God in the Suburbs and Beyond: The Emergence of an Australian Megachurch and Denomination

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Thesis abstract

The Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical arms of Protestantism have provided some of the fastest growing segments of Christian religious activity in the United States, Australia and globally during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Much of this growth has been concentrated in a few very large megachurches (defined by scholars as churches with 2000 or more weekly attendees in one location) and new denominations formed as smaller churches became affiliated with them. Globally, the megachurch phenomenon is not exclusive to Pentecostalism. However, in Australia, almost all megachurch developments are Pentecostal, or charismatic and neo-Pentecostal offshoots. This dissertation examines the early life course biography of one of the first Australian megachurches, the Christian Outreach Centre (COC). It reviews events leading up to the founding of the COC in 1974 under a charismatic leader, and its growth and transition over its first 30 years and its development into a national and international denomination.

The thesis explores the COC’s development alongside other megachurches in Australia and specifically in Brisbane’s south east suburban ‘Bible belt’. It also investigates the COC’s capacity to establish itself in new locations within Australia and overseas. In addition, it examines the diversification of the COC as a provider of primary and secondary schools, tertiary education, counselling, political lobbying and social care activities.

The thesis proposes that the initial attraction of the COC megachurch and its affiliated churches reflected a market niche for a certain kind of religious experience, which was preserved through organizational development and response to social change in Australia during the late 20th century. It traces market opportunities for megachurch and denominational growth that arose because of increased tolerance of religious pluralism, suburbanization, generational change, inflexibility within traditional mainstream churches and acceptance of religious free market competition. The COC represents a local Australian expression of the global religious phenomena involving Pentecostalism and related late 20th century Christian revival movements and organisational
developments. This thesis examines the features of Pentecostalism exemplified in the COC and assesses the contribution of the COC to the mission of Christianity and to the life of participants from critical, theological and social perspectives.

Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed

Date

Sam Hey

16 September 2010
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**Key Terms:**

Case study. A study of one particular case of the phenomenon (Yin 1994).

Church growth movement. A school of study in missiology at Fuller Seminary (Towns, Engle & McIntosh 2004).

Charismatic movement. The spreading of Pentecostal phenomena among traditional mainstream church members in the second half of the 20th century (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:477).

Church planting movement. An offshoot of the church growth movement that placed an emphasis on starting new churches (Towns, Engle & McIntosh 2004).

‘Classical’ or ‘Traditional’ Pentecostalism. Pentecostal denominations that developed in the first half of the 20th century (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:553).

Life course. The developmental pathway and stages through which an individual or organization will typically transition.

Mainstream or traditional churches. Church denominations that are many centuries old, have long European traditions, and emphasize liturgical practices. These include the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Uniting and Baptist churches (ABS 2002).¹

Megachurches. These are defined by Thumma and Travis (2007) as churches with 2,000 or more attendees meeting in one location each week. The growth of a large number of these very large evangelical churches is a phenomenon that only occurred after 1950.

¹ The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2002, 1301.0 Religion) describes the traditional churches as those churches that were brought to Australia by European settlers in the 1800s.
Neo-Pentecostal, ‘neo-charismatic’ and ‘new independent charismatic’ churches. Churches and denominations that developed when charismatic movement Christians left traditional churches to establish new independent churches (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:928).

Pentecostalism. The branch of evangelicalism that emphasizes speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and supernatural gifts of divine healing, prophecy and words of knowledge as evidence of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment (Burgess & van der Maas 2002).
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Abbreviations:

ABC  Australian Broadcasting Commission.
ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics.
AFM  The Apostolic Faith Mission, started by Charles Parham, who promoted the notion of speaking in tongues as the sign of ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit’ in 1900/1901.
AFM–Az The Apostolic Faith Mission at Azusa Street, started by William Seymour In 1906, he led a revival that added African American elements and promoted Pentecostalism globally.
AOG  Assemblies of God.
A–AOG Australian Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal denomination in Australia. It developed out of the merger of the PCA with a pre-existing group of Australian AOG churches in 1937. It is independent of the American AOG, but draws its name from the American denomination. In April 2007, the AOG changed its name to the Australian Christian Churches (ACC). As the movement is still incorporated as Assemblies of God in Australia and is widely known by that name, and most of the thesis describes events prior to 2007, A-AOG is the predominant term for the ACC in this thesis.
Am–AOG The American Assemblies of God, formed in 1914 from a merging of earlier groups. It is the largest Pentecostal group in America.
CRC  Christian Revival Crusade, a neo-Pentecostal megachurch started in Adelaide in 1957 that grew into an independent denomination.
CCC  Christian City Church, a neo-Pentecostal megachurch that started in Sydney in 1980 and has grown into an independent denomination with 200 churches in Australia and overseas in 2008.
COC  Christian Outreach Centre, a neo-Pentecostal megachurch started in Brisbane in 1974 that by 2008 had grown into a denomination of 160 Australian and over 800 overseas churches.
COG  The Church of God, a neo-Pentecostal church started in Brisbane in 1937
that grew into a small denomination before merging with the CRC.

**CLC–S** The Christian Life Centre in Sydney, a neo-Pentecostal megachurch, started in Sydney in 1977. It joined the AOG denomination in the 1980s.

**CLC–H** The Hillsong Christian Life Centre was started by Brian Houston, son of the CLC–S founder, in 1983. It merged with the CLC–S and joined the AOG. It has grown into Australia’s largest church with approximately 19,000 weekly attendees.

With the success of its Hillsong music the Hills Christian Life Centre changed its name to Hillsong Church in 1999.

**CLC–B** Christian Life Centre in Brisbane, a neo-Pentecostal megachurch started in Brisbane in 1972 as a breakaway from FGC. It has 27 churches in the CLC denomination in Australia and over 200 churches overseas.

**FGC** Full Gospel Church started in Brisbane in 1953 and grew to 600 attendees in the early 1970s. It was registered as a denomination with the Australian government in 1963. It has grown into a national and international denomination with over 160 churches.

**GNH** The Good News Hall, the first ‘Pentecostal’ church in Australia, started in 1909 by a Methodist woman, Sarah Jane Lancaster.

**NWL–M** The *New Way of Living* magazine of the COC.

**NWL–T** The *New Way of Living* television program started by the COC.

**PCA** The Pentecostal Church of Australia, started by Church of Christ leader Charles Greenwood in 1916, arising from the ‘Sunshine Revival’ at Sunshine near Melbourne, Victoria.
**Acknowledgements**

Effective research can rarely be conducted in isolation, but only as one relates to others who are exploring the same area of interest. I wish to acknowledge my debt to the organizations and people who have supported this research project and assisted my growth as a researcher and teacher.

First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge the encouragement and support of my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Malcolm Alexander. I have appreciated our many stimulating discussions, his advice and guidance, and the many hours of reading, reflection and feedback. I wish to thank the staff from many institutions and associations, including Griffith University, Macquarie University, Alphacrucis (formerly Southern Cross College), the Pentecostal and Charismatic Bible Colleges (PCBC), the Australian History Association (AHA), The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) and the International Australian Studies Association (InASA) for opportunities for conference presentations and their support for my studies. I thank Wayne Hudson, Jill Roe, Mark Hutchinson and many other staff from these institutions for their continued support, assistance and feedback.

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Chapter One: God in suburbia: Megachurches, their organization and appeal

The Christian Outreach Centre today

The Brisbane Citipointe COC megachurch building looks very different to a traditional church. The main auditorium is more like an entertainment or shopping centre. Near the front entrance is a large commercial café, well stocked bookshop and an extensive information booth with EFTPOS machines for collecting payments and offerings. The wide entrance hall leads into a huge auditorium with over 2,000 seats. This is fronted by a large stage, with musicians and a team of singers energetically presenting their own compositions and high tempo music. Five large electronic screens extend across the back of the stage with song lyrics overlaying images of the performers. Thirty minutes of carefully planned singing is followed by a well organized welcome and announcements, and a message that focuses more on contemporary life than the traditional religious themes of many churches. With over 3,500 attendees gathering in 9 services each weekend, Citipointe is possibly the largest church of its kind in Brisbane and one of the largest weekly church gatherings in one place in Australia. The COC property houses much more than this church building. The auditorium is located on 90 acres with extensive car parking for travellers from the nearby heavily populated Brisbane suburbs with which it interacts. The property has a crèche, child care centre, weekly children’s and youth programmes, local and overseas aid centres, a primary school, high school and tertiary college. The Christian Outreach Centre (COC) movement that developed out of this centre is even larger. It comprises a denomination with 163 churches across Australia and over 1,000 affiliated COC churches spread across the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and Africa.

The COC started in 1974 and its growth to megachurch size and into a denomination is, in many ways, a surprising development, particularly in the light of a decline in religious participation predicted by secularization theorists and often observed in mainstream churches. However, it is not just the phenomenon of megachurches that is significant, for
there are historical precedents for such large churches. As noted by Thumma and Travis (2007:2), it is the number of megachurches, the spread and influence of their congregations, the ways in which they challenge traditional churches and secular institutions and their effect on the ways in which religion is practised that make megachurches a development that is worthy of deeper study.

**The research questions**

This study addresses the thesis question:

*How do we account for and describe the rise of Pentecostal megachurches in Australian since the 1970s*

More specifically, the thesis seeks answers to the central research question:

*What does the recollected oral history of the COC say about the organizational development and growth of Australian megachurches, with a focus on the COC megachurch and denomination and the role of charismatic leaders and their responses to changing markets?*

In seeking answers to these questions, four groups of sub questions have emerged.

1. There are questions relating to the categorization and nature of Australian megachurches such as COC, i.e. what kind of development is the COC and other Australian megachurches; what is unique and local about this Australian megachurch; and what aspects of COC are parts of broader, global religious developments, particularly those from North America?

2. There are questions about the organizational character of the COC, i.e. what organizational characteristics aided the development of the COC; what is the relationship between the charismatic leader and followers in the COC; how has the COC organization changed over time; how has the COC expansion into a national and international
network, and into new roles including schooling, been achieved; and how has the COC organization been changed by its expansion?

3. There are questions about the market orientation of the COC megachurch, i.e. what does the growth of the COC megachurch and movement tell us about the increased market orientation in Australian churches and society; how has the COC identified and responded to changed market opportunities; and how have deliberate efforts to identify and respond to market opportunities shaped the character of the COC and its message?

4. There are questions about the evaluation of COC and the religious validity of their organizational developments, reliance on charismatic leadership, and approaches to marketing, i.e. to what extent are the COC innovations in practice and belief a valid call to return to core Christian traditions and values, or are they simply a shallow commercialization of Christian symbols and traditions; and what are the benefits and limitations of COC involvement for churches, participants and society?

Some of these questions require a detailed historical case study of this megachurch and its unique organizational life course. Other questions are broader, requiring more general theorizing and considerations about the relationship between the COC and other megachurches, Australian religion and society. This thesis combines both approaches through a social historical case study of the COC within these wider contexts.

**Megachurches in North America and Australia**

The conceptual category of ‘megachurch’ was first used by Vaughan (1984) to describe a new form of religious organization that spread rapidly in the mid to late 20th century and which attracted many congregations of over 2,000. The same definition is used by other scholars including Thumma and Travis (2007:1) and is generally accepted in Australia (Bouma 2006a:154). Churches of over 1,000 are sometimes referred to as megachurches,
but this is not widely accepted as they have a different dynamic. While there have been large church congregations throughout history\(^2\), the appearance of large numbers of megachurches with over 2,000 attendees did not occur until after 1955. Thumma and Travis (2007:14) argue that the megachurches are a new collective social phenomenon and the leading edge of a new form of religious expression which emerged in the late 20\(^{th}\) century. As Ellingson (2007:4) notes, megachurches are not only increasing in size and influence, they are also reflecting and contributing to changes in Christian religion. They began predominantly in the United States (US) before developing in other countries (Loveland & Wheeler 2003; Chaves 2006; Ellingson 2008; Thumma 2009). In the US, the number of megachurches has grown from less than ten before 1950, to 50 by 1970 and over 1200 by the early 21\(^{st}\) century (Thumma 2009). Bouma (2006a:146; 2006b) observes that the influence of megachurches on Australian Christianity is growing, as it is in the US. Megachurches emerged in Australia in the 1980s from churches that were already growing rapidly.

Until recently, the newness of the phenomenon, scholarly suspicion of popular movements and scepticism about evangelical and Pentecostal practices and beliefs restricted the study of megachurches. However, due to their growing prominence and influence, they are now being studied more extensively. Within these studies, there is need for research into what attracts attendees to such groups, and the ways megachurch attendance affects attendees’ views about themselves and their world, particularly as these large gatherings help them to feel numerically influential and empowered. The similarities between North American and Australian megachurches are suggestive of significant relationships that also need examining.

\(^2\) Examples of early large churches include Charles Spurgeon’s Baptist Metropolitan Tabernacle in London (late 1800s) which attracted 5,000 weekly attendees; Charles Finney’s Second Free Presbyterian Church (1832) of New York City with a Sunday School enrolment of 6,027; Moody’s (1876) Chicago Avenue Church with seating for 2,200; Aimee Semple McPherson’s (1922) Los Angeles Temple attracted over 5,000 attendees; the First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas (1928) had an average attendance of 5,200; and The Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, grew to 8,597 members by 1943 (Vaughan 1984). Many contemporary megachurches continue the revivalist and organizational emphases of these earlier large churches.
The number of megachurches in the US is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Megachurches in the United States.\(^3\) Source: Thumma and Travis (2007:7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>US population (millions)</th>
<th>Number of megachurches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10 (1 in 7.6 mill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>50 (1 in 4.1 mill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>310 (1 in 806,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1210 (1 in 240,000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thumma and Travis (2007:31) identified four main types of American megachurches as of 2005. The majority of megachurches identify themselves as evangelical,\(^4\) but Thumma and Travis suggest more refined categories, as follows. Around 30 per cent of American megachurches are tied to traditional denominations such as the Southern Baptists (20 per cent) and United Methodists (9 per cent). These use formal liturgies, organ music and choirs, but tend to downplay their denominational affiliations. A further 25 per cent fall within the Pentecostal and charismatic theological traditions and these are the most likely group of churches to sponsor television ministries (5 per cent are in the largest Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God). Another 36 per cent are either independent non-denominational or smaller new denominations. The remaining 10 per cent are mostly ‘new paradigm churches’ that emphasize a return to traditional Christian symbols, language and practices, or experiment with new ways of ‘doing church’.

Australian megachurches are not yet as diverse as those in the US. Interestingly, almost all of Australia’s megachurches are found within the single category of Pentecostal and charismatic traditions that Thumma and Travis (2007:31) identify. This raises questions

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\(^3\) The North American megachurches include traditional and ‘new paradigm’ churches that emphasize a return to traditional Christian symbols, language and practices that has not yet been observed in Australian megachurches (Thumma & Travis 2007:7).

\(^4\) Thumma & Travis (2007:31); see also Thumma, Travis and Bird (2005).
about why there is less diversity in Australia and what it is about Australian Pentecostalism that contributed to the growth of Australia’s megachurches.

Table 1.2: The number of megachurches in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Australian population (millions)</th>
<th>Number of megachurches &gt; 2,000 weekly attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 (1 in 4.3 mill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>10 (1 in 1.7 mill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>21 (1 in 900,000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: derived from Table 1.3.

The following is a list of the 21 megachurches in Australia in 2010.

Table 1.3: Australia’s largest megachurches in 2010 in order of date commenced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Affiliation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>(Year established ) Year megachurch begins</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weekly attendance</th>
<th>No. of churches &amp; schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Temple AOG</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>(1925) 1985 (CL Greenwood) Philip Hills</td>
<td>A-AOG</td>
<td>600 to 2,000 in 1980s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Gospel Church</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>(1953) 1963 Ian Munro</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverley Christian Fellowship</td>
<td>Melbourne ‘Citylife’</td>
<td>1967 Richard Holland Kevin Conner, Mark Conner</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>900 then 3,000 then 5,200</td>
<td>3 and a school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden City Christian Church</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>(1955) 1968 Reg Klimionok</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>200 then 3,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradise Community Church</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>1969 Andrew Evans then Ashley Evans</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>5 and a school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Christian Faith Centre)</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1969 Paul Collins</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>600 then became CCC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logos Foundation</td>
<td>Sydney then Toowoomba</td>
<td>1970 Howard Carter</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>8 and a school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Life Centre</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Trevor Chandler</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>27 + 205 O’seas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Outreach Centre</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Clark Taylor then Neil Miers</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>160 Aust 500 O’seas 4 schools, a college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverview Christian Church</td>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Brian Baker then Phil Baker</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>15 and a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian City Church CCC/C3</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Phil Pringle (Paul Collins 1969)</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>100 and a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Inspire CLC</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>John McMartin</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Life Centre ‘Hillsong’</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Frank Houston then Brian Houston</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal then A-AOG</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackburn Baptist Church ‘Crossway’</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Rowland Croucher, Stuart Robinson</td>
<td>Charismatic Mainstream Baptist</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careforce Church</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Allan Meyer</td>
<td>Charismatic Mainstream Church of Christ</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeman Downs CCC</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Gordon &amp; Jo Moore</td>
<td>Independent neo-Pentecostal CCC</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway Baptist</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Brian Andrew</td>
<td>Charismatic Mainstream Baptist</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire Live</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>(1953) 1990</td>
<td>Michael Murphy</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Christian Church</td>
<td>Sunshine Coast, Qld</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Steve Penny</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1 and a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside Christian Church</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Danny Guglielmucci</td>
<td>AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen Hills AOG</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>(1932) 2000</td>
<td>Wayne Alcorn</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planetshakers City Church</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Russell and Sam Evans</td>
<td>A-AOG Classical Pentecostal</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources of Table 1.3. This table draws from the literature produced by the megachurches, interviews with megachurch leaders and elders, and information from Australian researchers. Other large churches that are sometimes described as megachurches include the Christian Revival Crusade in Adelaide and St Hilary’s Anglican Church in Sydney. Wesley Central Mission, under the leadership of Gordon Moyes, could be considered a non-charismatic movement megachurch. It has 3,000 paid staff and 3,000 volunteers, over 470 buildings, a programme on commercial television, and a multi million dollar income. However, these groups do not emphasize a weekly gathering of over 2,000 or more attendees in one location.

**The three types of megachurch in Australia**

All of Australia’s megachurches appear to have been aided in their growth by Pentecostal beliefs and practices. Even megachurches in traditional Australian denominations, such as the Blackburn Baptist, Gateway Baptist and Careforce Church of Christ, depend on charismatic, Pentecostal and related practices to draw and hold their large attendances. Australian Pentecostalism is dependent on the megachurch organizational form to give it concentrated resource bases and a greater profile. At the same time, the megachurch organizations appear to gain motivation, direction and ideas from Pentecostalism (Clemens & Minkoff 2004:155).

Pentecostalism has emerged as a sizable global revival movement. It has grown from a few thousand members in few small churches in the early 1900s into the second largest sub-group within Christianity after Catholicism with a worldwide following of more than 400 million participants by the century’s end (Wacker 1995:440; Barrett & Johnson 2002). Within Australia, Pentecostalism has also grown into the second largest group of weekly church attendees after the Catholics (Carey 1996:18; Hughes 1996:105). In 2006, Barrett estimates that there were 497 million Pentecostal/charismatics in 1997 or 27% of the world Christian population and that there will be 1,140 million or 44% of the total number of Christians in 2025 (Barrett 1996, 1997).
it had just over 1 per cent of the population (ABS 2006). If charismatic mainline groups were included, this number could double. While traditional churches retain sizable affiliation rates as measured in the Census, their weekly attendances have declined, whereas many Pentecostal churches are attracting high participation rates and the large attendances that have contributed to megachurch developments.

Within this one general category of Pentecostalism, Australia’s megachurches are associated with the three main branches of Pentecostalism found in Australia:

1. Classical Pentecostal megachurches. This term is used to describe the Pentecostal denominations that developed in the first half of the 20th century (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:553). This movement has its roots in 17th century Pietism, through a Wesleyan Methodist emphasis on a ‘second blessing’ experience, combined with Finney’s emphasis on revivalism and conversion experience and the Holiness and the Keswick movements (Synan 1971; Dayton 1987). The global movement that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century is characterised by belief in a post-salvation ‘baptism’ in God’s Holy Spirit. This post-conversion experience was doctrinally linked to glossolalia, or tongues speaking, by a former Methodist minister, Charles Parham, in 1901 (Goff 1988). Pentecostalism is also associated with belief in millennialism, divine healing, and charismatic gifts.

In Australia, classical Pentecostalism emerged out of the ground swell of interest in ‘intense religious experiences’, and ‘higher life teachings’ that characterized many Christian groups, particularly Methodism, in the late 19th century (Hutchinson, in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:26). Classical Pentecostalism in Australia was consolidated through the formation of the Australian AOG (A–AOG) denomination in 1937, which is Australia’s largest and oldest Pentecostal denomination. Ten of Australia’s megachurches

6 It should also be noted that there are a number of difficulties associated with the interpretation of Census data. The addition of a ‘no religion’ category in 1971 and ‘this question is optional’ in 1981 have made comparisons more difficult. Unlike the larger groups, Pentecostalism was not a box that could be ticked and members had to write their own description of their grouping (Hughes 1996:59 ff).
have developed within the A–AOG. Some were founded early in the 20th century, but their megachurch growth only came late in the 20th century, after 1977, when its ‘charismatic’ leaders fostered a new growth ethos and ‘re-founded’ the AOG in ways that aided megachurch growth. Other smaller classical Pentecostal groups including the Elim, Apostolic, United Pentecostal, Church of God and Four Square denominations have not yet developed Australian megachurches.

2. Charismatic movement megachurches within mainstream denominations. The term charismatic movement is used to describe the spread of Pentecostal type phenomena among traditional mainstream church members in the second half of the 20th century (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:477). Three ‘charismatic movement’ megachurches have developed. They are the Blackburn Baptist Crossways Church and the Careforce Church of Christ Church in Melbourne, and the Gateway Baptist Church in Brisbane. These grew into megachurches when leaders and attendees within traditional mainstream Baptist and Church of Christ denominations adopted Pentecostal beliefs and practices of the ‘charismatic movement’ and remained within their traditional denominations. Some of the largest Australian Catholic churches are also charismatic churches, but none have grown to over 2,000 weekly attendees meeting in one location.

3. Independent neo-Pentecostal megachurches. These megachurches developed when charismatic movement Christians left traditional churches and established new independent churches (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:928; Anderson 2004b:156). Because these churches developed outside the restrictions of traditional denominational structures, they had greater freedom for experimentation and innovation and for the development of new independent denominations. There are eight Australian churches in this category and four have developed into new denominations. The largest of these

7 In the United States only 11% of megachurches are affiliated with one of the mainline denominations. A similar low percentage is observed in Australia, suggesting resistance within traditional denominations to factors that contribute to megachurch growth. See Thumma and Petersen 2003:107; Thumma and Travis 2007:27.
independent denominations is the COC. Curiously, three of these new independent denominations have developed in Brisbane.

This thesis case study focuses on the development of the Brisbane COC megachurch, now known as the Citipointe Church, and its associated Citipointe School and Christian Heritage Tertiary College. The case study also traces the story of the COC denomination and in later chapters it will suggest some reasons why it followed its particular developmental pathway.

**Other themes of the thesis**

Case studies such as this provide valuable insights into the historical specifics of individual case, as well as insights into religious and organizational developments within the church, and the ways it has interacted with the wider society. The story of this particular case of the COC is even more interesting when it is understood against the backdrop of more widespread movements and broader social developments. This case study will interact with, be informed by, and comment on the following more general themes.

**Religious and organizational renewal**

Megachurch researcher Stephen Ellingson (2007:111,164) observes that the growth of megachurches has been aided by their openness to religious and organizational innovation. They typically grow by pursuing radical second order ‘frame breaking’ shifts in orientation and leadership which bring revitalization as well as encouraging adaptations that foster new growth. They often discard long held practices, symbols and rituals, while freely adopting new worship styles, ideas, architecture, technologies, organizational practices, policies and marketing approaches that they believe are able to renew their movements and attract and hold large attendances (McGavran 1986:122; Cox 1995:57; Coleman 2000:24; Jenkins 2002:75; Thumma & Travis 2007:14f; Ellingson 2007:7). Like other revival movements, they emphasise the conversion of large numbers
of people to greater commitment to the Christian faith, teachings and reform in society (Orr 1973:vii; Piggin 2000:3). The megachurches also pursue organizational renewal through changes in group culture and structures, increased motivation and commitment, a re-emphasis of the grassroots deinstitutionalized origins, new breakaway offshoots, as well as mergers and acquisitions (Smelser 1963). The Australian megachurches have adopted a distinct revivalist orientation. They have taken up distinctive global and North American Pentecostal developments, dependence on charismatic leadership, Spirit empowerment of the laity and pragmatic approaches to ministry (Dunn 1985:81) and Pentecostal openness to the ‘new thing that God is doing’ (Hutchinson 1998b:14) that are conducive to revitalization.

Religious renewal movements are concerned with countering a perceived drift away from the original patterns, values and purposes, while also pursuing new response to changes in internal and external environments (Smelser 1963:270; Barna 1993). They typically retain selected conservative religious beliefs that provide a strong sense of certainty, authority and a ‘reason for being’ combined with new adaptive responses to social change. Renewal movements are often termed ‘primitivist’ and ‘restorationist’ because they gain a sense of authority and motivation from the belief that they are restoring original practices and beliefs associated with ‘primitive’ models of earlier or biblical times. However, these original practices are difficult to identify and interpret, and revivalist groups usually introduce more innovations than they restore. The megachurch innovations also bring changes that endanger core Christian beliefs and practices (Ellingson 2007:7) and their claim that they are restoring beliefs and practices that are true to Scripture and core Christian traditions needs to be tested. The breakaway groups from which Australian megachurches develop, go further than revival, pursuing reformation and ‘a reconstitution of values, a redefinition of norms, a re-organization of the motivation of individuals, and a redefinition of situational facilities’ (Smelser

8 Wacker (1988:197ff) identified three sources of primitivism as the biblical and philosophical belief that the Bible is the revealed word of God, the historical belief that new movements can recreate lost forms of apostolic Christianity and the ethical belief that new movements can restore lost ethical standards and practices.
They could more correctly be described as renewal movements (Lippit 1982:13) that confront and initiate changes designed to help organizations adapt, address problems, remain viable and promote individual, group and organizational development. They could also be described as reformation movements. Further to this, Packard (2008) warns that the innovations that megachurches introduce are limited by their tendency towards isomorphism and to close identification with consumer society. 

While such religious innovations are frequently viewed with concern by mainstream traditional church leaders such as Ellingson (2007:7), management consultant Peter Drucker (1998) observes that the megachurches’ innovations are the sort of response that contemporary churches need to make if they are to adapt to the social changes around them. Drucker writes:

Consider the pastoral megachurches that have been growing so very fast in the US since 1980, and they are surely the most important social phenomenon in American society in the last 30 years. There are now some 20,000 of them, and while traditional denominations have steadily declined, the megachurches have exploded. They have done so because they asked, ‘What is value?’ to a non-churchgoer and came up with answers the older churches had neglected. They have found that value to the consumer of church services is very different from what churches traditionally were supplying. The greatest value to the thousands who now throng the megachurches, both weekdays and Sundays, is a spiritual experience rather than a ritual (Drucker 1998).

Sociologists of religion, Roger Finke (2004) argues that openness to innovation is particularly important for religious groups to maintain the relevance of religious traditions during times of rapid social change. Organizational development theorists, including Wolfe (1994) and Schein (2004:225), have identified openness to innovation as one of the most important characteristics in aiding the emergence, ongoing viability and development of an organization. While ossified organizational structures limit adaptation to change, organizations that develop flexible, holistic, gestalt organizational structures,

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9 Isomorphism refers to the tendency organizations have to become increasingly similar as they seek to become more like those organizations that are perceived to have been most successful.
are able to adapt freely to changes in internal and external environments (Massarik 1995). Like living organisms they must evolve and adapt to respond to environmental change. Like a tree that balances old wood and newer growth, the religious groups that remain most vital combine the preservation of core past teachings and structures with innovative responses to the needs and changes of the present (Rogers 1995; Coleman 2000; Finke 2004). Organizational renewal and growth is aided by maintaining a balance between the institutionalization and formalization of beliefs, practices and organizational structures needed to preserve the organization, and the continued openness to diversification, decentralization, domain expansion, and adaptation to environmental changes that aid their continued expansion (Quinn & Cameron 1983:40). In marketing terms, the groups that are most successful are those that respond to changed market trends, develop new products and adapt to new developments in the contemporary culture. Successful adaptation also requires well informed, critical reflection on the nature of the innovations that are introduced.

At the same time, Meyer, Brooks and Goes (1990:93) and Ellingson (2007:7) warn that eagerness for change in the new groups and megachurches can cause them to lose their connection to rich traditions of the past and their original purposes and identity. It can threaten their historical and cultural ‘chain of memory’ (Hervieu-Léger 2000) and endanger their ‘reasons for being’ and support base. Revivalist sects can destabilize and speed up the decline of parent organizations and may contribute to the ‘voluntary destructuration’ of established religious groups through the abandonment of old practices and procedures (Wilson 1975:116ff). They can even be at war with their own roots (Casanova 2001:437). This disconnection from the past can contribute to an eventual decline in adherence to core Christian beliefs and traditions. Revivalist groups also have a tendency to be overly experiential, insufficiently rational, easily manipulated, open to

10 In the local Australian context, Hirsch (2007:179ff) argues that the notion of church organizations as living organisms and living systems is needed if religious groups and movements are to be adequately understood. He argues that, as in organisms, the development of ‘hidden’ centralized structures provide the support and resources needed for the growth of the decentralized periphery of the body or population where most growth and innovation occurs.
delusion, and adopting poorly thought out practices and beliefs (Ahlstrom 1978:450).\textsuperscript{11} Additionally, while some revivalists were content to allow revivals to simply be God’s work, many seek to develop techniques and programmes that foster a sense of revivalism while failing to provide the long-term benefits of true renewal. This pragmatic, programmed ‘revivalism’ has been described as the ‘Americanization of revival’.\textsuperscript{12} Australian scholars on revivalism, such as Piggin (2000:122) and Chant (1999), warn of the dangers of human efforts to produce revival. They also point to the positive contribution that ‘genuine’ God directed revivals could play in renewing participants and their parent organizations. At the same time, Piggin (2000:120) also observes that revivals are easily quenched by formalism, clericalism, sacralism, traditionalism and nominalism.

Thus, for revival and renewal to be effective, there is a need to balance experimentation and innovative responses to environmental changes with maintaining continuity with historical traditions, founding visions and values (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther 2002:152). Schein (2004:225) describes this need in terms of the organizational challenge of balancing external adaptation to environmental changes with the internal integration of core traditions and culture.

**Megachurches and the market for religion**

In organizational development terms (Aldrich 1999:195; Schein 2004), the organizations that are most successful are those that respond most effectively to changed social and religious environments. Megachurch researchers (Thumma & Travis 2007:14) point out that megachurches intentionally identify and respond to their social settings and markets in ways that are conducive to their growth. Marion Maddox (cited in Ferguson 2005:38) observes that the marketing of mega-churches would put a lot of commercial enterprises

\textsuperscript{11} These sect-like characteristics include exclusivity, a belief that they have a monopoly on truth, and a tendency to be led by the laity. They tend to be world rejecting, and have demanding membership requirements (this is not generally true of Pentecostal megachurches) (Wilson 1959).

\textsuperscript{12} WW Sweet, quoted in Bollen 1973:24.
to shame. Ashley Evans, pastor of the first Australian AOG megachurches in the Adelaide suburb of Paradise, says that the success of Pentecostalism can be attributed to offering a service that people want:

We have a great band, a great service, which is full of life illustrations. We make it unpredictable with lots of surprises. Each service has lots of object lessons, a drama, songs, and a story from someone. It breaks the whole thing up and keeps people listening. (Ferguson 2005:38)


Just when many thought religion was a dying phenomenon that would not make it into the 21st century, megachurches sprang up. Churches filled with youth, and energising forms of worship I refer to as spiritual aerobics. These cannot be dismissed as shallow calls to return to the past, but are active engagement with the world of today with forms of message delivery that are strictly postmodern and keyed into the receptors of young people.

Thus, for the megachurch movement to be fully understood there is a need for studies into the social contexts in which they were situated, the ways in which megachurches identify and respond to market opportunities in order to reach particular audience needs and an evaluation of how this market oriented approach is affecting the megachurches and their message.¹³

**Australian society as a context for megachurch growth**

Scholars such as Berger (1967), Wilson (1982) and Bruce (2002) identify social changes in the mid to late 20th century that created the opportunity for a range of mega-complexes including shopping and entertainment centres and megachurches to form. These include industrialization, urbanization and suburbanization, as well as acceptance of free market competition in all areas of society, including religion. Other significant social changes that relate to megachurch formation include increased immigrant diversity, acceptance of ethnic, social and religious diversity, the collapse of national and denominational ‘sacred

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¹³ The importance of understanding social contexts of Pentecostal developments is made by Cox (1999:11), see also Piggin (2000:11f).
canopies’, increased diversity of subcultural groups and societal differentiation. Additionally, the encouragement of individual freedom, autonomy, choice, democratic participation and individualism allows for changes to the ways religion is viewed and participated in. This not only promotes privatization of religion, but also opportunities for churches and megachurches that offer individual experiences combined with a strong sense of community. McLeod (2007) and Hilliard (1997a) also identify more immediate social changes that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, challenging mainstream denominations and contributing to the growth and character of megachurches. These involve increased affluence, changed attitudes towards sexuality and gender, fresh ideals expressed in new political and social movements, and a weakening of the ways in which the next generation of young people were socialized into traditional religious beliefs. Other changes that have impinged on megachurch development are television and new media, access to education and information, the changing nature of work, the increased use of motor cars and response to a decline in social capital (Putnam 2000:284).

Megachurches’ interactions with these social changes are complex; often contributing to changes in the ways in which religion is practised and believed, as well as contributing to social changes themselves. Against this backdrop, megachurches have emerged as new social and religious institutions that are playing an increasingly prominent role in urban and suburban life. They provide extensive facilities located close to transport networks and are contributing significantly to the ways in which community is being formed and viewed. They are providing new ways of meeting religious and social needs, particularly within rapidly growing new suburbs. They are also integrating with contemporary culture, using new electronic media and contemporary presentations to attract and hold their audiences. In the light of these observations there is a need for more research into the relationships between megachurch developments and their social contexts. While many aspects of social change could be studied, this thesis will focus on megachurch organizational responses to social change and their use of marketing, franchising and contemporary organizational developments to meet social needs.

14 See Bruce (1998b).
The megachurches and the market for education and schools

The influence of megachurches is increased by their expansion into other less religious areas of society that have a close affinity with their religious orientation, including education, social welfare and politics. The megachurch involvement in schools and tertiary colleges has been particularly significant, in that it provides an important avenue for nurturing the next generation in the faith of the parents. It also establishes the megachurch as a central place for community formation during the week. However, these educational efforts have been challenged by those who raise questions about their tendency towards isolation and indoctrination (Thiessen 1984:224; Lambert 1993:48ff; Long 1996:235). Education theories such as Perry’s (1970) model of intellectual development offers a means by which the legitimacy of their schools can be measured. King and Kitchener’s (1994) more recent study similarly proposes that well founded intellectual development should progress from pre-reflective thinking (stages 1 to 3) to quasi-reflective relativism (stages 4 to 5), then to reflective commitment (stages 6 to 7) which can be used to evaluate the educational effectiveness of church schools. These models argue that a well developed education system should encourage transition from absolutism and dualism to a greater awareness of the complexity of the real world and the limitations of under developed epistemological and faith systems.

Religious authenticity and megachurch approaches

The marked difference between mega and traditional churches raises questions about the authenticity of megachurch marketing and organizational efforts to attract large attendances. For megachurch participants, success is often measured in terms of their attendances, attendee experiences, responses to calls for conversion and claimed supernatural encounters. Large attendance and enthusiastic experiences are frequently viewed as evidence of religious revival. Many outside the megachurches question such claims, pointing to deeper and less easily observed aspects of religious encounters. The question ‘How effective is a religious group?’ can be tested by the questions, ‘how effectively do they preserve core traditions and belief?’ and ‘how effectively do they
contribute to the mission of God (*Missio Dei*) and communicate the love and grace of God as revealed in Christ?’ (Bosch 1991:390, 519). Piggin (2000:11) observed that ‘genuine’ revivals promote orthodoxy, theological reflection, commitment, the reformation of church and society, and the diminution of sinful practices. The claims of megachurch can also be tested in terms of their contribution to attendees’ lives and to their commitment to core religious beliefs, practices and values.

A particularly effective, but underutilized measure of authenticity is provided by human development and faith theorists who provide dynamic models that relate the health and vitality of a group to developments in the lives of leaders and attendees. Fowler’s (1981) faith development theory argues that for healthy faith development to occur, people must make a series of transitions. They should graduate from intuitive projective and mythic-literal faiths that are characteristic of childhood, to synthetic-conventional faith and conformity that are characteristic of adolescence, to individual reflective faith that characterizes faith in early adulthood, transcendent-conjunctive faith in the adult years, and finally to universalized faith that reflects the maturation of late adulthood. Fowler (2004:418) observed that megachurches typically encourage unexamined conformity to the simplistic, but attractive, faith perspectives of charismatic leaders. He found that megachurch attendees are generally content to remain in the synthetic-conventional faith stage. Fowler (2004:418) expressed concern that megachurch leaders often offer little encouragement for the critical examination of beliefs and values, for exploring contradictions that arise from church and life. For megachurches to promote higher levels and more authentic forms of faith development, they must encourage progress from the narrow, unreflective acceptance of faith positions, towards more highly developed, carefully considered, faith positions that encourage each member to take responsibility for fully informed and well thought out beliefs, practices and values. According to Fowler (1981:187), achieving higher faith development levels requires dialectic and dialogic thinking, as well as recognition of the limits of rational and experiential knowledge, acceptance of the polarities and opposites in life, and the valuing of post critical faith positions and a willingness to spend and be spent for the transformation of present reality towards a transcendent actuality (Fowler 1981:200).
Kegan (1983) and Oser and Gmunder (1991) offer six-stage models of faith development similar to Fowler’s. Oser and Gmunder argue that the higher levels of faith development are reached by pursuing autonomy in decision making and inter-subjectivity. This requires acceptance of the imminence and transcendence of God in ways that permeate each other, together with the acceptance of the universal solidarity of all people. They depict mature individuals as free and responsible decision makers. The authenticity of megachurches can also be measured broadly, in terms of the contribution they make to the health of the Christian churches as a whole as well as promoting orthodoxy and unity in all churches (Bloesch 2002:103). They must also make a contribution to society, advancing community formation and engagement with all that society has to offer. As Cox (1965:4f) and Berger (1999:9) noted, these churches face the challenge of assisting attendees to deal with the requirements of the modern and postmodern worlds without resorting to withdrawal from them, or to unquestioning accommodation to them.

