

THE FUTURE OF THE URBAN CHURCH

Introduction

The urban church

- Definition of the urban area
- Characteristics of the urban area
- Personal observations

The urban church: yesterday and today

- Description of the urban church

The urban church: present reality

"The past 20 years have been nothing less than devastating for the WELS in the cities where we are represented. Membership losses range from 30-50%. From 1974-1994 Toledo's four congregations went from 989 communicants to 539 (this includes figures for the church that moved to the suburbs); Detroit went from 1093 to 547 (one church R.I.P.); Benton Harbor from 1410 to 817; Racine from 1441 to 1066; Kenosha's four went from 3162 to 2178; Milwaukee's north side churches from 13,923 to 8,981; Milwaukee's south side from 7,101 to 5,349; Minneapolis from 1,687 to 8/51 and St. Paul from 1,932 to 10,055." (Jeske, Cross-Cultural Ministry, 6/95)

- County Profiles
- Cross-Cultural Communities
- Changing Society

Biblical Perspectives

1. The future is in God's hands.

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

2. Eternity will show the fruit of our labors.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

3. A sense of urgency.

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.'" (John 9:3-4)

"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

4. A word of encouragement.

"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

5. Focus on our mission.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)

"He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'" (Luke 24:46-48)

"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" (John 20:21-23)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

6. A commitment to the city.

"But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:11)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." (Matthew 23:37)

The example of the Apostle Paul: Acts 16:12 (Philippi); Acts 17:16 (Athens); Acts 18:1 (Corinth); Acts 19:1 (Ephesus); Romans 1:15 (Rome)

7. Look to and ask the Lord to open doors for witness.

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. (Acts 8:26-27)

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)

8. Reach out "to every nation, tribe, language and people." (Revelation 14:6) This includes the disadvantaged and outcasts. (Luke 18:35ff; Luke 19:1ff, John 4:1ff)

"'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you have ordered has been done, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'" (Luke 14:23)

9. Look to the Lord for the results.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." 1 Corinthians 3:6

"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'" Acts 8:36

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Acts 2:41

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message." Acts 10:44

Challenges

1. A Commitment to the neighborhood
 - Learn to understand each culture and respect it.
 - Understand the barriers to "crossing the threshold."
 - "Intentional" and "Presence" evangelism.
 - "Go" and "Come" strategies.

2. Inter-congregational cooperation
 - i.e. ICPC, Southside Eight
 - VBS, Ascension service, scholarships, lay leadership training, networking, encouragement

 - Suburban partners
 - Breaking down barriers, fellowship, encouragement

3. Raising up "new" lay leaders
 - Adult spiritual growth/Bible study curriculum (expectations of leaders and members)
 - Intentional male leadership training
 - Member ministry/service
 - Initial "full-time" ministry training
 - Use women in ministry/service

4. Staffing
 - "Long term" commitments
 - Positive attitude, setting the tone for the membership

5. The value of the LES/Children/Youth Ministries
 - Intentional outreach
 - Funding
 - Cooperative schooling (bane or blessing?)
 - The "third" place

6. Facilities maintenance
 - Cost issue
 - Community image

7. Common sense and flexibility in ministry
 - No "one size fits all"
 - Language
 - Worship/music

Resources

Sorum, E. Allen, A Theology of Missions With Special Application To North American Cities

Jeske, Mark A., Cross-Cultural Ministry

Klass, Alan C., Mission In Urban Area, Report of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
Urban Ministry Task Force

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COUNTY PROFILES

Milwaukee - WELS: 1966 (peak) - 52 churches - 29,218 communicants
 1994 - 47 churches - 21,769 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	1,054,249	959,275
Number of churches	405	499
Number of unchurched	448,641 (42.6%)	389,538 (40.6%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	48	58,328	48	39,731	-18,597
ALC	21	24,621			
LCA (ELCA)	31	29,586	53	36,981	-17,226
RC	112	377,604	109	304,275	-73,329
EPIS	16	8,112	17	6,082	- 2,030
AM BAP	18	6,326	17	7,172	+ 846
UCC	20	9,945	16	6,657	- 3,288
METH	28	22,781	26	11,356	-11,425
PRES	22	13,268	19	6,443	- 6,825
WELS	52	40,718	48	31,002	- 9,716

