described as “House Churches”,²³ “Restorationism”,²⁴ and more recently as “New Churches”.²⁵ The particular label used may have changed over time, but all describe a group of churches that are in some ways on the edge of established Christianity. Although seeking to be thoroughly orthodox and evangelical in belief, Newfrontiers is unashamedly radical in its practice and prides itself as being on the cutting edge of mission and church planting. This is demonstrated in various ways including the mobility of their church members and the amount of money given towards church planting.²⁶

From the conception of Newfrontiers in 1986, Virgo has continually sought to emphasise that although each church is autonomously governed by its own elders, they are nevertheless co-operating together on a mission. In 1996 this was defined as meaning that they were working together to restore the church, make disciples, train leaders, plant churches and to reach the nations.²⁷ As will

²³ Virgo, T. *A People Prepared*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1996) 174.

²⁴ Walker, A. *Restoring the Kingdom*. (Guildford:Eagle. 1998) 38-41.

²⁵ Smith, D. “An account for the sustained rise of New Frontiers International within the UK.” *JEPTA*. (Vol. xxiii. 2003) 138.

²⁶ Virgo, T. *No Well-Worn Paths*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 2001). 346.

²⁷ Virgo, (1996) 175.

be explained later,²⁸ the concept of restoring the church, or “Restoration” as it is sometimes known, is very significant to Newfrontiers. Arthur Wallis in the forward to Virgo’s first book describes the “diligent attempt to restore the church to New Testament Christianity.”²⁹

The issue of leadership is also very important within Newfrontiers. This is true in every area from the role of Virgo and the other international “apostolic” leaders to the elders within a local Newfrontiers church. Walker points out that their understanding of leadership is not strictly Episcopal. He writes, “While they (i.e. New Churches) do not use priestly terminology, they do believe firmly in authority in a constituted hierarchy.”³⁰ This Walker explains, comes from their understanding of Scripture rather than from church history.

It is significant that Newfrontiers, along with other New Churches, all seek to take the justification behind their style of leadership from the Bible rather than from church history. In a chapter entitled *Apostles today?* Virgo writes of the importance of “getting back to the Bible instead of walking in a maze of human logic based on previous experience.”³¹ For Newfrontiers this has relevance not only to a belief in present day apostles, but in a local church structured relationally around a plurality of elders. Walker sums this up by saying, “Restorationists show no interest in the first few centuries of church history. They insist that the pattern for church order can be, and must be, discerned from the Scriptures alone.”³²

The significance of leadership is therefore central to this thesis. As will be seen below, leaders have been interviewed, asked to complete questionnaires and are often quoted. Their role is not just as spokespersons for Newfrontiers, but rather as the shapers and influencers of the future direction of the movement.

²⁸ See I.6.3.

²⁹ Wallis, A. in Virgo, T. *Restoration in the Church*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1985). 10.

³⁰ Walker, (1998) 153.

³¹ Virgo, (1985) 128.

³² Walker. (1998) 152.

I.3 Church planting within Newfrontiers

Newfrontiers, and Coastlands before it,³³ has always emphasised the importance of church planting. However, as will be explored later,³⁴ it was not until 1990 that the practice became widespread and intentional. Dave Devenish, who is a part of the Newfrontiers international leadership team, sums up the belief of Newfrontiers when he writes: "Church planting was Paul's priority, and church planting must be the missionary priority today. Both in our own home nation and in the unreached people groups of the world, more communities of God's people are needed if the prophetic purposes of God are to be fulfilled in the earth."³⁵ Virgo concurs: "Local churches are undoubtedly the strategic key for world evangelisation."³⁶

In 1996 Virgo stated that approximately 50% of the then 128 Newfrontiers churches in the UK were church plants,³⁷ with the others having their "own previous history".³⁸ Since then the proportion of churches started by Newfrontiers has increased, with church plants taking place in many towns and cities throughout the UK. In addition to the number of plants mentioned below, at any one time there are others at various stages of conception. In 2001 there were 152 Newfrontiers churches in the UK with an additional 15 recognised as church plants.³⁹ By 2008 that had increased to 206 churches and 29 church plants.⁴⁰

Perhaps more significant than the actual numbers of churches being planted is the way church planting has become such an integral part of the belief and praxis of Newfrontiers. Chapter two highlights some of the ways that that has taken place. It concludes that Newfrontiers is moving, albeit slowly, towards its goal of establishing 1,000 churches in the UK.

³³ Prior to 1986 Newfrontiers was known as Coastlands.

³⁴ See 1.1.5.

³⁵ Devenish, D. *What on earth is the church for?* (Milton Keynes:Authentic Media. 2005) 39.

³⁶ Virgo, (1996) 80.

³⁷ For a definition of the way "church plant" is used in this paper see 1.6.1.

³⁸ Virgo, (1996) 175.

³⁹ Statistics quoted in Smith, 148.

⁴⁰ Shaw, T. "The church and the campus". *NMag.* (Vol. 3. Issue 3. July 2008) 20.

I.4 From restoration to church planting

The literature of Newfrontiers has often revealed an apparent dichotomy between an ongoing desire to restore the church to life and vitality⁴¹ and to increasing evangelism worked out through the practice of church planting.⁴² This tension has always been in place but chapter one will show a reversal of emphasis from a preoccupation pre-1990 in restoring the church to a stronger emphasis more recently on church planting.

This tension is seen clearly in an article written in 2002 by Virgo entitled “Does anybody still believe in restoration?” He argues that the task of restoring the church to God’s original intention is a legitimate one for pragmatic, biblical and historical reasons. However Virgo continues, “We are also thoroughly committed to the Restoration of the church because of our God-given commission to make disciples of all nations”, a task that those within Newfrontiers regularly equate with church planting. He continues, “The recovery of New Testament church life will result in the recovery of a passion for world mission... To be preoccupied with the recovery of church life, therefore, is not to turn our back on mission.”⁴³

I.5 The brief of this thesis

I.5.1 Newfrontiers

This research concentrates upon the group of churches that are affiliated to the ministry of Virgo now known as Newfrontiers. There are a number of reasons why this choice was made.

Firstly, in recent years Newfrontiers has emerged as a dominant force amongst the New Churches.⁴⁴ It is statistically the largest New Church group in the UK and, perhaps more significantly, its churches co-operate together in a way that is foreign to most of the other New Church groupings. At a time when many of the other New Churches are declining, fragmented or have even disbanded,

⁴¹ For instance see Virgo’s Forward to Hosier, J. *Christ’s radiant church*. (Oxford:Monarch. 2005) 5.

⁴² For instance see Barron, C. “Church Planting.” *nfimag*. (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 20-21.

⁴³ Virgo, T. “Does anybody still believe in Restoration?” *nfimag*. (Issue 18. Aug-Oct 2002) 5-9.

⁴⁴ Wright, N. “The Nature and Variety of Restorationism and the ‘House Church’ Movement” in Hunt, S., Hamilton, M. & Walter, T. *Charismatic Christianity*. (Basingstoke:Macmillan. 1997) 69-70.

Newfrontiers' "place at the forefront of the New Church movement, and the UK evangelical scene seems assured."⁴⁵

Secondly, there are very few other groups of churches in the UK that put such a high priority on church planting. Moreover this priority is not just a good intention, but is being worked out in practical ways throughout much of the country. With a goal of becoming a family of 1,000 churches in the UK, church planting is firmly fixed upon its agenda.

Thirdly, this thesis has been made possible due to the willingness of many of the leaders of Newfrontiers to contribute towards this research. As detailed in the methodology, this has included the completion of questionnaires and the readiness to be interviewed. Many of the UK leaders participated, including Terry Virgo, David Holden and David Stroud,⁴⁶ while other administrative staff contributed statistics and other information.

1.5.2 Church planting in the UK

Although church planting is a global phenomenon and is taking place on a larger scale in many other countries, the decision was made to limit this study to the UK, despite the fact that Newfrontiers now works in an increasing number of countries. There are many pragmatic reasons for this decision, including the interest of the author, the relative ease of access to sources in the UK, the limitations of a thesis of this size, and the comparative sparsity of research carried out on contemporary church planting within the UK.

1.6 Unique contributions

This thesis is offered as a unique contribution to the wider body of research for the following reasons:

⁴⁵ Smith, 141-142.

⁴⁶ Holden and Stroud are currently two of the most senior leaders within Newfrontiers.

I.6.1 Examination of Newfrontiers

The comparative scarcity of literature looking at the New Churches in general and Newfrontiers in particular has previously been highlighted.⁴⁷ There are many reasons for this including the relative “newness” of the movement and, perhaps more notably, the speed at which it is still developing.⁴⁸ Wright describes the New Churches as being in a “state of flux”, stating that anything written will “swiftly be out of date.”⁴⁹

In 1985 Walker wrote his first edition of *Restoring the Kingdom*,⁵⁰ a book that was republished as a “fully revised and expanded edition” just thirteen years later. Substantial changes in the second edition included the addition of a new section on Virgo and Newfrontiers.⁵¹ This work remains the most comprehensive review of the New Churches up to 1998, with little written after that time. It is significant that in the “Author’s Postscript” of the first edition, Walker acknowledged that the book would be “out of date as soon as it’s in print”,⁵² the reported reason why Walker has resisted producing a third edition.⁵³ More recently Kay has added to the debate with *Apostolic Networks in Britain*, a book which includes a summary of the work of Virgo and Newfrontiers.⁵⁴

This thesis builds on these sources and includes a summary of the history of Newfrontiers. Wherever possible this has been written using the writings and recordings of Virgo and other Newfrontiers leaders. As well as using *No well-worn paths*⁵⁵ and two audio recordings of Virgo “telling his story”,⁵⁶ articles from the in-house magazines dating back to 1986 have been used for the first time as primary source material.

⁴⁷ Wright, (1997) 60.

⁴⁸ Smith, 137.

⁴⁹ Wright, (1997) 61.

⁵⁰ Walker, A. *Restoring the Kingdom*. (London:Hodder & Stoughton. 1985).

⁵¹ Walker, (1998) 330-339.

⁵² Walker, (1985) 298.

⁵³ A claim made by Virgo at the February Leaders’ Prayer and Fasting in 2006.

⁵⁴ Kay, W. *Apostolic Networks in Britain*. (Milton Keynes:Paternoster. 2007) 54-81.

⁵⁵ Virgo, (2001).

⁵⁶ Virgo, T. “The story so far” (AVM 1998) and “The story so far” (AVM 2007).

1.6.2 Newfrontiers church planting in the UK

This thesis considers how Newfrontiers has established a church planting momentum that has made a very significant contribution towards the 41.8% growth in the number of Newfrontiers churches in the UK from 2000 to 2006. Although, according to the criteria set out by Garrison, Newfrontiers is perhaps not yet qualifying as a “church planting movement”,⁵⁷ the extent to which the majority of the Newfrontiers leaders, as well as many of their members, have bought into the concept of church planting is very significant.

The particular way that Newfrontiers currently goes about church planting is considered in chapter three. Although variations to the norm can always be found, this chapter examines the common factors and explores topics such as their leadership structure, philosophy of evangelism, and style of Sunday meetings. Chapter four seeks to discover what impact the new church plants are having in their community, and to what extent they contribute towards the wider Newfrontiers mission of starting 1,000 churches in the UK.

Although the practice of church planting by Newfrontiers has been recognised by other writers,⁵⁸ discussion is brief with little investigation into their methodology, motivation, or consideration of the impact their church plants are having. By examining how Newfrontiers is planting churches, this thesis seeks to make a contribution towards understanding contemporary church planting in the UK.

1.6.3 Empirical research

As will be seen from the Methodology, a major proportion of this thesis is based upon empirical research carried out by the author.

In particular this has focused upon a list of new and intended church plants published in 2002.⁵⁹ Questionnaires were completed by their leaders in autumn 2005 and telephone interviews were subsequently conducted, also with the

⁵⁷ Garrison, D. *Church Planting Movements*. (Richmond:WIGTake Resources. 2004). See also 4.5 below.

⁵⁸ Such as Robinson, and Lings, G. & Murray, S. *Church Planting: past, present and future*. (Cambridge:Grove Books. 2003) 13.

⁵⁹ Blaber, S. (ed.) *Seeds of Change*. (2002).

leaders, during 2007. These explored a number of factors including the development and growth of the church plants, profile of the leaders, and the locations into which they were planted. These results were then analysed using the computer programme SPSS.⁶⁰

Other original research included a number of interviews with Newfrontiers leaders and 247 questionnaires completed by a sample of individual members from eleven recent church plants.

1.7 Terminology used

Throughout this thesis a number of phrases and titles are used that justify some explanation. These include the following:

1.7.1 Church, church plant and church planting

The debate as to what constitutes a church can be traced back to the Early Church Fathers.⁶¹ As might be expected Newfrontiers broadly follows the Reformers and understands the “marks” of a church to include the preaching of the Word of God and the celebration of baptism and communion.⁶²

In general terms this thesis follows popular usage and understands a *church* as an established group of Christians, usually with a recognised leadership structure, and sometimes with their own building and/or salaried staff.⁶³ In contrast *church plant* is understood to describe a new and embryonic church. This will usually have more limited numbers, and in a Newfrontiers context will probably initially meet in a home rather than in a public building. *Church planting* therefore is seen as the process of establishing a new church in a new location.

As far as Newfrontiers is concerned, the necessary requirements before a church plant can be recognised as a church are set out in a summary written by former UK administrator Steve Blaber from a discussion held at the UK

⁶⁰ SPSS v14.0 for Windows. Copyright SPSS Inc. 1985-2005.

⁶¹ Berkhof, L. *The history of Christian doctrines*. (Edinburgh:Banner of Truth. 1978) 227-241.

⁶² Grudem, W. *Bible Doctrine*. (Leicester:IVP. 1999) 369-370.

⁶³ Montgomery, 79.

Newfrontiers team meeting in April 2003.⁶⁴ For a church plant to be recognised as a church it must contain “effective leadership”. Although stating that a plurality of eldership is preferable, this is not set out as a requirement, although the involvement of external “apostolic” ministry is. The summary also includes reference to a “sustainable gathered community”. Blaber acknowledged this was deliberately loose, but things to be considered included the ability to be financially self-sufficient as well being able to hold “effective and sustainable” Sunday meetings. He was also clear that this was assumed to include biblical preaching and the celebration of the sacraments.⁶⁵

For Devenish the definition of a church is not just about what a church *is*, but also about what a church *does*. He writes: “I would define a local church as a grace-motivated, Spirit-filled community of people from all walks of life in a particular locality, who have a common faith in Christ and are committed to one another and to leaders who serve and care for them. That community is, however, missional at its core, understanding that its responsibility is to reach others with the gospel.”⁶⁶

1.7.2 Coastlands, New Frontiers, New Frontiers International (NFI), and Newfrontiers

The family of churches examined in this thesis has been known by different names. Originally calling itself *Coastlands*, chapter one describes the process whereby it re-invented itself and emerged as *New Frontiers*. Since then it has changed its name to *New Frontiers International*, often abbreviated to *NFI*, and then more recently to *Newfrontiers*.

This thesis will use the title *Coastlands* for the early days of pre-1986, and primarily use *Newfrontiers* to describe the movement since that time.⁶⁷ Chapter one will seek to show how this change is more than semantics and represented a significant change in philosophy and practice.

⁶⁴ Blaber, S. “Excerpt from team leaders meeting on ‘When is a church a church?’” April 2003.

⁶⁵ Source: a telephone conversation with the author (14-10-2005).

⁶⁶ Devenish, 60.

⁶⁷ The exceptions to the use of *Newfrontiers* are quotations from other writers, where their title will be repeated in this thesis.

I.7.3 House Churches, Restorationism, and New Churches

Of all the problems with nomenclature that this thesis may experience, perhaps the most significant is the question of what to call the groups of churches that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s such as Newfrontiers. Originally the term *House Church* was often used, then *Restorationism*. More recently the term *New Churches* has come into vogue. Walker correctly observes that these titles have emerged out of “common usage and the popular desire for identification” rather than for any precise technical reason.⁶⁸

Wright points out that the term *House Church* and *New Church* are misnomers and in some ways misleading. Although many of the churches originally met in homes, and many new church plants continue to start that way, some Newfrontiers churches are now in possession of large, sometimes multi-million pound facilities.⁶⁹ Wright also suggests that the term *New Church* is no better since some churches have considerable histories. He prefers the term *Restorationism*, a term that he says describes a “cardinal theological concept.”⁷⁰ Although perhaps appropriate in 1997, eleven years later this too would appear unsatisfactory, for while it was used quite extensively⁷¹ it has more recently fallen into disuse. In 2002, Virgo wrote an article entitled *Does anybody still believe in Restoration?*⁷² His answer was an emphatic “We most certainly do!”⁷³ However, the fact that the question was even asked is significant. Although the concept of a church restored to God’s original intention is still important to Virgo,⁷⁴ the phrase *Restorationism* is now seldom used within Newfrontiers. This is perhaps an acknowledgement that restoring the church now forms only one aspect of their mission.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Walker, A. in Percy, M. & Jones, I. (eds.) *Fundamentalism, Church and Society*. (London:SPCK. 2002) 53.

⁶⁹ At a Leaders’ Prayer and Fasting in February 2007, six churches were prayed for that were hoping to embark on building projects in excess of £3,000,000.

⁷⁰ Wright, (1997) 60-61.

⁷¹ For instance Virgo’s first book was entitled *Restoration in the Church*.

⁷² Virgo, T. “Does anybody still believe in Restoration?” *nfirmag*. (Issue 18. Aug-Oct 2002) 5-9.

⁷³ *ibid.* 9.

⁷⁴ See Virgo’s Forward to Hosier, (2005) 5.

⁷⁵ For a summary of the current mission of Newfrontiers see <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/about-us/our-mission/> (accessed 3-5-2008).

In this thesis, the term *New Churches* will be used to describe the groupings of churches that emerged alongside Newfrontiers. It is being used, not because it is any more accurate than the other titles, but because it is currently the most commonly used contemporary label for these churches.

1.7.4 Pentecostal and Charismatic

Newfrontiers belong to a group of churches that can be broadly described as *Pentecostal-Charismatic*. This is the only sector of the Christian church that is currently growing in the UK, and has an estimated 500 million members worldwide.⁷⁶ The neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement began in the 1960s with the “House Church Movement” emerging during the 1970s.⁷⁷

Although it is not possible in this thesis to include a summary of Charismatic beliefs, two specifics are sufficiently important to an understanding of Newfrontiers and will therefore be briefly considered below.

1.7.4.1 Apostles⁷⁸

According to Wright, the belief in the recovery and relevance of *Apostles* is “of primary importance” to New Churches today. He observes that the apostles of today are not understood as the “re-constituting of the original twelve”, but as the recovery of “the spiritual function in the church in line with the five-fold ministry referred to in Ephesians 4:11”,⁷⁹ a point also well made by Walker.⁸⁰

Virgo has frequently written about his understanding of the role of an apostle. In *Does the future have a church?* he states that the ministries of Ephesians 4:11 are “highly significant”, and that local churches “throughout history” have suffered from the misunderstanding and disregard of these “gifts”.⁸¹ Newfrontiers believes that apostles have a vital role in giving order and direction

⁷⁶ Hollenweger, W.J. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. (Peabody:Hendrickson. 1997)

⁷⁷ For a summary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements written largely from an American perspective, see Synan, V. *The Century of the Holy Spirit*. (Nashville:Thomas Nelson. 2001).

⁷⁸ For the development of the role of an Apostle among the “Apostolic Networks” see Kay, (2007) 241-246.

⁷⁹ Wright, (1997) 62.

⁸⁰ Walker, (1998) 153.

⁸¹ Virgo, T. *Does the future have a church?* (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 2003) 113.

to the church today, and within Newfrontiers, Virgo and a number of other senior leaders are recognised as having “an apostolic ministry.”⁸²

The belief in modern day apostles is not just a theoretical one. Newfrontiers enjoys a flexibility and mobility that is in part due to their “charismatic” style of leadership⁸³ that allows key “apostolic” individuals to make decisions quickly and simply without any accompanying bureaucratic structure. After emphasising the importance of flexible, God-given leadership in a local church, Virgo writes, “Where tradition is the entrenched norm, and democratic power is held by a majority who treasure the past, we should not be surprised to note little freedom of movement or spiritual progress...”⁸⁴

Several examples are given in chapter one of significant decisions being taken by Virgo and the leaders of Newfrontiers that have all contributed towards Newfrontiers’ mission of planting churches. These decisions have often originated in prophetic words⁸⁵ and had far reaching implications for Newfrontiers in general, and for their practice of church planting in particular.⁸⁶

1.7.4.2 Prophecies and prophetic words⁸⁷

The importance to Newfrontiers of *prophecies* and *prophetic words* is hard to overstate. Turner describes these as “oracular speech”, that is the belief that a particular message has been imparted to an individual “directly by the Spirit”.⁸⁸ Cartledge notes seven different ways that these “words” may be received,⁸⁹ while Turner explores the contemporary practice of prophecy in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches,⁹⁰ much of which is relevant to Newfrontiers.

⁸² *ibid.* 119-125.

⁸³ As defined by Weber – see Gerth, H. & Wright Mills, C. *From Max Weber*. (London:Routledge. 1991).

⁸⁴ Virgo, (1996) 129.

⁸⁵ For example the changing of name to New Frontiers International – see Smith, 147-148.

⁸⁶ For example see 1.1.6 and the close of Stoneleigh Bible Week.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of prophecy in a “Restoration” context, see Briers, S.J. *Negotiating with Babylon*. An unpublished Ph.D thesis presented to Cambridge University. (1993) 189-193.

⁸⁸ Turner, M. *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 1996) 306.

⁸⁹ Cartledge, M. “Charismatic Prophecy.” *The Journal of Empirical Theology*. (1995) 80-82.

⁹⁰ Turner, 307-318.

1.8 Is Newfrontiers really different?

The title of this thesis would suggest that Newfrontiers has a number of “distinctives” that separates it from other churches and denominations. Section 1.2 presents a number of values that are held by those within Newfrontiers that together are sometimes seen as a justification for starting new churches. However it will be suggested that the significance of these emphases is not in their uniqueness, but in the way Newfrontiers perceives itself. They are often seen by those within Newfrontiers as being distinctive even though the same values are often shared by many other churches.

Newfrontiers has much in common with a number of other churches groups. For instance their beliefs are a mix of neo-Pentecostal⁹¹ and reformed theology,⁹² their worship is charismatic,⁹³ their evangelism is evangelical revivalism,⁹⁴ and their leadership style is “New Apostolic”.⁹⁵

There is variety within Newfrontiers in the way it conducts its Sunday worship, but there is a general expectation that services will include an opportunity to experience the presence of God in worship that is “joyful, creative and expressive” and that the Bible will be communicated in a way that it is “relevant to life”.⁹⁶ These claims are not unique to Newfrontiers and could be repeated on thousands of church web sites throughout Britain.⁹⁷

The “distinctives” of Newfrontiers then is not primarily in the values outlined in 1.2 or the way they conduct their church services. It is more to do with their self-belief in what they believe God has called them to be, that is a “worldwide family of churches together on a mission to establish the Kingdom of God by restoring the church, making disciples, training leaders and planting churches.”⁹⁸ At a

⁹¹ Synan, 395-397.

⁹² Walker, (1998) 332.

⁹³ Hayford, J. *Worship His Majesty*. (Milton Keynes:Word. 1987) 47.

⁹⁴ Dieter, M. “Revivalism” in Elwell, W. (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Basingstoke:Marshall Pickering. 1984) 948-951.

⁹⁵ Wagner, P. *The New Apostolic Churches*. (Ventura:Regal. 1998) 13-25.

⁹⁶ Taken from the King’s Church website: <http://www.kingscentre.org.uk/aboutus.php> (accessed 10-4-2009).

⁹⁷ Smail, T. *Charismatic Renewal*. (London:SPCK. 1993) 109-116.

⁹⁸ A strapline printed on much of the Newfrontiers recent literature.

time when other church denominations are talking about planting churches, one of the main distinctives of Newfrontiers is that they actually have a programme of expansion that is seeing an increasing number of churches started each year.

Literary review

The nature of this thesis, in that it covers a range of disciplines, makes the inclusion of a literature review problematic. The overall context of section one is historical, seeking to place Newfrontiers into the context of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic movement. As will be seen below there is a scarcity of literature covering this subject. This is partly due to the comparative newness of the New Church movement, and the rapid rate of change that groups like Newfrontiers is still experiencing.

Section two and three then describe Newfrontiers in the context of contemporary church planting, a practice that is often studied within the framework of missiology. Here the range of literature is much broader although the relevance to this thesis of many of the texts are limited, due either to their devotional nature, or because they are specifically written for a North American audience.

Section four, which focuses on the empirical research outlined in the methodology, sits within the developing field of practical theology. As this section is perhaps the climax to this thesis, this literature review will briefly summarise the relevant historical and missional literature before concentrating upon the discipline of practical theology.

L.1 Relevant historical literature relating to Newfrontiers

From 1985 to 2007 the primary text dealing with what was then known as Restorationism was *Restoring the Kingdom* by Walker. The first edition⁹⁹ focused primarily on a group of churches led by Bryn Jones and based in Bradford and tended to evaluate other groups in relation to how they interacted with Jones and his “Harvestime” group. The revised and expanded fourth edition¹⁰⁰ sought to correct that imbalance and devoted extra copy to Virgo and Newfrontiers.¹⁰¹ In the introduction Walker described his original approach in *Restoring the Kingdom* as “academic journalism”, that is an attempt to “both tell

⁹⁹ Walker, (1985)

¹⁰⁰ Walker, (1998)

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* 330-339.

the story and offer some analysis."¹⁰² In this regard it would seem that Walker was largely successful, with no other detailed work published until 2007.

In 2007 Kay wrote *Apostolic Networks*¹⁰³ a book that traces the charismatic movement in Britain from the 1960s to the early 2000s. It is thorough and includes a section on Virgo and Newfrontiers. The style is not dissimilar to this thesis in that it attempts to cover both historical narrative and empirical research. Kay suggests that many of the churches covered in his book are, at least from an ecclesiological and sociological perspective, innovative and present a number of challenges to the established church, including the idea and practice of church planting.

The other significant book that forms the basis for much of chapter one is *No well-worn paths*¹⁰⁴ written by Virgo. Although written as an autobiography, it covers the development of Newfrontiers up to the turn of the Millennium, and demonstrates how closely the fortunes of Virgo are intertwined with that of Newfrontiers.

Apart from these three works, discussion regarding the New Churches in general and Newfrontiers in particular is very limited. In 1995 Hewitt wrote having interviewed seven church leaders who were or had been involved in the "house church movement". The book included a chapter on Virgo under the heading "Missionary to the south-east".¹⁰⁵ The book is popular in style and demonstrates the many changes that have taken place since it was written.

An article with a more academic style was published in JEPTA in 2002.¹⁰⁶ In it Smith attempted to briefly put Newfrontiers into a historical context before seeking to explain the apparent popularity and "success" of Newfrontiers. He included a section on church planting and made the observation that the emphasis upon church planting, with the resulting release of resources

¹⁰² *ibid.* 13.

¹⁰³ Kay, (2007) 54-81.

¹⁰⁴ Virgo, (2001).

¹⁰⁵ Hewitt, B. *Doing a new thing?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton. 1995) 67-97.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, 137-156.

dedicated to the task of opening new churches, might impact negatively upon Newfrontiers' ability to grow larger churches.

L2. Relevant missiological literature relating to church planting

The wealth of literature on church planting, especially from North America, is immense. Some of this is of a technical nature and covers the practicalities of starting a church,¹⁰⁷ whilst other authors write more devotionally and inspirationally.¹⁰⁸ More recently Stetzer has attempted to write an "instruction book" that aims to cover both the why and the how of church planting.¹⁰⁹

In the UK, literature on church planting has not been as abundant, however a number of significant texts have been written. Some, such as *Church Planting*¹¹⁰ by Murray, have a specific remit such as emphasising the significance of church plants being built upon firm theological and historical foundations. Murray argues that without leaders being secure in the reasons why they are starting churches, they will often succumb to discouragement. He writes, "Church planting involves laying foundations. The quality of these foundations has profound implications for what can be built on them."¹¹¹ It will be noted later that Newfrontiers wholeheartedly embraces the significance of building upon firm foundations.¹¹²

Although Robinson has written about the importance of foundations,¹¹³ his writings have often been of a more practical nature. In 1992 he wrote a "comprehensive handbook",¹¹⁴ while in 1995 he published a training manual.¹¹⁵ Writing in 2006 in the preface to *Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today*, Robinson conceded that some of his earlier writings may have appeared too "mechanistic". He suggests that church planting is complex and should be

¹⁰⁷ For instance Hesselgrave.

¹⁰⁸ For instance Wagner, (1990).

¹⁰⁹ Stetzer. xv-xvii.

¹¹⁰ Murray, S. *Church Planting – laying foundations*. (Scottsdale:Herald. 2001).

¹¹¹ *ibid.* 11.

¹¹² See 3.1.

¹¹³ Robinson, M. & Christine, S. *Planting tomorrows churches today*. (Speldhurst:Monarch. 1992) 15-121.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Robinson, M. & Spriggs, D. *Church Planting – the training manual*. (Oxford:Lynx. 1995).

thought of in more “organic” terms.¹¹⁶ The book also specifically commends the expansion of Newfrontiers, largely due to their practice of intentional church planting, as an example of good practice in the UK.¹¹⁷

In July 2009 a book was published by Stroud entitled *Planting Churches, Changing Communities*.¹¹⁸ It addresses a number of practical issues including the call of the church planter, recruiting a church planting team and how to maximise the impact of the launch. It is written entirely from a Newfrontiers perspective and contains many references to other leaders within Newfrontiers who are planting churches.

L3. Relevant practical theological literature relating to empirical research

The third relevant discipline covers the empirical studies of churches under the umbrella of practical theology. The literature published under this heading is varied and is dependent upon the period in which it was written, as well as the particular tradition that the author follows. Cartledge rightly describes practical theology as being a “diverse and fragmented discipline.”¹¹⁹

L3.1 History and definitions

The authors of *Practical theology in action*¹²⁰ summarise four approaches to practical theology. They point out that these are not always “disparate or mutually exclusive”, and should be understood as different strands that sometimes appear to be interwoven.¹²¹

The first strand follows the work of Schleiermacher¹²² who is often credited as being the first to develop the field of practical theology.¹²³ He understood practical theology as “applied theory” and was motivated to provide theology

¹¹⁶ Robinson, 7-8.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* 30-31.

¹¹⁸ Stroud, D. *Planting Churches changing communities*. (Milton Keynes:Authentic. 2009).

¹¹⁹ Cartledge, M. *Practical Theology*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 2003) 3.

¹²⁰ Ballard, P & Pritchard, J. *Practical Theology in Action*. (London:SPCK. 2006) 59-77.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 59.

¹²² Schleiermacher, F. *Brief outline on the study of theology*. (Westminster:John Knox. 1977).

¹²³ Anderson, R. *The shape of practical theology*. (Illinois:IVP. 2001) 24.

with academic credibility. This he did by arguing that theology's task was primarily practical but that professional practice "had to be grounded in adequate theory... theology is precisely that theory..."¹²⁴ For Schleiermacher therefore, practical theology was related to training ministers. Ballard and Pritchard acknowledges the appeal of this approach in that it encourages Christian action to be seen as a response to God's call as mediated through the Bible and/or Christian tradition, but suggest that it encourages the "clerical paradigm", and falls down because it is "unidirectional" thus neglecting to take the context seriously.¹²⁵

In the 1960s there was a new stimulus for practical theology that evolved out of the emergence of the social sciences. This meant that practical theology, and the training of professional clergy in particular, borrowed a number of insights and skills from the caring professions. This in turn led to the criticism that practical theology looked "like the total abdication of theological responsibility."¹²⁶ The result was that Browning¹²⁷ and others, sought to retain the insights made from the social sciences, but re-affirm a refreshed theological foundation. This has become known as the method of "critical correlation" and championed in a number of formats including an emphasis on a dialogue with tradition, a bringing together of pastoral concerns and ethics, and an appeal to hermeneutics and communication.¹²⁸

A third strand centres on the ideas of "praxis". Ballard and Pritchard note that this has evolved out of the Marxist tradition and seeks to overcome a false dichotomy between theory and practice. It seeks to do this by analysing the initial situation, reflecting upon this in the light of a theological understanding and then setting a course of resultant action. This thinking has been taken up by the liberationists of Latin America, as well as forming the basis of the pastoral

¹²⁴ Ballard & Pritchard, 61.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* 60-63.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* 63.

¹²⁷ Browning, D. *Practical Theology – the emerging field in theology.* (New York:Harper & Row. 1983).

¹²⁸ Ballard & Pritchard, 63-70.

cycle described below. This view largely sees practical theology as a reflection on the Christian life and mission.¹²⁹

The final approach to practical theology summarised by Ballard and Pritchard is described as the “habitus model”.¹³⁰ In this context “habitus” refers to a “mind-set that has become second nature.”¹³¹ Under this scheme, the emphasis of practical theology is to do with producing Christian character, that it to “enable the whole Christian community, personally and collectively, to grow in grace and Christian wisdom...”¹³²

With this background in mind, Ballard and Pritchard summarise practical theology as dealing with “Christian life and practice within the Church and in relation to wider society.”¹³³ Although not intended as a definition, this encapsulates much of what is currently meant by the term. The emphasis in practical theology, especially in Europe, is no longer entirely focused on the preparation for pastoral ministry, but upon an outworking of Christian faith for “every aspect of social policy and cultural experience.”¹³⁴

Heitink,¹³⁵ writing from a Continental European perspective, defines practical theology as “the empirically orientated theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society.”¹³⁶ Within this definition he emphasises the object of practical theology to be based on the “mediation of the Christian faith” that needs to be outworked in the context of society.¹³⁷ For Heitink, practical theology is all about “God’s activity through the ministry of human beings.”¹³⁸

¹²⁹ *ibid.* 70-73.

¹³⁰ *ibid.* 73-77.

¹³¹ *ibid.* 73.

¹³² *ibid.* 75.

¹³³ *ibid.* 1.

¹³⁴ *ibid.* 6.

¹³⁵ Heitink, G. *Practical Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1999).

¹³⁶ *ibid.* 6.

¹³⁷ *ibid.* 8-9.

¹³⁸ Anderson, 25.

In contrast Anderson, who reflects the North American tendency towards critical correlation, defines practical theology as “a dynamic process of reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God’s purposes for humanity, carried out in the light of Christian Scripture and tradition, and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge.”¹³⁹ This rather longwinded definition is unpacked in his book, largely in the context of pastoral ministry.

For Osmer, practical theology focuses on four tasks. That is a descriptive-empirical task where information is gathered, an interpretive task which draws on the social sciences, a normative task sometimes based on ethic, and a pragmatic task which includes a strategy for action. In his book *Practical Theology – an introduction*,¹⁴⁰ Osmer describes the outworking of these tasks and suggests that they answer four key questions: what is going on, why is this going on, what ought to be going on, and how we might respond. This he describes as the “hermeneutical circle”.¹⁴¹

L3.2 Models

Just as there is a divergence of definition so various authors have put forward different models for the implementation of practical theology. One that is becoming widely accepted, that has been taken up in other areas such as Christian youth work, is the pastoral cycle. Ballard and Pritchard see this as being so significant that they devote a large section of their book to an explanation of this model.¹⁴²

The pastoral cycle is a fourfold process or series of actions that progresses from “experience”, to “exploration”, to “reflection” and then leads to “action”.¹⁴³ As a cycle it is intended to function as a spiral rather than a closed circle. After the first round of action, the new experience can be explored and reflected upon, with a new series of resulting actions appropriate to the newly changed situation. Thus the cycle can be seen to continue. In a style that is used

¹³⁹ *ibid.* 22.

¹⁴⁰ Osmer.

¹⁴¹ See L3.2.

¹⁴² Ballard & Pritchard, 81-192.

¹⁴³ *ibid.* 85-86.

throughout their book, Ballard and Pritchard illustrate the pastoral cycle with an example of how this might work itself out in a ministerial context.¹⁴⁴

In line with the emphasis within practical theology to be firmly rooted in praxis rather than theory, the entry point for the pastoral cycle is “experience”. This is the starting position, and in particular focuses on the catalyst that has provoked the situation, crisis or tension. It is the situation where it is “no longer possible to go on as before.”¹⁴⁵

The pastoral cycle continues with a period of “exploration”. This requires that all appropriate information is identified and obtained. Whatever the nature of this information, it is likely that the research will not take place in isolation but will be necessity involve others in dialogue and discussion. Ballard and Pritchard describe the outworking of this as being an “inter-disciplinary task.”¹⁴⁶

Ballard and Pritchard point out that information in itself “does not give answers” but can only inform and indicate potential possibilities. Before any resulting action can take place there needs to be a period of “reflection”. This may sometimes prove to be the most demanding period in the cycle as “perceptions, beliefs and values” are challenged. Again the point has been made that reflection needs to be a “corporate activity.”¹⁴⁷

The final aspect of the pastoral cycle which can then feed into the next spiral is the resulting “action”. Ballard and Pritchard acknowledge two opposite dangers: that is the folly of moving from experience directly to action, and the temptation of analysing a situation without progressing with any resulting actions.¹⁴⁸ This latter point reflects a wider emphasis within pastoral theology, namely the belief that all theology should in some way be practical and progress from the classroom “towards some graceful action.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* 83-85.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.* 85, 96-112.

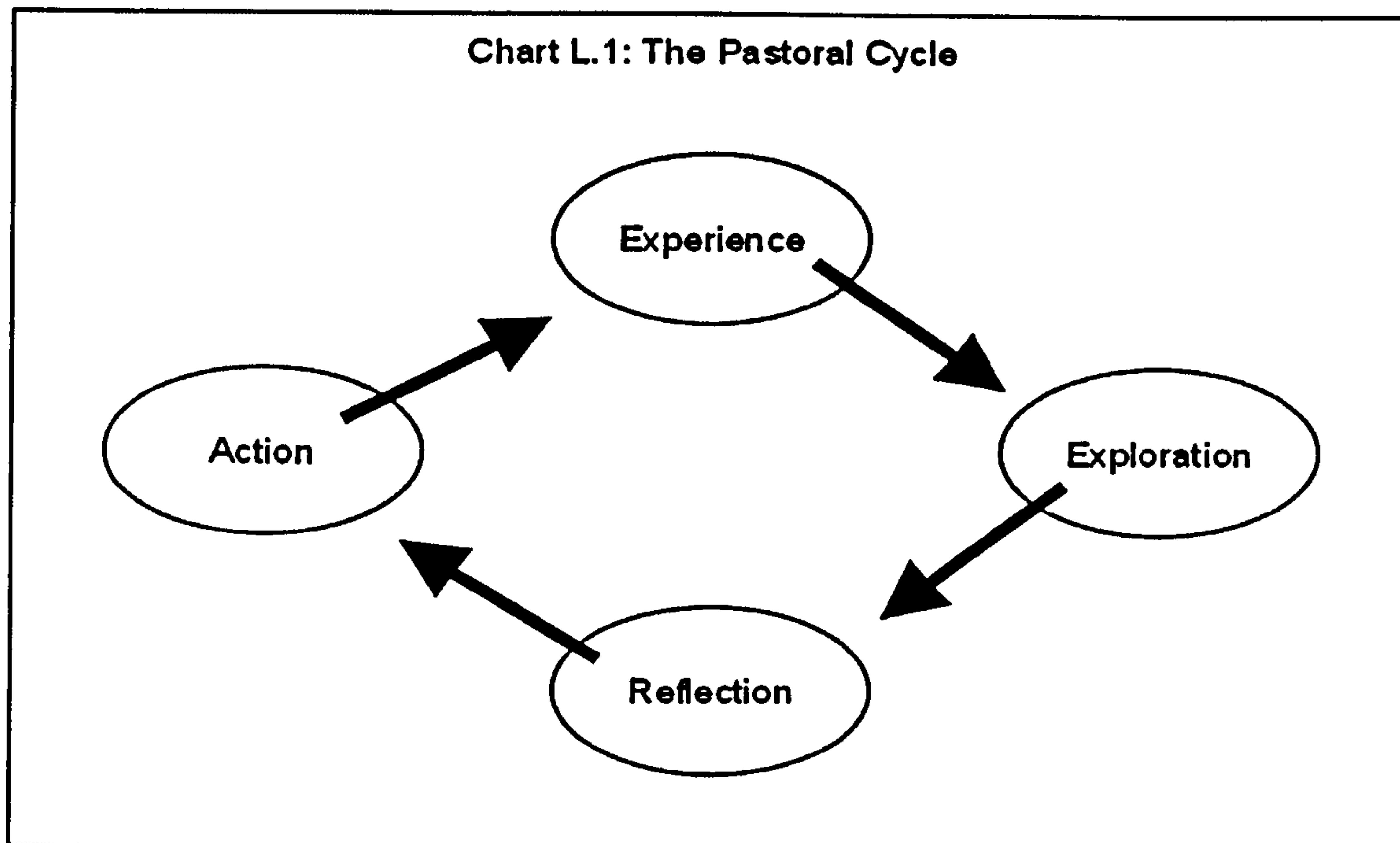
¹⁴⁶ *ibid.* 85-86, 113-125.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* 126-144.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* 86, 161-176.

¹⁴⁹ Whitehead, J. “The practical play of theology” in Mudge, L. & Polling, J. *Formation and Reflection*. (Philadelphia:Fortress Press. 1987) 47.

Chart L.1: The Pastoral Cycle

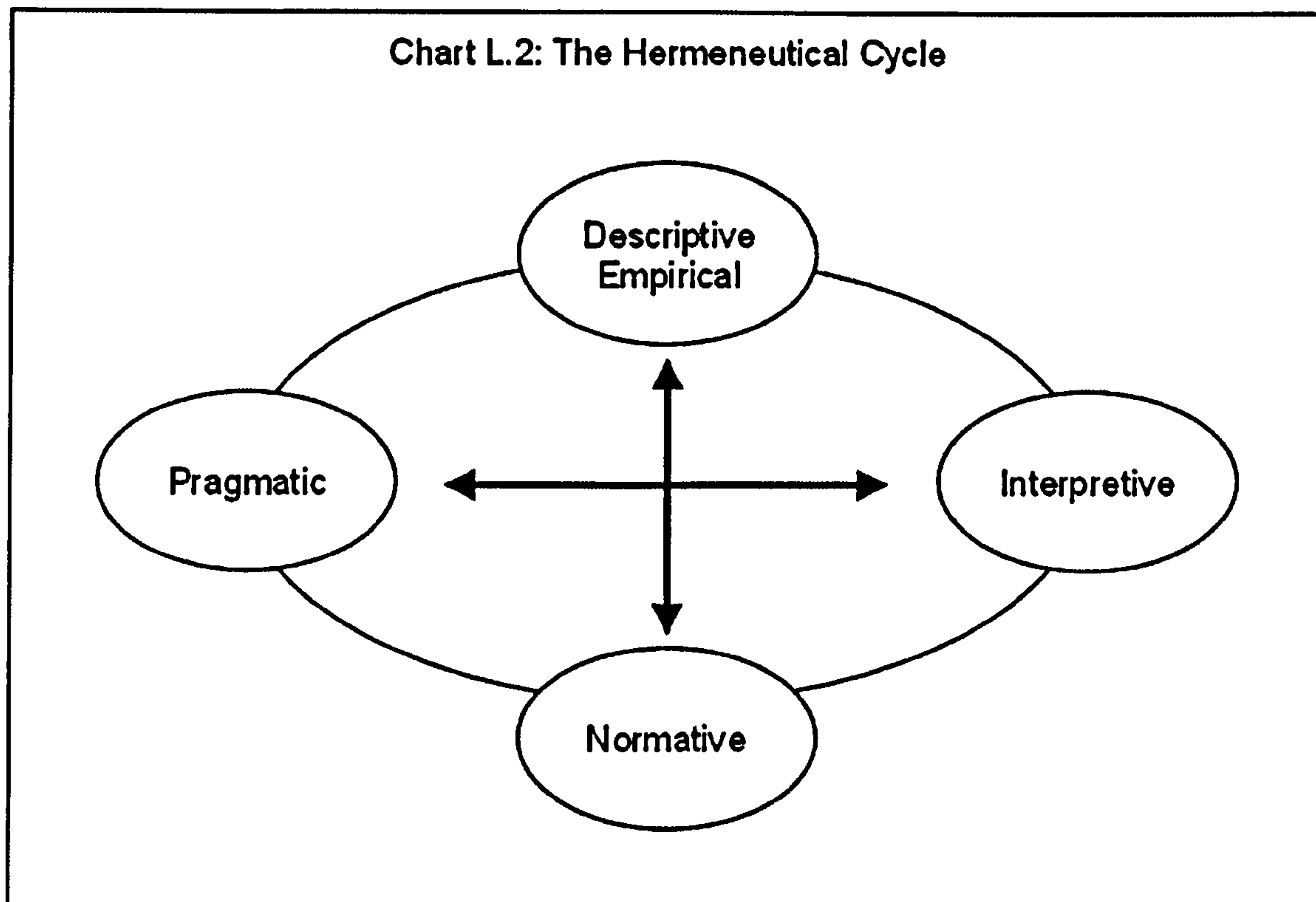


A variation, at least in terminology, of the pastoral cycle is the hermeneutical cycle as described by Osmer.¹⁵⁰ This focuses on four questions, each outworked through one of four core tasks.¹⁵¹ Like Ballard and Pritchard, Osmer devotes a major section of his book to explaining and expounding these tasks. He also uses contemporary pastoral situations to illustrate his points and successfully integrates the hermeneutical cycle into the methods of the social sciences as well as giving it a thorough theological basis.

¹⁵⁰ Osmer.

¹⁵¹ See 3.1 above. 4bid. 4.

Chart L.2: The Hermeneutical Cycle



Heitink also has his preferred model of practical theology. For him it is a triangle based upon the concepts of understanding, explanation and change.¹⁵² Heitink expands these headings with discussion on hermeneutics under the heading of understanding,¹⁵³ the philosophy and management of change,¹⁵⁴ and a consideration of empirical research under the heading of explanation.¹⁵⁵

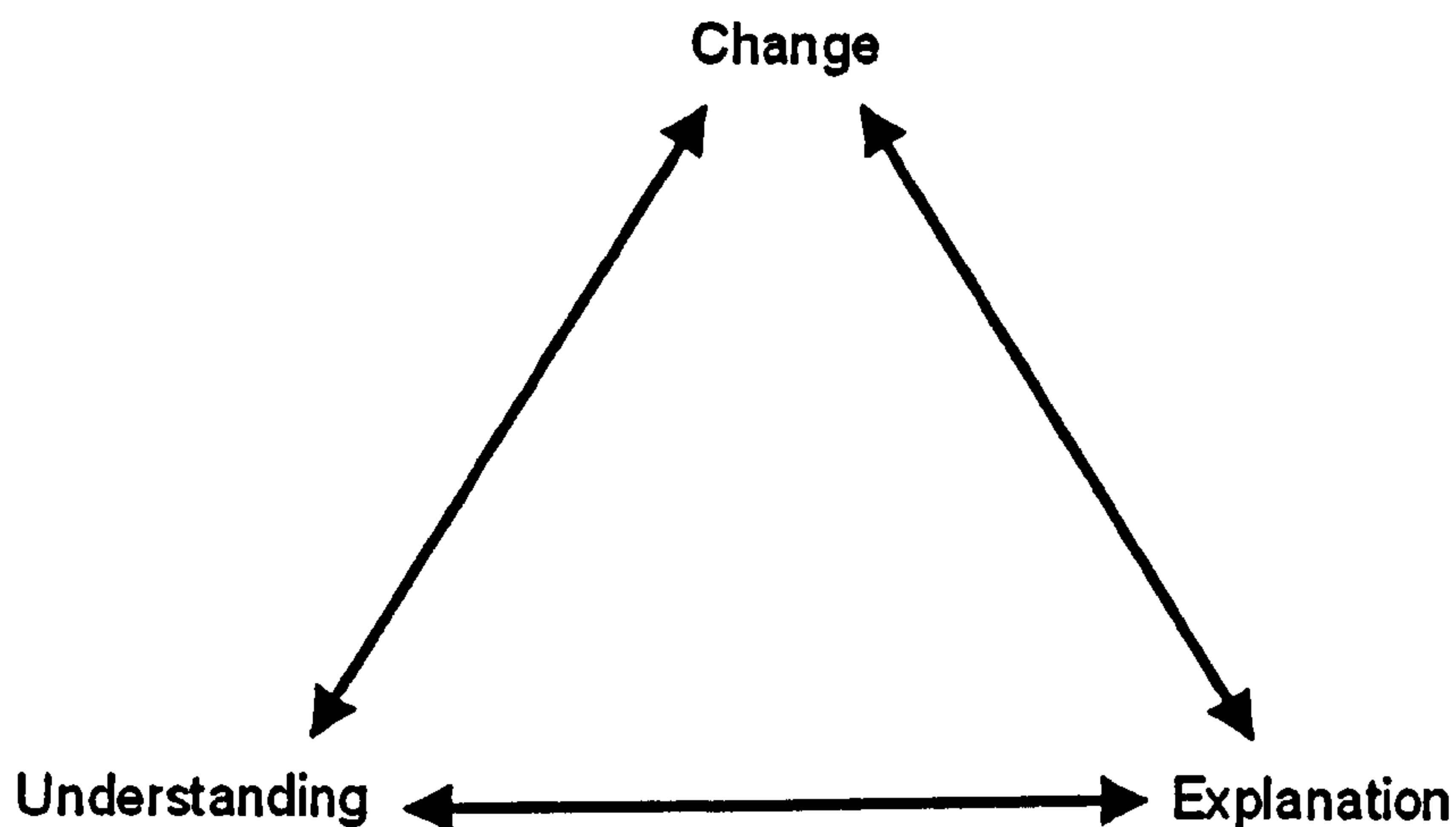
¹⁵² Heitink, 163-166.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* 178-200.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* 201-219.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* 220-240.