These faith development models provide a useful way of examining the faith, beliefs and practices of COC attendees and their church organization. Fowler (2004:411) notes that these models of gradual faith development are not easily accepted by many evangelical and Pentecostal groups because of the concerns by the high value that the models place on rationalism, pluralism, relativism and contextualization. They are also concerned by the model’s accommodation to secular society and the over confidence placed in humanity’s efforts to promote human development through agencies such as education and psychology. The models appear to challenge their notions of absolutes and sin as well as the dominant roles of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church in instant human transformations such as conversion. The final chapter of this thesis will return to these questions and discuss the authenticity and value of the COC megachurch practices and beliefs in the light of the data collected in this study.
Research methodology

How this study came about – a personal reflection

The present thesis has grown out of questions that arose from the author’s observations of the ways in which religion in Australia and overseas is changing. Growing up in mainstream and evangelical churches in Australia, I observed that many of the traditional churches that grew most strongly in the 1950s and early 1960s often struggled to attract attendees and support in the late 20th century. In contrast to this, attendance at Pentecostal churches and megachurches appeared to increase in late 20th century Australia, to the point where they are replacing traditional churches in their size and influence. When I attended and ministered as a pastor in Pentecostal churches, my observations raised further questions: ‘What was the nature of these changes?’, ‘What are the benefits and difficulties raised by the organizational and marketing approaches of these churches?’, ‘How beneficial, or otherwise, were these developments for the participants and churches?’ and ‘What do these changes say about the likely future of religion and society in Australia?’ My interest in religious phenomena led to further undergraduate studies in ministry and theology. My Master of Arts degree in theology at the University of Queensland in 1997 included a 20,000 word research paper on Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation, and numerous conference papers and journal articles exploring these questions. In articles, including one in Evangelical Review of Theology (Hey 2001a) entitled ‘Changing Roles of Pentecostal Hermeneutics’, I surveyed the ways in which Pentecostal strategies for interpreting the Bible have changed over time. In other articles, I examined Pentecostal interactions with secularism, modernity and postmodernity and interactions with contemporary society. These investigations raised further questions about Pentecostalism that called for further exploration.

15 The author of this thesis was raised in the Anglican Church and was a science teacher before working as a school chaplain supported by a range of mainline churches. He has worked in evangelical and Pentecostal churches. He has served as a pastor in the Apostolic Pentecostal Church of Australia and the Christian Outreach Centre (COC). He lectures at Christian Heritage College School of Ministries and other colleges. 16 See References - Hey (2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2002, 2006).
In 1997, I was offered a teaching position at the School of Ministries, which is the tertiary institution of the Christian Heritage College on the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) campus. This presented an opportunity to study the development of a uniquely Australian Pentecostal group in detail. The COC leaders were willing to participate in this study, and their provision of access to the oral, written, audio and other records that preserve the history of the COC. The oral history of the COC was collected and collated from 2000 to 2003. The COC participation in the National Church Life Survey in 2006 sheds further light on the Brisbane megachurch and the COC. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a greater understanding of the development of COC, and the neo-Pentecostal megachurches of which it is a part, in ways that will benefit the participants as well as those outside these movements.

**Methodology**

This thesis study of the COC uses a socio-historical and organizational case study approach to examine the growth of an Australian megachurch (Hall 2007:82). It takes a functionalist stance that seeks to examine the COC in terms of the ways it functions within its religious, social, cultural and organizational contexts (Strasser 1981:132). It uses an inductive research method in which grounded theories and theoretical concepts are generated from the interviews considered in the thesis. 17 Religious, organizational, and human development theorists provide the resources for deductive research that tests the concepts raised from the interview data. This theoretical literature against which the interview data is considered is examined in the literature review in chapter 2.

The methodology of this thesis follows that used in similar thesis studies of Pentecostal church movements, including Knowles (1994) PhD on ‘The history of a New Zealand Pentecostal movement: the New Life Churches of New Zealand from 1946 to 1979’, which used a variety of sources including oral history to describe the largely unexamined

17 An extensive literature on grounded theory exists. See for example Glaser & Strauss (1999).
New Life Churches (NLC) within the wider contexts of social and religious change in New Zealand. The NLC were a precursor to the COC movement studied in this thesis. This thesis also interacts with Clifton’s (2005) PhD on ‘An analysis of the developing ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia’ which also used a combination of oral history interviews, studies of the AOG movement’s literature and interaction with scholarly writings to examine ecclesiological concepts in the AOG. This present study is also modelled on studies of overseas megachurches, such as those considered by Thumma and Travis (2007), who combined interview and survey data with information collected from surveys and other methods. The methodology and interview selection process used in this thesis is outlined in appendix 9.

Examples of the use of multiple sources of data including oral history interviews, surveys and questionnaires are presented in organizational biography studies by Salama (1992:225) and in organizational culture studies by Schein (1994:337). Their insights are used in this study to better understand the COC organizations and its character and culture. Alzira Salama (1992:225) argues that the study of an organization’s biography can bring a greater understanding of its past and culture, and that it offers rich theoretical insights that are missing in more static studies of organizations taken at one particular time. Kimberly (1979:437) also states that the biographical approach to organizational analysis offers invaluable insights into the different requirements for organizations at different stages of their development. Pedler, Burgoyne, and Boydell (1991) further demonstrate that such studies can show how individual and group development and learning can aid organizational growth and survival. The application of organizational development research to the development of religious movements is as yet an under explored avenue for greater understanding of historical development of religious groups such as those that are explored in this thesis.

A single case study approach is chosen as it affords the best opportunity to examine and analyse one case more extensively and to more fully describe what is occurring in this single case (Bouma 1993:90). As Yin (1994:8) points out, a single case study does not produce generalized data, nor represent the broader group, but it does provide insights
that can be applied to wider studies and to other similar cases as well as to more general religious, organizational and social developments. The Christian Outreach Centre (COC) was chosen for this case study because it is one of the earliest neo-Pentecostal megachurches to form in Australia, one of the few to be started in Australia by an Australian,\(^\text{18}\) as well as one of the first to grow into a new Australian denomination. COC also reflects well the changes taking place in Australian religion and society during the late 20\(^{th}\) century. The relatively young age of COC, just 30 years old in 2004, enabled the use of direct observation and systematic interviewing of participants who had firsthand experience in COC, and interviews with those who had participated in the social history of COC during the first 30 years of its existence.

Since Pentecostalism is largely an oral movement, oral history interviews with the COC leaders and attendees form a sizable source of information. The predominant data source in this thesis is open ended interviews. Marshall and Rossmann (1999:22) and Conger (1998:107) note that qualitative research through interviews is well suited to historical studies of new movements and to the study of complex social interactions such as those observed in the COC. The strengths and weaknesses of the oral history method are listed by Yow in *Recording Oral History* (1994).

Oral history recollections and COC records include elements of creative reconstruction, idealized oratory, idiosyncratic drama and poetic self-discovery that had to be considered.\(^\text{19}\) Like participants in other religious groups, members of COC constructed their recollected histories to legitimize their preconceptions of the past, present and future and to define themselves, their group, their world and their relationships with those the supported and opposed (Hobsbawn 1997:5). These oral, written and electronic records produced by COC attendees were guided by a mixture of motivations and views, many of which changed over time. These constructed oral histories were often triumphalistic,

\(^{18}\) Interestingly, many of Australia’s other megachurches were started by New Zealanders who were associated with charismatic and Latter Rain revivalist movements. Reasons for this are explored in the thesis.

\(^{19}\) These categories are drawn from Barclay (1986).
reflecting the Pentecostal tendency to promote optimistic accounts of their victories and they often overlook difficulties and blunders (Anderson 2000:193). Given such tendencies, every effort was made to heed Yow’s (1994:15) advice to take care so that narrow, idiosyncratic viewpoints were not simply accepted, but they were carefully examined so as to more accurately identify underlying motivations and insights on which a deeper understanding of a movement and its history might be reconstructed. The idealist views in these oral and written histories of insiders need to be considered in the light of the often broader views held by those outside the movement. The limitations of oral history recollections need to be noted and efforts made to look beyond these limited recollections into the deeper developments that lay behind them. Much oral history is in narrative format, made up of smaller individual narratives that are embedded in larger metanarratives that are held by larger cultural and subcultural movements that needed to be identified and examined.

A high priority is also given to issues of reliability, validity and consideration of the limitations of the data (Yin 1994). Themes, hypotheses and insights that emerge from the data are tested, and verified or disproved through comparison with other cases and interviews and with theories that have been proposed by other researchers. As the thesis progressed, propositions emerged from the initial findings that were able to be tested through further studies and interviews. The difficulties arising from the use of limited oral reminiscences were partly overcome by supplementing these recollections with other data sources. These included COC and other related magazines, audio and video records, data from the 2006 National Church Life Survey and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The use and comparison of a variety of data sources serves to increase the depth, rigour, validity and reliability of the research (Creswell 2003:171).

20 The term triangulation is sometimes used to describe the improved accuracy and reliability that comes from the use of multiple data sources (Isaac & Michael1980). Other related studies of Australian churches including COC were made by Weiler (2000), Sheppard (2006) and Williams (1978).
The research project conforms to the ethics guidelines of Macquarie and Griffith Universities, and has the approval of their ethics committees. This study recognized the need for all participants to be fully informed, voluntary contributors to the project. Each interviewee was given an overview of the project and signed a written consent form. The collected data were securely stored and efforts were made to inform participants of the progress and provide opportunities for them to check the data and provide feedback and corrections. Further details about who was interviewed, the interview agreement forms and the questions that were asked are included in the appendixes.

Researcher bias is always a potential danger in qualitative research and continual efforts have been made to avoid unexamined preconceptions and bias through dialogue with researchers from outside the COC, conference presentations and regular scholarly interactions as well as reflection on this researcher’s own background and assumptions (Neuman 1977:334). The history of the COC narrated in this thesis was shaped by taking an outsider’s view, using scholarly perspectives, and regular interaction with other scholars and their literatures, while also interacting with insider’s perspectives. Objectivity was pursued by seeking to avoid over accommodation to the views of COC participants or those who opposed its developments. Minimal interference from the interviewer was sought so as not to pre-empt information that was provided. At the same time, the participation of the interviewer allowed specific questions to be asked in order to uncover insights that may otherwise have been overlooked.

As Hayden White (1973:30) states,

The historians problem is to construct a linguistic protocol, complete with lexical, grammatical, syntactical and semantic dimensions, by which to characterise the field and its elements in his own terms (rather than in the terms in which they come labelled in the documents themselves), and thus to prepare them for the explanation and representation he will subsequently offer of them in his narrative.
Sources

In this thesis study, interviews were conducted with 68 Brisbane COC members, including 23 senior COC leaders, as well as with 48 attendees of other Australian COC churches. These included 6 overseas COC attendees. Interviews were also conducted with 22 leaders and attendees from other related churches and megachurches outside the COC, and with 4 Methodist and Uniting Church ministers who had interaction with Taylor prior to his starting the COC. The interviews included 9 former attendees who left the COC, thus giving a wider range of perspectives about the COC. Most interviews were conducted between 2000 and 2003. A list of the interviewees and their background, as well as the date they joined the COC, is included in appendix 1.

Some people who played a particularly significant role in the COC and who had extensive recollections about the history of the COC were interviewed more than once. These included the COC founder, Clark Taylor, and his wife, Ann Chapple/Taylor, the CHC college founder, Brian Millis, the Victorian chairman, Craig Anderson and the Australian National chairman, David McDonald. These additional interviews allowed for clarification, expansion and cross checking of previous interview information.

Information on the history of the COC was also gathered from publications by the COC and its members, including the group’s monthly magazines, The Burning Bush (1981–84), Australia for Christ (1985–89), A New Way of Living (from 1989), Outreach (2004), the Clark Taylor Mission Outreach Newsletter (first published in 1973), a history of Christian Outreach College titled In God’s Hands, and other publications. A brief written history of the COC was prepared by Clark Taylor’s personal assistant, Marcia Ford, in the 1970s and 1980s, and this was expanded on in interviews. After 35 years, her account of COC history is still the most frequently quoted history of COC used by COC
churches. Records of COC meetings and its history were also preserved in the extensive audio and videotaped records of COC weekly meetings and these provided another valuable source of information.

The 2006 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) provided a useful source of additional data on Brisbane and other COC churches and allowed comparison with other Pentecostal and Protestant churches. The NCLS data was not made available until 2008, long after much of the initial interview data had been collected and examined and too late for more extensive analysis. However, the NCLS data is the most recent data on the COC and it is included for the insights that it gives into COC emphasis openness to innovation, competitive market oriented behaviour, switching of attendees and changing demographic and education levels. The NCLS is a cooperative research venture sponsored by the Uniting Church Board of Mission (NSW), ANGLICARE and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It is held every five years in the same year as the national census. In 2006 the NCLS sampled 400,000 participants from 600 churches in 22 denominations across Australia and included the COC for the first time. The thesis author participated in the survey administration, collection and collation of NCLS data for the COC in Brisbane. The National Church Life Survey data for 2006 consisted of:

- 400,000 forms from 600 churches in 22 denominations
- 150,000 forms from 500 randomly selected Catholic churches
- 234,943 forms from 4514 Protestant churches across Australia
- 34,667 forms from 412 Pentecostal churches in Australia
- 3,357 forms from 64 churches in the COC denomination
- 966 forms from the Brisbane (Citipointe) COC megachurch

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provide information about denominational affiliation, and the growth of Pentecostalism. It was also a useful source of demographic information.

21 Apart from these brief records, no substantial written history of the Christian Outreach Centre has ever been written. A brief history of COC was prepared by Bible College student, Matthew Rees, but it has not been widely used by members of the movement.
Analysis

The method of analysis used in this study follows the sociological and historical analysis method used by Knowles (1994) in his study of the interviews and literature from the New Zealand New Life Centre movement. It also follows Clifton’s (2005) study of the A-AOG in its examination of interviews and written records. SPSS, NVivo and other forms of statistical analysis of the data were also trialed as methods of further examination of the data, but they were found to be less suited to the oral history that was collected, requiring more time and resources, and not providing sufficient insights into the COC history that was the focus of this present study. While these and other approaches to interview analysis could be used, a researcher administered thematic analysis was found to be most suited to this present study. This thematic analysis of the interviews and other sources followed the qualitative studies guidelines given for given by Creswell (2003:192) and Punch (2005:193). Interviews were selectively transcribed and cross matched with information from the other sources and the interview data was examined and coded to establish patterns, categories and themes that were examined in this study. Thematic analysis of interviews with the COC founder provided the basis for the examination of charismatic leadership in chapter 4; analysis of interviews with early COC attendees provided the basis for chapter 5; interviews with school and college leaders and attendees gave the basis for chapter 6 and analysis of interviews with more recent attendees provided the foundations for chapters 7 and 8. The themes that were identified through inductive analysis were supplemented by deeper underlying explorations arising from deductive insights from scholarly studies. These studies identified further religious, social, leadership, organizational and market oriented developments that were related to the insights arising from the inductive analysis of interviewee transcripts.
The thesis stated: A synopsis of the main story

This thesis argues that the historical narrative of the Brisbane COC provides insights into the religious, organization, leadership and social innovations that aided the growth of a small Brisbane revival centre into an Australian megachurch and a new national and international denomination. This thesis case study traces the growth of the COC from its beginnings in 1974 as a revival centre to emerge as a megachurch and its spreading into new Australian and overseas locations. It examines the role of charismatic leadership and its influence on the growth stages of the church. Initially, it examines the initiatives of the charismatic COC founder and other Australian leaders within the contexts of revivalist developments associated with the spreading of Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal revival movements. It also traces their interaction with related developments of evangelical, divine healing, millennialism, Latter Rain, faith confession and other related movements. Resources and motivation from these movements appears to have provided a potent combination of beliefs and practices that attracted sizable attendances and the resources needed to establish a megachurch denomination.

As the new group grew, the leaders mobilized additional financial and human resources that aided further expansion. The use of television and contemporary media increased the size of their potential audience. The COC also developed a franchise-like system of reproducing new churches that assisted their spreading into a national and international network of churches. Organizational development studies provide further understanding of the stages in the growth of the COC. The relocation of the Brisbane COC church to suburban acreage at Mansfield in 1982 was accompanied by the building of a megachurch auditorium in the rapidly growing surrounding suburbs. This aided further growth and supported further national and international expansion. COC efforts to identify and respond to market opportunities are reflected in the sense of empowerment they provide to youth, laity, the working class and new middle class cohorts. The COC also diversified its activities into schools, a tertiary college and other social and community projects.
This case study argues that although the COC and its schools began with an initial isolationist stance and esoteric beliefs, it has since pursued efforts to engage with the wider society. It identifies a creative tension that has arisen between a desire to retain the initial practices and beliefs that aided the commencing and early growth of the COC, and a more recent desire to change and adapt to changes within society in order to faithfully contextualize and communicate the core Christian beliefs and practices. These tensions between isolationism, sectarianism, accommodation to secular and consumerist values, and efforts to provide a well thought out response to the needs of attendees and society continue to be major themes in the COC narrative as this church seeks to relate the Christian message to the contemporary social contexts.

**Outline of the thesis structure**

This case study is examined in nine chapters. Each chapter unfolds the thesis arguments that are outlined in this opening chapter.

Chapter 1. Here the main themes of the thesis are introduced, namely Australian megachurches, religious innovation associated with Pentecostal renewal movements, organizational development and responses to changes in ‘the market for religion’.

Chapter 2. This contains a literature review of the scholarly research on religious institutionalization and renewal, the nature and stages of organizational development and benefits and limitations of market oriented responses to changes in society. It lays a foundation for this thesis study.

Chapter 3. This provides a historical overview of global and Australian revival movements that have influenced megachurch developments. It investigates global religious innovations and revivals that were precursors to the localized development of Australian megachurches. In particular, it examines the revival developments in Pentecostalism, evangelicalism, the charismatic movement and neo-Pentecostalism that contributed to Australian megachurch development.
The first three chapters provide the theoretical framework for the COC case study described in chapters 4 to 8.

Chapter 4. This examines the origins of the COC organization in relation to the life course biography of the COC founder.

Chapter 5. Here, the organizational development of the Brisbane COC is reviewed from its founding in 1974 to its growth into Australia’s largest Pentecostal megachurch in the late 1980s.

Chapter 6. This explores the expansion of COC into primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Chapter 7. Here the plateauing of megachurch and Australian COC growth, transition to new leadership in the 1990s and geographic expansion of COC into new areas, nationally and internationally, is considered.

Chapter 8. This investigates changes in the megachurch, national and international COC, and the beliefs and practices of COC leaders and participants in the first decade of the new millennium.

Chapter 9. The final chapter draws together the main findings of the study and addresses more fully the questions raised in the first chapters. It also raises further questions arising from the study.
Chapter Two: The megachurches as businesses in the marketplace for spirituality

Whatever else he may be, man is a social and an historical actor, who must be understood, if at all, in close and intricate interplay with social and historical structures (C Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959:158).

This chapter reviews the literatures that are most relevant to the study of Australian megachurches and the COC case study. It explores the ways in which megachurches tend to arise and the innovations needed for megachurch development and growth (Thumma and Travis 2007:12; Roozen and Hadaway 1993). It examines characteristics of sectarian renewal movements, reasons why they arise, the contribution made by charismatic leaders and the ways in which these renewal movements led by charismatic leaders contributed to megachurch development.

An overview of relevant organizational development literature explores the ways in which megachurches can be gainfully viewed as business organizations that are responding to market opportunities arising from changed environments. This review also examines the likely organizational developmental pathways of megachurches as they transition from embryonic beginnings under a charismatic leader, grow through resource mobilization and diversification, mature as market needs are met, and then face decline or renewal depending on their ability to continue to respond to changing external environments. It also examines contemporary organizational approaches and market orientations that helped them attract adherents within a competitive free market for religion (Ferguson 2005:37). This review of these literatures shows how these insights into the organizational contexts of megachurch development provide a foundational framework for the case study that follows.
The megachurches as business organizations

Australian megachurches have combined the more traditional church role with a contemporary business-like approach to meeting church requirements. They are often regarded as megabusinesses (Kroll 2003; Ferguson 2005) and have adopted an organizational form that shows similarities to other ‘mega’ forms used for meeting consumer needs through mega shops, factories, hospitals, schools and entertainment centers (Thumma & Travis 2007:14). Like their overseas counterparts (Ferguson 2005:35; Ellingson 2007:111) Australian megachurches are using current business approaches to attract and maintain the large weekly attendance needed to support their extensive facilities and staff and redress the high turnover and loss of attendees. In order to survive, they must continue to attract large, committed congregations by offering highly developed programmes and facilities. The 21 Australian megachurches identified in Chapter One each has warehouse style buildings, capital works, mortgages and debts, and each employs large numbers of full- and part-time staff in administrative and pastoral roles. This megachurch use of organizational expertise to stimulate revivals continues a long tradition of similar practices within evangelicalism involving Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, Oral Roberts and Billy Graham and others.

Megachurches present a challenge for sociologists of religion and churches. There is a well-established theory that new churches begin as enthusiastic, revival sects but as the church and its message become institutionalized, the early vitality seeps away as stability and stagnation sets in. However, megachurches are not so easily described. Their relatively young age combined with rapid growth and continued efforts to attract large numbers of new attendees means that megachurches typically combine characteristics of sects and churches, while matching a sense of spontaneity and freedom with high levels of organization.

This chapter examines the literature on sect formation and institutionalization and suggests how megachurches avoid sectarian tendencies towards isolation and stagnation and the organizational restrictions of institutionalization. It notes the difficulties of
maintaining growth while building organizational infrastructure to preserve that growth. It also examines the literature on organizational life cycles, tracing interesting parallels between the role and life course of the charismatic leader and the megachurch organization he or she leads. They also promote a Weberian notion of charismatic leadership, empowering entrepreneurs who build a charismatic relationship with the audience to encourage growth (Diekema 1991:143). The study of the organizational development of megachurches provides valuable insights into the function of institutional structures and the ways these change over time. The final literature reviewed examines the market-oriented approach that megachurches adopt to promote and maintain church growth. This literature posits the notion that within contemporary, pluralistic society there is a market for religion and that megachurch success can be attributed to their ability to identify and create a product for emerging market niches among consumers. The literatures reviewed in this chapter provide a framework for understanding the organizational situation of megachurches that underpin my case study of the COC in subsequent chapters.

**Religious movements and the problem of institutionalization**

Historians and sociologists of religion have identified institutionalization and renewal as major processes in the history of religious groups (Weber 1922; Eisenstadt 1964:235; Poloma 1989:97). Weber (1922) was among the first to describe how religious groups tend to become institutionalized in ways that limit adaptation and inhibit growth. Weber (1978:1112) observes that new religious groups tend to emerge in reaction to these processes of routinization and institutionalization of established churches. The observable behaviours and organizational ‘artefacts’ of institutionalized churches (Schein 2004:26) say a great deal about the underlying beliefs, values, assumptions and core cultures of traditional denominations. It also suggests why they develop few megachurches. By applying organizational development research, such as that conducted by Schein (2004:26) and others to Australian churches, it can be argued that mainline churches have been largely resistant to innovation in practices and beliefs, and slow to respond to cultural, social and religious change (Rayner 1962:282f; Gill 1993:189). Their
architecture, language, uptake of technology, preaching styles, worship, dress codes, language, modes of expression, storytelling forms, rituals, fixed dogma and rituals all point to ‘institutionalized’ organizational structures that make it difficult for them to respond to changed environments and attract new attendees. The growth of Australian megachurches, on the other hand, is an indicator of willingness for churches to adapt, change, deinstitutionalize and innovate in order to attract and maintain large attendance.

O’Dea (1961) expands on Weber’s notion of institutionalization, identifying five dilemmas or dialogical tensions that contribute to transformations within churches and prompt the formation of breakaway deinstitutionalized sects or sections. O’Dea describes the ways in which these new groups are in turn transformed, as they become institutions and more like ‘churches’. First, an institutional dilemma arises from changed motivations as attendees age and they increasingly pursue the worldly rewards of economic security, respectability and self-interest instead of earlier single-minded interest in self-sacrifice for other worldly, utopian, mission goals of a new organization and its charismatic leader. Second, an institutional dilemma arises as religious ceremonies are formalized, alienating those who seek more mystical, numinous, experiences of the sacred. Third, specialized organizational, administrative and leadership structures are needed to preserve organizations in ways that often conflict with earlier desires for greater freedom and lay participation. Fourth, as institutions mature, they redefine their main message in concrete, rational terms. They introduce rules and guidelines that delimit their message. This is often less appealing to those who are seeking a mystical encounter with the divine. Fifth, a dilemma arises from the tendency for religious groups to align themselves increasingly with the dominant values of the wider society, and thus lose their potential to evaluate their society prophetically and critically. This decreases their appeal as a reforming alternative to present societal values and cultures.

Hynd (1984) and Piggin (2000:122) observe these dilemmas in established Australian churches. Hynd (1984) finds that Australian churches tend to be dominated by centralized, hierarchical leadership, with middle class leaders, values, language, ideas and institutional structures. He believes that these developments separate the churches from
potential attendees. The established churches tend towards formalism, clericalism, sacramalism, traditionalism, nominalism and institutionalization in ways that make it difficult to attract average Australians (Piggin 2000:122). Sturmey (1988:1ff) argues that the gulf between institutional leadership and potential attendees in Australia has become even greater since the general populace identified with the ‘ordinary bloke’, the common people and younger age groups which are often overlooked by church institutions.

Megachurches appear to resist these dilemmas by combining non-institutional alternatives with institutional structures that help them to maintain large gatherings. They appear to combine other-world hopes with this-world rewards; offering mystical encounters with the divine along with formalized programmes and a simple, clearly defined message; a sense of freedom and lay participation with highly developed organizational structures; and a critical alternative to society with accommodation to many of society’s underlying values. This study will investigate these efforts in the case of the COC.

At the same time, the term ‘institutionalization’ can often be too broad and general. Institutional developments vary greatly and they play different roles at different stages of an organization’s development. There is a need to distinguish organizational and institutional developments that are appropriate for each stage of development and those that facilitate growth, renewal, adaptation to environmental change and mission from developments that restrict adaptation and growth. In the early stages, institutional structures are needed to coordinate activities and support early growth and mission. As organizations become larger and more complex, other structures are needed for different functions, such as preserving values and beliefs, supporting organizational gains and bringing the benefits of conformity to wider religious or societal expectations. New groups soon discover that organizational structures provide invaluable resources for meeting their goals and giving concrete expression to the ideologies and identities of their movements. The balance between free growth and organizational structures in new organizations may be likened to organic growth, combining rigid and unchanging structures that accumulate over time with more flexible areas of development that
predominantly occur on the periphery where new growth is found. Just as a tree benefits from new growth while retaining older trunk and stem growth for support, organizations also benefit from a balanced combination of free organic growth and older supporting structures and cultures. The term organic organization was coined by Tom Burns & GM Stalker (1961) describe organizations that are adaptive, flexible, egalitarian, valuing external knowledge, thriving on the power of personalities, and a network of individuals and responding rapidly to changing environments. At the same time, institutional structures must be sufficient to preserve the core identity and mission of the church and support its activities while retaining freedom to adapt to changed social environments. It seems likely that organic and mechanistic organizational structures encourage very different types of organizational development. Gibbs & Bolger (2005) argue that a combination of organic freedom and institutional structures are needed if churches are to more fully engage with contemporary cultures,

**Sectarianism**

The theory of institutionalization is closely associated with the notion of sectarianism. Weber (1922) and Troeltsch (1911) were among the first to define characteristics of breakaway sects, or sections, from existing churches. Breakaway groups are most common when mainstream organizations resist internal change and renewal, and where conditions are favourable for religious experimentation and free market competition. Most Australian megachurches began as breakaway sections from existing churches and they retain sectarian characteristics including voluntariness, elite status, exclusivity, merit, self-identification, expulsion, conscience and legitimacy (Wilson 1970:23; Stark and Bainbridge 1985:429). However, sects rarely remain in their original sectarian form for long. They soon follow one of a number of different developmental pathways. Niebuhr (1929:20f) argues that sectarian characteristics are usually lost in the second generation because the churches need to cater for those born into them, rather than for converts. Niebuhr (1929:17) also argues that most North American sects soon lose their sect-like character and grown into ‘denominations’ that are halfway between the typical positions of church and sect. In Australia, traditional churches may become so small that
they become sect like, while sects that grow into megachurches tend to become church like.

The term ‘fundamentalism’ was first used in the 1920s to describe adherence to fundamental Christian beliefs (Barr 1978:2). Its meaning has expanded to now include all religious groups that dogmatically hold to a narrow set of belief and values, with a tendency towards isolation, dogmatic certainty and belief in Scriptural inerrancy. While many of Australia’s megachurches began with these fundamentalist tendencies associated with their sectarian origins, their pursuit of larger audiences has required them to interact more fully with society in ways that mitigate fundamentalism. Later chapters of this thesis will investigate the ways in which Australian megachurches manage the challenges of sectarianism and fundamentalism, particularly in the case of the COC.

**Charismatic founders**

Megachurch researchers Thumma and Travis (2007:59) observed that the founding leaders play a particularly strong role in the origins, growth and character of megachurches, almost all of which reach megachurch size with a single charismatic leader. Church Growth proponents make similar observations, arguing that giving senior pastors a high profile and freedom is a significant aid to church growth (Wagner 1976:63). Organizational development scholars including Mintzberg (1984:214) also observe that the founding leaders of organizations are usually highly charismatic individuals. Schein (2004:225, 299) further argues that the culture, values, beliefs and ‘reason for being’ of organizations are often determined by the life journey and values of their founders.

Weber (1947:328) provides a definitive description of a charismatic leader as someone with extraordinary gifts who is able to offer visionary solutions to potential followers’ concerns. House (1977:189) adds that charismatic leaders characteristically display high levels of confidence, empathy and sense of mission in ways that attract followers. Further to this, Conger and Kanungo (1998:94) observe that charismatic leaders typically take
risks, articulate desire for change and frame innovations in ways that attract adherents, so as to build new organizations and movements. At the same time, Worsley (1970) and B. Wilson (1975) argue that charismatic leadership also reveals a great deal about followers and their efforts to attribute characteristics and roles to the leader.

Charismatic leadership also poses inherent danger, in that charismatic leaders are often motivated by their own personal agendas and a deep-seated desire for power and influence (Conger and Kanungo 1998:211ff). This can lead them to pursue over-ambitious projects rather than meeting the true needs of their followers. For these reasons, Burns (1978), with Bass and Riggio (2006:3) argue that ‘transformational’ leadership is more beneficial because it encourages questioning and review of the leader and his or her decisions, which meets followers’ deeper needs while empowering and developing them.

Erikson’s studies (1958; 1970) of the relationship between the socio-psychological development of leaders and their organizations provides a useful lens through which to view parallels between the life course biography of charismatic leaders and developments in the organizations and movements that they found.\textsuperscript{22} Erikson’s writings, in Young Man Luther (1958) and Gandhi’s Truth (1970), shows that charismatic leaders do not just arrive \textit{in situ}, but that they emerge through a developmental journey, forming values, resolving crises and moving through stages that relate to wider questions of their times. Erikson (1958:12ff) argues that the conviction, innovations and extraordinary

\textsuperscript{22} Other human development studies also provide useful insights into these developments. Freud (1927) showed how early experiences, personality and identity affect the identity and character of leaders and the organizations they found. The attachment theories of Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) point to the importance of pre-existing relationships and early attachments in an organization’s development. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory stresses the role of modelling in human development and this has application to leadership and organizational development. Piaget’s insights into cognitive development are useful for describing how leaders and organizations change as they gain new knowledge, insights and cognitive structures. Vygotsky’s (1978) cognitive mediation theory is also useful in showing how the internalization and proximal development of leaders aids the development of their organizations. Fowler’s (1981) studies on faith development of leaders also provide insights into developmental changes in religious organizations that occur as their leaders mature. Kohlilberg (1981) shows how leaders and organizations develop knowledge of right and wrong.
accomplishments of charismatic leaders such as Luther and Gandhi were related to the ways they resolved, or did not resolve, personal identity crises. He shows that the way they handled personal development crises had parallels with solutions that they offered to the social, political, religious and organizational predicaments that surrounded them. In addition, he shows that these developmental patterns are distinctive for every charismatic leader, because charismatic leaders often carry unresolved identity issues, including a need for recognition and identity, which guide their actions.

**Organizational development life cycles**

Megachurch studies often overlook the organizational and life cycle development of these churches. Organizations go through developmental stages and life cycles\(^2\) that are similar to human development as they resolve crises, accumulate knowledge and experiences and respond to changed opportunities and responsibilities (Aldrich 1999:195). Organizational scholars such as Greiner (1972), Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) and Aldrich (1999:195) have proposed generalized models of organizational development that offer insights into the developmental pathways that most organizations, including megachurches, follow. Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) propose a four-stage development model involving: (1) creativity, entrepreneurship and marshalling of resources needed for survival, (2) a collectivity stage that emphasizes communication and cohesion, (3) a formalization and control stage with an emphasis on stability and efficiency, and (4) structural elaboration, adaptation and domain expansion.

Mintzberg (1984:213) proposes a similar series of stages that he labels: (1) embryonic (autocratic); (2) developmental (missionary or instrumental); (3) maturity (a closed system); and (4) decline (a politicized organization). The organizational life cycle can often be related to product life cycles involving market development, a rapid growth phase, competitive turbulence, maturation and decline (Hofer 1975:788; Klepper 1996).

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23 Mason Haire’s 1959 publication, *Modern Organization Theory*, is recognized as one of the first studies to apply the biological model of life cycles extensively to organizational growth.
Gupta and Chin (1994:271) argue that organizational effectiveness changes at different stages in the life cycle. An initial open system encourages opportunism and innovation followed by the need to emphasize human resource development. This is followed by a greater emphasis on planning, goal setting, productivity, control and efficiency, then by a need for stability and management, and finally an inevitable institutionalization or rejuvenation that comes with ageing (O’Dea 1961).

This framework for organizational development is summarized in the following diagram.
After reviewing nine models of organizational development, Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) identified five main stages commonly seen in the development of new organizations. The following outline adapts and further develops these stages, and adds a sixth stage.

1. The entrepreneurial stage: In its early life, an organization is usually a ‘one man’ and ‘one product’ development, with little organizational structure or functional specialization. Its growth is often dependent on charismatic individuals who identify and develop innovative responses to niche opportunities arising from changed environments. Social skills, creativity, flexibility, and resource acquisition aid further growth.

2. The organizational development stage: Initial growth requires the securing of organizational, financial and human resources and the development of more complex organizational structures. Further growth and long-term viability is aided by functional specialization, departmentalization, development of formalized structures and diversification into new products and services.

3. The collectivist stage: The growth and enlarging of the goals and objectives of an organization requires the commitment and cohesion of an increasing number of people. The establishment of branch developments in new locations can aid further growth. The development of human, financial and other resources becomes even more important.

4. The institutional stage: The formalization of operational systems, processes, controls and institutionalization brings stability, efficiency and consistent productivity. Structural elaboration, domain expansion, goal achievement and development of management systems are required. However, flexibility and decentralization are needed to avoid over-institutionalization and allow for further growth and adaptation.
5. The maturation stage: Overly rigid structures, self-deception and cultural inflexibility restrict adaptation, innovation and response to changing environmental and internal needs.

6. The renewal stage: Stagnation and decline are largely inevitable unless an organization is open to change and renewal. Generational transition is an important need. Flexible structures, multiple product lines, decentralization and diversification can aid renewal. Leadership changes, acquisitions, mergers and takeovers can also be used. There may also be a need for changes in the product and the ways the product is viewed and organized.

As in human development, the transitions between organizational development stages require the successful resolution of crises that are faced as organizations grow in size and complexity (Greiner 1972:37). Initial growth often results in crises that require stronger leadership and clearer direction. However, successful leadership intervention can then lead to a crisis arising from the suppression of autonomous action. For further growth to occur the devolution and delegation of power and responsibilities is necessary. This devolution often leads to a crisis of control, which may require increased centralization and coordination. This in turn can lead to a crisis of over-regulation that is only solved by greater collaboration and devolution of responsibilities. Further crises can arise from a loss of strategy and mission, requiring stronger structural and cultural frameworks. These create further difficulties. Thus, a well-timed alternation between centralization and decentralization is needed, along with alternation between institutionalization and deinstitutionalization, in order to provide an organizational framework that most fully assists ongoing development. The series of crises that organizations face as they develop is summarized in the following diagram.
Kimberly (1979:437) argues that a biographical approach to organizational analysis shows that organizational requirements differ markedly at different stages in their development, and that paradoxically those features of the organization that led to its success in innovation, organizational birth and initial growth in the short term are often incompatible with requirements for institutionalization and survival in the longer term.

Aldrich (1999:196), and van de Ven and Poole (1995:512), caution against deterministic approaches to organizational life cycles by observing that stages and the patterns of growth vary greatly. Proposing an evolutionary model, Aldrich (1999:16) argues that organizations that grow most quickly during periods of environmental change will be
those that encourage diversity, variation, cross-fertilization and adaptation. This is similar to the biological world where genetic diversity, natural selection and adaptation to changing environments enhance development opportunities.

Proponents of ecological organizational development models argue that development is dependent on competition and natural selection of organizations that are most suited to new environments. In diffusion and contagion models, however, ideas and innovations rather than organizations themselves are the major elements that develop and spread. Organizational ‘chaos theories’ challenge these notions that organizational change follows predictable development patterns. They argue that organizational change is often non-linear and unpredictable because of the variety of possible initiatives that organizations and their leaders pursue, and the different responses that can flow from various responses to changed external social environments.

At the same time, organizations succeed during times of change by providing order and predictable responses to change (Lichtenstein 2000:131). Like people, organizations learn over time, particularly when they demonstrate flexible and adaptive organizational structures that encourage reflection, engagement and beneficial responses to rapidly changing environments. The literature on ‘learning organizations’ (Senge 1990:3) provides insights into how organizations, including megachurches, can benefit from encouraging free-flowing group thinking and teamwork rather than being limited by one individual leader’s thinking and vision. Those groups that isolate themselves from change in external environments or over rely on a single leader are likely to be poorly adapted. The organizations that are most likely to grow and make a valuable contribution to their world will be those that are most open to change while also preserving their core beliefs, values and culture (Mintzberg and Westley 1992:53).

**Franchising**

One of the major challenges that an organization faces is the high cost of reproducing itself. Because of the high costs, and risks of deviance, most organizations do not
reproduce. Those that develop models of reproduction that reduce costs increase their likelihood of successful reproduction. In the business world, franchising is one of the more successful models used to aid reproduction while reducing the risks of failure. Zech (2003:323) argues that contemporary religious groups are intentionally mirroring this franchising model by encouraging the reproduction of a product, brand or market strategy in return for a small portion of income being returned to a central office or ‘whole group’ along with adherence to operating manuals and quality controls. Zech (2003:323) says that this approach encourages greater church reproduction and growth than the centralized organizational models followed by most mainstream churches.