Waukesha - WELS: 1971 - 13 churches - 6,755 communicants
 1994 - 16 churches - 10,916 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	231,335	304,715
Number of churches	155	190
Number of unchurched	70,552 (30.5%)	110,019 (36.1%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	15	12,969	15	14,160	+ 1,191
ALC	12	9,831			
LCA (ELCA)	14	11,020	30	24,588	+ 3,737
RC	29	88,344	31	98,501	+10,157
EPIS	12	3,354	11	2,229	- 1,125
UCC	12	6,449	12	5,812	- 637
METH	15	10,791	14	6,991	- 3,800
PRES	11	4,236	12	3,568	- 668
WELS	14	9,329	16	13,981	+ 4,652

Washington - WELS: 1971 - 8 churches - 3,004 communicants
 1994 - 10+1 churches - 6,153 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	63,839	95,328
Number of churches	69	76
Number of unchurched	15,650 (24.5%)	33,579 (35.2%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	5	3,480	4	4,531	+ 1,051
ALC	3	1,551			
LCA (ELCA)	4	3,511	8	5,849	+ 787
RC	21	26,292	20	32,872	+ 6,580
UCC	14	4,256	14	3,885	- 371
METH	4	2,696	3	2,371	- 325
WELS	10	5,456	10	7,633	+ 2,177

Ozaukee - WELS: 1971 - 6 churches - 1,415 communicants
 1994 - 7 churches - 1,949 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	54,467	72,831
Number of churches	48	59
Number of unchurched	10,394 (19.1%)	22,131 (30.4%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	6	7,557	8	8,097	+ 540
ALC	7	5,438			
LCA (ELCA)	3	1,131	11	5,984	- 585
RC	12	22,594	12	25,539	+ 2,945
UCC	5	1,650	5	1,511	- 139
METH	3	1,651	3	1,495	- 156
PRES	1	1,310	1	1,731	+ 421
WELS	6	2,044	7	2,476	+ 432

Racine - WELS: 1971 (peak) - 5 churches - 2955 communicants
 1994 - 6 churches - 2636 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	170,838	175,034
Number of churches	109	129
Number of unchurched	65,559 (42.6%)	73,130 (41.8%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	12	9,904	15	7,908	- 1,996
ALC	11	11,426			
LCA (ELCA)	7	8,282	19	17,750	- 1,958
RC	23	52,945	25	50,459	- 2,486
EPIS	5	1,507	5	1,008	- 499
UCC	6	1,532	4	827	- 705
METH	15	7,449	14	5,093	- 2,356
PRES	3	2,168	3	1,427	- 741
WELS	6	4,801	6	3,498	- 303

Kenosha - WELS: 1966 (peak) - 8 churches - 4,679 communicants
 1994 - 9 churches - 3,143 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	117,917	128,181
Number of churches	68	88
Number of unchurched	48,947 (41.5%)	64,241 (50.1%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	2	893	2	731	- 162
ALC	3	2,731			
LCA (ELCA)	5	6,538	9	7,303	- 1,966
RC	17	40,270	16	37,054	- 3,216
SO BAP	3	1,176	6	1,437	+ 261
METH	10	5,083	10	2,988	- 2,095
WELS	8	5,554	9	4,018	- 1,536

Walworth - WELS: 1980 (peak) - 3 churches - 1694 communicants
 (Eastern half) 1994 - 3 churches - 1426 communicants

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1990</u>
Population	63,444	75,000
Number of churches	75	84
Number of unchurched	31,494 (49.6%)	40,067 (53.4%)

	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u># Ch</u>	<u># Souls</u>	<u>Change</u>
LCMS	5	2,072	4	2,571	+ 499
ALC	4	2,358			
LCA (ELCA)	7	3,674	9	4,410	- 1,622
RC	10	10,849	10	15,099	+ 4,250
AM BAP	9	1,782	7	1,480	- 298
UCC	9	2,744	9	2,924	+ 180
METH	16	3,788	14	3,276	- 512
WELS	5	2,896	5	2,471	- 415

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES
With A Population Over 100,000 People