Chart L.3: Heitink's Triangle of Practical Theology



L3.3 This thesis and the hermeneutical cycle

The process of investigation followed in this thesis loosely follows the hermeneutical cycle as described by Osmer in *Practical Theology – an introduction*.¹⁵⁶

The author's first task was to discover "What is going on?", the process Osmer describes as the "descriptive-empirical task". The theological process for this, he describes as "priestly listening".¹⁵⁷ In practice this covers the design of the research project, together with decisions regarding the chosen methods for the empirical research.¹⁵⁸ Discussion of this process is covered in the methodology below. Additionally, Osmer's description of this initial task has relevance to section one of this thesis. This covers the more descriptive work which seeks to put church planting within Newfrontiers into a wider context and forms the foundation for the empirical research that follows.

¹⁵⁶ Osmer.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* 31-78.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* 47-64.

Osmer's second "interpretive task" seeks to answer the question "why is this going on?", a task that he describes as "sagely wisdom".¹⁵⁹ His premise is that it is insufficient to know what is happening. Before an effective plan of action can be written it is imperative that there is an understanding of why something has happened. This has relevance not only to the problem of alcoholism,¹⁶⁰ but to contemporary church planting. In this thesis the author has sought to understand and account for the reasons behind church planting in section two.

Section three of this thesis considers the concept of "success" - another way of asking "what ought to be going on?" This Osmer describes as a "normative task", a task that he compares to "prophetic discernment".¹⁶¹ He suggests that there are three ways to approach normativity: theological interpretation, ethical reflection and good practice.¹⁶² In this thesis all three are covered with an emphasis on what works.

Osmer's final question is how might we respond? This he describes as the "pragmatic task" under the theological heading of "servant leadership".¹⁶³ In this thesis the author starts to introduce matters of application in the final section before drawing them together in the conclusion.

L3.4 Practical theology and the mission of God

Ballard and Pritchard suggest that the ultimate practical outcome of the pastoral cycle should be "an expression of the mission of God." This they argue is not essentially for pragmatic reasons, but because the "character of God is fundamentally missiological... the *mission Dei is the essence of the church*".¹⁶⁴

This thesis contributes to the field of practical theology in that it researches a growing group of churches and examines the way it starts new churches. In doing this it focuses on one example of how a group of churches is intentionally seeking to become a valid expression of the mission of the church.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* 79-128.

¹⁶⁰ This is the pastoral example that Osmer uses to illustrate this chapter. See *ibid.* 79, 100-128.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* 129-173.

¹⁶² *ibid.* 139-161.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* 175-218.

¹⁶⁴ Ballard & Pritchard, 162. Italics of original authors.

Anderson also argues for a mission focus for practical theology. He writes, “The nature of the church is determined in its existence as the mission of God to the world... Cosmic in vision, alive in praxis, apostolic in spirit and Pentecostal by nature, the church thrives where its mission theology flourishes freely.”¹⁶⁵ This description encapsulates the Newfrontiers’ emphasis upon church planting, and the subject matter of this thesis.

¹⁶⁵ Anderson, 31-32.

Methodology

The research below has been carried out by the author to examine church planting within Newfrontiers, and in particular to suggest reasons for the growth and expansion that it is experiencing. Throughout this study the guidelines of the British Sociological Association on ethical practice have been observed.¹⁶⁶ These highlight the interests of those affected by the work, and seek to safeguard their welfare. In practice this has meant the giving of a full explanation to all participants of the nature of the research, obtaining consent for all quotations and, wherever possible, giving interviewees an opportunity to view and then approve sections that use their material.

The planning and preparation of this research has also followed the “descriptive-empirical” task of Osmer.¹⁶⁷ He suggests that a four step process is necessary for effective research design, that is being clear on what is to be achieved, deciding on the most appropriate method of research to be used, the formation of a plan and timeline for the research, and reflection on the “metatheoretical assumptions” of the project.¹⁶⁸

Qualitative research¹⁶⁹

Cartledge suggests that qualitative research necessitates a commitment to sustained involvement by the researcher with the group in question over a prolonged period of time. This, he says, will enable a thorough description of the social and historical contexts to be obtained.¹⁷⁰ In this, as in many of his other suppositions, Cartledge follows Bryman, who states: “It is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they (qualitative researchers) can view the world as a participant in that setting.”¹⁷¹ Cartledge also observes that qualitative research tends to operate “with an open and flexible research strategy”, one that formulates and tests theories and concepts as things

¹⁶⁶ See <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm> (accessed 14-3-08).

¹⁶⁷ Osmer. 31-78.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.* 47-48.

¹⁶⁹ For a detailed study on how qualitative research can be used in a theological context see Swinton, J. & Mowat, H. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. (London:SCM. 2006).

¹⁷⁰ Cartledge, 69.

¹⁷¹ Bryman, A. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. (London:Routledge: 1996) 96.

develop, rather than setting out with a more prescriptive and closed set of presuppositions.¹⁷²

Since the conception stage of this thesis, the author has sought to function as a participant observer within Newfrontiers.¹⁷³ This has resulted in involvement in a local Newfrontiers church, as well as attendance at the Leaders' Prayer and Fasting and Brighton Conferences. Numerous unstructured interviews have taken place with different church leaders which have subsequently been recorded in note form.¹⁷⁴ This has been carried out in an overt way and as a "researcher participant",¹⁷⁵ taking "part in a social setting while at the same time engaging in positive social interaction."¹⁷⁶

One of the results of carrying out research as a participant is the relationships that develop. This has significant benefits including an increased willingness of individuals to be interviewed and to complete surveys, as well as having access to information that might otherwise be unobtainable. It would be hoped that such relationships may also enable a fuller and more complete assessment to be made. However there are also inherent dangers with this approach. These include the possibility of objectivity being compromised due to over-familiarity or relational loyalty, something sometimes described as "going native", where the researcher loses objectivity.¹⁷⁷ There is also the difficulty of the researcher having to be close enough to "see through other people's eyes"¹⁷⁸ and the possibility of the results being skewed due to the presence of the researcher.¹⁷⁹

Quantitative research

Partly to minimise these dangers, as well as to introduce other more causal information, it was decided to supplement the qualitative approach by undertaking quantitative research. This has been done largely through the use

¹⁷² Cartledge, 70.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* 70-71.

¹⁷⁴ Bryman, 46.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.* 48.

¹⁷⁶ Cartledge, 71.

¹⁷⁷ Bryman, 96.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* 72.

¹⁷⁹ Cartledge, 71.

of questionnaires¹⁸⁰ and semi-structured interviews, with the results analysed using the computer package SPSS.¹⁸¹ While qualitative research seeks to engage in a meaningful way with its subject, quantitative research tends to view “from the outside looking in, with detached scientific objectivity.”¹⁸²

In the past, the two traditions of qualitative and quantitative research have often been seen in opposition¹⁸³ but Bryman believes both approaches can be complementary and gives examples where both are used together.¹⁸⁴ Heitink also argues for a balance between the two, and suggests that both are usually needed to enable the researcher to reach a proper understanding.¹⁸⁵ Cartledge goes further and argues that there may be theological reasons for research to contain both a qualitative and quantitative element. He writes: “Knowledge is to be gained both by participation and by reflection, by engagement and detachment... This means that they can be usefully employed together in order to understand the theological praxis of groups.”¹⁸⁶

M.1 Documentary analysis

Despite Newfrontiers being just over twenty years old, a considerable quantity of significant primary source material is available.¹⁸⁷ This includes a number of books by Virgo and other Newfrontiers leaders, in-house magazines that have been regularly published since 1986, and numerous audio tapes, CDs, videos and DVDs.

All twelve books written to date by Virgo have been examined, together with those that are relevant from other Newfrontiers leaders such as David Devenish and John Hosier. The majority of magazines and other literature published by Newfrontiers since its conception have also been obtained, and are referred to throughout this thesis. In addition, a number of relevant audio and audio visual

¹⁸⁰ Kay outlines the advantages of using questionnaires in Kay, (2007) 295.

¹⁸¹ For an explanation of how data is recorded and analysed see Cartledge, 75-76.

¹⁸² *ibid.* 80.

¹⁸³ Bryman, 93-94.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.* 127-156.

¹⁸⁵ Heitink, 223.

¹⁸⁶ Cartledge, 82.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.* 73.

recordings have been listened to or viewed. These comprise mostly of recordings from various Newfrontiers conferences, as well as promotional material distributed throughout Newfrontiers churches.

M.2 Interviews with Newfrontiers leaders

A number of interviews were carried out between 2005 and 2007 with Newfrontiers leaders. The primary purpose of these was to gather information, as well as to test various hypotheses and assumptions.¹⁸⁸ They were usually conducted over the phone and were sometimes recorded and then transcribed. On other occasions notes were made during the interviews that were subsequently typed up. These were carried out in a semi-structured way with a number of set questions but also with a willingness to pursue other lines of questioning as something interesting and relevant arose.¹⁸⁹

Nine primary interviews took place, including with Terry Virgo, David Holden, and David Stroud, the three most influential leaders within Newfrontiers in the UK. They were asked about their understanding of church planting, including the reasons why they believed it was important, and their observations of the ingredients necessary for a successful church plant. In addition Stroud was asked about his own church planting journey that has included starting churches in Bedford, Birmingham and more recently in central London. Colin Baron, Tony Thompson, and Anthony Henson were interviewed because of their particular expertise and experience of church planting.

Chapter one describes the circumstances behind Baron moving to Manchester with a commitment to spearhead church planting into the north of England.¹⁹⁰ Although falling short of his intention of planting twenty churches in and around Manchester, Baron has been very influential within Newfrontiers, writing a training manual¹⁹¹ and a number of magazine articles. Thompson and Henson have also planted a number of churches that in some cases have in turn gone

¹⁸⁸ Cohen, L. & Manion, L. *Research methods in education*. (London:Routledge. 1996) 272-273.

¹⁸⁹ Cameron, H., Richter, P., Davies, D. & Ward, F. (eds.) *Studying local churches*. (London:SCM. 2005) 30-31.

¹⁹⁰ See 1.1.5.

¹⁹¹ Baron, C. *Pioneering Churches*. (Burnage:Manchester Family Church. 2003).

on to plant other churches. Both took part in a seminar on church planting at Brighton 2006 and Thompson currently co-ordinates the Newfrontiers church planting training programme. In addition three other leaders were interviewed because of their particular involvement with students,¹⁹² Newday¹⁹³ and Front Edge¹⁹⁴ weekends.

M.3 2002 church planting list

The most extensive, and probably most significant, aspect of the empirical research carried out focused upon a list of prospective church plants published in 2002. The list, contained in *Seeds of Change*,¹⁹⁵ highlighted 77 locations where Newfrontiers either already had a church plant or in some cases had identified the intention to plant. This list was used as a basis for the questionnaires sent out in 2005, and the phone interviews in 2007.

The results were analysed using SPSS to discover the most statistically significant factors that had contributed to the growth and development of the church plants, as well as testing a number of common perceptions about church planting held within Newfrontiers. A number of tests were used including the Pearson correlation (r) and Pearson chi-square (X^2).¹⁹⁶ For a discussion on the results of this data see section four.

M.3.1 2005 survey

The design and implementation process of the sending out of the survey followed the stages outlined by Cohen and Manion.¹⁹⁷ These included defining the objectives, deciding on what information was needed, identifying the sample and piloting the survey.¹⁹⁸ This information was discussed with Supervisors¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Tom Shaw. For details of the work with students see 2.3.

¹⁹³ Joel Virgo. Newday is a youth event for those aged 12 to 19. See 2.3 for more details.

¹⁹⁴ Lex Loizides. Front Edge is an evangelism training and motivational weekend. See 3.4 for more details.

¹⁹⁵ Blaber, *Seeds of change*.

¹⁹⁶ For an explanation of how these work in practice see Kay, W. *Pentecostals in Britain*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 2000) xx-xxi.

¹⁹⁷ Cohen & Manion, 84.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* 85-100.

and appropriate changes made. The survey was designed to be clear and unambiguous, with clear instructions and was accompanied by a covering letter.²⁰⁰

In the summer of 2005 an email was sent to all the named contacts on the 2002 church planting list outlining the research project and asking for their participation in the completion of a survey. Follow-up phone calls were made to those who failed to respond to the initial email. This revealed that of the 77 places listed, an attempt to plant churches had taken place in 52 locations. Of those, 46 returned the questionnaires, with one leader reporting that the church plant had started but had subsequently closed. The survey mainly concentrated on how the church had started and on the progress that had subsequently taken place.

M.3.2 2007 telephone interviews

During the summer of 2007 the leaders of the church plants that had returned a questionnaire in 2005 were contacted by phone and asked a series of questions, focusing mainly on the leader and the location of their church plant. In addition, a question was asked about the current number of attendees on a typical Sunday.

Of the 46 who returned the original survey 41 leaders completed the interview. Of the remainder, one church plant had left Newfrontiers, one had merged with another local Newfrontiers church and three had closed. These interviews were undertaken in a more structured way with a fixed set of questions.²⁰¹ Again they were planned carefully in advance following the advice given by Cohen and Manion.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Research Methodology, in Kay, W. & Francis, L. (eds.) *Religion in Education* (3). (Leominster:Gracewing. 2000) 435-472.

²⁰⁰ Cohen & Manion, 96-97.

²⁰¹ *ibid.* 273.

²⁰² *ibid.* 284-286.

M.4 Church members' sample

In May and then in September 2007 a number of Newfrontiers leaders of recent churches and church plants²⁰³ were contacted to ask if they would circulate a church members' survey to their congregation after a Sunday service.²⁰⁴ They were asked to give them to everyone over 18, except visitors, and to collect them once completed. Eleven church leaders agreed and 247 questionnaires were returned. The questions focused primarily on demographics and the reasons why they had chosen to attend that particular church. This "convenience sample"²⁰⁵ was not large²⁰⁶ but does offer an insight into who attends Newfrontiers church plants and their reasons for doing so.

M.5 Church planting practitioners' focus group

A focus group²⁰⁷ was also held at the Leaders' Prayer and Fasting in October 2007. All the Newfrontiers leaders who had contributed to the research were invited to attend and twelve took part. They were given a sheet containing data produced by SPSS and then asked to comment. They did this through discussion and by the completion of a feedback form containing a number of questions based on the data provided. One of the aims of these discussions was to identify "differences among the participants and any contradictions within and between their replies."²⁰⁸

M.6 Limitations

As in all quantitative research, it should be noted that the data collected and the resulting statistical analysis can only indicate the likely probability or correlation between two factors. Whilst this is very helpful, it does not explain what the relationship is between them. For instance, statistical analysis may suggest that A and B are related in some way, but it will not explain whether A causes B or visa versa. In some cases the situation may be further complicated by a

²⁰³ Recent was defined as having started in the last ten years.

²⁰⁴ See Appendix 5.

²⁰⁵ Cohen & Manion, 88.

²⁰⁶ However it is larger than the sample used by Kay in Kay, (2007) xx.

²⁰⁷ Cartledge, 72.

²⁰⁸ Bryman, 50.

separate external factor - C influencing both A and B. Sometimes the picture becomes clearer when the responses are crosstabulated together.

Another concern is the subjective nature of some of the data supplied by church leaders in the questionnaire and telephone interviews. For instance leaders were asked about the percentages of those joining their church plants who were new converts. Although one church leader did look through his records to ensure an accurate answer, it is very likely that the majority had not recorded that information and therefore only estimated their answers.

Section 1: The national context

As has already been noted, at a time when many of the other New Churches in the UK are in decline or have even disbanded, Newfrontiers is increasing in size, both in terms of membership and number of churches. This is at least in part due to their strategy of intentional church planting and forms the basis for this thesis.

This first section suggests three reasons why Newfrontiers is involved in church planting before asking how their current church planting impetus is being maintained. It is largely descriptive and seeks to put following empirical research into context. In doing this it follows the “descriptive-empirical” task of Osmer.²⁰⁹

The main source material for this section has been the books and magazine articles that have been written by Virgo and other senior leaders within Newfrontiers. In order to understand the self-perception of their history, the book *No Well-worn Paths*,²¹⁰ together with two audio recordings by Virgo,²¹¹ have proved particularly important for these chapters.

²⁰⁹ Osmer. 31-78.

²¹⁰ Virgo, (2001).

²¹¹ Virgo, T. “The story so far” (AVM 1998) and “The story so far” (AVM 2007).

Chapter 1: Why does Newfrontiers plant churches?

In February 2004, Virgo stated that there were 180 churches in the UK plus 70 embryonic church plants.²¹² Although 180 is not a large number when compared with traditional denominations, the proportion of church plants is significant.²¹³ This section explores three inter-related reasons why Newfrontiers is currently investing so much energy and resources into starting new churches. Namely the emphasis Newfrontiers puts upon a series of prophetic words, their belief that they are a distinctive people with a distinctive message, and their particular view of eschatology. All three have contributed to the church planting momentum that is examined in chapter two.

1.1 Because of its “prophetic history”

To understand Newfrontiers and its motivation behind church planting correctly, it is necessary to consider how it has developed, from a cluster of Sussex-based churches, to an international movement with the intention of becoming 1,000 churches in the UK. This historical survey will focus on two main factors, the influence of Virgo and a series of “prophetic words”, currently located on the church’s website.²¹⁴

Virgo’s influence for Newfrontiers cannot be over-emphasised.²¹⁵ He is its founder and despite an ongoing attempt to decentralise,²¹⁶ still exercises a strong paternal influence over its life and beliefs. Wright says: “Without being an outstanding personality, his combination of pastoral concern, teaching ability, and wise counsel plus his ability to gather and maintain a strong team of leaders around himself, has led to the formation of a well organised network of churches...”²¹⁷

²¹² These figures were announced at Prayer and Fasting in February 2004.

²¹³ This compares with just 19 Baptist church plants in 2002. Campbell, 12.

²¹⁴ <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/about-us/history/words-that-have-shaped-us/> (accessed 7-9-2007).

²¹⁵ Walker, (1998) 332-335.

²¹⁶ Smith, 151-152. See also Virgo, T. “The story so far” *nfi*mag. (Issue 9. Winter 2000.) 10.

²¹⁷ Wright, N. “Restoration and the ‘house church’ movement.” *Themelios*. Jan-Feb. Vol. 16. No. 2, (1991) 6.

Virgo acknowledged his significance in an interview given to *The God Channel* when he described himself as the “Father of Newfrontiers”.²¹⁸ It is also clearly demonstrated in his autobiography *No Well-worn Paths*,²¹⁹ which contains the most thorough description of the movement written to date.²²⁰ Any account of the development of Newfrontiers will therefore inevitably contain a biography of the main events of Virgo's life.²²¹

Another significant influence is Newfrontiers' reliance upon a whole series of “prophetic words”. Smith observes that this has led to an emphasis upon church planting,²²² while Virgo writes: “It would be true to say that over the years, prophecies and visions have also played a very large part in forming my thinking and expectations.”²²³ Wendy Virgo credits prophecy as being responsible for “many new church planting strategies, social action initiatives, and work in other countries...”²²⁴

Although not an exhaustive list,²²⁵ the website contains details of seven key visions or prophecies given between 1986 and 2003. These were selected by Steve Blaber, previously an administrator for Newfrontiers within the UK, because they had “significantly affected the direction of Newfrontiers” and were regularly being referred to by senior church leaders.²²⁶

This description of the development of Newfrontiers will therefore emphasise the significant role of Virgo and attempt to put events within the context of these seven prophetic words. It will be based primarily on *No Well-Worn Paths*, but will be supplemented wherever possible, from other primary source material such as magazines and other promotional material.²²⁷

²¹⁸ “In depth with Terry Virgo” (Sunderland:The God Channel. 2005) Programme 1.

²¹⁹ Virgo, (2001).

²²⁰ The other books containing information about Newfrontiers are the revised edition of Walker, (1998) 330-339, and Kay, (2007).

²²¹ Smith, 142 and Kay, (2007) 20.

²²² *ibid.* 147-148.

²²³ Virgo, (2001) 144.

²²⁴ Virgo, W. *The Stoneleigh Experience*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 2001) 26.

²²⁵ *ibid.* 29.

²²⁶ Source: a personal e-mail sent to the author.

²²⁷ In particular Virgo. *The story so far*, (AVM 1998), and Virgo. “The story so far” *nfimag.* (2000) 6-7.

1.1.1 From Coastlands to Newfrontiers

The invitation to form “a new kind of relationship” that was to be known as “New Frontiers”²²⁸ was not made until May 1986.²²⁹ By then Virgo was already exercising an increasing influence over a substantial number of leaders and churches, primarily in the South East but also in India and South Africa, under the often misunderstood heading of “Coastlands”.²³⁰

At least in Virgo’s mind, there were to be important differences between the two. Coastlands was intended to be a title of convenience for their conferences and tape ministry, while New Frontiers described a grouping of churches that were joined and working together on a mission.²³¹ Walker affirms the change of name as being “one of the best moves (Newfrontiers has) ever made” and leading to a return to the “pioneering spirit of the church”,²³² while Virgo describes it as “a huge turning point for us.”²³³

Talking of the Coastlands period, Virgo said: “We had no sense of our being visibly a group. It was just a growing number of churches I was helping.”²³⁴ Ray Lowe, who at that time led Biggin Hill Baptist Church and has worked with Virgo since this period, describes this as “just Terry and a few of his friends...”²³⁵

For the genesis of Coastlands, and hence Newfrontiers, it is necessary to go back to 1968,²³⁶ when Virgo became the pastor of a church in Seaford, near Brighton. It was a new church that Virgo had visited previously as a student.

²²⁸ A little later “International” was added, but this was dropped in 2003, when New Frontiers International (NFI) became Newfrontiers.

²²⁹ Virgo, T. “Why a change of name?” *NFU*. (No 1. 1986) 1.

²³⁰ Virgo admits that Coastlands was often taken to signify his work on the south coast. However, it had been taken from Isaiah 42:12, and was a reference to “far-off nations waiting to hear the gospel”. Virgo, (2001) 118.

²³¹ *ibid.* 144-146.

²³² Walker, (1998) 336.

²³³ Virgo. *The story so far*, (AVM 1998).

²³⁴ *ibid.*

²³⁵ The comment was made during a talk in 2007.

²³⁶ This may be a convenient starting point as far as Virgo and Newfrontiers is concerned. However - Walker traces the beginning of “Restorationism” back to Lillie in 1958, Wright to the gathering of ‘house church’ leaders during 1970-1974, and Kay to the ministry of David Du Plessis. (Walker, (1998). 51-65, Wright, (1991) 4, and Kay, (2007) 17.

The church was not at that time “charismatic” but had what Virgo describes as a “pioneering spirit”.²³⁷

Virgo stayed in Seaford for eleven years and saw the church develop into what was at that time, a radical church enjoying such things as open worship and midweek meetings in homes.²³⁸ This was unusual, and people started to visit to see what was happening.²³⁹

1.1.2 Increasing Influence

Unexpectedly for Virgo, in 1973 a number of small “house fellowships” from around Sussex invited him to help them on a regular basis. Initially, this meant leading Bible studies in homes, but soon developed into giving direction to the leaders on how they could transition into what Virgo understood to be New Testament Christianity. Without realising it, relationships were established between these embryonic churches that were to form the nucleus for the Downs Bible Weeks and thereby what became known as “Coastlands”.

His influence soon extended further when some other churches also started to look to him for direction and support. Virgo summarises this period by saying: “It seemed that my sphere of responsibility was now stretching away from the south coast and encompassing not only some of Kent but also parts of London. By this time I was working with about 20 churches...”²⁴⁰

During 1978, a number of Christians broke away from a Baptist church in Hove and asked Virgo to help them. Although initially rejecting their request, he felt God challenge him to move from Seaford to Brighton, and to join himself to this group of believers.²⁴¹ At the beginning, Sunday meetings were held in a school, but soon the opportunity came to merge with Clarendon Church in Hove and to use its facilities.²⁴²

²³⁷ Virgo, (2001) 74.

²³⁸ *ibid.* 77-83.

²³⁹ Virgo, T. *The story so far*, (AVM 1998).

²⁴⁰ Virgo, (2001) 98.

²⁴¹ Virgo, “The story so far”. *Nfimag.* (2000) 7.

²⁴² Virgo, (2001) 121-124.

Around this time a number of events took place in the wider charismatic church scene. These included a series of influential Bible weeks, held first of all in Capel, Surrey²⁴³ and then in Harrogate, Yorkshire.²⁴⁴ The latter was organised by Bryn Jones, who was leading the largest and most influential group of “house churches” from his centre in Bradford.²⁴⁵ Other, more negative developments included the eventual separation into two “sides” of the main “Restoration” leaders. Virgo sums this up: “Things came to a tragic and ugly climax. Differences of opinion were even more magnified and an inevitable split took place. It seemed that people were almost forced to take sides...”²⁴⁶ Virgo found himself increasingly identified with Jones, and the others who Walker later categorized as “R1”.²⁴⁷

It was while working with Jones on the Dales Bible Weeks and as a contributor to *Restoration* magazine, that Virgo was encouraged to form a team to assist him in supporting other churches. Initially, this comprised of five leaders, but later Nigel Ring was invited to help administer the first Downs Bible Week. This was held in 1979 and was originally a southern clone of the Dales.²⁴⁸ In 1981 they went “on their own” and from then on administered the Downs without any significant support from Jones or his team.²⁴⁹

1.1.3 No well-worn paths

The 1985 Downs Bible Week proved to be a turning point and contributed to the change of name that took place one year later, when Coastlands became New Frontiers. In response to a prophecy, Virgo spoke on Jonah: “the parochial and reluctant prophet”. Writing in the *New Frontiers Update* in 1986, Virgo declared that it was time for Newfrontiers to move on. “At Downs 85 I used the story of Jonah to bring home the truth in Isaiah 49:6 that it was too small a thing for God’s servant only to bring restoration to God’s existing people, he was also to

²⁴³ Virgo, *The story so far*, (AVM 1998), and Walker, (1998). 83-86.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.* 74.

²⁴⁵ Smith, 142. For an account of Jones and his influence on the Restoration movement, see Walker, (1998).

²⁴⁶ Virgo, (2001) 104.

²⁴⁷ Walker, (1998). 38-42.

²⁴⁸ Virgo, “The story so far” *nfimag.* (2000) 8.

²⁴⁹ Virgo, (2001) 141, although the Downs Bible Weeks were advertised alongside the Dales Bible Weeks up to 1986.

be a light to the nations. We are now to be more committed to reaching the nation and even the nations!”²⁵⁰

A very important decision was made in 1986,²⁵¹ again as a result of a series of prophecies. This led them to change their name from “Coastlands” to “New Frontiers”.²⁵² The first of these prophecies came to Virgo in India. He felt God say that what he had experienced so far “was nothing in comparison with what would follow”.²⁵³ At the same time, God also spoke to Wendy, his wife. She saw a vision of her husband running a marathon, starting along quiet back streets but ending up in a vast and crowded stadium.²⁵⁴ As important as these two experiences were, in *No Well-Worn Paths* they are overshadowed by perhaps the most noteworthy prophecy received by Newfrontiers to date. It was given by John Groves at a leaders’ meeting, and radically changed the direction of the movement.

Groves saw a herd of elephants running towards a jungle. Although the way looked impenetrable, the weight and momentum enabled them to make a path through. Virgo recounts the opening words of the prophecy: “There are no well-worn paths ahead of you... Together you can accomplish more than you could ever accomplish alone.”²⁵⁵ Another prophecy confirmed this, describing an armada of ships with the implication that although they all had different roles, they all needed each other and could only achieve their full potential as they co-operated closely together.²⁵⁶

Virgo and the other leaders present discussed the implications and felt that God was telling them to change their existing structure and work more closely together. Up to that point, due to his fear of “denominationalism”, Virgo had

²⁵⁰ Virgo, “Why a change of name?” *NFU*. (1986) 1.

²⁵¹ Virgo calls it a “huge turning point”. Virgo *The story so far*. (AVM 1998).

²⁵² For an explanation behind the change in name, see Virgo, “Why a change of name?” *NFU*. (1986) 1, and Virgo, (2001) 141-150.

²⁵³ *ibid.* 142-143.

²⁵⁴ Virgo, “The story so far”. *nfimag*. (2000) 7.

²⁵⁵ Virgo, (2001) 144. The significance of this can be seen by its use as the title of his account of the history of Newfrontiers published twenty years later.

²⁵⁶ Virgo, “Why a change of name?” *NFU*. (1986) 1, and Virgo, *The story so far*, (AVM 1998).

resisted the suggestion that the churches were in any way “joined up”.²⁵⁷ However, now things were to be different and much of the current momentum of Newfrontiers, including its emphasis upon church planting, can be traced back to this fundamental change in philosophy.²⁵⁸

At this time, Virgo and many of his leaders gathered three times a year for a period of prayer and fasting.²⁵⁹ In May 1986, at the prayer and fasting following Groves’ prophecy, Virgo communicated what he felt God was saying. “I believed God was inviting us to form a new kind of relationship together. We were to join together on a mission...” This involved changing the name to *New Frontiers*, “reflecting the burden of the prophetic vision”. Although offering everyone an opportunity to “get off the bus”, Virgo describes how each leader enthusiastically “embraced it.”²⁶⁰

1.1.4 Kriengsak Chareonwongsak

In 1987, Virgo was invited to speak at a conference in Texas and met the Thai church leader Kriengsak Chareonwongsak.²⁶¹ Virgo describes the conference as “a life-changing encounter”,²⁶² although it would seem that this was due mainly to the impact of Kriengsak himself rather than the conference. Virgo recounts how he was intensely moved and deeply challenged.²⁶³

Virgo sums up other meetings with Kriengsak by saying: “God used these contacts to stimulate my desire that NFI should also see itself as a light to the nations. Restoration, though obviously essential within the church, was evidently too small a thing.”²⁶⁴ This theme was reflected in the title of the 1988 Downs Bible Week: “World Changers”.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁷ “In depth with Terry Virgo” – Programme 1 (AVM). Virgo admits that the prophecy “shook him”. (2001) 145.

²⁵⁸ A point made in an interview by Holden (10-6-2005).

²⁵⁹ These events take place each February, May and October and have been very important to the development of Newfrontiers.

²⁶⁰ Virgo, (2001) 145-146.

²⁶¹ Kriengsak’s story and his call to plant 700 churches throughout Thailand is found in Boyd, C. *The Apostle of Hope*. (Chichester: Sovereign World. 1991)

²⁶² Virgo, (2001) 166.

²⁶³ Virgo, T. “Commissioned to Go!” *NFMag.* (Feb/Mar 1988) 15.

²⁶⁴ Virgo, (2001) 170.

²⁶⁵ n.a. “Downs ’88 report” *NFMag.* (Oct 1988) 9-11.

1989 and 1990 were unusual years for Newfrontiers as the Downs Bible Week had stopped and Stoneleigh had not yet started. Instead Virgo visited sixteen cities for a tour entitled: "Enjoying God's Grace". In 1989 he wrote: "Instead of inviting people to come from across the country to a field in Sussex, we should go and visit major centres with the message God had given us to share..."²⁶⁶ This tour involved spending a weekend in each location, teaching based on Romans, leaders' meetings, and evening celebrations. Virgo describes the tour as being a "great success".²⁶⁷

It was during this period that Kriengsak's influence was again experienced. At a leaders' conference in 1990, he spoke of his calling to plant churches and invited those willing to move location to come forward with "scores of people" responding.²⁶⁸ Smith describes Kriengsak's influence upon Newfrontiers as "crucial".²⁶⁹ It was during this period that two more of the "significant words" were received.

1.1.5 No longer just southeast

The first came to Virgo whilst with Newfrontiers leaders. Possibly with the challenge of Kriengsak still on his mind, Virgo saw a vision of southern England with a bow and arrow pointing towards mainland Europe. An article in the *nfimagazine* stated: "We sensed God urging us to develop more energy to reach the nations, increasing resources by planting churches throughout the UK."²⁷⁰

Virgo believed that if they were to make an impact upon Europe and the rest of the world they would need to strengthen their "home base" and "multiply resources" beyond the southeast.²⁷¹ He concluded: "We needed to pull back the bow string by planting more churches in our own nation, in order to reach out across the frontiers of other nations. This was a new strategy! We were no

²⁶⁶ n.a. "Downs to the nation" *NFMag.* (Jul 1989) 6.

²⁶⁷ A "How to" workbook was published to accompany this tour: Virgo, T. *Enjoying God's Grace.* (Milton Keynes: Word. 1989)

²⁶⁸ n.a. *NFMag.* "Making ready a people prepared" (Dec 1990) 7-9 and Virgo. (2001) 185-186.

²⁶⁹ Smith, 149.

²⁷⁰ Virgo, "The story so far" *nfimag.* (2000) 10.

²⁷¹ The degree that Newfrontiers were thought of as being limited to the Southeast can be seen in Hewitt's chapter on Terry Virgo: "Missionary to the southeast". Hewitt, 67-97.

longer to confine ourselves to the southeast.”²⁷² However, at least in principle, this was not a new strategy. An article entitled “Life after the Downs”, included the intention to plant churches beyond the southeast. It read, “We feel that God is mobilising his army, sending people into towns to plant new churches there. No longer are we going to restrict our outreach to the southeast of England.”²⁷³

The other prophecy came through the controversial “prophet” Paul Cain,²⁷⁴ who spoke to Newfrontiers leaders in Brighton. Despite the lack of “words of knowledge” for which he was known, during his sermon he suddenly started to prophesy. Virgo records that his words were “rather stumbling” but had “far reaching implications.”²⁷⁵ Cain saw “satellite beams” of light going off in “every conceivable direction.” He then described God’s “apostolic work” for Newfrontiers, twice repeating that God was going to use Newfrontiers to help “change the expression of Christianity throughout the world.”²⁷⁶

The vision of the bow gave a renewed impetus for many to take seriously the call to plant churches.²⁷⁷ This had always been on the Newfrontiers agenda but had previously been primarily focused on the southeast. Baron was one of the first to move, going in 1993 with a belief that God had called him to plant twenty churches throughout Greater Manchester.²⁷⁸

1995 saw another fresh impetus for church planting in the UK. Although not mentioned in *No Well-Worn Paths*, this too came as a result of a prophecy. Devenish picked up the phrase already referred to, that restoring the church “is too small a thing...” He concluded by challenging those present to “receive faith to bring light to the nations.”²⁷⁹ This resulted in the “Midlands Initiative” which

²⁷² Virgo, (2001) 188. See also Virgo, W. 7.

²⁷³ n.a. “Life after the Downs.” *NFMag.* (Oct 1988) 16.

²⁷⁴ Virgo, T. “A passion for Word and Spirit.” *nfmag.* (Issue 16. Feb-Apr 2002) 38. See also Wright. in Smail. *Charismatic Renewal.* (London:SPCK. 1993) 117-118.

²⁷⁵ Virgo, (2001) 192-193.

²⁷⁶ Virgo, T. “Firstline” *nfmag.* (Issue 2. Spring 1998) 2. For a discussion of this in the context of mission see Kay, W. “Apostolic networks and mission” *JEPTA.* (Vol. xxvi. 2006). 156-167.

²⁷⁷ Kay, (2007) 75.

²⁷⁸ Hadaway, L. “The Bow is drawn back.” *Front.* (Jan/Feb 1993) 19. See also Austin, M. “Baron Land”. *nfmag.* (Issue 2. Spring 1998) 36-39.

²⁷⁹ Virgo, W. 29. It is unclear whether this was originally taken to be a prophecy or a comment on Isaiah 49:6. See Devenish, D. “Restoration: Too Small a Thing?” *Front.* (Jun 1996) 21.

was led by Devenish and Stroud, both established leaders in Bedford. The ambitious plan was to plant 50 churches throughout the Midlands by 2000²⁸⁰ and as a part of this, Stroud moved to Birmingham in 1998.²⁸¹

Over this period many others moved from towns in the south to be involved in church planting, not only in the Midlands, but throughout the north as well.²⁸² Indeed this emphasis upon deliberately relocating to start and then establish churches has become an important part of Newfrontiers strategy. Virgo writes: “The more people we can disciple, train and send, the more churches we can plant... A possible job change or house move should not be regarded as merely the secular part of your life... it might be the very thing that God himself has arranged in order to get another church started.”²⁸³

On the final night of Stoneleigh 1999, another key prophecy was given, this time by John Kpikpi, a Newfrontiers leader from Ghana. This included the challenge to believe God for 1,000 churches throughout the UK.²⁸⁴ The commentary given on the website says: “This now lives with us as we look to reach the UK and the nations with the gospel.”²⁸⁵ According to Thompson, this prophecy has been responsible for ensuring that Newfrontiers has kept to the vision of church planting and avoided an emphasis of only looking to grow large churches.²⁸⁶

1.1.6 The end of Stoneleigh

Another important decision was taken in 2000, when Virgo felt that God wanted them to stop the successful Stoneleigh Bible Week.²⁸⁷ The last one was held in 2001. Virgo writes, “Why did we stop Stoneleigh? Simply, (sic) because we

²⁸⁰ Devenish admits that the target of starting 50 new churches was not achieved but sates that they “were well on the way”. *ibid.* 40.

²⁸¹ n.a. “Thinking Big” *nfimag.* (Issue 1. Winter 1998) 14. In 2004 Stroud moved again to pioneer another new church, this time in London, and in 2005 he took over the leadership of Newfrontiers in the UK. See Tibbert, S. “Focus on London” *Connect.* (Vol 2. Issue 1. Feb 2004) 6.

²⁸² Virgo, (2001) 265-266.

²⁸³ *ibid.* 269.

²⁸⁴ Kpikpi, J. “Stoneleigh Impact” *nfimag.* (Issue 8. Autumn 1999) 21.

²⁸⁵ See also Virgo, W. 29-30.

²⁸⁶ An interview with the author (18-11-2005).

²⁸⁷ Attendance at Stoneleigh grew from 8,000 in 1991 to nearly 30,000 over the two weeks in 2001. It was the largest Bible Week held in one location in Europe. Virgo, W. 98.

really believe that God told us to."²⁸⁸ Wendy Virgo describes this decision as "surprising, exhilarating and scary!"²⁸⁹

Writing before the final Stoneleigh, Virgo admits to not understanding the implications of stopping the Bible Week. However, he believed that this would enable Newfrontiers to be mobilised, and released to church planting and world evangelism.²⁹⁰ He writes: "God has led us to get ready, to clear the ground for what He is preparing... We are gradually becoming an army. It's time to mobilise."²⁹¹ Speaking retrospectively in 2005, Holden claimed "all that Newfrontiers is doing now is a direct result of closing Stoneleigh."²⁹²

Around five months before the final Stoneleigh, Devenish brought the penultimate prophetic word featured on the website to a group of Newfrontiers leaders. Understood in the context of the uncertainty of that final Bible Week, Devenish reminded those present of God's desire to go to the nations.

A leaflet was also distributed at Stoneleigh 2001 entitled "*Where do we go from here?*" It contained an overview of revival, an update on church planting, and a challenge to get involved. It read: "So we go from the last Stoneleigh to see many more churches planted, churches that will change society... We go believing that God will call many to the nation and the nations."²⁹³

1.1.7 A second half mentality

The final prophecy, detailed on the website, was again given by Groves. Given at Brighton in 2003, he spoke using a football analogy stating that Newfrontiers were about to commence a "new half". The first half had been played well but God was calling everyone to a more attacking mentality. In giving this, Groves

²⁸⁸ Virgo, T. "Firstline" *nfimag*. (Issue 12. Winter 2001) 2-5.

²⁸⁹ Virgo, W. 98.

²⁹⁰ Virgo, (2001) 338-341.

²⁹¹ Virgo, "Firstline" *nfimag*. (2001) 2-5.

²⁹² A remark made during a church weekend away (1-5-2005).

²⁹³ n.a. *Where do we go from here?* A leaflet published by Newfrontiers in 2001.

apparently unknowingly expounded an article written by Virgo for the *nfimagazine* a year previously.²⁹⁴

This significant prophecy was, for at least a few years, repeatedly emphasised. It was mentioned on numerous occasions at the Leaders' Prayer and Fasting, was the subject of six talks given by Virgo to the "International Apostolic Team", and formed the basis for an article in the March 2004 *Newfrontiers Magazine*. The main focus was again a call to mobilise and to reach out with renewed enthusiasm and determination. Virgo concluded his 2004 article with: "God has called us to a great task... Don't get distracted. Don't get flabby and out of breath! This isn't a practice game or a friendly! What happens now will count forever and you only get one chance. This is the second half! The next whistle is the final one!"²⁹⁵

An example of the increased mobilisation that has taken place since the demise of Stoneleigh was a series of "Harvest Events". These started in 2003 in Bournemouth, and continued in 2004 in Norwich and Sheffield, with another large-scale mission again in Bournemouth during 2005. These events offered a holistic approach to evangelism with a mix of social action projects, children's clubs, low key as well as more direct evangelism, accompanied by prayer for the sick.²⁹⁶

More recently a series of "Front Edge" events have been spearheaded by Lex Loizides, an English evangelist working in Cape Town. These weekends include the drawing together of recognised Newfrontiers evangelists, a teaching day on evangelism, and then simultaneous Sunday morning guest services. Between 2004 and February 2008, 12 Front Edge weekends have taken place in the UK as well as in South Africa, India, Zimbabwe and Holland. 237 guest services have taken place with 1,474 people responding to the message and "becoming Christians".²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Virgo, T. "Terry's half-time team talk" *nfimag*. (Issue 16. Feb-Apr 2002) 9-13. In an interview with the author, Groves indicated that he had no recollection of ever reading Virgo's original article (11-5-05).

²⁹⁵ Virgo, T. "Firstline" *NMag*. (Vol. 2. Issue 6. Mar-May 2004) 3-5

²⁹⁶ n.a. "Harvest Norwich." *Connect*. (Vol. 2. Issue 3. Jul 2004) 4-5.

²⁹⁷ Source: notes distributed by Loizides at a Front Edge training day in Shrewsbury. April 2008.

Possibly one of the most important developments within Newfrontiers since the close of Stoneleigh has been a new summer camp aimed at twelve to nineteen year olds. *Newday 2004* took place in August in Newark. It was fashioned on *Festival Manchester*, and included opportunities for practical service as well as more overt evangelism, with times for teaching and worship.²⁹⁸

Prayer for Newday was included at the Leaders' Prayer and Fasting in February 2004, and a series of 16 prophecies and pictures were shared. One promised that the event was going to have "national impact" and was even going to "stop the decline" amongst the young people of Britain.²⁹⁹ Newday has reflected the values of Newfrontiers with a strong emphasis upon mission. The 2004 *Newday Handbook* included a reminder of the call to plant 1,000 churches, details of seminars on mission, and quotations from young people involved in the recently planted church in Nottingham.

The ongoing vision of Newday was outlined by Joel Virgo, Terry Virgo's son and the main instigator behind Newday. He wrote: "We are committed to imparting a long-term vision to the emerging generation: a vision of a glorious church that spans the globe..." He went on to claim that the vision to plant 1,000 churches is increasingly being owned by young people, leading onto the second aspect of the vision: "Big evangelism". During Newday 2005, this included holding evangelistic meetings in Notts County football stadium.³⁰⁰ In 2006 to 2008 the venue moved to Uttoxeter racecourse to accommodate the increasing numbers of campers with evangelism taking place in nearby Derby.

Conclusion

It is significant that all the prophecies previously listed on the website, together with several highlighted in *No Well-Worn Paths* and other Newfrontiers literature are all interpreted as having a similar theme, that is the call to move beyond "restoring the church" to reaching out to affect those who are non-Christians.

²⁹⁸ Virgo, J. "Newday 2004." *Connect*. (Vol. 2. Issue 4. Nov 2004) 3.

²⁹⁹ A prophecy given by Devenish at Prayer and Fasting, February 2004.

³⁰⁰ Virgo, J. "Let's see the Overflow." *NMag*. (Dec 04-Feb 05) 21-23.

For Virgo and Newfrontiers this is repeatedly interpreted as referring to planting churches.

As is argued in chapter two, there is little doubt that the recording and emphasising of these prophecies have made an important contribution towards the church planting momentum experienced by Newfrontiers. What is less clear is the extent to which these have been selected and highlighted to legitimise and strengthen the existing desire to plant churches, and to what extent the current desire to plant churches has developed out of these prophecies. It is possible that the answer may lie in a mixture of the two, as the desire to plant churches was present in Coastlands before 1986,³⁰¹ yet took on a new reality after the prophecy of the bow in 1990.³⁰²

1.2 Because of its self-belief in being a distinctive people

Newfrontiers has a strong self-belief and confidence in what it believes is its God-given mission.³⁰³ In contrast to much of contemporary Christianity,³⁰⁴ Virgo and Newfrontiers demonstrate clear beliefs that result in specific actions. One of the most obvious of these is their emphasis upon church planting. The assumption is sometimes made by the leaders of Newfrontiers that they have something to offer that is different to other churches. This, they believe, therefore legitimises the planting of new churches even in places where other “good” churches already exist.³⁰⁵

Newfrontiers have a number of distinctive beliefs that will now be considered. However, in reality it is debatable how distinctive these really are. It could be argued that many, if not all of them, could be found in other churches. It could be that their significance is in the accumulative effect of a whole church movement holding these as fundamental, or perhaps that they are more

³⁰¹ Virgo, (2001) 160-161.

³⁰² *ibid.* 189-190.

³⁰³ This observation was made to the writer by Dr. William Kay in a conversation during Prayer and Fasting (10-11-2004).

³⁰⁴ Brown, C.G. *The Death of Christian Britain*. (London:Routledge. 2001) 1.

³⁰⁵ In the context of a church plant in Bradford, Dave Harper, a Newfrontiers leader in the Northwest made the comment that Paul Scanlon’s Abundant Life Church in Bradford was a “good church” but had a “different flavour” to Newfrontiers (17-3-2005).

distinctive in their own self perception than in objective reality. However, even if this is the case, this understanding is still a strong motivation for Newfrontiers to plant churches.

1.2.1 An emphasis on grace

The success of Virgo, and hence Newfrontiers, has been put down to one word: "Grace".³⁰⁶ Virgo has written four books on grace,³⁰⁷ including one credited as the most important book he has written,³⁰⁸ spoken about it regularly at Bible weeks,³⁰⁹ and conducted two tours highlighting God's grace. Smith describes this emphasis as being "strong and significant".³¹⁰

Although the "grace message" is common to many of the New Churches,³¹¹ in the UK it is Virgo and Newfrontiers who have become its champions.³¹² Virgo claims that a "revelation of grace" pervades the whole of Newfrontiers,³¹³ a claim that has some justification, with an almost continual emphasis throughout the literature³¹⁴ and conferences³¹⁵ of Newfrontiers.

Virgo often talks about his discovery of the reality of God's grace and describes it at length in *No Well-Worn Paths*. He writes of feeling "totally emancipated and almost as though my Christian life had started all over again."³¹⁶ His dramatic "grace-conversion" from a Bible-believing but "legalistic" Christian, has undoubtedly been a strong influence in his desire to see "people not simply free

³⁰⁶ Smith, 143, quoting Ralph Turner, an "ex-NFI elder".

³⁰⁷ Virgo, (1989), Virgo, T. *God's Amazing Grace* (Milton Keynes:Word. 1992), Virgo, T. *Reigning in Life*. (Tonbridge:Sovereign World. 1995) and Virgo, T. *God's Lavish Grace* (Oxford:Monarch. 2004).

³⁰⁸ Editors footnote to "DIY". *NMag*. (Vol. 2. Issue 6. Mar-May 2004) 17.

³⁰⁹ For instance at Stoneleigh 1999 Virgo took three main sessions on grace.

³¹⁰ Smith, 144.

³¹¹ For instance, see Hewitt, 129-153.

³¹² At Stoneleigh 1999, Virgo suggested that Newfrontiers "are somewhat renowned for a stance on grace..." Virgo, "Grace to say no." (AVM 1999).

³¹³ Virgo, (2001) 293.

³¹⁴ For instance "Enjoying God's Grace". *NFMag*. (Oct 1988) 3-6, "The old has gone, the new has come." *Front*. (Sept-Oct 1993) 9-10, and "Grace or Righteousness?" *nfmag*. (Issue 8. Autumn 1999) 8-11. All by Virgo.

³¹⁵ The subject of grace has been addressed regularly in virtually all Bible Weeks and Leaders Conferences. One example is a seminar at the 2005 Brighton Conference, entitled "Sovereign Grace – building a local church based on Ephesians 1:4".

³¹⁶ Virgo, (2001) 121.

from legalistic religion but also able to understand the New Testament doctrines of grace.”³¹⁷

Virgo has also argued that many churches contain Christians who have not understood and do not enjoy a life of grace. He writes, “Many Christians today have not fully grasped their freedom from law, and sadly, in the name of holiness, spend their time majoring on minors. We will never live holy lives until we see our death to the law and our freedom from legalistic religion.”³¹⁸ Legalism is, he claims, the biggest barrier to “the growth of the kingdom”,³¹⁹ and “another religion.”³²⁰ It would appear that since Virgo’s earliest days at Seaford, the desire that Christians should fully grasp the reality of grace and its implications, have become something of a preoccupation and a personal crusade for him.³²¹

In recent years Virgo has emphasised the caveat that grace must not be “misunderstood”.³²² One of his messages at Stoneleigh '99 was entitled “Grace to say no”, a title provoked by a church leader who shocked Virgo by implying that grace and righteousness were in opposition to each other.³²³ Although this theme was not covered in his earlier books, it is mentioned in *No Well-Worn Paths*,³²⁴ and emphasised throughout *God’s Lavish Grace*.³²⁵

Implications for Church Planting

Virgo’s message of grace has practical implications for church planting. Firstly, it encourages churches to be outward looking and to accept others, even if they have made mistakes and carry unhelpful baggage in their lives.³²⁶ Those who are non-Christians, or Christians who do not conform to the usual evangelical

³¹⁷ *ibid.* 119-121.

³¹⁸ *ibid.* 291. See also “The old has gone, the new has come.” *Front.* (1993) 9-10.

³¹⁹ Virgo, (1985) 38.

³²⁰ Virgo, (1996) 57.

³²¹ Virgo admits that grace is “a theme on which I love to speak.” Virgo, (2001) 155.

³²² *ibid.* 291.

³²³ “Grace or Righteousness?” *NMag.* (1999) 9.

³²⁴ Virgo, (2001) 291-296. The content appeared previously in “Grace or Righteousness?” *NMag.* (1999) 9-11.

³²⁵ Virgo, (2004).