Ritzer (1996) uses the term ‘McDonaldization’ to warn that such franchising and other associated commerce and manufacturing processes are increasingly dominating the distribution of goods and services and they are likely to reduce diversity and choice in contemporary Christian churches and megachurches. Just as fast food chains and franchise organizations produce standardized products in standard packaging in predictable ways, Ritzer (1996) argues that similar principles of simplification, efficiency, predictability, calculability and control are dehumanizing and depersonalizing Christian organizations. Ritzer (1996:1) defines ‘McDonaldization’ as:

‘the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world.’

In a recent book, Ritzer (2008:1) notes that megachurches are also like ‘Starbucks’ cafes in their efforts to develop easily reproducible and marketed contemporary experiences of God.

The megachurch acceptance of pluralism, free market competition and openness to innovation has changed religious beliefs and practices in unanticipated ways that are of concern to those who value traditional religious beliefs and practices (Ellingson 2007:7). In Australia, McDonald’s restaurants represent a change in food culture from European and Australian cuisine to a well-marketed, instant product from North America.
Australian megachurches may represent a similar change in religious culture, from a long European ‘chain of memory’ (Hervieu-Léger 2000) to an instant and experiential North American product. It has led to a form of church that is ‘attractional’ rather than ‘incarnational’, and to evangelism as an ‘event’ rather than a ‘lifestyle’. The antecedents of these concerns lie in Weber’s (1968:809) earlier observations on institutionalization, rationalization and standardization.

Managing the direction of megachurches: The Church Growth movement

The eagerness to use new organizational approaches to aid church renewal prompted strong interest in the Church Growth movement and aided its spread among evangelical churches in Australia in the 1970s and 80s. The movement was pioneered by Dr. Donald McGavran at the Fuller Theological School of World Mission in Pasadena, California. After a series of seminars in 1972, the Institute for American Church Growth was established and the movement’s ideas spread rapidly among evangelical churches in the United States and globally (McIntosh 2004). The Church Growth movement promoted the application of social, scientific and organizational development approaches to foster growth in the size and number of churches. Writing in *Understanding Church Growth*, McGavran (1980:418) insists that ‘from the beginning to end, the movement assumed that qualitative growth of the church was God’s will and that growth ought to be measured, depicted, discussed, and made the basis for evangelistic and missionary labours.’ This approach contributed to an emphasis on attendance as a measure of success, that McGavran likened to the ways used to measure success in shopping and entertainment centers. He argued that religious approaches to church growth had often overlooked important insights from organizational, sociological, demographic and other insights. This movement also encouraged pursuit of large number of attendees and conversions, and the establishment of new churches in places where growth would be most likely, such as in the suburbs of large cities. McGavran’s principles were
popularized by Wagner, whose extensive publications argued that growing churches should encourage charismatic leadership, pragmatism, homogeneous groups of people, the promotion of free market competition and church planting in the most receptive areas. The Church Growth movement was further promoted in the 1970s and 1980s, in ways that appear to be a popularization of the American dream of entrepreneurial expansion through the marketing of new products.

After reaching peak interest in the 1980s, support for the Church Growth movement declined and the Fuller Institute for Church Growth closed in 1995. Many evangelical and Pentecostal churches have turned instead to the Natural Church Development (NCD) movement led by the social scientist and psychologist, Christian Swartz (1996). Schwartz identified eight characteristics that he said were required for the ‘natural’ growth of ‘healthy churches.’ These are empowering the leadership, gift-oriented lay ministry, passionate spirituality, functional organizational structures, inspiring worship service experiences, small groups, evangelistic activities related to the needs of the people and loving relationships (Schwartz 1996:18–19, 33). At the same time, many church leaders found the models of Church Growth and NCD did not work in different locations, cultures and environments. Many also found NCD suffered from the same weaknesses as the Church Growth movement from which it emerged.

**Megachurches and the market for spirituality**

While pluralism and choice are not new, the extent of pluralism and choice in mass mediated, democratic society and the resulting empowerment of small cultures and individuals is unparalleled. The acceptance of pluralism in the United States has contributed to a decline in the linking of religious identity and national ‘sacred canopies’ such as those seen in many European countries (Berger 1967, 1973, 1999:15; Warner 1993:1047, 1060; Smith 1998:106). Pluralism, secularization and the privatization of

24 For one example, see Wagner (1976).
religion have undermined previously dominant institutional claims of monopolistic certainty and contributed to a decline in institutional religion (Berger 1967; Luckmann 1967; Bruce 1998b). In the United States, religion is accepted as part of a competitive, free market economy, in which firms must market and sell their products as they compete against each other and other consumer interests.

According to Warner (1993:1057), given the competitive and innovative pluralistic conditions of many countries, consumers’ religious needs are more likely to be met where ‘the religious economy is wide open to energetic entrants, none of whom has a guaranteed income’. Scholars such as Stark & Bainbridge (1985:429) Finke & Stark (1988) argue that where conditions exist that are conducive to religious activity and where religious groups are open to organizational and religious change, the groups that are most likely to grow are those that make the greatest efforts to attract voluntary attendance (rather than enforcing doctrinal and organizational absolutes). Iannaccone (1991:157) observes that ‘church attendance and religious belief are both greater in countries with competing churches than in countries dominated by a single church.’ In such settings, religion is increasingly a matter of individual choice amid competing small subcultures rather than the unconscious acceptance of large collective national or regional cultures. Berger (1990:244) writes:

> what previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be sold to a clientele that is no longer constrained to ‘buy’. A pluralistic situation is, above all, a market situation. In it, the religious institutions become market agencies and the religious traditions become consumer commodities.

The acceptance of pluralism and a competitive free market has led not only to increased competition between religious groups but also to an *a la carte* or supermarket approach to religious choice that is changing the way religion is viewed, consumed and presented (Swatos 1999:12). It has also encouraged religious consumers to construct individualized world views that often deviate from long established norms and follow popular trends.
Globalization and pluralization of the markets

Changed migration patterns and other social changes have restructured the religious culture of Australia since the mid 20th century towards greater pluralism and competition (Bouma 2006a:53). Prior to the 1940s, Australia was predominantly an Anglo Celtic society, with 40 per cent of the population affiliated with Anglican and 23 per cent with Catholic churches. However, changes in immigration policy and changed attitudes to religion meant that by 2006 Australia had become a multicultural society with 25.8 per cent of the population Catholic, 18.7 per cent Anglican, an array of other Christian denominations and an increased proportion of non-Christian, agnostic and ‘no religion’ adherents. Despite examples of prejudice in the media, the population has generally accepted diversity and shown tolerance of the religious and social variety (Bouma 1995:296). The acceptance of increased diversity has been accompanied by increased acceptance of religious skepticism, agnosticism, theological liberalism and ecumenism that are characteristic of changes since the 1960s (Pollock 1966a:255). However, while the acceptance of skepticism and agnosticism remain strong since the 1960s, more recent figures suggest that theological liberalism and ecumenicism have become more contentious with the conservative theological position that is typical of megachurches growing in their place. The growth of Pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical churches and megachurches appears to be characterized by a growing market response to these changes. These newer religious groups have taken advantage of the loosening of national and corporate religious identity, religious social pressures and norms, and loss of denominational monopolies since the 1960s and 70s (Mol 1985:19). These combined creative adaptations with promotion of conservative responses to the loosening of convictions, beliefs and proscriptions that changed definitions of decency, values and correctness with a free market competition for adherents.

The term globalization has been used to describe the process whereby religious, organizational and social interactions in the contemporary world have been reshaped by innovations in transport, technology, communication and information exchange, economic, political and cultural associations, organizational forms, management
practices, health, education and family structures, and other developments (Lyon 1998). These simultaneously promote cultural homogenization and the empowering of localized cultural developments. In recent times these global and local developments have acted synergistically to empower new global–local relationships to bypass previously established national institutions. The term ‘glocalization’ was first used in the 1970s to describe the ways in which many contemporary movements are neither wholly global nor local, but a complex combination of both (Hannerz 1990; Robertson 1992; Castells 1997).

In Australia, increased migrant diversity, globalization, changed attitudes towards religion and a decline in denominational allegiance (Bouma 2006a:54) were accompanied by a shift from dependence on European and British economic and cultural resources to increased alliances with North America and Pacific Rim nations. This has contributed to a realignment of religious influences on Australian society from the dominance of the staid religious traditions and monopolies of Europe to the pluralistic religious and cultural influences, revivalism and competitive, market-oriented pursuit of religious fervour of North America (Martin 1978:5; Gibbs 1993:173).

According to Smith (1998), in societies that have accepted competitive religious pluralism and consumer choice, once dominant national religious identities have been replaced by a myriad of global and local collective subcultural identities in which individual and group identities within a nation are now grounded. Beliefs are now associated with ‘portable, accessible, relational worlds and religious reference groups (Smith 1998:106). In North America, openness to religious diversity and competition has encouraged the development of about four times as many megachurches per unit of population as in Australia, which in turn has a higher proportion of megachurches than many European nations. Until recently, Australians were slow to adopt the notion of free market competition and religious choice. This has now changed in ways that are contributing to the character and growth of the megachurches.
Free market competition

In recognition of these developments, many scholars, including Stark and Bainbridge (1985:425f), Finke, Guest and Stark (1996) and Iannaccone (1998) have turned to models of ‘religious economy’, ‘free market competition’ and ‘supply side theory’ to explain the religious changes they are observing. These market oriented models argue that in a complex, pluralistic world church participants are actively involved in making rational choices about the benefits and costs of participating in freely chosen religious groups for limited time periods, rather than unconsciously accepting singular, dominant religious traditions. They also argue that in contemporary urban western societies, such as the United States, religions thrive as groups developing new products, organizational structures and marketing approaches to attract attendees. The acceptance of a competitive market has encouraged churches and megachurches to align themselves with their environments and with the dominant paradigms of modernization, urbanization, egalitarianism, rationalization, subcultural diversity and individualism (Bruce 1998b:224).

Megachurches appear to be striking examples of efforts to identify and meet market needs and to target their presentations to specific audiences (Ferguson 2005:37; Weightman 1993:20). In the midst of this free market competition, megachurches have grown because their participants and leaders have treated religion as a product that must be marketed to compete successfully with other potential interests. The market orientation of megachurches is evident in the way their leaders identify and respond to market opportunities, being ‘seeker friendly’, building brand loyalty and marketing their ‘products’ (Ellingson 2007:48). According to Thumma and Travis (2007:15), megachurches succeed in attracting large attendance because they meet unspoken needs of attendees, including professionalism, higher quality experiences, member interactions,

25 Megachurch leaders are turning to books such as Marketing the Church (Barna 1988), Surprising Insights of the Unchurched and Proven ways to Reach them (Rainer 2001), and the Church Growth movement literature.
a sense of identity, contemporary and entertaining worship, choice and opportunity to express the seriousness of commitment. Their growth also manifests their ability to identify, participate in, reflect and exploit opportunities arising from demographic and social changes (Wuthnow 1988; Roof 1999). In such an environment, the more competitive groups are likely to play important roles in reinvigorating religion and the establishment of beliefs and practices that will become dominant in the new millennium (Berger 1973:147; Stark & Bainbridge 1987). At the same time, the growth in complexity and pluralism of the contemporary world has encouraged the growth of religions that offer a sense of certainty, stability and existential hope (Berger 1998:782). The genius of megachurches is the way that they combine a sense of certainty with free choice, individualism with community, and organization with experientialism in appealing ways.

Suburban sociodemographics

The growth of megachurches has accompanied the expansion suburban mortgage belts in large cities, where mega supermarkets, entertainment and other ‘mega’ complexes have also developed. Just as other Australian suburban developments often followed American examples, it is not surprising that Australian religion has done likewise. While traditional churches struggled to find resources and make the changes needed to meet the needs arising from the massive population shift to the suburbs, many evangelical and Pentecostal churches and megachurches viewed the suburbs and their consumer oriented sentiments as opportunities for religious expansion (Kaldor 1987:162; Wuthnow 1976:851; Ellingson 2007:14). Megachurches are usually established where large blocks of less costly land are available for extensive car parking and facilities, and where large numbers of youth and young families, who are the principal attendees of these churches, live (Vaughan 1993; Eiesland 1997; Karnes, Mcintosh, Morris & Pearson-Merkowitz 2007; Thumma & Travis 2007).
Generational change

Scholars such as Wuthnow (1976:850), Strauss and Howe (1991), Finke and Stark (1992:247), Blumhofer (1993:272), Roof (1999) and Putnam (2000) have noted that one reason for the decline in attendance at traditional churches in the 1970s and 1980s was the difficulties these churches faced in responding to generational change. Kaldor et al (1995), Hughes (1996:v) and Bouma and Hughes (1998:18ff) make similar observations for mainline church decline in Australia. Traditional churches tend to invest most of their resources into meeting the needs of older generations, emphasizing middle class values, rational intellectualism and authoritative, rule-oriented moralism. This approach has alienated many younger people who see it as anathema to their ‘counterculture’ sensibility, experientialism and efforts to differentiate themselves (Wuthnow 1976:850; Tipton 1982:19). This proved critical at a time when younger generations found that increased affluence, greater educational opportunities and technological innovations gave them unprecedented economic and volitional power (Hobsbawm 1994:324; Marwick 1998).

As Wuthnow (1976:850) notes, what was thought to be a problem of secularization is largely a problem of generational disconnection, and the ability of evangelical and Pentecostal churches and megachurches to attract younger generations has been a major reason for their growth (Hughes 1996:v). Generational differences were further accentuated by the different social, organizational and religious contexts of the younger generations and a diversity of youth cultures and subcultures has emerged (Bouma 1979; Strauss & Howe 1991; Bouma and Hughes 1998; Mackay 1997). Religious and cultural pluralism and an expanded and secularized education system have also contributed to a decline in opportunities for the uniform religious socialization of the younger generation. By identifying the needs of the young people and investing in methods that meet the interests, tastes and needs of younger age groups, megachurches have attracted large numbers of highly motivated converts. This ability to attract large numbers of young people at an age when they are most open to making conversion decisions has further accentuated the sense of revival for which the megachurches are known (Roof 1993).
Suburban megachurches not only show similarities to suburban shopping centers in their architecture and organizational approaches, but also in the values and culture they promote, as is evident in their emphasis on individualism, consumerism and choice (Weber 1922:85f; Thumma 2006:195f). Kilde (2002 :22) observes that the changes in the architecture and approach of megachurches reflects changing psychological, spiritual and social needs, a rejection of formalism, and an increased toleration of social, ethnic, economic, intellectual and ideological diversity. They show historical continuity with Finney’s revivalism, which emphasized individual adult conversions, public confessions of faith, the altar call and the erection of a stage at the front of large meeting halls. This provided a North American precursor of the changing ways in which the audience view themselves and their relationship with each other, the preacher and the church (Kilde 2002). The growth of the megachurches is also associated with large numbers of youth and the ‘expressive revolution’ that began in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. It placed an emphasis on individualism, self-actualization, experience and pursuing alternatives to the dryness of rationalism, and this has provided the seedbed for many global religious renewal movements (Hilliard 1997b:227). The growth of megachurches has come from this willingness to accept new ways of viewing the world associated with consumerism, informality, spontaneity, self-exploration, self-transformation and immediate experiences (Martin 1981:15).

The growth of megachurches also appears to be related to their capacity to combine the increasing emphasis on individualism evident in contemporary Western societies with a strong sense of community that is often lacking in them. As Bellah (2007:248) observes, the increasingly individualistic emphasis in American and Western cultures has encouraged individualized forms of religion that can be transformed by reconnection with the public realm. Mol (1985:62) observes:
If individual thought and conscience begin to move to centre stage, a religious organization begins of necessity to be less cohesive, more divisive and pluriform. It may maintain all the trappings of the ancient theology but it has now opened its flank to an ideology in which individual autonomy is strong. And this means that institutional decision-making has to compete more with individual opinion. Church now becomes more optional.

Mol argues that the focus on individualism has been associated with a theology of personal salvation, away from the salvation of the community involving sacraments and church institutions. In megachurches this is evident in choruses and practices that promote individualized experiences and encounters with God and megachurch sermons that emphasize self-expression and self-fulfilment. While this emphasis on individualism has benefits in encouraging greater reflection, self-awareness and personal responsibility, it has also encouraged consumerism and self-focused narcissism. At the same time, the megachurches combine this emphasis on individualism with opportunities for community formation in ‘cell’ and ‘homogenous’ groups, communal worship and preaching on social responsibilities. Social changes including economic and work changes, suburbanization, electronic media and generational change have contributed to a dramatic fall in social capital and community formation (Putnam 2000:283). However, while churches and megachurches are victims of this decline, they can also play a role in its reversal and the strengthening of community formation (Hughes (2000; Putnam 2000; Thumma and Travis 2007:17; Hughes, Black & Kaldor 2007:83). The attraction of megachurches partly comes from their capacity to combine individualism with opportunities for community formation. While Bruce (1998a:223) argues that charismatic movement churches and megachurches are examples of secularization, other writers such as Casanova (1994) and Swidler (1986:278) observe that megachurch developments also provide evidence of desecularization, together with increased efforts by religious groups to influence public social and political institutions.

The megachurch appears to be dependent on many aspects of modernity, including the emphasis on modern organizational methods, rationalism and optimism. At the same time, the megachurches also appear to be a reaction to the limitations of modernity and a
shift towards postmodernity, which is reflected in their emphasis on community, individual choice, experience, image rich presentations and pessimism about the present world (Ellingson 2007:74). McLeod (2007:1) described these changes as being associated with a rupture in world views that is as profound as that of the Reformation. The shift in world view signalled a historical and cultural transition that some have described as a new historical period characterized by phrases such as post-Puritan, post-Protestant, post-Christian and postmodern (Ahlstrom 1978:445). The final chapter of this thesis will assess the role of the COC megachurch and denomination in responding to the changes that modernity and postmodernity represent.

**The megachurch as an active agent**

Many of the studies of megachurches mentioned above have focused on external contexts that aided and shaped their growth. Most imply that megachurches are passive respondents to these external and internal organizational forces. However, megachurches view themselves as active agents that are responding to divine direction, envisioning a better world and leading religious, organizational and social change (Ellingson 2007:179). Like sectarian groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, megachurches are often led by a ‘highly motivated, volunteer religious labour force’ who believe they are initiating these changes (Stark & Iannaccone 1997:147). Pentecostal participants in particular see themselves as empowered by the Holy Spirit and with a God-given, biblically defined mandate for developing new practices, expressions of belief and organizational developments that are able to bring change to life, church and society. The ‘positive thinking’, ‘faith confession’ and North American entrepreneurial cultures accentuate this proclivity for action. While the megachurch eagerness to act is not doubted, their ability to develop well thought out responses to the needs of participants, churches and society needs to be evaluated.
**Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the literature on religious, organizational and social change that suggests necessary conditions for the development of megachurches in Australia. It investigated questions as to why megachurches have emerged in the form, places and times they have and suggests a framework against which this case study of an Australian megachurch can be conducted. This examination of the theoretical literature explored three broad areas and theoretical questions that are further examined in this thesis:

1. Global Pentecostalism has energized and resourced local religious developments from which Australian megachurches formed. This raises questions as to whether Australian megachurches are a truly localized Australian development meeting local Australian needs or whether they are an example of North American or other forms of hegemony. Australian megachurches have been shown to be an example of deinstitutionalization combined with reinstitutionalization that needs further investigation. They also show sectarian characteristics that need examining. There is also a need to better understand the ways in which their need to maintain sizable audiences mitigates against this.

2. The megachurches are noted for organizational innovations that include an emphasis on charismatic leadership, use of contemporary organizational approaches, measuring success in terms of attendance, conversions and use of contemporary organizational development. Their system of reproduction shows similarities to franchising. This thesis will investigate the effectiveness of these organizational approaches in the case of the COC.

3. Megachurches have grown rapidly within a globalized, pluralistic environment by marketing their products to particular social and demographic niches. They are predominantly located in fast-growing suburbs of large cities, where they seek to meet specific niche markets and reach youth and young families. The thesis will investigate the ways the COC has responded to these market opportunities, and the effects this market orientation has on megachurch beliefs and practices.
The next chapter examines the historical origins of Australia’s megachurches in detail. It considers the relationship of local Australian developments with the global movements that energized and resourced them. It will also examine ways in which movements from which megachurches emerge reflect changes in the ways religion and spirituality in Australia are viewed and practised. This provides a backdrop to the detailed case study of the Christian Outreach Centre movement that follows. Each megachurch development follows a unique historical path that varies from group to group and from general theoretical observations. The detailed study of the COC provides an individual case study that helps to explain the deeper philosophical, theological and psychological changes that these megachurches represent. The questions raised by megachurch organizational approaches and market orientation, and COC efforts to use such approaches to meet the needs of churches, attendees and society, are examined more fully in the final chapter.
Chapter Three: Revivalism and the origin of Australian megachurches

This chapter examines 20th century revival movements that have contributed to the development of Australia’s megachurches, particularly those associated with the spread of Pentecostalism. This thesis observes that the growth of Australia’s megachurches has been aided by preceding waves of religious revival and by the accompanying global dispersal of Evangelical, Pentecostal, neo-Evangelical, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal beliefs and practices. Australia’s megachurches all began as small revival movements within Evangelicalism, where participants were inspired by testimonies of conversion, supernatural healing, heavenly inspired languages and millennial expectations of the Messiah’s return. Revival gatherings often attracted large crowds, but not until the 1970s did groups begin to develop the organizational structures, physical resources and new perspectives on church and ministry that maintained this large ‘megachurch’ attendance every week. In Australia, as in many places around the globe, Pentecostalism has emerged as the dominant form that has given voice, shape and opportunity to this evangelical impulse for revival, and for the megachurches that emerged as a prominent forum for revivalism in the late 20th century.

Christian theologians and leaders have a long tradition of scrutiny and scepticism about the authenticity of revival movements. There are questions about their contribution to the health and vitality of their participants, churches and society, about whether revival leaders and participants are aware of the changes they introduce, or how legitimate these changes are in terms of the original purpose and mission of their traditions. Despite the potential shortcomings of manufactured revivals, ‘genuine’ revivals are believed to play a significant role in renewing the church and society in ways that are consistent with orthodox church traditions (Piggin 2000:122).

This chapter examines 20th century revival movements that have contributed to the development of Australia’s megachurches, particularly those associated with the spread
of Pentecostalism. The final chapters of the thesis will examine the questions of authenticity and value that these revival movements raise.

**Christian revival and Pentecostalism in the 20th century**

Poloma (2006) and others\(^\text{26}\) identify at least three global waves of religious renewal during the 20th century that were associated with the spread of the Pentecostal message, beliefs and practices. In Australia, Evangelicalism and neo-Evangelicalism also contributed to further waves of experiential religion that played a significant role in revivalist developments. An initial wave of renewal within Evangelicalism gave rise to the first Pentecostal groups and churches early in the 20th century, globally and in Australia (Synan in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:553). A second wave of renewal was associated with the neo-Evangelical movement of the late 1940s and 1950s, followed by a wave of revival associated with the charismatic movement and the growth of interest in Pentecostal beliefs and practices in mainline churches that were open to religious experimentation (Hocken in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:477). These preceding waves fostered a fourth wave of interest in the form of neo-Pentecostalism, as charismatic movement participants left their traditional denominations to establish new independent churches and denominations and swell attendance in existing Pentecostal churches (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:928). Each revival wave had its own distinctive, but related, set of beliefs and practices, and each contributed to distinctive aspects of Australian megachurch development.

Some writers use loaded terms such as American hegemony to describe these revivalist developments. However, Australian revival movements and Pentecostal groups have their own dynamic that involves a cross-fertilizing of divergent global and local developments (Hutchinson, 1998). Others use broader terms like globalization, but as noted in chapter

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26 The observation that there appear to have been three waves of Pentecostal growth during the 20th century has been made by a number of scholars including Wagner (1988) and Walker (1995:432). Walker suggests that a fourth wave may also be seen, of which the Pentecostal megachurches may be a part.
2, ‘glocalization’ is a more appropriate term to describe the ways in which Pentecostal movements combine global and local processes so as to empowered local groups so as to challenge previously dominant national institutions.

Figure 3.1 shows how these four global revival movements contributed to the development of Australia’s megachurches.
AN EARLY 20th CENTURY WAVE OF REVIVALISM 1900–1914

Good News Hall – Australia – 1909

Pentecostal Church of Australia – 1916

Australian Assemblies of God (A–AOG) formed in 1937
Institutional development of the Australian AOG

Global developments – revivals & Pentecostal movement origins globally and in USA, 1901 to 1914

The formation of the North American AOG in 1914

Other global classical Pentecostal denominations form, including the Apostolic, Elim, Four Square, United Pentecostal and Church of God.

A SECOND WAVE OF REVIVAL: Neo-Evangelicalism and revival movements in the 1950s

Neo-Evangelicalism, Billy Graham Crusades

Healing Revivalists – 1950s +

Latter Rain Revival – Canada 1948

New Life Centres – New Zealand 1960s

A THIRD WAVE OF REVIVALISM: CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT 1960s–1970s

Charismatic movement in mainline denominations 1960s–1990s
The Church Growth Movement

A FOURTH WAVE OF REVIVALISM: 1970s–1980s

Australian AOG – Deinstitutionalized in 1977

Charismatic churches in mainline denominations

Latter Rain influenced Australian Independent churches FGC, COC, CLC, CCC

Australian AOG Megachurches 1977+

Charismatic megachurches in mainline denominations in Australia 1980 +

Independent neo–Pentecostal Megachurches in Australia 1980 +

Figure 3.1: Global revival movements and Australian megachurch developments.
Pietistic developments in the late 1800s contributed to a variety of revival movements in the early 20th century, one of which became known as Pentecostalism. Synan (1971:1) traces the origins of Pentecostalism to earlier religious traditions that included European mystical traditions, Wesley’s second blessing movement, Edward Irving’s Catholic Apostolic movement and the Holiness and Keswick movements of the 1880s and 1890s. Synan observed that most participants in early Pentecostalism came from Methodism and similar groups. Wacker (2001:2) identifies the theological tributaries of Pentecostalism as including Wesley’s conception of entire sanctification and empowerment by Holy Ghost baptism, Finney’s emphasis on experiences of adult conversion, Keswick teachings on the higher life, and evangelicalism. Wacker (2001:11f) also argues that the long lasting appeal of the Pentecostal church came from its ability to bring together the two opposing impulses of an other-worldly, primitivist sense of the power of God and a this-worldly pragmatic adaptation to contemporary social and cultural expectations. The acceptance of innovation, independence and splitting further aided the spread of Pentecostalism (Synan 1997). At the same time, these groups shared common beliefs associated with their origins in evangelicalism. These include an emphasis on the sinfulness of unredeemed humanity as a consequence of the literal fall of Adam; evil arising from the continuing activity of the devil; the Bible as a divinely inspired source of God’s truth; the centrality of Christ’s death on the cross; and the outworking of a changed life in bringing change to society (Bebbington 1989:2ff).

The distinctive Pentecostal thesis of tongues speaking as ‘biblical’ evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit can be traced to Charles Parham’s interpretations of tongues speaking as a sign of end time’s revival (Goff 1988:14f, 51). General interest in Pentecostal-like experiences took on their most commonly reproduced belief in ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ from the Bible school run by Charles Parham in Topeka, Kansas in 1901. These beliefs were combined with an emphasis on divine healing and instant conversion. The notion of every participant being empowered by God’s Holy Spirit gave the movement flexible organizational forms that aided its growth and spread. From a theoretical
perspective, Spittler (2002:670) and Poloma (1989:184) point out that tongues speaking, like divine healing, gained much of its meaning from the expectant social setting in which these practices occurred and the sense of other-worldly encounters with God that it engendered. However, the failure of missionary efforts and the non-arrival of millennial predictions led to tongues being reinterpreted as the empowerment of each individual for life and mission. Synan (1971:129), Wacker (2001:291) and Martin (2002:4) argue that Pentecostalism drew on earlier mystical, revivalist and cultural developments of the undisciplined margins of Britain, Europe and America, such as revival movements in Ulster, Cornwall, Scotland and Wales; and American revivals in Kentucky, Texas and Topeka, Kansas. However, its explosive growth at Azusa Street in California from 1906 to 1909 gave Pentecostalism its most distinctive form.

The expansion of Pentecostal beliefs, practices and organizational approaches was heavily indebted to Parham’s African American student William Seymour, who led the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 to 1909 in Los Angeles (Hollenweger 1972; 1997).27 Seymour brought to the Azusa Street revival an African American emphasis on oral liturgy; narrative theology and witness; participation of the whole community in worship and service; the inclusion of dreams and visions in private and public worship; and an emphasis on the relationship between body and mind through prayer for healing and bodily movement in dance. Hollenweger (1972; 1997) argued that the characteristics that Pentecostalism drew from Wesleyism, evangelicalism and Negro spirituality combined a unique contemporary emphasis that freed Pentecostalism from the restrictions of enlightenment rationalism that had restrained the more ‘respectable’ older Protestant denominations. Similarly, Martin (2002:5) observes that the Pentecostal fusion of the religion of poor Whites with that of poor Blacks created an amalgam that was capable of crossing cultural barriers and becoming a truly global phenomenon.

27 One of the more extensive early generic works on Pentecostalism was the landmark publication by Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (1972), which formed the basis of the more recent *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (1997).
Global and local Pentecostalisms

Although Pentecostalism is a truly global religious phenomenon (Poewe 1994:xii), it is culturally indebted to local subcultures in the southern and western regions of the United States where it emerged. Poloma (1989:152) notes that the Pentecostal notion of empowerment carries with it a North American emphasis on self-discovery, self-fulfilment and self-expression. In contrast to the more restricted and frequently monopolistic religious traditions of Europe, North America’s rich mixture of migrant traditions and a long history of revivalism contributed to a diverse range of Christian religious developments (Martin 1978:5). The American acceptance of social, cultural and religious diversity and free market competition weakened the hold of any one dominant national religious tradition and aided the emergence and growth of a variety of newer religious groups (Warner 1993; Stark and Iannaccone 1997:147; Bruce 1999). In the late 20th century, many countries around the globe have followed the American pattern of revivalism, rather than the European tendency towards secularism. This led Davie (1994) to suggest that Europe may be the exception to global religious renewal, rather than the rule. In the early 20th century this openness to a competitive free market has allowed Pentecostalism to emerge as one of the most vigorous and global form of religious innovation.

Egerton (1974) observes that the revival of evangelical Protestantism at Azusa Street, and more widely during the 1950s and 60s, is associated with a ‘southernization of American religion’ in which Southern-style religion has taken a prominent position within mainstream American culture. Billy Graham is perhaps ‘the single most influential figure’ in this process (Egerton 1974:195). The proliferation of southern United States’ (US) religion and culture was associated with the spread of a synthesis of blues, Black and White music, and ‘rock and roll’ and ‘country’ music styles (Cawelti 2002). These southern musical developments share with Pentecostalism an emphasis on creative experimentation, innovation and protest against dominant organizations and cultures (Goff 1998:722). Shibley (1996) observes that migration, the uptake of new media, the ‘electronic church’, the spread of evangelicalism and the emergence of the ‘New
Christian Right’ in American politics further aided this southernization of US culture. Cawelti (2002) also finds that the spread of southern US religion and culture was associated with the extension of a long tradition of Protestant oratory into new media including television in the form of televangelism. Cawelti (2002) further observes that the emergence of a distinctive American culture and religion is also related to the spread of western US cultures and their mythic notions of equality, pragmatism and individualism. The Word of Faith form of Pentecostalism that many megachurches adopted appears to have strong ties to these southern and western US subcultures (McConnell 1988; Vreeland 2001). It has been argued that the evangelical Protestantism shaped by these southern and western influences has become the new ‘mainline’ religion in North America (Streiker and Strober 1972).

Despite the peculiarly American contributions to its origins, Pentecostalism has global appeal and has emerged as a global movement. As Martin (2002:6) observes,

“it is a repertoire of religious explorations controlled, though sometimes barely, within a Christian frame, and apt for adaption in myriad indigenous contexts…”

The historiography of Australian Pentecostalism

The history of Australian Pentecostal churches has largely been written by its participants. Chant argues in Heart of Fire (1984) and his 1999 doctoral thesis on ‘The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia, 1870–1939’ that Australian Pentecostalism is not an American import (1999:39) but ‘an indigenous movement enriched by a variety of overseas influences’ (1999:103). His argument is supported by Klaus (in Dempster, Klaus & Petersen 1999:127) who refers to Pentecostalism as ‘the quintessential indigenous religion, adapting readily to a variety of cultures’, adding that ‘it places an emphasis on the ‘freedom of the Spirit’ that militates against the homogenizing and standardizing tendencies that characterize globalization’.
Australian scholars including Hughes (1996:3), Hutchinson (2002:26) and Chant (1999:40, 103) posit that Australian Pentecostalism is a local ‘indigenized’ development whose groups tend to be started by local people rather than overseas missionaries or institutions.

Many international scholars also note the capacity for Pentecostalism to promote the development of locally initiated Christian groups in the locations and countries to which it spreads (Hodges 1953; Poloma 1989; Knowles 1994, 2000; Cox 1995; Berger 2003). The notion of ‘the glocalization of Pentecostalism in Australia’ (Clifton 2005:107) suggests that global and local influences increasingly act synergistically to empower new global–local relationships (Hannerz 1990:237; Robertson 1992:73). However, as Hutchinson (1998:5ff) notes, Australian Pentecostal and charismatic movements have frequently given way to the expediency of importing overseas ideas and practices. While this pragmatism has often aided their growth, it also contributes to a narrow isomorphism in Australian Pentecostal practices and beliefs that has restricted variation and limited the experimentation through which future initiatives can emerge.

Australia occupies a position between the secularism that is dominant in parts of Europe and the innovative revivalism of North America. Australia’s religious landscape was more pluralistic than Europe’s, yet it has been dominated by large mainstream denominations, including Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterian and Orthodox churches, each of which struggled to meet the needs of a geographically, socially and culturally dispersed population that was inherently suspicious of religious and social institutions. Hence, Australian revivals have been smaller and more isolated than those seen in North America and parts of Europe (Bouma 2006a:6).

28 While the term ‘Indigenous’ has developed a particular meaning in 20th century Australia in reference to its original native inhabitants that meaning is not used in discussions of Pentecostalism or in this study. In this thesis the term indigenous is used to describe movements that originate within a country and take on characteristics of the local setting in which they originate, rather than being brought in by immigrants.
The founding and institutionalization of Pentecostalism in Australia

Australia’s first substantial Pentecostal church started in 1909, just three years after the American Azusa Street Revival of 1906. A Methodist woman, Sarah Jane Lancaster (Chant 1999; Hutchinson 2002:26) established the Good News Hall in North Melbourne after reading revivalist tracts from England and America. News of the revival spread through the Good News periodical and travelling evangelists associated with the work (Chant 1984:43; Smith & Smith 1987:19). By 1925, the Good News Hall had grown into 15 affiliated churches (Chant 1999:670). However, Lancaster’s innovative teachings that Jesus was inferior to God and that there was no eternal punishment, and the lack of formal organizational structures and leadership training, contributed to the decline of the Good News Hall (Chant 1984:52).

In 1916, the Pentecostal Church of Australia (PCA) was started by a former Church of Christ leader, Charles Greenwood. He was a leader of a sizable revival at Sunshine, north of Melbourne. Richmond Temple was established as its headquarters in 1925 and it remained Australia’s largest Pentecostal church until the early 1970s (Clifton 2005:172). From July 1926, it became the headquarters of the Pentecostal Church of Australia and produced the Australian Evangel national paper (Chant 1984:96). The church again grew rapidly during the 1980s, reaching 2000 weekly attendees in the late 1980s (P Hills, Interview, 2010).

The Australian Assemblies of God (A–AOG) denomination formed in 1937 by the merging of earlier Pentecostal groups. Although independent of the American denomination of the same name, it admits being guided and inspired by the American literature. Greenwood was elected as Chairman, and CG Enticknap, a former Methodist, was appointed as Vice Chairman. The denomination grew from 20 churches in 1937 to 42 assemblies in 1945. However, the number of attendees at each church remained small, with an average of 30 attendees per church and a total Australian Pentecostal affiliation of only 1250 people in 1945 (Chant 1984:43; Smith & Smith 1987:19). Smith and Smith (1987) and Cartledge (2000) attribute the slow growth of the early Australian AOG to
institutionalization and restrictive organizational structures, a decline in its earlier emphasis on supernatural healings, miracles and evangelism, a decrease in lay involvement and the lessening of social, gender and racial equality. Growth was also constrained by external circumstances, including the difficulties imposed by the two World Wars, the dispersed nature of Australian towns and cities and opposition from established denominations (Smith & Smith 1987:37). Clifton (2005:163) observes that the clash between the AOG’s global orientation and the resurgent nationalism of the 1930s and 40s, the dislike of the Pentecostal emphasis on pacifism, and the non-traditional nature of Pentecostalism also slowed growth. The loose-knit nature and centrifugal forces within the new AOG denomination also allowed a proliferation of Bible training institutions that undermined central discipline (Hutchinson 2002:27).

In the mid 20th century many outside Pentecostalism still regarded it with suspicion, while many within Pentecostalism felt that it had lost its earlier emphasis on vitality, spontaneity and enthusiasm. Institutionalization and slowing of Pentecostal growth led to new independent developments. One of the earliest new independent Pentecostal churches in Australia was the Church of God, started in 1937 in Brisbane by Cecil Harris. Cecil and his son, Leo Harris, left the A–AOG after disagreements with its leaders after he embraced distinctive British Israel beliefs. The Brisbane Church of God had 100 attendees and grew into a small movement of eight churches. The church started by Cecil’s son, Leo, in Adelaide in 1944, renamed Christian Revival Crusade (CRC), grew much larger. The Adelaide CRC was one of Australia’s largest Pentecostal churches in the 1960s, with over 700 attendees by the early 1970s. Although small by later megachurch standards, its relatively large size at the time, and innovative developments including annual conventions, original songs and new beliefs and practices, aided its development. CRC conferences and resources aided the spread of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements across Australia. It also started the Tabor College, one of the first Australian private national tertiary education institutions. The Resource Christian Music developed by Dennis and Nolene Prince at Heatherton CRC in 1981 was widely used in Australia and overseas. The CRC has 129 churches in Australia, over 400 churches in Papua New Guinea and 150 churches in other locations including Fiji, Hong Kong, India,
the Philippines, Vanuatu, Sri Lanka and the Solomon Islands. However, the growth of the CRC movement slowed after the death of its founder in 1977.