Miami - 90.7% (62.5% Hispanic)
Detroit - 79.7% (75.7% African-American)
Atlanta - 70% (67.1% Af-Am)
Los Angeles - 64.2% (39.9% Hsp)
Chicago - 63.7% (39.1% Af-Am, 19.6% Hsp)
New York - 60.5%
San Francisco - 54/4%
Dallas - 53.1% (29.5% Af-Am, 20.9% Hsp)

Milwaukee - 39.6% (30.5% Af-Am)

Albuquerque - 42.2% (34.5% Hsp)
Ann Arbor - 19.7%
Aurora, CO - 22.4%
Austin, TX - 38.8% (23% Hsp)
Baltimore - 61.6% (59.2% Af-Am)
Birmingham - 64% (63.3% Af-Am)
Chula Vista, CA - 51.2% (37.3% Hsp)
Corpus Christi - 56.5% (50.4% Hsp)
Denver - 39.4% (23% Hsp)
El Paso - 74% (69% Hsp)
Flint - 52% (47.9% Af-Am)
Fort Worth - 43.9% (22% Af-Am, 19.5% Hsp)
Garden Grove, CA - 46.1% (23.5% Hsp, 20.5% Asian)
Houston - 56.1% (28.1% Af-Am, 27.6% Hsp)
Lansing, MI - 29.3% (18.6% Af-Am)
Las Vegas, NV - 28.4%
Oklahoma City - 27.6%
Phoenix - 28.8% (20% Hsp)
Pomona - 73% (51.3% Hsp)
Riverside, CA - 39.4%
San Antonio - 64.1% (55.6% Hsp)
San Jose - 51.5% (26.6% Hsp, 19.5% Asian)
Tempe - 19.5% (10.9% Hsp)
Torrance, CA - 33.9% (21.9% Asian)
Tucson - 37.4% (24.3% Hsp)
Virginia Beach - 21.7% (13.9% Af-Am)

*Change and decay in all around I see;
O thou who changes not, abide with me!*

Many of us will wake up tomorrow hoping that it will be 1954 again (the good old days!), but it will soon be 2000. And it will be a DIFFERENT world. Into such a changing world we are called to bring a changeless Gospel. The MESSAGE (the Word of God) remains the same forever but it needs to be applied to today's world. As MESSENGERS we need to be adaptable/flexible, understanding the context, community and culture in which we are called to minister so that we will apply God's Word of Truth to today's world.

What follows are some categories of change as referenced in the books DYING FOR CHANGE by Leith Anderson and in THE FROG IN THE KETTLE by George Barna. Suggestion: Brainstorm these changes in lifestyle in an Evangelism Meeting or Bible Class. What will be our response/approach to each of these issues? How can we as MESSENGERS best reach these people with the MESSAGE (the BAD NEWS and the GOOD NEWS....Law and Gospel)?

1. MOBILITY: One out of five households changes its address each year. This results in lack of roots, relationships and loyalty. People are hesitant to develop relationships since each move means painful departures. "Cocooning," for many, is becoming a way of life.

2. COLORING: In 1980 there were 14.6 million Hispanics; by 1995 they will total 26.8 million. The 26.5 million black Americans will grow to 35.8 million by 2000. Those of Asian descent increased from 3.5 million to 5.1 million between 1960 to 1985. By 2000 the total could be 10 million. At the same time, the Anglo population is static or slightly declining.

3. GRAYING: For the first time in our history, there are more Americans over 65 than there are teenagers. The fastest growing age group in America is the age group over 85. Gerontologists tell us that by 2000 we will likely divide the elderly into three segments of mature adults: those age 50-64, those 65-79 and those 80 and older. Each group will have its own particular needs and expectations. Look to "senior citizens" for the lagging core of volunteer workers in the church! Elderly care will be one of the dominant issues in the '90s. Almost half of all adults 65 or older by 2000 will be single. Of all the people who have ever lived past the age of 65, half of them are alive today. Day care for elderly in some areas is in high demand.

4. WOMEN: Today 55% of American women work outside the home. That estimate will continue to rise to somewhere around 65% by 2000. In the past women have been the bulk of volunteers for churches, school activities, and community services. What some perceive as declining volunteerism because of lower commitment level is often lower volunteerism because of increased commitments elsewhere. As women assume greater leadership and latitude in the work place, they will expect greater access to all positions held by men.