³²⁶ For instance for the first few years the church plant in Liverpool repeatedly referred to itself as the “church of the second chance”.

expectations, still tend to be welcomed,³²⁷ although there is a strong expectation that once they have understood grace their lives will gradually take on more Christ-like qualities.³²⁸ This has an obvious appeal to those who may have had a more negative reception in other churches.

Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that young people are attracted to a faith that emphasises relationships rather than keeping external rules. It is perhaps significant that grace is often emphasised in contexts where young people are present. For instance it was often taught to teenagers at Stoneleigh and is regularly featured at Newday. Energetic and enthusiastic young people are beneficial to any church and especially to a new church just being planted.

Thirdly, the emphasis upon grace carries with it the suggestion that Christians who have not experienced the same level of grace are missing out. Virgo teaches that this doctrine is not an optional extra, but fundamental to the gospel.³²⁹ The implication is that churches that do not emphasise grace are deficient to those who do. Virgo states this in an unusually candid way when he says: "churches that are built on the foundations of grace are different from those built on any other foundation."³³⁰ This belief is in itself a strong motivation to plant more "grace" churches.³³¹

Finally, Virgo suggests that the grace of God is an important motivation for evangelism and hence for church planting. He argues that a correct understanding of what it means to live under grace will always lead to world mission.³³² Conversely, "Legalism undoubtedly frustrates mission" while "grace sets you free to take action."³³³

³²⁷ Hosier, (2005) 25.

³²⁸ Virgo, T. "Grace to say no." (AVM 1999).

³²⁹ Virgo, (1985) 38-39, Virgo, (1996) 56-57.

³³⁰ Virgo, (1996) 61.

³³¹ Holden implied this at a weekend away when emphasising the importance of grace, and was describing the context of a new church in Aberdeen (1-5-2005).

³³² Virgo, (2003) 39.

³³³ Virgo, (2004) 109, 160.

1.2.2 An emphasis upon being “charismatic” and “reformed”

In an interview in the millennium edition of the NFI Magazine, Joel Edwards, the General Director of the UK Evangelical Alliance, commented on Newfrontiers’ “unusual combination of reformed theology and charismatic experience.”³³⁴ As with all these characteristics, this exactly mirrors the theology and experience of Virgo. He writes: “I have always been extremely comfortable with the combination of reformed doctrine and charismatic experience, feeling deeply convinced that they are both rooted in biblical revelation.”³³⁵

This emphasis can be traced back to Virgo’s time at Bible College in London, where he regularly worshipped at two very different churches that he describes as being “major influences” in his life.³³⁶ On Sunday mornings he joined a charismatic group, and Sunday evenings he listened to Dr. Lloyd-Jones preach at Westminster Chapel. Virgo describes the mornings as “one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life”, and the evenings as containing “some of the most magnificent preaching” he had ever heard.³³⁷ It is clear that both have been very strong influences on Virgo and thereby on Newfrontiers.³³⁸

This emphasis upon being charismatic and reformed was highlighted in a magazine in 2001. In the editorial Virgo wrote: “In this magazine we often highlight what might be regarded as charismatic issues. This edition... is particularly devoted to what might be called ‘reformed doctrine’”.³³⁹ Virgo then expounded what he believed was its practical outworking including being “well settled in your faith” and leading to a greater confidence in a sovereign God.³⁴⁰

³³⁴ Ring, N. “21st Century Man.” *nfi*mag. (Issue 9. Winter 2000.) 67.

³³⁵ Virgo, (2001) 62.

³³⁶ Kay, (2007) 65-66.

³³⁷ Virgo, *The story so far*, (AVM 1998).

³³⁸ Smith, 143. The influence of Lloyd-Jones upon Virgo is especially significant. For a discussion on Lloyd-Jones and the Charismatic movement, see Brencher, J. *Martyn Lloyd-Jones and twentieth century evangelicalism*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 2002) 200-205.

³³⁹ Virgo, T. “Firstline” *nfi*mag. (Issue 14. Aug-Oct 2001) 2.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.* 5. See also Virgo, T. *Men of Destiny*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1987) 48, where Virgo writes: “Those who believe in the sovereignty of God should be like a rock, secure and immovable, not frightened men!”

In the same magazine Greg Haslam wrote an article explaining the relevance of being “reformed” to contemporary charismatic believers.³⁴¹ In it he too described a “second conversion” experience, but unlike Virgo’s grace encounter, Haslam described his experiences that resulted from reading the reformed writings of Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones and Stott.³⁴²

After expounding the virtues of many of his reformed heroes, Haslam warned against those who have “exhibited a worrying form of blindness” and were closed to a present day emphasis on the Holy Spirit. He argued that the two can, and should, be married together, producing a number of clear and practical results. These include a “clean” fear of God, a faith that keeps the Bible central, a proper understanding of humanity and the resulting grace of God, a “great” view of Christ, and a resulting “expanded” worldview.³⁴³

Smith argues correctly that this emphasis upon the sovereignty of God has not led to fatalism but to an activism that has grown from a conviction that God is with them.³⁴⁴ Virgo warns against a misunderstanding of reformed theology that might lead to “passivity” and argues instead that the belief that God is in control should be an incentive to live by faith and greater “risk taking”.³⁴⁵ This would seem to be the case, with a significant number of experienced leaders being prepared to move to be involved with church planting.³⁴⁶

Apart from increased confidence, it is unclear if this emphasis has helped Newfrontiers plant churches. It may be that the combination is attractive to some, perhaps especially to educated young people, as the charismatic emphasis tends to bring excitement, while the reformed emphasis tends to lead to more “solid” and “safe” expositional preaching.³⁴⁷

³⁴¹ Haslam, G. “Seeing the bigger picture”. *nfimag*. (Issue 14. Aug-Oct 2001) 31-35.

³⁴² *ibid.* 31-32.

³⁴³ *ibid.* 31-35.

³⁴⁴ Smith, 144.

³⁴⁵ Virgo, “Firstline” *nfimag*. (2001) 5.

³⁴⁶ Examples include Colin Baron moving to Manchester, David Stroud moving to London and David Coak moving to plant a church in Oxford.

³⁴⁷ Smith, 144.

1.2.3 An emphasis upon “Word” and “Spirit”

Of all these emphases, this will seem the most familiar to other charismatic and evangelical Christians.³⁴⁸ For instance, it is a theme that has consistently been emphasised in the Elim Pentecostal Church, and was a common theme in the ministry of Bob Gordon.³⁴⁹ However, it is regularly spoken of within Newfrontiers as an emphasis that, if not unique to them, is certainly a part of their legacy for other churches.

Again, this emphasis has flowed out of the experience and beliefs of Virgo. In a magazine article describing the history of Newfrontiers, he describes the two churches he attended whilst at college, and their influence upon him as also being the catalyst to his emphasis upon the Bible and the Spirit. He writes: “Two streams became inherently joined in Terry’s own ministry: the Word and the Spirit. From then on he could not have one without the other, and there begun to be born in him a longing to see church life that was strongly rooted in biblical doctrine and ignited by the Holy Spirit.”³⁵⁰

Virgo expounded this theme during the so-called “Toronto Blessing” in 1994 and 1995. In the midst of embracing what he believed was a real move of God,³⁵¹ Virgo taught of the continual need to be open to the work of the Spirit while being firmly based on God’s word. In *From Refreshing to Revival*, Virgo argued for a continuous embracing of “orthodox theology with the supernatural”,³⁵² while in *A People Prepared*, he said: “In days of increased spiritual experience and manifestations of power, we must not turn our backs on the role of biblical doctrine.”³⁵³

This was also the theme of Brighton 2002 with the title, “Honouring the Bible – Welcoming the Spirit.”³⁵⁴ In an editorial in the magazine preceding the conference, Virgo raised the criticism that charismatics are “ignorant of their

³⁴⁸ Lord suggests this dual emphasis has been at the heart of the belief and praxis of Pentecostals from Azusa Street onwards. Lord, A. *Spirit-Shaped Mission*. (Milton Keynes:Paternoster. 2005) 36-37.

³⁴⁹ Gordon, B. “Hearing from God” *Direction*. (March 1991) 14-15.

³⁵⁰ Virgo, “The story so far” *nfimag*. (2000.) 6.

³⁵¹ Virgo, T. “Firstline” *Frontline*. (Mar 1996) 3.

³⁵² Virgo, T., Holden, D. & Hosier, J. *From Refreshing to Revival*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1995) 92-93.

³⁵³ Virgo, (1996) 38.

³⁵⁴ See advert in *nfimag*. (Issue 16. Feb-Apr 2002) 40.

Bibles".³⁵⁵ His answer was to acknowledge the importance of Bible knowledge by stating unequivocally that, "there can be no spiritual health without the knowledge of Biblical truth." He then proceeded to make a case that what is needed is not "either/or" but "both/and".³⁵⁶

In *No Well-Worn Paths*, Virgo devotes two chapters to various beliefs that are important to Newfrontiers. The first of these is a plea to be a people that emphasises the importance of both the Bible and God's Spirit.³⁵⁷ Once again Virgo showed little patience for charismatics who neglect the Scriptures, or evangelicals who ignore the Holy Spirit.

This combined emphasis on "Word and Spirit" has impacted the church planting momentum of Newfrontiers. Firstly, despite this being a fairly common aspiration in today's church; it would seem that this emphasis forms an incentive to plant churches. Emphasising both the authority of Scripture and an environment where Christians are open to the Spirit is of fundamental importance to Virgo.

Secondly, it may be that this dual emphasis by Newfrontiers helps to explain why other church leaders are often positive about a Newfrontiers church starting in their town. Smith notes that Newfrontiers often has an "appeal" to other Christians that he credits, at least in part, to the preaching ministry of Virgo.³⁵⁸ Enjoying the favour of other Christians is of benefit to the start of a new church, particularly when the leader may be isolated and in need of the support of other church leaders.³⁵⁹

Thirdly, Kay suggests that Newfrontiers has suffered less than some other groups from what he describes as the "swings of charismatic and evangelical fashion" and ascribes that to their emphasis upon expository preaching.³⁶⁰ If

³⁵⁵ The same point is made by Hosier in *Christ's Radiant Church*. He suggests that the reason Newfrontiers is "strong on the Spirit" is that they are also "strong on the Word". Hosier, (2005) 10.

³⁵⁶ Virgo, T. "Firstline." *nfimag*. (Issue 16. Feb-Apr 2002) 2-3. See Virgo, (1996) 39.

³⁵⁷ Virgo, (2001) 285-290.

³⁵⁸ Smith, 144.

³⁵⁹ This point was made by Graham Webb, leader of the church in Liverpool.

³⁶⁰ Kay, (2007) 80-81.

that is true, then it is likely that a considerable amount of energy that might otherwise have been expended upon the “swings of fashion” will have been able to be channelled into the task of church planting.

1.2.4 An emphasis on a “victorious church”

Another theme common to many of the New Churches is a commitment to a victorious end time church. Although this forms a central part of the eschatology of Newfrontiers, it is one of their strongest distinctive beliefs and so is included here as well as in 1.3 below.

In *No Well-Worn Paths* Virgo traces his beliefs regarding the destiny of the church to a talk given in 1971 by David Mansell,³⁶¹ one of the early leaders of the House Church movement. Virgo writes, “That day, as David spoke, I was captivated with a prophetic vision of God’s purpose for the church that has never left me.”³⁶² Virgo expounded this in 1978 in an article entitled “The Church – God’s only answer”, where he argued that God’s intention has always been to establish a glorious end time church that is the “answer to the world.”³⁶³ That vision has become an integral part of Newfrontiers and is still prominently featured in their magazines and other literature.³⁶⁴

Much of that “prophetic vision” is based upon a series of Old Testament passages, interpreted by Virgo and others as referring to the church.³⁶⁵ Alluding to some of these verses, Virgo writes, “God is preparing his church for end-time prominence when she will arise and shine, and nations shall turn to her light and kings to the brightness of her rising. Then the mountain of the house of the Lord will rise above all the mountains, and all the nations will flow to it.”³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ For an account of Mansell’s contribution to the Restoration movement see Walker, (1998).

³⁶² Virgo, (2001) 84. The idea of being “captured” by a vision of a victorious end time church is a common one to leaders of Restoration churches. See for example Devenish, D. “A vision for an end-time glorious church.” *nfirmag.* (Issue No. 18. Aug–Oct 2002) 11.

³⁶³ Virgo, T. “The Church – God’s only answer.” *Restoration.* (Nov-Dec 1978) 11-14.

³⁶⁴ For example see Loizides, L. “Precious to Him – the Church of Jesus Christ.” *NFMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 4. Sep-Nov 2003) 12-17 and Virgo, (1996) 45-55.

³⁶⁵ Virgo, (1985) 112-113. See also Virgo, T. *Weak people, Mighty God.* (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1990) 63-64.

³⁶⁶ Virgo, (1987) 48-49.

Devenish argues for the legitimacy of this interpretation, quoting Paul's use of Old Testament prophecies in Acts³⁶⁷ referring to the mission of the church. He describes how studying these verses, and reading books such as *The Puritan Hope*,³⁶⁸ persuaded him of the significance of the Church.³⁶⁹ He later expounded this in *What on earth is the church for?*³⁷⁰

For Newfrontiers, the belief in the victorious church has always had a direct relevance to mission and church planting. Virgo and others reason that if God is looking for a glorious bride, comprised of every "tribe and nation", then the onus is on Christians to fulfil God's purposes and to bring God's word to the nations.³⁷¹ Virgo writes: "We became convinced that the church was no longer to be weak and irrelevant; it was to arise and shine and fulfil her destiny of representing Jesus Christ to the world."³⁷² For Newfrontiers such a mission is always interpreted in the context of church planting.³⁷³

In line with other New Churches, Newfrontiers sometimes uses images from the Old Testament, applies them to the church, and then uses them as an incentive to mission. For example, in the context of David's charge to Solomon to build the temple, Virgo writes, "Have you seen the vision for God's house – the magnificence, fame and glory? David wanted Solomon to be clear about what he had to build. God wants you clear about his objectives on earth – namely to glorify his Son by giving him a glorious church from every tribe and nation."³⁷⁴

³⁶⁷ For instance Acts 13:47.

³⁶⁸ Murray, I. *The Puritan Hope*. (London:Banner of Truth. 1971). It is no co-incidence that many phrases used by Murray of a victorious church (for instance, see page 96: "If the church is the God appointed means for the advancement of this kingdom, then her future is beyond all doubt.") could also refer to Newfrontiers. The book has been well read by many leaders within Newfrontiers and Virgo, Hosier and Devenish have all referred to it in books they have written.

³⁶⁹ Devenish. "A vision for an end-time glorious church." *nfigmag*. (2002) 11-13.

³⁷⁰ Devenish, 3-6.

³⁷¹ Virgo, (1990) 63.

³⁷² Virgo, T. in Springer, K. (Ed.) *Riding the Third Wave*. (Basingstoke:MMS. 1987) 116.

³⁷³ A point made in a number of interviews including those with Holden (10-6-2005) and Stroud (22-7-2005). See Virgo, (1996) 8 & 50.

³⁷⁴ Virgo, (1990) 64. See Virgo, (1987) 61-65.

Conclusion

Virgo and other leaders in Newfrontiers³⁷⁵ have followed Wagner³⁷⁶ and others³⁷⁷ in regularly declaring that church planting is the most fruitful way to evangelise.³⁷⁸ Yet for Newfrontiers the opposite is also true, that true evangelism must be rooted in the life of a local church.³⁷⁹ For Virgo, the “church is the hope of the world”,³⁸⁰ a glorious and victorious church, that is full of grace, that holds together the apparent dichotomies of being charismatic yet reformed, and is a people of the Word and the Spirit. Virgo writes: “We need to rediscover the incredible value and significance of the local church in God’s plan and perspective. She is not to be ignored and despised but to be honoured and cherished.”³⁸¹

As has been stated above, these beliefs may not be unique to Newfrontiers, but as Holden argues, they are a part of Newfrontiers’ “DNA”,³⁸² and this self-belief is a strong incentive to it to plant churches even where other “good churches” already exist.

1.3 Because of its particular view of eschatology

The linking of eschatology and ecclesiology is not unique to Newfrontiers.³⁸³ Writing from the perspective of charismatic missiology, Lord suggests that eschatology must be a “central theme”. He says: “Together these understandings give a natural focus on evangelism, the desire to see people respond to Christ and enter the kingdom before Christ comes again.”³⁸⁴ However, while this may be foundational to Pentecostal and charismatic theology in general, Newfrontiers explicitly and repeatedly makes the

³⁷⁵ Virgo, T. “Build your church and heal this land”. *NFU*. (Dec 1986) 3. This statement was repeated in interviews with Holden (10-6-2005) and Thompson (18-11-2005). See Virgo, (1996) 50, 85 & 169.

³⁷⁶ Wagner, (1990) 7-8, 11 & 16.

³⁷⁷ Malphurs, A. *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*. (Grand Rapids:Baker. 1992) 40.

³⁷⁸ Virgo, (1996) 50.

³⁷⁹ Virgo, T. “The Local Church” *NFMag*. (Feb 1990) 3-7.

³⁸⁰ Virgo used the phrase at an “Enjoying God’s Grace” tour in Leeds in 2006.

³⁸¹ Virgo, T. “Alive and well?” *Direction*. (May 1990) 10.

³⁸² A statement made by Holden to the author in an interview (10-6-2005).

³⁸³ See for instance Doyle, R. *Eschatology and the shape of Christian belief*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 1999)

4.

³⁸⁴ Lord, 56.

connection,³⁸⁵ and uses this future hope as an incentive to plant churches. It is significant that of the six reasons Devenish gives for planting churches, five are connected to eschatology, with only one being pragmatic.³⁸⁶

Newfrontiers, in common with other New Churches, have a well-developed belief in the end times.³⁸⁷ However, this is not focused in dogmatic statements about events surrounding the parousia or the millennium, but rather on a commitment to Jesus returning for a glorious end time church.³⁸⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that this belief forms a strong motivation to restore existing churches to what Newfrontiers believes was God's original intention,³⁸⁹ and to being involved in planting new churches throughout the world.

1.3.1 The end times

The most detailed explanation of the eschatology of Newfrontiers is found in *The End Times*,³⁹⁰ a book written by Hosier,³⁹¹ a close friend of Virgo and a respected teacher within Newfrontiers.³⁹² As well as discussing a number of unsurprising topics such as the millennium, the parousia, and the tribulation; the book applies the future hope of Christ's return to the Christian life lived out in the present and in particular in relation to the life of the church.

In a commendation written by Virgo about *The End Times*, the connection between eschatology and the mission of the church is clearly made. Virgo writes: "With our passion to build the church and reach every nation with the gospel there is a need to understand where both this world and we are

³⁸⁵ For a discussion of how eschatology and ecclesiology relate together in the context of the "house church movement", see Scott, J. *The Theology of the so-called "New Church" Movement: An analysis of the Eschatology*. A thesis submitted to Brunel University for MTh. Published on the internet: <http://www.wild-fire.co.uk>. 9-13 (accessed 11-11-2005).

³⁸⁶ Devenish, 41-46.

³⁸⁷ Scott.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.* 10.

³⁸⁹ Devenish, D. "Here I am. Send me!" *nfi*mag. (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 59.

³⁹⁰ Hosier, J. *The End Times*. (London:Monarch. 2000).

³⁹¹ Hosier trained at Spurgeon's College, and served as Director of Studies at Moorlands Bible College. He also led Virgo's home church in Brighton for eight years.

³⁹² Scott describes Hosier as "a key shaper of the theology and thinking of NFI." 41.

heading...³⁹³ This point is also made by Hosier in his introduction, and then expounded regularly throughout his book.

It is significant that the last four chapters of Hosier's book³⁹⁴ expound and apply his previous teaching to the church. He writes: "Our eschatology should affect our ecclesiology... When you believe the Rapture will take place and what you believe about the condition of the church when Jesus returns will certainly influence your view of the church today and the task to be done",³⁹⁵ a point also recognised by Kay.³⁹⁶

Hosier argues repeatedly that eschatology must affect the way the church is built "right now".³⁹⁷ Using a verse from Ephesians³⁹⁸ as his starting point, he suggests that the end-time church will become a glorious church demonstrating God's greatness to the world.³⁹⁹ However for Hosier in particular, and for Newfrontiers in general, such a belief does not lead to passivity but to a commitment to build, and where appropriate to plant many "restored" churches.⁴⁰⁰

1.3.2 Practical implications

One example of the practical implications of eschatology is the way Hosier argues for a post-tribulation rapture⁴⁰¹ and then seeks to apply this in relation to the "big vision" of the church.⁴⁰² He writes: "If I believe that the Church will not be raptured, and that Jesus will not return until there is a church in every people group, then each local church must be built with the big vision of the world's nations in its view."⁴⁰³ Hosier again reflects the beliefs of Newfrontiers that such a big vision must include church planting.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹³ Written by Virgo and printed on the cover of Hosier (2000).

³⁹⁴ Representing approximately one third of the book.

³⁹⁵ Hosier, (2000) 127.

³⁹⁶ Kay, (2007) 23-24.

³⁹⁷ Hosier, (2000) 128-129.

³⁹⁸ Ephesians 3:10.

³⁹⁹ Hosier, (2000) 128-137.

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.* 132.

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.* 29-37.

⁴⁰² *ibid.* 139-150.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.* 141.

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid.* 148.

The Hosier quotation above also links the need for church planting “in every people group”⁴⁰⁵ with the return of Christ, an indirect reference to a verse from Matthew, that the parousia will not take place until the “gospel has been preached throughout the whole world.”⁴⁰⁶ It is noteworthy that for Hosier the preaching of the gospel is once again equated with planting churches.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the range of some of the other subjects covered,⁴⁰⁷ discussion regarding the end times in *No Well-worn Paths* is limited to a brief mention in the context of celebrating the Millennium in 2000.⁴⁰⁸ However it is noteworthy that Virgo chooses to emphasise that Jesus will return for a church made up of “every tongue, tribe and ethnic group”, with the familiar conclusion being a call to be “active in reaching the lost”.⁴⁰⁹

Virgo develops the same point in a book written in 1996.⁴¹⁰ In the final chapter entitled “Into all the world”, he presents a number of verses from the Old Testament which he says form “the foundation of New Testament missionary vision”⁴¹¹ before proceeding to emphasise the importance of the church fulfilling God’s destiny by being a “light to the nations”. “World evangelisation,” Virgo writes, “is the greatest task that a Christian, a church, or a group of churches can embrace. It is the goal of history...”⁴¹² Once again this is linked to the urgency of preparing a glorious church for Christ’s return.⁴¹³

Devenish summed up the Newfrontiers vision of “restoration” in an article published in 2000.⁴¹⁴ In it he discussed the significance of Isaiah 49:6, a verse that he had brought as a “prophetic word” in 1995. His conclusion typifies

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.* 141.

⁴⁰⁶ Matthew 24:14 (quotation from NIV). It is interesting that this verse is seldom referred to in the literature of Newfrontiers. Instead they more often emphasise verses that directly describe the restoration of a “glorious church”.

⁴⁰⁷ Although the book primarily charts the story of Virgo and the development of Newfrontiers, many other topics are dealt with, including grace (pages 290-297), women in ministry (pages 302-303) and the place of revivals (page 315-325).

⁴⁰⁸ Virgo, (2001). 329-330.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.* 330.

⁴¹⁰ Virgo, (1996).

⁴¹¹ *ibid.* 182.

⁴¹² *ibid.* 186.

⁴¹³ *ibid.* 186-187.

⁴¹⁴ Devenish. “Here I am. Send me!” *nfimag.* (2000) 58-62.

Newfrontiers' attitude to eschatology, seeing the verse to contain a charge not only to restore the church but also to be a light to the nations. He finishes his article by saying: "The vision itself becomes the means of our commission. What I see becomes how I am sent to do it. Isaiah heard the voice of heaven, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' Heaven is still shouting this..."⁴¹⁵

It is not surprising that the theme of a glorious end time church occupies a major proportion of Newfrontiers literature. However it is never described in abstract academic terms but always related, albeit in varying degrees,⁴¹⁶ to the twin task of restoring the church and planting new churches. Devenish is clear that it is this that keeps Newfrontiers aspiration to plant churches "going".⁴¹⁷

As has already been noted, it is quite common for the leaders of Newfrontiers to describe how they were captivated by a vision for a "glorious" church.⁴¹⁸ It would seem that the reason for this narrative is to put their beliefs into context and to explain why they are involved in both restoration and the planting of churches.

Conclusion

This section suggests the main reasons why Newfrontiers is actively involved in church planting. They all interrelate and together form a strong motivation that has filtered down from Virgo through his senior leaders at least as far as the majority of the elders leading local Newfrontiers churches. The next section explains how this impetus to plant churches has been achieved.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.* 62.

⁴¹⁶ There has been a subtle shift in the emphasis of these two themes. As the church planting momentum within Newfrontiers has grown, so the emphasis upon church planting has increased. For instance in 1988/1989 Hosier wrote a six part series entitled "A Glorious Church – The Vision of Restoration" which was full of exhortation to build a vibrant restored church but did not link this with the call to evangelism or church planting. *NFMag.* (Dec 88-Jan 89), this is in marked contrast to the emphasis upon church planting in Hosier. (2000).

⁴¹⁷ Devenish, "A vision for an end-time glorious church." *nfirmag.* (2002) 12.

⁴¹⁸ See *ibid.* 10-11 and Hosier, J. "A new day of Restoration." *nfirmag.* (Issue 18. Aug-Oct 2002) 31-32.

Chapter 2: How is its church planting momentum being maintained?

According to its website the stated aim of Newfrontiers is to “establish the Kingdom of God by restoring the church, making disciples, training leaders and planting churches”,⁴¹⁹ a strap-line that is also included regularly in its literature.⁴²⁰ This chapter examines how its considerable impetus to plant churches is being maintained.

2.1 Impact of the prophetic

The influence of prophetic words on the development of Newfrontiers has already been noted.⁴²¹ It is clear that they have made an important contribution to the general decision making process, and in particular have acted as a provocateur to church planting.⁴²² All of the seven prophetic words featured on its website and mentioned above have to some extent been interpreted as encouraging church planting, with two in particular highlighting the urgent task of starting more churches.

In 1990 Virgo had the vision of a bow being pulled back towards the northwest with the arrow released into Europe. This was taken as a call to plant churches “deep into England”, with an anticipated release of resources that would enable Newfrontiers to reach “far into the world”.⁴²³ This also coincided with a period of recession, with many moving for economic reasons away from the southeast to other parts of the UK.

When Virgo asked Baron to research where church members were moving to, Swindon and Manchester were revealed as the most common destinations. It was through undertaking this research that Baron felt challenged to move to Manchester, and the impetus to plant churches away from just the Home Counties began in earnest. Despite earlier aspirations, the existing policy of

⁴¹⁹ See <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/uk/about-us/our-mission/> (accessed 19-10-2007).

⁴²⁰ For instance see *NMag.* (Vol 2. Issue 12. Sept-Dec 2005) 2.

⁴²¹ See 1.1.

⁴²² Virgo, W. 26.

⁴²³ Virgo, *The story so far.* (AVM 1998).

Newfrontiers of intentional church planting away from the southeast can be traced back to Virgo's vision of the bow and arrow.⁴²⁴

The other word originally came not so much as a prophecy but as a challenge to believe God for "1,000 churches in the UK."⁴²⁵ It was given by Kpikpi at Stoneleigh 1999 and has since been regularly referred to as a part of God's mission call to Newfrontiers.⁴²⁶ Kpikpi described his motivation behind this challenge: "I felt God saying the boom time for the UK churches was nearer now than ever before, but that He saw the scale of the work He wanted to do in the UK was still not fully appreciated so He wanted to put a figure to His promises for His people..."⁴²⁷ Wendy Virgo wrote: "This gave added impetus to our church planting programme."⁴²⁸ An excerpt of this "prophetic challenge" was printed in a leaflet entitled "Dare to believe for 1,000 churches... and churches of 1,000".⁴²⁹

2.1.1 Significant Impact

There is little doubt that these prophetic words have become a catalyst to the church planting momentum of Newfrontiers. They are referred to regularly and have become inseparable from the Newfrontiers story. However it is also evident that this process has not evolved randomly, but rather that the importance of certain prophecies have been intentionally emphasised and applied to the mission of Newfrontiers.

The particular emphasis on prophecy by Newfrontiers is summed up by Wendy Virgo, when she writes: "Over many years, New Frontiers has sought to hear God for every change in direction... Over a period of time, there is a clear sense of what God is saying... Many new church planting strategies, social action initiatives and work in other countries have begun in this way. Therefore we

⁴²⁴ Holden made this point in an interview with the author (10-6-2005).

⁴²⁵ Kpikpi, "Stoneleigh Impact" *nfimag*. (1999) 21.

⁴²⁶ For instance it was also mentioned by Holden in an interview with the author as a part justification why Newfrontiers is involved in church planting (10-6-2005).

⁴²⁷ Kpikpi, "Stoneleigh Impact" *nfimag*. (1999.) 21.

⁴²⁸ Virgo, W. 31.

⁴²⁹ n.a. "Dare to believe for 1,000 churches... and churches of 1,000" (c. 2000).

take prophecy very seriously."⁴³⁰ This is confirmed in the way all prophecies given at the Brighton Conferences are recorded and made available on CD, while those given at the leaders' prayer and fasting are transcribed and sent to church leaders by e-mail.

It should be noted that prophetic words are always given within a specific context. For instance, Virgo saw the vision of the bow within six months of Kriengsak's challenge for Newfrontiers to be a movement with a vision for the nations and not just the UK,⁴³¹ and at a time when Virgo was considering the financial cost of increased involvement into France and Holland.⁴³² Kpikpi gave his call to believe for 1,000 churches towards the end of a highly charged Stoneleigh Bible Week where the call to mission was never far away.

Once given, there has often been a period of reflection where Virgo and other leaders have weighed the significance of what has been said.⁴³³ This has resulted in certain prophetic words gaining in importance, while others have been left to fade.⁴³⁴ Smith comments on this process in the context of Groves' "no well-worn paths" prophecy and sees the way this was handled as "very illuminating", particularly "the determined way in which the prophecy was weighed, with application coming from Virgo himself."⁴³⁵

As has been noted, the seven prophetic words that were recognised as most significant are all featured on the Newfrontiers website. These have taken on an almost "canonical" status, and many of these have been regularly emphasised by Virgo as he has recounted the story of Newfrontiers.⁴³⁶ Speaking of these prophetic words, he describes them as having "moved us and stirred us. They became something that burned deeply in our hearts..."⁴³⁷ It may also be that in some cases their significance has grown over time. Very few of the prophecies

⁴³⁰ Virgo, W. 26.

⁴³¹ Smith, 150.

⁴³² Virgo, T. "Firstline" *Newfrontiers Magazine*. (Vol. 2. Issue 7. Jun –Aug 2004) 5.

⁴³³ It is hard to assess what criteria are used in this process, except perhaps to the degree that the prophecies confirm the direction that is currently being taken.

⁴³⁴ Virgo, (2001) 144-146.

⁴³⁵ Smith, 148.

⁴³⁶ Virgo, *The story so far*. (AVM. 1998) and Virgo, "The story so far" *nfinmag*. (2000) 4-13.

⁴³⁷ Virgo, *The story so far*. (AVM 1998).

are mentioned in the magazines immediately after being given but often appear several months later.⁴³⁸

The difficulty of knowing to what extent these prophetic words have directly caused church planting has already been noted.⁴³⁹ However there can be little doubt that their existence and the way they have been deliberately and regularly emphasised has been a major contributor towards the church planting momentum of Newfrontiers. They have provided a focus and a rallying point around which many within Newfrontiers have aligned.

2.2 Conferences: Downs, Stoneleigh, Brighton, Prayer and Fasting

Reference has already been made to a number of conferences and leaders' events that have had a significant impact on the development of Newfrontiers.⁴⁴⁰ As a relatively new Christian leader, Virgo attended some of the early gatherings of charismatic leaders, including the Capel Bible Week.⁴⁴¹ By the time he started to assist other churches, he was committed to gathering Christians, and especially Christian leaders, together.

2.2.1 Downs and Stoneleigh Bible Weeks

The first attempt at gathering what was then the Coastlands family of churches took place in 1979, when 2,000 people assembled at Plumpton racecourse, Brighton.⁴⁴² This Downs Bible Week was initially modelled on the Dales but increasingly took on its own style and flavour.⁴⁴³ For ten years it grew in numbers and influence until it closed in 1988 with around 7,000 attending.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁸ For instance the "Second Half" prophecy is printed in a magazine two years later. See Miller, G. "Prophesying in Public Meetings" *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 7. Jun – Aug 2004) 5.

⁴³⁹ See the conclusion to 1.1 above.

⁴⁴⁰ For instance see 1.1.4.

⁴⁴¹ Virgo, (2001) 99-101.

⁴⁴² Virgo, W. 6.

⁴⁴³ At least that was the perception of those who travelled from Newcastle to the Downs asking for support. Virgo, *The story so far.* (AVM. 1998).

⁴⁴⁴ Virgo, "The Story So Far". *nfimag.* (2000) 9.

One of the main purposes of the Downs was to be a place for Virgo to share his “prophetic burden,”⁴⁴⁵ and in 1985 he talked about Jonah as the “Reluctant Prophet”. Virgo describes that as “a turning point year” when Coastlands started to turn its attention from a “preoccupation of getting the church right” to considering their mission to the world.⁴⁴⁶ It was the following year that Groves saw his vision of the charging elephants, and Coastlands transitioned into New Frontiers.

In 1991 Stoneleigh Bible Week began and for eleven years took place during August in the Agricultural Showground near Coventry. Numbers increased rapidly and it became the largest regular Christian gathering in a single location in Europe.⁴⁴⁷ Although the majority of those attending were from Newfrontiers churches, an estimated 30% were from other denominations.⁴⁴⁸ Its worship albums became best sellers, and many of the Stoneleigh songs were sung throughout the UK.⁴⁴⁹ As Stoneleigh Bible Week grew so did the influence of Virgo and Newfrontiers. Smith describes Stoneleigh as a “shop window”, and suggests with some justification that it might have become “bigger than NFI itself.”⁴⁵⁰

The popularity of Downs and Stoneleigh has made a significant contribution to the momentum of church planting. They were increasingly used as an opportunity to share the vision and values of Newfrontiers. Each year Virgo preached on a number of occasions, often including references to the task of opening new churches. The topic of church planting was also covered regularly in seminars and was made the focus of prayer.⁴⁵¹ There were opportunities for prophecies to be given, with three of the seven key prophetic words being delivered at Stoneleigh. From 1995, professionally produced videos were

⁴⁴⁵ Virgo, *The story so far*. (AVM. 1998). See also Ring, N. “Trends: Bible Weeks” *Restoration*. (May-Jun 1987) 19.

⁴⁴⁶ Virgo, *The story so far*. (AVM. 1998).

⁴⁴⁷ Smith, 153.

⁴⁴⁸ Virgo, (2001) 337.

⁴⁴⁹ Virgo, W. 55-63.

⁴⁵⁰ Smith, 154.

⁴⁵¹ Hosier, (2005) 20.

shown highlighting the successes and challenges of Newfrontiers, including progress being made to plant churches.⁴⁵²

Wendy Virgo contrasts the period before and after Stoneleigh. She writes: “(before Stoneleigh) some were feeling a stirring to go and plant new churches or to take part in mission teams, but broadly, our vision was not very high.” About the end of the Stoneleigh period she wrote: “God has challenged our thinking and stretched our understanding about what he wants to do.”⁴⁵³

The number of churches and church leaders attending the Bible Weeks from outside of Newfrontiers has proved to be a fertile recruiting ground for potential church plants. Several of the church planting leaders surveyed made mention of people who had joined their churches from other local churches as a result of visits made to Stoneleigh. This was probably not due to a deliberate attempt to proselytise, but rather an inevitable result of the clear vision and high profile of Virgo and Newfrontiers that was consistently being presented as a company of people who were on a mission together.⁴⁵⁴

2.2.2 Brighton Leadership Conference

The wisdom of stopping such a successful event as Stoneleigh has been questioned,⁴⁵⁵ with Smith describing the loss as having “huge potential repercussions for the future”.⁴⁵⁶ However, it would seem that these concerns have been largely unfounded, due partly to a greater emphasis upon the Brighton Leadership Conference.

The origins of this conference can be traced back to 1984 when Virgo prayed that the Brighton Conference Centre would be filled with Christian leaders rather than political parties.⁴⁵⁷ The first partial fulfilment of this desire came six years later when leaders from all of the then 76 Newfrontiers churches gathered to hear Kriengsak challenge the audience to plant churches. Virgo sums this up by

⁴⁵² Virgo, W. 83.

⁴⁵³ *ibid.* 30.

⁴⁵⁴ Smith, 154.

⁴⁵⁵ Virgo, W. 98. See Fisher, J. “New Frontiers” *Renewal archives published on the internet.*

⁴⁵⁶ Smith, 154.

⁴⁵⁷ n.a. “Together for purpose” *nfimagazine.* (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 41.

saying, "I believe that something of Kriengsak's phenomenal apostolic anointing was in operation and there was a genuine impartation of his passion to church plant."⁴⁵⁸

In 1996 the second Brighton Leaders Conference was held with 2,000 gathering under the heading, "Receiving the Spirit, Restoring the church, Reaching the Nations."⁴⁵⁹ Two years later the theme was based upon Cain's prophetic word given eight years previously: "Equipping leaders to change the expression of Christianity."⁴⁶⁰ Two years after that, the fourth Brighton Leaders Conference was held entitled: "Does the future have a church?"⁴⁶¹

From 2002, a year after the Stoneleigh Bible Week ceased, the Brighton Conference became an annual event and moved from November to June/July. The advert in the *nfimagazine* in 2002 clearly portrayed the Brighton Conference as superseding Stoneleigh. Under the heading "From Stoneleigh to Brighton..." it read: "Our Stoneleigh Bible Week has finished but now our significant leaders' event, Brighton 2002 fills the horizon."⁴⁶² In that year 3,000 leaders met and Virgo expounded Ephesians 4. Amongst other things he related the teaching on "apostolic ministry" to church planting.⁴⁶³

The Leadership Conference at Brighton continues to have an impact upon the church planting of Newfrontiers. The main teaching regularly relates the Bible to the challenge of church planting, while times of prayer include praying for new churches.⁴⁶⁴ Seminars with titles such as "Pioneering churches in the inner city"⁴⁶⁵ and "Starting churches to re-evangelise the nation"⁴⁶⁶ take place most years. With the demise of Stoneleigh, perhaps the greatest impact of the Brighton leadership conference upon the momentum of church planting is that it

⁴⁵⁸ Virgo, (2001) 196.

⁴⁵⁹ See advert in *Frontline*. (Jun 1996) 32.

⁴⁶⁰ See advert in *nfimagazine*. (Issue 2. Spring 1998) 40.

⁴⁶¹ See advert in *nfimagazine*. (Issue 11. Autumn 2000) 40.

⁴⁶² See advert in *nfimagazine*. (Issue 15. Nov-Jan 2002) 40.

⁴⁶³ Virgo, W. "Brighton 2002" *nfimagazine*. (Issue 18. Aug-Oct 2002) 22.

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid.* 23.

⁴⁶⁵ A title of a seminar by Simon Thomas during Brighton 2002.

⁴⁶⁶ A title of a seminar by Thompson during Brighton 2003.

acts as a focal “rallying” point. Plans of new church planting initiatives are shared and progress is reported.

2.2.3 Prayer and Fasting

Another important event where this communication takes place is at the two days of prayer and fasting currently held in Peterborough three times a year. Virgo has always spoken of these events enthusiastically. In 1992 he wrote, “These days have become a vital hub of our fellowship and activity. I cannot express how much I look forward to them...”⁴⁶⁷ In *No Well-worn Paths* he described them as “one of the keys to our fellowship, unity and openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit through prophecy”.⁴⁶⁸ Hosier credits them with achieving “a great deal of advance and breakthrough”,⁴⁶⁹ and Holden simply says they are what makes Newfrontiers “tick”.⁴⁷⁰ Kay, speaking after attending as a guest of Holden, describes them as the “secret to the success of NFI.”⁴⁷¹

These, too, have played a considerable part in the Newfrontiers church planting momentum. Perhaps unsurprisingly, time is again given to praying for church plants, the vision of church planting is often restated, and as at the Brighton Conference, updates from new churches are regularly given.

In the final chapter of *No Well-worn Paths*, Virgo discusses why he believes Stoneleigh had to stop. In that context he comments: “Conferences can be helpful, but they are not essentially what we are. They help us on our mission, but they do not constitute our mission.”⁴⁷² That might be so, but there can be little doubt that the various conferences described above have all had a major impact on the momentum of planting new churches. They have provided an environment where vision can be cast and encouragement regularly given to be wholeheartedly involved in the Newfrontiers mission of planting churches.

⁴⁶⁷ Virgo, T. “Prayer and Fasting.” *1991/92 New Frontiers International Annual Report*. (c.1992) 3.

⁴⁶⁸ Virgo, (2001) 130. In a talk to leaders in 2005 Virgo described the days of prayer and fasting as being a “gift from God” and one of the reasons why Newfrontiers progresses when many of the other “streams” seem to be “disintegrating”. Virgo, T. “Session two” (AVM. Nov. 2005).

⁴⁶⁹ Hosier, (2005) 127.

⁴⁷⁰ Holden, D. “Some lessons learnt”. *NMag*. (Vol. 2. Issue 5. Dec-Feb 2004) 34.

⁴⁷¹ Kay, (2007) 77.

⁴⁷² Virgo, (2001) 341.

2.3 Mobilisation of “teens”, students and “twenties”

Another factor that has assisted the church planting impetus is the successful mobilisation of many of their young people. Over the years a number of high profile events have been staged by Newfrontiers for teenagers and those in their twenties. Initially these were focused mainly on the Downs and Stoneleigh Bible weeks, but recently have included *Newday* and *Mobilise*. For many of these events, church planting has clearly been on the agenda.⁴⁷³

In 1989 Virgo set out some of the virtues of young people. These included “energy, mobility, time, idealism, zeal and teachability”. While church planting was not mentioned, his conclusion included a call to present young people with a “big vision” focusing on a mission to “preach the gospel to every nation.”⁴⁷⁴ This aspiration to involve young people in mission in general terms has at least in part evolved into a desire for them to become fully involved in church planting.⁴⁷⁵

At Stoneleigh this was worked out through “re.vive”, a series of seminars and celebrations attended by 5,000 teenagers in 2001.⁴⁷⁶ Looking back after Stoneleigh closed, it was claimed that “many” young people had received a specific calling to go to specific towns in the UK, presumably with a view to planting new churches.⁴⁷⁷

By 2002, church planting was very explicitly on the Newfrontiers youth work agenda. Matt Hosier and Joel Virgo wrote: “Mission and church planting have been absolutely central to what we have done and what will be done in the future.” As evidence of this, they describe 1,000 young people going from Stoneleigh to six towns in the Midlands to take part in evangelistic events tied in with new church plants.⁴⁷⁸ Looking forward from 2002, Hosier and Virgo

⁴⁷³ Hosier, M. & Virgo, J. “The Now Generation”. *nfimag*. (Issue No. 15. Nov–Jan 2002) 18-23.

⁴⁷⁴ Virgo, T. “A New Generation” *NFMag*. (Mar 1989) 6.

⁴⁷⁵ However it would seem that this aspiration is not always been a reality. The 2005 survey revealed that over 50% of the new churches commenced without a single teenager as a part of their Core Group.

⁴⁷⁶ Hosier and Virgo, “The Now Generation”. *nfimag*. (2002) 22.

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.* 19.

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid.* 19.

describe the future of youth work within Newfrontiers and promise to keep “mission and church planting as their key focus.”⁴⁷⁹

This link has become especially close at the Newday youth event.⁴⁸⁰ For instance, during Newday 2005, after a seminar aimed at those who were about to go to university, 200 students were linked with leaders from Newfrontiers church plants.⁴⁸¹ Joel Virgo summed up the vision of Newday as being to provide contexts for large event evangelism, to promote a vision for a global, restored church, and to “help young people to own the Newfrontiers vision of church planting.”⁴⁸²

In 2003 a major new initiative aimed at students and those in their twenties commenced. “Mobilise” took place in Brighton, ran concurrently with the Leaders’ Conference, and by 2008 was expecting around 2,000 to attend. In 2005 25% of the eight seminars were directly aimed at those who were interested in being involved with church planting. The introduction on the event’s 2004 booking form also reinforced this link. It read: “As we move closer to our target of planting churches in many nations, the need for us to build together grows and grows... We believe the younger generation should play a substantial part in this...”⁴⁸³

Tom Shaw, who heads up Newfrontiers’ work with students⁴⁸⁴ and young people in their twenties, also organises an annual Student Worker Day with the twin aims of equipping churches to reach students and encouraging students to get involved with new church plants. He is thoroughly committed to church planting⁴⁸⁵ and made the extravagant claim that: “If we are to reach our target of

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.* 23.

⁴⁸⁰ Newday started in August 2004 and is aimed at 12 to 19 year olds. Its strap line is “Changing lives, Mobilising a generation, Reaching a city”.

⁴⁸¹ An interview with Tom Shaw by the author (10-11-2005).

⁴⁸² An interview by the author (2-12-2005).

⁴⁸³ Leadership with Mobilise 2004 booking form.

⁴⁸⁴ Shaw estimates that in 2005 there were between 2,000 and 3,000 students from Newfrontiers churches at Universities in the UK. Source – an interview with the author (10-11-2005).

⁴⁸⁵ He described church planting as being at “the top” of his agenda. An interview with the author (10-11-2005).

1,000 churches it will be by reaching students and then by releasing them to serve, particularly in new church plants.”⁴⁸⁶

Joel Virgo and Tom Shaw have successfully made the vision to plant churches an integral part of the Newfrontiers work with teenagers and twenties. In this they have taken an area of ministry that has in some denominations worked with their own separate agenda, and embedded it into the overall vision of Newfrontiers.⁴⁸⁷ This link is also contributing to the church planting impetus of Newfrontiers. Young people and students are regularly giving their time and energy. Some are taking part in gap-years while others are playing a full part in the Newfrontiers church plant located in the town where they are studying.

2.4 Influence and involvement of Virgo and other senior leaders

The considerable impact of Virgo upon the development of Newfrontiers has already been repeatedly noted⁴⁸⁸ and in many ways it is impossible to separate Newfrontiers from Virgo. He is still its “father figure”⁴⁸⁹ and despite a continued emphasis upon restructuring and “giving away responsibility”,⁴⁹⁰ continues to hold enormous influence and authority.⁴⁹¹ All of the distinctive beliefs of Newfrontiers examined above, mirror convictions held by Virgo. It is not just that one has affected the other, but rather that they have both developed concurrently and inseparably.

This is also true of Newfrontiers’ mandate to plant churches. This central facet of Newfrontiers vision and philosophy has not been pushed by a group of young zealous evangelists but flows directly from Virgo himself.⁴⁹² When asked why Newfrontiers are involved in planting churches he simply replied: “Because it is

⁴⁸⁶ An interview with the author (10-11-2005).

⁴⁸⁷ Shaw. “The church and the campus”. *NMag.* (July 2008) 20-21.

⁴⁸⁸ See 1.1 above.

⁴⁸⁹ Smith, 142.

⁴⁹⁰ Walker, (1998). 338-339.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.* 333.

⁴⁹² Virgo has repeatedly talked positively about church planting, for example in an article arguing for modern day apostles: “The fact remains that we need to plant a great number of new churches if we are going to see the tide turn in the nation...” Virgo, T. “Apostles today – yes.” *Renewal.* (No. 118. Aug-Sep 1985)

the Biblical way to carry out Jesus' great commission...⁴⁹³ This conviction permeates Newfrontiers and is a major factor in its church planting momentum. According to Groves, Virgo "works hard" to keep church planting "constantly before us."⁴⁹⁴

Virgo's theological conviction of the validity and urgency of church planting does not imply any contradiction to Wagner's pragmatic belief that church planting is the most fruitful way to evangelise.⁴⁹⁵ Virgo repeatedly shares the same stance: "Planting a new church... is the most effective way of evangelising a new area."⁴⁹⁶ In an interview in 2003 he linked both reasons for church planting, which he described as "the most Biblical and effective way of evangelising."⁴⁹⁷

In November 2005, Virgo and Stroud were the speakers for the annual "Leadership and Church Planting Training Conference" held at the Marriot Hotel in Northampton, a weekend where leaders from some of the current Newfrontiers church plants were invited to attend. Virgo spoke at the conference of the need to understand what made Newfrontiers "tick", and included discussion of the way he believed "apostolic authority" interacted with local church eldership. His desire was to avoid either extreme, of churches seeing themselves as being independent, or of apostles trying to dictate how churches should be run and when leaders should move. His conclusion was to emphasise the importance of strong relationships.⁴⁹⁸ This commitment has permeated Newfrontiers and has a major impact upon how church planting takes place.

As an example of this, Virgo described how in 1988 he asked Don Smith, the then leader of the thriving Hastings Newfrontiers church, to consider moving to start a new church in nearby Eastbourne. Virgo explains how Smith later recounted that as soon as Virgo made the suggestion he "knew this was what God wanted him to do", but that if Smith's reaction had been different Virgo

⁴⁹³ An interview with the author (18-11-2005).

⁴⁹⁴ An interview with the author (11-5-2005).

⁴⁹⁵ Wagner, (1990) 7-8, 11 & 16.

⁴⁹⁶ Virgo, T. "Planting new churches" in *Front.* (Oct 1996) 20. See Virgo. (1996) 50.

⁴⁹⁷ Fisher, J. "New Frontiers" *Renewal archives published on the internet.*

⁴⁹⁸ Virgo, T. "Session two" (AVM. 2005).

would not have considered “ordering” him to go.⁴⁹⁹ The result was that a senior and “successful” church leader became involved in planting a new church. This Smith did and by 1996, the Eastbourne Newfrontiers church had grown to about 200,⁵⁰⁰ and by 2005 there were 300 worshipping regularly.⁵⁰¹

This model of senior leaders moving to plant new churches has often been repeated. In 1992 David Coak moved from Haywards Heath to start a new church in Cambridge. After thirteen years the church had grown to around 300 and, following a suggestion made by Stroud, moved again in 2005 to lead a new church plant into Oxford.