Revival and decline in Australian religious life from 1945 to the mid 1960s

As in other countries with large numbers of immigrants, including Canada, the US and New Zealand, the growth of religious and secular institutions in Australia exceeded general population trends in the years immediately following World War II (Hastings 1986; Hilliard 1997a; Putnam 2000). An expansion in global trade (Murphy & Smart 1997:1, 21) and decreased unemployment\(^\text{29}\) caused a rapid rise in the standard of living\(^\text{30}\) and increased immigration, and efforts to rebuild after World War II contributed to a 25 year ‘golden age’\(^\text{31}\) of economic expansion. The accompanying strong growth in religious affiliation and attendance led Mol (1972), in his first comprehensive study of the sociology of religion in Australia, to conclude that church attendance and belief in Australia to 1966 was static, stable and high.\(^\text{32}\) Consequently, the mood of most traditional churches and institutions in the immediate post war years was optimistic and self-confident.

The following Table 3.1 places the growth of Pentecostalism within the contexts of changes in other major denominations. As the table shows, this post-war period of Protestant church growth was followed by a period of attendance decline that became

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29 Unemployment stood at 1.2% in 1950, rising no higher than 3.2% in 1962, and dropping to 1.2% again in 1965 (Bolton 1996:90).
30 Horne (1964:18ff) notes the improvement in Australia.
32 Mol’s Religion in Australia (1972) was based on a questionnaire that was distributed in mid 1966. By the 1960s, the Anglican Church’s finances had trebled during the previous decade, aiding the building of new parishes and Sunday school halls (Hilliard, 1986:122, 127; 1997b; 2002:124f). Hilliard also records that South Australian Anglican Sunday School enrolments increased substantially in the 1950s, peaking in 1959. Brookes (1993:2) found a similar optimism in the Methodist Church.
increasingly pronounced from 1966 to 1976. The large Anglican and Uniting/PMU (Presbyterian, Methodist, Uniting and Congregational churches) affiliations fell in absolute terms, even though the population grew by 16.8 per cent.

Table 3.1: Australian religious affiliation by denomination 1901–2006 (ABS 2006).

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<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>3,483</td>
<td>27.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>2,957</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>3,885</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>3,752</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<td>PMU group (a)</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>1,687</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>2,249</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>1,937</td>
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<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>&lt; 2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non Christian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>7,579</td>
<td>11,599</td>
<td>13,548</td>
<td>15,602</td>
<td>17,752</td>
<td>18,769</td>
<td>19,855</td>
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(a) The PMU group combines the census figures for Presbyterian, Methodist, Uniting and Congregational churches, which reflects the changes associated with the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia in 1977.

**Divine healing and Latter Rain seeds of later developments**

Hutchinson (2001:84) reports that American models of revivalism began to swamp the Australian religious ‘market’ after World War II. Although many of these revivalist movements died out, their influence was significant. A number of religious developments during the 1950s and 1960s introduced new beliefs, practices and that would contribute to the unique character of the revival movements and megachurches that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. The divine healing and Latter Rain movements were two of the more
prominent of these movements. They contributed to the growth and character of Australian megachurches.

**Post-war healing movements**

The divine healing movement was a form of global revivalsChristianity that attracted large religious attendance in Australia in the 1950s. In North America, the post World War II healing revival movement dates from meetings held by independent Pentecostal evangelists, William Branham, Gordon Lindsay and Oral Roberts in the late 1940s (Kydd 2002:710). Like many healing revivalists, Roberts’ interest in divine healing grew out of his own experience of divine healing from tuberculosis and stuttering in 1935. Interest in Roberts’ message was high and by 1948 his column appeared in 674 newspapers (Harrell 1975:44). Circulation of the monthly magazines *Healing Waters* and *Abundant Life* grew to 265,000 by 1953 and over one million by 1956 (Chappell 2002:1025). Attendance at US healing movement meetings in the early 1950s was boosted by the public anxiety over the Cold War and nuclear proliferation, social and economic mobility and a hunger for conservative religious beliefs and values. However, by the late 1950s the excesses and abuses of the healing evangelists had increased to the point where their claims were widely dismissed (Harrell 1975:111). Oral Roberts tried to introduce his form of divine healing to Australia in 1956, but his team were heckled, jostled and forced to withdraw. In 1961, the former healing evangelist, William Branham, denounced the healing movement, and Gordon Lindsay published statements in 1962 that questioned the healing evangelists’ methods and tendency for self-exaltation (Harrell 1975:138).

Australian healing movements were independent of and usually different to the more demonstrative North American healing movements, emphasizing the cultural differences between North America and Australia (Hutchinson 2001:84). Canon Jim Glennon, who began healing meetings in Sydney Anglican Church in September 1960, led some of the
largest divine healing gatherings in Australia. His meetings stimulated interest in other supernatural phenomena and aided the spread of the charismatic movement in mainstream churches. Australia’s megachurches have continued to emphasize the practices and beliefs of the divine healing movement, developing an approach midway between the North American demonstrative approach and the quieter, denominational model of Glennon.

**Neo-Evangelicalism**

In an address given at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1948, Dr Harold John Ockenga coined the term ‘neo-Evangelicalism’ to describe efforts to find a middle position between the more extreme forms of evangelicalism that pursue isolationist, fundamentalist developments on the one hand, and modernist, theologically liberal positions on the other. This new branch of Evangelicalism combined belief in personal salvation and Bible based doctrines with social application of the gospel and engagement with the wider society (Nash 1963:14; Erickson 1968:32). In its increased interaction with North American Christianity, many conservative Protestant Christians in Australia embraced this more socially interactive form of neo-Evangelicalism over the narrower and isolationist stances of fundamentalism or theological liberalism.

The neo-Evangelicalism resurgence from 1947 to 1966 appeared to peak in Australia with the high level of interest in Billy Graham’s global crusades. In contrast to Oral Roberts’ difficulties, Graham ensured his success by gaining the support of Anglican and mainstream denominations by emphasizing the Bible and points of doctrinal agreement and by avoiding the more controversial doctrines and practices such as divine healing (Piggin 1989:2; Hutchinson 2001:84). Graham’s 1959 visit to Australia drew record

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33 Minutes of the 73rd Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, 1974, Paterson, Brisbane, QLD, p. 153.
crowds to the MCG arena in Melbourne. This was followed by a four-week Sydney crusade in April and May 1959, attended by 980,000 people. In Brisbane, 246,000 people attended the crusades and 10,661 people came forward to make a salvation commitment. Approximately 3.25 million Australians attended or watched the 1959 Australian crusades and over 130,000, or 1.2 per cent of the country’s population, responded to Graham’s call for a commitment to Christ (Pollock 1966a:249). During the months that followed, attendance at many Australian churches swelled and ministry training colleges had record intakes. The converts took Graham’s evangelical emphasis with them into many Australian churches, Christian movements and colleges (Carey 1996:187). The unprecedented levels of interdenominational cooperation indicated a loosening of corporate religious identity based on tightly defined theological doctrines that aided the spread of the evangelical and charismatic movements. By promoting common evangelical experiences in Christ, the organizers transcended denominational and theological differences.

The Billy Graham Association showed how American revivalist notions of evangelism, formulated in terms of the “sinner’s prayer”, “accepting Jesus into one’s life” and associated beliefs, were attractive to Australians. It also showed that contemporary organizational and marketing methods could be used to attract and hold ‘mega’ crowds. Graham’s crusades showed the effectiveness of a combination of human effort, contemporary organizational practices, the use of the mass media (newspapers, radio and television), reliance on the transcendent power of God and core evangelical beliefs (Smart 1999:168). Graham also demonstrated how the promotion of the preachers as charismatic megastars could aid the spread of the Gospel (Smart 1999:165). The Graham Association introduced new institutional and organizational structures that melded with ecumenism, namely business organizational approaches, use of new media and market responses to communicate the Christian message to large audiences.

Neo-Evangelicalism increased interest in new views on conversion to challenge traditional church teachings. Hughes (1991:101, 104) contrasts the conversionist pattern of faith of neo-Evangelicalism with the broader notions of conventionalist faith and salvation held by mainstream Anglican, Catholic, Uniting and other traditional churches. From the conventionalist perspective, humanity’s problems are seen as arising from a complex of broader difficulties that include injustice and the uneven distribution of resources. They viewed conversion and salvation as part of a complex, lifelong transformation of individuals that take place within broader religious communities and the wider society (Wilson, 1982:121ff). These conventionalist churches were concerned that preachers often manipulated the notions of instant salvation, which were too simplistic and contributed to the neglect of lifelong identity development. At the same time, Rambo (1993) suggests that conversion is more complex, with at least five different types of conversion occurring among members. These include defection from a religious tradition, intensification of a tradition, affiliation to a particular group, institutional transition and tradition transition. His studies identify some of the broader, more complex changes that are associated with conversion. Australian megachurches have largely accepted North American models of instant conversion.

The Latter Rain revival movement

As interest in Pentecostal and healing movements in the mid 20th century waned, many churches overseas and in Australia turned to the Latter Rain movement as a source of revival, new practices and beliefs. The terms ‘Latter Rain’ and ‘New Order of the Latter Rain’ were taken from prophecies in Joel 2:23 and 28, and Zechariah 10:1. The Latter Rain movement interpreted these verses as predictions that a ‘Latter Rain’ outpouring of God’s Spirit would occur just prior to an ‘end time harvest of souls’, and the ‘return of Christ’ (Riss 1987, 1988b). The origins of the Latter Rain revival movement can be traced to revivalist meetings at the Sharon Bible School and orphanage in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1948 led by a former Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) minister, George Hawtin, and former Four Square Gospel ministers, Ernest and Percy Hunt and Herrick Holt (Riss 1987:61). These Latter Rain movement leaders introduced innovations
in divine healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit and the imparting of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands. The Latter Rain movement was also known for its openness to new liturgical practices that included the repeated singing of short, contemporary choruses and scriptures set to music, singing in tongues, and individualized prophecies and dancing.  

Established mainstream and Pentecostal churches soon raised concerns over many Latter Rain beliefs, including their teaching that God was raising up self-appointed apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and elders, as described in Ephesians 4:11, and the emphasis on autonomy and individualism. They were also concerned about the teaching that believers needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, fearing it was anti-Trinitarian. Concerns were also raised over their allegorical Bible interpretations of the feasts of Israel, tabernacle and temple as symbolic depictions of contemporary revivals. Further controversies arose over the notions of perfectionism, manifest ‘Sons of God’ beliefs and their acceptance of contemporary cultural developments (Blumhofer 1993:3; Knowles 2000:35ff, 297ff). Because of its rejection by most mainstream and Pentecostal churches, the movement remained relatively small and scholars often overlook it. Despite considerable opposition, the movement spread from Canada to New Zealand where it contributed to the growth of New Zealand’s largest Pentecostal denomination and to new independent churches. It subsequently influenced Australian churches and its innovations have contributed to the development of many of Australia’s megachurches.

Ray Jackson introduced Latter Rain beliefs and practices to Pentecostal churches in Auckland, Wellington and Blenheim, New Zealand in 1949. Jackson adopted Latter Rain teachings after attending W. H. Offiler’s Bethel Temple in Seattle, Washington and the Latter Rain revival in North Battleford, Canada (Knowles 2000:303). He travelled to Australia in 1950 and introduced the Latter Rain teachings to Pentecostal churches in

37 Sectarian groups are frequently inspired by attempts to restore the patterns and ideals of the past, such as New Testament models of Christianity (Hamilton 1995:195).
Sydney, Melbourne and Bendigo. However, opposition from New Zealand and Australian churches restricted the uptake of the new teachings to a few small, independent churches (Knowles 2000:43). Jackson conducted a Bible school in a Sydney home in late 1951. Among the 21 students who attended were Rob and Beryl Wheeler, Peter Morrow, David Jackson, Ron and Muriel Coady, Mike Bensley and Kevin Conner, who became key leaders of the Latter rain movement (Knowles 2000:43). In New Zealand, the Word of Faith Bible School, established in Tauranga in 1959 and relocated to Auckland in 1965, provided training and motivation for the development of further independent churches. The scattered New Zealand independent groups that sprang up out of these crusades were known as ‘Independent Churches’, ‘Indigenous Churches’ and ‘Indigenous Pentecostal Churches.’ These names emphasize the role that local people played in starting new independent churches. The term ‘Full Gospel’ was also used to communicate the belief that the ‘full message of the Gospel’ must include divine healing, full immersion adult baptism, gifts of the Holy Spirit and the imminent return of Christ (Nichol 1971:7). The term ‘New Life Centre’ was used to describe the churches and movement. The term ‘centre’ avoided the institutional and religious connotations of the word ‘church’. The term ‘movement’ was used by participants to characterize their fluid, organic, loose association of churches and participants (Knowles 2000:vii).

Although the Latter Rain movement largely died out in the United States and Canada, New Zealand’s New Life Centre (NLC) churches grew from just four small churches in 1957 into New Zealand’s largest Pentecostal group with 121 churches in 1983. The NLC was larger than the New Zealand Assemblies of God, which had 109 churches in 1983. The term ‘New Life Churches’ was adopted as the official name of the New

38 These churches were all founded and led by New Zealanders. These names convey their emphasis on autonomy and accountability of the founders and churches to God and the Holy Spirit, rather than to established denominational hierarchies (Knowles, 2000:vii).
39 Knowles (2000) draws on his doctoral thesis in church history, submitted in 1994. His data come from interviews with pastors and congregational members of the New Life Churches. The book traces the emergence of the Christian Life Centre movement in New Zealand in the mid 1940s and its growth to become one of the largest New Zealand Pentecostal bodies by the 1970s. Knowles’ book examines the origins of the movement’s original revivalism and the ways it became linked with moralist concerns and the application of political pressure for social change. He also explores the relationship between the New Life Churches and the emerging New Zealand charismatic movement.
Zealand movement in 1988 and this marked a transition from a loosely defined movement into a church denomination (Knowles 1994). However, by this time, the earlier sense of vitality had declined and the movement entered a period of stasis and decline (Knowles 1994). Some of the leaders of revivals in New Zealand travelled to Australia where they contributed to the development of Australia’s megachurches.

**Christian Fellowship Churches—a false start and sectarian offshoot**

The difficulties associated with emergent large churches that remain isolated from society are particularly evident in the Christian Fellowship Churches. The Latter Rain inspired Bible school established by Ray Jackson in Sydney in 1951 later moved to Melbourne where it continues today as ‘Calvary Bible College’. It supported the start of a number of new churches in Melbourne and Brisbane, and in regional centres in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. These churches are members of the Associated Mission Churches of Australasia. The Melbourne congregation was known as ‘Immanuel’ before changing its name to ‘Melbourne Christian Fellowship’ (MCF). The Sydney Christian Fellowship meets in Leumeah in NSW. Brisbane Christian Fellowship has moved to 25 hectares in the Samford Valley, on Brisbane’s northwest outskirts. 40 While other independent churches that started about this time became more open and went on to become megachurches, the Australian Christian Fellowships retained the isolationist, sectarian teachings of Offiler and the Latter Rain movement, insisting that only those baptized in the ‘name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ and being members of Christian Fellowship churches will be saved. They taught that their teachers and apostles were especially enlightened and that attendees should not listen to any outside churches, media or religious publications (Holden 1993). The Christian Fellowship churches in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane each grew to about 700 attendees, but their sectarian character restricted further growth and contributed to their eventual decline. Zwartz (2008) writes extensively

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40 Other Christian Fellowship churches are located at Toowoomba, Stanthorpe, Nambour, Maryborough and Cairns in Queensland; Sunbury, Shepparton, Nhill, Wangaratta and Leongatha in Victoria; Sydney and Forster in New South Wales; Adelaide, SA, and Perth, WA. The fellowship group also includes churches in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Switzerland.
about the Melbourne Christian Fellowship, arguing that because of its isolationism it became a cult characterized by the manipulation and exploitation of its members. Morag presents evidence that Jackson became a typical cult leader who succumbed to temptations, abusing his access to power, sex and money (‘Call to probe’ ABC 2008; Conner 2008; Croucher 2008).

Waverley Christian Fellowship

In 1967, Richard Holland, a member of Melbourne Christian Fellowship, broke with Jackson and established ‘Waverley Christian Fellowship’. Kevin Conner shared his concerns. Conner was a former Salvation Army member who attended Jackson’s Bible college in Sydney, then confronted Jackson and left (Conner 2007:261, 273). He lectured in Bible schools run by Rob Wheeler in Tauranga and by Ray Jackson’s son, David Jackson, in Timaru, New Zealand. In 1972, Conner and his family moved to Portland, Oregon, where he taught in the Portland Bible College and Bible Temple. Conner returned to Australia in 1981 and was appointed leader of the Waverley Christian Fellowship in 1986. Parkmore Full Gospel Church and its Christian school (now Waverley Christian College) merged with Waverley Christian Fellowship in 1983, swelling its numbers further and helping it to reach megachurch size.

The decision by Holland, Conner and Waverley Christian Fellowship to separate physically and theologically from the Melbourne and other Christian Fellowship churches helped it avoid their cult-like developments and aided the growth and health of the church. It moderated earlier sectarian beliefs while continuing to promote less divisive beliefs that were attracting sizable gatherings (Conner 2005:405). At the same time, Conner continued to popularize a number of the Latter Rain views across Australia through his self-published books that isolated him from mainstream churches. Conner’s teachings included a strong Latter Rain emphasis on contemporary Biblical symbolism as seen in the Ark of the Covenant (Conner 1975:19), the tabernacle of Moses (Conner 1975:1) and its furnishings (1975:12), and the Golden Candlestick (1975:40). In his teachings, the outer court of the tabernacle was
Christian Fellowship has not affiliated with other denominations and it remains an independent church.

The Faith Movement

While Roman Catholics largely interpret faith in terms of the sacraments and church, and Protestants interpret faith in terms of the Biblical acceptance and understanding of references to the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the ‘faith’ movement interpreted faith in terms of an individual’s capacity to visualize, believe and confess the promises of God. Kenyon, who is widely recognized as the father of the faith movement (Harrison 2005) writes that faith involves natural laws that are not unlike the scientific laws that govern the universe (Kenyon 1970:98). Kenyon (1970:15, 27; 1983:15) also writes that all physical illness has a spiritual cause and that healing comes when one’s ‘spirit is adjusted to the Word.’ He said that visualization, confession and acting on the Word of God demonstrated faith and made redemption a reality. The ‘faith confession’ and ‘gospel of wealth and prosperity’ messages appear to have reached a peak of popularity in the 1970s and 1980s due to the ways they fitted the experiences, aspirations and expansion of Western consumerism and materialism of that time (McConnell 1995:xix). There appears to be a correlation between the economic level of society and the nature of the supernatural beings that are postulated (Radin 1937:8; Cox 1965:8). Globalization has not only provided technologies that assisted the spread of Christianity and Pentecostalism, it also contributed to a culture of consumerism, individualism and mass mediated entertainment, and the financial, educational and aspirational cultures that affected the ways in which the Christian message was being interpreted by newly emergent megachurches. McConnell (1988:24), Poloma (1989:52f) and Hanegraaff (1993) have shown that these ‘positive confession’ movements have similarities to New Thought, Christian Science and other ‘metaphysical’ movements in their efforts to show

believed to represent prophetically New Covenant times that were most fully expressed in the present (1975:1, 2).

42 Kenyon (1969b:75).
that the mind and spirit had power over the complex material world. Many of Australia’s megachurches include aspects of the faith confession movement in their message.

**The religious crisis of the 1960s**

After the boom in church affiliation and attendance in mainline denominations from 1949 to 1963, it came as a shock to church leaders in many western countries when affiliations and attendance began to decline from 1963 to 1973 (Wilson 1966; Berger 1967; Bruce 2002:60). Mainline churches in Australia also saw attendance growth falling below population growth after 1966 (Bouma 1983; Kaldor 1987). Evans and Kelly (2000) observed that self-reported Australian monthly church attendance, which grew from 23 per cent in 1950 to 27 per cent in 1961, fell dramatically after the mid 1960s to around 18 per cent by 1978 where it has lingered ever since. Hilliard (1997b:226) notes that the decline in church attendance in Australia was unevenly distributed among the denominations and was experienced first amongst the theologically liberal Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the larger cities. Theologically conservative and conversionist evangelical groups, such as the Baptists, had less difficulty holding on to their attendees and showed signs of adapting more readily to these changes. A major reason for this decline was the difficulties that mainline denominations faced in transmitting their beliefs to the younger generations (Kaldor et al, 1995; Hughes 1996:v; Bouma & Hughes 1998:18ff).

The decline in attendance and participation in the 1960s and 1970s was not confined to religion, suggesting that the difficulties were as much organizational as they were religious. Davie (1994:19f) and Putnam (2000) observe that most western religious and social institutions, and virtually every form of communal, civic and religious involvement, experienced an increase in numerical and financial support until the mid 1960s, followed by a decline. As noted in chapter 2, these declines reflected the difficulties faced by voluntary institutions as they responded to major social changes. these included sociodemographic and generational changes, suburbanization, pluralism, the growth of free market competition, egalitarianism, consumer choice and
individualism, the growth of a complex, globalized and ‘mass mediated’ world, and the challenge of increased competition for people’s time from other activities including the motor car, television, Sunday sports and Sunday trading (Davie 1994:19f; Putnam 2000:283). The slow response by many social institutions to these changes prompted the emergence of protest movements that characterized this period, including the civil rights, women’s, environmental, student, anti-war, and other movements (Ahlstrom 1978:446; Howard 1991:39; Ballis & Bouma 1999:17). At the same time, Putnam (2000:77) argues that churches and social organizations were not only victims of these changes and the decline in community participation, but that they also played a role in responding to them and in rebuilding community and civic involvement.

The impact of the general crises of this time was accompanied by a number of changes in Australian church denominations. The Vatican II Council in the Roman Catholic Church from 1962 to 1965 gave greater recognition to religious and cultural diversity and encouraged increased participation of the laity within the church, the role of individual conscience and personal responsibility. It also encouraged increased openness to other Christian and religious groups. Changes in the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches led to their merger to form the Uniting Church in 1977. Changes in the Anglican Church in Australia were reflected in changes to its name and constitution. Many attendees who were unsettled by these changes transferred to Pentecostal churches, swelling their numbers and helping them to grow to megachurch size (P Hills, Interview, 2010). Pentecostal churches and megachurches, being more open to organizational change and response to changed markets, grew strongly as they gained many younger attendees and others who felt disaffected by traditional churches.

**The charismatic movement in the 1960s and 1970s**

As the popularity of the healing evangelists in North America declined in the 1960s, some, notably T L Osborn, Gordon Lindsay and Oral Roberts, began to explore previously untapped audiences in the mainstream traditional churches. Californian millionaire Demos Shakarian commenced the Full Gospel Businessmen’s International
(FGBMI) in 1951 with the support of Oral Roberts, and this aided the spread of the charismatic movement among members of traditional mainstream churches (Poewe 1994:2f; Burgess & van der Maas 2002:653). The FGBMI also helped to attract attendees from the newly emerging middle class and provided a large new audience for the charismatic movement (Harrell 1975:146).

The term ‘charismatic movement’ was coined in the early 1960s to describe a wave of interest in experiential, revivalist and Pentecostal Christianity that spread among attendees of traditional churches during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The charismatic movement gained global exposure when the acceptance of the ‘baptism in the Spirit’ by a United States Episcopalian minister, Dennis Bennett, was published worldwide in *Newsweek* (4 July 1960:77) and *Time* (15 August 1960:53). Within ten years of Bennett’s announcement, 10 per cent of the North American clergy and over one million mainline church participants had received ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ and were adopting charismatic practices and beliefs such as tongues speaking (Synan 1997a:233). Macchia (2006:27) observes that the rise, fall and diffusion of the charismatic movement in the 1960s and 1970s was driven at least in part by changes in culture that included a disillusionment with Western rationalism, a quest for spirituality and experience and a search for community. In Australia, the Vision Ministries organization, started by the NSW Waverley Methodist minister Alan Langstaff, became a vector for the spread of charismatic renewal movement ideas by electronic media, including the use of radio and the introduction of television and cassette tape recordings (Hutchinson 1998). Alan Langstaff’s (Interview, 12/7/2004) founding of Vision Ministries, Vision Magazine and Charismatic Conferences in Sydney can be considered further examples of glocalization due to its combination of global and local interactions.  

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43 Vision ministries was established by Langstaff after his study tour to North America and England, It was modelled on the Temple Trust in England using local resources and people. The Teen Challenge Ministry founded in Brisbane and Australia by Charles Rigma (Interview 01/09/2004) provides another example of glocalization. Rimga was trained in the Reformed Church in Australia. He established Teen Challenge modeled on the movement of the same name in North America. He is presently on the faculty at Regent College, Vancouver, as well as teaching in the local COC CHC college, a further example of global/local interconnections in the Australian Pentecostal and charismatic movements.
The origins of the Catholic charismatic movement are often traced to its beginnings in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1967 among the students and faculty of Duquesne University. Charismatic Catholic groups commenced in Michigan State and Notre Dame Universities shortly after. The Catholic charismatic movement came to Australia in January 1969 after Professor Alex Reichel, an associate professor of mathematics at Sydney University, returned from sabbatical leave in the USA with news of the charismatic movement there. He was given permission by the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy, to establish charismatic meetings at Sydney University and to introduce new practices at St Michael’s College and St Francis Parish Church in Surry Hills (Hutchinson 2002:26). News of the renewal movement in Sydney encouraged the development of similar groups in Bardon, Queensland and Melbourne, Victoria. Within two years, the new movement had spread to every state capital city in Australia.

Because the charismatic movement’s practices became symbols of deinstitutionalization, empowerment of the laity and freedom for innovation, they were opposed by those who sought to preserve established institutional practices and power structures. Many traditional church leaders opposed the newer Latter Rain and charismatic movement practices. On 20 April 1949 the Assemblies of God executive in Australia took an early stand against the ‘new move’ and passed a resolution condemning new Latter Rain doctrines and practices, with further statements of condemnation in the 1960s and 1970s. They called a special AOG Presbytery Conference in Melbourne in 1972 to counter the ‘new move’. The 1973 national AOG conference again spoke against the new move, passing a remittance to expel all ministers who were involved in the ‘new move’, ‘deliverance’ or ‘dancing in worship’ (Cartledge 2000:129). They singled out two New Zealanders who were involved in the new move, the New Zealand church leaders Trevor Chandler and Bob Midgley. At the same time, the charismatic movement provided a large number of potential attendees from mainline churches who would swell attendance at the new churches and megachurches formed in the 1970s and 1980s.
Australia’s largest charismatic churches

The interest generated by the charismatic movement helped to swell attendance in the mainline churches that were most open to the new phenomena. The few mainstream congregations that were best able to harness this interest were able to establish Australia’s first charismatic movement megachurches.

The charismatic Crossway Baptist Church, previously known as Blackburn Baptist Church, has become Australia’s largest Baptist church. Under the leadership of Rowland Croucher, who was the pastor from 1973 to 1981, the church grew from 300 people in 1973 into a megachurch with over 2,000 attendees by 1981. The Crossways Church has since grown to over 4,000 weekly attendees under the leadership of Stuart Robinson, who came to the church in 1983. It has also established smaller daughter churches in Craigieburn, Cranbourne, Moreland, and Stonnington, forming a new relationship network that is a radical shift from the autonomy of Baptist churches within the much larger denomination.

In Brisbane, the Holland Park Gateway Baptist Church grew to megachurch size under the leadership of Brian Andrew, who came from the Spreydon Baptist Church in New Zealand to lead the church in March, 1984. Again, the introduction of charismatic practices began to attract younger, single people, and people from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds. These soon outnumbered the older, middle class Australian and British attendees who had previously been predominant (Miller, Interview, 2002). By the late 1980s, the church grew to over 1,000 weekly attendees. The growth of the church was further assisted by the church elders’ participation in the Seventh Church Growth International Conference led by Yonggi Cho in South Korea in 1986 and the Fuller ‘Break Through the 1000+ barrier’ Conference in 1989. On 14 February 1993, a 1,500 seat auditorium was opened on 27 acres of bush land in the Brisbane suburb of

44 http://rowlandcroucher.blogspot.com/2007_05_01_archive.html, visited 10/12/08
Mackenzie and the church grew to over 2,000 attendees by the early 1990s (Bensley 1994:13).

Australia’s largest Church of Christ congregation is the charismatic Mount Evelyn Christian Fellowship ‘Careforce’ Church in Victoria. It grew to megachurch size with over 3,500 weekly attendees under the leadership of Allan Meyer, who took over the church leadership in 1983. The church moved into a new facility on 10 acres at Mount Evelyn in 1992. Meyer was a school teacher and Lutheran church attendee before entering Bible College and becoming Youth Pastor at Hal Oxley’s Pentecostal Church.45 The Mount Evelyn Christian Fellowship has diversified into many areas including an extensive missionary outreach into India with over 3,500 churches, orphanages and a trade school.

There is the potential for the development of megachurches among traditional denominations in Australia, because of their large number of affiliates. Surprisingly, at this stage, Australian megachurch growth has only occurred in those congregations that were open to new practices and organizational approaches associated with the Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal movements.

**Revival in the 1970s to 1990s: neo-Pentecostalism**

As participants in the charismatic movement in the 1970s and 1980s left established churches, they increased the attendance at new independent neo-Pentecostal churches and these began to grow much larger. These churches differed from traditional churches and from institutionalized classic Pentecostal denominations such as the AOG. They rejected the tightly defined practices and beliefs of the major denominations and were more open to the innovations of the Latter Rain, Faith Confession and Prosperity movements and their distinctive beliefs and practices.

45 http://www.philbaker.net/about.php?p=1, visited 10/12/08
New Zealand contributions to Australian churches and megachurches

In the 1960s in New Zealand, ministers such as Frank Houston, Trevor Chandler and Bob Midgley accepted the practices and beliefs of the Latter Rain, charismatic and other movements and this contributed to the growth of their CLC, AOG, and other Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The visits of Houston, Chandler, Midgley and others to Australia helped to spread the new beliefs and practices here. Houston had been converted in the Salvation Army and trained in the Baptist church in New Zealand. With the encouragement of controversial healing evangelist Ray Bloomfield, who he met in 1956, and his own experiences of being healed and filled with the Holy Spirit, Houston developed a ministry that emphasized divine healing and spiritual gifts (Houston 1989:76; Knowles 2000:298). Houston had moved to Lower Hutt in 1959 and he led the AOG church there for 18 years. Chandler was his associate pastor from 1963 to 1969 (Chandler 1981). Houston was appointed New Zealand AOG national superintendent in 1966 and his openness to new practices and to other Pentecostal denominations brought growth to the New Zealand AOG during his 11 years as superintendent. At the same time, Houston, Chandler and others were careful to avoid the more controversial aspects of new doctrines, such as the Latter Rain teaching on baptism in the name of Jesus.

Eventually some New Zealand church leaders decided to migrate to Australia. Australia’s population of 20 million could support larger churches than the smaller New Zealand population of 3 million. They became part of successive waves of migration from New Zealand to Australia that became strongest in the late 1960s, mid 1970s, late 1980s and the 1990s (Zoladkiewicz 2007). Trevor Chandler moved to Australia in 1970, Frank Houston in 1977, Bob Midgley in the late 1970s, Phil Pringle in 1980 and Brian Houston

in the early 1980s. The new practices and beliefs they promoted created a sense of revival and vitality that helped to mobilize some of Australia’s first megachurches.

**Full Gospel churches**

The Full Gospel Church (FGC) established in 1953 by Ian Munro, at the School of Arts Hall at Windsor in Brisbane, became one of the first post-war new independent denominations. Like many Australian Pentecostal churches at the time, the FGC was small, attracting just 60 attendees in the 1950s. It was part of the AOG until 1962 when the restrictions imposed by AOG prompted Munro to leave and establish an independent church. When Munro sought registration as a marriage celebrant, he found that the Attorney General’s department preferred to give the authority to denominational heads rather than individual ministers, and in June 1963 the Full Gospel Church was registered with the Commonwealth Government Attorney General’s department as a new Australian denomination. Registration was assisted by affiliation with the Gospel Lighthouse Church in Texas, USA. The association of Full Gospel churches was based on fellowship and relationship rather than a strong organizational structure and was noted for the autonomy of each of its churches. Pastors’ conferences, an annual conference and a quarterly magazine were used to maintain relationships. Local congregations were free to write their own constitutions based on the guidelines that Munro provided. Because the FGC was less institutionalized than the A–AOG, many disenchanted ministers from Pentecostal and charismatic churches were attracted by the freedom and independence that the FGC offered. Another feature of the Full Gospel Church was its efforts in

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48 The Gospel Lighthouse Church was a ‘Full Gospel’ church with J.C.Hibbard as Pastor, in Dallas, Texas. Hibbard pursued a healing evangelism ministry after his daughter was healed of bronchial pneumonia. Hibbard was forced to leave the AOG after his divorce and remarriage, which led him to establish the Gospel Lighthouse Church in 1940 as an independent Pentecostal organization (http://www.hibbardfamily.com/jc/index.html viewed 23/6/05). Hibbard was admitted as a member of the Full Gospel Fellowship of Churches and Ministers International.
49 *Commonwealth Gazette* No. 48 of 30 May 1963.
50 A high level of autonomy is a characteristic of sectarian groups (Stark 1967:123).
51 Fewson (2009).
inviting guest speakers from other Pentecostal, Latter Rain and charismatic movement churches from across Australia, New Zealand and the United States.\textsuperscript{53} These included Worley, Armstrong, Houston, Chandler, Midgley and others. Aided by their input, the FGC encouraged the development of a ‘co-operative fellowship of free, sovereign and independent churches’ (Chant 1984:214).\textsuperscript{54}

The Brisbane Full Gospel church grew considerably after 1970 when Trevor Chandler, who was one of the first leaders to introduce the newer charismatic and Latter Rain movement practices from New Zealand to Australia, was invited to relocate from New Zealand and lead the church. \textsuperscript{55} Chandler was senior minister of Windsor Full Gospel Church from 1970 to 1972. Ian Munro remained President and Chairman of the Full Gospel Church Board.

Disagreements over the structure of the church board and decision making led to a church split in July 1972. Munro continued to lead about 60 attendees who remained in the Full Gospel Church at Windsor (Williams 1978:37). While the Full Gospel Church never moved to acreage, built large auditoria, or established megachurch facilities, it was able to build a sizable movement based on the resources it could offer. By 1974, the Full Gospel Church denomination continued to provide an umbrella organization for 73 independent churches across Australia with overseas churches in Romania, Uganda and Fiji (Chant 1984:222). After Munro’s retirement, the group declined to just 46 churches in 1999, and in 2010, it currently has 60 churches.

\textsuperscript{54} See also Armstrong, NL 1994, ‘Tribute to Pastor Ian M. Munro’, \textit{The Full Gospel Messenger}, vol. 31, no. 3, p.3.  
\textsuperscript{55} Chandler was born in New Zealand on 29 November 1927 and was converted in a Baptist church at the age of 15. He was baptized in the Holy Spirit in a small AOG church in 1956.
Brisbane Christian Life Centre

In 1972, Chandler, Midgley, Taylor, Blainklock and many of the congregation left the FGC and moved to warehouse premises in Ann Street where they started the Brisbane Christian Life Centre (B–CLC). The B–CLC grew to over 1,000 attendees in the mid 1970s and over 2,000 weekly attendees in the early 1980s (Williams 1978:37; Chant 1984:226). It was one of the earliest megachurches to form in Brisbane. Williams’ (1978:93) study of the B–CLC in 1976 found that those who attended expressed dissatisfaction with the deadness, ineffectiveness, lack of spiritual life, formalized and impersonal worship, clerical monopolies and loss of a sense of community in traditional churches. He (1978:93) attributes the growth of the B–CLC to strong friendship networks and a millennialist message that gave members a sense of significance, self-worth and a hope-filled outlook. He also found that the CLC had changed since 1972 from an informal renewal movement that sought to contribute to the growth of all denominations in Brisbane into a more structured denomination with a goal of building its own denomination and establishing other CLCs (Williams 1978:58). Earlier emphases on evangelism and divine healing declined as it introduced further organizational structures and placed a greater emphasis on teaching, spiritual and personal growth. These changes were viewed by Williams (1978:58) as examples of institutionalization, such as was discussed in Chapter 2.

By the end of 1990, Brisbane CLC remained a megachurch with 27 affiliated CLC churches in Australia, 200 in Papua New Guinea, four in Japan and one in France. Although the name ‘Christian Life Centre’ suggests a loose connection with the New Zealand New Life Centres, the churches are not connected, nor is the Brisbane Christian Life Centre connected with the Sydney Christian Life Centre started by Frank Houston.

Brisbane Christian Outreach Centre

Clark Taylor was a young trainee Methodist minister who first heard Chandler speak at a Full Gospel Businessmen’s breakfast at the Windsor Full Gospel Church in 1970. He was
so impressed by the life and vitality communicated in Chandler’s message that he left the Methodist church to join Chandler in the ministry team at the Windsor Full Gospel and he continued in the ministry leadership of the B–CLC. He left the B–CLC in 1972 to pursue itinerant ministry and his healing revival meetings attracted hundreds of attendees. However, he became concerned about the difficulty of building large churches through his short visits. In 1974, Taylor returned to Brisbane to start the Christian Outreach Centre (COC), which he hoped would provide a healing evangelism centre to resource churches in Brisbane and Australia. In the late 1980s, the COC grew into Australia's largest megachurch and a large new independent denomination. The major case study of this thesis is the COC, which begins in the next chapter.

**Sydney Christian Life Centre and Hillsong**

Frank Houston, who was Chandler’s senior pastor in New Zealand, moved to Australia in 1977 and founded the Sydney Christian Life Centre (S–CLC). Although he had been AOG superintendent in New Zealand, the Australian AOG did not accept Houston into its membership, partly because of his enthusiasm for dancing in the Spirit, casting out demons, and other new practices and beliefs (Houston 1989:171). Like many others at that time, Houston preached the faith prosperity message and the faith visualization teachings of Yonggi Cho (Houston 1989:197). He also emphasized divine healing and the expectation of Christ’s soon return. Houston introduced many innovations, including appointing a former professional rock musician, Trevor King, to lead the music. By 1989 the S–CLC had grown to over 2,000 attendees, requiring a move to a warehouse in the inner Sydney suburb of Waterloo. By 1999, the S–CLC had established 20 churches in Sydney and New South Wales, with 60 churches across Australia and overseas (Chant 1999:9ff). It was not until after the change of executive in 1977 that Houston was persuaded by Evans to join the Australian AOG (Clifton 2005:217).

Frank Houston’s son, Brian, attended a Bible College in New Zealand and moved to Australia in 1978 to assist his father. In 1983, he started the Hills Christian Life Centre (H–CLC) in the suburb of Baulkham Hills. Building on his father’s innovations, his own
training, the prime suburban location at Baulkham Hills in Australia’s most populous city of Sydney, and using television and other media, the Hills CLC grew solidly to 7,000 attendees by the late 1980s. When his father retired in May 2000 the city and Hills churches were merged to form a combined Hillsong multisite campus. When the Hillsong music became widely known the Hills Christian Life Centre changed its name to Hillsong Church in 1999. Hillsong has continued to grow and it is Australia’s largest church (Kaldor 1987:170) becoming the only Australian ‘gigachurch’ to achieve over 10,000 and then 20,000 attendees each week. The influence of Hills CLC is also apparent through its weekly TV programme, which is broadcast across Australia and overseas and annual Hillsong conferences that attract over 20,000 delegates.

