



# Global CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL MISSIONS, UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH INTERNATIONAL

## Elements of Growth in the Local, National, Regional, and Universal Church

Let me state my bias up front. I love the church and I am so thankful to be a part of it. Why? I once was lost in sin but was found at church. There I also found faith, fellowship, friendship, family, fruitfulness and a heavenly Father. David confessed one day in the Lord's house—the church—beats thousands spent as a guest in the house of sin (Psalms 84:10). He could be counted on to be often found at church.

### Annual Church Growth Statistics



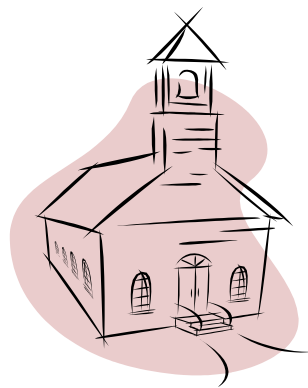
I am extremely thankful for the 36,804 churches and preaching points we have outside of North America, in over 198 nations. These churches are pastured by 22,129 faithful ministers. We now have over 2, 408, 435 constituents. We are part of a great global church. We are still committed to taking the whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church.

The church is a group of believers, anywhere in the world, that have been called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The Bible employs about one hundred metaphors and phrases to portray the “church.” Chief among these is the idea that the church is an *ekklesia*; the “called out” ones. Other pivotal images depict the church as the Body of

Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3-8; 12:31). The church is a living organism and “grows as God causes it to grow” (Colossians 2:19). Growth is natural, expected, and deliberate. We continue to develop into our future role as the “Bride of Christ” (John 3:29; Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7). We are part of the family (2 Cor. 6:18; John 1:12). There is protection in the church because we are among the flock (Luke 12:32).

The word “church” first appears in Matthew 16:18, “...and on this rock I will build my church” (NIV). The church is called out from the world and called into an assembly (Acts 19:32) for the purpose of fellowship and reaching a lost world. A group of people at any level from local to universal may rightly be called “the church” as demonstrated in the following table:

### THE CHURCH



House Church	Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19
Local Church	1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Galatians 1:2
Regional Church	Acts 9:31
Universal Church	Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Remember the church is not a building or even a denomination. We are the church! The church is comprised of every believer starting with the birth of the church in Acts 2, throughout the ages, and still propels itself into the twenty-first century.

The church is designed to be a world-wide force for evangelism and impact in society. How can this be done? We cannot have realistic church growth without preaching the message of the Early Church (Acts 2:38). Preaching from our pulpits is Word-centered, anointed, and also relevant and practical to the people.

Consider five elements of church growth based on Acts 2:41-47. In order for the church to grow, each of these principles must be operating in the church and they must be in balance. There is not one that is considered to be more important than another and each are necessary.

### **1. Fellowship**

The first church members were in unity; shared in fellowship and in breaking of bread. This is why it is important for each member to attend church regularly. The church where fellowship is strong is a caring church. Believers demonstrate a genuine concern for each other. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Not only did the Early Church fellowship with each other but they also had fellowship with their God through prayer. The first church was brought into existence as a result of a prayer meeting and continued to grow as a result of prayer.

Miracles began taking place in Acts 3 when they were on their way to prayer. The prerequisite to a miracle is someone in need. Needs are met at our churches.

### **2. Discipleship**

We are called to make disciples; to reproduce ourselves. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

In the Great Commission Jesus Christ placed "discipleship" at the top of the list of things needed to be done. As a church we must never forget about discipling and enabling our members. It is important to attend and participate in the elective series offered for adults and Sunday school offered for all ages. It provides spiritual nutrition for us to grow.

Are we making a difference in our community, culture and country? How can we make a greater impact in a shorter period of time? This can be done through discipleship (training and teaching). The Early Church "ceased not to preach and teach" (Acts 5:42), and therefore "filled Jerusalem with their doctrine" (Acts 5:28).

Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). If we do not teach people what is expected of them from the Bible we are rendering them "Bible Illiterates." Therefore, we have a strong emphasis on both preaching and teaching in our churches.

### **3. Worship**

Worship and praise are vital to church growth. In sports we realize there is something greater about a game that is played in front of thousands of people compared to a game played in front of a few hundred people. As we gather together at church, there is an atmosphere of celebration. When we begin to celebrate our God and what He has done for us we are

expressing our love for God. We enter the church to worship and leave to reach others for Christ. "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:3).

#### **4. Ministry**

This is expressing our love for others and meeting their needs. If we are not meeting people's needs then we are not ministering. The church ministers to different types of people (ladies, men, children, youth, prisons, hospitals) with different types of needs. These needs fall into the four categories that make up a man: spiritual, physical, social, and emotional. Our ministry is often enriched through prayer. It has been said, "A prayerful church is a powerful church." We anticipate God moving in every service; at home and collectively when we all come together. We create the environment through our prayer (bringing down the power of God) and praise (bringing down the presence of God).

We have our fellowship groups where people get together and minister to each other in a small group setting. In Acts they ministered from "house to house." We also effectively endeavor to build faith in our homes. Our combined faith is explosive when we all meet together at church.

#### **5. Evangelism**

If we do not try to witness and evangelize, people will not come into the church. We cannot expect people to walk in off the streets but we must go to where the people are. When we make an effort to evangelize we are showing the world we are a reaching body. We are reaching for those outside of our church who are in need with a desire to provide hope and help.

If we are able to have all five elements operating in our church, and give them proper attention, the direct result will be: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

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