Stroud, who now leads the work of Newfrontiers in the UK, has also demonstrated a passionate commitment to church planting. In 1992 he started the “King’s Arms”, a new church plant in Bedford with the particular aim of reaching students. Then in 1998 he moved to Birmingham to plant a new church and to spearhead the “Midlands Initiative”. His most recent move took place in October 2004 when he moved to London to start Christchurch, a new church, and something of a Newfrontiers flagship.⁵⁰²

This pattern of inviting senior leaders to move location to plant new churches has, in at least two ways, been very influential in the church planting momentum of Newfrontiers.

Firstly, it has ensured that a significant number of new church plants have been led by some of the most experienced Newfrontiers leaders. This has been particularly true in places that were felt to be “strategic”, and where churches have been expected to have a growing influence throughout a new region. This has, in some situations, resulted in a strong central church with new churches being planted from it.

⁴⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ Virgo, “Planting new churches” *Front.* (1996) 21.

⁵⁰¹ An interview with Groves by the author (11-5-2005).

⁵⁰² Christchurch is unique within Newfrontiers in that it was started with three full time staff. It has been given a far greater profile than any other new church plant with the intention that it will soon become a significant church within London. At Prayer and Fasting in February 2006 it was included in prayer for churches that were over the next few years hoping to break through the 1,000 barrier. See also n.a. “Church planting in the capital.” *Update.* (Vol. 2. Issue 1. Feb 2004) 6-7.

The direct involvement of a number of the most senior Newfrontiers leaders has also helped to ensure that church planting is kept constantly at the forefront of the Newfrontiers agenda. Their success stories are regularly celebrated, such as the 200 people attending the launch of an Alpha course in Glasgow,⁵⁰³ and their lives are held as examples to be followed.⁵⁰⁴

It is significant that a movement such as Newfrontiers has, in Virgo, someone dedicated to encouraging the starting of new churches. What is perhaps even more important is the extent to which this has percolated to Stroud and the other senior leaders. There can be little doubt that their commitment and example are major contributing factors to the momentum to plant churches.

2.5 Publicity and promotion

For many years Newfrontiers has invested considerable effort and finances into the production of good quality promotional resources.⁵⁰⁵ These have included leaflets and magazines, videos, DVDs and a website.⁵⁰⁶ All of these contain information that focuses upon the mission of Newfrontiers in general and specifically upon the call to plant churches.

In 1992 a double page article in a Newfrontiers magazine stated: "Frontier Publishing International has been established with the aim of providing teaching and worship materials which are challenging and thought provoking. Our goal is to produce new projects to meet specific needs to help resource, equip and build the local church."⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰³ n.a. "Glasgow plant get 200 at free curry Alpha supper." *Connect*. (Vol. 2. Issue 3. Jul 2004) 3.

⁵⁰⁴ Virgo, "Session two" (AVM. 2005).

⁵⁰⁵ This may partly have been influenced by the early work of Jones and "Harvestime". See Cummings, T. "Shepherds or sheep stealers?" *Buzz*. (August 1984)

⁵⁰⁶ <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/index.php> (accessed 15-2-2008).

⁵⁰⁷ n.a. "Lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes." *NFMag*. (No. 3. 1992) 12-13.

2.5.1 New Frontiers Update to Newfrontiers Magazine

This includes a mostly “in-house” magazine that has been produced under a variety of titles.⁵⁰⁸ Its main content has usually been teaching related to a theme and often written by Virgo himself,⁵⁰⁹ but it has also carried news items⁵¹⁰ and adverts for Stoneleigh, Brighton, or other Newfrontiers events.⁵¹¹ They are distributed free of charge throughout Newfrontiers churches and were at one time sold in Christian bookshops and distributed by subscription.

The first edition of *New Frontiers Update*, published in 1986 after Groves’ vision of the charging elephant and just after “Coastlands” had been changed to “New Frontiers”, contained an article by Virgo explaining these developments. In it he briefly referred to the task of planting new churches, although at this stage they were to be “around London and the southeast of England”.⁵¹² Two years later church planting was mentioned again, this time in an article encouraging people to “pioneer” for God.⁵¹³

At Downs ’88 the August *New Frontiers Magazine* was distributed to everyone who attended. Perhaps partly with regard to non-Newfrontiers guests, three pages were dedicated to describing various “spheres of ministry” that were currently being undertaken. The first item was a brief section on church planting mentioning eleven towns where new churches had either been started or were about to be started.⁵¹⁴

The next significant reference to church planting came again in an article written by Virgo. In it he commented on the renewed interest in planting new churches throughout the Christian world and said: “God is impressing on his people the need to plant new churches. As we prepare for the 1990s we must see this as

⁵⁰⁸ For instance *New Frontiers Update* (c. 1986 to Dec 1987), *New Frontiers Magazine* (Feb-Mar 1988 to c. 1992), *Frontline* (c. Nov/Dec 1992 to Dec 1996), *New Frontiers* (1997), *nfimagazine* (Winter 1998 to Aug-Oct 2002) and *Newfrontiers Magazine* (Nov 2002 to present day).

⁵⁰⁹ For instance Virgo, T. “The Local Church.” *NFMag.* (Feb 1990) 3-7.

⁵¹⁰ For instance n.a. “Frontier News” *NFMag.* (Apr 1990) 11-14.

⁵¹¹ For instance “Stoneleigh ’91” *NFMag.* (No. 3. 1991) 20 and “Brighton 2002” *nfimag.* (No. 14. Aug-Oct 2001) 40.

⁵¹² Virgo, “Why a change of name?” *NFU.* (1986) 1.

⁵¹³ Virgo, “Commissioned to go!” *NFMag.* (1988) 4.

⁵¹⁴ Virgo, T. “Called to change the world” *NFMag.* (Aug-Sep 1988) 4.

one of the most important challenges facing us...⁵¹⁵ Seven months later, Virgo wrote about the local church and its mission, stating “church planting is the most effective form of evangelism.”⁵¹⁶ The next magazine contained an article introducing Kriengsak and his vision to plant churches in each of the 685 districts of Thailand.⁵¹⁷

At the Brighton Conference in 1990, the September *New Frontiers Magazine* was distributed with a theme of “Evangelising the nation”. In the lead article, Virgo stated: “We have a mission to evangelise England. We have a message which is God-given and life changing... We also have a method of evangelising the nation, namely to plant churches all over it.”⁵¹⁸ The magazine also contained a reference to Virgo’s “bow and arrow” vision given a few months earlier, together with a map showing the distribution of Newfrontiers churches at that time.⁵¹⁹ Eighteen months later the progress of seven church plants were featured.⁵²⁰ There then followed a period of five years before church planting was covered again in any detail,⁵²¹ when an excerpt from *A People Prepared* was reprinted in 1996.⁵²²

In 2000 a “Special Millennium Edition” of the *nfimagazine* was produced.⁵²³ This 68 page magazine contained an article by Virgo charting the history of Newfrontiers,⁵²⁴ as well as a whole series of articles written by senior Newfrontiers leaders explaining the vision of the movement. These included an article by Baron entitled: “NFI Vision – Church Planting”.⁵²⁵ In it he made mention of the “apostolic call to plant churches” and stated that “God has called

⁵¹⁵ Virgo, T. “To the nation” *NFMag.* (Jul 1989) 4.

⁵¹⁶ Virgo, “The local church” *NFMag.* (1990) 5.

⁵¹⁷ Virgo, T. “Called to plant churches” *NFMag.* (Apr 1990) 8-9.

⁵¹⁸ Virgo, T. “Evangelising the nation” *NFMag.* (Sep 1990) 3-7.

⁵¹⁹ The map shows 56 churches in England with only 3 (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Sheffield and Hatherleigh, Devon) outside of the Southeast. Virgo, T. “Evangelisation by church planting.” *NFMag.* (Sep 1990) 4

⁵²⁰ Virgo, T. “The young ones.” *NFMag.* (No. 4. 1991) 6-8.

⁵²¹ Although an advert for a Church Planting Conference held in Sidcup, North Kent was placed in *Frontline* in 1995 (Jan-Feb 1995) 8.

⁵²² Virgo, “Planting new churches.” *Front.* (1996) 20-23.

⁵²³ *nfimag.* (Issue 9. Winter 2000).

⁵²⁴ Virgo, “The Story So Far” *nfimag.* (2000) 5-13.

⁵²⁵ Baron, C. “NFI Vision – Church Planting”. *nfimag.* (Issue. 9. Winter 2000) 20-22.

us as a movement to this great task of planting churches.”⁵²⁶ Nine months later the *nfimagazine* contained another article by Baron providing “practical insights to planting churches.”⁵²⁷

Apart from a couple of passing references to church planting in different contexts,⁵²⁸ the next major article addressing the theme came in the May 2003 edition of the *Newfrontiers Magazine*. In it, Virgo argued that church planting should take place not just for pragmatic reasons but because it is the means that God has instigated to gather a corporate people for himself.⁵²⁹ This particular edition of the *Newfrontiers Magazine* had church planting as its main theme with articles from Devenish,⁵³⁰ Thompson⁵³¹ and Baron.⁵³² Thompson wrote again about church planting in March 2005.⁵³³

In July 2008, the *Newfrontiers Magazine* again carried church planting as its main theme. Although once again carrying an article by Thompson,⁵³⁴ there was also an emphasis upon the church planting that was taking place by Newfrontiers throughout the world with articles written from a South African⁵³⁵ and Ghanaian perspective.⁵³⁶

As can be seen from the above, church planting has frequently been discussed in the *Newfrontiers* magazines. These articles have appeared periodically since the first copy in 1986, and have often been written by Virgo himself. Their main emphasis has usually, but not always, been motivational rather than practical, with a strong call to church plant in order to fulfil God’s calling to Newfrontiers.

⁵²⁶ *ibid.* 21.

⁵²⁷ Baron, C. “Starting apostolic churches”. *nfimag.* (Issue 11. Autumn 2000) 9-11.

⁵²⁸ Kpikpi, J. “Great expectations.” *nfimag.* (Issue 14. Aug-Oct 2002) 14-16, and Baron, C. “Dreaming big dreams.” *nfimag.* (Issue 15. Nov-Jan 2002) 10-11.

⁵²⁹ Virgo, T. “Firstline” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 2. May 2003) 3-5.

⁵³⁰ Devenish, D. “Reaching the nations through church planting.” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 2. May 2003) 6-11.

⁵³¹ Thompson, T. “Cell strategy for church planting.” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 2. May 2003) 13-17.

⁵³² Baron, C. “Towards a strategy of multiple church planting.” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 2. May 2003) 36-41.

⁵³³ Thompson, T. “Faith for church planting”. *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 10. May 2005) 37-41.

⁵³⁴ Thompson, T. “Church planting – an enigma”. *NMag.* (Vol. 3. Issue 8. July 2008) 10-13.

⁵³⁵ Oliver, S. “More together than we are apart.” *NMag.* (Vol. 3. Issue 8. July 2008) 22-24.

⁵³⁶ Kpikpi, J. “Church planting: A West African experience.” *NMag.* (Vol. 3. Issue 8. July 2008) 26-29.

2.5.2 Connect

The other regular Newfrontiers publication, as far as the UK is concerned, is *Connect*, “the UK newsletter for Newfrontiers”.⁵³⁷ Published since 1999, almost every issue has given a strong priority to church planting, but with the emphasis upon news of progress rather than on the inspirational articles of the main magazine.⁵³⁸

With one exception,⁵³⁹ every issue has featured news from existing church plants as well as details of plants that were in the process of starting. From 1999 to October 2007, 62 different church plants were mentioned. Some gave details of new churches that were about to be planted,⁵⁴⁰ while others gave updates of how the new churches were developing.⁵⁴¹ In February 2006, a UK map highlighting 38 current or imminent church plants was shown,⁵⁴² while 44 were listed in the October 2006 issue.⁵⁴³

2.5.3 Other promotional literature

Newfrontiers have always published glossy professionally produced promotional material. In the 1991/92 financial year this accounted for 11.8% of its total expenditure.⁵⁴⁴ This has included the publishing of books written by Virgo and other senior leaders⁵⁴⁵ but has also included a number of individual leaflets, often distributed at events such as Stoneleigh, sometimes specifically addressing the subject of church planting.

For example, a leaflet was printed in 2000 highlighting Kpikpi’s prophetic word at Stoneleigh 1999 to believe God for 1,000 churches. The leaflet published a

⁵³⁷ Edited from May 1999 to February 2006 by a team led by Blaber and published from Sidcup, Kent. Since then the editorial team has been led by Ross Bull and published from the Christchurch office in London.

⁵³⁸ An exception to this is the brief article written by Stroud entitled, “Breakthrough and advance.” (Issue 15. May 2003) 1.

⁵³⁹ Although containing much about mission and evangelism in general the *Connect* published in November 2004 did not have the any references to church planting. (Vol. 2. Issue 4. Nov 2004).

⁵⁴⁰ Such as about the new church that to be planted in Braintree, Essex. n.a. “Braintree – a new church is launched.” *Connect*. (Vol. 2. Issue 6. May 2005) 4.

⁵⁴¹ Such as the growth seen in Reading Family Church. n.a. “Reading Family Church.” *Connect*. (Issue 9. Jul 2001.)

⁵⁴² n.a. “Church Planting Update.” *Connect*. (Vol. 2. Issue 8. Feb. 2006) 3.

⁵⁴³ n.a. “Church Planting Update.” *Connect*. (Vol. 3. Issue 1. Oct 2006) 5.

⁵⁴⁴ That is £125,000. *1991/92 New Frontiers International Annual Report*. (c.1992) 2.

⁵⁴⁵ Such as the popular “How to” series published jointly with Word from 1987 to 1993.

part of that prophecy, details of a strategy of how church planting was taking place in the UK, testimonies of nine recent church plants and a list of 41 places where new churches had been started.⁵⁴⁶

One year later another leaflet was distributed at the final Stoneleigh Bible Week entitled: "Where do we go from here?"⁵⁴⁷ Its first sentence stated: "Church planting is on God's agenda..." As well as a list of 52 potential or new church plants, it contained a number of articles with a challenge to be involved in the mission of planting churches. This was summed up in the final paragraph: "Not only leaders are needed to plant new churches but people with many different gifts, from hospitality to administration. If you feel stirred by the challenge then pray, talk to your own church leaders and contact one of the places where we are now planting..."

In 2002 a 24 page booklet was produced entitled: "Seeds of change – Church Planting – Time to dig in!"⁵⁴⁸ This contained a challenge from Holden,⁵⁴⁹ a prophecy given by Devenish,⁵⁵⁰ details of new churches to be planted and a list of 77 churches where Newfrontiers was "currently involved in helping to start new churches."⁵⁵¹

2.5.4 Videos and DVDs

Since 1990 Newfrontiers has used audiovisuals in its promotional material.⁵⁵² From Stoneleigh 1994⁵⁵³ this has included a video shown in the evening celebrations, highlighting the work and mission of Newfrontiers throughout the world. The video was closely linked to the offering and gave the audience a powerful image of what they were being asked to give to.⁵⁵⁴ Writing a review of

⁵⁴⁶ n.a. *Dare to believe for 1000 churches.* (c.2000.)

⁵⁴⁷ n.a. *Where do we go from here?* (2001.)

⁵⁴⁸ Blaber (ed.) *Seeds of change – church planting – time to dig in!* (2002.)

⁵⁴⁹ Holden, D. "We've only just begun!" *Seeds of change – church planting – time to dig in!* (2002.) 5-6.

⁵⁵⁰ Devenish, D. "Seasons." *Seeds of change – church planting – time to dig in!* (2002.) 4.

⁵⁵¹ Blaber, who helped compile the list, admitted that the definition of involvement was very broad and went from a location where a number of people were already meeting to places where there was little more than an intention to plant a new church. An interview with the author (14-10-2005).

⁵⁵² The first reference is to a "slide show" that was shown at the leaders conference in Brighton 1990. n.a. "The Launch of Frontier Services." *NFMag.* (Dec 1990) 10.

⁵⁵³ n.a. "sbw '94." *Front.* (Sep-Oct 1994) 16.

⁵⁵⁴ Virgo, W. 95-96. *Virgo.* (2001) 338.

Stoneleigh 2000, Hosier commented on the “excellent” video that gave an insight into the work of Newfrontiers, including church planting.⁵⁵⁵

2.5.5 Website

Since 2003, Newfrontiers has had a professionally produced website, which was completely updated and re-launched in June 2007.⁵⁵⁶ This currently includes pages on many subjects, including a brief history of Newfrontiers,⁵⁵⁷ articles from the magazine,⁵⁵⁸ a booking facility for events such as the Brighton Leadership Conference,⁵⁵⁹ an online bookshop⁵⁶⁰ and a directory of churches and church plants. This directory has proved significant for a number of church plants. For instance, the Newfrontiers church plant on the Wirral had three new families visit because of the website over a six month period.

Since its inception Newfrontiers has invested in literature, videos and, more recently, a presence on the internet. These have often been used to communicate the values and vision of Newfrontiers including the call to plant churches. Additionally, news updates on current church planting initiatives have fuelled prayer and encouraged others to get involved. By themselves they do not account for the church planting momentum, but taken with the other factors in this section they have made a significant contribution.

2.6 Release of finances

Another factor that has contributed to the church planting momentum is the considerable amount of finance that is released each year, much of it designated for church planting.⁵⁶¹ This money is raised from the tithes of local churches as well as from major offerings, formerly taken at Stoneleigh and more recently at the Brighton Leaders' Conference.

⁵⁵⁵ Hosier, J. “Stoneleigh 2000.” *nfim*mag. (Issue 11. Autumn 2000) 21.

⁵⁵⁶ <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org> (accessed 7-9-2007).

⁵⁵⁷ http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/history/category_index.php?id=4 (accessed 7-9-2007).

⁵⁵⁸ http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/magazine/category_index.php?id=15 (accessed 7-9-2007).

⁵⁵⁹ http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/conferences/TOAM06/module_index.php?id=11932 (accessed 7-9-2007).

⁵⁶⁰ <http://www.resources.newfrontiers.xtn.org/> (accessed 7-9-2005).

⁵⁶¹ Smith, 152.

The offering at the first Stoneleigh in 1991 was £440,800 and from that nearly £120,000⁵⁶² was allocated to support seven new church plants.⁵⁶³ Wendy Virgo records how the Stoneleigh offerings “stayed at around £600,000” each year until 1999, when Ring challenged the campers to give “a million for the millennium”.⁵⁶⁴ That amount was exceeded and a new level of giving was achieved for the remaining years whilst at Stoneleigh.⁵⁶⁵

Although Newfrontiers does not have enough finance to fund everything that it would like to,⁵⁶⁶ the significant amount of funding that is available towards church planting, particularly in the larger, more strategic, towns and cities, is considerable. Typically, when a church plant is funded it currently receives around £30,000 in the first year and half of that in the following year.

In a letter sent by Virgo, which accompanied a promotional DVD encouraging giving at Brighton 2005, he explicitly connected the giving with the task of planting churches. He said: “We are utterly committed to this objective as the truly Biblical way to evangelise the world and church plant from nation to nation... I would be so grateful if you could continue to stand with us.”⁵⁶⁷ Subsequently at the Brighton conference £135,000 was designated for church planting.⁵⁶⁸

2.7 Training and mentoring

The final factor being considered is the consistent emphasis on training and mentoring church planting leaders. Apart from the seminars held at various

⁵⁶² This represented 16.3% of the total expenditure for that year. The remainder was spent on Evangelism and Training (2.9%), Publishing (11.8%), Overseas Mission (18.5%), Church Care and Oversight (14%), New Frontiers Magazine (6.2%), Overheads (1.7%) and conferences (24.9%) with the remainder (3.7%) being carried forward. Source: “Stoneleigh Offering ’91” *1991/92 New Frontiers International Annual Report*. (c.1992) 2.

⁵⁶³ *ibid.* 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Virgo, W. 96.

⁵⁶⁵ Kpikpi. “Stoneleigh Impact.” *nfimag.* (1999) 20.

⁵⁶⁶ At Prayer and Fasting in November 2005 Virgo admitted that although the giving to Newfrontiers by local churches and at Brighton was “very generous” the opportunities in the UK and around the world far outstretched the resources available.

⁵⁶⁷ Letter dated 25-5-2005.

⁵⁶⁸ An interview with Steve Blaber by the author (14-10-2005).

conferences relating to church planting, a number of specific courses have regularly been offered, all delivered in the context of the local church.

Predictably, the local church connection is a vital one for Virgo and Newfrontiers. Devenish sums this up when he says, "Training in a local church context is an important part of mission..."⁵⁶⁹ In a section in his book *What on earth is the church for?* entitled "Teaching and Training", he implores Christians to get involved in serving and in being trained in their local church before they consider an overseas calling.⁵⁷⁰

Once again, the value of training and discipling or mentoring others can be traced back to the ministry of Virgo. From the earliest of days he invested heavily in mentoring other people, including Holden, who lived with him in Seaford before taking over the leadership of a new "house church" in Sidcup, Kent.⁵⁷¹ Virgo devoted a chapter to the importance of training others, written in the context of Elijah and Elisha in *Weak People, Mighty God*.⁵⁷²

This topic has also been covered in the magazines.⁵⁷³ Duncan Watkinson,⁵⁷⁴ who at the time led the work in India, argued that training should not be confined to educating intellectually, but must involve facilitating life change. This reflects an emphasis of Newfrontiers training in general that is usually very practical, skills based, and rooted in the local church.⁵⁷⁵

The *nfimagazine* published for the Millennium included a summary of training carried out by Newfrontiers between 1981 and 2000.⁵⁷⁶ It described a variety of courses, some aimed at full time leaders, others such as *WORDplus* that were to equip all Christians.⁵⁷⁷ Interestingly, in this summary there was no reference

⁵⁶⁹ Devenish, 134.

⁵⁷⁰ *ibid.* 134-135.

⁵⁷¹ Virgo, (2001) 97-98.

⁵⁷² Virgo, (1990) 127-136.

⁵⁷³ For instance Stroud, D. "Handing on the baton." *nfimag.* (Issue 17. May-Jul 2002) 6-10.

⁵⁷⁴ Watkinson, D. "Who's training who?" *nfimag.* (Issue 4. Autumn 1998) 31-35.

⁵⁷⁵ Devenish says that training should focus on developing knowledge, character and skills. "Training." *nfimag.* (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 17-19.

⁵⁷⁶ n.a. "United Kingdom." *nfimag.* (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 16.

⁵⁷⁷ See the "You're Unique" advert in *nfimag.* (Issue 9. Winter 2000) 18.

to any course specifically designed for those involved with church planting. However, a little later, three regional church planting courses were advertised, and two years later this was increased to five locations.

Further details of the “Church Planting Training Schools” were given in the *Newfrontiers Magazine* in 2003. Topics reflected the values of Newfrontiers, as well as the practical nature of church planting, and included apostolic and prophetic foundations, the call and vision of a church planter, the devotional life of a leader, evangelism and how to gather a small group, training and developing new leaders and reaching a post-modern generation. The training was aimed at individuals or couples, made accessible to those in “full-time employment”, and supported by a “personal coach” to help develop “character and leadership skills”.⁵⁷⁸ Thompson sums up the importance of training when he writes: “Preparation is key – if you don’t do the training you can’t expect to do well.”⁵⁷⁹

Conclusion

This section has sought to explain how Newfrontiers is maintaining the momentum of planting churches. All the reasons given above complement each other to motivate the majority of the leaders of Newfrontiers, and many of the church members, to be actively involved in the mission to see 1,000 churches established in the UK. The next section examines how these churches are actually being planted.

⁵⁷⁸ “You’re Unique.” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 1. Nov-Jan 2003) 35. The significance of Newfrontiers church planting training to the success of church plants is highlighted in 6.3.1.

⁵⁷⁹ Thompson. “Church planting – an enigma”. *NMag.* (July 2008) 10-11.

Section 2: Newfrontiers church planting in practice

Having put the Newfrontiers practice of church planting into context by examining its motivation and by considering how its impetus to plant churches is being maintained, this section reflects on its church planting practice. This involves chapter three looking at six aspects of church life that are usually present in a Newfrontiers church plant, while chapter four examines what impact they are having, both in terms of reaching out to others and in their contribution towards the wider Newfrontiers mission agenda. These are important issues to the argument of this thesis and together with section one form the foundation to section three and four where the reasons for the growth and expansion of Newfrontiers are examined.

In *Practical theology an introduction*, Osmer observes that it is insufficient to describe what is happening without a thorough understanding of the reasons why it is happening.⁵⁸⁰ While section one has been largely descriptive and looked at what Newfrontiers is doing regarding church planting, this section seeks to go further and consider the motivation behind church planting.

Once again the Newfrontiers literature is quoted, and this is set in a framework of what has been written by other authors exploring contemporary church planting practice.⁵⁸¹ In addition, reference is made to the insights received from the leaders and churches that were surveyed by the author.

⁵⁸⁰ Osmer, 79-128.

⁵⁸¹ Such as Murray (2001), and Robinson.

Chapter 3: How does it plant churches?

As the Newfrontiers vision to plant churches has grown and developed it has become increasingly more intentional. Before Virgo's vision of the bow and arrow, church planting was largely undertaken in a haphazard way by individual churches, often in response to having a number of its members living in neighbouring towns.⁵⁸² This accounts for the majority of church plants taking place primarily in the southeast before 1990.⁵⁸³

With the embracing of Virgo's bow and arrow vision, the strategy evolved to include more intentional church planting, targeted at many of the major towns and cities throughout the UK. Hosier suggests that this strategy has further adapted, so that instead of starting with "a fair sized group, ideally 30-50 people", church plants are now often started by smaller groups meeting in a home, which slowly grow until "there is enough critical mass to come together, usually on a Sunday morning."⁵⁸⁴

However more recently it would appear that the intention is for church planting praxis to revert to starting with a larger group. Although individual families are still moving to plant churches in new areas, Baron talked at a training weekend of the ideal of starting churches with enough people and resources to "hit the road running."⁵⁸⁵ This may in part be a reaction to a relatively small number of church plants that have failed to get established, largely due to the very limited resources that were available to them.⁵⁸⁶

Wagner describes a "prevailing, although not an exclusive, pattern" of how "new apostolic churches"⁵⁸⁷ are started in the United States. The process he

⁵⁸² For instance Eastbourne was planted in 1988 by transferring 24 members from the Newfrontiers church in Hastings. See Virgo, (1996) 172.

⁵⁸³ There were exceptions to this such as the planting of a church in Canterbury in 1989 which developed from an initiative taken by the North Kent Region of Newfrontiers. See n.a. "City Church Canterbury." *NFMag.* (Sept 1990. 18)

⁵⁸⁴ Hosier, (2005) 209.

⁵⁸⁵ Notes taken by the author (3-11-2007).

⁵⁸⁶ As has already been noted four out of the original 52 church plants on the 2002 church planting list had closed by 2007.

⁵⁸⁷ Wagner defines these as the "new non-denominational", usually charismatic churches that have emerged in the last twenty years. Wagner, C.P. *Churchquake!* (Ventura:Regal. 1999) 5. As it is written in an American context, it is not surprising that Newfrontiers is not mentioned, but Newfrontiers would fit

describes starts with a local church that has a vision to “reproduce”, a church planting couple that emerges, a recognition and commissioning by the existing church leaders, an agreed “target” location, a relocation to that new area, meetings held in the leader’s home and ongoing support from the sending church.⁵⁸⁸ Many, although not all, Newfrontiers churches in the UK are started in a similar way.

This section will consider a number of broad principles that are often important to the way new churches are started by Newfrontiers.

3.1 Original vision and foundations

A number of writers emphasise the importance of church leaders understanding why their church exists and having a clear vision of what they believe God wants their church to look like.⁵⁸⁹ According to Brierley, such clarity is a strong motivating force that is often very significant in the life of a new church.⁵⁹⁰ Virgo agrees and emphasises the importance of church planters being visionaries, with a faith that can sustain them “during the difficult early days.”⁵⁹¹ Conversely, Baron believes that a lack of a clear purpose is one of the main reasons why some church plants fail.⁵⁹²

Murray also emphasises the importance of starting churches with firm foundations. In his preface to *Church Planting – laying foundations* he says: “Church planting involves laying foundations. The quality of these foundations has profound implications for what can be built upon them... enthusiasm is not enough.”⁵⁹³ He goes on to explain that the purpose of his book was to assist church planters to lay “strong foundations.”⁵⁹⁴

into much of what is written. Significantly Virgo referred to this book at Prayer and Fasting in 2006 and was pleased to speak inclusively of themselves as a part of this movement.

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid.* 192-193.

⁵⁸⁹ For instance Shenk & Stutzman, 65, Robinson & Spriggs, 30 and Robinson, M. & Smith, D. *Invading Secular Space*. (London:Monarch. 2003.) 150-151.

⁵⁹⁰ Brierley, P. *Vision Building*. (London:Hodder & Stoughton. 1989) 14-19.

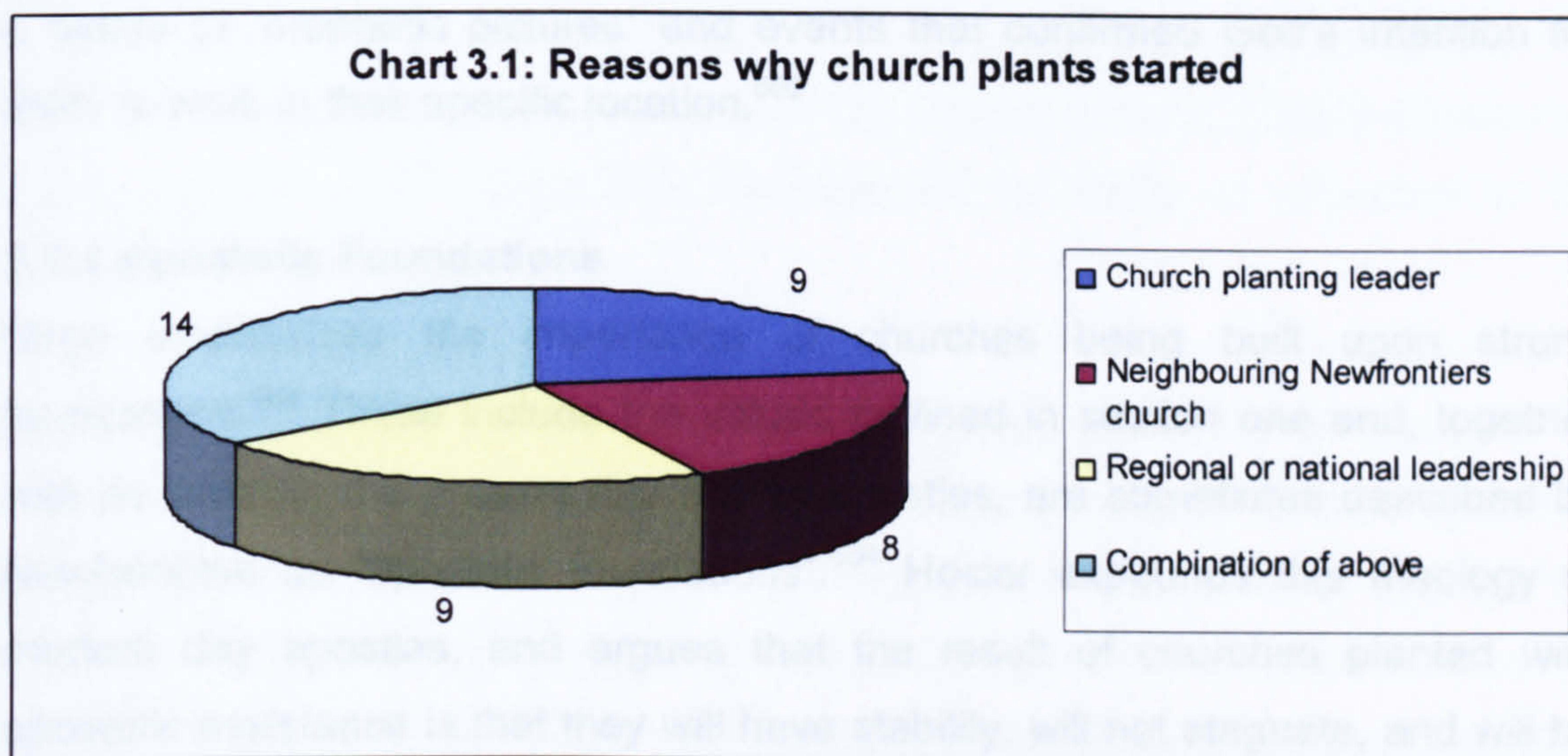
⁵⁹¹ Virgo, (1996) 170.

⁵⁹² Baron, 1.

⁵⁹³ Murray, (2001) 11.

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid.* 12.

Chart 3.1 shows the variety of reasons why the church plants featured in the 2005 survey were started. It reveals that some were started because of the vision of an individual church planting leader, some because of a neighbouring Newfrontiers church, and some because of a strategic decision made at a regional or national level.⁵⁹⁵



Robinson suggests five factors that all need to be present before a decision to plant should take place.⁵⁹⁶ These include the need for a leader, the right “opportunity”, and the drawing together of a church planting team. In line with other church planting tacticians,⁵⁹⁷ he also highlights the importance of researching demographics, an activity that is tentatively acknowledged by Newfrontiers but is often absent.⁵⁹⁸ His fifth point is entitled “prayer and confirmation”, and states that for church planting leaders, their “sense of journey is very important.”⁵⁹⁹ As far as Newfrontiers leaders are concerned, their enthusiastic embracing of prophetic words and pictures, may explain their hesitancy at spending time in collecting statistical information about an area.

In line with the emphasis of Virgo and Newfrontiers on looking for guidance through prophetic utterances, many of its church planting leaders confidently

⁵⁹⁵ Virgo also acknowledges this variety in the way churches are started. Virgo. (1996) 173.

⁵⁹⁶ Robinson, 64-66.

⁵⁹⁷ See for example Ellis, R. & Mitchell, R. *Radical Church Planting*. (Cambridge:Crossway) 134-135.

⁵⁹⁸ Thompson, “Strategies for reaching different communities” (AVM. 2006).

⁵⁹⁹ Robinson, 65.

point to a series of ways in which they believe God has guided them. For instance Davies, who was leading a church in Stockport and had a key role in the Northwest Region, was so convinced that God had called him to move to Cardiff that he was prepared to “argue his case” to Stroud and the other national leaders.⁶⁰⁰ Others, such as Webb who moved from Horsham to Manchester in 1992,⁶⁰¹ and then on to Liverpool in 1999, regularly point back to a series of “prophetic pictures” and events that confirmed God’s intention for them to work in their specific location.⁶⁰²

3.1.1 Apostolic Foundations

Virgo emphasises the importance of churches being built upon strong foundations.⁶⁰³ These include the values outlined in section one and, together with its belief in the present day role of apostles, are sometimes described by Newfrontiers as “apostolic foundations”.⁶⁰⁴ Hosier expounds this theology of modern day apostles, and argues that the result of churches planted with apostolic assistance is that they will have stability, will not stagnate, and will be “fully functioning.”⁶⁰⁵ Without defining what he means by apostles, Murray seems to agree when he writes: “The contribution of apostles... could provide breadth and depth to the vision of the new church, and ensure that they are well founded.”⁶⁰⁶

In a chapter entitled “Apostolic Foundations”,⁶⁰⁷ Virgo acknowledges the uniqueness of Jesus’ twelve disciples, before proceeding to emphasise their significance to the early church. He argues that the first believers were “added to them”, and that their teaching was the foundation upon which the church was

⁶⁰⁰ This point was made by Davies when he explained his move to the other Newfrontiers leaders in the Northwest Region (10-11-2005).

⁶⁰¹ An account of the way Webb believes he was guided to move to Manchester is found in Hadaway. “The Bow is drawn back.” *Front.* (1993) 19.

⁶⁰² Webb describes “seeing” a picture of a seven pronged menorah which he took as God’s challenge to plant seven churches. After feeling that might include Liverpool he asked a friend to describe the city. He responded by drawing a map of the Liverpool road system. To Webb this looked like the same candelabra, albeit on its side. Webb felt that this confirmed God’s will for him to move to Liverpool. Source: a conversation with the author.

⁶⁰³ For instance Virgo, (1985) 136-137.

⁶⁰⁴ Virgo, (2003) 119-130.

⁶⁰⁵ Hosier, (2005) 39-47, 56-57.

⁶⁰⁶ Murray, (2001) 214.

⁶⁰⁷ Virgo, (2003) 119-130.

established.⁶⁰⁸ Previously he had written: “The apostolic method in the New Testament was not simply to evangelise, but to establish New Covenant communities filled with God’s presence and power, and securely built on apostolic doctrine.”⁶⁰⁹

He goes further: “But added to what? They were added to this new community of which Jesus Christ was the head and the apostles were the foundation.”⁶¹⁰ After discussing Bible passages where Paul described his apostolic ministry as laying foundations,⁶¹¹ Virgo then emphasised the need of churches to be similarly structured today.⁶¹²

Baron develops this idea and connects his task of planting churches in Manchester with the wider call of Virgo and Newfrontiers to start churches throughout the nation. He writes: “As Mary and I moved north to plant 20 churches in Greater Manchester, we knew that we were part of the outworking of Terry’s apostolic call. This gave us a great sense of security and faith knowing we were not on our own in this. Rather, we were involved in a much bigger vision.”⁶¹³ A theme he repeats in an article entitled: “Starting Apostolic Churches.”⁶¹⁴

3.1.2 Practicalities

Devenish argues that for new churches to grow beyond the church planting stage, leaders must have a “big vision” of God’s purpose, together with “the specific direction of God’s call to a particular place...” Without both held in tension he suggests that leaders will tend to give in to discouragement and the church will not be established.⁶¹⁵ As far as Newfrontiers church plants are concerned it would seem that both aspects of vision are usually evident.

⁶⁰⁸ *ibid.* 120-121.

⁶⁰⁹ Virgo, (1996) 26.

⁶¹⁰ Virgo, T. “Apostles.” *nfimag.* (Issue 11. Autumn 2000) 6.

⁶¹¹ Such as 1 Corinthians 3:10.

⁶¹² Virgo, (2003) 129-130.

⁶¹³ Baron, “NFI Vision: Church Planting.” *nfimag.* (2000) 21

⁶¹⁴ Baron, “Starting Apostolic Churches.” *nfimag.* (2000) 9-11.

⁶¹⁵ Devenish, 47

The Newfrontiers emphasis upon “Apostolic Foundations” gives church planters a clear identification with the “big vision” to which Devenish refers. In much of the Newfrontiers literature, as well as at many of their conferences, the corporate mission of Newfrontiers, including the call to plant churches, is repeatedly emphasised. At the same time the clear expectation of receiving explicit revelation from God, including guidance to a specific location, ensures that the vision and foundations of Newfrontiers church plants are usually evident. It is significant that in at least two of the Newfrontiers church plants that ceased to operate, a lack of vision was described as being one of the main contributing factors.⁶¹⁶

3.2 Leader, leadership team and initial core group

One of the most important factors in the progress of any church, and especially a new church, is the senior leader and the others who are recognised as the leadership team. Hughes writes: “Success, however you measure it, and the capability of leadership are closely linked.”⁶¹⁷ Hybels states: “The local church is the hope of the world, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders.”⁶¹⁸ If that is true, then the future of a church plant will be inextricably linked with those who lead it.⁶¹⁹

3.2.1 Senior Leaders

According to Richardson, who researched church planting among Elim Churches, the level of experience of the senior leader is one of the most noteworthy factors in a church plant.⁶²⁰ He states: “All the leaders of churches which succeeded had some relevant experience, whereas all but one of the leaders of the churches which failed had a leader with no relevant experience.”⁶²¹ Thompson would probably agree. He writes: “The key to successful church planting is the leader and his leadership... Without leadership

⁶¹⁶ Source: the author attempted to interview as many of the leaders of church plants that closed as possible.

⁶¹⁷ Hughes, B. *Leadership Tool Kit*. (Crowborough:Monarch. 1998) 14.

⁶¹⁸ Hybels, B. *Courageous Leadership*. (Grand Rapids:Zondervan. 2002) 6.

⁶¹⁹ Malphurs, 99 & 353, and Wagner, (1990) 51.

⁶²⁰ Richardson, G. Evaluate the effectiveness of church planting among Elim churches in the Northwest of England between 1990 and 2000 and assess the implications for the future training of new pastors. An unpublished thesis presented to Manchester University for MTh. Jul 2000. 36-37.

⁶²¹ *ibid.* 37.

gifting, without key strengths and anointing from God, there will be no successful church plants.⁶²² He continues: “The bottleneck in many parts of the world is leadership. If we had more leaders we could plant more churches.”⁶²³

It has already been noted⁶²⁴ that in Newfrontiers those who lead church plants are usually not young and inexperienced leaders, but include many who have led successful churches before. Some church planters, such as Stroud and Thompson, have been responsible for planting several new churches.⁶²⁵

Murray suggests that the leadership required in a church plant is fundamentally different from a more established church. He argues that in an established church the first paid member of staff is usually someone with pastoral gifts and other more “mission orientated” gifts are found in the church members. He suggests that in a church plant the opposite is true, with the first paid leader having evangelistic gifts and the pastoral gifts found in the church members.⁶²⁶

In addition, a perceived lack of time is one of the most common problems facing those leading church plants within Newfrontiers. In the 2005 survey, 27% referred to time pressures, either because they were “bi-vocational”⁶²⁷ and were employed in a “secular” job, or because they were senior leaders within Newfrontiers and carried significant regional responsibilities. Either way, many struggled to balance the demands of the new church, family and for some separate employment as well.

3.2.2 Leadership Team

For Robinson, the success of a new church is not just down to its senior leader but also to the leadership team.⁶²⁸ He correctly observes that it is the leadership team who set the tone for others in the church. This, he suggests, is particularly

⁶²² Thompson, T. “Secrets of successful church planting.” *Healthy Church Magazine*. (Issue 9. Apr-Jun 06) 10.

⁶²³ Thompson. “Church planting – an enigma”. *NMag*. (July 2008) 12.

⁶²⁴ See 2.4.

⁶²⁵ Thompson has planted three Newfrontiers churches at St Neots, St Ives and Luton; Stroud in Bedford, Birmingham and London. Thompson. “Cell strategy for church planting.” *NMag*. (2003) 13.

⁶²⁶ Murray, (2001) 210-211.

⁶²⁷ Bickers, D.W. *The Tentmaking Pastor: The joy of bi-vocational ministry*. (Grand Rapids:Baker. 2000).

⁶²⁸ Robinson, 96.

significant with regard to their confidence in the vision of the church. However, he neglects to mention the obvious impact the leadership team will also have on church dynamics, such as the quality of open and transparent relationships or the spirituality and fervour of their worship.

P.J. Smyth, the leader of a new Newfrontiers church recently started in Johannesburg, has written on the importance of establishing teams of leaders. He writes: "Why bother with team? ...because of common sense. Teams minimise the weaknesses of the members and capitalise on their strengths. Teams have more resources, ideas, and energy than would an individual..."⁶²⁹ Stetzer agrees. He writes: "Church planting, though profoundly entrepreneurial, is not a solitary effort; church planting must be a partnership."⁶³⁰

It is significant that for the leaders who took part in the 2005 survey, the most frequent answer to the question of what had been the main contributing factors in the church's growth, and what had been the biggest barriers, both revolved around church leadership and core groups. 39% reported that their leadership team or core group were one of their biggest strengths, while 66.5% highlighted that their lack of leaders or core group were one of their biggest barriers.⁶³¹

These answers reflect the Newfrontiers emphasis upon having a plurality of leadership, as well as highlighting their commitment to the importance of leadership for those involved in church planting. It should also be noted that referring to the core groups as a barrier to growth does not necessarily imply a lack of people. Some who reported a sizable number in the core group, still felt that it was a barrier to growth, either because of their lack of leadership potential or because they were all from the same segment of society.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Smyth, P.J. *The world needs more elders* (Newfrontiers:South Africa. 2004) 41.

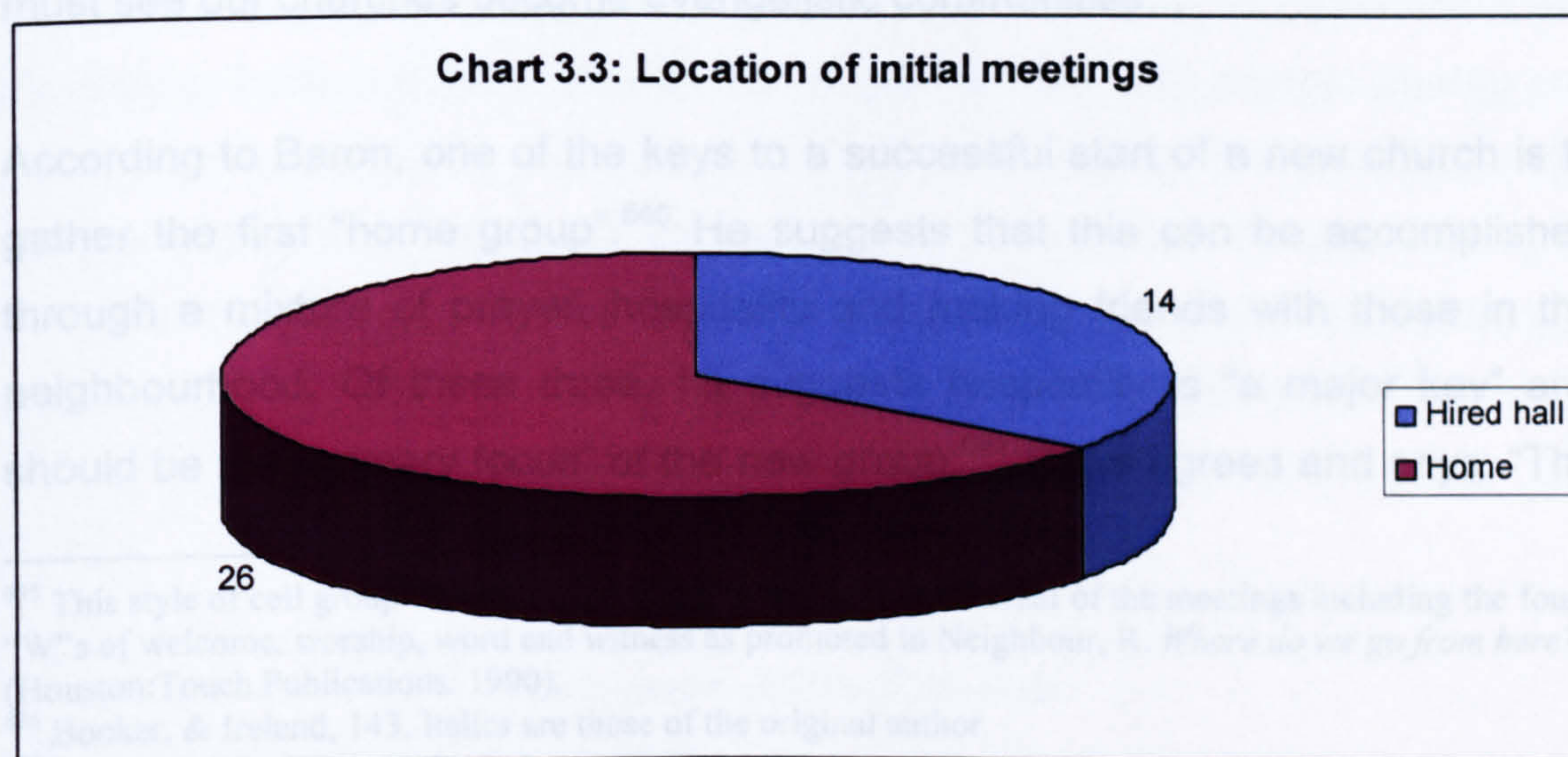
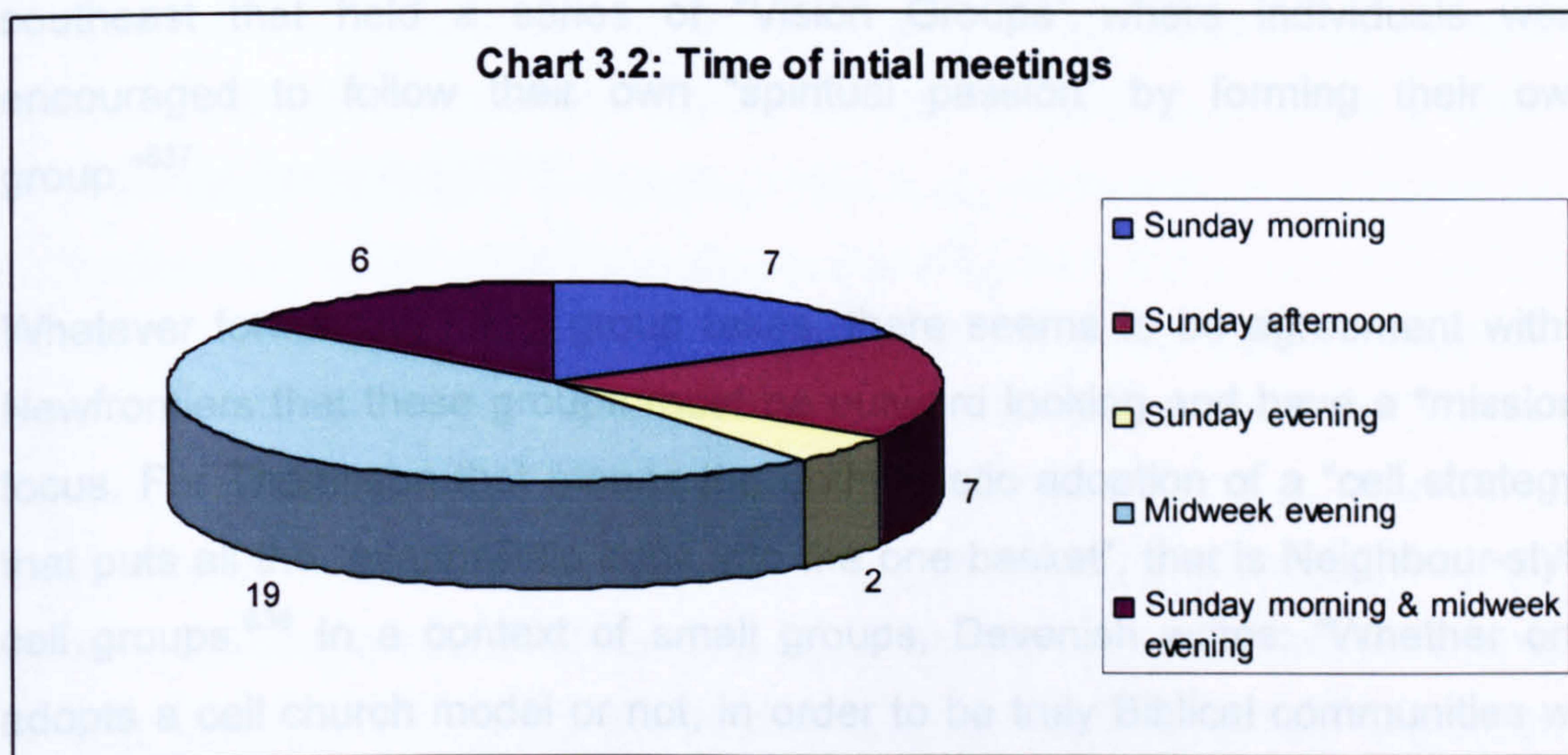
⁶³⁰ Stetzer, 42.