**Western Australia’s Rhema Riverview Church**

Western Australia’s largest church is the independent neo-Pentecostal Riverview Church located in an inner suburb of Perth. It was started by Brian J. Baker, who emigrated from the United Kingdom to New Zealand where he participated in charismatic movement revivals before training to be a minister at Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, under Kenneth Hagin. Baker then established the church in Belmont, then Burswood, which are inner city suburbs in Perth, Western Australia, in 1979 and a school followed in 1982. This global – local combination of influences provides a further example of glocalization. The church started an Australia-wide Rhema denomination of 15 member churches. The leadership of the church passed to his son, Phil Baker, in 1989, but the church declined and closed temporarily in the mid 1990s. It reopened with a more ecumenical focus under the name ‘Riverview Church’ in 1997. Phil Baker gave Riverview an emphasis on contemporary social concerns that replaced his father’s emphasis on other-worldly, ‘faith movement’ phenomena, indicative of a broader
transition that was occurring within Australian Pentecostalism. The church had reached 5,000 weekly attendees by 2008.  

**Sydney Christian City Church**

In 1980, Phil Pringle left Sydenham in New Zealand to start the Christian City Churches (CCC) in Sydney. Pringle had been converted in 1971 and he became youth leader at the Sydenham AOG church in Christchurch in New Zealand. When the minister, Dennis Barton, introduced the ‘new’ innovative practices and beliefs, the elders asked him to leave. Pringle then joined Barton in establishing an independent church in Sydenham (Barclay 1987:24). Pringle was particularly beholden to Paul Collins, a charismatic movement former Methodist who was involved in the Latter Rain movement in New Zealand in the 1960s. After Collins moved to Sydney in Australia to establish the Faith Christian Centre in the early 1970s Pringle came to Sydney to assist Collins for five months during 1972. In 1980, Pringle returned from New Zealand to Sydney to lead Collins’ Christian Faith Centre (Barclay 1987:28), and this formed the basis of the Christian City Church (CCC). With the aid of contemporary music, the newer Pentecostal, ‘Latter Rain’ and charismatic movement practices of clapping, raising hands and dancing, combined with the energetic leadership and musical talents of Pringle, the new group attracted a sizable following (Barclay 1987:36ff; Pringle 1991). Many people came from the alternative and surf cultures of Sydney’s northern beaches and others were charismatic Christians who felt disenfranchised in the mainline churches (Hutchinson 2002:26). People were also attracted by Pringle’s emphasis on faith confession and faith healing. Even today, many of his mannerisms appear to be modelled on the ministry of Clark Taylor (Barclay 1987:7, 60). Barclay (1987:54, 69, 78) notes that Pringle also adopted millennialist views as seen in the writings of Hal Lindsay in *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and the beliefs and practices of Yonggi Cho. When the number of attendees

increased the church moved to acreage at Oxford Falls, and by 1995, over 1,500 people gathered each Sunday at Oxford Falls Church. Attendance reached over 2,000 in the late 1990s. By 1999 the CCC had 64 churches in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States and this grew to 200 churches in Australia and overseas by 2010. Many attendees came from established Pentecostal groups, including the AOG churches, which were perceived to be more institutionalized than the Christian City Churches. Like the other Australian megachurches, the CCC expanded into music recording, television broadcasts, a Ministry Training College and a Christian School (Barclay 1987:80, 92). Over time, beliefs and practices of the CCC church have changed in ways that suggest it is becoming more aligned with the wider society. The CCC, later rebranded as 3C, shows many similarities to the COC.

**Logos Foundation**

Howard Carter also moved to Australia to assist Paul Collins in Sydney before leaving to establish the ‘Logos’ movement. Carter had been pastor at a Baptist church in Manurewa, South Auckland, in New Zealand, after he graduated from Bible College in 1962. The Baptist church pressured him to leave after he received baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1965. In 1966 he commenced *Logos* as a quarterly magazine in Christchurch NZ as a voice for the charismatic movement. Paul Collins was editor, and Rob Wheeler, Kevin Conner, Peter Morrow and others contributed ‘restoration’ and Latter Rain articles. He then moved to Sydney and established Logos there. Under Carter’s leadership, the Logos Foundation expanded and it moved to the Blue Mountains in 1977. In late 1978, the Logos organization purchased a forty-acre property at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains near Sydney with a 5,000 seat auditorium. In 1980, Carter moved to Canada to lead the Vancouver Covenant Fellowship. Carter then returned to Australia in 1985 and the Logos Foundation returned with him. By this time, it had changed from being an evangelism-centred charismatic group to become politically focused. Carter mobilized his resources to oppose the United Nations Bill of Rights and the proposed national identity card. In

57 Additional testimonies relating to CCC can be found at http://www.drdisk.com.hk/PhilSmith/about.htm.
early 1988, Carter moved Logos and most NSW church members and staff to Toowoomba in Queensland, seeking a more favourable, conservative religious environment. However, Carter had a long history of struggle with adultery, and this led to his resignation in August 1990. The Logos Toowoomba property was sold in 1991 and Logos movement came to an end. The magazine continued to be published from Canberra until it ceased in 1995. Harrison (2006:11) suggests that the failure of Logos was related to their lack of political sensitivity and credibility. Suggested reasons for Carter’s failure have included insecurity, an inability to open up to others, “arrogance” and over confidence in his own ability.

**Australia’s largest AOG churches**

In the 1970s the acceptance of the new practices by two younger ministers, Andrew Evans at Paradise AOG and Reginald Klimionok at Garden City AOG, helped these churches to grow into Australia’s largest AOG churches with over 1,000 attendees each. Despite the growth that the new practices brought to these churches, the AOG executive and the national leader, Ralph Read opposed them. Poloma (1989:243) noted a similar slowing of growth in the North American AOG at this time. She traced this slowing of growth to institutionalization and O’Dea’s (1961) five institutional dilemmas, which she lists as: (1) changed motivation from sacrifice to self-interest, (2) the formalization of religious ceremonies, (3) increased restrictions of administrative structures, (4) the delimiting of the message into concrete, rationalized forms, and (5) an increased alignment with the wider society. The Australian AOG, which was almost the same age as its American namesake, faced similar dilemmas to its American namesake. By way of contrast, Australia’s two largest AOG churches continued to grow strongly with the assistance of new practices, beliefs and organizational approaches.

In Brisbane, Reginald Klimionok took over the leadership of the Mt Gravatt–Garden City A–AOG Church in 1968, when it had 70 adult attendees. This number grew to over 200 by the early 1970s (Klimionok 1984:305). In 1973, the church purchased two acres of bush land at 81 Gosford Street in Mt Gravatt and began building one of Australia’s first megachurch complexes. Klimionok (1983:306) recalled that it seemed a large building for a congregation of just 200, but ‘as soon as we created the capacity, God began to bring the increase’. Klimionok recognized the importance of the media, and he produced a thirty-minute programme ‘Focus on Truth’ which was broadcast every Sunday evening at 8 pm. Mt Gravatt AOG grew to over 500 people by 1977. Drawing on North American models, Klimionok was one of the first AOG churches to introduce a multi-staff leadership with paid church administrators and youth leaders (Hills, Interview, 2005). Klimionok viewed the visit of Yonggi Cho to Australia in 1977 as a turning point for his church. After accepting Cho’s innovations, attendance increased. Their new church auditorium with seating for 900 opened on 4 June 1983 and attendance swelled to over 2,000 each weekend. Yonggi Cho’s visit in 1977 would also be a turning point for other AOG churches and for the Assemblies of God denomination as a whole.

Andrew Evans took over the leadership of Klemzig AOG in Adelaide from Gerald Rowlands in 1969. When he arrived, he found the church had over 200 attendees and was moving in renewal, singing in tongues, dancing and falling over during prayer at the altar. His initial reaction was to oppose these practices and this led the church to decline to 150 attendees. After he decided to accept these practices, the church grew substantially (Clifton 2005:203). This led to expansion of the building to seat 700 attendees. Attendance growth was assisted by use of the media, and guest speakers who included Frank Houston, Peter Morrow from New Zealand and Yonggi Cho from Korea. Attendance increased to over 2,000 a week in the early 1980s. In 1982, the church purchased 9 acres in the suburb of Paradise. They built an auditorium to seat over 2,000 attendees and adopted the name Paradise AOG.

61 The period of growth came to an end in November 1988 when Klimionok resigned after he was alleged to have misspent church funds (Courier Mail, 28.11.1988; 17.8.1988; 6.7.1988).
Reinvigoration of the AOG after 1977

In light of the Pentecostal emphasis on openness to the Spirit of God, it is surprising that the largest Australian Pentecostal denomination, the Australian AOG (A–AOG) was so resistant to the innovations of the charismatic, Latter Rain and neo-Pentecostal movements. Institutional developments had aided AOG growth to 150 churches by 1977 (Clifton 2005:176) showing the benefits that institutions can bring, but growth was slow (Zucker 1987:445). In the mid 1970s, institutionalization in the Australian AOG (Cartledge 2000:133ff) had encouraged a culture of inertia and resistance to change that restricted autonomous initiatives within local churches where most new growth and innovations develop (Bosch 1991:380; Cartledge 2000:133ff). The resistance of the Australian AOG to change during the 1970s is evident from the Presbytery conference in 1972, which was organized to counter Latter Rain and new move practices. The Presbytery said the focus of their concerns were New Zealand preachers including Trevor Chandler, Frank Houston and Bob Midgley, and Australia’s Clark Taylor. They identified their concerns with the new practices of ‘deliverance’ and ‘dancing in worship’, free and undirected worship, falling to the floor, shaking, claims of visions, holy laughter and personal prophecy. The resistance to these new practices appeared to reflect an underlying organizational inflexibility, cultural rigidity, conformity, conservatism and resistance to change that were limiting the potential for AOG growth.

The debate over the new practices came to a head at the 1977 AOG national conference. The Korean megachurch leader, Yonggi Cho, was the guest speaker. He challenged the Australian AOG leaders to show a greater openness to new things that God was doing, to adopting the more pragmatic goal setting approaches of the American ‘church growth’ movement, the innovative beliefs and practices of the charismatic movement, and Cho’s own emphasis on faith visualization, prayer and home cell groups (Majdali 2003:272). In a close decision, the AOG national conference appointed Andrew Evans from Adelaide

62 Cartledge (2000:129). Numerous disapproving articles were published in the official magazine, Australian Evangel, including a particularly strong article attacking the new move in 1973.
to replace Ralph Read as the national leader and this opened the way for organizational and cultural renewal. Evans introduced organizational changes that included giving increased authority to senior pastors and their churches and encouraging greater openness to new practices, beliefs and innovations (Clifton 2005:210). These changes in outlook and practices, together with a reversal of bureaucratizing and centralizing tendencies in the AOG, and encouragement of local autonomy for each church, contributed to a dramatic increase in the number of churches in the AOG and their church attendance (Cartledge 2000:137).

As Hills (former Garden City AOG megachurch pastor, Interview, 2005) notes, these churches drew on North American organizational models, including the introduction a multi-staff leadership, paid church administrators and youth leaders and contemporary approaches to worship and preaching so as to reinvigorate local Australian churches.

Reg Klimionok from Brisbane, David Cartledge from Townsville and other younger pastors whose churches were growing larger were given greater leadership responsibilities, bringing a generational change in thinking to the AOG executive. Evans’ emphasis on an active Armenian theology that encouraged the active pursuit of growth replaced an earlier emphasis on reformed, predestinist theology that encouraged acceptance of the status quo and smaller church sizes. Drawing on the insights of the church growth movement, Evans urged all AOG churches to work towards growing larger churches and starting new churches (Cartledge 2000:93ff). Assisted by a new emphasis on goal setting, which is a common way for charismatic leaders to motivate their followers (Shamir, House & Arthur 1993:5ff), as well as church planting, evangelism and church growth strategies, the number of AOG churches increased from 150 in 1977 to 717 assemblies by 1993. During Evans’ 20-year term from 1977 to 1997, the number of adherents increased twelvefold from 9,446 to 115,912 (Majdali 2003:273). By 2002, the Australian Assemblies of God had 158,391 members and adherents, 944 churches, and 2,333 credentialed ministers. There were 464 female ministers (Majdali 2003:273). Evans also encouraged the development of a national AOG youth movement called Youth Alive, which organized rallies that attracted up to 10,000 young people to
each event. The Assemblies of God in Australia also attracted many migrants and by the late 1990s it had over 60 ethnic AOG churches. Most of these were in New South Wales.63

The changes introduced by the 1977 conference contributed to the emergence of the AOG megachurches. Evans’ own Paradise AOG church in Adelaide, South Australia and Garden City AOG in Brisbane, Queensland, were the first to grow to over 2,000 attendees in the early 1980s. Others soon followed. In April 2007 the AOG changed its name to the Australian Christian Churches (ACC) though it is still incorporated as AOG in Australia. At present (2010), 10 of the 21 Australian megachurches are in the AOG/ACC denomination, reflecting the strong AOG/ACC support for megachurch development. As well as the two mentioned above, the AOG/ACC megachurches include Liverpool ‘Inspire’ CLC (Sydney), Shire Live (Sydney), Kings Christian Church (Sunshine Coast, Queensland), Southside Christian Church (Adelaide SA), Bowen Hills CCC (Brisbane Queensland), Planet Shakers (Melbourne) and Richmond AOG (Melbourne).

**David Yonggi Cho**

As noted above, Australian Pentecostalism in the mid 20th century was strongly energized by the writings and visits of David Yonggi Cho (Majdali 2003:272). Cartledge (2000:93) says that Yonggi Cho’s ministry at the 1977 conference ‘became one of the major components for redirecting the entire movement and enabling it to become united and effective’. His church is Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) in Seoul, South Korea. It is the world’s largest church with over 100,000 weekly attendees (Lim 2004:133) and over 230,000 regular adult church attendees (Hong 2000:80). The independent neo-Pentecostal megachurch leaders including Clark Taylor (Interview, 28/8/2001) also point to the important role that Cho’s teachings and role model played in their ministry. Cho

63 These included 17 Samoan, 8 Spanish, 5 Italian, 5 Korean, 5 Fijian, 4 Slavic and 3 Chinese churches (Ward & Humphreys 1995:186).
contributed to the neo-Pentecostal movement’s emphasis on faith confession, visualization, adopting church growth methodologies, organizational and institutional structures, lay empowerment, prayer and home cells. Cho modelled his ministry and his interpretation of Christianity on American healing and prosperity evangelists, especially Oral Roberts (Wilson 1988:161). He also attributes his ministry emphasis to his own experiences of gradual escape from poverty and healing from tuberculosis. Cho is a particularly charismatic individual in the Weberian sense (Lim 2004:130), and he encouraged an emphasis on charismatic leadership to aid church growth. His message found an audience among Koreans who were recovering from struggles associated with Japanese occupation and the Korean War, and seeking escape from the poverty and sickness that were rampant in Korea at that time (Cho 1979:110, 172; Anderson 2004a:109).

With the assistance of these Pentecostal, charismatic, neo-Pentecostal movements and associated developments, Australian megachurches have emerged as a leading influence in Australian Pentecostalism. They have taken on the roles of resource production and direction setting that were previously filled by larger denomination heads and training colleges. The music, media, preaching, conferences and productions of the megachurches have replaced traditional church denominational heads and training colleges, in guiding the direction of Christian beliefs and practices in Australia. They have also introduced a style of leadership, religious practice, preaching and organization that contrasts with the quiescent, pastoral style and hierarchies of traditional churches (Majdali 2003:271). These developments in megachurches have made a contribution to increased church attendance. They have helped Pentecostalism to grow to the point where they have more attendees on any given Sunday than any other Australian denomination except Catholicism (Hughes 1996:105; 2003). In an environment where numbers speak loudly, the Pentecostal megachurches have become a major source of direction and influence to all of Australia’s churches. They have also helped to lift church commitment and involvement. At the same time, while the number of Australians reporting that they were Christian has grown to 12.7 million by 2006, the proportion of the total population affiliating with Christianity fell from 88 per cent in 1966 to 64 per cent in 2006. Much of
this change has been related to changes in immigration patterns, broader changes in society, changed attitudes towards religion and growth of the ‘no religion’ group (Bouma 2006a:54).

Australia’s megachurches have emerged as part of more general global cycles of renewal in evangelical Protestantism that relate to cycles of economic, social and religious change, together with response to institutionalization and previous revivals and developments. Such innovative, revivalist developments are most likely to occur when periods of social and religious upheaval cause people to lose faith in ‘the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions and the authority of our leaders in church and state’ (Wallace 1956, 1972; McLoughlin 1978:2ff).

This chapter suggests ways in which global and local (ie glocal) approaches to religion and spirituality are increasingly competing and interact as new groups form and contend for adherents (Hughes 1996:3; Hutchinson 2002:26; Chant 1984:52; Chant 1999:40, 103; Clifton 2005:107).

A 20 to 30 year cycle of global religious renewal can be seen between Azusa Street revival (1905–9), 1930s revivals, Evangelical, Healing and Latter Rain revivals (1948+), charismatic renewal and neo-Pentecostalism (1970s) and Toronto Blessing (1992+). If this pattern holds, another revival or renewal movement may follow around 2012.64

64 This expectation may be self-fulfilling. An Internet search for 2012 reveals a great deal of apocalyptic literature relating to that date, largely because of Mayan predictions.
Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Australia’s megachurches have taken a common form associated with revivalism and the spreading of global and North American Pentecostal, evangelical, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal movements. They have participated in the shift from unquestioning acceptance of lifelong allegiance to traditional mainline churches to short-term commitments within a competitive free market of religious and cultural pluralism. In the midst of this competition for people, time and allegiance, each of these movements contributed to distinct forms of Australian megachurches. These developments have emerged as major contributors to the ways in which Australian megachurches and their spirituality are perceived and defined.

This chapter noted that the historical roots of Australia's megachurches are indicative of their broad dependence on global Pentecostalism and its offshoots, which, despite small beginnings, has grown into an influential worldwide movement that is reshaping Christianity globally and in Australia combined with local developments that gave these churches and megachurches a strong ‘glocal’ or ‘global/local’ culture. The megachurches were dependent on the Evangelical and neo-Evangelical movements and by Billy Graham’s 1959 visit to Australia. These contributed to an increased emphasis on individual experiences of conversion, a personal relationship with God and highly organized approaches to managing the large revivalist gatherings that became characteristic of megachurches.

Through participation in these movements, the rapid initial growth of the megachurches was further aided by participation in revival movements that emphasized conversion and a personal relationship with Christ, a millennialist expectation of Christ’s soon return, supernatural healing, being filled with the Spirit and tongues speaking. These supernatural perspectives and experiential activities captured interest and brought a sense of divine favour that has proved attractive to Australians. It also attracted highly motivated local leaders, and enabled these leaders and members to start new churches and generate local innovations in theology and practice (Hodges 1953:132). At the same time,
these freedoms have encouraged frequent splits and the emergence of new groups, followed by periods of consolidation.

The assistance of migrants from New Zealand has promoted Latter Rain and other revivalist movements and innovations. The charismatic movement introduced large numbers of potential attendees from mainline churches to these movements, increasing attendance so as to promote megachurch developments. Some potential megachurch developments, such as the Christian Fellowship churches and Logos movement, demonstrate the dangers of revivals in which charismatic leadership, isolation and insufficient accountability create difficulties. Other developments, including the Waverley Christian Fellowship and Christian City Church, provide examples of sectarian groups that transition to greater openness and accountability in an attempt to avoid these dangers. The Australian AOG resistance to megachurch developments before 1977 provides an example of the difficulties that institutionalization poses. On the other hand, the changes introduced by the AOG after mid 1977 provide an example of ways in which deinstitutionalization and re-institutionalization have contributed to megachurch growth.

The neo-Pentecostal churches demonstrated the contribution that increased freedom of independent churches has made to establishing new denominations. These neo-Pentecostal churches have provided some of the most innovative and fastest growing segments of Pentecostalism, both overseas and in Australia (Burgess & van der Maas 2002:928). At the same time, some of these neo-Pentecostal churches also show the dangers of isolation on the one hand and over accommodation to society on the other.

The following chapters of the thesis examine these developments more specifically through the case study of the neo-Pentecostal COC. Chapter 4 begins the case study by examining events in the life course biography of the COC founder. It shows how these events impinge upon and parallel developments in the COC organization.
Chapter Four: Clark Taylor: Charismatic leader, religious innovator and COC founder

In religion as in every other area of human endeavour, individual personalities play a much larger role than many social scientists and historians are often willing to concede. (Berger 1999:13)

We create ourselves out of the stories we tell about our lives, stories that impose purpose and meaning on experiences that often seem random and discontinuous. As we scrutinize our own past in the effort to explain ourselves to ourselves, we discover — or invent — consistent motivations, characteristic patterns, fundamental values, and a sense of self. Fashioned out of memories, our stories become our identities. (Faust 2003:38)

As noted in Chapter 2, organizational theorists observe that one of the major determinants of an organization’s culture, beliefs, practices and identity is the founder (Schein 2004:225). This was particularly the case during the 1960s and 1970s, which was a time of social upheaval that provided a seedbed for new social, political and religious movements (Hilliard 1997b:227). During times of social upheaval, new organizations and movements are more likely to arise as followers give allegiance to charismatic leaders who provide attractive solutions in ‘moments of distress—whether psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, or political’ (Weber 1947:328). It was also a time of opportunity for new charismatic personalities to rise up to lead these movements. The search for leaders prompted many secular organizations to place an emphasis on leadership training as they sought to gain a competitive edge (Blackwell, Gibson & Hannon 1998). The evangelical churches also pursued leadership development as the key to the growth of churches, and this is reflected in the proliferation of Christian leadership literature and training courses that appeared in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Church Growth movement further encouraged the emphasis on leadership appointment, and on giving greater opportunity, freedom and responsibility to church leaders as a way to encourage church planting and growth.

In the previous chapter, the growth of Australian megachurches was shown to be partly related to acceptance of a form of ‘charismatic’ (to use Weber’s term) leader who was willing to try innovative ways of doing church, meeting with God, developing new
organizational structures, and identifying and responding to market needs. However, while many potential church leaders shared these common concerns, beliefs and attributes, few became church founders and even fewer started megachurches or new denominations. This chapter examines events in the life course of one person, Clark Taylor, which led him to become one of the few churchmen to establish an Australian megachurch, and a national and international denominational movement.

**The prospects and limitations of charismatic leadership**

The COC founder, Clark Taylor, appears to possess many characteristics that are described in the literature as typical of charismatic leaders. House and Howell (1992) identified these typical charismatic leadership characteristics as including a strong work commitment, high energy levels, endurance, enthusiasm, self-confidence, cognitive oriented values, intelligence, vision, innovation and creative tendencies. Conger and Kanungo (1998:66) describe charismatic leaders as typically assertive, socially sensitive, encouraging, considerate of followers’ needs, demonstrating a desire for change, having a propensity to take risks, and able to frame innovations in ways that attract adherents. Tucker (1968:737) described charismatic leaders as those who reject old ways and rules, issue demands for change, and create new visions and obligations. Cohen (1992:37) observed that charismatic leaders tend to hold the interest of followers through theatrical and impression management that involves framing, scripting, staging and performing in ways that are similar to acting. This fits with observations that within Pentecostalism, the emphasis on leadership, conversion and healing has parallels with, is modelled on and is learned in similar ways to dramatic and ritual performances (Clements 1981:139). All of these observations are true of Taylor, who worked long hours with little sleep, had high levels of self-confidence and enthusiasm, could identify social and church needs and opportunities, took risks, pursued new innovative ideas, and was known for his ‘dramatic’ performances.

Many people recall that they were drawn to the COC by Taylor’s strong sense of confidence, authority and relationship skills (See interviews with Earle 2000; McDonald
They spoke of confidence in Taylor’s visionary thinking, his unshakeable commitment to seeing grand plans come to pass and his ability to create a sense of personal and social empowerment. Taylor spoke in confident, absolute terms, while at the same time he conveyed a sense of humility by pointing to God as the source of his confidence. He was able to combine traditional religion with a sense of engagement with the latest ideas, a notion of divine empowerment and an earthy realism. Others (such as Dales, Interview, 17/01/2002) were attracted by Taylor’s demonstrations of ‘supernatural healings’, ‘words of knowledge’, ‘revelations’ and ‘spiritual gifts’, which created a strong sense of God’s presence and mission. Taylor’s willingness to make sacrifices also helped him to motivate large numbers of people to commit their time, finances and lives to the projects that he initiated (Earle, Interview, 15/08/2000).

All of these recollections point to Taylor as an outstanding example of ‘charismatic’ leadership in the Weberian sense. Similar characteristics are also observed in most of the other Australian megachurch founders (listed in Chapter 1). This supports the observation of Thumma and Travis (2007:59) that charismatic leadership plays an important role in megachurch formation.

Conger and Kanungo (1998:214) observe that charismatic leadership can result in two very different outcomes. They write:

This affirmation of self and resulting dependence can either then be exploited by the charismatic leader solely for his or her own personal aims or serve as a vehicle for constructive mentoring for followers’ own growth. These differing outcomes provide a critical distinction between negative and positive forms of charismatic leadership. (Conger & Kanungo, 1998:217).

As Conger and Kanungo observe (1998:214), charismatic leadership can either lead to the pursuit of over-ambitious and overly demanding projects, serving the personal gain

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65 This sense of transformation is often called transformational leadership (Petzall, Selvarajah & Willis, 1991:146).
66 This fits with Kelley’s description of a charismatic leader (Kelley 1972:79).
67 Currie, Gilbert and Horsley (1977:63) say that the more secular a society is, the more dramatic and experiential religion needs to be to attract the unchurched.
68 Aldridge (2000:99ff) argues that resource mobilization theory is important for understanding how religious groups develop.
and ego needs of the leader and promoting narrow sect-like developments, or meet the real needs of the followers and promote openness and interaction with others.

The application of Erikson’s identity development model to the COC leader

Lehmann (2002:585) notes that events in an individual’s life, such as conversions, identity crises, conflicts and their resolutions, and formation, often have parallels with more general crises, conflicts, awakenings, movements and reorientations in society at large, and in new organizations they establish. Erikson’s studies of Young Man Luther (1958) and Gandhi’s Truth (1970) in particular show how events in the life course development of charismatic individuals reflect and impinge upon wider social changes and new religious developments. These studies were based on Erikson’s earlier studies of human development.

Erikson identified the ways in which crises and events in childhood, adolescence and adulthood can contribute to the character and identity of a person in ways that have ongoing effects on their later development and on their roles and life work (See Table 4.1). These events not only contribute to the beliefs and world views of charismatic leaders, they also contribute to the organizations and movements they start. Erikson’s studies thus provide a useful theoretical framework for examining the parallel relationships between the life course biography of charismatic founders and the organizational biographies of the movements they found. Erikson showed that a person’s successes and failures are cumulative, and that the ways in which each stage is resolved, or not resolved, will contribute to ways in which future developments occur, and to the contributions they make to the development of followers, organizations and movements they are involved in. As Hutch (1997:45) notes, Erikson’s writings go beyond psychoanalysis to deeper levels of biographical and cultural reflection on the ways in which life biographies interact with events in the wider world.
Table 4.1: Erikson’s developmental stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Conflict</th>
<th>Age first developed (approx.)</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust vs Mistrust</td>
<td>Birth to 18 months</td>
<td>An infant in this early childhood stage learns to trust the maternal parent and caregiver and trust in the material world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt</td>
<td>18 months to 3 years</td>
<td>At this stage a child develops important skills of the will that must be balanced with interdependence with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative vs Guilt</td>
<td>3 to 6 years</td>
<td>A child learns social role differentiation and the value of taking initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry vs Inferiority</td>
<td>6 to 12 years</td>
<td>During this stage new skills and knowledge are developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity vs Role Confusion</td>
<td>12 to 18 years</td>
<td>In adolescence identity begins to come increasingly from what a person can do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy vs Isolation</td>
<td>19 to 30 years</td>
<td>In young adulthood more intimate relationships with other people become more important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generativity vs Stagnation</td>
<td>40 to 65 years</td>
<td>In middle age a person tends to become preoccupied with creative and meaningful work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity vs Despair</td>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>In later life the sense of personal and life meaning becomes more important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many earlier developments continue to impinge upon identity development in later adulthood. The resolution of crises in childhood, such as who and what is trusted and distrusted, what brings a sense of autonomy and shame, and how initiative and guilt are handled, continues to provide a foundation for the ways trust, autonomy and initiative are treated in later adulthood. They also affect views about trust, autonomy and initiative that are passed on to followers and organizations. Similarly, resolutions about industry, inferiority, identity and roles in youth and early adulthood provide an underlying framework for views held in later adulthood, transmitted to others and held by new institutions. Unresolved issues not only create difficulties in a person’s life, but also affect their later relationships and decisions, and the organizations they establish, in terms of who and what is trusted (and distrusted), notions of autonomy, initiative, industry, intent and roles. Erikson identified adolescence and early adulthood as a particularly important identity development period in which a person detects ‘some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened
awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be’ (1958:12; 1968). However, fixation on these stages can limit developments needed in later life. As identity formation continues into adulthood, further crises will need to be resolved.

Charismatic leaders are often noted for their strong sense of autonomy, self-confidence, and ability to overcome opponents who seek to shame and doubt their abilities. Such characteristics can sometimes reflect unresolved or poorly established developmental issues. Too high a level of autonomy can contribute to an unrealistic assessment of one’s abilities, skills and life purposes. Withdrawal and isolation can increase unrealistic expectations of the leader and their movements. For charismatic leaders in particular, the capacity to resolve developmental issues fully, accurately assess oneself and others, establish sound relationships with a wide network of people, be open to feedback, and pursue strong systems of accountability will help to avoid the dangers of a tendency towards poorly founded identity and the manipulation of relationships. A commitment to hard work, endurance, self-discipline and overcoming a sense of inferiority and inadequacy continue be important in adult charismatic leadership development (House & Howell 1992). However, overemphasis on industry, too narrow a focus on a few areas of life, and resistance to change in later life may reflect unresolved earlier issues that increase the likelihood of leadership failure in later life. Erikson also observed that the attraction of charismatic leaders to followers is often enhanced by prolonged identity and role development that helps to strengthen their commitment to a comprehensive and convincing set of convictions and new belief systems.

Later stages of an adult charismatic leader’s development often focus on efforts to overcome stagnation and self-absorption and pursue various expressions of generativity. Erikson’s studies show that the beliefs and practices of individuals and the movements they lead do not remain static, but change as leaders, hopefully, resolve the issues they face, learning and moderating their beliefs and world views as they age, and as they pass on their organizations to younger generations. According to Erikson (1958:255; 1968) leaders are likely to spend more time in later life seeking to develop a well integrated ‘biography’ that reflects a well developed sense of purpose and integrity. In later
adulthood leaders often gain a sense of identity by reproducing themselves in others, in their work, what they produce and what they leave as a legacy. However, unresolved earlier issues affect the ways generativity is interpreted and worked out.

Erikson’s model of stages of identity development also suggests that signs of immaturity in charismatic leaders and the organizations and movements they establish should not lead to hasty rejection or isolation, but to encouragement of reflection, change and further development. Poorly handled efforts to impose discipline, stifle autonomy, stop experimentation or restrict the development of potential leaders, and the resulting isolation and withdrawal can stifle important development stages in charismatic leaders and the organizations and movements they start. These developmental studies also offer insights into some of the weaknesses of new charismatic leaders and movements and the ways they might be resolved. They suggest that wider support networks, guidance and change not only aid the leader towards greater autonomy, maturity, responsibility and integrity, but also have positive benefits for the organizations they lead and their participants.

Erikson’s insights into identity development provide useful insights and a framework against which to examine the life course narrative of the COC founder. At the same time, they also identify the danger of unresolved crises in the life of a movement founder that may contribute to difficulties that the founder and the movement will later face. Erikson’s studies also show the importance of cultural, biological and deep seated psychological influences on the development of leaders and their movements (Hutch 1997:45).

**The case study of the Christian Outreach Centre founder**

This next section of this chapter examines the life course of the COC founder, Clark Taylor, and the ways in which his life course development, crises and resolutions provided the main themes in the history of the COC movements that he founded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Life Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>0–16</td>
<td>Clark Taylor was born into a rural family at Palen Creek, near Rathdowney, Beaudesert, south of Brisbane. He grew up on cattle farms in Queensland and the Northern Territory. The rural background and views of his father, mother and significant others contributed to Taylor’s views of himself and his world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Death of Taylor’s father in a tractor accident contributes to identity questioning and reformation. Part of the farm was sold, prompting consideration of vocational change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Taylor was converted at the Brisbane Billy Graham Crusade. He began lay preaching. Graham and Evangelicalism provided strong role models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>He contracted malaria and struggled for four years with this illness. Battling with this illness contributed to Taylor’s commitment to the divine healing movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Taylor experienced divine healing. He received other charismatic experiences including baptism in the Spirit, tongues speaking, prophecy, deliverance etc. Taylor’s early adoption of these global movement practices and beliefs attracted a sizable following.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>He was appointed paid trainee assistant at Holland Park Methodist Church. The conflict and opposition from older church members and leaders, and efforts to generate distrust, shame and guilt increased his commitment to the charismatic movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969–1970</td>
<td>32–33</td>
<td>Taylor undertook academic training at King’s College, University of Queensland where his conservative beliefs clashed with those held by theological liberalism. His commitment to the charismatic movement increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>He resigned from the Methodist ministry and pursued an itinerant healing evangelism ministry. These opportunities increased his ministry identity and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–1971</td>
<td>33–34</td>
<td>Taylor was appointed assistant minister to Trevor Chandler (Frank Houston’s assistant, from New Zealand) at Christian Life Centre, Brisbane. He accepted the ‘new’ Latter Rain ways of doing ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972–1974</td>
<td>35–37</td>
<td>Itinerant healing evangelism in Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands and USA further increased Taylor’s ministry identity and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15 years after his conversion and early ministry experiences, Taylor commenced the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) in Central Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>The first COC offshoot church was established in the Brisbane suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Sexual misconduct led to a short break from ministry. After six weeks he was reinstated as the COC leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>The COC moved to 25 acres at suburban Mansfield and built a large auditorium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>COC Brisbane grew into Australia’s largest megachurch with 3 800 weekly attendees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–1989</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>The COC established 160 churches across Australia. An additional 100 acres was purchased at Mansfield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1980s</td>
<td>Early 50s</td>
<td>The COC churches established their first overseas churches in New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Taylor resigned from the COC after further cases of sexual misconduct were revealed. After nine months, the COC severed all connections with Taylor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td></td>
<td>Miers appointed as COC leader. The COC Australia retains 160 churches and expands to 500 overseas churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Taylor remarries his first wife and establishes the Worship and Ministry Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Taylor establishes more Worship Centres in Australia and overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Worship centre attendance grows to over 1,000 each week. Mansfield COC megachurch grows to over 5,000 weekly attendees, led by Mark Ramsey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A biographical exploration of Taylor’s early years**

**Early beginnings on the rural margins**

Scholars such as Anderson (1979) and Bruce (1998b:229) observe that many early revival leaders came from rural areas. The rural setting encourages a conservative religious orthodoxy that seeks to avoid the challenges from academic institutions in cosmopolitan centres. The rural background encourages a world view that is simpler and more organically interconnected than the more complex world view of the large cities (Larson 1978; Bruce 1998b:229). It encourages a view of God as an unchanging, stabilizing helper who watches over the unstable, ever changing, natural world. It favours a theology such as that promoted by Arminius, and a belief in hard work and persistent effort to achieve all that is needed in life. In the case of the COC it fostered a belief that life’s harsh realities were lessons from God, to be learnt by enduring hardships and with a reaping of rewards for those who were persistent in their efforts. These ‘marginal’ rural areas also allow new ideas and practices to be tried out. Many conservative evangelical and Pentecostal groups were started by rural leaders. A large number of the early Australian Pentecostal leaders also came from rural areas (Chant 1999). Many then moved into urban locations where they attracted a sizable following by combining a simple, conservative rural world view with a pragmatic harnessing of urban resources.

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69 Anderson (1979) notes that early revivalists such as D L Moody and Billy Graham and many Pentecostal leaders came from poor rural backgrounds. Queensland Methodist leaders, including Taylor’s mentors in Ivan and Cyril Alcorn, also came from rural settings.

70 Jacobus Arminius’ (1560–1609) belief that election is conditional upon each person’s response and actions became an important aspect of Wesleyan theology, and this contrasted with Calvinist views of predestination.

Taylor’s early experiences of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry can be shown to shape his life in ways that are described by Erikson (1958) as typical for charismatic leaders. Erikson (1958) has shown that childhood experiences shape charismatic leaders’ views of themselves and their world in ways that later influence not only their own characters, but also the character of the organizations and movements that they found. In the case of the COC founder, his early life was strongly indebted to his rural upbringing, and to the challenges and opportunities that a transition to an urban and suburban life presented.

Born in 1937, Clark Taylor was the third child of Joe and Rita Taylor. He grew up on a 640 acre family farm at Barney View, near Rathdowney, seventy miles south of Brisbane. His grandfather was a settler who founded the farm and most of his grandfather’s 13 children continued farming in the area. As the eldest son, Taylor’s family expected that he would develop a high level of achievement, self-reliance and willingness to sacrifice. Taylor admired the commitment of his father, who worked for long hours and looked with pride at the calluses on his hands. He inherited his father’s driven nature, unshakeable passion for the interests he pursued and a commitment to hard work. Taylor would later preach that hard work was a sign of godliness and laziness was one of the works of the devil. The emphasis on hard work became a feature of Taylor’s ministry.

Taylor inherited a commitment to the Methodist religion and traditions from his mother, Rita, and her parents. His mother’s strong faith in God and prayer led her to say that she

74 This fits with Leman’s (1985: 43ff) observations on birth order.
76 Erikson’s (1972:249) observation that a leader’s theology can be shaped by childhood and early adulthood events suggests that Taylor’s later beliefs emerged from the crises and experiences he faced. Erikson (1972:249) also noted that the tension between the demands of a more remote, authoritarian father and the unqualified love, sustenance and grace of a caring mother create tensions that shape a child’s view of their religion and life.
felt that God would use her son in a special way. This contributed to the expectation that Taylor would go into the ministry. The Taylor family attended Barney View Methodist Church where Clark developed an early interest in religion that provided a framework for his later religious development. Despite this, his enthusiasm waned in his later childhood and teenage years due to competing claims on his time and interests.

Much of Taylor’s early education came from his parents and from the land. He could ride a horse by the age of four, and by age 11 he was breaking in horses and raising cattle and calves to sell at market. His skill on horseback was remarkable; at 11 years old he won his first open camp draft competing against much older men. As his work on the farm increased, Taylor had little incentive to attend the nearby one-teacher school, missing about half of his primary schooling. When he attended, he learned the value of outward performances. He often misbehaved to cover up his difficulties and insecurities. At an early age Taylor also learnt to value pragmatic demonstrations of natural abilities, and that these were often more valuable than academic learning. The value of dramatic performance is a feature of charismatic leaders (Clements 1981:139; Cohen 1992:37) which developed early and was often observed later in Taylor’s church and television ministry.