5. PLURALISM: There used to be three television channels, three major automobile manufacturers and a limited selection of periodicals (TIME, LIFE, LOOK and SATURDAY EVENING POST). Today there are 110 channels, 150+ different types and styles of autos and hundreds of choices of specialized magazines. Instead of just vanilla, chocolate or strawberry, you now can choose between 33+ flavors of ice cream. People are used to and expect choices.

6. SHORT-TERM COMMITMENTS: Modern American culture places great emphasis on self, independence, and personal fulfillment. It is estimated that the "average" baby boomer will work at ten different jobs during their lifetime. Even marriage is being entered into today without a "lifetime" commitment. "Try it. If you don't like it, try something or someone else!" For many, any task, office or commitment for longer than a year seems like a "lifetime sentence."

7. JOBS: The shift from an industrial age to a communication age will continue. Manufacturing jobs will go more and more to third world countries. Down-sizing in companies will continue. More and more people will work two jobs to "make ends meet."

8. CONSERVATISM: Younger people today are generally more conservative than their baby boomer parents. However, being politically conservative does not necessarily mean one is morally conservative. Witness the fact that more and more young people live together before marriage and sometimes (often) their first baby is a witness to their wedding.

9. GENERATIONS: The year we were born has an effect on the way we view the world and the way we live. This is illustrated in an area such as "saving" and "spending." In '89 only 6 % of savings were owned by persons aged 25-34. 66% of wealth was owned by persons over 55. Expectations are vastly different.

10. BABY BOOMERS: The generation born from 1946 through 1964, 75 million plus and growing (immigration), represents about a third of our total population. Some characteristics are: low loyalty, weak on relationships, tolerance for diversity, comfortable with change, on a search for the meaning of life.

11. BABY BUSTERS: Those born after 1964...too early to tell how they'll turn out. They appear to be more pessimistic than their parents. Some characteristics are: sense of entitlement, lack of deferred gratification, individualism and isolation, postpone things (marriage, children, jobs, etc.) until later, fast-paced and unfocused, undecided and indecisive, comfortable with contradictions.

12. VALUES: People will become even more self-centered, more materialistic, more driven to play. "Meet my needs and I'll be open to what you have to say."

13. CURRENCY: Time will replace money as tomorrow's currency of choice. Time, for many, will be their most valuable possession. Dollars will be more available than those precious extra minutes in which to cram everything we want to do in each hectic day.

14. BELIEFS: Many people already feel that nobody knows what they need better than they do...The 90's will develop more blends of pop religion. The choice of a religious system will depend on the system's ability to satisfy personal needs and desires. The 90's promise to bring a move toward syncretism - the blending of the most popular aspects of Christianity with similarly pleasing elements from other religious traditions. Pick and choose what pleases and satisfies you.

15. PEOPLE/FAMILIES: Gone are the days of America as the young, white, middle-class nation with a mom and dad and two children. By the year 2000 Americans will be darker skinned and more wrinkled (older median age) and from more widely divergent economic backgrounds. There will be a shrinking middle class with growing classes of "haves" and "have nots." Over 65% of all families will be dysfunctional in some way or another. Single parents and his, her and our children families will be common occurrences. The number of divorces may level off but, in general, family problems will continue to increase in this selfish and self serving world.

16. TOOLS: Americans will openly embrace technology with a shift from an emphasis on innovation to an emphasis on application. Labor- and time-saving devices will be hot commodities.

For further reading on the subject of our changing world I would offer the following bibliography:

MEGATRENDS: TEN NEW DIRECTIONS TRANSFORMING OUR LIVES by John Naisbitt, 1984, Warner Books, Inc., New York, NY

IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD!: THE CHALLENGE FOR TODAY'S PASTOR by Lyle E. Schaller, 1987, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN

DYING FOR CHANGE : THE NEW REALITIES CONFRONTING CHURCHES by Leith Anderson, 1990, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN

THE FROG IN THE KETTLE : WHAT CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE IN THE YEAR 2000 by George Barna, 1990. Regal Books, Ventura, CA