⁶³¹ 16% answered that in some way it was both one of the main factors and one of the main barriers!

⁶³² One leader said that the core group was made up of almost all young families which made it harder for those without small children to attend.

3.3 Small groups and Sunday services

The 2005 survey showed a wide divergence in the times and location of their first public meetings. Chart 3.2 and 3.3 show the range of answers given. In line with the pattern observed by Wagner,⁶³³ the most common scenario was to start meeting in a home on a midweek evening,⁶³⁴ although other variations included four who first met on a Sunday morning in a home, and one plant that also met in a home on a Sunday morning and in a hotel on a Wednesday evening. Of those that first met in a home in midweek, the delay between that first meeting and starting to meet on a Sunday varied from just one month to three years with an average delay of just over one year.



⁶³³ Wagner, (1999) 5

⁶³⁴ 43.9% did this.

3.3.1 Small groups

There were also differences in the format of their midweek meetings. Of those who completed the 2005 survey, 62.3% said they followed the “Four W’s/Ralph Neighbour”⁶³⁵ style of cells. Booker describes the emphasis of Neighbour and others who follow the cell style of small group as representing “a prioritizing of small groups... far beyond the secondary role assigned to home groups in most churches. Rather than working with a model of a church *with* small groups, cell sees a church *of* small groups. Membership of a small group is primary, and as much as possible of the life of the church occurs in or is delivered through the small groups.”⁶³⁶ The remaining church plants described their gatherings as having a different focus and format. One example was a church plant in the southeast that held a series of “Vision Groups” where individuals were encouraged to follow their own “spiritual passion” by forming their own group.⁶³⁷

Whatever format the small group takes, there seems to be agreement within Newfrontiers that these groups must be outward looking and have a “mission” focus. For Thompson that means the enthusiastic adoption of a “cell strategy” that puts all the “evangelistic eggs into the one basket”, that is Neighbour-style cell groups.⁶³⁸ In a context of small groups, Devenish writes: “Whether one adopts a cell church model or not, in order to be truly Biblical communities we must see our churches become evangelistic communities...”⁶³⁹

According to Baron, one of the keys to a successful start of a new church is to gather the first “home group”.⁶⁴⁰ He suggests that this can be accomplished through a mixture of prayer, hospitality and making friends with those in the neighbourhood. Of these three, he suggests hospitality is “a major key” and should be the “primary focus” of the new group.⁶⁴¹ Barrs agrees and says: “The

⁶³⁵ This style of cell group was described in this way due to the format of the meetings including the four “W”s of welcome, worship, word and witness as promoted in Neighbour, R. *Where do we go from here?* (Houston:Touch Publications. 1990).

⁶³⁶ Booker, & Ireland, 143. Italics are those of the original author.

⁶³⁷ Source: an email sent to the author.

⁶³⁸ Thompson, “Cell strategy for church planting.” *NMag.* (2003) 16.

⁶³⁹ Devenish, 133.

⁶⁴⁰ Baron, 17-21.

⁶⁴¹ *ibid.* 20.

call to be hospitable is not an option or a suggestion but a command... When we are hospitable, many others in addition to our family members will have opportunity to see our love at work."⁶⁴²

3.3.2 Sunday services

The impact of the public "shop window" meeting, which is usually held on a Sunday, is considerable. According to Schwarz, this is one of the biggest differences between growing and non-growing churches. As a part of the research for the "Natural Church Development" project, participants were asked to what extent they found the Sunday worship service an "inspiring experience". 80% of those in growing or high quality churches said "true" or "very true", compared to 49% on those in churches that were not growing or of low quality.⁶⁴³ Schwarz concludes: "When worship is inspiring, it draws people to the services 'all by itself'".⁶⁴⁴

However, while Baron would no doubt agree, he points out this may be a reason for new churches to delay meeting on a Sunday. He writes: "For most groups, a Sunday meeting will expose the church to visitors at a time of weakness..."⁶⁴⁵ He suggests delaying the time to start meeting publicly on a Sunday until there will be at least 30 to 40 people present,⁶⁴⁶ while Robinson and Spriggs propose waiting until a church plant has 50 people. They suggest that this will mean that it will be able to offer a level of anonymity for visitors, will be likely to have enough people to "carry" the meeting, and enough energy and momentum to move the group forward.⁶⁴⁷ It would appear that a considerable number of Newfrontiers church plants disregard this advice. For the 36 church plants on the 2005 survey that answered the question, only 30% started with 30 people or more, 15% with 40 or more and only 7.5% with 50 or more.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴² Barrs, J. *The heart of evangelism*. (Leicester:IVP. 2001) 69.

⁶⁴³ Schwarz, C.A. *Natural Church Development*. (BCGA. 1996) 30-31.

⁶⁴⁴ *ibid.* 31.

⁶⁴⁵ Baron, 43.

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid.* 44. However he does sound a word of caution, admitting that some churches have started with less "and done well", while others have waited for a larger number.

⁶⁴⁷ Robinson & Spriggs, 122-125.

⁶⁴⁸ See 6.1.5.

3.3.3 Sunday or midweek?

As might be expected, in Newfrontiers churches there is a general consensus that corporate meetings, usually held on a Sunday, and small groups, usually held in a home in midweek, are both vital for the development of a church. The church members' sample revealed that for 59.1% of those who answered the question, a Sunday service was their first introduction to the church plant, while 19% first attended a small group.

3.4 Alpha and other evangelistic strategies

As church planting has been described as “the most effective form of evangelism”,⁶⁴⁹ it is not surprising that a high priority in all Newfrontiers church plants is placed upon evangelism. As will be described later,⁶⁵⁰ the way this is worked out varies considerably, but the majority of the evangelistic endeavours have the same underlying philosophy. That is an emphasis upon relationships, the acceptance of the spiritual journey of those they are trying to reach, and the expectation that God will in some way be active through the work of the Spirit.

3.4.1 Building relationships with those on a spiritual journey

The emphasis upon building relationships and in recognising a journey towards faith is not limited to Newfrontiers. Indeed it could be claimed that they are merely reflecting a popular trend embraced by the majority of evangelical churches. This trend, strongly influenced by Finney's *Finding Faith Today*,⁶⁵¹ represents a strategic change in direction from many forms of evangelistic outreach taking place prior to the mid-nineties.⁶⁵² Drane says: “Evangelism has moved from being a one-off call to repentance at the foot of the cross to a journey alongside those who are making their way into Christian discipleship.”⁶⁵³ Finney adds: “In 1985 evangelism for most people still meant the big meeting, the imported speaker...By 2000, evangelism in the UK meant

⁶⁴⁹ Wagner, (1990) 7-8, 11 & 16 and Virgo, “Build your church and heal this land”. *NFU*. (1986) 3.

⁶⁵⁰ See 3.4.5.

⁶⁵¹ Finney, J. *Finding Faith Today*. (Swindon:Bible Society. 1992).

⁶⁵² Booker & Ireland, 4.

⁶⁵³ Drane, J. *Do Christians know how to be spiritual?* (London:Darton, Longman & Todd. 2005) 80.

the small group, the ordinary member of the congregation, the continuous work of the church.”⁶⁵⁴

In a sample of 383 adults who become Christians over seven years, Bennett discovered that the majority could identify their own “journey to faith” with an average span of two years and three months.⁶⁵⁵ He concluded: “If conversion is a gradual process, then the individual Christian must concentrate on long term relationships.”⁶⁵⁶ Peck concurs, and states that “90% of people come to faith through personal relationships.”⁶⁵⁷ Clarke also agrees and suggests: “Evangelism today must start further back.”⁶⁵⁸

Hendricks points out that the issue of friendship is the key to the assimilation of new Christians into the life of the church. He argues that for someone to be properly integrated, it is necessary for them to make seven friends within the first six months of attending the new church.⁶⁵⁹ The importance of personal friendship is also clear from the church members’ sample. They revealed that 42.5% of those who answered the question first attended the Newfrontiers church plant because they were invited by a friend.

3.4.2 Activity of the Holy Spirit

The emphasis of Newfrontiers upon the Word and the Spirit has already been noted.⁶⁶⁰ Although they would not want to limit the work of the Spirit to evangelism, this is often seen as a starting point.

The belief and expectation that God will work in churches in “signs and wonders”, has been regularly emphasised in Newfrontiers since their involvement with Wimber in 1984. It has often been addressed at their

⁶⁵⁴ Finney, J. *Emerging Evangelism*. (London:Darton Longman & Todd. 2004) 70.

⁶⁵⁵ Bennett, D. *A study of how adults become Christians with special reference to the personal involvement of individual Christians*. An unpublished dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MA in Evangelism Studies, University of Sheffield at Cliff College. 2002) 32.

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.* 33.

⁶⁵⁷ Peck, A. “Church plants – do they grow?” *Christianity and Renewal*. (Apr 2003).

⁶⁵⁸ Clarke, J. *Evangelism that really works*. (London:SPCK. 1995) 10.

⁶⁵⁹ Hendricks, W. *Exit Interviews*. (Chicago:Moody. 1993)

⁶⁶⁰ See 1.2.3.

conferences, and guest speakers have sometimes specifically been chosen because of their “ministry in the miraculous”.⁶⁶¹

3.4.3 Alpha

It is noteworthy that Newfrontiers’ philosophy of evangelism is exemplified in the Alpha course,⁶⁶² an evangelistic tool that is warmly embraced and encouraged by Newfrontiers. To what extent this has been adopted by many Newfrontiers churches because it fits with their evangelistic philosophy and to what extent their philosophy has been influenced by the apparent success of Alpha is not clear. The reality may include a measure of both. In *Telling Others*,⁶⁶³ Gumbel describes the principles behind Alpha as a commitment to evangelism worked through the local church, evangelism as a process, evangelism involving the whole person and evangelism involving the work of the Holy Spirit, principles that are all wholeheartedly embraced by Newfrontiers.

The claimed impact and reach of Alpha in the UK has been questioned⁶⁶⁴ and dependable figures are hard to obtain. It has been described as “the most significant new component for any evangelistic strategy that has emerged in recent years”.⁶⁶⁵ Research published in 2004 suggested that 1.3 million people in the UK had at that time attended a course,⁶⁶⁶ while MORI discovered that 22% of adults recognised it as a Christian course.⁶⁶⁷

Alpha has often been actively promoted within Newfrontiers. Seminars on how to make the most of Alpha have been held regularly at Brighton and during the latter years of Stoneleigh. As well as highlighting the philosophies and practicalities of the “official” Alpha course, they have often also sought to contextualise Alpha into a Newfrontiers context.

⁶⁶¹ This comment was made by Virgo at Brighton 2002 in his introduction of David Carr, the senior minister of Renewal Christian Centre, Solihull.

⁶⁶² For an explanation of Alpha and its impact in the UK see Booker & Ireland, 12-32.

⁶⁶³ Gumbel, N. *Telling Others*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1994) 15-31.

⁶⁶⁴ Hunt, S.J. *Alternative Religions – a sociological introduction*. (London:Ashgate. 2003) 9-19.

⁶⁶⁵ Booker & Ireland, 9.

⁶⁶⁶ Research carried out by Christian Research and quoted in Croft, S. *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age*. (London:Church House. 2005) 10.

⁶⁶⁷ Brierley, (2006) 5.

3.4.4 The place of evangelists

There is also an enthusiastic embracing of the role of the evangelist within Newfrontiers. Virgo writes: "A new day has dawned for people to be evangelists... They can work out their call from the local church base."⁶⁶⁸ However, there is an expectation that although this role may include evangelistic proclamation, one of the main roles of the evangelist is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry so that they change the very atmosphere of the local church," that is, to ensure the churches are continually outward looking and reaching out in evangelism.⁶⁶⁹

In 1996, Virgo stated his aspiration that churches should be started with an evangelist within their leadership team. He wrote: "A full-time pastor teamed with a full-time evangelist proves a healthy combination..."⁶⁷⁰ However, although this was true of Baron and Webb moving to Manchester, and has been true more recently with the start of Christchurch, London, this is not a pattern that is regularly used within Newfrontiers. There are many obvious reasons for this, including the limited finances and the numbers of evangelists that would be required.⁶⁷¹

3.4.5 Other strategies

One of the intrinsic needs for any church plant is to make contact with those who are non-Christians. Booker and Ireland point out one of the implications of accepting that people generally move towards faith over a period of time is that for a church to grow it will need contact with a significant number of people, and over a prolonged period of time.⁶⁷² Clarke describes these people as being the church "fringe", and says that "without a fringe, evangelism is almost impossible..."⁶⁷³ Booker and Ireland also emphasise the importance of holding "mission events" as part of "the mix in local church evangelism."⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁶⁸ Virgo, (1996) 52.

⁶⁶⁹ *ibid.* 52.

⁶⁷⁰ *ibid.* 171.

⁶⁷¹ When Webb moved from Manchester to Liverpool in 1999 he specifically asked to be accompanied by a full time evangelist but was told that there was insufficient funds.

⁶⁷² Booker & Ireland, 7.

⁶⁷³ Clarke, 18.

⁶⁷⁴ Booker & Ireland, 74.

The 2005 survey also revealed a variety of more “direct” evangelism strategies, such as 33.4% who used occasional open air evangelistic meetings, 18.5% who sometimes went “door to door”, and 60.8% who sometimes held “guest services.” The survey revealed a wide variety of strategies designed to make contact, build relationships, and then to see people make their transition towards faith. Examples of activities mentioned included bi-monthly “gathering events” such as quizzes and bonfire night parties, maximising the potential of Christmas carol services, and weekly “family nights” with something for “every age group”.

3.5 Involvement in the local community

The author has previously argued for six positive outcomes for a church that is involved in the community. They are that social action earns the right to be heard, provides visibility, builds a church fringe, provides a context for Christians to build relationships with non-Christians, breaks down misconceptions and provokes questions.⁶⁷⁵ For the new church plant they are especially relevant, as a small group meeting in a home will have no credibility, may be subject to suspicion, and is unlikely to have a significant number of contacts with those outside of the group.

Ireland discusses what he calls “community ministry”, and suggests this will have a number of positive results, including that “the church fringe will almost certainly grow, and those involved will be impressed by what they are seeing.”⁶⁷⁶ For Chester and Timmis, any church plant that wishes to follow the ministry of Jesus will be involved with social action.⁶⁷⁷

Ellis and Mitchell give an example of the positive impact that being involved in a local community can have upon a new church. They describe a new church planted in Bognor Regis. After an initial six month period of informal community involvement, they held a community play scheme followed by a fun day. The

⁶⁷⁵ Cooper, B. *Evaluate the impact of a holistic model of social action and evangelism by the local church on the receptivity of non-Christians to the gospel in the UK.* An unpublished thesis presented to Manchester for MTh. (June 2004) 39-56.

⁶⁷⁶ Booker & Ireland, 103.

⁶⁷⁷ Chester & Timmis, 85-88.

result was to see a number become Christians, 100 “warm contacts”, and up to 1,000 different people attending the fun day.⁶⁷⁸

Perhaps the most important benefit of a church plant being involved in their local community, is that this will inevitably increase their contact with those who are non-Christians. This has a very real benefit for the group, as a lack of contact with those who are non-Christians is often seen as being one of the biggest barriers to the growth of a church.⁶⁷⁹

Although some Newfrontiers church plants are involved in their community, this is by no means true for them all. From the 2005 survey, only 36.4% said they currently worked “with the poor”. In addition only 22% said that this work had been either “quite important” or “very important” to the growth of their church. However, that this impact is a relatively small percentage is perhaps not surprising, as it is widely recognised that community involvement necessitates a “long term approach”.⁶⁸⁰

The reality of involvement of Newfrontiers church plants in social action is in contrast to the expectation of Devenish. In a context of world mission he writes: “Church-based social action is something that our family of churches is involved in... as we plant churches, we encourage each one to have some form of kingdom ministry amongst the needy... it is not possible to plant New Testament style churches effectively without this dimension.”⁶⁸¹ Wagner would wholeheartedly agree, and says “Christian social responsibility is mandatory, not optional.”⁶⁸²

It may be that in practice there is a dichotomy between church planting in the UK and in other, especially third world, nations. In a magazine largely given over to church planting, Ring gives several examples of church planting and

⁶⁷⁸ Ellis & Mitchell, 98.

⁶⁷⁹ Abraham, W. *The Logic of Evangelism*. (London. Hodder & Stoughton. 1991) 73.

⁶⁸⁰ Cooper, 63-64.

⁶⁸¹ Devenish, 116.

⁶⁸² Wagner, (1999) 195.

social action working together. However, these are all in Africa and there is no mention of church plants getting involved in their community in the UK.⁶⁸³

3.6 Involvement and support from the wider Newfrontiers family

Newfrontiers has always prided itself on being based upon relationships. Virgo insists that Newfrontiers is not an organisation to join but essentially a family of churches that are on a journey together,⁶⁸⁴ hence the strap-line, “a worldwide family of churches together on a mission to establish the kingdom of God by restoring the church, making disciples, training leaders and planting churches.”

However, perhaps inevitably, the way this works out varies from region to region. For instance, in 2007 Harper took over the leadership of the Northwest region and stated that his aim was that relationships should once again be at the centre of everything the region did, the implication being that this might not always have been the case. On occasion some church planting leaders have admitted to not feeling supported or to not receiving clear direction and help.⁶⁸⁵ This may in part be due to the varying level of experience and gifting of those within the leadership of the regions.

The support given to the new churches can be divided into direct and indirect support. Direct support includes providing the motivation to start the church, financial support, and the advice and guidance given from regional and national leaders. Indirectly, all church plants also benefit from the corporate vision, ethos and resources of Newfrontiers. These include the ongoing high profile given to church planting by Virgo and others in leadership, envisioning events such as the leaders' prayer and fasting and the Brighton Conference, as well as the high quality promotional literature and DVDs that are distributed free of charge throughout the churches.

Many Newfrontiers churches have, at least historically, also benefited from a high degree of mobility that has meant the leaders and church members have

⁶⁸³ Ring, N. “Act Together.” *NMag.* (Vol. 2. Issue 2. Feb-May 2003) 26-27.

⁶⁸⁴ Virgo, “Session Two” (AVM. 2005).

⁶⁸⁵ Source: conversations with the author.

been prepared to move in order to help establish a church plant. For Thompson this is a “key thing”, and is one of the major reasons why Newfrontiers has been able to plant so many churches.⁶⁸⁶ An example of this is that when Webb moved from Manchester to Liverpool he was joined, almost immediately, by two couples moving from established Newfrontiers churches in Sheffield and Bracknell.

The church members' sample also confirmed this. It revealed that a very high percentage of those who joined the church plants had previously been involved in Newfrontiers. Of the 74.5% who joined from another church either in the same town or having moved into the area, 31.2% previously attended a Newfrontiers church and 20.2% had attended Stoneleigh or another Newfrontiers event. Interestingly, 28.7% reported they had joined the church plant without considering other local churches, suggesting that many had intentionally left their previous church in order to be involved in the new church plant.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that although there is variety in how Newfrontiers plants churches, there are a number of common factors that are present in the majority of church plants examined. Many of these are not unique to Newfrontiers but there is an intentionality, clarity and determination that is not always found in other church planting situations. For Newfrontiers, church planting is not a reaction against the “establishment”,⁶⁸⁷ but flows comfortably out of its history and beliefs as described in chapter one.

⁶⁸⁶ Source – an interview with the author (18-11-2005).

⁶⁸⁷ This is often the implications of discussion around the so-called “Emerging Church” and “Fresh Expressions”. See for instance Stoddard, C. & Cuthbert, N. *Church on the edge*. (Milton Keynes:Authentic. 2006) 81.

Chapter 4: What impact are its church plants having?

Having considered the processes that are usually deployed in the starting of Newfrontiers church plants, this chapter examines what impact the new churches are having. A number of different factors are considered, starting with a consideration of the measure of numerical growth they are enjoying.

4.1 Levels of numerical growth

There is a common expectation and assumption within Newfrontiers that its church plants will grow numerically. Indeed it could be argued that despite the general acceptance of church planting as the Biblical norm for evangelism,⁶⁸⁸ most church planting undertaken by Newfrontiers is done primarily for pragmatic reasons. Virgo has repeatedly followed Wagner and others, by describing church planting as “the most effective form of evangelism.”⁶⁸⁹

In some church growth literature there is the assumption that small churches are more successful evangelistically.⁶⁹⁰ Booker states: “Smaller churches are on average far more likely to grow than larger ones.” This, he explains, does not mean that a single small church will grow numerically more than a larger church, but rather that a number of smaller churches will collectively experience more growth than the same number of Christians all worshipping in a single larger church. Booker gives some evidence for this,⁶⁹¹ including work undertaken by Jackson looking at growth rates taken from the 1998 English Church Attendance Survey.⁶⁹²

Malphurs agrees with Booker, and seeks to justify this by suggesting that smaller congregations “are organised around evangelism”, while larger churches “allocate most of their resources to the care of members.”⁶⁹³ This is too much of a generalisation, and despite quoting statistics that seem to indicate that the longer churches have been established the fewer people are

⁶⁸⁸ For instance Virgo, (1996) 80.

⁶⁸⁹ *ibid.* 50, 169.

⁶⁹⁰ For instance Wagner, (1999) 191 and Stetzer, 6.

⁶⁹¹ Booker & Ireland, 139.

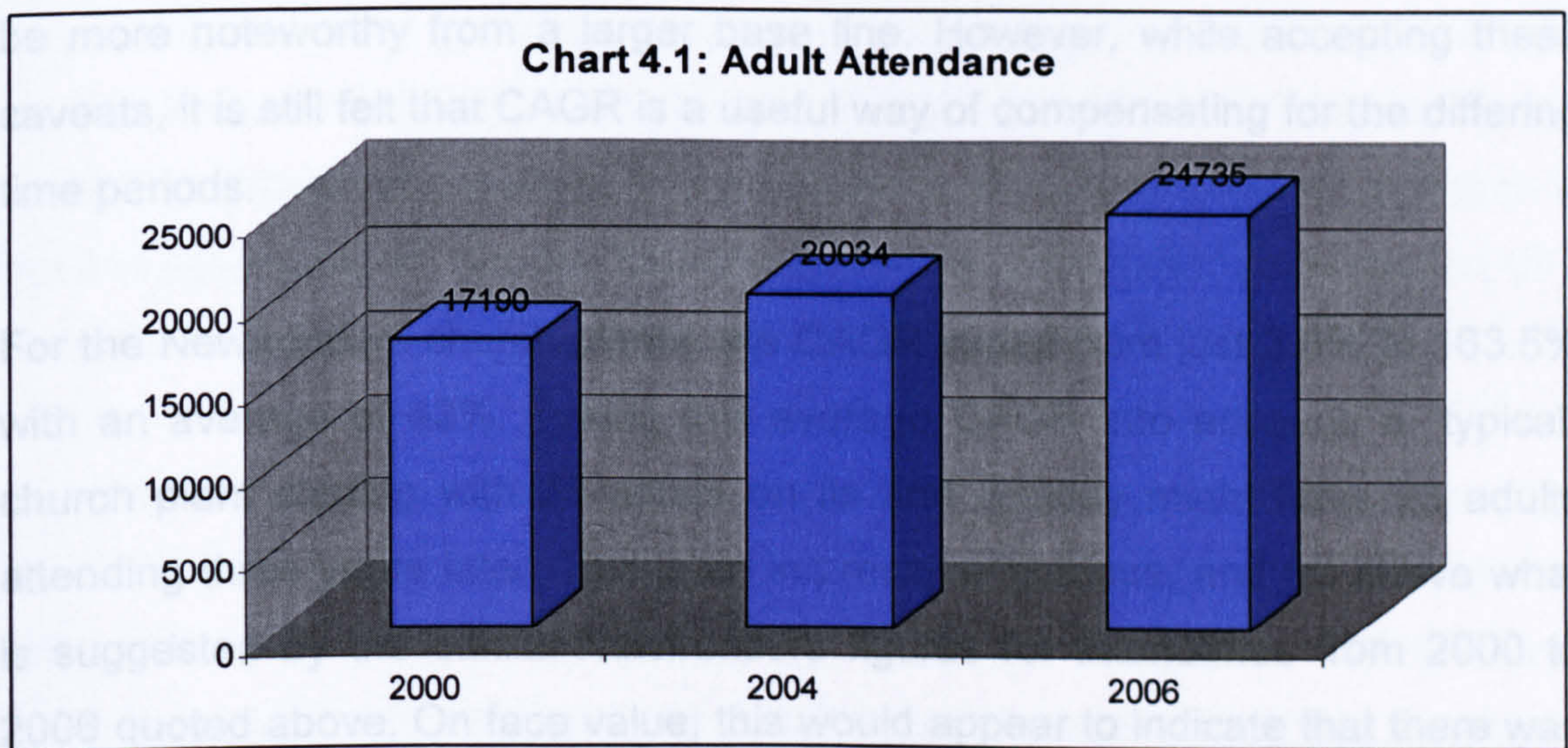
⁶⁹² Jackson, 109.

⁶⁹³ Malphurs, 42-43.

added to them each year, it is unclear to what extent this is true of churches in the UK rather than the USA, and whether this is relevant to New Churches such as Newfrontiers or only to more established traditional churches. It would appear that the majority of Newfrontiers churches aim to be “organised around evangelism” whatever their size and age.

Stetzer suggests that the key factor is not the size of congregation but the age of the church. He accounts for the apparent success of newer churches by claiming that they “tend to be more culturally indigenous than established churches” and therefore see more fruit from their evangelistic efforts.⁶⁹⁴ This would seem to be true of much of Newfrontiers, and not just of their church plants.

Chart 4.1 shows how the Newfrontiers adult attendance has grown by 30.5% from 2000 to 2006. However, it is not possible to determine what percentage of this growth can be accredited to the 12.5% of churches that in 2006 had an attendance of under 50, or the 42.4% of churches under 100, many of which will be church plants.⁶⁹⁵



As is expected, the 2005 survey revealed a wide divergence of numerical growth, from the number of adults present in the first Sunday meeting to

⁶⁹⁴ Stetzer, 322.

⁶⁹⁵ Statistics released by Justyn Pride, one of the administrators for Newfrontiers in the UK.

September 2005, when the survey was undertaken.⁶⁹⁶ By September 2005 all but one church plant had increased its Sunday attendance,⁶⁹⁷ with numbers of adults attending varying from 20 to 160, with an average of 73.2.

One obvious reason for the differing numbers of new additions from the first Sunday to September 2005, is that this time span differed from less than six months to almost seven years, with an average time of just over three years. One way to compensate for these differences has been to calculate the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR).⁶⁹⁸ This is widely used within financial services and can be summarised as “an imaginary number that describes the rate at which an investment would have grown if it grew at a steady rate.”⁶⁹⁹

Although the CAGR is used in this thesis as a way to compensate for the difference in time span, it should be noted that there are difficulties in using this approach. By definition, the CAGR is a theoretical and “imaginary” percentage, an assumption that the church plants grow evenly over a period of time. A stated CAGR percentage gives no indication of the period concerned, or the starting point. For instance, it might be assumed that it would be harder to sustain a CAGR over a longer time period, and that a percentage growth would be more noteworthy from a larger base line. However, while accepting these caveats, it is still felt that CAGR is a useful way of compensating for the differing time periods.

For the Newfrontiers church plants, the CAGR varied from just 3.8% to 163.5% with an average of 43%. Taking this average CAGR into account, a “typical” church plant starting with 25 adults on its first Sunday might have 73 adults attending three years later. This is an impressive increase, and far above what is suggested by the official Newfrontiers figures for attendance from 2000 to 2006 quoted above. On face value, this would appear to indicate that there was

⁶⁹⁶ See 6.1.5 for more details.

⁶⁹⁷ That church had started with 18 people and nearly four years later attendance was still at 18 people.

⁶⁹⁸ This was done by using a calculator found on the internet at

http://www.moneychimp.com/calculator/discount_rate_calculator.htm (accessed 16-3-2007).

Alternatively the CAGR can be calculated by [ending value divided by beginning value] multiplied by [1 divided by number of years] - 1.

⁶⁹⁹ <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/cagr.asp> (accessed 16-3-2007).

either a tendency to over record the attendance figures on the 2005 survey, that the figures released by Newfrontiers were under-recorded, or that these church plants are indeed responsible for a significant percentage of the numerical growth of Newfrontiers.

However, a further factor that needs to be considered is the number of people who joined Newfrontiers church plants from other more established Newfrontiers churches. As discussed below,⁷⁰⁰ this is quite considerable and counted for 31.2% of those who joined the church plants, who took part in the church members' sample. Although counted in the survey, these "in-house transfers" would not have contributed to the overall Newfrontiers growth. If this sample is reflective of all church plants, then this would reduce their average CAGR to 29.8%, still above the overall national figures,⁷⁰¹ and still suggesting that church plants are responsible for significant numerical growth within Newfrontiers.

4.2 New additions: Conversions and transfers

The assumption is sometimes made that if a church is growing numerically then it must be a "good church", and must therefore be making an impact in the community. Schwarz questions this, before presenting what has become known as the Natural Church Growth "Quality Index", a method for measuring the qualitative growth of a church.⁷⁰² For Schwarz, the key to a growing church is not the measuring of Sunday attendance, but a complicated examination of a series of indicators that he believes will reveal if a church is "healthy."⁷⁰³

Chapter five argues that numerical growth is one of a number of indicators that should legitimately be considered when assessing the "success" of a church plant. However, even if this is accepted, to assess the impact that a church plant is having, it is necessary to consider what proportion of the numerical

⁷⁰⁰ See 4.2.

⁷⁰¹ The figures for Newfrontiers adult attendance from 2000 to 2006 (as in chart 4.1) reveal a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 6.25%.

⁷⁰² Schwarz, 20.

⁷⁰³ *ibid.* 44-45.

growth is from new converts, and what proportion are people merely transferring from other churches.

For Hesselgrave it is vital that church plants grow through the conversion of unbelievers,⁷⁰⁴ while Peck says: "If mission isn't at the heart of the plant, it is merely an exercise in sheep shuffling, so after a lot of effort, we will be back where we started."⁷⁰⁵ Murray notes that "many apparently successful churches grow through transfers from other churches, rather than through effective evangelism,"⁷⁰⁶ a point also made by Drane.⁷⁰⁷

Chadwick argues at length that enormous harm is often done when numerical growth is primarily due to transfer growth. He says: "...enabling discontent through escapism, producing distrust among churches and reshuffling membership certificates can scarcely be considered the work of Christ... Sheep stealing as a church growth philosophy is a violation of Christian ethics."⁷⁰⁸

Chadwick admits that the difficulty of a church trying to grow through conversions is that it will inevitably be "slow growth", requiring "the decision of one person at a time." In contrast, the appeal of transfer growth is that it "has few growth-inhibiting factors and offers the greatest potential for success."⁷⁰⁹

Gibbs agrees, and says that growing by transfer is "easier, if less significant, than growing at someone else's expense"; a practice that he describes as "recycling the saints."⁷¹⁰ For Robinson, the reason behind the growth of many "successful" churches in the UK, is that they have simply learnt how to attract Christians from other churches "more effectively than other congregations."⁷¹¹

Although Chadwick is not addressing church planting, the accusation has often been made that church plants in general, and New Churches in particular have

⁷⁰⁴ Hesselgrave, 120.

⁷⁰⁵ Peck, "Church plants – do they grow?" *Christianity and Renewal*. (2003).

⁷⁰⁶ Murray, S. *Church after Christendom*. (Milton Keynes:Paternoster. 2004) 30.

⁷⁰⁷ Drane, J. *The McDonaldisation of the church*. (London:Darton, Longman & Todd. 2000) 4-5.

⁷⁰⁸ Chadwick, W. *Stealing Sheep*. (Downers Grove: IVP. 2001) 9-10.

⁷⁰⁹ *ibid.* 95-96.

⁷¹⁰ Gibbs, E. *Ten growing churches*. (London:MARC. 1984) 8-9.

⁷¹¹ Robinson & Smith, 30.

only grown at the expense of other “less exciting” local churches.⁷¹² Francis and Brierley seem to take this for granted,⁷¹³ while Peck says: “Some suggest church plants act like parasites – bleeding existing churches dry as people church-hop in the hope they get more of what they are looking for.”⁷¹⁴ Hunt also expounds this perception: “Evidence suggests that many charismatic churches are not winning a great number of converts. What they appear to do, however, is to attract members from other churches...”⁷¹⁵

It is hard to be certain of the truth or otherwise of these statements. Differing evidence is sometimes quoted, often from the USA, and sometimes seemingly chosen to “prove” the preconceived ideas of the authors. For instance, Malphurs states that 80% of all growth in American churches comes from transfer not conversion,⁷¹⁶ while Lanferman, in a seminar at Brighton, quoted Schaller as saying that 60-80% of additions to church plants in America are “not from existing churches.”⁷¹⁷

As a part of an MA thesis, Bing analysed a sample of 90 church plants containing a total of 6,087 adults. His research revealed that on average 20% were from the original church planting team, 16% transferred from other local churches, 17% relocated from outside of the area, 14% were “backslidden” and returned to faith, 15% were considered to be “fringe”, and 18% were new converts.⁷¹⁸

As far as Newfrontiers is concerned the intention is clear. Mark Landreth-Smith, who for a time acted as the Newfrontiers “Press Officer”, stated: “We don’t want to have people from other churches joining us. We are going for unreached people, not the malcontents from other churches.”⁷¹⁹ Hosier would agree and

⁷¹² Jackson, 137.

⁷¹³ Francis, L.J. & Brierley, P.W. in Bar-Lev, M & Shaffir, W. (eds.) *Leaving religion and religious life*. (London:Jai Press. 1997) 171.

⁷¹⁴ Peck, “Church plants – do they grow?” *Christianity and Renewal*. (2003).

⁷¹⁵ Hunt, (2003) 80.

⁷¹⁶ Malphurs, 60-61.

⁷¹⁷ No reference was given by Lanferman.

⁷¹⁸ Bing, MC. *The impact of church planting on the local community* unpublished MA thesis, Exeter University, 1996.

⁷¹⁹ Quoted by Peck, “Church plants – do they grow?” *Christianity and Renewal*. (2003).

warns: "It is possible to plant churches and, by doing so, do no more than move the furniture around..."⁷²⁰ Wagner suggests that these sentiments are true for all "new apostolic churches", although he goes on to say "this may be the desire, but there is often a bothersome gap between the desire and the reality..."⁷²¹

Thompson writes more pragmatically than Landreth-Smith. Writing from his experience of church planting, he says: "As a small group takes its perilous first steps in church planting it is hungry to grow; in fact it needs to grow numerically to survive. That early growth is unlikely to come through conversion... Early growth often comes through backslidden or drifting Christians returning, Christians travelling a distance finding a worshipping community closer to their home, or gathering people newly moved into the area."⁷²²

The 2005 survey asked leaders to indicate the Christian background of those who had recently joined the church. Although it is unlikely that these figures will be completely accurate due to the way that leaders were asked to estimate, they do suggest that Thompson's summary may be an accurate one. Of the people who joined the 46 church plants from which the information was supplied, 42.5% were said to be already Christians who had recently moved into the area, 24.9% were already Christians who had moved from another local church, 13.6% were backslidden Christians, and 19.5% were new converts.

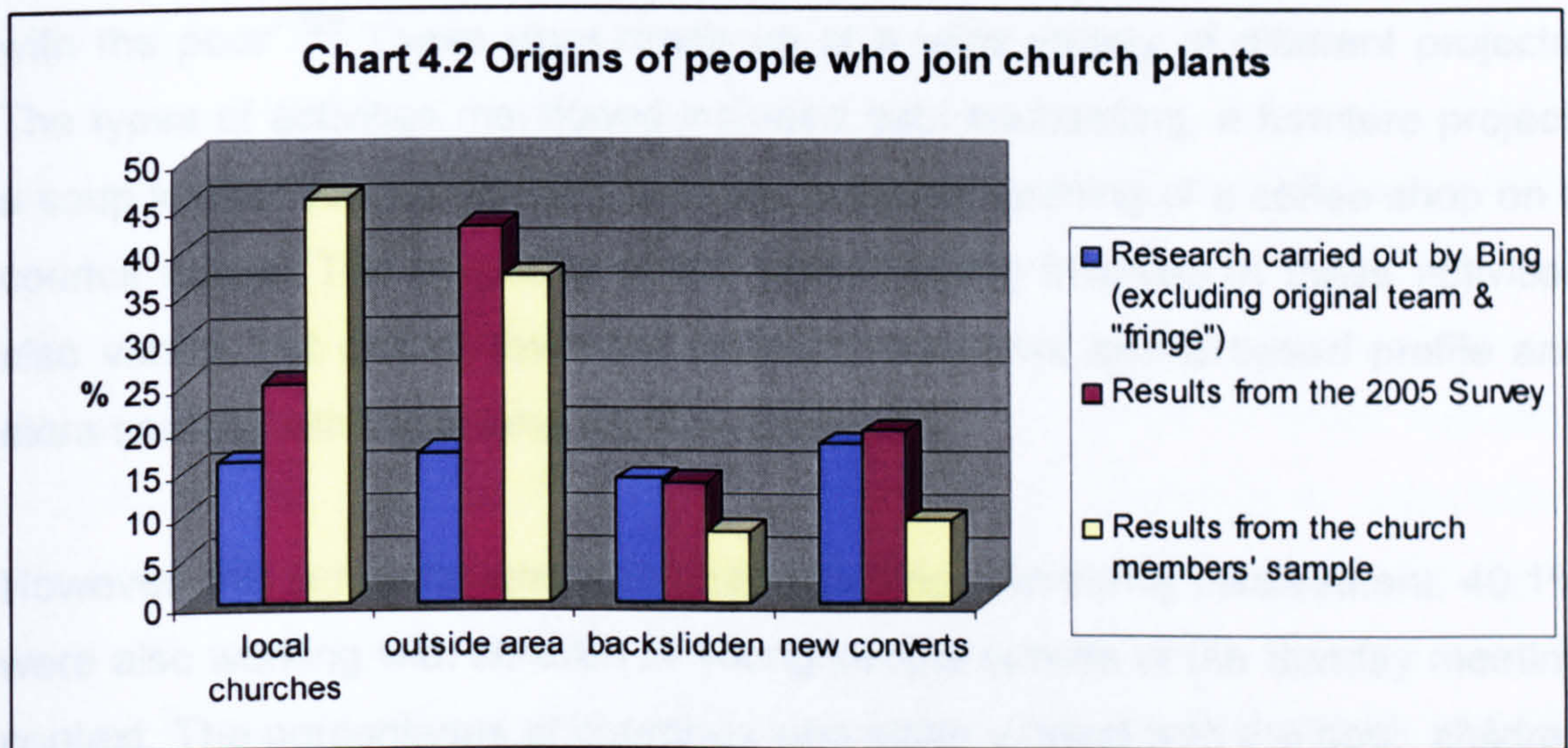
The church members' sample revealed a similar, albeit less positive mix. Of the sample of 247 church members attending the 11 Newfrontiers "newer" churches who completed the questionnaires, 36.8% were already Christians who had recently moved into the area, 45.7% were already Christians who had moved from another local church, 8.1% were backslidden Christians, and just 9.4% were new converts. Of those who moved from another church, 31.2% had moved from another Newfrontiers church.

⁷²⁰ Hosier, (2005) 199.

⁷²¹ Wagner, (1999) 191.

⁷²² Thompson, "Cell strategy for church planting." *NMag.* (2003) 17.

As can be seen from chart 4.2, these statistics reveal a mixed message regarding the impact that Newfrontiers church plants are having. Although they show that a relatively small number of those who join are new Christians, they also reveal a smaller percentage than is sometimes suggested transfer from other local churches. It would appear that a very significant proportion of those added to the church plants do so having intentionally moved into the area, often from other Newfrontiers churches.



4.3 Church attenders – Who are they?

There is a perception among some that the New Churches are made up almost exclusively of white, middle class people.⁷²³ Hunt is typical when he says: "Neo-Pentecostalism, unlike its 'classical' predecessor, has continued to attract a fairly distinctive middle class element. Indeed, the movement has always found it very difficult to transcend its white middle class enclaves."⁷²⁴ In some ways the limited church members' sample tended to confirm this perception.

It revealed that the majority were female (55.9%),⁷²⁵ in their twenties (25.9%),⁷²⁶ white British (83.8%) and educated to at least degree level (52.6%).⁷²⁷ They

⁷²³ Synan, 407.

⁷²⁴ Hunt, (2003) 79.

⁷²⁵ This compares with 51% of the UK general population and an estimated 65% of overall church attendance being female. Source: n.a. *Faith in Life*. (Churches Information for Mission. 2001) 9.

⁷²⁶ This compares with a population peak of around 30 in the general population and around 70 in the overall church attendance in the UK. *ibid* 8.

lived between two and five miles from where they worshipped (29.5%) and had been Christians for over ten years (72.7%).⁷²⁸ Their ethnicity, levels of education, the distance they travelled to church and length of time they had been Christians all suggest that the “white middle class” perception may be an accurate one.

4.4 Community involvement

The 2005 Survey revealed that just over one third of churches were “working with the poor”.⁷²⁹ These were made up of a wide variety of different projects. The types of activities mentioned included debt counselling, a furniture project, a soup kitchen for sex workers, and the intended opening of a coffee shop on a council estate. The purposes of the church being involved in these activities also varied, but one of the most common aims was an increased profile and extra contact with those who are non-Christians.

However, this is not the whole picture regarding community involvement. 40.1% were also working with children or young people outside of the Sunday meeting context. The percentages of churches who either worked with the poor, children or young people, or a combination of any of these was 67.7%.

As has already been noted, involvement with the community necessitates a long term view.⁷³⁰ It is, therefore, very difficult to assess the impact that these activities may be having. However, it may be significant that when the church leaders were asked in the telephone interviews about what the local community would miss most if the church were to cease operating, 50% mentioned some regular aspect of their work in the community.

⁷²⁷ This compares with 14.5% of the general population and 33.5% of the overall church attendance in the UK who are educated to degree level. *ibid* 9.

⁷²⁸ This is despite only 8.4% of the respondents coming from churches in the more affluent Southeast.

⁷²⁹ See 3.5.

⁷³⁰ See 3.5.

4.5 Planting other churches

Faircloth argues that the primary goal of any new church should be to reproduce itself.⁷³¹ He says: “Church planting in any situation must make a high priority of the goal of *reproduction* – the multiplication of local churches throughout the land. Church planters must not be satisfied with the mere birth of a congregation... They must strive to reach the long-term goal of nurturing a mature adult congregation, one which will enthusiastically engage in planting other new churches.”⁷³² Stetzer suggests that if a new church doesn’t plant another church within the first three years it “probably never will.”⁷³³

Robinson devotes a chapter to considering what kind of churches plant other churches.⁷³⁴ In this, he develops the thoughts of Garrison who considers “church planting movements” throughout the world.⁷³⁵ According to Garrison, one of the characteristics of these movements is the speed by which churches are planted. He suggests that a newly planted church should plant again within two years, and then repeatedly “year after year”. Robinson suggests that this is an aspiration for which every church planter should aim. He writes: “If every church planter could make a contribution to the creation of a church planting movement rather than simply planting a church we might yet be able to write the story of the re-evangelism of the West.”⁷³⁶

For Chester and Timmis there is often an unhelpful “mystique” attached to church planting. They suggest that in some circles, those who plant churches are looked on as “a kind of rugged pioneer”, a view that they believe hinders a culture where church planting is seen as “normal”. They write: “Every local church should be aiming to transplant and raise up church planters.”⁷³⁷

When Ott considers the different roles of church planters, he includes the “catalytic church planter.” He defines this as someone who, after planting a

⁷³¹ Faircloth, S.D. *Church Planting for Reproduction*. (Grand Rapids: Baker. 1991) 35-41.

⁷³² *ibid.* 34. (italics are the original author’s)

⁷³³ Stetzer, 320.

⁷³⁴ Robinson, 141-156.

⁷³⁵ Garrison.

⁷³⁶ Robinson, 155.

⁷³⁷ Chester & Timmis, 95.

church, “remains as pastor or resource person in that church to become a catalyst or facilitator for church multiplication.”⁷³⁸ Ott goes on to suggest that the catalytic church planter is relatively rare, and demands “exceptional gifts and vision.”⁷³⁹

With a stated target of reaching 1,000 churches in the UK, it is not surprising that these concepts have been discussed within Newfrontiers. The clearest promulgation of this was in an article written by Baron entitled: “Towards a strategy of multiple church planting.”⁷⁴⁰ In it, he appealed to all Newfrontiers church leaders to think continually about the next opportunity for church planting, even if they themselves are currently working in a new church. Using his own role, which Ott might describe as a “catalytic church planter”, in Manchester as an example, he also encouraged churches to be open to the possibility of planting churches “simultaneously”, although he does temper this by acknowledging the danger of “spreading yourselves too thinly.”⁷⁴¹

In the article, Baron also suggests that “young churches” are in the best position to plant additional churches.⁷⁴² Without defining what “young” may mean, he says: “Young churches tend to plant churches. If a church wants to keep young, some of the original members should be encouraged to plant new churches.”⁷⁴³ He warns that in some cases, the alternative to an intentional programme of church planting, can be church “haemorrhaging” with some of the church’s best people going “to where the action is.”⁷⁴⁴

Baron is not the only person within Newfrontiers to talk of multiple church planting. Lanferman delivered a seminar at Brighton in 2005 entitled: “The Reproducing Church.” He said: “We shouldn’t just plant churches but always plant reproducing churches... Church planting should not end with the

⁷³⁸ Ott, C. “Matching the church planter’s role with the church planting model.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. (July 2001) 342.

⁷³⁹ *ibid.* 343.

⁷⁴⁰ Baron, “Towards a strategy of multiple church planting.” *NMag.* (2003) 36-41.

⁷⁴¹ *ibid.* 39-40.

⁷⁴² Webb claims that this strategy was influenced by the teaching of Wimber. Source: a conversation with the author. See also Kay, (2007) 170.

⁷⁴³ Baron, “Towards a strategy of multiple church planting.” *NMag.* (2003) 40.

⁷⁴⁴ *ibid.* 41.

establishment of one church. The process needs to repeat itself when a church matures to the point of reproduction.” He did not, however, explain when this “point of reproduction” might be reached.

It would appear that Baron and Lanferman’s desire for multiple church planting has not been enthusiastically implemented within Newfrontiers. Although Baron managed to start six churches in nine years from his base in South Manchester, this momentum ceased when he left the area in 2004, and at least two of those churches are still small and struggling several years later.

Another person who has tried to plant churches in this way is Webb, who worked with Baron in Manchester before moving to Liverpool in 1999. Four years later, a church plant was started by the Liverpool church on the Wirral, with attempts subsequently also made to reach into St Helens and Kirkby. However, the emphasis in Liverpool has more recently shifted to strengthening the “home base” before attempting to make further progress with Webb’s aim of planting seven churches throughout Merseyside.⁷⁴⁵

Although attempts at multiple church planting may be limited, as has been repeatedly emphasised, church planting is firmly established on the Newfrontiers agenda. The telephone interviews revealed that 59.4% of the church plants had already been involved in contributing in some way towards church planting. How this was done varied, but included starting “daughter” churches, giving away church members, and contributing financially. A further 35.1% said that they intended being involved in church planting within the next five years, with only 5.4% saying that this was unlikely.

4.6 Contribution to the mission of Newfrontiers

The impact of the “No well worn paths” prophecy and the decisions that were taken as a result of this has already been documented.⁷⁴⁶ Along with the change of name came a deliberate change in emphasis and style, from a number of individual churches whose leaders all happened to be working in

⁷⁴⁵ Source: discussion with the author (5-12-2007).

⁷⁴⁶ See chapter one.

some way with Virgo, to a “family of churches on a mission together”. Without these changes it is unlikely that Virgo and the churches that made up Coastlands would have ever developed any kind of corporate strategy, let alone an ambition to grow to 1,000 churches. Indeed, it is possible that without the modus operandi of close co-operation that has evolved out of this, Newfrontiers (or Coastlands) would, like many of the other original House Church streams, by now have disintegrated and have ceased to exist.⁷⁴⁷

The concept of being a “family of churches on a mission together” is far more than just a catchy phrase on a corporate plan. In very real and concrete terms it is what Newfrontiers has become. This is demonstrated in various ways including the number of leaders who gather three times a year at the Leaders' Prayer and Fasting,⁷⁴⁸ and the £600,000 that was given during 2006 from individuals and churches within Newfrontiers in the UK as a response to the humanitarian crisis in Kenya.

Although the way this is being worked out is still developing,⁷⁴⁹ the concept of being able to do more together than they could individually has been present since 1986 when the prophecy and decision to change name took place. In the first issue of the *New Frontiers Update* Virgo described a prophecy given after the decision to change name had been made. Comparing themselves to an armada of ships on a journey together, he wrote: “An armada is gathered for a purpose... As an armada we can provide mutual encouragement and can release men and resources with specialist ministries to serve the churches in a variety of ways... together, we are able to accomplish much more than we could accomplish alone.”⁷⁵⁰

This conviction has stayed with Virgo ever since. Writing ten years later he proclaimed: “We are together on a mission... Working together with a group of churches has made possible many strategies that would be beyond the scope

⁷⁴⁷ Peck, “Are the new church streams stagnating?” *Christianity and Renewal*. (2003).