When Taylor was 14, his rural vision expanded when his family moved to take up the larger challenge of a 1,500 square mile cattle station at Mount Lindsay in the Northern

77 Clark Taylor, Interview, 28/08/2001.
78 His mother recalled the events surrounding his birth in Biblical terms. She remembered that during a difficult pregnancy she had prayed to God, saying that if Clark lived, she would dedicate him to God. Taylor was born with the cord wrapped around his neck and the midwife struggled to assist. Taylor survived and like many mothers, Rita continued to pray for him each day. Interview with Norma Ormsby, 11/01/2001; also recorded by Thorburn in Waugh (1995:8).
79 Taylor recalls that he was so impressed by an evangelist who visited the church that he preached the evangelist’s sermons the next day at school. He recollected that children responded to the invitation for salvation that he gave and that he got into trouble for it. From a young age, Taylor recognized the impact that Christianity could have on children and this contributed to the high value that he placed on children’s work. Clark Taylor, Interview, 28/08/2001.
81 Clark Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001.
82 Clark Taylor, Interview, 28/08/2001.
Territory. This property would later be included in the third stage of the Kakadu National Park. The harsh environment encouraged a fierce competitive independence, an ability to improvise and the development of an immense capacity for hard work. The outback setting encouraged a commitment to live on next to nothing and to make sacrifices in order to pursue larger dreams. The expanded rural environment also gave Taylor an understanding that he had to be tough on the outside and to cover up the soft inner feelings and fears that made a person vulnerable. Taylor would later tell of how he slept in stock camps each night on a swag thrown on bare ground in the midst of scrub bulls, buffalo and venomous snakes.

The cattle station experiences gave Taylor opportunities to develop skills in leadership and confidence and an identity that would be essential in his later life. His experiences encouraged the high levels of autonomy, self-confidence, initiative and commitment to hard work that were characteristics of charismatic leaders (Conger 1989; House & Howell 1992). By the age of 16 he was given responsibility for leading a mustering camp of 16 cattlemen and 40 stock horses. Taylor recalled that he learned to survive on just a few hours’ sleep each night. Each day he would rise at 3 am, wake his mustering team at 6 am and work long hours for seven days each week. He would marshal the team for rounding up and branding wild cattle, constructing fences and building cattle yards to contain them. He learned that the purchase and expansion of property holdings was a basis for life’s opportunities. So began his dream of owning a string of cattle stations that would stretch all the way from ‘the Territory’ in the north to the family home in the south east corner of Queensland, forming a cattle enterprise that could be run across dispersed centres in different parts of the Australian nation. His opportunities for trying new roles

84 Clark Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001.
86 Craig Anderson, Interview, 14/01/2002.
87 Clark Taylor, Interview, 28/08/2001; A New Way of Living, Briz 31, 16/11/2003.
and overcoming difficulties further strengthened charismatic leadership characteristics such as those described by Erikson (1958:250).

**The death of Taylor’s father**

Taylor’s sense of identity as a rural outback farmer and his goal of pursuing a future on cattle stations was suddenly shaken when his father, Joe Taylor, was killed in a tractor accident in 1955. The death of Taylor’s father highlighted the brevity of life and the importance of leaving a lasting legacy for others. It led Taylor to look for new authority figures and alternative sources of meaning and work outside of farming. After his father’s death, the family had difficulty running the Northern Territory and Rathdowney properties, particularly because they were over 2,500 miles apart. The Northern Territory property was eventually sold and Taylor returned to Rathdowney to manage the farm and care for his mother.

Erikson (1970) and Hutch (1997:10) observe that the death of one’s father during the adolescent years can contribute to a questioning of one’s source of identity and to the pursuit of a new and expanded understanding of who one is. This strong sense of identity reformation provides clues to the motivations of new movement founders.

**Conversion and identity re-formation**

The scholarly literature on conversion provides insights into another important stage in the identity development of charismatic religious leaders. Weber (1968:1112) and Erikson (1958:89) note that experiences such as religious conversion play a prominent role in the development of religious leaders and their convictions. Conversion involves a radical change in a person’s world view, life perspectives and identity and this affects how a person views themselves and others (Travisano 1970). Lofland and Stark (1965),

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89 For a discussion of such identity transitions, see Pals (2006).
90 Clark Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001.
Ullman (1982, 1989) and Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) note that sudden conversion experiences are often preceded by personal crises, emotional stress and unhappiness that contribute to a questioning of previously held certainties and authorities, and increase openness to new authorities, beliefs, paradigms and identity reconstruction. While caregivers provide the dominant role models for children in early life, at conversion new ‘spiritual’ caregivers become the primary influence in reshaping a convert’s ongoing beliefs and practices (Tate & Parker 2007). James (1935) observed that conversion is most commonly an adolescent phenomenon. This ‘second birth’ often leads to new devotions and ideologies, and a rechannelling of energies into new causes and social networks. It also contributes to efforts to unite divided aspects of the self. Rambo (1993) reminds us that conversion is a complex processes that also involves changed social relationships, ideologies, expectations and institutional realignments. Additionally, Gelpi (1993) observes that conversion also involves changes in the affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political domains.

Conversion is often associated with changes in religious, social and psychological values, a person’s world view, and ideologies. Travisano (1970) and Snow and Machalek (1984:173f). The notion of instant, adult conversion can aid rapid growth in individual and group identity, ethical values and life goal formation for participants. This can make a positive contribution towards personal well-being, sense of security and lower levels of anxiety (Mahoney & Pargament 2004; Eckstein 2005:19). Dramatic conversion experiences can contribute to a highly motivating sense of God’s commission and voice that can heighten charismatic leadership development (Weber 1978:1112, 1117). It can contribute to openness to new ideologies, practices and beliefs. However, it can also contribute to an obsessive fixation and commitment to narrow sets of beliefs, values and relationships formed at the moment of conversion that can be difficult to change in later years when further personal growth challenges are faced and as needs and circumstances change. The limitations of instant conversion experiences within small sectarian congregations are particularly apparent in people and groups that exhibit psychopathological weaknesses such as insecurity, a sense of superiority, intolerance,
rigidity or narcissism. Hence, the study of conversion provides important insights into the development of charismatic leaders and their message and movements.

James (1935) observed that conversion is most beneficial when it builds relationships with healthy organizations that encourage reflection, self-evaluation and growth, but it creates difficulties when participants are locked into autocratic organizations with restrictive social networks and inflexible ways of thinking, which is often regarded as a characteristic of cults (Stark & Bainbridge 1985). The notion of instant conversion is most helpful when it is viewed as an initiation into an ongoing series of lifelong transformation processes (Chan 2001:87).

**Taylor’s conversion and identity reconstruction**

The religious and vocational direction of Taylor’s life changed in May 1959, when at the age of 22, he was invited by his Aunt Alexandra to attend the Billy Graham Crusade in Brisbane. Taylor was initially uncomfortable with the message he heard, but he was impressed by Graham’s tall, rugged appearance, and by the sense of conviction he brought. He was also attracted by the image of Christ that Graham presented and by Graham’s ability to make the presence of God and Christ real and challenging. During the last verse of ‘Just as I am, without one plea’ Taylor rose to his feet and joined the thousands who walked forward to accept Christ as their ‘Lord and Saviour.’ After the untimely death of his father, Taylor found in Graham a new authority figure to model his life on. Taylor’s conversion initiated a detachment from his previous paradigms of self-reliance and self-worth, based on his rural pursuits. It initiated a sense of reliance on God and Christ as his primary sources of security and self-understanding (Granqvist

93 Thorburn in Waugh (1995:8f); also Clark Taylor, Sermon, Briz 31, 07/03/2004.
94 Other religious leaders who have been affected by the death of their fathers include Jesus, Mohammed, Ayatollah Khomeini, etc.
In Erikson’s (1958) terms, Graham and evangelicalism had provided new role models that reconciled the tensions in his life.

Billy Graham’s form of evangelicalism provided Taylor with the motifs that he would later use in his own meetings as he sought to bring others to similar experiences of conversion, meaning and hope. Through Graham, Taylor became aware of the captivating, ‘charismatic’ leadership features that could rally large audiences and help to initiate and revitalize religious groups (Weber 1922:2). He also became aware of the value of marketing the star performer combined with a denial of any form of elitism. This feature of American revivalism (Smart 1999) would become an important characteristic in the churches that Taylor and others established. Graham’s emphasis on the priority of the Bible as the ‘Word of God’ and the preaching of the gospel as a minister’s chief task became key emphases of Taylor and the COC movement. In fact, Taylor was so impressed by Billy Graham that he purchased recordings of Billy Graham and learned to preach by imitating them (Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003). Later Taylor would use organizational structures, technologies, media and television similar to those used by Graham to enhance his own evangelical campaigns. He would also adopt Graham’s emphasis on ecumenism to increase attendance further. Taylor may have observed that Graham’s denial of stardom reinforced a sense of sincerity and dependence on God that made his message even more effective.

Lehmann (2002) notes that an individual’s response to the crises they face often parallels more general crises in society and religion. He notes too that individual conversions often parallel more general movements, awakenings, and reorientations. Such was the case with Taylor. His conversion paralleled wider transitions in Australian religion, from the older generations to the younger, from European Christian traditions, rituals and hierarchies towards newer, North American religious revivalist traditions. The new ways of organizing and expressing religion reflected responses to the social upheavals of the 1960s.

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95 *Sun-Herald*, 15 March 1959
The rural to urban transition

In the months that followed, the feedback Taylor received from leading Sunday school classes, youth groups and preaching further contributed to his sense of divine calling to become a minister. In 1961, Taylor moved from his country home in Rathdowney to Australia’s third-largest city of Brisbane to study for the Methodist ministry. He attended the Kangaroo Point campus and attended the large West End Methodist church led by Rev. Arthur Preston that was located nearby. Australia’s first ‘drive-in’ shopping centre had opened in the nearby Brisbane suburb of Chermside in 1957. Drive-in shopping centres were based on a North American model that reflected the growth in consumerism and market oriented living that was reshaping Australian cities and lifestyles. Taylor became aware of the opportunities that large urban settings could bring. He would later view churches in the same way, with large car parks, plain exteriors and a consumer-oriented message that resembled the new commercial centres.

Taylor’s desire to train for the Methodist ministry faced an early obstacle when he found he had to complete Matriculation. He had missed much of his schooling and was, up until this point, functionally illiterate. Despite these difficulties, Taylor committed himself to his study. Taylor’s foremost role model at that time was the Methodist youth leader, Ivan Alcorn, who also came from rural Queensland. Ivan’s wife, Iris Alcorn (1992:154), recalled that Ivan had a reputation for being ‘a supreme optimist and visionary’. However, Ivan’s relentless schedule contributed to heart attacks in 1960 and 1967, and he died from a heart attack on 28 September 1972. Taylor not only followed his mentor in adopting a relentless schedule of preaching, he would also suffer a series of debilitating heart attacks throughout much of his ministry.

96 Purpose of the Home Church, Video.
97 The original site of King’s College at Kangaroo Point had been handed over to the Methodist Young People’s Department in 1960. Cyril Alcorn was its founding Principal. The College was later renamed Alcorn College. Minutes of the 59th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1960, p. 89.
After overcoming his earlier academic difficulties, Taylor completed his Matriculation in 1961 and his Local Preachers’ Certificate in late 1962. The minutes of the Methodist conference record that in 1963 he was accepted as a candidate for the ministry with fellow students Leonard Bray, Colin Howard, Peter Jordon, Ray Lithgow, Graham Whybird and John Woodley. His library at this time shows he continue to read conservative evangelical literature that further shaped his views.

**Illness and divine healing**

Like many healing evangelists, Taylor’s identity and world view were reshaped by a health crisis. Taylor’s pursuit of ministry training faced difficulties in 1964 when he contracted cerebral malaria during a visit to Papua New Guinea. Medical assistance was limited and this potentially fatal disease frequently left Taylor convulsing and lapsing into unconsciousness. In 1964, the Methodist Church medical board certified Taylor unfit for the ministry and he withdrew from ministry training. Over the next four years, the malaria-induced attacks continued to severely undermine Taylor’s strength and confidence. Motivated by the pressures from this disability, Taylor began reading divine healing literature, meditating on healing passages from the Bible, and seeking healing from God through prayer. While working at an Oxley home for discharged prisoners, Taylor attended the Oxley Methodist Church where the minister, Rev. Godfrey Williams, was an early participant in the charismatic movement. Williams’ book, *God

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98 Minutes of the 61st Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1962, p. 142.
99 Minutes of the 66th Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1967, p. 292. The diversity of ministry directions of these candidates is later indicated when Colin Howard was appointed as Queensland Director of Cross Roads in 2000 and John Woodley was appointed as the Australian Democrat spokesperson for Indigenous Affairs.
100 Clark Taylor, Sermon, Briz 31, 01/06/2003.
101 Clark Taylor, Sermon, Briz 31, 01/06/2003.
102 Minutes of the 63rd Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1964, p. 12; Godfrey Williams interview, 03/08/2001.
103 Nickles in Ford, correspondence.
104 Stark (1967:45f) also suggests that the extra intensity that drives sect leaders is often generated by physical features and personal life histories that create increased tension between the potential leader and their society.
Wills Your Healing (1996:3) emphasized the importance of faith for divine healing, stating that healing rests on ‘the believer’s ability to believe God’s word and to have faith in him to meet our request’.

Williams recalled praying for Taylor at a Methodist church service on Wednesday 13 September 1967, speaking with a sense of God given authority and saying “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of him, Satan”. When Taylor rose to his feet he had a strong sense of release from his illness. He never suffered malaria symptoms again (Williams, Interview, 03/08/2001). Taylor’s healing experience provided him with a conviction, message and testimony about ‘divine healing’ that he believed could help to ‘win the nation of Australia to Christ’. Taylor’s perception of divine healing was expanded further as he read the literature of American healing evangelists who included Oral Roberts and DL Moody and Smith Wigglesworth from the UK. Taylor’s healing also encouraged his pursuit of further information about other charismatic ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’ that were associated with a wave of interest in the charismatic movement in the late 1960s.

**Tongues speaking and ‘baptism in God’s Spirit’**

Taylor’s personal and ministry identity experienced further change when he participated in the Pentecostal practice of the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ and tongues speaking. On 9 October 1967 Taylor was invited to a home meeting at Oxley where Frank Fullwood, a former Methodist who had joined the AOG, was the guest speaker. Fullwood prayed for Taylor to receive the ‘baptism’. Taylor was one of the first theological students at King’s College to adopt the practice of ‘speaking in tongues’ and he encouraged others to

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105 This reading list came from the Brian Millis interview (16/03/2001) and Taylor’s library from this time. The commitment of these healing evangelists to a divine healing ministry also strengthened by their own healing experiences, often in their childhood and adolescent years.
106 Taylor’s Methodist mentor, Nickles (interview 14/2/2001), said that tongues was an opportunity for fulfillment of Wesley’s teaching on a second post-salvation experience. The Pentecostal origins of this belief are described by Synan (1997a:1) and Burgess, McGee & Alexander (1988:2).
107 Nickles, History of COC (1967:1).
seek this experience. Most leaders of most Queensland Methodist churches and King’s College viewed tongues and other charismatic practices as ‘un-Methodist’, ‘uncultured’ and ‘a part of the first century world view that was no longer relevant in the advanced scientific society’. They tried repeatedly to persuade him to desist. The opposition that Taylor faced was similar to the tensions between autonomy and shame, initiative and guilt, which Erikson (1958:12) described as shaping earlier identity formation. While Taylor considered their views, he was persuaded to continue, by the vitality he observed to be associated with tongues speaking and charismatic movement practices.

Even the AOG minister, Frank Fullwood, found a similar resistance to new charismatic movement phenomena, free use of tongues speaking and divine healing, in the Pentecostal AOG movement. His frustration with the institutional hierarchy of the AOG led him to leave the AOG and pursue an independent ministry (Fullwood, Interview, 29/07/2004). Taylor would later follow this example. At the same time, Fullwood’s views on the charismatic movement approach to counselling mellowed over time, and he pursued an interest in conventional counselling approaches. The counselling services he established demonstrate the benefits of this maturation.¹⁰⁸

**Methodist ministry at Holland Park in 1968**

In 1967, after a doctor’s report showed Taylor’s health had been restored, he was welcomed back as a candidate for Methodist ministry.¹⁰⁹ Taylor enrolled for a probationary year as an assistant minister in 1968 in the Holland Park circuit under Rev. Fred Buchholz. Taylor was young and enthusiastic and he looked for every opportunity to introduce other people to similar conversion, healing and charismatic phenomena that he had experienced. He found a ready audience of people who were interested in the charismatic movement from the baby boomer generation, to whom Taylor, coming from

¹⁰⁸ Frank Fullwood later received awards for his contribution to counselling development.
the previous generation, saw himself as a father figure. Interest in charismatic movement phenomena was high. The meetings that Taylor held were also swelled by the novelty of the charismatic movement practices, the enthusiasm of the newly empowered, counter cultural younger generation, and interest in conservative responses to the massive social changes being felt in Australia during the late 1960s (Mackay 1993; Kelly 1992). Anne Taylor recalled ‘a hundred and twenty had been coming to Bible studies in the lounge room of my home, three nights a week. There wasn’t a square inch of floor space without someone sitting on it’. Clark Taylor said that ‘Nearly the whole church got saved ‘cause, they hadn’t been saved yet’. Success, which is important to charismatic leadership (Weber 1968:242; Puffer 1990:177ff), increased Taylor’s self-identity as a charismatic leader and the leadership image he portrayed to others.

Stories of divine visitation serve to reinforce the identity and self-concept of religious leaders and their groups because they encourage a sense of divine confirmation and direction (Rubin 1986:88). One of the earliest and most often retold miraculous events occurred at St Paul’s Church evening service on 21 July 1968.

The Sunday night services rarely attracted more than a handful of people but, as expectations spread that something extraordinary was going to happen, the meeting became so packed that ‘many had to stand outside and look in through the windows.’ Those who were present recalled a strong sense of God’s presence that was increased by speaking in ‘tongues’, ‘prophesy’ and ‘words of knowledge’. After a time of singing short, catchy choruses, Taylor preached a sermon on divine healing and invited those who wanted to be healed to respond. He then spoke of the need to be ‘born again’ and ‘saved’ and invited respondents to come to the front of the church. The sense of excitement, large crowds and responses led many who were present to testify that a religious revival had arrived (Ford, Interview, 25/01/2001).

110 Ford, History of COC (1968:2).
111 Despite his enthusiasm for converts, research indicates no more than 30% of conversions are usually punctiliar. Many people experience conversion as a gradual process that involves acceptance into the church and its people (Peace 2004: 8).
112 Ford, History of COC (1968:3); Ford, Interview, 25/01/2001; Clark Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001.
Not everyone was so pleased. Buchholz, who was senior minister of the Holland Park Circuit, had little time for emotional appeals or the ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’. He felt that most congregation members had already had the church’s blessing pronounced over them at birth and through confirmation, and he was unhappy with the suggestion that baptized, confirmed church members were not saved (Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001). The majority of older people in the circuit expressed their concern that the newer charismatic practices were not part of the Methodist tradition.

On hearing what was happening that evening, the senior minister rapidly finished the service he was conducting at another church and rushed over to St Paul’s. When he saw ‘the commotion’ he instructed Taylor to finish the service. The Queensland President of the Methodist conference that year, Ivan Alcorn, recalled that on the following morning ‘The phone calls didn’t stop long enough for me to pull my trousers on’ (Ford, Interview, 25/01/2001). Charismatic meetings in the circuit were forbidden (Ormsby, Interview, 11/01/2001).

Some time later, Buchholtz (1972:20) wrote:

> Within the Holland Park Circuit there have been claims of … [charismatic] gifts being bestowed and received, and I would not question the sincerity of those making the claims, but in making an assessment of the results would question the validity of such claims… As I have observed here and elsewhere, a movement claimed to be Charismatic, emphasizes mostly only two aspects of the Gifts, namely speaking in tongues and healing. In the former, I believe undue emphasis is given, and the guidance of Scripture as to the nature of the gift, least of all, and of St. Paul’s statement that he would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand in an unknown tongue - is not heeded.

The relationship between Taylor and the Holland Park leadership remained ‘very rocky’ for the rest of that year (Chapple, *COC History*, video 1995.). These tensions would later lead Taylor to consider leaving the Methodist church.
Methodist training at King’s College

The Methodist leadership recognized Taylor’s potential as an evangelist, minister and youth worker, and they encouraged him to enrol for further theological training at King’s Methodist College at the University of Queensland in 1969. Taylor was joined by four other ministry candidates, LF Gigg, GP Davidson, PG Horsfield and DC Robinson. Taylor recalled (Interview, 17/01/2001) being introduced to the writings of scholarly Protestant theologians including Karl Barth and Paul Tillich, existentialists including Kierkegaard and Sartre, and biblical scholars including Bultmann. The conservative evangelical views that were encouraged in his earlier years of ministry were challenged by the intellectual speculation, critical approaches and diversity of views about God and religion that were held by the theologically liberal lecturers. These lecturers sought to encourage intellectual development along the lines described by Perry (1970), from absolute and dualistic views on right and wrong to an awareness of contextual relativism and more complex understanding of the ways in which knowledge is constructed. Fowler (1981) described this transition in terms of a change from undifferentiated faith to individual reflective and universalized faith.

While many students accepted the liberal views, Taylor (Interview, 17/01/2001) continued to hold on to his conservative evangelical world view. He continued to hold to the authority of experience and the global community of Pentecostalism over the authority of rationalism and historical church traditions. Taylor formed the view that while a liberal theological education “may have been fine for preparing college professors, it was doing little to train people for the challenges of pastoral ministry” (Taylor interview, 17/01/2001).

Although many academics spoke positively about the complex academic discourses of the King’s Methodist College, other Methodist leaders expressed similar concerns as

113 Minutes of the 68th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1969, p. 93.
Taylor, arguing that they contributed to a decreased emphasis on conversions and a personal relationship with God that seemed to be emptying the theological colleges and churches. Dempsey’s (1969) study of Australian Methodist churches also noted that the extensive theological training and promotion of academic views created scholarly elites, who were isolated from the concerns and beliefs of ordinary church members.

In 1969, George Nickles invited Taylor to hold meetings in the large enclosed area under his ‘Queenslander’ elevated house in the Brisbane suburb of Corinda. Around 50 people attended the first Corinda meeting on Saturday 10 May 1969. Attendance at these meetings was swelled by the charismatic movement that continued to grow strongly at this time. Over the next two years weekly attendance grew to over 200, providing opportunity for further development of Taylor’s ministry.

**A new direction**

Although Taylor could have found considerable ministry opportunities within the Methodist church, he eventually found the Methodist system too restrictive and ‘dry’ when compared to the more dynamic approach of the charismatic movement. Events in 1970 would open up further opportunities within the new independent neo-Pentecostal groups that were forming and these seemed to offer greater opportunities for pursuit of his sense of the call of God on his life.

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115 Blaike (1979:32) made a similar observation.


117 Norma Ormsby, Interview, 11/01/2001. Norma Ormsby brought a car load of people to the meetings each month from Dalby.
New Zealand influences

The Full Gospel Businessmen’s International (FGBMI), which was founded in 1951 by Demos Shakarian with the support of Oral Roberts, has played a considerable role in the spread of the charismatic movement among members of traditional mainstream churches in many countries including Australia (See Chapter 3; Burgess & van der Maas 2002:653). At Easter 1970, Taylor attended a FGBMI breakfast in Brisbane at which two New Zealand charismatic leaders, Trevor Chandler and Bob Midgley, spoke. Taylor was impressed by their demonstrations of the power of God in which people appeared to be ‘delivered’ from evil spirits and to fall to the floor under the ‘power of the Spirit’. During the weeks that followed, Taylor attended the small Windsor Full Gospel Church where Chandler and Midgley were preaching. These events led Taylor to reflect further on ‘his understanding of God’s ways’. He concluded that spontaneous, intuitive responses to the promptings of God’s Spirit communicated a sense of renewal more effectively than carefully prepared sermons, impromptu preaching, prayer and liturgy. At these meetings Taylor embraced new practices such as ‘lifting hands’, ‘dancing in the spirit’, impromptu preached messages and typological interpretations of Bible passages. These were features of the global Latter Rain revival that Chandler and Midgley introduced to Australia from New Zealand. While these approaches lacked the depth and theology of the carefully prepared sermons and liturgies, they had a raw vitality that traditional churches often lacked and these approaches became features of the groups that Taylor led.

Water baptism

Taylor faced a further crisis of identity in 1970 when he was asked to choose between the practices of infant baptism and confirmation taught by the Methodist church and the full immersion adult baptism offered by the charismatic movement. In the mid 1970s, the Methodist Conference responded to this growing trend by reiterating that re-baptism was

118 Clark Taylor, Sermon, CT, 05/04/1981.
119 Clark Taylor, Sermon, CT, 05/04/1981.
a threat to the value of infant baptism and the authority of the church, and that it was ‘contrary to Methodist theology.’ On 19 April 1970 Taylor and other Corinda group members were baptized in water at the Windsor Full Gospel Church. This act strengthened attendees’ commitment to the new group and the opposition they faced provided a sense of cohesion that the new movement was united (Gerlach 1974:682). The rejection of infant baptism and acceptance of adult baptism became further features of Taylor’s ministry.

**Resignation from the Methodist church**

The minutes of the 1970 State Methodist Conference record that two students resigned from training at the Methodist Theological Hall that year. Opposition to charismatic practices had increased and Taylor felt pressure either to desist from such practices or resign from the Methodist church. Of the 22 students who took up study the previous year, Taylor was one of the few to continue doggedly to hold on to conservative evangelical beliefs and charismatic movement practices (Taylor, Interview, 17/01/2001). While some were pleased to see Taylor leave, others within the Methodist church expressed their concern that Taylor’s decision contributed to the loss of potential leadership that could help to renew the Methodist church in Australia.

Erikson (1958:42) observes that adolescents and young adults are often driven by a need for devotion to leaders and causes that combine earnestness and ascetic practices, together with a concurrent need to repudiate and reject causes and people they believe to be obsolete. He writes, ‘Young people offer devotion to individual leaders and to teams, to strenuous activities, and to difficult techniques: at the same time they show a sharp and intolerant readiness to discard and disavow [other] people.’ Taylor’s decision to reject the

120 The Pentecostal Ministry Report, adopted by Victoria and Tasmania, 1975, p.11
122 Minutes of the 69th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1970, p. 88.
123 Alcorn is reported by Norma Ormsby to have said, ‘Clark Taylor is one person in the church that is getting souls saved. Norma Ormsby, Interview, 01/11/2001.
complex but tried ways of the Methodist church and to pursue new role models in the charismatic movement continues in this tradition, combining rejection of tradition with a new sense of identity, new causes, fresh opportunities and fresh convictions.

**Windsor Full Gospel Church**

A growing network of new charismatic and independent churches gave Taylor and others increased opportunities to participate in and promote charismatic movement practices among mainstream church attendees. The Full Gospel Church (FGC), which had been reinvigorated by the appointment of Trevor Chandler as senior minister, had grown in attendance and new staff were needed. In late 1970, Taylor was invited to join the ministry team. The freedom of association in the Full Gospel Churches enabled Taylor to continue to minister in different denominations including the Apostolic Church, the Assemblies of God, and Methodist Church, as well as Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship meetings.¹²⁴

Some expressed their displeasure with Taylor’s ecumenical activities. Members of the Wynnum Apostolic Church, for example, expressed their concern about the practice of ‘slaying in the spirit’ where people fell to the ground. They also expressed concern that Taylor’s beliefs were dividing the church, and that he was taking members from their churches to his own church rather than building up their churches (Hart, Interview, 05/05/2006). Chandler later expressed concern that Taylor’s hyper-faith message had replaced faith in God with ‘faith’ in experiences and faith in ‘faith’ (Chandler, Interview, 03/05/2001). In a later book titled *Hope: The Answer to the Problem of Faith* (1993), Chandler argued that the Bible does not speak about having faith for things, but that Bible emphasized the need for faith ‘in’ God and His saving actions in Christ. Other Australian Pentecostal leaders expressed similar concerns about Taylor’s teaching that ‘faith

confession’ brought that which was confessed to pass, his demonstrative divine healing ministry, words of knowledge and ‘slaying’ in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{125}

Taylor continued to lead the Corinda house meetings during 1971 with over 200 people attending. However, this growth created objections from neighbouring residents and the last Corinda meeting was held in May 1971.\textsuperscript{126} Larger and more permanent facilities were needed if these large charismatic movement meetings were to continue.

\textbf{Itinerant ministry in 1973}

Taylor began to look for further opportunities to expand his ministry and to pursue his distinctive emphasis on evangelism, divine healing and faith confession. In December 1972, he resigned from the Christian Life Centre and pursued opportunities for itinerant ministry in New Zealand for four months, followed by ministry to a wide range of churches across Australia and the Pacific (Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001). While in New Zealand, Taylor developed a closer relationship with the New Life Centre churches and with the teachings and practices that they had inherited from the Latter Rain movement (Taylor, Interview, 28/02/2002). During 1973 Clark Taylor held meetings in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji that attracted crowds of up to 1,000 people in churches that had previously struggled to attract 100 attendees. The CT Mission Outreach Newsletter and newspapers reported the testimonies of conversions and miraculous healings.\textsuperscript{127} In early 1974, Rev. Judson Cornwall invited Taylor to preach in the USA for the three months and when Judson Cornwall suffered a heart attack, Taylor was given the opportunity to take over his itinerary. In a letter from Hampton, Virginia, USA dated 21\textsuperscript{st} March 1974, Ann Taylor wrote.

\begin{quote}
On Sunday morning, (17\textsuperscript{th}) Clark preached on ‘faith’ from Mark 16, and was well received. There was a large altar call for healing. All were healed except for one lot for
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{125}Barry Chant is one of many Pentecostal leaders who expressed similar concerns.
\textsuperscript{126} Ford, History of COC (1971:1).
\textsuperscript{127}CT Missionary Newsletter, 1, 2 & 3; Wanganui Herald, New Zealand, 26 September 1973.
\end{flushright}
short sightedness. The last healing was the opening of a completely blind eye. During altar calls the people were most responsive and co-operative and really praise God for each healing.

These meetings increased Taylor’s relationship with American churches and introduced him to further innovations in the United States that he brought back to Australia (Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001).

**Moratorium**

Erikson (1958:12) argued that influential leaders often make their most decisive contributions after an extended period of ‘moratorium’ in which the resolution of their own personal crises are able to contribute to the resolution of the wider social and religious crises of their times. In the case of the COC founder, 15 years had passed from Taylor’s conversion at age 22 and his introduction to Christian training before he started his first COC church in 1974 at age 37. Taylor had wrestled with and resolved a series of crises that increased his convictions and gave him a message that attracted a sizable following to meetings he led and the churches he would found. These convictions, together with well developed charismatic leadership skills, had the potential to build a sizable church, particularly in the correct religious, geographic and social setting. In Brisbane in the 1970s and 1980s at the height of the charismatic movement, the settings were ripe for Taylor to establish a congregation that would grow into one of Australia’s first megachurches.

**The founding of COC**

Charismatic leaders are often driven by a desire to transform their earlier movement developments into more permanent institutions that will preserve their efforts (Weber 1968:241, 1112). As Taylor travelled, he became increasingly aware that the healing evangelism campaigns that he conducted only brought a temporary increase in church attendance that declined after he left. He recognized the value of a permanent evangelism
centre that would aid the long term retention and discipleship of the converts his meetings were attracting. In early 1974, Taylor wrote:

For a long time now the Lord has been impressing upon me to commence another centre in Brisbane. It is a city of nearly one million people and God has given me a vision to reach many of the country areas around about. What a challenge lies ahead of us! Only God can do it! I feel that it is God’s time for me to add my weight to the existing ministries in this area and to do it by establishing a centre in Brisbane as the first step…I will not be travelling much at all from now on. The Lord has implanted a detailed vision in my heart and He has promised me that He will open the way step by step.128

As Erikson (1958) has shown, the crises and events in a charismatic leader’s life and the ways they were handled contribute to the character and future of the organizations they found. The life course development, life events, crises, beliefs and leadership of this one charismatic founder of COC, Clark Taylor would continue to play a major role in shaping the character, beliefs and development of the COC organization and its members. The next chapter shows how Taylor established a healing evangelism centre in Brisbane that grew rapidly in size in the mid 1970s. As Wagner (1970:3) has noted, such breakaway groups often have a greater vitality and openness to innovation than existing organizations. Taylor introduced further innovations, including new approaches to evangelism and healing meetings and the televising of the church services that swelled attendance to over 1,000 and provide the resources and attendance needed for expansion to megachurch size of 2,000 and beyond in the 1980s.

**Conclusion**

The overview of the life course biography of the COC founder, Clark Taylor, up until 1974, gives insights into the ways these events and contexts shaped not only the identity, beliefs and practices of the charismatic founder of the COC, but also of the organizations and movements that he was a part of. In doing so, they support Erikson’s (1958; 1968)

model of identity development. This review shows how the message and abilities of the charismatic founder of the COC developed in ways that would attract a large following. Taylor’s rural upbringing, the death of his father, overcoming a significant illness, and opposition from established church institutions all contributed to his convictions. Participation in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements contributed to Taylor’s religious and self-identity, and to the notions of church and the movement that he founded. Taylor’s commitment to Pentecostal beliefs in divine healing, tongues speaking, testimonies of miracles and new forms of ministry contributed further to Taylor’s convictions and commitments. Erikson’s (1958) studies point to potential weaknesses within charismatic leadership, raising questions about Taylor’s convictions about who and what is trusted and distrusted, and over commitment to autonomy, independence and industry. Erikson’s study also points to dangers that can arise from unresolved issues in terms of identity, relationship networks and values that would pose difficulties for the COC founder and the movement. Taylor’s acceptance of the measure of success in terms of experiences, numbers of conversions, attendance and testimonies of the miraculous would aid pragmatic steps to promote the growth of new churches, but they also raise questions about the validity of these claims and their long term benefits. Fowler’s (1981) faith development model offers further insights into how the developmental of the charismatic leader and the movement he founds can be evaluated. The benefits and challenges these developments bring will be examined further in the later chapters of this thesis.

The next chapter examines how the development of the COC organization followed and paralleled these developments in the life course biography of COC founder. It will trace the growth of the COC from its foundation in 1974 to its peak growth in the late 1980s.
Chapter Five: COC growth: Becoming a megachurch and national movement

This chapter examines the development of the Brisbane COC from its beginnings in 1974 to its peak attendance as a megachurch in 1986 to 1989, and its development as a national and international movement. After founding the first COC on 16 June 1974, Taylor began to acquire the physical resources, organizational expertise and network of leaders that would support his vision for establishing a revival centre that would revitalize traditional and Pentecostal churches in Brisbane and provide a spiritual home for the charismatic Christians who did not fit in the mainline churches. The growth of the COC is shown to be assisted by the adoption of new products that included innovations in religious practices and beliefs, demonstrative approaches to divine healing, new ways of viewing conversion, a millennial belief in Christ’s soon return, a sense of empowerment that came from baptism in the Spirit, charismatic gifts and faith confession, the appeal of contemporary music, and modern organizational approaches with identification and response to market opportunities. The COC organization that emerged had flexible, decentralized, organic organizational structures that allowed each church to pursue growth opportunities in their own way. The growth of the COC was also aided by rapid and innovative responses to changes in the external social environment, including responses to changed patterns of work and family life, the changed role and influence of women, laity and young people, development of a distinctive youth culture, suburban expansion and the growth of a postmodern, mass mediated, consumerist culture (McLeod 2007:1f). The COC movement also developed a franchise approach to church replication that rewarded entrepreneurial leaders by encouraging them to start new churches, each one of which retained control of their liturgies, programmes and 95 per cent of their income. The organizational development literatures of scholars such as Greiner (1972),

129 Klepper (1996:578) observes that the largest and most profitable firms come from the first cohort of entrants into new products. Growth of the COC was aided by early adoption of religious innovations from North America associated with the Pentecostal, charismatic and related movements.

The growth of the Brisbane COC and the national movement is illustrated in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.1: Growth of the Brisbane COC and the national COC movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth of Brisbane COC</th>
<th>Growth of the National COC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974 16 July COC begins</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974 Oct Move to Trafalgar St, Woolloongabba</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 Mt Tuchekoi purchased</td>
<td>1975 COCs started in Brisbane suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 Nov Move to West End</td>
<td>Ipswich, Redcliffe, Gatton, Toowoomba and Dalby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977–1982 Televising COC services</td>
<td>1976 COC registered as denomination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 COC school started</td>
<td>1977 Nambour COC started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 B–COC moves to Mansfield</td>
<td>1978 COC has grown to 14 churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B–COC school moves to Mansfield</td>
<td>1980 Northern New South Wales churches join the COC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 110 acres purchased</td>
<td>Other churches join COC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditorium expanded</td>
<td>1984 Mass planting of COC churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 BCOC grows to 3,800 attendees</td>
<td>National expansion to 160 churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1980s International expansion to &gt; 1,000 churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 Innisfail COC establishes COC churches in Pacific Islands.</td>
<td>Other overseas churches join COC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Australian COC has 164 churches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2: COC Australia church and attendance growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Australian churches</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
<th>COC Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>12,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>17,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1989</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>20,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: COC National Office statistics.
* The year in which the COC founder resigned.


A vision for national revival is often conceived in the imagination of itinerant ministers as they travel abroad and view their nation from a distance, from where the task of national revival seems more achievable and the stirring of heartfelt affections for one’s homeland is highly motivating.\(^{130}\) A more distant viewpoint lifts a person from the limited perspective of their local setting and it encourages an alignment with global

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\(^{130}\) In the USA the dream of national revival formed as the Pentecostal founder, Charles Parham, travelled across America. In Australia the dream of a National Revival Crusade formed as CRC founder Leo Harris travelled overseas in New Zealand. For Clark Taylor the dream of national revival formed as he travelled in New Zealand and North America.
movements whose visions are much larger than those of local communities. Those who travel are also more likely to be the sort of people who will take risks to start new ventures. Those who travel overseas are also likely to find innovative products that attract larger audiences than local enterprises.

As Taylor ministered overseas he found his divine healing ministry could swell attendance and lead to large numbers of conversions in the small churches that he visited. His ability to attract sizable crowds increased his confidence in God and in the Pentecostal and Latter Rain movements to meet human needs. However, church attendance often shrank after he left and he realized that itinerant evangelists do not often see long term results from their efforts. This contributed to Taylor’s decision to return from the United States to Brisbane on 11 June 1974 to establish a permanent evangelical centre. He called the new group the Christian Outreach Centre (COC), with the goal of reaching ‘Australia for Christ’.