⁷⁴⁸ Just over 800 in May 2007.

⁷⁴⁹ In the 2007 DVD that promoted the Brighton offering Virgo made several references to the many new opportunities that there are for working across the world.

⁷⁵⁰ Virgo, “Why change a name?” *NFU*. (1986) 1.

of one local church.”⁷⁵¹ In 2007 he made the same point in a DVD, produced to encourage individuals and churches to give towards the £1.4m offering target at the Brighton conference.

It is not possible to be certain of the extent that the new church plants contribute into these offerings. However the telephone interviews contained questions about their church's giving to Newfrontiers. 94.6% of respondents claimed that their church gave to Newfrontiers regularly. 78.4% described doing this each month, with 75.7% giving to the main offering at the Brighton conference.⁷⁵²

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the impact that the Newfrontiers church plants are having under a number of headings. These include the comparatively limited numbers who join through “conversion”, those who join from other local churches,⁷⁵³ their community involvement, involvement in church planting, and their contribution to the wider vision of Newfrontiers.

⁷⁵¹ Virgo, (1996) 179-180.

⁷⁵² These are obviously not exclusive of each other - many leaders reported that they gave in both ways.

⁷⁵³ In particular the relatively large number who join from other Newfrontiers churches. See 4.2.

Section 3: “Successful” church plants

Having considered the methods employed by Newfrontiers to plant churches and the impact that these new churches are having, attention can now be turned to what a “successful” church plant might look like. This reflects Osmer’s “normative task”⁷⁵⁴ and is necessary before the reasons for the growth and expansion of Newfrontiers can be examined in section four.

Chapter five seeks to define what it means to be successful in this context, before applying these measures to the church plants that were on the Newfrontiers 2002 list. Chapter six then describes a number of factors that might be expected to contribute towards these measures of success.

Chapter five is set within the context of contemporary church planting and church growth thinking and is based upon this literature, while chapter six considers some of the factors examined in the 2005 survey.

⁷⁵⁴ Osmer, 129-173.

Chapter 5: Defining and measuring “success”

Traditionally in church growth literature, success has usually been defined as an ever increasing numerical attendance.⁷⁵⁵ Successful churches have often been seen as being those which have a large Sunday attendance, an enormous budget, multiple staff, and at least in an American context, a large and often very expensive campus.⁷⁵⁶ In more recent years the pendulum has sometimes swung to the opposite extreme with a “small is beautiful” mentality that at times seems to despise large attendance,⁷⁵⁷ preferring to emphasise the intimacy of small groups, often meeting exclusively in homes.⁷⁵⁸ Added to that contradictory mix is the consideration of church health pioneered by Schwarz, known as the “Natural Church Development Movement” (NCD).⁷⁵⁹

This chapter considers three different ways that the success of a church plant could be evaluated, before progressing to suggest a number of different measures that will be used together in this thesis to define a “successful” church plant. Finally, this is applied to the 2002 church planting list and the church plants are graded according to their success in reaching these measures.

5.1 Defining success

5.1.1 An increasing numerical attendance

At least on the face of it, the attractiveness and appropriateness of defining growth in this way is clear.⁷⁶⁰ Numerical attendance is easy to measure, as well as being comparatively straightforward both to analyse and to compare. An increasing attendance, it is often argued, means larger churches that in turn will lead to a greater impact in the community. Larger churches will by definition be made up of lots of people, with the implied assumption that more people will have become Christians in the process.⁷⁶¹ To what extent this is true of

⁷⁵⁵ Murray, (2004) 165.

⁷⁵⁶ Perhaps exemplified in Willow Creek Community Church. See Hybels, L.&B. *Rediscovering Church*. (Grand Rapids:Zondervan. 1995)

⁷⁵⁷ Murray, (2004) 166.

⁷⁵⁸ For instance see Neighbour.

⁷⁵⁹ Schwarz.

⁷⁶⁰ Drane, (2000) 39.

⁷⁶¹ Dye, C. *It's time to grow*. (Harpenden:Gazelle. 1997) 45-50.

Newfrontiers church plants or whether they have grown primarily by transfer has already been considered.⁷⁶²

It is the numerical growth, or lack of it, that has been the main focus for the work carried out by Brierley and Christian Research in the 1989, 1998 and 2005 church surveys. After comparing the attendance of the 36% of churches that had completed more than one survey, churches were categorised according to their growth or decline.⁷⁶³ Although Brierley does make the point that “‘growth’ is a complex variable not readily reduced to single factors”, the implication of his research is that churches that grow numerically are “successful” churches and a part of the answer, while churches that decline are “unsuccessful” churches and part of the problem.⁷⁶⁴

Drane argues that measuring numerical attendance has a place in evaluating the “spiritual temperature” of a church, but describes it as a “blunt instrument”. He suggests that although there will always be a reason why a church might be declining, he doubts whether the opposite is always true, that is whether a growing church necessarily is a church “where something spiritually worthwhile is happening.”⁷⁶⁵

Traditionally, some church growth literature written from a UK perspective has been suspicious of “quantitative growth”. For instance, after a chapter discussing the place of recording attendance statistics, Gibbs says: “numbers aren’t everything... Quantity and quality are equally important.”⁷⁶⁶ More recently Walker seems reluctantly to admit that numerical growth can be significant. “Healthy things grow,” he says, before qualifying this by offering two exceptions, the rural church in a small community, and the church situated in a very transient area.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶² See 4.2.

⁷⁶³ Brierley, (2006) 188-189.

⁷⁶⁴ *ibid.* 205-206.

⁷⁶⁵ Drane, (2000) 39.

⁷⁶⁶ Gibbs, E. *Body Building Exercises*. (London:CPAS. 1979) 37.

⁷⁶⁷ Walker, P. “What is a healthy church?” *Church Health Magazine*. (Issue 1. 2003) 25.

Moffitt also cautions against an over-emphasis upon numerical growth. For him the question is not how many people are present at a particular service, but what impact they are making in their community. "It is not a matter of numbers but of obedience," he says.⁷⁶⁸ Drane goes further, and suggests that an over-emphasis on "what is quantifiable" may distract and even undermine what he sees as the more important issues of "personal and spiritual growth."⁷⁶⁹

Principally for reasons of convenience and accepted convention, serious consideration was given by the author to defining success purely in terms of numerical growth. This would have given a straightforward and simple to understand measure. However, this was rejected due to the danger of oversimplification⁷⁷⁰ and the desire to consider a more comprehensive range of indicators.

5.1.2 Church health

Murray suggests that since 1990 there has been a gradual change in emphasis, from a pre-occupation in numerical growth, to an interest in growing "healthy churches." Evidence cited includes the renaming in 2003 of the British Church Growth Association to become "Healthy Church UK".⁷⁷¹ If this change in emphasis has taken place, it is largely a response to the work carried out by Schwarz and the publishing of a series of resources based upon *Natural Church Development*.⁷⁷²

The approach of Schwarz and Natural Church Development (NCD) has evolved out of extensive research looking at 1,000 churches in 32 countries. His aim was to identify eight "quality characteristics" that he believed would be true of all growing churches.⁷⁷³ The assumption being, that if a high standard can be attained in these characteristics, then numbers will increase "biotically".⁷⁷⁴ Churches that are embracing NCD undergo a complicated and potentially

⁷⁶⁸ Moffitt, B. *If Jesus were Mayor*. (Oxford:Monarch. 2006) 182-183.

⁷⁶⁹ Drane, (2000) 41.

⁷⁷⁰ *ibid.* 39.

⁷⁷¹ Murray, (2004) 166-167. See <http://healthychurch.co.uk>

⁷⁷² Schwarz.

⁷⁷³ Schwarz, 18-37.

⁷⁷⁴ *ibid.* 62-63.

lengthy process of questionnaires and computer analysis, before embarking on a period of concentrating on the quality characteristics that received the highest and lowest scores.⁷⁷⁵

One of the problems in this approach is in defining what qualities should be included. For instance, Macchia has identified a similar list of characteristics that he claims are equally authoritative and backed up by similar, although more limited research. When compared, the two lists enjoy some overlap as well as some clear differences.⁷⁷⁶

The emphasis upon NCD has not gone unchallenged. Murray admits the shift of emphasis is significant and the analyses and tools offered are helpful⁷⁷⁷ but points out that this programme has limitations. He suggests that its main contribution will be to “help relatively healthy churches become more attractive to people like those they already attract.”⁷⁷⁸ Croft is even more critical and dismisses the search for church health as being “incomplete”.⁷⁷⁹

Another influence has been the unconnected but very influential book *Purpose Driven Church*. In it Warren says: “I believe the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church *health*, not church growth.”⁷⁸⁰ In the UK the concept of being “purpose driven” has been championed by Beer who writes, “The goal is a healthy church...”⁷⁸¹

For largely pragmatic reasons the principles of NCD are not included in the measurements of success used in this thesis. It was felt that the financial cost of researching over 40 churches and the time commitment required from the churches themselves prohibited its use.

⁷⁷⁵ *ibid.* 103-125.

⁷⁷⁶ Macchia, S. *Becoming a healthy church*. (Grand Rapids:Baker. 1999). For instance both include “Leadership”, while Schwarz includes “Functional structures” and Macchia “Stewardship and Generosity”.

⁷⁷⁷ Murray, (2004) 167.

⁷⁷⁸ *ibid.* 168.

⁷⁷⁹ Croft, S. *Transforming Communities*. (London:Darton, Longman & Todd. 2002) 62.

⁷⁸⁰ Warren, R. *The purpose driven church*. (Grand Rapids:Zondervan. 2005) 17. Italics are those of original author.

⁷⁸¹ Beer, D. *Building a strategic church*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 2007) 32.

5.1.3 Being recognised as a church, rather than a church plant

Discussion has already taken place as to how a church is defined, and in particular what qualities need to be true of church plants before they can be recognised as fully functioning Newfrontiers churches.⁷⁸² The criteria are perhaps deliberately vague and would seem to be interpreted differently in different parts of the country.⁷⁸³ It would appear that in the final analysis, it is the personal recognition of those designated as having an “apostolic role” to the church plant that determines when a church plant can claim to have evolved into a church. This very subjective criterion has sometimes been the cause for confusion and disappointment.⁷⁸⁴

5.2 Measuring success

For the purposes of this thesis, some way of defining and measuring the relative “success” of a church plant had to be determined. For the reasons given above⁷⁸⁵ it was decided that it was not practical to use Schwarz’s NCD processes or desirable to limit this to numerical growth.

However, although only revealing a part of the picture, considering the numerical growth of a church plant as one measure among others is legitimate for a number of reasons. Firstly, as has already been mentioned, there is a strong expectation that Newfrontiers church plants will experience numerical growth. This belief is not far away from all their church planting praxis. To plant a church is to be involved in evangelism with the express intention of seeing those who are non-Christians responding to the gospel and being added to the local church.⁷⁸⁶

Secondly, numerical growth is comparatively easy to measure. The use of Compound Annual Growth Rate successfully overcomes any potential differential of time span from when the church plant started, to the summer of

⁷⁸² See I.6.1.

⁷⁸³ For instance a church plant in Essex was very quickly accepted as a an official Newfrontiers church while a church plant of a similar size in the Northwest has made several unsuccessful requests to be put on the “churches list”.

⁷⁸⁴ Source – a conversation with a church leader who did wished to remain anonymous.

⁷⁸⁵ See 5.1.

⁷⁸⁶ Virgo, “Firstline.” *NMag.* (May 2003) 3-5.

2007 when the telephone interviews were completed. The result is a measure of growth that is clear and relatively objective.

It could also be argued that the common and most straightforward use of the word “growth” in a church context also legitimises this consideration. Despite the reservations noted above, the phrase “growing” or “declining” churches is often used without explanation to refer to numerical change.⁷⁸⁷ The premise of Brierley’s work in the English Church Surveys is that attendance is worth counting and that numerical decline or growth has importance.⁷⁸⁸

There remains a question, however, as to what it is most helpful to count. The English Church Survey counted church attendance on a “typical” Sunday, and respondents of the 2005 survey were likewise asked for the numbers of adults attending a recent Sunday service.

As useful as this may be, these figures do not take into account the origin of those attending. As has already been discussed,⁷⁸⁹ church attendance may increase significantly merely as a consequence of people transferring from other churches. Drane speaks for many when he says: “Much so-called church growth amounts to little more than moving bodies around from one congregation to another.”⁷⁹⁰ It could be argued that the more significant numerical growth is not the number attending on a Sunday but the number of people becoming Christians.

Another relevant numerical measure is to consider any increase in the number of those committed to the church, rather than those who just attend on a Sunday. The 2005 survey asked for the number of those in the “core group”, and defined this as those the leader felt were “in practice strongly committed to the church”. They were not necessarily in recognised leadership but were actively involved and were those that the leader could “trust and rely on.” The

⁷⁸⁷ Drane, (2000) 2-3.

⁷⁸⁸ Brierley, (2006) 12.

⁷⁸⁹ See 4.2.

⁷⁹⁰ Drane, (2000) 4-5.

concept of core group was used rather than membership as it was felt unlikely that many of the newly planted churches would have formal memberships.

In addition to consideration of the above numerical growth, two other factors are considered in this definition of success. That is the progress from being a church plant to a recognised Newfrontiers church, and some identifiable involvement in the community. The former was determined by a list of “official” churches obtained from Newfrontiers’ UK office, while the latter was identified in the telephone interviews.

5.2.1 Success criteria

The criteria, therefore, for evaluating the success of church plants used in this thesis will consist of the following six measures:

Measure 1 – numerical growth in Sunday attendance of more than 10% per year. As has already been discussed, to avoid problems with differences in time span, the CAGR has been used.⁷⁹¹ This average has been taken from the numbers attending the first Sunday meeting to the Sunday before the telephone interviews took place in 2007.

Measure 2 – numerical growth in Sunday attendance of more than 30%. As the CAGR varied considerably it was decided to introduce a second level of numerical growth of church plants that grew by over 30% per year. This was calculated in the same way as measure 1.⁷⁹²

Measure 3 - at least 20% of the numerical growth to be through new converts, rather than through transfer from other churches. These figures were estimated by the leaders and form a part of the 2005 survey.

Measure 4 - at least 20% of growth in the number of the core group. This has also been calculated using the CAGR and the numbers have been taken from the 2005 survey.

⁷⁹¹ See 4.1.

⁷⁹² N.B. Church plants that successfully fulfilled measure 2 had obviously also fulfilled measure 1.

Measure 5 - progress from being a church plant to becoming a recognised Newfrontiers church. This is an obvious goal for any church plant and so is included here.

Measure 6 - identifiable involvement in the community. This has been included as a measure due to the at least theoretical emphasis placed upon community involvement by many within Newfrontiers.⁷⁹³

These six measures result in a “scale of success” that Newfrontiers church plants can be graded by.⁷⁹⁴ It is suggested that together they give a more complete picture than merely using quantitative measures such as the numerical increase in Sunday attendance.

5.3 Conclusion

When the church plants on the 2002 list have been graded according to the above criteria, a scale of success can be identified from a church plant that meets all six measures to a church plant that meets only two measures. The numbers of church plants graded according to each measure are recorded in table 5.1.

⁷⁹³ For instance Ring. “Act Together.” *NMag*, (2003) 26-27, and Devenish, 116.

⁷⁹⁴ This is similar to the star ratings used by a variety of quality control measures such as the English Tourist Board. See <http://www.fweb.org.uk/dean/visitor/accom/symbols.html> (accessed 14-9-2007).

Table 5.1 2002 church planting list graded according to how many success measures they had achieved.

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| 5 church plants had met all six success measures | | |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 1 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 2 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 3 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 4 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 5 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 6 | 5 |
| 15 church plants had met five out of the six success measures | | |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 1 | 15 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 2 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 3 | 11 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 4 | 15 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 5 | 15 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 6 | 14 |
| 11 church plants had met four out of the six success measures | | |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 1 | 9 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 2 | 4 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 3 | 6 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 4 | 8 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 5 | 11 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 6 | 6 |
| 7 church plants had met three out of the six success measures | | |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 1 | 5 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 2 | 1 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 3 | 2 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 4 | 4 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 5 | 6 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 6 | 3 |
| 2 church plants had met two out the of six success measures | | |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 1 | 1 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 2 | 0 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 3 | 1 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 4 | 1 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 5 | 1 |
| | Number of church plants achieving measure 6 | 0 |

Chapter 6: What factors might contribute to a successful church plant?

Having considered how success can be defined and quantified, this chapter will examine 20 factors that might contribute towards a successful church plant. These have been selected because of the claims made about them,⁷⁹⁵ because they are emphasised by Newfrontiers,⁷⁹⁶ or because of the interest of the author.⁷⁹⁷

It should be noted that some of the material in this chapter overlaps with chapter three. However, chapter three examines the material from the viewpoint of a number of broad principles that are often present in individual church plants. This chapter seeks to summarize a number of factors that might be thought to make a contribution to the success of a church plant. A number of factors are considered that are not included in chapter three,⁷⁹⁸ and this chapter forms the foundation for the statistical analysis found in section four.

6.1 The leader, core group and first Sunday

6.1.1 Leadership age and experience

The relevance of age and experience to church planting could be debated. It could be argued that church planters need to be mature, experienced leaders capable of withstanding the pressures of church planting, or conversely that leaders need to be younger, full of energy and open to new ideas. Stoddard and Cuthbert present the ideal that “the wisdom of age should always be paired with the vision, passion and creativity of youth.”⁷⁹⁹ The 2005 survey enquired about the age of the leader when they started their current church plant. It revealed a variety of age, varying from 23 to 56 with an average of 39.

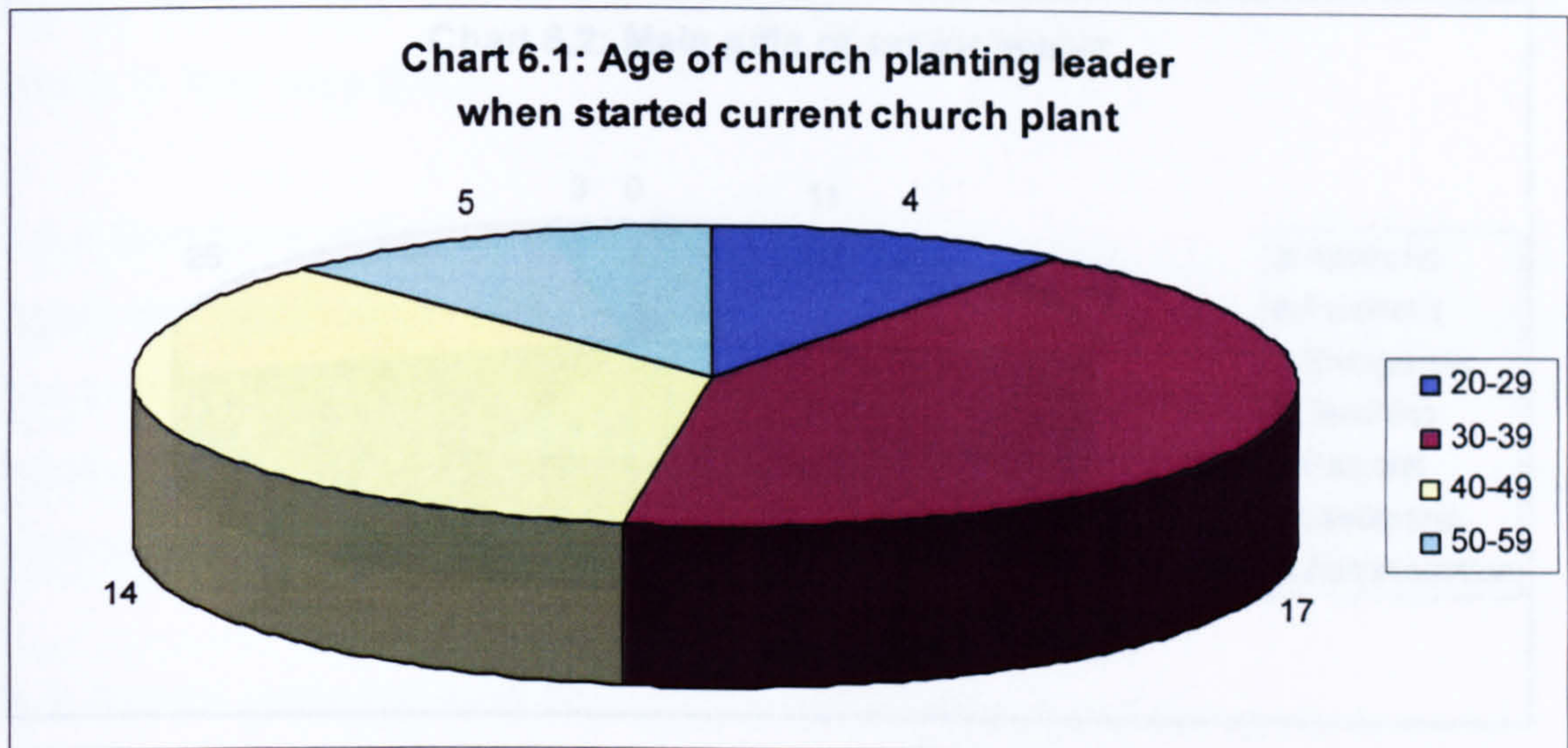
⁷⁹⁵ Such as Alpha or Cell Groups.

⁷⁹⁶ Such as Signs and Wonders.

⁷⁹⁷ Such as an emphasis upon social activities or work with the poor.

⁷⁹⁸ Such as discussion about leadership age, experience, gifting and training.

⁷⁹⁹ Stoddard & Cuthbert. 62.



They were also asked about their experience before starting their current church plant in terms of leadership and church planting. The results showed that everyone had previously had some level of leadership responsibility, with 61% being in eldership and 32% of those being the senior leader. With regard to previous church planting experience, 48.8% had no previous direct experience, while 43.9% had been in leadership in a church plant, with the remainder previously having attended a church plant.

6.1.2 Leadership gifting

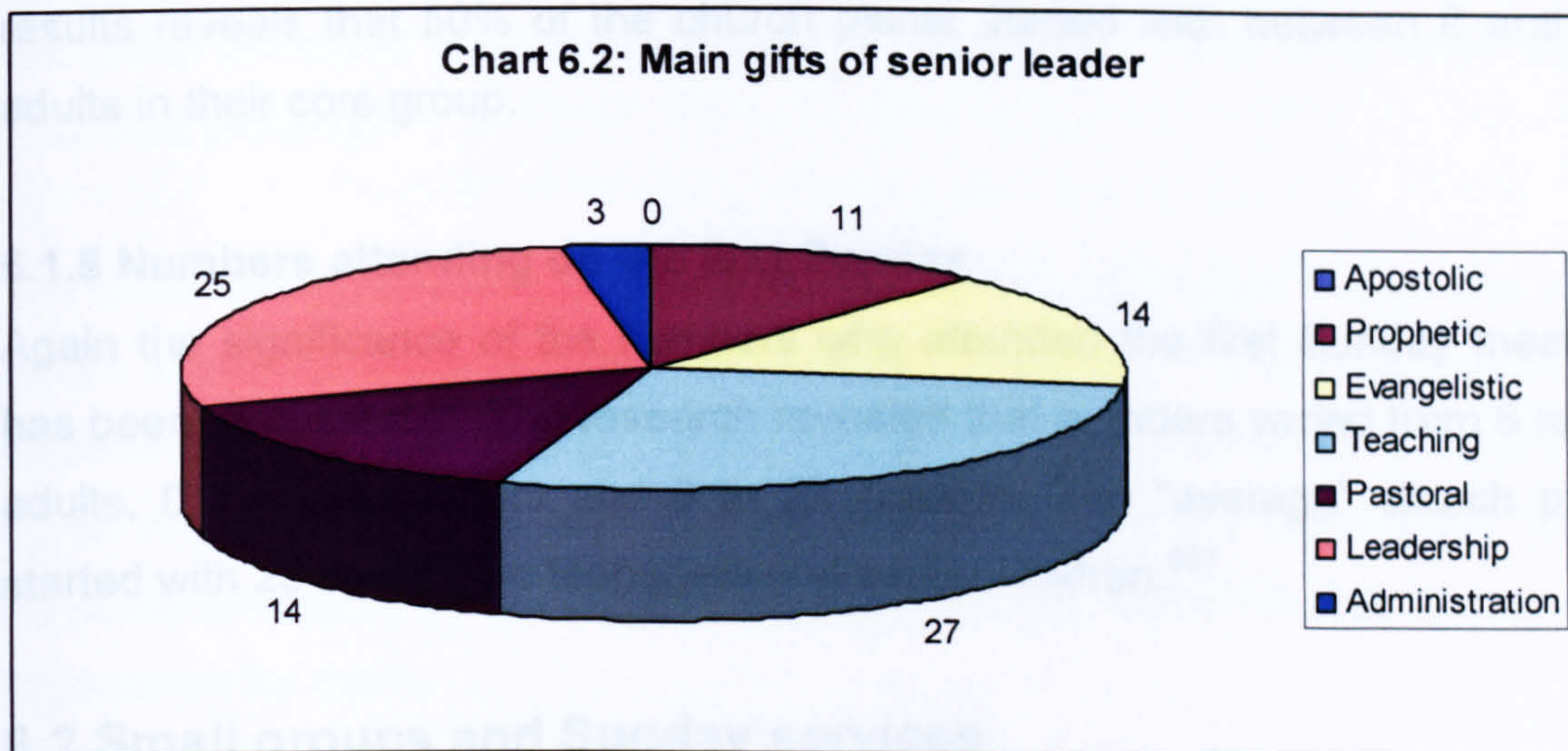
The connection between the gifting of the leader and the growth of the church has also been discussed for some time.⁸⁰⁰ Recently, Hybels has argued that churches should be led by those with the gift of leadership.⁸⁰¹ As far as Newfrontiers is concerned, Virgo has gone on record as stating that ideally a church plant should include an evangelist on the team.⁸⁰²

The 2005 survey asked leaders to identify up to three of their main gifts. For this purpose, the options were limited to apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, teaching, leadership and administration. Chart 6.2 shows their response to this question.

⁸⁰⁰ One of the first to examine this link was Wagner, P. *Your spiritual gifts can help your church grow*. (London: MARC. 1979).

⁸⁰¹ Hybels, 26-28.

⁸⁰² Virgo, (1996) 171.



6.1.3 Leadership training

One of Richardson's recommendations regarding church planting within the Elim Pentecostal churches focused on training. He proposed that church planters need a mixture of theological and practical on-the-job training.⁸⁰³ In contrast, Allen has argued that theological training is counter-productive and even sometimes detrimental to evangelistic breakthrough.⁸⁰⁴

In the 2005 survey, leaders were asked about their "highest" level of theological training. The results showed that only 12.5% had been theologically trained to degree level, while 50% had received Newfrontiers' own in-house training. The remainder had either some other practical training or no theological training at all.

6.1.4 Size of initial core group

The importance of the initial core group has already been discussed.⁸⁰⁵ As well as giving much needed support and encouragement to the leader, the strength of the core group is likely to be a major factor in the development of the early church plant. The 2005 survey asked leaders about the number of adults in their initial core group. Once again, numbers varied with three being the lowest and 26 the highest. Although the average was 12.6, closer examination of the

⁸⁰³ Richardson, 65.

⁸⁰⁴ Allen, 106.

⁸⁰⁵ See 3.2.

results reveals that 50% of the church plants started with between 6 and 11 adults in their core group.

6.1.5 Numbers attending on the first Sunday

Again the significance of the numbers who attended the first Sunday meeting has been discussed.⁸⁰⁶ The research revealed that numbers varied from 8 to 70 adults, 0 to 12 teenagers and 0 to 20 children. The “average” church plant started with 25 adults, two teenagers and seven children.⁸⁰⁷

6.2 Small groups and Sunday services

6.2.1 Midweek meetings

From the early days of Coastlands, the importance of small groups has regularly been emphasised. This is perhaps to be expected, as much of Virgo's early work involved visiting groups in homes. As early as 1982, four years before Coastlands became Newfrontiers, Richard Haydon-Knowell, formerly a member of Virgo's leadership team, wrote a practical manual for house group leaders.⁸⁰⁸ In 1985 this was rewritten under the title, *Wednesday Night at Eight*.⁸⁰⁹ Both described groups with a pastoral emphasis,⁸¹⁰ something that would be common to most “house groups” at that time.⁸¹¹

This style of small group was largely unchallenged until the mid-1990s when Simon Pettit, who led the Newfrontiers work in South Africa, introduced “cell groups” to the leaders at Stoneleigh. After that, Beckham spoke at Brighton and many Newfrontiers churches transitioned their small groups from pastoral house groups to more evangelistic cell groups.⁸¹² By the end of the 1990s seminars on

⁸⁰⁶ See 3.3.

⁸⁰⁷ These figures do not include a number of churches who indicated that their first Sunday attendance was abnormally high due to the support from other local churches.

⁸⁰⁸ Haydon-Knowell, R. *How to lead a House Group*. (Hove:Coastlands. 1982).

⁸⁰⁹ Haydon-Knowell, R & S. *Wednesday Night at Eight*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1985).

⁸¹⁰ Haydon-Knowell, R. 4-6 and *ibid.* 11-12.

⁸¹¹ For instance Trudinger, R. *Cells for life*. (Eastbourne:Kingsway. 1983).

⁸¹² Kay, (2007) 201. Beckham is the author of the influential *Second Reformation*. Beckham, B. *Second Reformation*. (Houston:Touch. 1995).

cell group principles were held regularly at Stoneleigh⁸¹³ and were often linked to church planting.⁸¹⁴

The 2005 survey revealed a variety of small group structures. Recipients were asked about the importance of “cell groups”,⁸¹⁵ “G-12”,⁸¹⁶ and “other midweek structures”. Of the 46 returned questionnaires, 45.7% said that cell groups were either very important or quite important, and 34.8% said the same about “other midweek structures”, while none of those questioned replied that G-12 had any importance for them.

6.2.2 Sunday worship and teaching

With Newfrontiers' emphasis on the Spirit and the Bible, it might be expected that there would be a link between the growth of their church plants and their Sunday meetings and that this would show itself in the two main meeting activities, that is worship and teaching. Perhaps predictably, the church leaders themselves were very positive about the impact of their worship and teaching, with 60.9% reporting that they felt both were “very important”.

6.3 Alpha and evangelistic strategies

6.3.1 Alpha

Many within Newfrontiers have energetically championed Alpha as an effective evangelistic tool, and this is frequently seen in the context of church planting. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority⁸¹⁷ said that Alpha had been quite or very important to their growth, although it is perhaps unexpected that 36.6% did not. However this is in the context of only 77.8% who were actually using Alpha in September 2005 when the questionnaire was completed.⁸¹⁸ It would seem that despite the enthusiastic rhetoric, not all Newfrontiers church plants regularly use Alpha, either because of their lack of resources or perhaps because of the sparsity of contacts willing to commit to a 10 week course.

⁸¹³ For instance Alan Preston spoke on “Effective Cell Groups” at Stoneleigh in 1998.

⁸¹⁴ For instance Thompson, “Cell strategy for church planting.” *NMag.* (2003) 13-17.

⁸¹⁵ i.e. groups following the format of Neighbour and Beckham. See Neighbour. and Beckham.

⁸¹⁶ i.e. groups following the format of Castellanos. See Castellanos, C. *Leadership of success through the group of 12.* (Colombia:Editorial Villit. 1999).

⁸¹⁷ 63.5%.

⁸¹⁸ September is the start of the main period of the year for Alpha.

6.3.2 Direct evangelistic activities

The questionnaires also asked about the perceived importance of a number of more direct evangelistic strategies, including the use of open air evangelistic meetings, door to door work and guest services. The guest services were further divided into those that were in a “seeker”⁸¹⁹ style and “other” styles that would, in a Newfrontiers context, often involve prayer for the sick. As would be expected, the results varied in terms of numbers of church plants that were using these methods and the importance they attached to them.

6.4 Involvement in the local community

6.4.1 Social activities

Pub quizzes, barbecues and a variety of other activities are often organised by church plants with the dual purpose of providing an environment where Christians can relate together, and a place where those who are non-Christians can meet members of the church. Mike Springer, a Newfrontiers evangelist, recently quoted Singlehurst as saying that the aim of church based social events should be that non-Christians will come to see that “God is good and Christians are OK.”⁸²⁰

The perceived importance of social activities is shown by 85.3% of leaders saying that they believed it had been either quite or very important to their growth. Of all the factors questioned, this was the fourth highest behind Sunday worship, Sunday teaching and prayer.

6.4.2 Work with the poor

Community involvement by church plants has already been examined.⁸²¹ In the 2005 survey just over one third reported that they were currently “working with the poor”. This is despite church plants having limited resources, and needing a long term strategy to work effectively in the community.⁸²²

⁸¹⁹ Dobson, E. *Starting a seeker sensitive service*. (Amersham-on-the-Hill:Scripture Press. 1992).

⁸²⁰ Taken from Singlehurst, L. *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*. (Leicester:Crossway. 1995) 34-35.

⁸²¹ See 3.5.

⁸²² Cooper, 63-64.

6.4.3 Children and youth work

The commitment of Newfrontiers to its children and in particular to its teenagers through *Newday* has been documented already.⁸²³ Newfrontiers sees itself as a family of churches of all ages and it values the potential of its children and teenagers.⁸²⁴

6.5 Support from the wider Newfrontiers family

6.5.1 Initial financial backing

There is often an unquestioned assumption that to start a church successfully, a church plant requires a leader who has sufficient resources to work “full-time”. There is some evidence that this view is prevalent within Newfrontiers with the practice of funding leaders planting into “significant” towns and cities.⁸²⁵

However, some question whether being released “full-time” is necessarily the best. For instance, within Elim, Richardson discovered that all but one of the church plants that had closed had been led by full-time leaders.⁸²⁶ Sjogren and Lewin go further and advise church planters to work outside the congregation until the church reaches about 250. Among their reasons for this are that working locally can provide a fruitful source of local contacts, and that a reduction in the leaders’ available time will help to ensure that everyone takes their share of responsibility.⁸²⁷

Chart 6.3 shows the wide variety of ways that the church planting leaders were financed during the first year of the church plant. It reveals that over half were financed within Newfrontiers,⁸²⁸ while a third were funded from their own resources.⁸²⁹

⁸²³ See 1.1.7 and 2.3.

⁸²⁴ Virgo, “A New Generation” *NFMag.* (1989) 6.

⁸²⁵ “Significant” is usually taken to mean church plants that are in strategic locations and are in turn expected to become bases for further church planting. They are usually led by more established leaders who receive a full salary for the first year and 50% during the second year.

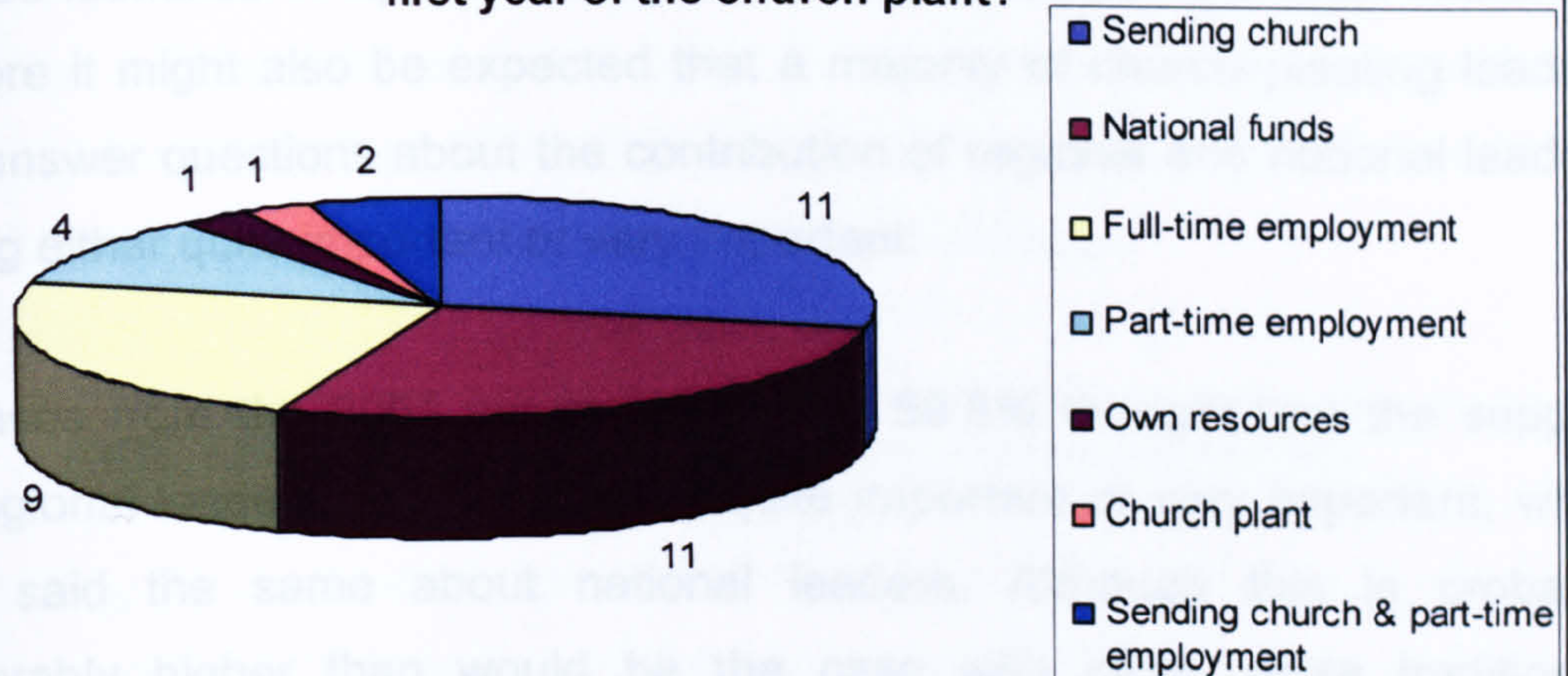
⁸²⁶ Richardson, 37.

⁸²⁷ Sjogren, S. & Lewin, R. *Community of kindness.* (Ventura:Regal. 2003) 172-174.

⁸²⁸ 56.4% - either by the “sending church” or out of national funds.

⁸²⁹ 35.9% - either by employment or by their “own resources”.

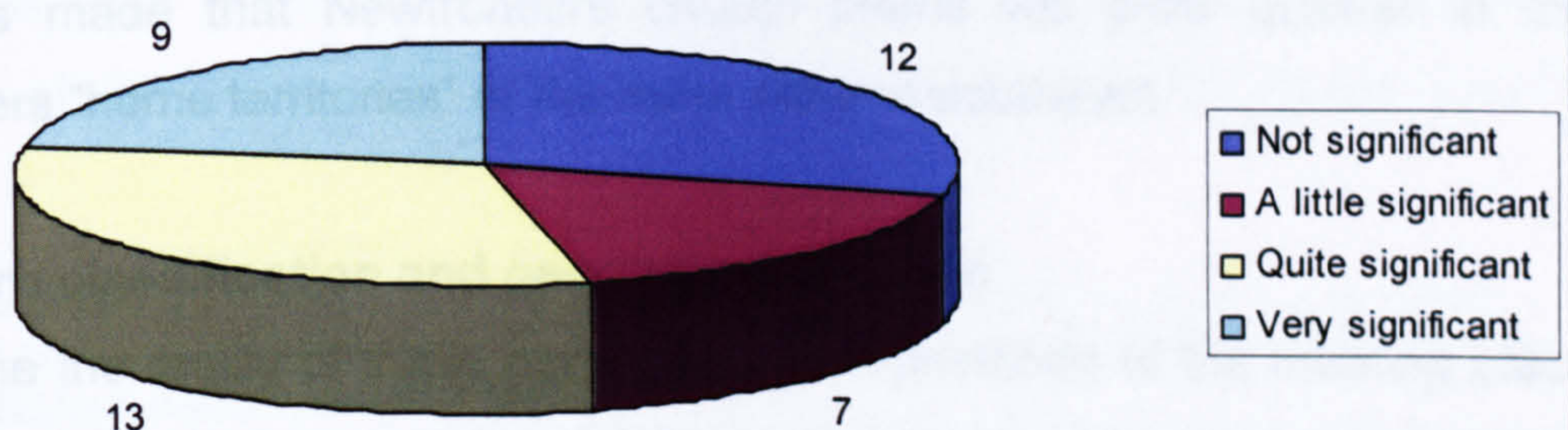
Chart 6.3: How was the leader financed during the first year of the church plant?



6.5.2 Support from local Newfrontiers churches

Newfrontiers prides itself as being a “family of churches on a mission together”. It might be expected, therefore, that there would be a high degree of mutual co-operation and a corresponding appreciation of support from local Newfrontiers churches. However, as chart 6.4 shows, the responses from the leaders ranged from not important to very important. These views were not linked to any geographical region, but were distributed across the country.

Chart 6.4 How important to the growth of your church has been the support from other local Newfrontiers church?



6.5.3 Support from regional and national Newfrontiers leadership

Virgo has repeatedly commented that Newfrontiers is not something that can be “joined” but rather is a family, based firmly upon shared relationships, common

values and a collective mission.⁸³⁰ There is also an emphasis on the travelling ministries identified in Ephesians 4, and their contribution to a local church.⁸³¹ Therefore it might also be expected that a majority of church planting leaders would answer questions about the contribution of regional and national leaders as being either quite important or very important.

Responses from the 2005 survey show that 58.8% thought that the support from regional leaders had been either quite important or very important, while 31.6% said the same about national leaders. Although this is probably considerably higher than would be the case with other, more traditional, Christian denominations, it might seem low for a relatively new “family” of churches. In addition, in telephone interviews some leaders appeared indifferent towards the support they had received from the leadership of Newfrontiers. There was an unwillingness to be quoted, but comments were made that some church planting leaders felt isolated and unsupported.

6.6 Location

There is a common perception within Newfrontiers that it is far stronger in the southeast of England. This is despite the more recent intentional emphasis on becoming an international movement with a strong home base spread throughout the whole of the UK. To an extent this may just be an inevitable result of having a longer history in that area.⁸³² The assumption is also sometimes made that Newfrontiers church plants will grow quicker in the Newfrontiers “home territories” of the more affluent southeast.

6.6.1 Acorn classification and geographic location

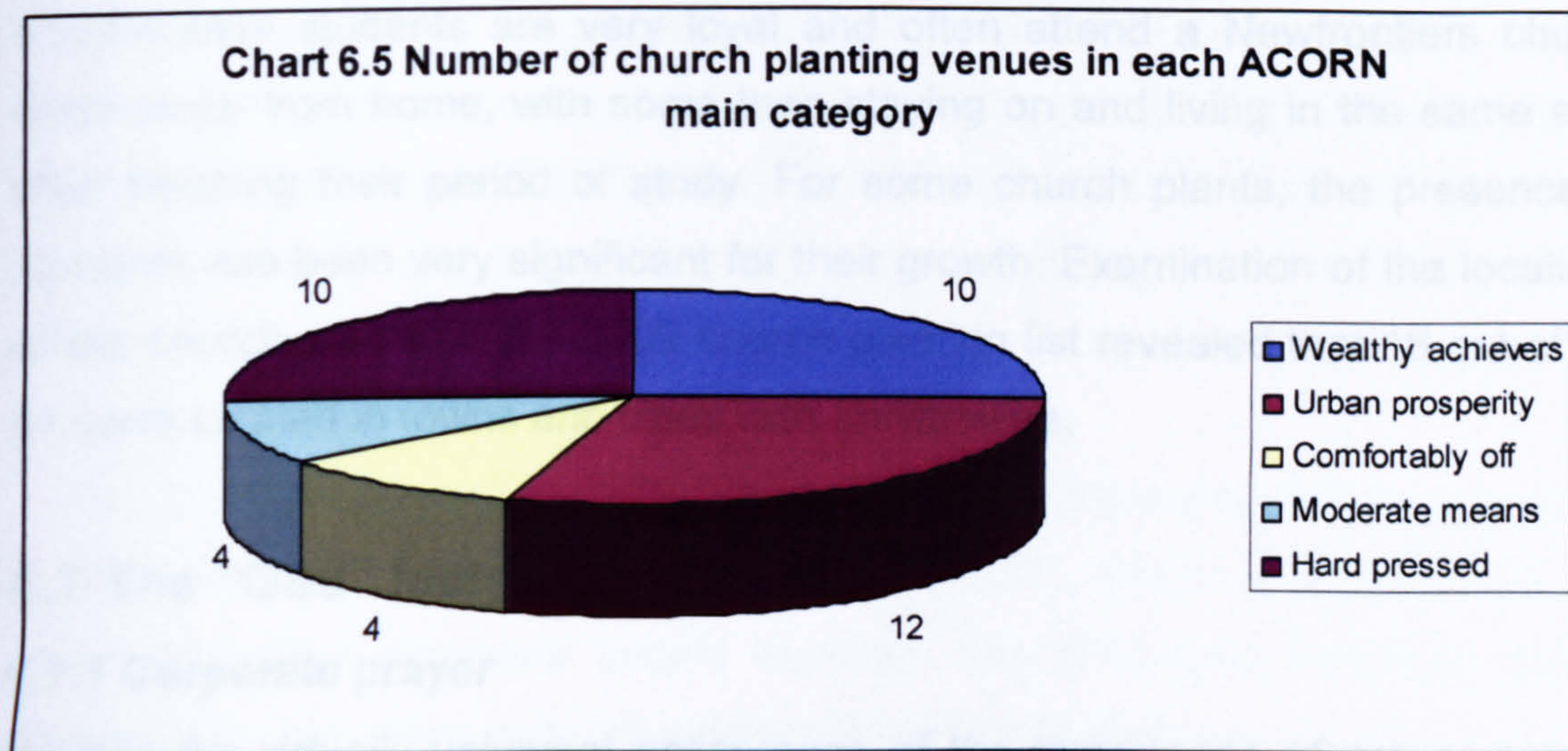
To examine the reality of these perceptions, the postcode of the meeting place of each church plant was entered into *www.upmystreet.com* to discover its

⁸³⁰ For instance this was repeated during a recent leader’s prayer and fasting in the context of a large group of churches that had asked to “join” Newfrontiers from Africa.

⁸³¹ Virgo, (2001). 298-299.

⁸³² The first Downs Bible Week was in 1979 and from then until the bow and arrow prophecy in 1990 Newfrontiers (and Coastlands before that) worked almost exclusively in the southeast.

ACORN classification.⁸³³ This is a geodemographic tool used by marketing professionals to understand the characteristics of a specific area. Chart 6.5 shows the numbers of church plants in each of the five main ACORN categories. It reveals that 60% of church plants meet in the top two ACORN categories with the highest income and standard of living.



6.6.2 Government regions, North/South divide, and distance from Brighton

In order to consider further the potential advantage of a church plant being based in the southeast of England a number of further tests were carried out. These included the identification of which Government region⁸³⁴ the church plant was located in, where it fell on the rather crude north/south divide,⁸³⁵ and its distance from Brighton.⁸³⁶ The results showed that church plants were present in all 10 regions with the largest number being in the South East;⁸³⁷

⁸³³ ACORN is an acronym meaning "A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods". It comprises 5 categories, 17 groups and 54 neighbourhood types. For more information on ACORN classifications see <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/whatis.asp> (accessed 7-4-2006).

⁸³⁴ Details of these administrative regions can be found at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/national> (accessed 19-10-2007). As these regions only refer to England, for this purposes Wales and Scotland was taken as additional regions.

⁸³⁵ For this purpose the church plants were divided into whether they were north or south of the Watford Gap, an imaginary dividing line sometimes used in popular speech. See for instance http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=489513&in_page_id=1770 (accessed 19-10-2007).

⁸³⁶ Church of Christ the King in Brighton is Virgo's home church and a centre for some of the administration of Newfrontiers. It is the location for the main annual leaders' conference and is in some ways the "home" of Newfrontiers.

⁸³⁷ 10 church plants were in the Government region of the South East that includes Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

they were split almost equally between north and south;⁸³⁸ and their distance from Brighton varied from 27 miles to 510 miles with an average of 182.9 miles.

6.6.3 Located within a university town

The emphasis upon reaching students and the impact this has on church planting within Newfrontiers has been outlined.⁸³⁹ It would appear that many Newfrontiers students are very loyal and often attend a Newfrontiers church while away from home, with some then staying on and living in the same area after finishing their period of study. For some church plants, the presence of students has been very significant for their growth. Examination of the locations of the church plants on the 2002 church planting list revealed that 16 out of the 41 were located in towns and cities with universities.

6.7 The “God” factor

6.7.1 Corporate prayer

Despite the virtually universal acceptance of the importance of prayer among Christian writers, there are few references to prayer in the context of church planting.⁸⁴⁰ For instance there are no chapters addressing prayer in *Planting tomorrow's churches today*,⁸⁴¹ *Church planting - laying foundations*,⁸⁴² *Planting new churches in a postmodern age*,⁸⁴³ or *Planting mission-shaped churches today*.⁸⁴⁴ This omission may in part be due to an assumption that the importance of prayer is taken as read, or a sub-conscious acknowledgement that church planting practitioners are largely pragmatic activists. Slagle warns: “The great temptation of church planters is to choose activity over prayer.”⁸⁴⁵

⁸³⁸ 48.8% were north of Watford Gap and 51.2% were south of it.

⁸³⁹ See 2.3.

⁸⁴⁰ An exception is Slagle, D. *The prayer-driven church plant*. A DMin thesis presented to Asbury Theological Seminary and published on the internet:

http://uploads.acts29network.org/media/Articles/Doctoral_Dissertation_The_Power_of_a_Prayer_Driven_Church_Plant.pdf (May 2006) (accessed 21-3-2008).

⁸⁴¹ Robinson & Christine.

⁸⁴² Murray, (2001).

⁸⁴³ Stetzer.

⁸⁴⁴ Robinson.

⁸⁴⁵ Slagle.

Robinson does include a single page on “The importance of prayer” and warns against allowing too much activity to “crowd out the place of prayer.”⁸⁴⁶ Booker and Ireland also state that “without constant, undergirding prayer, most evangelism strategies will ultimately fail.”⁸⁴⁷

Although it is not possible in this thesis to examine the impact of prayer in detail,⁸⁴⁸ there is an assumption in Newfrontiers that prayer should have a central place, both in the life of individual Christians and corporately in a church. This belief has always been enthusiastically promoted by Virgo. In *Praying the Lord's Prayer* Virgo, writes: “Prayer is one of the most vital issues facing Christians today.”⁸⁴⁹

It is hard to imagine anyone within Newfrontiers disagreeing with the concept of corporate prayer. As would be expected therefore, 93.8% of leaders said they currently held a corporate prayer meeting, with 90% also indicating that its contribution was either quite important or very important.

6.7.2 Signs and wonders

One of the Christian leaders who have had a significant impact upon Virgo and on Newfrontiers is John Wimber.⁸⁵⁰ Although he never spoke at Stoneleigh, Wimber did speak alongside Virgo at a number of major conferences in Brighton. Arguably Wimber's lasting legacy, as far as Newfrontiers is concerned, is the impact of his teaching on healing and signs and wonders.⁸⁵¹ Both Newfrontiers' style of prayer for the sick and their emphasis upon signs and wonders can be traced primarily back to the influence of Wimber.⁸⁵²

Writing in 2007 in a magazine dedicated to the subject of healing, Groves exhorts: “Healings, signs and wonders are on God's agenda for us... Let us

⁸⁴⁶ Robinson & Christine, 294.

⁸⁴⁷ Booker & Ireland, 182.

⁸⁴⁸ For a recent contribution see Yancey, P. *Prayer – does it make any difference?* (London:Hodder & Stoughton. 2006).

⁸⁴⁹ Virgo, T. *Praying the Lord's Prayer*. (Milton Keynes:Word. 1993). 11.

⁸⁵⁰ Virgo, (2001). 151-158.

⁸⁵¹ See Wimber, J. & Springer, K. *Power Evangelism*. (London:Hodder & Stoughton. 1985) and Wimber, J. & Springer, K. *Power Healing*. (London:Hodder & Stoughton. 1986).

⁸⁵² Virgo, T. “A journey into healing.” *NMag*. (Vol. 3-3. Apr-Jun 2007).

determine to keep laying hands on the sick with an increasing faith and expectation that they will get well!"⁸⁵³

Despite this emphasis it would appear that the impact of signs and wonders upon church planting in Newfrontiers is limited. The 2005 survey revealed that only 20.5% said that signs and wonders had been either quite important or very important to the growth of their church plant, the fifth lowest response.⁸⁵⁴

Conclusion

Chapter six has considered twenty possible factors that might be considered significant to a successful church plant. Together they form the foundation for the statistical analysis in section four.

⁸⁵³ Groves, J. "A healing King and a healing kingdom. *NMag.* (Vol. 3-3. Apr-Jun 2007).

⁸⁵⁴ That is fifth out of nineteen subjects examined.

Section 4: Statistical analysis

This final section will build upon the foundations laid in the previous sections and look for reasons to account for the growth and expansion of Newfrontiers. It will do that by examining the statistical data produced by SPSS from the 2005 survey, and follow up telephone interviews. It will do so primarily using two statistical tests, namely Pearson correlation (r) and Pearson chi-square (X^2). Pearson correlation is used where both sets of variables are ordinal,⁸⁵⁵ that is where they can be arranged on a scale or in order; Pearson chi-square where at least one set of variables is nominal,⁸⁵⁶ that is they are names or do not have scalar attributes.

The tables below give two figures: the value and the significance. In Pearson chi-square, the larger the value is, the more significant the connection is likely to be. In the Pearson correlation, this is shown by how close the value is to 1 or -1.

The significance indicates the likelihood of these figures occurring randomly by chance. Thus a significance of .05 suggests that they would occur randomly less than five times in a hundred. This is usually taken to be the point where the relationship is said to be statistically significant.⁸⁵⁷

To further explore any connection the factors that are statistically significant in chapter 7 are crosstabulated. These tables show the number of variables set out against each category.

Chapter 7 will examine the factors previously described in chapter 6 and will highlight those that are statistically significant to the various measures of growth as suggested in 5.2. Finally, chapter 8 will summarise what a “not so successful” and “very successful” church plant will look like. Chapter 8 will also

⁸⁵⁵ For instance questions which have a scale of answers such as “very important”, “quite important”, “a little important” and “not important” or a numerical answer.

⁸⁵⁶ For instance questions which have unconnected names as answers such as Government regions or “yes”/“no” answers.

⁸⁵⁷ Kay, (2000). xxi.

start to consider Osmer's "pragmatic task",⁸⁵⁸ that is the implications that can be drawn from this research. These will then be expanded in the Conclusion.

⁸⁵⁸ Osmer, 175-218.

Chapter 7: Statistically significant and not statistically significant

Having considered in chapter six the factors that might be significant; this chapter examines each of the six success measures outlined in 5.2 and uses data from SPSS to identify factors that are statistically significant. It does this from the information gathered from the 2005 survey as detailed in the Methodology. Statistically, some factors are seen as being more significant than others, perhaps with a possible link to one specific measure of success. Suggestions are made to account for any correlation, and these are then crosstabulated to give an indication of how the connection has occurred.

7.1 Factors statistically significant

7.1.1 Measure 1: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 10%

The first measure to be considered, are church plants that have seen their Sunday attendance grow by a Compound Annual Growth Rate of at least 10%. Of the 40 church plants that supplied this information, 87.5% experienced this level of growth.

What are the significant correlations?

SPSS could only find one correlation between the church plants that had achieved a CAGR of more than 10%, and the potential contributing factors listed in chapter six. Table 7.1 shows this link with the Government regions.

Table 7.1 Significance of measure 1 and Government regions.

| | Measure 1: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 10% | |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| (Pearson chi-square) | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of Government regions | 24.849 | .003 |

Observations

1. Despite the statistical link found by Pearson chi-square, it is not clear how the location within a particular **Government region** impacts upon the growth of Sunday attendance. The crosstabulation shown in table 7.2 reveals that the five church plants not reaching this measure were spread in four out of the ten regions. However it also shows that all of the 25% of church plants in the South

East had achieved this measure, and all but one of the five that did not were based in regions in the Midlands or further north. These figures might suggest that church plants away from the south are less likely to see growth in Sunday attendance,⁸⁵⁹ but the small numbers of church plants not achieving this measure caution against dogmatism.

Table 7.2 Crosstabulation between measure 1 and Government regions.

| | | Government Regions | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|--------|----------|------------|
| | | South East | South West | West Midlands | North West | East of England | Yorks & Humber | East Midlands | London | Scotland | North East |
| Measure 1: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 10% | No | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Yes | 10 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 |

7.1.2 Measure 2: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 30%

This category includes church plants that have seen the fastest growth in Sunday attendance, that is church plants with a CAGR of over 30%.⁸⁶⁰

What are the significant correlations?

When SPSS used the Pearson chi-square to explore any correlation between church plants with a CAGR of over 30% and the factors listed in chapter six, three were found to be statistically significant. Their relationship is shown in table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Significance of measure 2 and social activities; signs and wonders; and other midweek meetings.

| | Measure 2: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 30% | |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| (Pearson chi-square) | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of social activities | 6.425 | .040 |
| Importance of signs and wonders | 11.771 | .008 |
| Importance of "other" midweek meetings | 11.833 | .008 |

⁸⁵⁹ Although the three church plants in Scotland all achieved this measure.

⁸⁶⁰ The church plants in this category obviously also include those discussed under measure 1.

Observations

1. **Social activities** are used widely within Newfrontiers' church plants. However the crosstabulation shown in table 7.4 does not indicate that their significance is necessarily greater in church plants that had achieved this measure. 73.3% of church plants that had achieved a CAGR of 30% answered that the impact of social activities had been "quite important" (rather than "little" or "very"). This may indicate that while the leaders of the fastest growing church plants thought social activities were important, less emphasis was put on them as compared with some of the other factors examined.⁸⁶¹

Table 7.4 Crosstabulation between measure 2 and the perceived importance of social activities.

| | | Perceived importance of social activities | | | |
|--|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 2: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 30% | No | 0 | 4 | 8 | 13 |
| | Yes | 0 | 1 | 11 | 3 |

2. The crosstabulation between measure 2 and **signs and wonders** shown in table 7.5 also shows a correlation that is not straightforward. Although 91.3% of leaders in church plants not achieving this measure answered that the impact of signs and wonders was not or only a little important, the majority of measure 2 achieving leaders did not answer "quite" or "very". Again, their largest single answer was "quite important" with no-one answering that signs and wonders had been "very important".

From the crosstabulation it could be suggested that church plants not seeing signs and wonders as having great importance to their numerical growth are also less likely to have grown significantly. However, it is not possible to make the opposite assumption; this is that those that have grown by over 30% attribute this to the importance of signs and wonders.

⁸⁶¹ For instance 86.7% of leaders who had achieved measure 2 thought that their Sunday worship was very important.

Table 7.5 Crosstabulation between measure 2 and the perceived importance of signs and wonders.

| | | Perceived importance of signs and wonders | | | |
|--|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 2: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 30% | No | 11 | 10 | 0 | 2 |
| | Yes | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 |

3. Table 7.6 shows the crosstabulation between church plants that had achieved 30% CAGR in Sunday attendance and “other” midweek structures.⁸⁶² It reveals that the churches that had not achieved measure 2 were equally divided amongst the top two and bottom two answers. However, nearly three quarters of those that had achieved this measure were in the bottom two categories. This rather confusing picture would suggest that although a statistical link has been found, it is not likely to be one of cause and effect. Despite what is sometimes assumed, there is no evidence from this research that midweek structures, of any kind, have a significant impact upon numerical growth in Sunday attendance.

Table 7.6 Crosstabulation between measure 2 and the perceived importance of “other” midweek meetings.

| | | Perceived importance of “other” midweek meetings | | | |
|--|-----|--|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 2: Sunday attendance with a CAGR of over 30% | No | 11 | 1 | 9 | 3 |
| | Yes | 6 | 5 | 0 | 4 |

7.1.3 Measure 3: At least 20% of growth due to conversion

It has been suggested that it is insufficient to consider numerical growth without determining where these new additions have come from.⁸⁶³ Measure 3 includes church plants that have seen at least 20% of those who have joined the church do so because they have become Christians. 62.5% of the 40 church plants achieved this measure.

⁸⁶² i.e. not Neighbour’s Cell Groups or Castellanos’ G-12 Groups. See 6.2.1.

⁸⁶³ See 4.2.

What are the significant correlations?

SPSS could not find any factors to be statistically significant to this measure.

7.1.4 Measure 4: An increase in the core group by a CAGR of at least 20%

The fourth measure used in this thesis to define a “successful” church plant comprise of those who have a core group that have experienced a CAGR of at least 20%. 82.5% of church plants who completed the 2005 survey achieved this.

What are the significant correlations?

Statistically, four correlations were found between church plants that had seen their core group grow by at least 20% and the factors listed in chapter six. Three of these relate to the meetings and activities, and the other to the theological training of the church planting leader. Their relationship is shown in table 7.7.

Table 7.7 Significance of measure 4 and Sunday worship; Sunday teaching; social activities; and the theological training of the leader.

| (Pearsons chi-squared) | Measure 4: Core group with a CAGR of over 20% | |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of Sunday worship | 14.422 | .000 |
| Importance of Sunday teaching | 8.703 | .013 |
| Importance of social activities | 7.172 | .028 |
| Importance of theological training of leader | 11.783 | .019 |

Observations

1. Table 7.8 shows a very obvious link between leaders who said that their **Sunday worship** had been very important and church plants that had achieved this measure. Of the 29 leaders who perceived their Sunday worship to be very important, all but one⁸⁶⁴ was in a church plant that had experienced more than 20% growth in their core group.

The question may be asked whether the quality of Sunday worship increases the size of the core group or whether an increasing core group contributes towards more inspiring Sunday worship. The answer may be in a mixture of

⁸⁶⁴ That is 96.6%.

both. It would seem likely that in a Newfrontiers context, Sunday worship is one of the main factors that encourage visitors to return. Inspiring charismatic worship⁸⁶⁵ may therefore increase the likelihood of attracting and keeping mature Christians. However, it may also be true that an increasing number of committed Christians will almost inevitably include some who are significant worship leaders and musicians, thereby increasing the quality and potential impact of the worship.

Table 7.8 Crosstabulation between measure 4 and the perceived importance of Sunday worship.

| | | Perceived importance of Sunday worship | | | |
|---|-----|--|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 4: Core group with a CAGR of over 20% | No | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 |
| | Yes | 0 | 0 | 5 | 28 |

2. When the relationship between measure 4 and the importance of **Sunday teaching** is tabulated, a very similar picture emerges. In this case 92.6% of leaders who said that the Sunday teaching had been very important to their growth were from church plants that had a core group with a CAGR of at least 20%. The comments made regarding Sunday worship are also relevant here with the correlation also likely to be a cyclical one.

Table 7.9 Crosstabulation between measure 4 and the perceived importance of Sunday teaching.

| | | Perceived importance of Sunday teaching | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 4: Core group with a CAGR of over 20% | No | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Yes | 0 | 0 | 8 | 25 |

3. Table 7.10 reveals that 93.9% of church plants that had seen their core group grow by at least 20% described **social activities** as being either quite or very important.⁸⁶⁶ That this is so high might suggest that social activities have a key role in the gathering, and maintaining people into a core group. Friendship is an important factor for anyone who joins a new church, and it is likely that regular

⁸⁶⁵ An inspiring worship service is also one of the eight “quality characteristics” that Schwarz says are present in all growing churches. Schwarz. 30-31.

⁸⁶⁶ Compared with 57.1% of church plants that had not met this measure.

social activities play a crucial part in developing friendships, which turn are key to encouraging Christians to get involved in a specific local church.

Table 7.10 Crosstabulation between measure 4 and the perceived importance of social activities.

| | | Perceived importance of social activities | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 4: Core group with a CAGR of over 20% | No | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | Yes | 0 | 2 | 17 | 14 |

4. Table 7.11 contains the crosstabulation between **theological training** and church plants that have achieved measure 4. It reveals that of the seven church plants not achieving this measure, 57.1% of the leaders had no theological training, whilst of the 32 church plants that did, 93.8% had received training. It is interesting that 100% of those with formal theological education, 90% of those who had undertaken Newfrontiers leadership training and 87.5% of those who had received some other practical training were leading churches with a core group that had experienced at least 20% growth. This suggests that the type of training is not as important as the fact that some training has taken place.

Table 7.11 Crosstabulation between measure 4 and theological training of the leader.

| | | Theological training of leader | | | | |
|---|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| | | Post-grad qualification | Theological degree | Newfrontiers leadership training | Other practical training | none |
| Measure 4: Core group with a CAGR of over 20% | No | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| | Yes | 1 | 4 | 18 | 7 | 2 |

7.1.5 Measure 5: Church plants that had been recognised as official Newfrontiers churches

By January 2007 all but two of the church plants that took part in this research had been accepted as official Newfrontiers churches.

What are the significant correlations?

SPSS found four relationships with significance and their relationship is shown in table 7.12.

Table 7.12 Significance of measure 5 and Sunday worship; social activities; open airs; and seeker services.

| (Pearson chi-square) | Measure 5: Recognition as a Newfrontiers church | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of Sunday worship | 5.550 | .018 |
| Importance of social activities | 14.737 | .001 |
| Open airs evangelistic meetings | 19.124 | .000 |
| Importance of seeker services | 19.000 | .000 |

Observations

1. Table 7.13 shows that **Sunday worship** was considered to be of importance to all the church plants. However, it is interesting that both church plants that had not been recognised as churches felt that their Sunday worship was only quite important compared with a majority⁸⁶⁷ of those successful in measure 5 who said that the Sunday worship was very important. In that one of the requirements to be recognised as a church centred around the Sunday meeting⁸⁶⁸ this is not a surprise, although it might also be expected that a statistical link with Sunday teaching would also be found.⁸⁶⁹

Table 7.13 Crosstabulation between measure 5 and the perceived importance of Sunday worship.

| | | Perceived importance of Sunday worship | | | |
|---|-----|--|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 5: Recognition as a Newfrontiers church | No | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | Yes | 0 | 0 | 9 | 29 |

2. 94.7% of church plants that had been recognised by Newfrontiers as a church said that their **social activities** had been either quite or very important. This is in stark contrast with those which had not been recognised, which all

⁸⁶⁷ 76.3%.

⁸⁶⁸ That is being able to hold "effective and sustainable" Sunday meetings – see 5.1.3.

⁸⁶⁹ According to Pearson chi-square, the significance of Sunday teaching to measure 5 is .086, that is that these results might be expected to occur 86 times in 1,000 which is not considered to be statistically significant.

replied that their social activities were only a little important. Taking into account the criteria for when a church plant should be recognised as a church, it is unlikely that social activities are a direct factor. However, it is likely that the momentum needed for this transition to take place is aided by a church programme that includes social activities. Conversely, it is also likely that church plants that tend to be small and struggling, and therefore not ready to be recognised as churches, are unlikely to have the time and energy to invest in a full programme of social activities.

Table 7.14 Crosstabulation between measure 5 and the perceived importance of social activities.

| | | Perceived importance of social activities | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 5: Recognition as a Newfrontiers church | No | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | Yes | 0 | 3 | 19 | 16 |

3. Tables 7.15 and 7.16 show the crosstabulation between church plants recognised as churches and the leaders' perceived importance of open air evangelistic meetings and seeker services. Although few conclusions can be made about church plants that had not achieved this measure, they do show that the majority of church plants successfully accepted as churches did not value open airs or seeker services very highly.

Table 7.15 Crosstabulation between measure 5 and the perceived importance of open air evangelistic meetings.

| | | Perceived importance of open air evangelistic meetings | | | |
|---|-----|--|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 5: Recognition as a Newfrontiers church | No | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Yes | 16 | 16 | 4 | 0 |

Table 7.16 Crosstabulation between measure 5 and the perceived importance of seeker services.

| | | Perceived importance of seeker services | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 5: Recognition as a Newfrontiers church | No | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Yes | 18 | 13 | 5 | 0 |

7.1.6 Measure 6: Church plants that have regular involvement in the community

The last of the six individual measures used in this thesis to assess the “successful” church plant is regular involvement in the community. This was determined during the telephone interviews which revealed that 70% of the church plants were active in this way.

What are the significant correlations?

Statistically, according to Pearson chi-square, there is a correlation between church plants that are involved in the community and the leaders’ perceived importance of the Sunday teaching.

Table 7.17 Significance of measure 6 and Sunday teaching.

| | Measure 6: Regular involvement in the community | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| (Pearson chi-square) | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of Sunday teaching | 6.711 | .035 |

Observations

1. The connection between the perceived importance of **Sunday teaching** to regular involvement in the community is an interesting and perhaps surprising one. Table 7.18 shows that 41.7% of the leaders of church plants that were not active in the community thought their teaching was very important, compared to 78.6% of leaders of church plants that were successful in this measure.

Table 7.18 Crosstabulation between measure 6 and the perceived importance of Sunday teaching.

| | | Perceived importance of Sunday teaching | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------|-------|------|
| | | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Measure 6: Regular involvement in the community | No | 0 | 0 | 7 | 5 |
| | Yes | 0 | 1 | 5 | 22 |

7.1.7 Overall scale of Success

Chapter 5 has argued that success should not be judged solely by numerical growth but by a range of measures as discussed above. When these six

measures are amalgamated, it is possible to grade each church plant according to a scale of success.⁸⁷⁰

What are the significant correlations?

When SPSS is used to analyse this scale, a number of factors were found to be significant. Some of these are the same as those contributing to individual measures as discussed above, and some are unique to the overall scale of success. Two statistical tests have been used: the Pearson chi-square where the data is nominal⁸⁷¹ and the Pearson correlation where the data is ordinal.⁸⁷²

Table 7.19 Significance of scale of success and the nominal factors that are statistically significant.

| | Overall scale of success | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| (Pearson chi-square) | Value | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Leadership experience | 17.077 | .029 |
| Church planting experience | 28.002 | .032 |

Table 7.20 Significance of scale of success and the ordinal factors that are statistically significant.

| | Overall scale of success | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| (Pearson correlation) | Value | Sig. (2-sided) |
| Importance of Sunday worship | .467 | .002 |
| Importance of Sunday teaching | .442 | .004 |
| Importance of signs and wonders | .384 | .017 |

Observations

1. The crosstabulation between **leadership experience** and the scale of success does substantiate that previous experience to eldership level is a significant factor. This confirms the often accepted assumption that leadership experience is important, and shows that wherever possible it should be to eldership level. In the Newfrontiers context, elders are usually responsible for the majority of Sunday teaching and have overall responsibility for leading the church. This experience has a direct and obvious relevance to leading a church plant. However, table 7.21 also suggests that having further experience as the senior leader is of no further advantage. This is surprising as it might have been

⁸⁷⁰ See 5.3 for the results of this as applied to the church plants on the 2005 list.

⁸⁷¹ That is where variables are names and do not have scalar attributes.

⁸⁷² That is where variables which can be arranged on a scale or in an order.

assumed that the advanced responsibility and experience that this role would have given would be a further advantage to church planting.

Table 7.21 Crosstabulation of scale of success and leadership experience of the main leader.

| | Scale | Leadership experience of the main leader | | |
|------------------|-------|--|-------|---------------|
| | | Small group / departmental | Elder | Senior Leader |
| Scale of success | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 3-4 | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| | 5-6 | 6 | 12 | 2 |

2. It might further be assumed that increased **experience in church planting** would also be beneficial in the same way as experience in leadership. This is the suggestion made by Richardson.⁸⁷³ Although the Pearson chi-square did show a connection, the crosstabulation shown in Table 7.22 presents some interesting results. This table shows that 70% of churches that had a success scale of 5 or 6, were led by leaders who had no previous church planting experience. This is surprising and counter-intuitive. When this is further crosstabulated with leadership and church planting experience the results show that the largest percentage⁸⁷⁴ of church plants with a success scale of 5 or 6 were led by those who were previously elders but had no prior church planting experience.

Table 7.22 Crosstabulation of scale of success and church planting experience of the main leader.

| | Scale | Church planting experience of the main leader | | | | |
|------------------|-------|---|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| | | Member of church plant | Leader of church plant | Senior leader of church plant | Newfrontiers church planting training | No experience |
| Scale of success | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 3-4 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| | 5-6 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 12 |

⁸⁷³ Richardson. 37.

⁸⁷⁴ That is 35%. The next highest category are those with no previous church planting experience but leadership experience as a small group or departmental leader (20%).

3. As with the impact upon measure 4, table 7.23 shows a clear correlation between **Sunday worship** and the scale of success. Of the 20 church plants who had reached level 5 or 6, 95% answered that their Sunday worship had been very important. Again the source of the cause and effect could be questioned, but once again it is likely that both contribute to each other. Sunday worship is undoubtedly a key ingredient in any "successful" or growing church plant, but conversely the numerical strength, spiritual passion and contagious enthusiasm that is likely to be present in such a church plant will have a very positive impact upon the Sunday worship.

Table 7.23 Crosstabulation of scale of success and the perceived importance of Sunday worship.

| | | Perceived significance of Sunday worship | | | | |
|------------------|-----|--|-----|--------|-------|------|
| | | Scale | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Scale of success | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| | 3-4 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 9 | |
| | 5-6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 19 | |

4. In the same way, the crosstabulation shown in table 7.24 reveals a similar, although slightly weaker link between the scale of success and perceived importance of **Sunday teaching**. In this context, 85% of church plants achieving level 5 or 6 reported that their Sunday teaching had been very important to the growth of their church. Again, it would seem likely that the impact of Sunday teaching both contributes to, and is a product of, a church plant which is high on the scale of success.

Table 7.24 Crosstabulation of scale of success and the perceived importance of Sunday teaching.

| | | Perceived significance of Sunday teaching | | | | |
|------------------|-----|---|-----|--------|-------|------|
| | | Scale | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Scale of success | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| | 3-4 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 9 | |
| | 5-6 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 17 | |

5. Table 7.25 shows the connection between **signs and wonders** and the overall scale of success. It shows a general increase in perceived importance in line with an increasing success scale.

It would seem likely from this research that signs and wonders are one of the factors that directly cause growth of church plants. It is possible that their presence has a number of positive benefits including a perceived confirmation of God's presence among the church plant, an increased "feel-good factor" and a positive influence on those who are non-Christians.

Table 7.25 Crosstabulation of scale of success and the perceived importance of signs and wonders.

| | | Perceived significance of signs and wonders | | | |
|------------------|-------|---|--------|-------|------|
| | Scale | Not | Little | Quite | Very |
| Scale of success | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | 3-4 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| | 5-6 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 1 |

7.2 Factors not statistically significant

7.1 describe a number of different factors that are statistically significant to some aspect of the growth or success of a church plant. While some of these may have been easy to predict, other factors are conspicuous by their absence and are highlighted below.

7.2.1 Cell groups

While a link was found with the "other" midweek structures, no statistical correlation was found between the leaders' perceived importance of cell groups and any of the success measures. However, when the importance of cell groups is crosstabulated with the scale of success, 44.4% of leaders in church plants with a scale of 5-6 reported that their cell groups had been very important to the growth of the church plant. Although the Pearson correlation could not

find a statistical link,⁸⁷⁵ that almost half of church plants with a scale of success of 5 or 6 also reported that their cell groups were very important to their growth, suggests that many of the more successful church plants also put a high value on cell groups.

7.2.2 Alpha

Although no statistical connection to growth has been established, it is likely that Alpha is a helpful tool for church plants. Interestingly, in all of the crosstabulations between Alpha and the different success measures, the highest response among church plants that had met the particular measure was that Alpha had been “quite important”. This would suggest that although no statistical link could be found, the value of Alpha is acknowledged in many of the more successful church plants.

7.2.3 Corporate prayer

89.7% of leaders answered that corporate prayer had been either quite or very important to the growth of their church plant. That this was almost universal throughout each of the success scales might indicate why no statistical significance was found. Again, it is interesting that although the Pearson correlation could not find a statistical link,⁸⁷⁶ 60% of church plants with a scale of success of 5 or 6 also reported that corporate prayer was very important to their growth.

7.2.4 Gifting of leaders

The wide ranging mix of giftings has already been noted,⁸⁷⁷ with no statistical connection with the overall success scale or any individual measure. However the crosstabulation of the giftings with those who had a success scale of 6 reveal that all five church plants were led by leaders who reported having a gift of leadership and four of those also said they had a gift of teaching. In other

⁸⁷⁵ According to Pearson correlation, the significance of cell groups to the scale of success is .172, that is that these results might be expected to occur 172 times in 1,000 which is not considered statistically significant.

⁸⁷⁶ According to Pearson correlation, the significance of corporate prayer to the scale of success is .333, that is that these results might be expected to occur 333 times in 1,000 which is not considered statistically significant.

⁸⁷⁷ See 6.1.11.

words, 80% of church plants with the highest success scale were led by those with the gift of leadership and teaching. When those with a score of 5 or 6 were examined, 66.7% were led by those with the same two gifts. Perhaps significantly, these are also two of the main gifts of Virgo.

7.2.5 North / South divide

References to the perceived differences between the work of Newfrontiers in the north and south of the UK have already been made.⁸⁷⁸ However, statistically no link could be found, except a connection between Government regions and measure 1; that is church plants that have grown by at least 10%.⁸⁷⁹ In this case crosstabulation would suggest that this link is not straightforward.⁸⁸⁰ Church plants further away from the South East do not necessarily have less success in reaching this measure. It may be that further research would identify the link as being due to a separate external factor such as the level of organisation and resources of a particular Newfrontiers region.

Although 100% of the church plants that had not been recognised as a church were to be found in the north, it is unclear how significant this is due to the small numbers involved.⁸⁸¹ If there is a connection, it may be down to the comparative isolation and distance away from the senior Newfrontiers leaders, most of which are based in the South East of England.

Table 7.26 reveals that nearly two thirds of church plants that had grown by more than 20% through conversion were south of Watford Gap, and just over two thirds of those which had not were north of Watford Gap. Although not statistically significant,⁸⁸² this is the one set of results that might indicate that the growth of Newfrontiers church plants are affected by where they are situated. However, rather than being due to any bias of Newfrontiers to the South East it

⁸⁷⁸ See 6.1.19.

⁸⁷⁹ See 7.1.1

⁸⁸⁰ See table 7.1.

⁸⁸¹ Out of the 41 church plants examined only two were not recognised as churches.

⁸⁸² According to Pearson chi-square, the significance of the location of church plants north or south of the Watford Gap to the scale of success is .060, that is that these results might be expected to occur 60 times in 1,000 which is not considered statistically significant.

may be indicative of a wider openness to Christianity in the "Bible-belts" of the South and the comparative indifference of those in the industrialised North.

Table 7.26 Crosstabulation measure 3 and church plants north and south of the Watford Gap.

| | | Church plants north and south of Watford Gap | |
|--|-----|--|----------------------|
| | | North of Watford Gap | South of Watford Gap |
| Measure 3: at least 20% through conversion | No | 10 | 5 |
| | Yes | 9 | 16 |

Conclusion

Table 7.27 shows the different factors that are statistically significant to the various growth measures where the crosstabulation suggests some sort of causal link. A question mark indicates that the crosstabulation is unclear as to why this connection has taken place, while "YES" indicates a causal link that is shown clearly from the crosstabulation.

Table 7.27 Factors that are statistically significant and probably have a causal link.

| | Measure: | | | | | | Scale of success |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------|
| | 1. Sunday attendance growing by at least 10% | 2. Sunday attendance growing by at least 30% | 3. At least 20% growth due to conversions | 4. Core group growing by at least 20% | 5. Recognition as a church | 6. Regular involvement in the community | |
| Importance of Sunday worship | | | | YES | YES | | YES |
| Importance of Sunday teaching | | | | YES | | ? | YES |
| Importance of social activities | | ? | | YES | ? | | |
| Previous eldership experience | | | | | | | YES |
| Importance of signs and wonders | | ? | | | | | ? |
| Location within south / southeast | ? | | | | | | |
| Theological training of leader | | | | ? | | | |

Chapter 8: “Not so successful” and “very successful” church plants

Having produced a scale of “success” in chapter five, and after using SPSS to identify the different factors that contribute towards a successful church plant in chapter seven, this chapter describes the characteristics of a typical “not so successful” and “very successful” church plant. For this purpose, “not so successful” includes the nine church plants that had a scale of success of two or three, while “very successful” refers to the five church plants that reached all six of the success measures.

8.1 Growth and development

Success measures

By definition, the very successful church plants had grown and developed more than the not so successful church plants. In contrast to those who had achieved all six success measures, table 8.1 shows the numbers of not so successful church plants that had reached each individual measure. It shows that these church plants were likely to have seen their Sunday attendance grow by a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10%, but probably not by 30%. They had probably been recognised by Newfrontiers as a church, and might have experienced a CAGR of at least 20% in their core group. They were unlikely, however, to have seen 20% of those who had joined do so because they had recently become Christians, and were unlikely to be involved in their community.

Table 8.1 The not so successful church plants and the six success measures.

| Numbers achieving: | 10% Sunday growth | 30% Sunday growth | 20% conversion growth | 20% core group growth | Church recognition | Community involvement |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| (Maximum 9) | 6 (66.7%) | 1 (11.1%) | 3 (33.3%) | 5 (55.6%) | 7 (77.8%) | 3 (33.3%) |

Actual percentages

It is no surprise that the actual figures that were used to define the success measures also confirm that the very successful church plants had experienced more growth than those achieving a scale of two or three. For instance the average CAGR of Sunday attendance for the not so successful church plants was 13.1%, while for the very successful church plants it was almost 40%.⁸⁸³ Additionally, the very successful church plants averaged almost twice as many new converts,⁸⁸⁴ while the CAGR of their core group was almost three times that of the not so successful church plants.⁸⁸⁵

June 2007

When the telephone interviews took place in June 2007, church plants that had a scale of two or three were likely to have around 40 adults attending on a Sunday, while the very successful ones had almost 90.⁸⁸⁶

Observations

1. From the way “success” has been defined in this thesis, these results are inevitable. By definition very successful church plants will be those which have scored highest on the scale of success.

2. However, it should also be noted that the averages of the not so successful church plants are still higher than the growth experienced by many more established churches. If a church plant consistently averaged 13.1% growth in Sunday attendance it would double in six years and a church plant that saw an increase in its core group by 30.8% each year would experience that doubling in three years.

⁸⁸³ 39.9%.

⁸⁸⁴ That is 26% compared with 13.3%.

⁸⁸⁵ That is 83.6% compared with 30.8%.

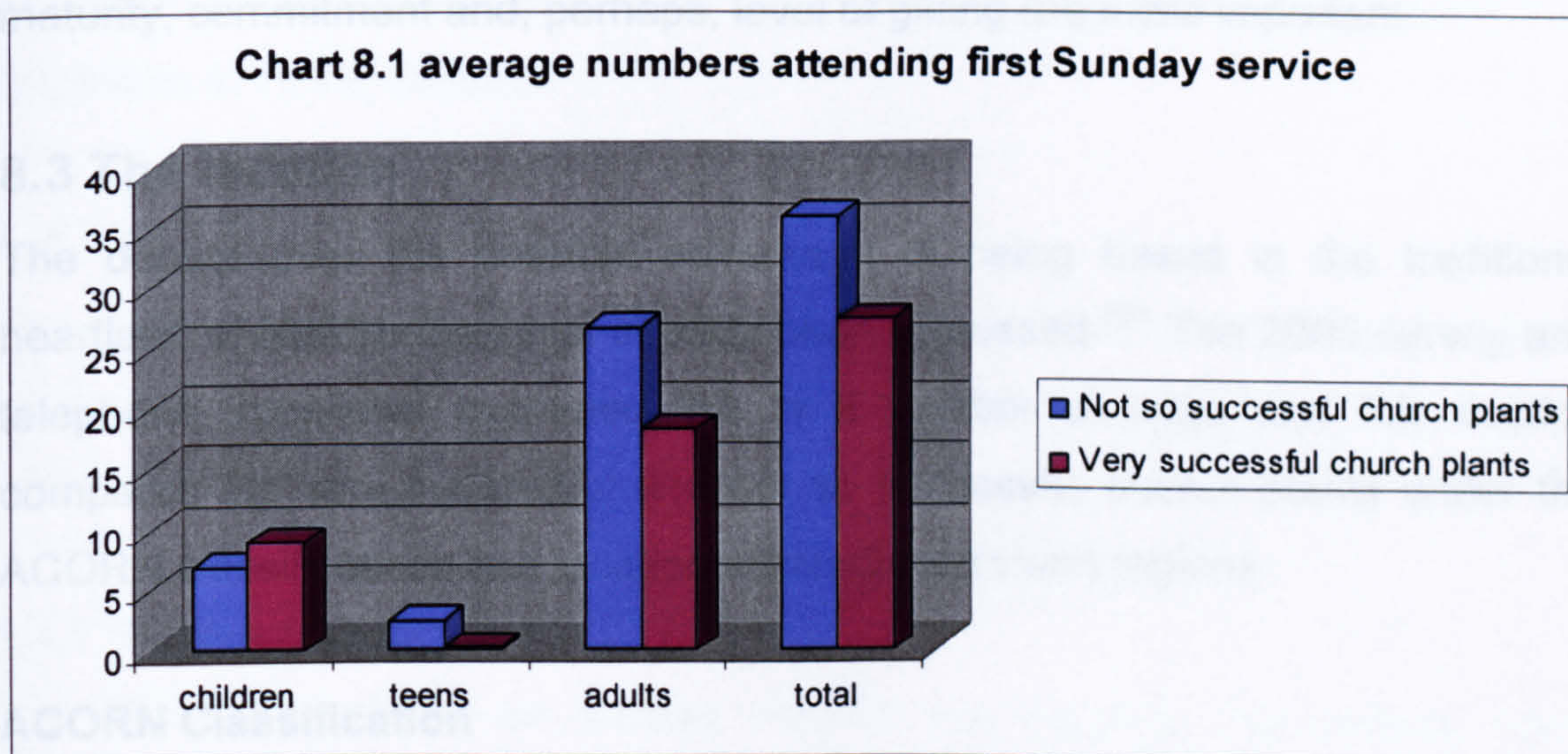
⁸⁸⁶ The average attendance for those with a scale of 2 or 3 was 43.7, while for those with a scale of 6 it was 89.

8.2 The initial period

First Sunday

Although the differences in 8.1 were predictable, the 2005 survey and telephone interviews have revealed other less obvious contrasts. For instance the time span between when the decision was taken to plant and the first Sunday services for the very successful church plants was between six months and one year,⁸⁸⁷ while for the not so successful church plants the time span varied considerably from 3 months to just over two and a half years.⁸⁸⁸

There were differences also in the size of the congregation at the first Sunday meeting. It might be assumed that the more successful church plants would have started with larger numbers on their first Sunday. However, chart 8.1 shows that with the exception of children, this was not the case. Perhaps surprisingly, the typical not so successful church plant started with on average 46.2% more adults than the very successful church plants.⁸⁸⁹



Initial core group

Another assumption might be that the more successful church plants will have started with a larger core group. Again this was not necessarily the case.

⁸⁸⁷ Average 7.5 months.

⁸⁸⁸ Average 19.9 months.

⁸⁸⁹ That is 26.6 compared with 18.2.

Results from the 2005 survey reveal that, on average, church plants achieving a success scale of two or three are likely to have a slightly larger core group.⁸⁹⁰

Observations

1. The differences in time span outlined above might indicate that leaders in the very successful church plants tend to be more decisive than those in the not so successful category. Alternatively, this might also be an indication that they have enjoyed more support, either from Newfrontiers nationally or from a sending church, and are therefore more quickly in a position to be able to move forward with the church plant.

2. The smaller numbers involved in the very successful church plants, both in the core group and on the first Sunday, is contrary to what might be expected. Although the differences are not great, these figures would suggest that the size of a core group and Sunday attendance are perhaps not as significant as might sometimes be thought. It could be that further research would show that the maturity, commitment and, perhaps, level of gifting are more important.

8.3 The location

The debate over the possible advantage of being based in the traditional heartland of Newfrontiers has already been discussed.⁸⁹¹ The 2005 survey and telephone interviews examined this in a number of ways and this section compares the very successful and not so successful church plants under the ACORN classifications and location within Government regions.

ACORN Classification

While the majority of the not so successful church plants meet in areas that are in one of the ACORN categories with the lowest income,⁸⁹² the majority of the very successful church plants are located in the top two categories.⁸⁹³ This contrast continues to the specific ACORN type. 33.3% of the not so successful church plants are in type 47, summarised as “low rise terraced estates of

⁸⁹⁰ That is an average of 15.6 for not so successful church plants and 13 for very successful church plants.

⁸⁹¹ See 6.1.19.

⁸⁹² 66.7%.

⁸⁹³ 80%.

poorly-off workers”, whereas 40% of the very successful church plants are in type 11, that is “well-off managers, detached houses”.⁸⁹⁴

Government regions

Interestingly, all five of the very successful church plants are located in one of the three Government regions which loosely make up what is sometimes known as the Home Counties.⁸⁹⁵ This compares with a much wider geographical spread amongst the not so successful church plants, with only 44.4% being in the same area.⁸⁹⁶

Observations

1. That the majority of very successful church plants are found in the top two ACORN categories may confirm the assumption that Newfrontiers churches grow fastest amongst more affluent, educated, middle class people.⁸⁹⁷ There may be different reasons for this, including the increasing resources available, and the willingness of existing Newfrontiers members to move into the more desirable areas. This also reflects the roots of Virgo and a movement that originated in Hove, Sussex.

8.4 The life of the church plant

The 2005 survey asked leaders to identify the likely importance to the growth of their church plants of a number of different meetings and activities. Six are highlighted here.

8.4.1 Sunday meetings

The importance placed on Sunday worship and teaching has already been detailed.⁸⁹⁸ The vast majority of leaders spoke very highly of Sunday worship and teaching, with 100% of the leaders of the very successful church plants suggesting that their contribution was very important. This compares with the

⁸⁹⁴ For more details on ACORN classifications see 6.6.1.

⁸⁹⁵ That is South East (3), London (1) and East of England (1).

⁸⁹⁶ For more details on the Government regions see <http://www.gos.gov.uk/national> (accessed 14-7-2007).

⁸⁹⁷ This suggestion was made by Stroud in an interview with the author (22-7-2005).

⁸⁹⁸ See 3.3.

majority of those in the not so successful church plants saying that they were only quite important.

8.4.2 Midweek meetings

The results give a rather confusing crosstabulation between the significance of the two different types of midweek meetings and the different categories of church plants. Although the answers varied considerably, generally the leaders in the very successful church plants were more positive than those in the not so successful church plants.

8.4.3 Corporate prayer

The leaders of the very successful church plants were also more positive about the role of corporate prayer to their growth. 80% said that prayer had been very important compared to 37.5% of the not so successful church plants.

8.4.4 Social activities

The leaders of the very successful church plants unanimously described the importance of the social activities as being quite important. In contrast, leaders from the not so successful church plants were divided although the majority said that it had been very important.

8.4.5 Alpha

Once again there was a variety of answers. The majority of not so successful church plants described Alpha as being either a little or quite important while the very successful church planting leaders thought that it had been either quite or very important.

8.4.6 Signs and wonders

All of the leaders of the not so successful church plants described the impact of signs and wonders on the growth of their church as having either little or no importance. In contrast, all of the leaders from the very successful church plants said that its importance had little or had been quite important.

Observations

1. With the exception of social activities, the majority of leaders of the very successful church plants answered more positively about all of the meetings and activities than the majority of their counterparts in the not so successful church plants. The difference was most marked with regard to Sunday worship and teaching.

2. Although it would seem likely that some of these have contributed to the growth and development of the church plant,⁸⁹⁹ these differences could also in part be attributed to a more positive outlook of the very successful leaders. Apart from any personality differences that are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is possible that leaders enjoying more success might naturally tend to give more positive answers than others who are experiencing less growth.

8.5 The leader

The significance of the role of the church planting leader has been emphasised repeatedly throughout this thesis.⁹⁰⁰ In this section, the leaders of the not so successful church plants will be contrasted with the leaders of the very successful church plants.

8.5.1 Previous experience

Although all had some prior leadership experience, there is a contrast between the level of leadership of the majority of those in not so successful and the very successful church plants. 80% of the leaders of the very successful church plants had previously served as an elder, whilst only 33.3% had done so in the not so successful church plants.

It has already been noted that while the importance of previous leadership experience was expected, analysis of the importance of specific church planting experience revealed some surprising results.⁹⁰¹ None of the leaders of the very successful church plants had previously been a leader in a church plant, some

⁸⁹⁹ As argued in chapter 7.

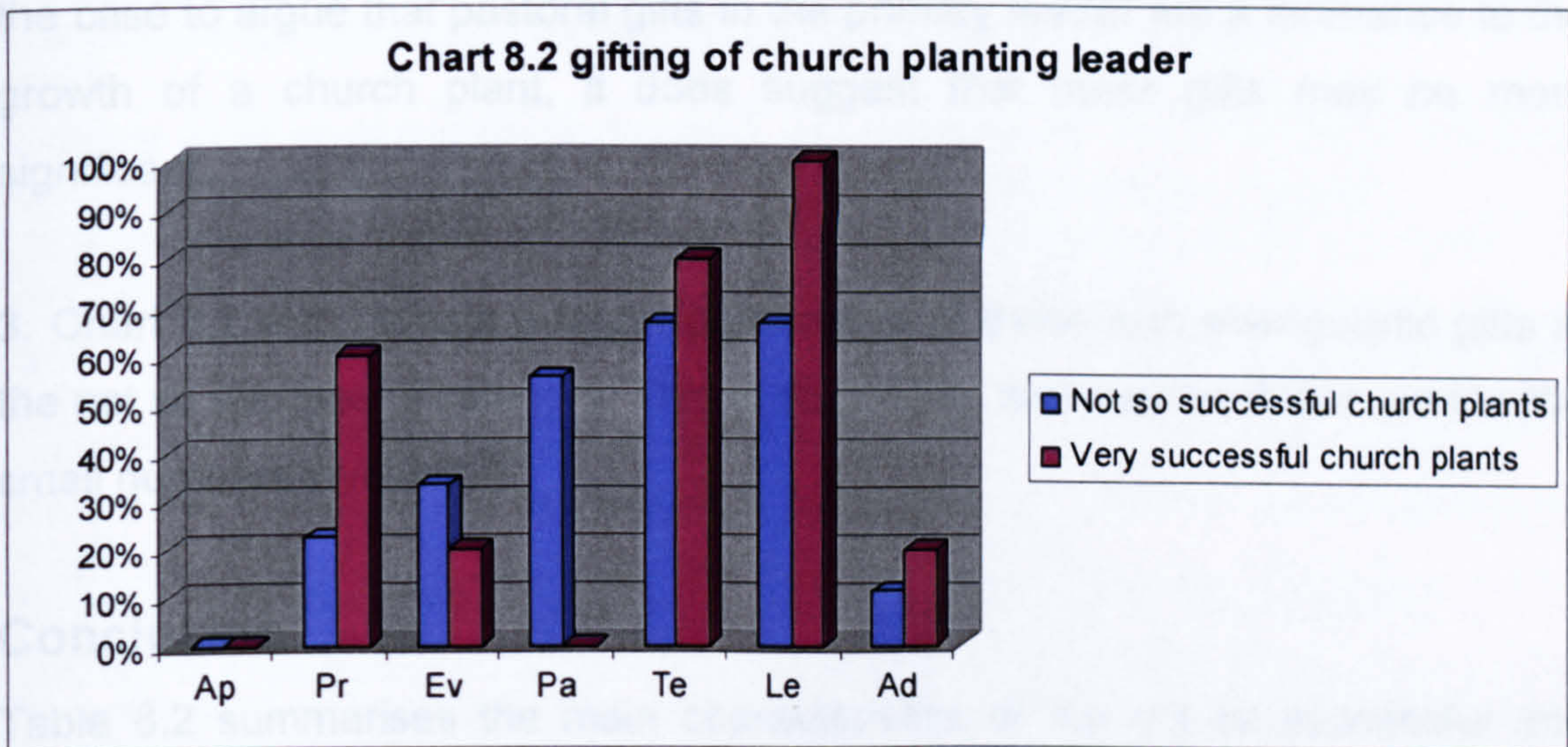
⁹⁰⁰ See for instance 3.2 and 6.1.10.

⁹⁰¹ See 6.3.7.

had been involved with the Newfrontiers church planting course, whilst others had no previous church planting experience. This contrasts with 66.7% of the leaders of the not so successful church plants who had previously been a leader in another church plant.

8.5.2 Giftings

Chart 8.2 shows the spread of gifts claimed by the church planting leaders in answer to a question asking them to identify up to their top three gifts.⁹⁰² It shows the top three gifts for those leading the very successful church plants to be leadership, teaching and prophetic,⁹⁰³ whilst the top three for the not so successful are leadership, teaching and pastoral.⁹⁰⁴



8.5.3 Theological training

There is another contrast in the theological training of those who lead the very successful church plants compared with those who lead the not so successful church plants. The majority⁹⁰⁵ of very successful church plants were led by

⁹⁰² The gifts for this purpose were limited to apostolic (Ap), prophetic (Pr), evangelistic (Ev), pastoral (pa), teaching (te), leadership (Le) and administrative (Ad). It should be noted that not all leaders identified three gifts.

⁹⁰³ 100%, 80% and 60%.

⁹⁰⁴ 66.7%, 66.7% and 55.6%.

⁹⁰⁵ 80%.

those who had undergone Newfrontiers training, while nearly half⁹⁰⁶ of those in the not so successful category had no theological training.

Observations

1. The contrast between the leadership and church planting experience has already received comment.⁹⁰⁷

2. Chart 8.2 highlights some interesting results. For instance while over half of the leaders of the not so successful church plants mentioned pastoral gifts, none of the leaders of the very successful church planting leaders reported that this was in their top three gifts. Indeed, the percentage of leaders with pastoral gifts diminished with each scale of success.⁹⁰⁸ Although it would be overstating the case to argue that pastoral gifts in the primary leader are a hindrance to the growth of a church plant, it does suggest that other gifts may be more significant.

3. Chart 8.2 also reveals a larger percentage of those with evangelistic gifts in the not so successful category. This is surprising, and may be due in part to the small numbers involved.⁹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Table 8.2 summarises the main characteristics of the not so successful and very successful church plants. It should be noted that these are generalisations, and in most cases they are based upon averages. However where the statement is true for all in this category it is put in italics.

⁹⁰⁶ 44.4%.

⁹⁰⁷ See 6.3.7.

⁹⁰⁸ The leaders of 55.6% of church plants with a scale of success of 2 or 3 (i.e. the not so successful church plants) mentioned pastoral gifts, 45.5% of those with a scale of success of 4, 26.7% of those with a scale of success of 5, and 0% of those with a scale of success of 6 (i.e. the very successful church plants).

⁹⁰⁹ That is three out of nine of leaders in the not so successful church plants and one out of five in the very successful church plant.

Table 8.2 A summary of the main characteristics of not so successful and very successful church plants.

| Not so successful church plants | Very successful church plants |
|--|--|
| <i>Achieved two or three success measures. Most likely to have Sunday attendance CAGR of at least 10%, core group CAGR of at least 20% and to be recognised as a church.</i> | <i>Achieved all six success measures.</i> |
| Likely to have started with around 27 adults on their first Sunday. | Likely to have started with around 18 adults on their first Sunday. |
| Likely to have started with around 16 adults in the core group. | Likely to have started with around 13 adults in the core group. |
| Probably in one of the bottom two ACORN categories. | Probably in one of the top two ACORN categories. |
| Could be situated in any Government region but probably not in South East, London or East of England. | <i>In the South East, London or East of England.</i> |
| Sunday worship and Sunday teaching is likely to be described as being "quite important" to growth. | <i>Sunday worship and Sunday teaching is said to be "very important" to growth.</i> |
| Corporate prayer would probably be described as being "quite important" to growth. | Corporate prayer would probably be described as being "very important" to growth. |
| Social activities would possibly be described as "very important" to growth. | <i>Social activities would be said to be "quite important" to growth.</i> |
| <i>Signs and wonders would be said as having "little" or "no importance" to growth.</i> | <i>Signs and wonders would be said to have "little importance" or be "quite important" to growth.</i> |
| The leader is likely to have been a leader in a previous church plant, although probably not at an eldership level. | The leader is very likely to have previously been an elder in a Newfrontiers church but not in a church plant. |
| The leader is likely to have leadership, teaching and pastoral gifts. | The leader is likely to have leadership, teaching and prophetic gifts. |
| The leader might not have done any theological training. | The leader is likely to have undertaken Newfrontiers theological training. |

Conclusion

It was noted in the introduction that at a time when many church denominations are in decline, Newfrontiers is expanding and planting churches at an increasing rate. This thesis has sought to provide reasons for this growth and expansion.