The first gathering of the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) in Taylor’s living room at 40 Clemesha St, Keperra on 16 June 1974 attracted 25 people. They were all charismatic former Methodists. The first meeting at the Teachers Union building at 495 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, on the following Sunday, 23 June 1974, attracted just over 100 attendees. Most who attended had heard Taylor preach in their Methodist, mainstream and Pentecostal churches, youth groups, Full Gospel Businessmen’s meetings and charismatic movement conferences. The nearby Christian Life Centre (CLC), led by Trevor Chandler, lost over 120 members in the next six months to the new COC group. The COC was a breakaway section (sect) of the CLC, which separated from the FGC.

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131 The early COC writings accentuate the divine dimension to the COC’s growth by emphasizing the small size and few resources of the COC. Video, The Past Eleven Years, 1985.
132 They included Clark, Anne, Rita, Max and Julie Taylor, Neil and Nancy Miers, Lyn and Keith Kelley, Mrs Fisher, Joy and Kevin Pearce, Elwyn and Alan Davies, Diane and Peter Jones, George and Gloria Nickles, Robyn and Ross McConnell, Merve and Diane Willis, and Ern, Marcia and Del Ford. Willelima Huismen also claims to have been present (Ford, Interview, 25/01/01).
133 The appendix lists many of the members and their backgrounds.
134 Ena Pricket (Interview, 06/08/2001) recalls that Chandler showed little animosity, saying that people were free to choose which church they attended. There was also competition for attendees between the three nearby megachurches, the COC and Garden City AOG and the Gateway Baptist Church.
which in turn broke away from AOG. Interest in Taylor’s ministry was already considerable and this contributed to over 200 people attended the first evening service held the same night.

The COC encouraged the practice of tithing, which is the practice of giving one-tenth of one’s income to the church. Drawing on the writings of Oral Roberts (1970:21), Taylor used the terms ‘sowing’ and ‘reaping’ to encourage giving that expected divine rewards. He preached, ‘If we believe, we will get plenty of money’\textsuperscript{135}, individually and as a church. The tithes and offerings provided sufficient finances to support the new group, though not yet enough for a rapid expansion of facilities.\textsuperscript{136} The hiring of relatively inexpensive halls such as the Teachers Union building enabled the establishment and growth of the COC at relatively low cost.

The lively expectancy and simple message delivered by a plainly dressed charismatic leader contrasted with mainstream religious approaches. The COC meetings were characterized by a vitality that contrasted with the subdued and regimented services, complex liturgies and hierarchical leadership in the mainstream churches and older Pentecostal churches. The COC grew rapidly, swelled by the wave of interest in charismatic movement phenomena that swept the globe in the early 1970s. Many attendees spoke of their concern about the ‘lack of opportunity for self-expression’, ‘deadness’ and ‘lack of life’ in their traditional churches.\textsuperscript{137} As one new COC recruit recalled,

\begin{quote}
It was the first time I saw people being excited about being Christians. This excitement was demonstrated by dancing and clapping and we could hardly wait to go to church or to a Bible Study group. There was a feeling that you didn’t want to miss a church service…\textsuperscript{138}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{135} Clark Taylor, ‘Heartfelt Faith,’ sermon preached in January 1975.
\textsuperscript{136} Ford, Interview, 25/01/01.
\textsuperscript{137} See appendix for a list of interviews.
\textsuperscript{138} Stillianos, Interview, 28/03/2002.
The COC meetings generated a strong sense of the presence of God through testimonies and claimed demonstrations of miracles and divine revelations, at a time when the reality of God was being questioned in the wider secular, pluralistic society and in many churches, particularly due to a growing acceptance of liberal theology and scientific rationalism (Jamieson 2002). This led the COC leaders to define their ‘product’ in terms of spontaneity, expectations of miraculous interventions from God and ‘life’, as seen in the songs which were popular at the time, such as:

I’ve found a new way of living, I’ve found a new life divine,
I’ve found a new way of living, I am abiding, abiding in the vine.
Abiding in the Vine, Abiding in the Vine,
Love! Joy! Health! Peace! He has made them mine.
I have prosperity, power and victory,
Abiding, abiding in the Vine.

A founding member recalled, ‘We sang that song, *I’ve found a New Way of Living*, but it wasn’t just a song, it was a reality. Church was vibrant. You looked forward to it. It was everything.’ This song gave the title ‘New Way of Living’ to the COC magazine, it was the theme song for their TV programmes and it was used to represent the COC nationwide.

The early COC meetings placed an emphasis was on mission oriented relationships rather than formal organizational structures. They had the informality, fluidity and vitality of an ‘organic movement’ that encouraged imagination, initiative, and creativity rather than adherence to the fixed, imposed structures of an institutionalized organization (Hirsch, 2007:253).

Who attended

The ecumenical openness of the neo-Pentecostal COC meetings drew attendees from a wide variety of church (and non-church) backgrounds. This confirms the observation of Kaldor et al (1994:225) that Australian denominational barriers are increasingly permeable and Protestant church attendees, particularly younger ones, are shopping around for congregations that provide an appealing experience.

The largest group of early attendees came from the Methodist Church, reflecting the Methodist openness to laity driven, experiential, revivalist, innovative sectarian developments such as were seen in the COC church and the Methodist background of the founders. Nearly all of the early COC leaders and most of the first 100 attendees were former Methodists. The Methodist emphasis on individual pietistic experiences of God and Holy Spirit empowerment of the laity appears to be particularly open to sectarian developments. Pentecostalism continues the Methodist emphasis on anti-institutionalization and its use of contemporary organizational practices and innovations to target the masses (Wigger 1998:7; Finke 2004). Attendees from a Methodist background put aside many of their practices, adopting the more experiential beliefs and practices of Pentecostalism, embracing a sectarian break from the past (Ellingson 2007:164). Some Methodists chose to attend the COC as an alternative to the proposed merger of the Methodist church into the Uniting church (which was finalized in 1977) and the sense of institutionalization and loss of evangelical fervour that this represented (Allen, Interview, 2002).

Many initial attendees were Catholics, encouraged by the decisions of the Vatican II Council of 1962–1965 that increased Catholic openness to wider participation in

140 Wigger (1998: 7) made a similar observation regarding American Methodism.

141 The COC founder, Clark Taylor, and the main COC leaders, including Neil Miers, David McDonald, Ashley Schmierer, David Shaeffer and Ron Woolley were all former Methodists.
Their attendance also reflected the common Catholic and Pentecostal interest in mystical religious experiences, individual revelations from God, and the shared folk elements of ‘exuberant worship’, ‘Spirit possession’ and pursuit of miracles. The early COC movement meetings were known for the attendance of priests and nuns (Ford, Interview, 25/01/2001). The attendance of Catholics declined, however, after Catholic charismatic groups including the Bardon Catholic Church and Emmanuel Covenant Community were started, and as the initial wave of interest in the Catholic charismatic movement declined. Catholic attendance further declined as the COC became an established denomination rather than an ecumenical ‘revivalist’ centre.

There were other denominations. Baptists came from the nearby charismatic Greenslopes, Gateway and other Baptist churches (Coleman, Interview, 29/04/2003). Some Anglicans came, though in lesser numbers, reflecting a culture of opposition to such experiential movements. Attendees also came from the Brethren, Lutheran and Reformed Churches, and from older more established Pentecostal churches such as the AOG and Apostolic Church. These attendees often said that they found the newer COC movement less institutionalized and more dynamic, with more experiences of the supernatural and with more opportunities for lay involvement than they found in the older Pentecostal churches.

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142 This openness to the charismatic movement was reflected in the success of the Australian Catholic Charismatic Conferences, the first of which was held in Melbourne in 1974 (Vision Magazine No 4, 1974, July/Aug). It was also reflected in the participation of the Pope and cardinals in the 1975 Congress on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church in Rome (Logos Journal, Vol 5, No 4, July-Aug 1975, p. 38). Similar observations were made by Hollenweger (1999) and Martin (1998:125).

143 In his study of CLC, Williams (1978:98) writes, ‘The pre-dominant churchmanship in Queensland, particularly North Queensland is Anglo-Catholic and consequently there is little contact with Protestant neo-Pentecostalism’.

144 These included Ray Albrecht, Lloyd Eastgate, Dennis and Judy Hughes, David Smith and Peter and Jan Campbell.

145 Elwyn and Del Jackson are examples.

146 Catharina Pricket Huisman recalled that the Reformed Church attendees were encouraged to attend the COC by charismatic Reformed Church leaders including Dr John Schep.

147 For example, Dot Brailey and Kevin Dales.

148 For example, Dot Brailey and Kevin Dales.

149 Ian Stephenson left Wynnnum Apostolic Church to join the Christian Outreach Centre in 1978 because it provided a greater opportunity to work full time for God.

150 For example, Dot Brailey and Kevin Dales.
Attendees from the Presbyterian Church came from a more of a middle class background and had higher levels of education. Some were given key roles in the development of the educational arms of the COC. The inner city location where the Brisbane COC started attracted attendances from migrant groups that were strongly represented in that area, and particularly from Greek and Catholic communities. A German–Polish Catholic immigrant described the appeal of the COC to migrants. She said the COC attendees provided comfort, friendliness and love, which helped her to overcome the loneliness and difficulties of speaking English. Her statements are supported by that of other migrant attendees. These migrant attendees also spoke of the strong resistance they faced in leaving their traditional migrant churches and communities. Another group of migrants came from New Zealand after they met Taylor when he preached there. Some of these later returned to New Zealander to established COC churches in their homeland.

**The appeal of the product**

The following table records the most common reasons given for attraction to the COC.

Table 5.3: Reasons mentioned by attendees for attending COC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of interviewed attendees mentioned this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism in the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked to leave mainstream churches after</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism in the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing healings and miracles</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult water baptism</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, friendships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

151 Brian Millis gained the accreditation of the school, before establishing the tertiary institution, the Christian Heritage College. Graham Hill established the Ministry Training Institute. Len Morris was a University of Queensland lecturer and elder at Kenmore Presbyterian Church. Graham Booth was also a Presbyterian.

152 Anna Wegrzniak, Interview, 2003.


154 Rob Pullar, Michael Winnington, Richard Oddie, Maurice Ritchie and Pam Katchall joined Australian COC churches from Timaru CLC in New Zealand. Other New Zealanders who relocated to the Australian COC included Peter and Jan Campbell, Mike Connell, Hap and Faith Seed and Alan and Ngaire Falivau.
Other reasons for attending included the excitement of the COC meetings, lively music, words of knowledge about illnesses, deliverance from the demonic, creationism, financial needs being met, Clark Taylor’s charismatic personality, the word of God coming alive, relevant, greater freedom, less structure, not going to hell, millennialism, death of a loved one, seeing the TV programs, sense of certainty, opportunity to help others, youth programs, and children’s programs.

McClung (1986:74) makes the general observation that the Pentecostal use of testimonies and spectacular displays of ‘signs and wonders’ and ‘divine healings’ provided an ‘evangelistic door-opener’ to attract people to their meetings. The high attendance at COC meetings illustrates this well. John Gear and Kevin Dales (Interview, 17/01/2002) recalled that the emphasis on divine healing and being ‘born again’ were major attractions for attending. During the initial growth period in the mid 1970s, COC meetings were known for words of knowledge about illnesses of congregation members, who were then called to the front for prayer and an expectation of healing. Falling to the floor when being prayed for was viewed as further evidence of the healing presence of God. This COC approach to divine healing was modelled on North American healing evangelists including Oral Roberts and D. L. Moody and Smith Wigglesworth from the UK.156

Another primary attraction was the opportunity for instant adult conversion. As one COC leader recalled, ‘the need of every person to be saved was woven into the subject of every sermon’ and ‘even weddings and funerals were seen as opportunities for conversion’.157 The early COC meetings also emphasized the practice of calling potential converts to make a proactive response and come to the front of the church. For many years the COC website stated:

155 New Way of Living May/June 1991, p. 36.
156 Brian Millis, Interview, 16/03/01.
157 Alison Stanton recalls a wedding of Fran and Rosemary Cox where people were converted. Alison Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003.
Altar calls are a custom of Christian Outreach Centre around the world. They are the most profound and important event of any meeting. Responding to an altar call for the first time is the most important step anyone will ever take. It is truly life-changing to accept God's wonderful gift of salvation.158

This practice of altar calls was strongly associated with the North American evangelical, revivalist tradition, and it was used by revivalist preachers who included Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody.159 The emphasis on conversion reflects the influence of neo-Evangelicalism and the Billy Graham Crusades on Australian Pentecostalism, and the prominent role that it plays in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

The appeal of tongues speaking and the related belief in Holy Spirit’s ‘baptism’ came from the sense of empowerment that they provided, particularly to the marginalized and laity. In the early years of the COC in the 1970s, many leaders of the mainstream churches spoke out against tongues speaking and some outside the COC said that tongues speaking was ‘of the devil’.160 At the same time, outsiders’ objections to tongues speaking often further aroused the curiosity of those interested in the COC experiences.161

Similarities between the COC and other Australian and overseas megachurches in terms of the approach to divine healing, conversion and spiritual gifts point to common informal global and Australia wide networks and literature distribution that linked these churches together (Glik 1986:579; Poloma, 1989:54). People do not have these experiences ‘entirely on their own’, but within the religious and social contexts and expectations that provide meaning to these experiences (Bouma 1992:40). For COC attendees the appeal of the COC also came from the sense of importance generated by a millennial expectation of Christ’s soon return, and their ‘restorationist’ argument that they were restoring the earlier mandates of biblical Christianity.

159 Books on soul winning by Finney and Moody were part of Taylor’s library.
160 John Carlisle, Interview, 16/02/2003.
161 Clive Hill Interview; Dawn Campbell, Interview, 22/10/2002.
Pre-millennialist expectations

In the early years of the COC, as in many evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the 1970s (Dempster, Klaus & Petersen 1991:201), there was a strong emphasis on North American pre-millennialism and Taylor often motivated attendees to action by reminding them that time was short and the second coming of Christ was near. This continued into the 1980s. One COC leader recalled,

End time teaching was everywhere at the time. None of us believed that we would have children. We didn’t believe that we would live to be forty five. We read Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*, and Chick publications on end times. We read *Cosmic Conspiracy* by Stan Deyo, which warned of the planetary alignment. Barry Smith spoke in 1985, warning us of the cashless society that would come in 1986. A former Catholic charismatic who joined the COC recalled, ‘We weren’t thinking long-term since we expected that Jesus would return any day. We let our insurance policies lapse and just lived for the day’. In the 1970s she left the city to live in a caravan park and wait for Christ’s return. The pre-millennialist views of the early COC members were further encouraged by New Zealand evangelists Barry Smith and Alister Lowe. It could be argued that the appeal of the pre-millennialism message came from offering simple answers to the anxieties associated with complex processes of globalization, economic instability, increased oil prices, new technologies, the Vietnamese war, the

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163 Geoff Woodwood, Interview, 06/04/2003; Geoff Woodwood sermon, Citipointe Brisbane COC, Mansfield, 06/04/2003. Other interviews support this observation that premillennialist views were more common and shaped beliefs and actions in the 1970s and 80s before declining in the 1990s. E.g. Ford Interview 2001, Earle Interview 2000, Mulheran interview 2010, Millis Interview 2000, Ramsey Interview 2010, to name just a few examples.
164 Tina McCrystal Interview, 29/01/2002.
Cold War and fears regarding communism, and massive social changes.\textsuperscript{166} Despite the repeated failing of these predictions, attendees continued to adhere to these millennialist teachings, even after the death of pre-millennialist preacher, Barry Smith, in 2003.\textsuperscript{167}

The dispensational pre-millennialism that most Pentecostals accepted was first popularized almost a century earlier by John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and the Plymouth Brethren. These beliefs were promoted through the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) and the writings of R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody. The term ‘millennium’ was taken from a single reference in Revelation 20:1–7 to an expected one thousand year reign of the Messiah. These dispensationalists added to this the expectation of prelude in which believers would be raptured so as to avoid the great tribulation. Martin (2002), Anderson (1979), Menzies (1971), Poloma (2002) Moltmann (1965) and Cox (1995:81f) are among the many scholars who argued that this millennial expectation of the soon return of Christ provided the central motivation for early Pentecostalism around which other supernatural expectations, including tongues, healings and exorcism formed. Mulheran (2002) and Gullo (Interview, 14/03/2003) observe that the urgency of millennialism contributed to the growth of the Australian charismatic movement and megachurches in the 1970s and 1980s.

These pre-millennialist views were further popularized and disseminated during the 1970s through Hal Lindsey’s top selling book, \textit{The Late Great Planet Earth} (1970). It sold more than 28 million copies (Boyer 1992:5, 16). These views were also promoted by Tim La Haye’s apocalyptic fiction \textit{Left Behind} series, which sold over 65 million copies. The continued influence of pre-millennialism in the 1990s is reflected in United States Gallup polls, which show that 62 per cent of American adults expect Jesus literally to return to earth in the near future (Boyer 1992:5, 16).

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Australia for Christ}, November, 1986, p.4, December, 1986, p.10.  
\textsuperscript{167} Powell (2000).
By late 1974, the COC identity as a divine healing evangelism centre with an emphasis on millennialism and a reputation for innovation had been established and the Brisbane COC had grown to 500 attendees. While other churches have more recently followed these trends, in the 1970s the Brisbane COC represented the leading edge of change in the ways that religion was being viewed and consumed in Australia.

**Visualization and faith confession**

Taylor and other COC leaders accepted the ‘faith confession’ message after they heard Frederick Price speak at the National Charismatic Convention (NCC) in Brisbane in January, 1976. In an interview for this thesis, Taylor said that it was Price who ‘taught me about the power of confession’ and Price who ‘gave the faith message logical form and sense’. Price has authored over thirty books on faith, and his books and audio tapes sold well in the COC bookshop. The message of faith confession was also promoted through resources produced by Oral Roberts, E.W. Kenyon, ‘Ern’ Baxter, F. F. Bosworth, David Nunn, T. L. Osborn, William Branham, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Don Gossett and Charles Capps. Many COC leaders attributed the growth of the COC and their leader’s eagerness to start new projects ‘for God’, to the motivation and sense of ‘divine blessing’ that came from the faith confession message.

Taylor’s earliest COC sermons during 1974 and 1975 reveal his strong dependence on the faith visualization message and the writings of E.W. Kenyon, who is recognised as the founder of the faith confession movement (McConnell 1988). Taylor’s early references to the ‘Hidden man of the heart’ and his use of 1 Peter 3:4 in his sermon on ‘Heartfelt Faith’ in January 1975 (repeated in 08/02/1986) draws directly from Kenyon’s

168 Clark Taylor, Interview, 28/08/2001; Fred Price, National Charismatic Convention (NCC), Brisbane, Temple Trust Tapes, January, 1976.
170 Gossett & Kenyon (1979:3).
171 Brian Millis, Interview, 16/03/01; Clark Taylor, Sermon, Briz 31, 10/08/2003; Clark Taylor, Sermon, Briz 31, 01/06/2003; Peter Earle, Interview, 15/08/2000; Chapple, *History of COC* (1995:8), also Chapple, *Video, COC History*, 1985.
books *The Hidden Man* (1970:7 ff) and *The Two Kinds of Faith* (1969b:460). Taylor’s sermons on ‘New Creation Realities,’ ‘The Old Man’ and ‘The New Man’ and his sermon on ‘Seeing and Speaking Faith’ (December 1976) also draw on Kenyon. Like Kenyon and Price, Taylor accepted the dualistic separation of the lesser value of the material ‘body’ and the greater value of the immaterial ‘spirit’.\(^{172}\) Like Kenyon (and Hagin), Taylor declared that ‘health and riches were part of the blessing’ in Christ and that poverty and sickness were ‘part of the curse that had been defeated by Christ’.\(^{173}\)

The ‘faith visualization’, ‘positive confession’, and ‘prosperity’ beliefs that were adopted by Australian Pentecostal churches and megachurches worried leaders of traditional churches and older AOG denominations who held that these beliefs overemphasized human efforts and metaphysical notions of faith, rather than submission to the sovereignty of God and the fuller revelation of the Christian message (see Hannegraff 1997:48). Many, like Farah (1981), have expressed concern at the poor logic and poor hermeneutics involved and the overuse of incorrect hermeneutic interpretations, particularly those relating to Mark 11:22 and 3 John. They view this as a form of anthropogenic fundamentalism. The view that material blessings were a sign of God’s favour encourages an uncritical pursuit of Western consumerist culture with little consideration of the processes by which wealth is distributed (Finke & Stark 1992:17; Wuthnow 1996:8;). In seeking to appeal to the secular world, they are in turn being secularized (Wells 1994; McGuire, 2002; Twitchell 2004:95). At the same time, Vreeland (2001) writes that it is best to not treat the ‘Word of faith’ teaching as a heresy to be obliterated, but as a theologically immature movement in need of reconstruction which comes through interaction with wider Christian communities.

Taylor’s confidence in visualizing what the Holy Spirit revealed was further encouraged by reading the writings of Yonggi Cho. Mulheran (2002:26) recalls that Taylor’s confidence in visualizing what the Holy Spirit revealed was further encouraged by reading the writings of Yonggi Cho. Mulheran (2002:26) recalls that Taylor

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‘compelled every Pastor to purchase a copy of Cho’s *Fourth Dimension* and build it into their lives’.

In contrast to the contextual hermeneutic of modernism, Taylor accepted the Latter Rain belief that the same Holy Spirit who wrote the Scripture could freely reveal new interpretations to contemporary readers. This subjective approach to Bible interpretation has affinities with premodernist community driven interpretations and with postmodern approaches, showing a reader oriented openness to a diversity of interpretations that are pragmatically related to the changing needs of individuals and their communities (Hey 2001a:210; 2002). This Pentecostal hermeneutic emphasized doing rather than studying, and text rather than context (Synan 1997a:214). However, it is not viewed as a ritualistic fundamentalism as Barr (1996:215) suggests, but as a creative act that allows God to speak afresh to contemporary needs and contexts (Cargal 1993:163). Poloma (1989:232) shows that these Pentecostal hermeneutic approaches can have benefits in challenging dominant power structures, in promoting individual, social and racial equality and in empowering working class youth and other subgroups within Pentecostalism. At the same time, Poloma (1989:232) warns that these free interpretations of biblical texts are also open to misuse that promotes aberrant interpretations and new inequalities within the sectarian groups that they encourage.

Like many new religious groups, the COC focused on a few extracts from scriptures. Mark 11:23, which was a key scripture in the ministry of Kenyon, Hagin and Price,


175 Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered saying to them, ‘Have faith in God’. 23 ‘Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.’ 24 ‘Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. *New American Standard Bible*, 1995, The Lockman Foundation, LaHabra, CA.


177 Taylor said, “You could never read this verse [11:23–24] too often”.
The COC used the mountains in Mark 11:23 as an allegory standing for all that opposed them; believing that “mountains of sickness, demons, or spiritual apathy, and Australian attitudes to religion, bureaucratic red tape, financial need, unbelief and impossibilities in general” would be removed.\(^{178}\) Taylor’s wife, Anne Chapple recalls, ‘The COC had to have faith in God because they had nothing else. They had no financial backing, no parent body, and no experience in starting churches’.\(^{179}\) Chapple adds, ‘We believed that unchurched Australians would be saved. We believed that unlearned men who had been with Jesus could turn this part of the world upside down. We believed that there would be a COC in every city and town in Australia’.\(^{180}\) These faith confession beliefs encouraged goal setting strategies, which are a common way for charismatic leaders to motivate their followers (Shamir, House & Arthur 1993:5ff) and Taylor regularly motivated attendees by setting huge goals for them to pursue. This emphasis on faith brought a determination and hardness that replaced the softer emphasis on acceptance and relationships that characterized the earlier charismatic movement.\(^{181}\)

**The move to Woolloongabba**

The early adoption of the latest overseas charismatic and Pentecostal phenomena increased attendance and within three months the rented Teachers Union building was overcrowded. Finding a larger and more permanent centre became a priority.\(^{182}\) Despite claims of God-given insights, Taylor and the early attendees initially had little appreciation of how large the Brisbane COC group would grow,\(^{183}\) nor did they think about the need to purchase land or buildings. However, it was not long before they recognized the need and benefits of purchasing a building and developing organizational structures, statements of beliefs and defined practices that would aid further growth and

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177 Clark Taylor, Sermon, 08/02/1986A  
182 Clark and Anne Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001.  
183 Anne Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001.
long term stability. In October 1974, a Salvation Army hall and adjacent house were purchased in Trafalgar Street, in the Brisbane suburb of Woolloongabba, for $35,000.\textsuperscript{184} An administration office was established in the house and a secretary, treasurer, church auditor and solicitor were appointed.\textsuperscript{185} Increased attendance brought in money that supported staff expansion. Clark’s brother Max Taylor, and his wife, Julie, came on staff to look after youth groups. Neil Miers, a builder, was employed to lead the children’s work. Jim Christian and Peter Kempster were appointed as pastors. In June 1975 the need for a presbytery was recognized and the first presbytery meeting with Pastors David Jackson, Alistair Low and Kindah Greening was held. The assistant pastors were Neil Miers, Jim Christian, Graham Passmore, Ted Linke, John White, John Gardiner and Gus Augustakis. The early development of these institutional structures challenges Weber’s (1922) notion that institutional developments come much later in new groups. As with many organizations, the continued success of the COC was dependent upon their early development of strong organizational structures (McCarthy & Zald 1977). At the same time, like many of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches, the COC ceded power and leadership responsibilities to the charismatic founder. The laity were given a strong sense of involvement, but the guidelines were set by the leader. This contrasted with the leadership structure of most church and secular organizations, which emphasized collective decision making, committee structures, reliance on highly trained and well educated professionals. Growth of the COC was further aided by its ‘organic’ openness to diversification, decentralization, domain expansion, flexibility, innovation and adaptation to environmental changes, as is found in the early growth of many new organizations (Quinn & Cameron 1983:40; Schein 2004:225).

\textsuperscript{184} Clark and Anne Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001.
\textsuperscript{185} Christine White was employed as secretary, Marcia Ford set up the cash books and Bob Henry was appointed as treasurer.
Sectarian developments at Mt Tuchekoi

In January 1975, the COC leaders purchased a 186 acre bush property at Mt Tuchekoi, two hours’ drive north of Brisbane, for $14,000. They built sleeping, dining and meeting facilities that enabled annual conferences, family camps, youth conventions and other gatherings to be held. While this initially helped to build a strong sense of community and increased the commitment of COC attendees to their church and movement, the development contained the seeds of sectarianism and isolation in the eyes of wider society. Pargament (1997:72) observed that religious attendees’ commitment to new religious groups tends to increase when they move to isolated locations that are cut off from the outside world. In remote locations, attendees find it easier to break with their past life and form new psychological, social, spiritual and religious identity paradigms. The initial strengthening of in-group commitment has benefits, but it can lead to difficulties commonly associated with ‘sectarianism’ if prolonged for too long (Wilson 1970).

Table 5.4: Mt Tuchekoi Guest speakers, 1977 to 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preacher</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Conference Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judson Cornwall</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>December 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Gibbs</td>
<td>CLC, Penrith, NSW,</td>
<td>December 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Marshall</td>
<td>New Zealand (independent)</td>
<td>January 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Roberts</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>January 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Marshall</td>
<td>New Zealand (independent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Arden</td>
<td>New Zealand NLC</td>
<td>December 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Baker</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Conner</td>
<td>Australia (Latter Rain)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Damazio</td>
<td>Oregon, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

186 COC Centre Productions Catalogue, 01/06/2000.
187 Taylor had previously invited Cornwall to speak at the Ministers’ Dinner at Wanganui Gardens on 9 March 1971.
188 Marcia Ford, Interview, 25/01/01.
The guest speakers at the Mt Tuchekoi meetings provide insights into the global network of charismatic and Latter Rain leaders that the COC were a part of at this time. The property adjoining Mt Tuchekoi was purchased as a farm to provide rehabilitation for young people ‘that the rest of the world wanted to throw away’ and it was renamed Shiloh.\textsuperscript{189}

**The move to West End in November 1975**

Accommodation difficulties resulted in relocation to a rented warehouse at 100 Victoria Street, West End, Brisbane in November 1975. The practice of using large rented warehouses aided growth without the high cost and time restraints of establishing purpose built auditoriums. This became a feature of COC and of other charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Australia and it aided rapid growth and expansion into new locations. So that these large warehouse buildings did not seem too big initially, moveable sound wings and false walls were used that could be moved as attendance increased further.\textsuperscript{190} The instability of renting led to the decision to purchase the West End building. By this time, the increased numbers had provided the financial and personnel resources needed for further expansion. An adjoining factory in Kurilpa St was also purchased (for $170,000) and it was used for church administration offices. The growth in weekly giving provided an asset base that supported even larger loans and aided further expansion. At the same time, the increased loans and salaries contributed to institutional commitments that produced a need to attract and hold attendees to support them.

Taylor’s reputation for demonstrations of divine healing and other charismatic phenomena continued to grow and the rapid increase in attendance and weekly testimonies of conversions and healings increased the sense that revival had arrived.\textsuperscript{191} Attendance at the new location was increased further by inviting well known guest

\textsuperscript{189} *Australia for Christ*, Nov. 1986, p. 11; Mt Tuchekoi Christmas Convention, Saturday, pm, 30/12/1978, Audio Tape.
\textsuperscript{190} Clark Taylor, 7th Birthday Sermon, 20/06/1981.
\textsuperscript{191} Clark Taylor, Sermon, Heartfelt Faith, January 1975.
speakers in the charismatic movement to COC meetings. Shaun Kearney, Gordon Gibbs, Peter Morrow, Jan Painter, Drummond Thom and Ruth Heflin were among the more noted speakers. Each speaker added further global ingredients to the beliefs and practices of the COC and their books and resources strengthened the relational network that the COC was part of. Fred Price introduced an emphasis on ‘faith confession’ which became a defining characteristic of the COC. Roger Teale and Bill Hamon contributed an emphasis on personal and group prophetic ministry. Steve Ryder lifted the emphasis on miracles. The speakers increased the COC commitment to the North American and Pacific Rim charismatic, Latter Rain, Divine Healing, Faith Confession, Millennialist and Creationist movement beliefs.

**Selling salvation: Using television and other media**

The merger of the Methodist Church into the Uniting Church in 1977 helped to swell attendance and by 1977, 800 people were attending COC meetings each week. It was the introduction of televised services that helped the COC to grow beyond this base to megachurch size of over 2,000 weekly attendees by the late 1970s.

The introduction of television in the United States during the 1950s had encouraged the development of new forms of televangelism\(^{192}\) that were used by healing evangelists Rex Humbard and Oral Roberts as well as evangelicals such as Billy Graham and Robert Schuller. These televangelists modelled their ministry on earlier American revivalists and sought to use the new media to accomplish similar revivalist tasks. Their acceptance provided the financial support that made expansion to megachurch size possible and huge complexes and media empires followed. Pat Robertson established the large Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in 1959. It grew into a multimillion dollar television empire, with associated Regent University and overseas aid organizations. Jim and Tammy Bakker and Paul and Jan Crouch started Trinity Broadcasting Network in 1973 and it grew into a media network with $200 million a year turnover. Australian religious

\(^{192}\) The term televangelism was coined by Hadden & Swan (1981).
leaders also recognized the potential of television. However, as Wilson (1983:62) notes, most considered the media to be outside their field of expertise and budgets. Most early Australian religious television programming was imported from America.

Taylor saw the potential of religious television during his travels in the United States. He enquired and found that television broadcasting in Brisbane was relatively affordable. Sunday morning television in Brisbane was not then encumbered by the national networks, large advertising revenue demands, or sport, business and music shows that would later make such programmes less affordable. In 1977 Taylor appointed Brian Millis, an experienced television journalist, to plan a COC television programme. The COC television programme cost $2,000 a week, or $100,000 each year, to broadcast. The edited half-hour broadcast went to air on 17 July 1977 on Channel O (now Channel 10). The presentations were modelled on those produced by the American healing evangelist, Oral Roberts, which Taylor had seen in his travels in North America. They combined Gospel songs, demonstrations of healings and testimonies of miracles with a short preached message that combined contemporary experiences with evangelical themes.

The COC pioneered the use of televangelism on commercial television in Australia. The title of the programme, *A New Way of Living*, was taken from a Christian chorus from John, Chapter 15 that was popular at the time. Television was then used by Australia’s other megachurches to assist their growth and communicate their message. The Brisbane Garden City AOG, Sydney Christian Life Centre, Sydney Hillsong Church and Sydney Christian City Churches, introduced televised programmes in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike the United States, these Australian churches were not able to achieve large enough attendance to provide the money to maintain broadcasting in prime time.

194 Peter Earle, Interview 15/08/2000.
195 Brian Millis, Interview, 16/03/2001; see discussion in Owens (1980:33).
The use of television by the COC increased pressures on the COC to refine its methods, message and future direction in terms of performances that could attract large audiences. The COC used plain, warehouse buildings with few religious trappings, and a platform, lighting, video and sound system in their efforts to attract unchurched attendees. This contrasted markedly with more traditional churches. As Hollenweger (2003) observed, there was a tendency for such megachurches to look “more like a TV studio than like a church” and “The modern Pentecostal pastor is more a TV moderator than a theologian or liturgist”. As in North America, the Australian televangelists began to focus on image, performance and entertainment rather than on traditional ministry relationships, church beliefs and rituals. They experimented with ways of turning the impersonal mass media of television into a ‘para-personal’ medium, using close-up shots and eye contact to give the impression that the preacher was speaking directly to the audience (Hadden & Swan 1981:13f).

The introduction of television more widely was changing the ways in which Australian people viewed their world, their place in it and the ways in which they relate to each other. It was also interacting with changing attitudes towards society and religion that characterized the 1960s and 1970s (Marwick 1998:16). As Neil Postman (1985) writes in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, in this environment television evangelists who are seeking to use television to re-sacralize their world are falling victim to secularization by the media and its world. Postman writes: ‘The danger is not that religion has become the content of television shows but that television shows have become the content of religion’. In the COC, the use of television contributed to an increased orientation towards showmanship and entertainment that has remained as a long lasting by-product of this stage in its development. The COC capitulation to an entertainment orientation is reflected in their emphasis on the church as an organization focused on producing consumer products, rather than the more traditional emphasis on preserving church traditions and pastoral care. The COC use of karaoke style singing with simple lyrics projected onto large video screens contrasts with the hymn books and more theologically complex hymns of mainstream churches. Themes and methods of preaching were also oriented more towards entertainment and popular culture, rather than deeper theological
reflection and fuller exegesis of Biblical passages. The COC use of television continued until 1982 when rising costs led it to be discontinued for a time, but the orientation towards entertainment and consumerism remained.

**The COC as a national movement: 1975–1982**

The foundations of the COC as a national movement were laid in 1975 as attendance at more distant home cells, swelled by the charismatic movement, attracted sufficient numbers for them to develop into fully fledged churches. Clark Taylor’s brother, Max, led a group at Ipswich that formed the Ipswich COC in 1975. Laurie Jensen, who had a home group on Bribie Island, moved to Redcliffe where the group became the Redcliffe COC in 1975. Jim Christian led a group on the Gold Coast, south of Brisbane, and it became the Gold Coast COC. Other groups were started at Gatton and Toowoomba, about an hour west of Brisbane, and churches were also started at Murgon and at Southport on the Gold Coast. Taylor flew to Dalby where a small church had been started. These churches began from groups of people who initially travelled to Brisbane. The leaders of these COC churches were farmers, carpenters, milkmen and builders who left their occupations to undertake a few weeks of intensive instruction before becoming pastors in the new churches. Most training was done on the job. There was initially little thought of establishing a denominational movement, but this began to change as the new COC churches demonstrated the value of church planting.

The COC acquired incorporated status by the issue of a grant of Letters Patent under the *Religious, Educational and Charitable Institutions Act* (QLD) on 9 September 1976. The COC recognition as an incorporated, non-profit association endorsed by the Australian Tax Office as an income exempt charitable entity lifted its hopes for spreading more widely.
Nambour COC

In 1977, opportunities for the development of COC churches further from Brisbane arose when a small group of 20 people from Nambour, an hour’s drive north of Brisbane, asked if they could establish a COC group. Because of its relatively proximity and the ease of support and visiting ministry, Taylor agreed and he sent Neil Miers to lead the new group. Nambour was a small town with a population of 15,000 in 1977 and the church was not expected to grow to more than a couple of hundred (interview with Miers, 2002). The first Nambour COC meetings were held at the Gatehouse Activities Hall at Nambour State Primary School which was inexpensive to hire.\(^{197}\) By holding mid-week meetings, interested people were able to attend COC meetings while continuing to attend their traditional churches. Children’s Church, Bible Study, prayer meetings, ladies’ meetings and school visits attracted further interest, and attendance grew to 200 in the first year.\(^{198}\) When the pastor of the nearby Maranatha AOG church was found guilty of sexual misconduct, more people joined the Nambour COC and new contacts brought further growth.\(^{199}\)

The charismatic movement, then in full swing, swelled attendance and provided the finance, hope and faith needed to establish a more permanent centre. A 25 acre property with a packing shed that could seat 500 was purchased for $210,000, ‘with only $1,000 in the bank’. This was seen as a miracle and evidence that the hand of God was on the new group.\(^{200}\) The congregation grew to over 1,200 by 1985, making it the largest COC church after Brisbane COC. A second auditorium that could seat up to 2,500 people was completed in 1987.\(^{201}\)

\(^{197}\) Sarah Gullo Soul Havens: Suncoast Christian Outreach Centre 2002.
\(^{198}\) New Way of Living, June 1993, p. 20–21; Australia for Christ, Sept 1986, p. 11.
\(^{199}\) Nance Miers, Interview, 23/01/2001.
\(^{200}\) Sarah Gullo Soul Havens: Suncoast Christian Outreach Centre 2002.
\(^{201}\) Sarah Gullo Soul Havens: Suncoast Christian Outreach Centre 2002.
Nance Miers (in Chapple 1995) attributes the growth of Nambour COC to a family orientation that met the needs of every age group, contemporary music and worship, dynamic leadership, a sense of excitement and dependence on God and the establishing of a Christian school. Three Nambour COC members, John James, Peter Furler and Duncan Phillips started the *Newsboys* Christian band whose move to Nashville, Tennessee helped it enter the lucrative American gospel music industry.  

Like most COCs, the Suncoast COC, as the Nambour group became known, generated further interest by developing a high level of involvement in their local community, including involvement in creative arts, fundraising for local charities, support of the Nambour Ambulance Station, and holding parenting and marriage enrichment seminars.  

**Further Queensland churches**

As interest in establishing new COC groups came in from more distant locations the Brisbane COC leaders were faced with a quandary as to whether these more distant churches could be supported and controlled. The church administrator at the time, Brian Millis, recalled:

> We had a bit of a wrestle [over the question] of whether we can sustain relationships over such distances. We never would have believed you could sustain a relationship with groups an hour away in Gatton and Toowoomba, but we did, so we were willing to try in other North Queensland locations such as Bundaberg, Townsville, Innisfail and Ingham.