National context

Chapter one has shown three reasons why Newfrontiers is involved in church planting. The impact of a series of prophetic words, a strong conviction in a number of beliefs, and a particular eschatological outlook all contribute together to provide the motivation to plant churches. Chapter two then examined how the church planting momentum has continued to be intentionally nurtured and maintained. This descriptive section has followed Osmer's "descriptive-empirical task", and has sought to discover "what is going on."⁹¹⁰

Church planting in practice

From the foundation of the reasons why Newfrontiers plant churches, section two progressed to consider their *modus operandi*. Chapter three looked at a range of ingredients that were usually present in a Newfrontiers church plant, before chapter four examined the impact the church plants were having and examined their numerical growth, the number of new converts, their involvement in the community and the extent that they contributed towards the wider Newfrontiers mission. This loosely relates to Osmer's "interpretive task", which seeks to discover the reasons why something happens in a certain way.⁹¹¹

"Successful" church planting

Having considered the "how" and the "why" of Newfrontiers church planting, section three introduced the concept of what it meant to be "successful". Chapter five sought to define what "success" meant in a Newfrontiers church planting context before proposing a series of measures that together gave a scale of success by which church plants could be judged. Chapter six summarised 20 factors that were examined empirically by the author because of

⁹¹⁰ Osmer, 31-78.

⁹¹¹ *ibid.* 79-128.

their possible contribution towards a successful church plant. This covers Osmer's "normative task".⁹¹²

Statistical analysis

The statistics obtained from the empirical research were then developed in section four. Chapter seven identified the factors that could be statistically shown to have contributed to a successful church plant, including Sunday worship and teaching, social activities and the experience of the senior leader. The final chapter then contrasted a "not so successful" with a "very successful" church plant.

C.1 Key observations

Throughout this thesis a number of themes have regularly reoccurred. Here four are highlighted.

C.1.1 Importance of the prophetic

Amongst the influences on early "Restorationism", Walker identifies a strong link with the Apostolic Church, a Pentecostal denomination started in 1916.⁹¹³ While most of the other Pentecostal groupings were content to see prophecy as "an ecstatic utterance", Walker points out that the Apostolic Church believed that prophecy should be more directional.⁹¹⁴ Kay summarises their belief in prophecy as a legitimate "method of guiding and governing the church".⁹¹⁵

It is clear that Newfrontiers follows comfortably from these roots with an emphasis on the prophetic which is intentionally worked out, and affects every aspect of their life and ministry, including church planting. The impact of prophecy on the history and development of Newfrontiers has been outlined in 1.1, while examples of the contribution prophecy has made to the individual journey of some of their church planting leaders is detailed in 3.1.

⁹¹² *ibid.* 139-161.

⁹¹³ Walker, (1998). 252.

⁹¹⁴ *ibid.* 251.

⁹¹⁵ Kay, (2000). 18.

C.1.2. Significance of Terry Virgo

The influence of Virgo has been seen throughout this thesis. This is especially stark in chapter one which presents an historical perspective of Newfrontiers through the ministry of Virgo,⁹¹⁶ before detailing a number of distinctive beliefs of Newfrontiers which have all evolved out of his beliefs and understanding.⁹¹⁷ Chapter 2.4 has also considered the influence of Virgo in relation to maintaining the church planting momentum. Virgo's influence upon Newfrontiers is of tremendous significance. He is the common ground and foundation upon which the movement stands.

C.1.3. Confidence in a victorious church

One of the names previously used to describe Newfrontiers and the other New Churches was "Restorationism".⁹¹⁸ This label was used because of their distinctive emphasis upon a restored and victorious church. *Restoration in the church*⁹¹⁹ was therefore the fitting title for Virgo's first book published in 1985. The premise of restoration is that God is at work in his church restoring it, not just to the former days of the New Testament, but to the "restoration of all things" when Jesus returns.⁹²⁰

The theme of a victorious church has been emphasised throughout this thesis. It was one of the distinctive themes described in chapter one,⁹²¹ and forms an important foundation to the practice of church planting in Newfrontiers. Their conviction that Jesus will return for a "glorious bride"⁹²² is an effective incentive for them to work hard, both in existing churches, and in the formation of new church plants. Hosier writes: "Surely, there can be nothing more important at the present time than seeing the church shape up more and more to her description in the scriptures. The world needs local churches with the qualities

⁹¹⁶ See 1.1.

⁹¹⁷ See 1.2.

⁹¹⁸ See 1.6.3.

⁹¹⁹ Virgo, (1985).

⁹²⁰ Walker, (1998) 143-149.

⁹²¹ See 1.2.4.

⁹²² Hosier, *NFMag.* (1989) 17.

and the evident presence of God that will astonish towns and cities. We need to battle, as God gives us grace, for the restoration of the church."⁹²³

C.1.4 Intentional church planting

The premise of this thesis is that since the vision of the bow and arrow in 1990,⁹²⁴ church planting has increasingly taken central place in the vision of Newfrontiers. It is not that church planting forms the totality of their mission,⁹²⁵ but rather that starting churches has become something of their *raison d'être*. The vision of becoming 1,000 churches⁹²⁶ is regularly featured in their literature, referred to at their conferences, and was often quoted in the interviews given to the author.

C.2 Statistically significant

The tables below⁹²⁷ show the different factors that are statistically significant to the various success measures and where crosstabulation reveals a likely causal link. Four factors are highlighted, namely Sunday worship, Sunday teaching, social activities and the experience of the senior leader.

C.2.1 Sunday worship and teaching

Table C.1 The significance of Sunday worship and Sunday teaching.

| | Measure: | | Scale of success |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | Core group growing by at least 20% | Recognition as a church | |
| Importance of Sunday worship | YES | YES | YES |
| Importance of Sunday teaching | YES | | YES |

Table C.1 summarises the findings of the 2005 Survey with regard to Sunday worship and Sunday teaching and shows a direct correlation with the growth of the core group, recognition as a church, and the overall scale of success. The

⁹²³ Hosier, (2005). 19.

⁹²⁴ See 1.1.5.

⁹²⁵ It also includes an emphasis on restoring the church, making disciples, training leaders and reaching the nations. See <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/about-us/our-mission/> (accessed 1-5-08).

⁹²⁶ See 1.1.5.

⁹²⁷ Taken from table 7.27.

likely reasons for this correlation have already been pointed out.⁹²⁸ In finding this link, the research confirms the findings of Schwarz who noted the importance of “inspiring” worship to the health of a church.⁹²⁹

The significance of worship and teaching have consistently been emphasised within Newfrontiers. In Virgo’s first book he wrote, “It is the ultimate scandal that people ignore the church because she is boring. Her meetings are so predictable and grey. God has made a world of magnificent colour...”⁹³⁰ More recently Hosier described God’s intention that the church should be a worshipping community characterised by a sense of celebration, participation and “reflecting the joy of heaven”.⁹³¹

The Newfrontiers website dedicated to church planting in the UK⁹³² encourages church plants to look for “high quality Spirit inspired worship from day one”.⁹³³ This it suggests should be the intention with effort and resources invested to do everything possible to make that happen. It warns against starting the public Sunday meeting too early, or commencing without a gifted preacher and worship leader in place.

Whilst not wanting to discount the vital significance of the numinous experience, the time when “God turns up”,⁹³⁴ there are practical steps that can be taken to enhance both the worship and the teaching. Steve Tibbert, one of the leaders of Newfrontiers in the UK, regularly encourages leaders to do everything they can to ensure that their Sunday meetings are as “excellent as possible”.⁹³⁵

Although church plants do not usually enjoy the same level of resources as more established churches, this research would suggest that they need to determine to conduct every aspect of their Sunday meetings to the best of their ability, and to the highest standards possible. It may be that the creation of a

⁹²⁸ See 7.1.

⁹²⁹ Schwarz, 31.

⁹³⁰ Virgo (1985) 66.

⁹³¹ Hosier (2005) 105-114.

⁹³² <http://www.ukchurchplanting.org> (accessed 27-4-2009).

⁹³³ <http://www.ukchurchplanting.org/equipment/qualities/earlydayspartII> (accessed 27-4-2009).

⁹³⁴ This was the main theme in two of the sessions at the Prayer and Fasting in May 2008.

⁹³⁵ For instance this was his main theme at a Front Edge training session.

quality Sunday experience has more to do with thought and preparation than the releasing of significant resources only possible in larger churches.

C.2.2 Social activities

Table C.2 The significance of social activities.

| | Measure: |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Core group growing by at least 20% |
| Importance of social activities | YES |

Table C.2 highlights the correlation between social activities and the growth of the core group. The positive impact of social activities has already been discussed in this thesis and possible suggestions made as to why this link exists.⁹³⁶

Virgo describes the rediscovery of friendship as one of the characteristics of the early charismatic movement. He writes, "True friendship has to be developed outside of Christian meetings. For friendship to flourish there must be openness, honesty and loyalty. We must be willing to come out from behind our masks and religious jargon and get to know each other openly."⁹³⁷ An obvious place for that to happen is through spending time together in barbeques, picnics and other social activities.

The Newfrontiers church planting website also emphasise the significance of building friendships. It advises, "Get to know people in the church, have social times. Hang out together and be family... Consider having lunch together on a Sunday as long as it is feasible. If you can't have fun with one another, you won't attract others to join you."⁹³⁸

This is an area where church plants can often flourish and may even have an advantage over more established churches. The level of informality and

⁹³⁶ See 6.4.1.

⁹³⁷ Virgo (1985) 70-71.

⁹³⁸ <http://www.ukchurchplanting.org/equipment/qualities/earlydayspartII> (accessed 27-4-2009).

spontaneity that can be enjoyed by a small group often exceeds what is possible in a larger church. A decision to spend time together can be made on the spur of the moment in a small group, but may need weeks of planning and organisation in an established church. This research suggests that church plants should make it a high priority to spend time together in social activities. Arguably the strongest relationships are often formed outside of the meeting context.

C.2.3 Experience of senior leader

Table C.3 The significance of previous eldership experience of the senior leader

| | Scale of success |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Previous eldership experience | YES |

Table C.3 shows the last statistically significant connection made between the eldership experience of the senior leader and the overall scale of success. It has been observed that church plants were more likely to be successful if the leader had previously been an elder in another Newfrontiers church.⁹³⁹

The importance of leadership has been emphasised throughout this thesis and is a familiar theme in Newfrontiers literature. For example, *A people prepared* contains a chapter entitled "The crucial role of leadership".⁹⁴⁰ In it Virgo outlines a number of lessons from the leadership of King David. He summarises, "God-given leadership provides security, motivation and direction. A leader who knows he is genuinely called and loved by God brings peace and security to a local church..."⁹⁴¹ He concludes by emphasising the importance of churches being led by a plurality of elders.⁹⁴²

As would be expected the Newfrontiers church planting website makes numerous references to the subject of leadership. In it Thompson writes "The

⁹³⁹ See 7.1.7.

⁹⁴⁰ Virgo (1996) 121-129.

⁹⁴¹ *ibid.* 121.

⁹⁴² *ibid.* 127-128.

bottleneck in many parts of the world is leadership. If we had more leaders we could plant more churches.”⁹⁴³ He then presents the challenge to train and send more leaders to the task of church planting.

This research has relevance for those who help select leaders for prospective church plants, and for those who prepare themselves to lead church plants. On the face of it this might suggest that wherever possible preparation should include a period of serving as an elder in a church before starting to plant. Although this may be a beneficial way forward, it is also possible that church plants will be more successful if they are led by people who have eldership qualities. The significance may not be one of office, but of maturity, gifting and experience.

C.3 Hard Questions

The growth and development of Newfrontiers from a small group of churches based in Sussex to a movement with over 200 churches in the UK, as well as involvement in 50 nations⁹⁴⁴ is significant and has been the main subject of this thesis. In many ways progress has been steady with growth sometimes seeming frustratingly slow.⁹⁴⁵ Newfrontiers has many strengths,⁹⁴⁶ and as a new movement enjoys many advantages of which other more established churches could only dream of.⁹⁴⁷ However, the future will contain many challenges and success in the past is no guarantee of continued success to come. Here two unanswered questions are briefly posed:

C.3.1 How will Newfrontiers progress beyond the second generation?

Although it is only 22 years since Coastlands became Newfrontiers, many of the original leaders are nearing or have passed retirement age. Virgo was 68 in

⁹⁴³ <http://www.ukchurchplanting.org/equipment/preparation/churchplantinganenigmamapartII> (accessed 27-4-2009).

⁹⁴⁴ For a list of nations see <http://www.newfrontiers.xtn.org/> (accessed 1-5-08).

⁹⁴⁵ Stroud commented at a recent Prayer and Fasting at his frustration that Newfrontiers still did not have any churches that “had broken through the 1,000 mark”.

⁹⁴⁶ Some of the strengths mentioned in this paper include the crucial influence of Virgo, the unity based on a clear unequivocal vision, and the mobilisation of thousands of young people.

⁹⁴⁷ The author remembers a conversation he had with a senior minister of the Elim churches who spoke enviously of Newfrontiers ability to receive an offering of over £1,000,000 at the Stoneleigh Bible Weeks. See 2.6.

February 2008 and is still very active within Newfrontiers. He continues to travel extensively,⁹⁴⁸ and hosts the Brighton Leaders' Conference. While the leadership of Newfrontiers is increasingly and intentionally becoming more devolved, with "younger" leaders being encouraged to take increasing responsibility,⁹⁴⁹ a question remains over how they will adapt and develop when the original leaders are no longer present.

Weber perhaps stated the obvious when he argued that the death of a founding charismatic leader was always a significant blow to a movement.⁹⁵⁰ Commenting on this, Hong writes: "Since charisma is regarded as an essentially unstable (transitory) phenomenon, it is required to undergo routinization. For Weber, routinization refers to the process by which the dynamism of charismatic leadership is translated into the stability of traditional or bureaucratic organization."⁹⁵¹

The nearest precedent for Newfrontiers would be the development of the Vineyard movement after the death of Wimber in 1997. Although there are significant differences between Newfrontiers and the Vineyard movement,⁹⁵² there are enough similarities to make the transition interesting and perhaps uncomfortable for Newfrontiers. After the death of Wimber, Todd Hunter reluctantly became the "National Director" and proceeded to radically reform the national leadership structure. After an initial "honeymoon period", Hunter encountered fierce opposition from within the Vineyard movement, and he subsequently resigned two and a half years later.⁹⁵³

⁹⁴⁸ For instance he travelled to South Africa at least five times from September 2006 to July 2007.

⁹⁴⁹ For instance, Stroud who leads Newfrontiers in the UK was 44 in 2008.

⁹⁵⁰ For a discussion of Weber's theory of the routinization of charisma, see Eisenstadt, S. (ed.) *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*. (Chicago:University of Chicago. 1968).

⁹⁵¹ Hong, Y. "The charisma of Cho Yonggi and its routinization in the Yoido Full Gospel Church of Korea." *Journal of Asian Mission*. (2/1 2000) 67.

⁹⁵² For instance Wimber was American, there were 500 Vineyard churches in USA when he died and perhaps most significantly even before his death the Vineyard churches were organised on a more hierarchical structure than Newfrontiers.

⁹⁵³ For an account of the transition from Wimber to Hunter, see Miller, D. "Routinizing Charisma: The Vineyard Christian Fellowship in the post-Wimber era". *Pneuma – the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. (Vol. 25. No. 2. Fall 2003) 216-239.

Although not suggesting that Newfrontiers will try to adapt in the same way as Hunter attempted to change the Vineyard movement, their experience does illustrate the vulnerability and unpredictability of what will be an inevitable period of transition.

C.3.2 What impact will Newfrontiers have in an increasingly non-churched nation?

Brown begins his book *Death of Christian Britain* by writing: "It took several centuries to convert Britain to Christianity, but it has taken less than forty years for the country to forsake it."⁹⁵⁴ He concludes by saying: "At the start of the third millennium, we in Britain are in the midst of secularisation... what is taking place is not merely the continuing decline of organised Christianity, but the death of the culture which formerly conferred Christian identity upon the British people as a whole."⁹⁵⁵

These fundamental changes in society are affecting every aspect of life, including the practice of church going. In 1998 Richter and Francis summarised British church going as: "fringe attenders" (10%), "open de-churched" (20%), "closed de-churched" (20%), "non-churched" (40%) and "regular attenders" (10%).⁹⁵⁶ Every indication is that since that was written the number associated with church attendance has further declined.⁹⁵⁷

All churches, including Newfrontiers, face a challenge: how do they reach out beyond the "fringe attenders" and the "open de-churched" and reach the 60% plus majority who are either "closed de-churched" or "non-churched"? Different individuals and streams are suggesting different answers. A plethora of experimentation is taking place across many parts of the world under various headings such as the "Emerging Church",⁹⁵⁸ or "Fresh Expressions".⁹⁵⁹ Sometimes these experiments seem little more than peripheral adaptations,

⁹⁵⁴ Brown, 1.

⁹⁵⁵ *ibid.* 193.

⁹⁵⁶ Richter, P. & Francis, L. *Gone but not forgotten.* (London:Darton, Longman & Todd. 1998) 138.

⁹⁵⁷ Stoddard & Cuthbert, 8-10.

⁹⁵⁸ For a critique see Carson, D. *Becoming conversant with the Emerging Church.* (Grand Rapids:Zondervan. 2005).

⁹⁵⁹ Cray, G. *Mission-shaped church.* (London:Church House. 2004).

other times the radical results challenge the very nature of what church is all about.⁹⁶⁰

Although Newfrontiers is involved in intentional church planting, there is sometimes a hesitancy to experiment, perhaps in case church plants are seen to push the boundaries too far. One church plant that completed a questionnaire in 2005 had left Newfrontiers by 2007. They were meeting in homes on a Sunday and having their main public gathering in a hotel midweek. When interviewed, the leader explained that although no-one in Newfrontiers had actually told them that what they were doing was wrong, he felt that because they were trying to do things differently, they were viewed with suspicion and felt they “didn’t belong”.⁹⁶¹

The majority of Newfrontiers church plants are started in a similar way.⁹⁶² They often start by meeting in a home midweek, but then transfer much of their energy to a public Sunday meeting as soon as they have enough resources to sustain it. A Sunday meeting at a “typical” Newfrontiers church plant may include 45 minutes of lively, charismatic worship followed by an expository preached sermon for a similar length. Although there is little doubt that this style of church is attractive to many, this research has suggested that the majority who join either come from another church, and often within Newfrontiers, or perhaps have had previous church connections.

Ward writes: “The problem is not with those who come to church, since it seems for them church is generally a positive environment. The real issue must be those who no longer attend church or those who have never set foot inside one. How do we connect with these people?”⁹⁶³ A good question and one that is very relevant for Newfrontiers.

⁹⁶⁰ See Stoddard & Cuthbert.

⁹⁶¹ Source: a conversation with the author (17-6-2007).

⁹⁶² See chapter three.

⁹⁶³ Ward, P. *Liquid Church*. (Carlisle:Paternoster. 2002) 4.

C.4 Potential for further research

As well as illuminating the motivation, methods and accomplishments of Newfrontiers in relation to their church planting, this thesis also raises a number of issues that warrant further research. These include the following questions:

1. How does the church planting in Newfrontiers compare with that of other contemporary church planting movements? This could either compare with church planting in another nation,⁹⁶⁴ or within the UK. In the UK, the Vineyard group of churches founded by Wimber would provide a fruitful area for further study.⁹⁶⁵

2. How does the impact of church plants within Newfrontiers contrast to their more established churches? For instance research carried out for this thesis would indicate that church plants might be responsible for a significant proportion of the Newfrontiers numerical growth.⁹⁶⁶ As far as Newfrontiers is concerned, is Booker right to suggest that “Smaller churches are on average far more likely to grow than larger ones”?⁹⁶⁷

3. How do the leaders of the church plants that have been categorised as being “very successful” compare with those who lead the “not so successful” church plants? This could follow the work done by Gubb,⁹⁶⁸ who used a number of profiles including the Francis Psychological Type Scales,⁹⁶⁹ to compare the lead elders from Newfrontiers with other contemporary church leaders. Research by the author has indicated difference in giftings,⁹⁷⁰ but are there also any significant differences in leadership style, temperament or personality?

⁹⁶⁴ For instance with the Acts 29 Network in North America. See <http://www.acts29network.org/> (accessed 3-5-2008).

⁹⁶⁵ For an introduction the Vineyard see Kay, (2007). 160-173, for an account of the ministry and impact of Wimber see Wimber, C. *John Wimber: the way it was*. (London:Hodder and Stoughton. 1999).

⁹⁶⁶ See 4.1.

⁹⁶⁷ Booker & Ireland, 139.

⁹⁶⁸ Gubb, S. *Fit for purpose? A comparative study of Newfrontiers lead elders*. An unpublished dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MA in Faith and Education, University of Wales. 2008.

⁹⁶⁹ Francis, L. *Faith and psychology*. (London:Darton Longman & Todd. 2005).

⁹⁷⁰ See 8.5.2.

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Audio visual media (AVM)

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- Thompson, T. "Strategies for reaching different communities" – a CD recording of a seminar at Together on a Mission 06
- Virgo, T. "The story so far" – a tape recording of a talk given at Stoneleigh 1998
- Virgo, T. "Grace to say no" – a tape recording of a talk given at Stoneleigh 1999
- Virgo, T. "Session Two" – a CD recording of a talk given at the Leadership & Church Planting Training Course. Nov 2005
- Virgo, T. "The story so far" – a tape recording of a talk given at Newday 2007

Appendices

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Appendix 1: Chronology of main events in the life of Terry Virgo and the history of Newfrontiers

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 20 February 1940 | Terry Virgo born. |
| May 1956 | Terry Virgo became a Christian. |
| 1962 | Terry Virgo baptised in the Spirit. |
| 28 June 1963 | Terry Virgo left secular employment. |
| 4 October 1965 | Terry Virgo moved to London to study theology at London Bible College. |
| 1968 | Terry Virgo took up the pastorate at a church in Seaford. |
| Summer 1976 | Dales Bible Weeks begin. |
| c. March 1979 | Terry Virgo moves to Hove to lead the Brighton & Hove Christian Fellowship. |
| Summer 1979 | First Downs Bible Week. |
| Summer 1984 | Downs becomes two weeks. |
| 1985 | <i>Restoration in the Church</i> published. |
| c. Oct 1985 | John Wimber's first conference in Brighton administered by Nigel Ring & Coastlands. |
| c. April 1986 | John Groves prophecy of charging elephants – "No well-worn paths..." |
| c. May 1986 | Invitation to leaders at Prayer & Fasting to become "New Frontiers". |
| 1987 | <i>How to: Praying the Lord's prayer</i> published. |
| 1987 | <i>Riding the third wave</i> published. |
| 1987 | <i>Men of destiny</i> published. |
| Summer 1988 | Last Downs Bible Week. |
| 1989 | <i>How to: Enjoying God's Grace</i> published. |
| 1989 & 1990 | Terry Virgo visits 16 cities in the UK for "Enjoying God's Grace" tour. |
| 1990 | <i>How to: Receiving the Holy Spirit</i> published. |
| 1990 | <i>Weak people mighty God</i> published. |
| Spring 1990 | Terry Virgo has a vision of bow pulled back to Manchester. |
| July 1990 | Paul Cain at Clarendon Church – "Changing the expression of Christianity throughout the world..." |
| September 1990 | Dr. Kriengsak speaks at Brighton conference, challenges about church planting and confirms Stoneleigh as venue for new Bible week. |
| Summer 1991 | First Stoneleigh Bible week. |
| 1992 | <i>Oasis: God's amazing grace</i> published. |
| August 1993 | Terry Virgo moves to America |
| 1994 | <i>Oasis: For new Christians</i> published. |
| 1994 | <i>Oasis: The Church and You</i> published. |
| 1995 | <i>From Refreshing to Revival</i> published. |
| July 1995 | Terry Virgo moves back to the UK. |
| Summer 1995 | David Devonish prophecy – "A light to the nations..." |
| 1996 | <i>A People Prepared</i> published. |
| 11 August 1999 | John Kpikpi prophecy at Stonleigh – "Dare to believe for 1,000 churches..." |
| 2001 | <i>No Well-Worn Paths</i> published. |
| March 2001 | David Devonish: "Let's go..." word given. |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Summer 2001 | Last Stoneleigh Bible week. |
| June 2002 | Brighton leadership conference becomes an annual event. |
| 2003 | <i>Does the future have a church?</i> published. |
| June 2003 | First Mobilise conference for students and twenties, run concurrently with Brighton leadership conference. |
| June 2003 | John Groves at Brighton Conference: "second half team talk..." prophecy. |
| 2004 | <i>God's lavish grace</i> published. |
| August 2004 | First Newday event for teenagers held in Newark showground. |
| 2006 | <i>The tide is turning</i> is published. |
| August 2006 | Newday event moved to Uttoxeter Race Course. |
| 2008 | "Together" Bible weekends commence. |

Appendix 2 - Locations featured in the 2002 church planting list

| Listed in the leaflet "Seeds of Change" (2002) | Completed questionnaire in September 2005 | Participated in telephone interview in June 2007 |
|--|---|--|
| Abbeytown | | |
| Addiscombe | | |
| Ashbourne | | |
| Ashford | Completed | Interviewed |
| Ashington | | |
| Ashton-under-Lyne | | |
| Banbury | Completed | Interviewed |
| Bath | Completed | |
| Billinghurst | Completed | Interviewed |
| Birmingham (Handsworth) | Completed | Interviewed |
| Birmingham (Weoley Castle) | Completed | |
| Blackburn | Completed | Interviewed |
| Blyth Valley | Completed | Interviewed |
| Bradford | Completed | Interviewed |
| Bristol (North) | Completed | Interviewed |
| Bristol (South) | | |
| Burnley | | |
| Buxton | Completed | Interviewed |
| Chesterfield | | |
| Colchester | | |
| Derby | Completed | Interviewed |
| Dereham | Completed | Interviewed |
| Dorking | | |
| Edinburgh | Completed | Interviewed |
| Exeter | Completed | Interviewed |
| Exmouth | | |
| Farnham | Completed | Interviewed |
| Glasgow | Completed | Interviewed |
| Gloucester | | |
| Great Dunmow | Completed | Interviewed |
| Guildford | | |
| Harlescott | | |
| Hartlepool | Completed | Interviewed |
| Hillingdon | Completed | Interviewed |
| Jersey | Completed | |
| Kenilworth | | |
| Kettering | Completed | Interviewed |
| Leamington | Completed | Interviewed |
| Leeds (Mosaic) | Completed | Interviewed |
| Leyland | Completed | |
| Liverpool | Completed | Interviewed |
| London (East) | Completed | Interviewed |
| London (North Central) | | |

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| London (South Central) | | |
| Loughborough | Completed | Interviewed |
| Luton | Completed | Interviewed |
| Macclesfield | Completed | Interviewed |
| Manchester (East) | | |
| Manchester (North) | Completed | Interviewed |
| Milton Keynes (South) | Completed | Interviewed |
| Nailsea | | |
| Newquay | Completed | Interviewed |
| Nottingham | Completed | Interviewed |
| Nuneaton | | |
| Oakham, Rutland | | |
| Perth | Completed | Interviewed |
| Portsmouth | Completed | Interviewed |
| Preston | | |
| Reading | Completed | Interviewed |
| Rugby | | |
| Salisbury | Completed | Interviewed |
| Shaw | | |
| St Albans | Completed | Interviewed |
| St Helens | | |
| Stoke-on-Trent | Completed | Interviewed |
| Sunderland | Completed | |
| Sutton | Completed | Interviewed |
| Taunton | | |
| Toddinton | | |
| Torquay | Completed | Interviewed |
| Trafford | | |
| Upminster | | |
| Verwood | Completed | Interviewed |
| Weston-Super-Mare | | |
| Weymouth | Completed | Interviewed |
| Wimborne | | |
| Wirral | Completed | Interviewed |

Appendix 3: 2002 church planting list - questionnaire

Church Planting & Newfrontiers “2002 Churches” Questionnaire

Many thanks for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. As I explained to you in my e-mail sent a few weeks ago, this questionnaire forms an important part of my research that will contribute towards a DMin that I am currently working on.

Please complete this questionnaire as soon as possible. (The danger of putting it off until tomorrow is that it will never get done!) I am hoping to receive all the completed questionnaires back by Thursday 29th September at the latest, but it will be helpful if they can be completed and returned before then.

Completed questionnaires can either be e-mailed back to me as an attachment, or printed off and mailed to me.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or my research, please don't hesitate to e-mail me or phone me.

Many thanks for your time and co-operation.

Specific Notes:

All answers will be treated confidentially and will not be divulged to anyone beyond this research project without your permission. Also, specific facts / details about your church will not be included in my final research again without your consent.

Questions 1 to 8 These all deal with your original church plant. I am defining “Core Group” (question 7) as those who you feel are in practice strongly committed to your church. They are not necessarily in positions of leadership but probably take an active role in the church and are people you feel you can trust and rely upon.

Question 9 Unless there is a reason why it will not be “typical”, I suggest you consider the typical Sunday to be 18th September.

Question 10 See comment above re. “Core Group”.

Question 11 Please place a cross (x) in the appropriate box for each heading.

Question 12, 13, 14 I realise “joining” is a vague term – I am using it to refer to those who are now attending your church regularly, and would refer to it as “their church”.

Question 15 Please place a cross (x) in the appropriate box for each heading.

Questions 16 & 17 Please feel free to be as brief or as comprehensive as you wish.

Thank you once again!

Church Planting & Newfrontiers "2002 Churches" Questionnaire

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Name of Church | |
| Your Name | |
| Your Phone Number | |
| Your E-mail Address | |
| Date Questionnaire Completed | |

1) When was the decision to plant a church in your town taken?

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Month | Year |
| | |

2) When did the church plant first meet?

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Month | Year |
| | |

3) When did the church plant start to meet regularly on a Sunday?

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Month | Year |
| | |

4) Where did the vision to plant a church initially come from?
(Please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Church planting leader | |
| Neighbouring church leadership | |
| Group of local Christians | |
| Newfrontiers regionally | |
| Newfrontiers nationally | |
| Other (please specify) | |

5) When did the church plant initially meet?
(Please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Sunday morning | |
| Sunday afternoon | |
| Sunday evening | |
| Midweek during the day | |
| Midweek during the evening | |
| Other (please specify) | |

6) Where did the church plant initially meet?
 (Please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box)

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Hired hall | |
| Purchased hall | |
| A home | |
| Other (please specify) | |

7) Approximately how many of the following were in your initial core group?

| | Number: |
|-----------|---------|
| Adults | |
| Teenagers | |
| Children | |

8) Approximately how many of the following were present in your first Sunday service?

| | Number: |
|-----------|---------|
| Adults | |
| Teenagers | |
| Children | |

9) How many of the following are currently present on a typical Sunday service now?

| | Number: |
|-----------|---------|
| Adults | |
| Teenagers | |
| Children | |

10) How many of the following do you consider to be in your core group now?

| | Number: |
|-----------|---------|
| Adults | |
| Teenagers | |
| Children | |

11) How significant have the following been to the growth of your church (both quantitative and qualitative) since it was planted?

(Please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box under each heading)

| | | Not significant at all | A little significant | Quite significant | Very significant |
|----|--|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Corporate prayer meetings | | | | |
| 2 | Sunday worship | | | | |
| 3 | Sunday teaching | | | | |
| 4 | Social activities | | | | |
| 5 | Alpha | | | | |
| 6 | Open airs | | | | |
| 7 | Door to door evangelism | | | | |
| 8 | Seeker friendly services (Hybells / Warren) | | | | |
| 9 | Other guest services | | | | |
| 10 | Kidz club / children's work | | | | |
| 11 | Youth work | | | | |
| 12 | Work with the poor | | | | |
| 13 | Signs & wonders / miracles | | | | |
| 14 | Cell groups (4 "W's" / Neighbour) | | | | |
| 15 | Cell groups (G12 / Castellanos) | | | | |
| 16 | Other midweek structures | | | | |
| 17 | Support from local Newfrontiers churches / leaders | | | | |
| 18 | Support from Newfrontiers regional leaders | | | | |
| 19 | Support from Newfrontiers national leaders | | | | |
| 20 | Co-operation with other local churches (ie not Newfrontiers) | | | | |
| 21 | Other (please specify) | | | | |
| 22 | Other (please specify) | | | | |

12) Approximately what percentage of the adults who have joined your church since it was planted (i.e. not in your initial core group) live locally? (i.e. live within one mile of the venue for the Sunday service)

13) Approximately what percentage of the adults who have joined your church since it was planted (i.e. not in your initial core group) are female?

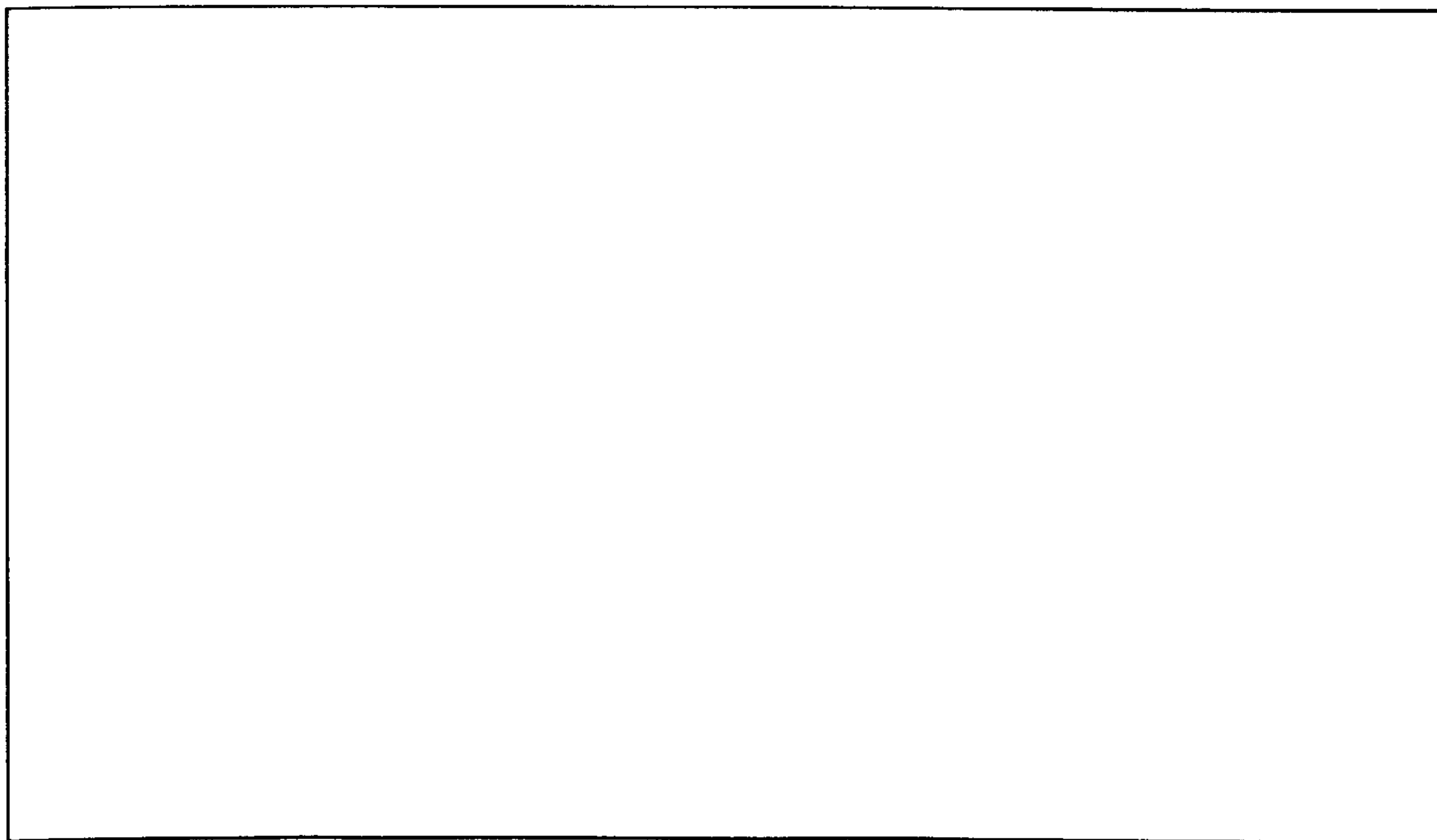
14) Approximately what percentage of the adults that have joined your church since it was planted (i.e. not in your initial core group) are...
 (please put a cross (X) in the appropriate column and ensure percentages add up to 100%)

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
|---|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| already Christians and have recently moved into the area | | | | | | | | | | | |
| already Christians and have moved from another local church | | | | | | | | | | | |
| backslidden Christians | | | | | | | | | | | |
| new Christians | | | | | | | | | | | |

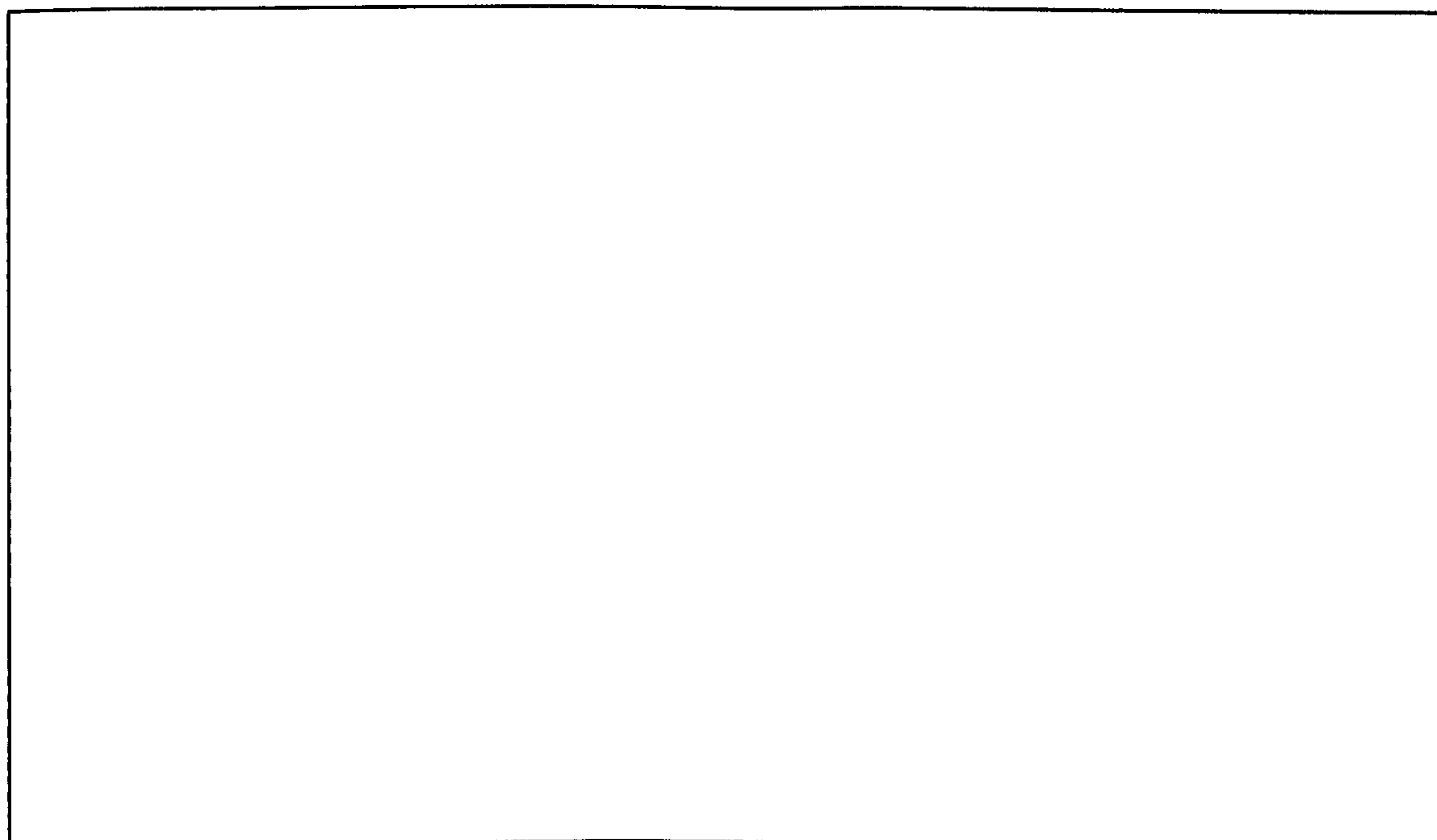
15) What activities is your church currently involved in?
 (Please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box under each heading)

| | | Yes? | No? |
|----|--|------|-----|
| 1 | Sunday morning service | | |
| 2 | Sunday afternoon service | | |
| 3 | Sunday evening service | | |
| 4 | Cell groups (4 "W's" / Neighbour) | | |
| 5 | Cell groups (G12 / Castellanos) | | |
| 6 | Other midweek structures | | |
| 7 | Corporate prayer meetings | | |
| 8 | Discipleship centred children's work | | |
| 9 | Evangelistic centred children's work | | |
| 10 | Alpha | | |
| 11 | Open airs | | |
| 12 | Door to door evangelism | | |
| 13 | Seeker friendly services (Hybells / Warren) | | |
| 14 | Other guest services | | |
| 15 | Work with the poor locally | | |
| 16 | Co-operation with other local churches (i.e. not Newfrontiers) | | |
| 17 | Other (please specify) | | |
| 18 | Other (please specify) | | |

16) What have been the main factors that have contributed towards the growth of your church (both quantitative and qualitative) since it was planted?



17) What have been the biggest barriers to the growth of your church (both quantitative and qualitative) since it was planted?



Thank you for your help.

Appendix 4: 2002 church planting list – telephone interviews

| | | | |
|--------------|--|---------|--|
| Your name: | | Date: | |
| Your church: | | Tel No: | |

A) Questions re the senior leader

| | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| 1) Level of leadership experience before leading existing church | Small group/departmental | |
| | Elder | |
| | Senior leader | |
| | Other | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 2) Previous church planting experience | Member of church plant | |
| | Leader in church plant | |
| | Senior leader of church plant | |
| | Attended Newfrontiers church planting training course | |
| | Other | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|--|--|
| 3) Your top three giftings | Apostolic | | |
| | Prophetic | | |
| | Evangelistic | | |
| | Pastoral | | |
| | Teaching | | |
| | Leadership | | |
| | Administrative | | |
| | Other | | |
| | Other | | |
| | Other | | |

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| 4) Initially (first year) how were you supported financially | New church plant | |
| | Sending church | |
| | Regional funds | |
| | National funds | |
| | Own savings | |
| | Full time job | |
| | Part time job | |
| | Other | |

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| 5) currently how are you supported financially | New church plant | |
| | Sending church | |
| | Regional funds | |
| | National funds | |
| | Own savings | |
| | Full time job | |
| | Part time job | |
| | Other | |

| | |
|---|--|
| 6) Your age when started current church plant | |
|---|--|

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 7) Theological training when started current church plant | Post-grad qualification | |
| | Theological degree | |
| | Newfrontiers leadership training | |
| | Other | |

| | |
|--|--|
| 8) What would you say is your spiritual passion? | |
|--|--|

B) Questions re the church now

| | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| 9) How many are present in a typical Sunday meeting now | Adults | |
| | Teenagers | |
| | Children | |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 10) Has your church had any involvement in planting other churches? | Giving away church members | |
| | Planting a daughter church | |
| | Other | |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| 11) Is your church likely to be involved in planting another church | In next 12 months | |
| | Over next 5 years | |
| | After 5 years | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 12) Does your church give regularly to Newfrontiers? | Specific appeals | |
| | Monthly giving – less than 10% | |
| | Monthly giving – 10% | |
| | Monthly giving – more than 10% | |
| | Give at Brighton – special offering | |
| | Give at Brighton – out of church funds | |
| | Other | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 13) What have been the main factors that have contributed to your growth in the past two years? | Leader / leadership team | |
| | Newfrontiers support | |
| | Preaching / Teaching | |
| | Worship / music | |
| | Friendships / relationships / community | |
| | Gathering / social events | |
| | Students | |
| | Alpha | |
| | Leaflets / other promotional literature | |
| | www | |
| | Children / youth work | |
| | Prayer / fasting | |
| | | |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 14) What have been the biggest barriers to your growth in the past two years? | Lack of admin support | |
| | Lack of 2 nd tier leaders / committed core group | |
| | Lack of pastoral giftings | |
| | Lack of evangelistic giftings | |
| | Lack of children / young people | |
| | Lack of suitable building / own building | |
| | | |

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--|
| 15) In what ways is your church involved in the community? | Kidz Club | |
| | Youth work | |
| | Servant ministries | |
| | Coffee shop | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|--------------------|--|
| 16) If your church suddenly ceased to exist, what do you think would be missed by those who are not-Christians? | Kidz Club | |
| | Youth work | |
| | Servant ministries | |
| | Coffee shop | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

C) Other Questions

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 17) how would you describe the location of your church? | Rural – village or small town | |
| | Suburban – an established residential area where most homes are owner-occupied by predominantly middle-class families | |
| | Urban – on a housing estate where most homes are rented by predominantly working-class families | |
| | Town centre – in a non-residential area near the centre of a large or medium sized town | |
| | Inner-city – in an area of high density population often with multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities near the centre of a large conurbation | |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|--------------|--|
| 18) do you know if your church is recognized as a church or church plant? | Church | |
| | Church plant | |
| | Not sure | |

D) Any other points to follow up on

Would you be willing to give out the questionnaires?

Appendix 5: The Church members' sample questionnaire

Dear church leader

Thank you for agreeing to give out my Church Questionnaire. It will form an important part of my research and will help to give a picture of what sort of people attend our churches. I have tried to make it as straightforward as possible and it should only take a couple of minutes to complete. Ideally I would like it to be given to every adult (age 18 or over) who attends your church, perhaps after a Sunday morning meeting.

I would be really grateful if you could do the following:

- 1) During the notices give a brief explanation of why you are giving out this questionnaire. That is to help me with my research looking at church planting in Newfrontiers. No names need to be given and all answers will be treated confidentially.
- 2) Give out the questionnaires, preferably after the Sunday morning service to all attenders over 18. You don't need to give it to visitors.
- 3) Encourage people to complete it and return it straight away. If the questionnaires go home then most probably won't come back.
- 4) Collect the questionnaires in and post back to me. If you include your address and who you want the cheque made payable to then I will be pleased to refund the postage and copying.

Hopefully that makes sense but if you have any questions then don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thanks again for your help.

Yours as ever,

Barry Cooper

Newfrontiers Church Questionnaire 2007

My name is Barry Cooper and I am a part of the leadership team of the Newfrontiers church in Liverpool. I am also currently midway through some post-graduate research looking at church planting within Newfrontiers. As a part of this work it would be a great help if you could take a few minutes and complete the following questionnaire. You do not need to put your name on it and no attempt will be made to identify you. All answers will be kept confidential. It should take you no more than a few minutes.

Thank you for your time.

Barry Cooper

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Name of church: | |
|------------------------|--|

Please tick the appropriate box(s)

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--|--------|--|
| 1) Are you: | Male | | Female | |
| | A student | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--|------------|--|
| 2) What age group are you: | 18-29 | | 30-39 | |
| | 40-49 | | 50-59 | |
| | 60-69 | | 70 or over | |

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| 3) How long have you been a Christian? | Less than 1 year | | Between 1 and 2 yrs | |
| | Between 2 and 5 yrs | | Between 5 and 10 yrs | |
| | Between 10 and 15 yrs | | Between 15 and 20 yrs | |
| | Between 20 and 30 yrs | | More than 30 years | |
| | I am not yet a Christian | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| 4) How long have you been attending this church? | Less than 1 year | | Between 1 and 2 yrs | |
| | Between 2 and 3 yrs | | Between 3 and 4 yrs | |
| | Between 4 and 5 yrs | | Between 5 and 10 yrs | |
| | Over 10 years | | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 5) Before you started attending this church were you: | already a Christian and had recently moved into the area | |
| | already a Christian and had moved from another church | |
| | a backslidden Christian | |
| | not a Christian | |
| | Other | |

| | | Yes | No |
|---|---|-----|----|
| 6) Before you started attending this church: | Did you previously attend a Newfrontiers church? | | |
| | Had you previously attended Stoneleigh or another Newfrontiers event? | | |
| | Did you look at other churches in the area before coming to this one? | | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 7) If you were already a Christian and had moved from another church, what were the main reasons why you made this move? | Problems in my previous church | |
| | My friends / family already attended this church | |
| | I was attracted by the worship | |
| | I was attracted by the preaching / teaching | |
| | I was attracted by their small groups | |
| | I was attracted by the vision | |
| | This church has better provision for my children / family | |
| | Other (please specify) | |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 8a) Why did you first attend this church? | A friend brought me | |
| | I received a leaflet through my door | |
| | My family already attend | |
| | Other (please specify) | |
| 8b) What was the first activity / meeting that you attended at this church? | A Sunday meeting | |
| | A midweek group in a home | |
| | The Alpha course | |
| | A social event | |
| | Other (please specify) | |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| 9) How far do you live away from where the church meets on a Sunday? | Less than 1 mile | | 1 to 2 miles | |
| | 2 to 5 miles | | More than 5 miles | |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| 10) What is your ethnic background? | White British | | White non-British | |
| | Mixed | | Black or Black British | |
| | Asian or Asian British | | Chinese | |
| | Other (please specify) | | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 11) What is your highest educational qualification? | GCSE passes A-C / GCE O level / NVQ level 2 or equivalent | |
| | GCE A Level / NVQ level 3 or equivalent | |
| | Higher educational / professional qualification (below degree level) | |
| | Degree / NVQ level 4 or equivalent | |
| | Post-graduate qualification | |

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it to the person who gave it to you.