In keeping with this increased church planting emphasis, the COC leaders started five to seven new churches a year from 1978 to 1982. As groups expressed interest in starting COC churches, Taylor and Miers looked for opportunities to train new COC leaders and

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203 Sarah Gullo *Soul Havens: Suncoast Christian Outreach Centre* 2002.
to visit and encourage the new COC groups. Taylor and Miers travelled each month to help establish new COC churches at Maryborough and Hervey Bay in 1979, and new churches followed at Gympie, Grafton, Noosa, Coolum, Cooroy, Kawana, Caloundra and Landsborough. Through Miers and other leaders taking on responsibilities for supporting new churches, the COC leadership developed a wider profile than just Taylor and the Brisbane megachurch. The more successful leaders in growing new churches began to take more prominent roles in the COC organization.

**COC schools**

In 1976, Taylor was introduced to the North American self-paced Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) school system by Rob Wheeler from Auckland Christian Fellowship and Alister Lowe from Nelson New Life Centre in New Zealand. Recognizing the value of Christian schools, the COC leaders established a small school on 16 May 1978 that met in their church building. Over 1,200 people were attending the COC at the time, and this provided considerable support for the school. The COC school initially was envisaged as a place of withdrawal and protection for children from secular society. However, as time progressed, government credentialing and funding requirements meant that the school became a place of increased interaction with the wider society. The COC School helped the church to provide a stronger sense of community and whole of life experience for participants. The development of the Brisbane COC School provided a template for other COC churches, and nine more COC schools were established using the ACE system. This expansion of the COC into education is more fully in Chapter 7.

**The franchising of religion**

Taylor’s efforts to reach ‘Australia for Christ’ had transitioned from itinerant evangelism to establishing a Brisbane based COC centre. The successful growth of nearby home

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205 *New Way of Living*, Vol 1, No 1, Jan. 1978, p. 8 gives the numbers attending as 1,200.
groups into churches contributed to further changes and increased interest in planting a new church in every Australian city and town in order to achieve the mission of reaching Australia for Christ. To do this, Taylor developed a low cost, easily reproducible, model of church planting. Taylor said, ‘Give me any old “brumby” and let me train him.’ The COC appointment of lay leaders with limited training led to a strong affinity between ministers and their congregations. The COC taught that the main qualifications for ministry were the call of God, empowering by God’s Holy Spirit, and a supernatural provision of ministry gifts. Many whom Taylor trained for ministry were farmers, carpenters and milkmen from working class backgrounds and with little formal training or education. Taylor believed that if potential ministers had unswerving faith in themselves and in God they could establish a church (Mulheran 2002). To increase the confidence of potential ministers, they were encouraged to read ‘positive thinking’ books by Norman Vincent Peale, Zig Ziggler, David J. Schwartz, Napoleon Hill and Dale Carnegie. Potential COC church leaders went with little financial support from or demands on the churches that sent them, believing that they would be able to raise sufficient funds for a full time salary from faith in God and the congregations that they established. These high levels of sacrifice and risk helped to bind the new group together (Kelley 1972:80). Many of the leaders in the COC found they had greater opportunities than they had had in established denominations. This contrasted with mainline churches, which had high start up costs, high education requirements for ministers and complex theologies that often alienated leaders from their congregations.

As Earle notes (Interview, 15/08/2000), Taylor sought to identify reproducible ministry concepts and to communicate them in a simple form that anyone could grasp. He trained

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207 Earle, Interview, 15/08/2000.

208 Clark and Anne Taylor Interview, 07/03/2001.

209 Other scholars had also noted that a dissonance created by overly academic ministry training had contributed to a decline in traditional denominations (Dempsey 1969). Blaike (1979:32) notes that by the late 1960s this frustration had contributed to the resignation of a large number of clergy and many church members from traditional churches in Australia.
others to follow his methods and promote the COC brand. He also required a commitment to COC beliefs and practices, and the giving of 5 per cent of church income to the central COC office. This system encouraged highly motivated potential leaders to start new churches whose financial requirements were entirely met from within each new church. Zech (2003:323) argues that these low cost, easily reproduced, less restrictive relationships between congregations and denominational centres have more in common with franchising than with traditional denominational structures. He also suggests that the payment of just 5–10 per cent to the national body was similar to franchising in that it increased the motivation of branch churches to pursue growth and innovation (Zech 2003:325). The requirement to follow the operations manuals, participate in training and motivation sessions, use common marketing strategies and follow procedures to maintain quality control also resemble franchising. Ritzer (2008:1) argues that such franchising, like the approaches of McDonalds and Starbucks, encourages simplification, efficiency, predictability and brand loyalty, but they can dehumanize and depersonalize Christian organizations while also restricting adaptation to the unique needs of each group and location. It can encourage church growth more than the centralized models followed by mainstream churches. It is an approach that attracts many who do not usually attend church, but it does this in ways that encourage secularization and yielding to popular culture (Wells 1999:180; Twitchell 2004).

The Bundaberg COC was one of the first planned COC church plants using television and tent campaigns in a new location where they did not know anybody. On Sunday 30 October 1978, with the encouragement of Taylor, Miers and other COC leaders, Peter and Lindsay Earle established Bundaberg COC in a rented hall. Peter Earle came from a Methodist family whose farm was located near Dalby. After joining the COC he trained at Melodyland School of Theology in America, before returning to Australia and establishing Bundaberg COC at the young age of 26. The launch of the Bundaberg church included a television campaign and a healing tent crusade with Taylor ministering that attracted 300 interested people. Unfortunately the suicide of 900 supporters of Jim Jones just two weeks after they started accentuated people’s suspicion of new religious groups and the Bundaberg COC church struggled, with fewer than 60 attendees for the
first six years. In the mid 1980s the church began to grow. Despite the setbacks, two acres of land were purchased and a church building constructed that could seat 500. After six years of struggle, the church eventually grew to 300 weekly attendees, making it the largest church in Bundaberg.

In another planned outreach in November 1980, the Innisfail COC was established in North Queensland by Kevin Dales. Dales came from an AOG church background and he joined the COC because he found it more dynamic and committed to conversions and healings. The COC he established in Innisfail initially struggled among the largely Irish and Italian Catholic immigrant population. In 1982 its 70 regular attendees moved into a new 1,000 seat auditorium and adjoining school complex. Attendance rose to 150. The healing revival meetings continued to attract interest and by the late 1980s the church had 500 weekly attendees in a town of just 8,000 people.

**Crossing the border**

The first interstate COC church was started by Geoff Wilson and Clark Taylor’s brother, Max Taylor, in Grafton, New South Wales (NSW) in late 1979. Establishing a COC church in the neighbouring state began to give the COC a more national character. The strongest growth of the COC in NSW, however, did not begin in the large urban centres, but in the much smaller country towns of Gloucester and Taree, under the leadership of two former Methodists, a bulldozer driver named John Gear, and a farmer, David McDonald. The COC found rural areas with fewer existing church resources were often more responsive than the city outreaches, but they were harder to support and network. Kaldor (1987:95) has similarly observed that: ‘Churches can have a more pivotal role in the lives of smaller rural communities than they can in larger regional centres or cities. Clergy can have greater influence there than their city counterparts have’.

210 Ray Overend, Interview, 05/12/2002.
Gear and McDonald led groups in the Methodist churches in their country towns that participated in the charismatic movement in the late 1970s. Opposition to the charismatic movement led to the decision to leave the Methodist church and establish independent groups. After hearing Taylor preach, the Gloucester and Taree groups asked if they could join the COC in 1980. However, their initial request was refused by Taylor and the COC leadership because of concerns that the Brisbane COC could not support or adequately oversee these distant rural groups (Millis, Interview, 04/05/2010, Woolley, Interview, 25/09/2002). After much persistence, however, the two churches were accepted into the COC (Gear, McDonald, Interviews, 12/05/2000). On 16 October 1980 McDonald launched Taree COC with a ‘crusade’ led by Trevor Scott and Phil Pringle. Further crusades followed and these raised enough money to sponsor the *New Way of Living* programme on the local television station in northern NSW. This contributed to further growth. McDonald said that the goal of establishing new COC churches was in order ‘to give every Aussie the chance to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ’. Like the Brisbane COC, attendees at the Taree COC came from the Uniting, Catholic and other churches, and many were unchurched. McDonald was inspired by Taylor’s example of church planting, and he held crusades that led to churches being started in Singleton, Orange, Wellington, Wollongong North, Mudgee, Bathurst, Forster, Hornsby, Inverell, Gunnedah, Sydney’s northern beaches and towns in western NSW. David Shaeffer planted the church at Purfleet among Aboriginal people and at Port Macquarie, and Kevin Mattherson started a church at Coffs Harbour. In recognition of McDonald’s ability to plant and oversee these churches, Taylor appointed him as the state chairman of New South Wales COC in 1982.

The broadcasting of *A New Way of Living* on 16 stations in Queensland and several others in northern NSW, Victoria and South Australia increased the exposure of COC and this helped start further COC churches as viewers from mainstream churches showed interest in joining the COC. The viewing audience was estimated by the COC office at

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211 David McDonald, Interview, 27/06/2001.
300,000 people.\textsuperscript{213} As interest increased, television broadcasts were coordinated with further ‘church planting’ projects (Millis, Interview, 2000). However, it was much more difficult to start new COC churches in areas where the COC had not been televised (Earle, Interview, 15/08/2000).

The opportunity for the COC to use television in Australia was, however, short lived. In 1982 Australian television stations were networked and the cost of broadcast time increased tenfold, from $2,000 to $20,000 a week. At the same time, the increased expenses associated with the decision in the early 1980s to relocate the Brisbane COC and build a large megachurch auditorium meant that there were insufficient funds to continue television broadcasting.\textsuperscript{214} By this time it had already significantly lifted exposure to the COC and attendance at the Brisbane church.

**Overseas interest**

In 1981, Kevin Dales at the Innisfail COC was invited by a convert, Lafai Ituaso, to conduct an outreach to his Pacific island home of Tuvalu. Dales initially resisted this invitation because of his other commitments. However, Taylor encouraged him, saying, ‘You never know Kev. Give it a go. It might be God’. Dales finally agreed to lead the first Innisfail COC mission trip to Nauru, Kiribati and Tuvalu in late 1982.\textsuperscript{215} Encouraged by the positive reception to this initial mission, Dales led a second trip in the following year to the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Fiji, Nauru and the Gilbert Islands.\textsuperscript{216} Many Solomon Islands Christians showed interest in the COC demonstrative approaches to conversions and healings. The Islanders were eager to establish their own COC churches led by Solomon Islanders and this was assisted by short periods of leadership training.\textsuperscript{217}

From these small beginnings, the Innisfail COC became the main centre for establishing

\textsuperscript{213} Clark Taylor, Sermon, CT 26/12/1978pm “Jerusalem or Babylon”, Mt Tuchekoi, 1978.
\textsuperscript{214} Craig Anderson, Interview, 17/01/02.
\textsuperscript{215} Murray Townsend, Interview, 06/12/2002.
\textsuperscript{216} Chas Gullo, Interview, 14/03/2002.
\textsuperscript{217} Kevin Dales, Interview, 17/01/2002
COC churches overseas. Ashley Schmierer (Pacific/Europe), Murray Townsend (Solomon Islands), Fred Bartolo (Chile/Malta), David Harney (Pacific) and others from the Innisfail COC became the main leaders of the global expansion of the COC movement.

By the early 1980s the COC had moved from its beginnings as a small healing evangelism centre into a highly organized megachurch and denominational organization with churches emerging across the nation and even overseas. It was seeking to reach ‘Australia for Christ’ through television, schools and planned efforts to establish new churches in every Australian city and town with a population of over 8,000.

**Building the flock: 1982–1989**

**A suburban megachurch**

Taylor initially did not seek to establish a suburban megachurch in the way that AOG churches had. However, the role and identity of the Brisbane COC church changed considerably in 1982, with the decision to move from its inner city location to acreage amid the heavily populated middle to outer Brisbane suburbs in order to build a megachurch modelled on similar developments in the United States and Australia. The early inner city locations of the COC at Spring Hill, Woolloongabba and West End had followed the pattern that Taylor had seen in the large West End Methodist Church led by Arthur Preston, the Full Gospel Church led by Ian Munro and the Brisbane New Life Centre led by Trevor Chandler. The inner city locations helped these churches to grow to 1,000 attendees and made them some of the largest churches in Brisbane and Australia. However, difficulties with car parking, transport and space restrictions, together with very high land and building costs, made it difficult for inner city churches to grow beyond 1,000 attendees. The inner city location also restricted the development of the

218 After the move to Mansfield, Taylor developed a plan for a 40,000 seat auditorium at Mansfield with a wide range of associated facilities. *The Burning Bush* 1, p.1 Aug. 1981.
COC school and other associated facilities. Just as the shopping and entertainment centres were finding increased opportunities through relocation to the suburbs, some of the fastest growing Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches pursued similar opportunities by relocating to the suburbs. The facilities they established often resembled the commercial centres located nearby.

Taylor’s early experiences in farming had taught him the value of owning property, and his visits to North American had shown him what churches could do with sizable acreage. In 1978, Taylor had been introduced to a receiver of bankrupt stock who had 25 acres of land for sale at Wecker Road, Mt Gravatt for just $40,000. He saw the value in moving in ahead of the population growth, while the land was still cheap and said, ‘That’s got to be God.’ Although considered by many to be a secluded location in an undeveloped outer suburban area, what became known as the Mansfield acreage was close to suburbs and transport routes that were about to experience considerable growth. Its proximity to the Holland Park Methodist circuit where Taylor had previously ministered also brought an awareness of the potential. Taylor’s faith was again tested. For two years the Brisbane City Council delayed approval for rezoning as a place of worship, and the COC leaders almost sold the land.

In April 1981 the Brisbane City Council finally approved the church auditorium. Taylor and the COC leaders saw this as a further demonstration of the enabling power of God and divine support for further COC growth. In 1981, Taylor preached at the Durban Christian Centre in South Africa, where he was impressed by the design of a nearby auditorium. Plans were obtained to build a similar auditorium in Brisbane that could seat up to 2,500 people, with scope for extensions to accommodate 5,000, 11,000 and then 40,000 people.

219 Clark Taylor, 7th Birthday Sermon, 20/06/1981.
220 Clark Taylor, 7th Birthday Sermon, 20/06/1981.
222 Clark Taylor, 7th Birthday Sermon, 20/06/1981.
223 The Burning Bush 1, p.1 Aug. 1981
The COC leaders and founder often acted first, believing they had heard from God, and then later pursued resources to support their decisions. This was again the case with the COC building. The projected cost of the initial church complex was estimated at $2.5 million and on June 1981 the church executive announced it had signed an agreement for a loan of $3 million, with $1 million payment for the first stage due in six months.\textsuperscript{224} As the date for the first payment drew closer, the difficulty of raising the money became apparent. Taylor openly expressed his concern that the loan could send the church bankrupt\textsuperscript{225} and others agreed.\textsuperscript{226} However, a finance manager at the time had a different view, saying ‘These statements were part of the myth making. We had a valuable asset and good income that made such a purchase possible’.\textsuperscript{227} The warning that the bank was ready to foreclose was a strategy to motivate greater giving.\textsuperscript{228}

The first meeting in the partly completed building was held on 19th September 1982. To many attendees, the new location seemed a long way from the city centre and well finished premises that they were used to. The dirt track to the property was often flooded, making access difficult.\textsuperscript{229} Rick Bottomly (Interview, 2002) recalled,

> when the church moved to Mansfield things seemed to change. There was a sense that all the energy had been tied up in property building. The edge seemed to have been lost.

To prevent the loss of people from the northern suburbs of Brisbane, a new COC church was established at Pine Rivers.\textsuperscript{230} When attendance initially declined after the move to Mansfield, considerable effort was made to build the numbers up again. Taylor again invited guest speakers from overseas churches to help increase attendance and meet the

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\textsuperscript{224} Australia for Christ, Oct 1985, p. 4 \\
\textsuperscript{225} Clark Taylor, 05/08/2001. \\
\textsuperscript{226} Booth, Interview, 06/11/2001. \\
\textsuperscript{227} Interview, with a COC finance manager. \\
\textsuperscript{228} Hadden and Shupe (1988:108) note that one of the most common cries that bring in funds is that of the foreclosing bank. \\
\textsuperscript{229} Mulheran, Interview, 20/03/2001 \\
\textsuperscript{230} Len and Elizabeth Morris, Interview, 20/11/2002.
\end{flushright}
Attendance eventually recovered and grew to much higher levels than the COC had previously known, passing 2000 over a weekend for the first time. The completion of the South Eastern Expressway and the Gateway Arterial in the following years positioned the Mansfield acreage in the centre of a major suburban growth corridor, with over one million people within 20 minutes’ driving distance of the centre. This contributed to further growth.

Registration as a denomination

As the number of churches affiliated with the Brisbane COC megachurch increased, a decision was made in 1981 to change the COC constitution from its focus on a single Brisbane church to a networked church denomination. The primary objectives of COC are outlined in their Constitution, which states their goal to “establish a centre or centres for the promotion of the Christian faith” and “to reach Australia for Jesus Christ in the most effective way possible in the shortest possible time.” Constitutional ordination of COC Pastors began on the 6 April 1981 and the Australian Government Attorney General’s Department recognized the COC as a religious organization and denomination in 1982. The nine pastors who were deemed to have been ordained by the COC prior to this were officially recognized. This registration gave opportunity for church leaders to be registered as ministers of religion and to conduct marriages under the Marriage Act of 1961. The denominational registration and constitutional changes also made it easier to borrow money to purchase property and construct new buildings. These changes contributed to increased interest in starting new COC churches. The centralization of the COC in 1981 was to enable finance to be raised to support the building of new churches.

231 The speakers included the New Zealand charismatic speaker, Tom Marshall, who came in January 1980, Fred Roberts from Durban Christian Centre, South Africa in December 1981, and Drummond Thom from South Africa in mid 1982, indicating further development of international relationship networks.
232 The Religious Educational and Charitable Institutions Acts 1861 to 1967, Constitution of COC, Objects: B, C. Object A is the standard “object” of all Constitutions, hence B and C are paramount in COC’s ethos.
in a rapidly growing movement (Pennycuick, Correspondence, 1/10/2002; Earle, Interview, 1/10/2002).

**The sale of Mt Tuchekoi**

The growth of the COC was assisted by its openness to change as new realities became apparent. In spite of the vision to establish an international conference centre and expenditure of $300,000 to upgrade the Mt Tuchekoi property, the conditions there remained primitive and the costs of further expansion increased.\(^{234}\) The social standing of the COC attendees had increased and the demand for camps at Mt Tuchekoi decreased. The property was increasingly considered too far away and too hard to maintain, and it offered many activities that were not central to the COC mission. COC leaders also recognized the need to consolidate their activities as the expenses required to maintain the Mansfield COC had increased (Millis, Interview, 04/06/2010. In 1982, the Mt Tuchekoi property was sold to Nudgee College which developed it as a school campsite.\(^{235}\)

The decision to sell the Mt Tuchekoi site brought further changes to the identity of the COC. The initial growth of the COC was assisted by establishing a social enclave that isolated attendees from secular society and built strong in-group bonding. The regular ‘retreats’ into the isolation at Mt Tuchekoi provided a site for enthusiastic gatherings where ‘other worldly’ hopes in millennialism and Latter Rain movement beliefs were encouraged.\(^{236}\) While such gatherings can be helpful in strengthening group identity in the short term, too strong in-group bonding can be detrimental if it continues for too long because of its promotion of sectarian tendencies and strong internal power structures that reduce accountability.

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\(^{234}\) At the Mt Tuchekoi camp in 1978 a collection was taken towards the $30,000 owing at that time. Mt Tuchekoi Christmas Convention, Saturday, pm, 30/12/1978, Audio Tape; $60,000 was still owed in 1978. Clark Taylor, Sermon, Mt Tuchekoi, 26/12/1978 pm.


\(^{236}\) The theory that sheltered enclaves aid religious groups has been advanced by Berger & Luckmann 1966a, Berger 1967 and Hunter 1987.
By way of contrast, the decision of COC church leaders to pursue growth opportunities by building a multifunction megachurch auditorium in the Brisbane suburbs required the church to engage more fully with society and reject sectarian tendencies. A similar change was seen in the decision to relocate the Brisbane COC school to Mansfield, and the change from the North American ACE school system to the mainstream state government curriculum. It is also apparent in many other Australian megachurches.

Other Pentecostal groups that continued to isolate themselves on remote sites did not fare well. The Latter Rain inspired Brisbane Christian Fellowship moved to an isolated 25 hectares north west of Brisbane. Its sect-like developments were said to have been detrimental to the lives of attendees and to have encouraged leadership abuse (Courier Mail & ‘Call to probe’ ABC News, 23 June 2008). The Melbourne Christian Fellowship faced similar assessment (Zwartz, 2008). The Logos foundation initially moved to the Blue Mountains west of Sydney in 1978, then to acreage in Toowoomba, Queensland in 1986. Its leaders were also accused of sect-like behaviour and abuse of their positions. The Logos movement disbanded after a sexual abuse scandal led to the resignation of its founder, Howard Carter in 1991 (Harrison 2006).

In a further demonstration of COC’s increased openness, Harry Westcott from the charismatic O’Connor Uniting Church in Canberra and founder of Vision Ministries was invited to officially open the COC auditorium on 28 May 1983.

Home cells

While large churches offer wide ranging resources and professional presentations, they often lack opportunities for developing the personal relationships needed to maintain

attendance and be a true church. Many have established small homogenous or ‘home’
groups to maintain more effectively high levels of commitment, conformity and church
participation (Finke 1994:8). As Warren and Jackson (2001:10) note

Contrary to popular notions, smaller churches are much more likely to grow than larger
ones… Larger churches need to find ways of acting ‘small’—of building the relational
advantages of small size groupings into their everyday life.

In recognition of this need, the Brisbane COC emphasized the importance of attendee
involvement in home cells. In the early 1980s, it coordinated over 60 home cell meetings
and by 1988 this had grown to approximately 120 home cells (Earle, Interview,
15/8/2000). Home cell leaders were encouraged use books such as Yonggi Cho’s
Successful Home Cell Groups and Robert and Julia Banks’, The Church Comes Home
(1989) and similar resources to develop their small groups. The efforts to develop home
cells were reported in the COC magazine (August 1991) which warned that home groups
should not play religious music, offer long prayers or talk about religion or religious
groups.239 Home cells were also considered a place where potential leaders had the
opportunity to develop skills that could be later used in a church setting.240 The home
cells were encouraged to use the latest technologies. Video Home Groups were also
established in remote locations where those who were interested in the COC could listen
to Taylor’s preaching.241

Prophetic motivators

The visits of North American and Pacific Rim ‘prophets’ further motivated the COC
leaders and their congregations to believe they were important participants in God’s plans
who should be willing to make sacrifices to aid church and national expansion. In May
1982 Roger Teale from Kentucky, USA, prophesied,

241 Ps Peter Pennycuick “My Recollections of Christian Outreach Centre History” personal
 correspondence, received 27/05/2002; Clark Taylor, Sermon, 26/10/1983 am.
Bill Hamon from Santa Rosa Beach, Florida (1985)\textsuperscript{242} Jan Painter from Kentucky, USA (1985)\textsuperscript{243}, Drummond Thom from USA (1985) and Marcus Arden, from New Zealand in (1988)\textsuperscript{244} and other preachers prophesied that the COC attendees were participants in a divinely initiated period of expansion predestined by God. With this prophetic encouragement, Taylor and the COC leaders encouraged the attendees to donate in support of further expansion. They engaged a team of architects to prepare plans for an expanded COC complex that would include a shopping centre, retirement village, nursing home, hostel and a sizable university campus.\textsuperscript{245}

**Expansion through church planting: 1984 onward**

In May 1984 Taylor initiated a four-week ministry training school where he encouraged many of those who attended to volunteer to plant new COC churches. This was repeated each January in the years that followed. The number of new churches started each year increased to 13 in 1986, 28 in 1987, 38 in 1988 and a peak of 39 new churches started in 1989. The COC again used television as an aid to growth in 1985 and 1986. These presentations differed from the older Sunday televcasts, in that short televised testimonials and professionally prepared advertisements were broadcast. It was estimated that up to 900,000 people saw these short programmes up to four times a week. Although the cost of $500,000 was high, it was considered worthwhile because it helped to swell attendance.\textsuperscript{246}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{242} Video, *The Past Eleven Years*, 1985; Australia for Christ, November, 1986, p. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Australia for Christ. Oct 1985, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Australia for Christ 1988, p. 8
\item \textsuperscript{245} Video, *The Past Eleven Years*, 1985.
\item \textsuperscript{246} Stillianos, Interview, 28/03/2002.
\end{itemize}
In October 1985 the first edition of *Australia for Christ*, the Christian Outreach Centre newspaper, was launched. This monthly newsletter was designed to document the testimonies of miracle healings, to link the growing numbers of Christian Outreach Centres throughout eastern Australia and to promote the COC message to the unchurched. The newsletter was an effective means of sharing testimony, news and encouragement. It was used for evangelism, and was posted to 1,500 pastors throughout Australia and overseas. At that time there were 32 centres in Queensland, 12 in New South Wales and one each in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. The COC had developed into a denomination that was offering an increasing number of programmes and resources outside of those being offered by the megachurch.

**Further growth of the Brisbane megachurch complex**

The success of the COC leaders in achieving their goals was dependent on their ability to attract large attendance and financial donations, and the pursuit of large offerings became a major goal of the COC leadership. The huge attendance provided finance for a $750,000 extension which was completed in February 1986. This increased the seating capacity to 5,500, making Mansfield COC Australia’s largest church auditorium. In 1986, 3,000 people were attending the Sunday morning services and about 2,000 were taking communion. Hughes (1996:48) claimed this made the COC the largest ‘Pentecostal’ church in Australia at that time. However, the COC was not a classical Pentecostal church like the AOG, but an independent neo-Pentecostal church that was more open to religious innovations such as demonstrative forms of divine healing and faith confession.

As the COC school grew, the possibility of establishing a tertiary college was considered.

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247 *Australia for Christ* Oct 1985, p. 5; *Australia for Christ* Nov 1986, p.11. The COC was replaced as Australia’s largest church in the late 1980s by Hills Christian Life Centre, which was established in the north western Sydney suburbs in 1983.
In 1986 Taylor appointed Brian Millis to establish the Christian Heritage College to provide tertiary education for Year 12 school graduates and to train teachers to teach in COC and other Christian schools. In contrast to other church based colleges, the COC tertiary college was unique in that it emphasized general tertiary studies as its main focus rather than ministry and theological training. On the 23 February 1986, the Christian Heritage College opened with Brian Millis as its principal. The growth of the Christian schools movement provided a demand for education graduates and steady growth of the College followed. Like the COC school, the COC college has transitioned from an emphasis on protection and isolation of students from the outside world and it has become a site for greater engagement with society. However, ministry training was kept physically separate from the college because they were viewed as more closely related to church life. This reflects the unique way that the COC saw education, as separate from ministry, and ministry as an experience that is caught rather than knowledge that can be taught.

The growth of the COC school, college and other facilities prompted the COC leaders to look for opportunities for further land purchases. In typical Clark Taylor and COC fashion, large commitments were made followed by efforts to raise the necessary resources. In 1986 a $20,000 deposit was paid on six adjoining 60 acre blocks of land advertised for sale for $500,000 each. The vendor insisted that they be purchased as one 360 acre lot with vendor finance and payments due every six months. The COC leaders again looked to North American churches for guidance. Gene Rumley, from the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, was brought to Australia to assist with the fund raising needed to purchase this land. Taylor had a reputation for using his charismatic personality to persuade people to donate and his own sacrificial example encouraged other people to commit to his cause.\textsuperscript{249} Donations enabled two of the blocks comprising a total of 119 acres to be purchased, in addition to the existing 25 acre property. The other blocks were sold off to pay the debt. This gave the COC one of the largest suburban

\textsuperscript{249} Stillianos, Interview, 28/03/2002.
church properties in Australia. The narrative of the fund raising and land purchase was frequently retold by Taylor and the church leaders as an example of God’s miraculous provision to encourage further donations.

**Increased ministry training**

A rapid expansion of the number of AOG churches followed their adoption of practices of Yonggi Cho and the church growth and church planting approaches of the Fuller School of World Missions in 1977. The smaller and younger COC movement were slower to adopt these approaches. However, encouraged by their successes at establishing new churches in the late 1970s and early 1980s, they pursued planned efforts at church planting emphasis in the mid 1980s. Bob Orr, the Vice President of the Institute for American Church Growth at Pasadena, CA, was the main speaker at the second national COC Pastors’ and Leaders’ Conference in October 1986. Taylor (Interview, 1999) attributes Orr’s emphasis on follow up discipleship and friendship networks to helping redress and earlier over emphasis on evangelism without sufficient follow up. 150 delegates from churches across Australia and overseas attended the Ministry Training School run from 5 January to 15 February 1987 and 30 started new COC churches during the following six months. In the following year 100 delegates attended and a further 30 churches were started. Taylor again used a franchise like approach that was based on four to six weeks training period and trust in Holy Spirit empowerment. Trainees were expected to raise their financial support from the locations they were sent to. However, in hindsight, many found that the short period of training was not sufficient to prepare them for the task of establishing and growing a sizable church. Only a motivational talk from Taylor convinced them to continue for another twelve months. This was difficult to sustain and by 1999 some 65 per cent of those who had been sent out were no longer in ministry. The need for more training also became apparent when pastors with little

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250 Stillianos, Interview, 28/03/2002.
251 Stillianos, Interview, 28/03/2002.
252 Matt Rhys, correspondence.
training were required to send in tapes of their preaching and many were found to be preaching ‘heresy’.  

Recognizing the need for more training, Taylor introduced a more extensive six-month course for potential church leaders in 1986. This was extended to a twelve-month course in 1987. These longer courses were optional, with many potential pastors electing to attend the shorter four-week training courses and ongoing distance education programmes.

The Brisbane COC Bible College was established in 1987. In typical COC pioneering fashion, it began without curriculum or staff, with few resources and just 23 students. Building on links that Taylor formed with New Zealand NLC churches, Pastor Robert Pullar from Timaru New Life Centre in New Zealand was invited to be the founding Principal. In contrast to the more academic approach that is part of training in traditional mainstream churches, the COC courses emphasized basic theology, leadership, character development, attitudes for successful living and how to build a church. Pullar said that the purpose of the COC Bible School was ‘to give practical training; help students find their personal identity; lead students to fulfil God’s purpose in their lives by preparing them for Christian service; and to teach them the ways of the Spirit’. The college also used new technologies including a Video Bible College with videotapes of the lectures mailed out to students. In late 1988 a specialized building was constructed for the Bible College at Mansfield at a cost of approximately $650,000.

In an effort to lift training further, Peter Earle was appointed as the Dean and Principal Lecturer of the School of Ministry in late 1989 with the task of developing more extensive training programmes. Earle was a Methodist with a farming background who

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257 Australia for Christ Dec 1989, p. 18.
had completed a Diploma of Ministry at Melodyland School of Theology in America. He established the COC church in Bundaberg. After his appointment, he completed Bachelor of Ministry and Master of Ministry studies with Oral Roberts University. Through the Bible College’s association with the Brisbane CHC, the COC ministry gained government accreditation for a two-year Associate Diploma of Ministry, followed by a Bachelor of Ministry and postgraduate courses. The granting of government support for students increased enrolments. It also increased reliance on government credentialing and promoted the development of greater accountability and stronger relationships with other denominations and tertiary institutions. With increased accreditation requirements, earlier texts by local Australian Pentecostal Latter Rain authors were replaced with books by more widely recognized overseas evangelical scholars that included George Eldon Ladd, Robert Gundry, Rodman Williams, and Gordon Fee. The earlier emphasis on ‘second coming,’ ‘spiritual gifts’ and ‘biblical symbolism’ was also replaced by more conventional Bible College curricula that emphasized mainstream evangelical theology, hermeneutics, church history and ministry practice (COC Course Outline, 1997). When Earle was given oversight of the COC in Chile, his more highly developed ministry and theological training approaches became the basis for training these leaders.

Expansion in the Pacific

In 1986, four students from the Solomon Islands trained at the Innisfail COC in Australia before returning to establish further COC Churches in the Solomon Islands. However, some of the older mainstream churches resented the COC intrusion, and physical attacks on COC buildings and attendees followed. Young people were pressured to cease attending. Despite this initial persecution, many Islanders were attracted by the contemporary music, dynamic notions of spiritual warfare, testimonies of healing and simple experiential preaching of the COC. Over time, the COC has become more widely

258 Levi and Melody Lauasi and Sunhil and Renate Dhari returned to the Solomon Islands to establish COC Churches there. Australia for Christ, June, 1988, p. 3.
259 Some young people were beaten by their parents when they professed religious conversion. A New Way of Living Magazine, June, 1989, p. 17; July/Aug 1991, p. 32.
accepted and persecutions waned. The COC became a driving force behind the formation of the Evangelical Fellowship of the South Pacific (EFSP), which was a regional grouping of evangelical and Pentecostal religious groups formed with the goal of uniting Christians who were working for church renewal and global evangelism, particularly through regional conferences. By June 1989, approximately 1,500 people were attending the Solomon Islands COC churches. This increased to about 2,800 adherents attending 28 ‘centres’ by 2002, mainly around the capital, Honiara, and Guadalcanal (Ernst 2002a:226).

The opportunity to establish COC churches in Fiji came in 1987 when a Fijian AOG pastor, Isiraeli Valu, left the AOG to join the COC. Valu said he was attracted to the COC by its refreshing approach and by Taylor’s notions of ‘moving in the Spirit’, divine healing, and ‘words of knowledge’. Taylor’s COC ministry appeared to be more dynamic that of the older traditional Methodist and AOG churches in Fiji, which Valu said were staid and outdated. The COC also faced opposition from the traditional churches in Fiji who accused the COC leaders of promoting a form of Americanization involving television, repeated requests for donations, questionable claims of miraculous and healings, and a questionable ‘prosperity’ message. As in the Solomon Islands, this opposition moderated over time as the COC and its practices became more widely accepted.

Osea Kwisaqoro from Nadi COC in Fiji (Interview, 14/01/03) recalls that Pentecostalism is the fastest growing group in Fiji, as people leave the Methodist church for the COC and other Pentecostal churches. He says that reasons for this include, the attraction of Pentecostal praise and worship, use of contemporary music, youth programs, give leadership responsibility to youth and younger adults, Bible based preaching, less compromise with the world and less pressure on financial giving.

260 Australia for Christ, June, 1989, p. 16. Townsend questions this, suggesting that at this early stage there may have been as few as 500 people attending.
261 Valma Ryan, Interview, 27/02/2004; David Inoke, Interview, 27/02/2004.
262Valma Ryan, Interview, 27/02/2004; David Inoke, Interview, 27/02/2004.
Australian COC leaders concerned about the lack of training of the Fijian leaders established projects to train South Pacific island leaders. In 1989 four overseas students from Fiji together with two from Papua New Guinea (PNG) trained at the Mansfield COC School of Ministry, before returning to establish churches in Fiji and PNG. Further training was offered to potential Fijian leaders and by 1996, nine COC churches had been established in Fiji. The COC also established a primary school in Fiji using the ACE system. Andrew Niedeck (Interview 10/06/05), an AOG and COC missionary to PNG and the Solomon Islands, recalls that the Pacific Island nations already had a strong belief in the spirit world and they were attracted by the COC emphasis on the spirit world.

In 1988, Taylor conducted an outreach to Papua New Guinea and his demonstrations of the power of God through miracles, healings, words of knowledge, laying on of hands and falling under the power of the spirit attracted much interest. Francis Apurel, who was a pastor with the CLC at the time, found the COC ministry more dynamic than the CLC and he joined the COC. Apurel travelled to Brisbane in 1989 and trained at the Brisbane School of Ministries before returning to Papua New Guinea to establish the first COC church at the Waigani administrative college with his Australian wife, Pauline. Apurel’s experience working in the Prime Minister’s Department in PNG helped him to register the new church with the government. The COC was officially incorporated in PNG in December 1989. Pastor Matthew Roni also left the CLC to become a pastor with the COC about this time.

In Papua New Guinea, the new COC group were initially persecuted and there was “planti tok baksait” about the church by other Christians, particularly those who attended

263 The students from Fiji were Allen Bhimsen (now at Northside COC), Jona Wagairagata, Soko Loge, and Kenneth George Prasad. The students from Papua New Guinea were Malcolm Kundopen and Tom Simon Wavik. *A New Way of Living* Magazine, May, 1989, p. 18.
traditional churches that objected to the COC practices of speaking in tongues, clapping, dancing and laying hands on the sick. They also strongly objected to the practice of adult water baptism, and spread a rumour that people were being baptized in boiling water. Some, like Mark Barimahi, a leader of Anglican youth work and son of an Anglican minister, faced strong opposition and he was asked to leave the Anglican church. He found that the COC gave him an opportunity to continue in his evangelical, Pentecostal practices. The COC also attracted large numbers of young people through its use of contemporary music and well developed youth programmes. Other churches were commenced in the PNG highlands in 1989 at Kilau and Ialibu under the pioneering leadership of Pastors Edward Wange and Dick Pombo.

David Wakefield (Correspondence, 16/12/2002) who is International Anthropology Coordinator SIL International recalls that

so far as I can see, joining COC was based on personal dissatisfaction with his religious experience to date. It was not an act of rebellion against extant social structures (Anglican or Miniafia), but rather a choice for experiencing God more ecstatically and intimately than he had known within the Anglican tradition.

Wakefield recalled that COC attendees maintain their village family ties as best they can and show real concern for the welfare of their non urban family members.

Expansion in New Zealand

In the mid 1980s, some Pastors from the New Life Centres in New Zealand moved to Australia and joined the COC. They were part of a wider migration of New Zealanders to Australia in the 1970s. Mike Connell, a New Zealand New Life Centre pastor who came to Australia in the mid 1980s to assist Taylor returned to New Zealand to start the Hawkes Bay COC in 1986. In the next six years the church grew to over four hundred

266 Mark Parimahi, Interview, 28/09/2004
people using Taylor’s methods (*A New Way of Living Magazine*, December 1991, p.18). Other former NLC leaders joined Connell and they started five interconnected COC churches in New Zealand in the 1980s. Other New Zealand citizens also came to Brisbane COC to be trained. Hap and Faith Seed left their dairy farm at Mangatangu in New Zealand to train at Mansfield COC and they returned to New Zealand in 1988 and established a COC church (*Australia for Christ*, May 1988, p.2). Peter and Jan Campbell were New Zealand dairy farmers who came to Australia before returning to lead COC Auckland North Shore Church in 1990. Some Australian COC pastors, including Ron and Lyn Strode, Peter and Jan Hoggerty and Jim and Jane Sullivan, also moved to New Zealand to establish COC churches there. However, the most successful COC churches in New Zealand were started by New Zealand nationals who were sensitive to the quieter, more reflective and more refined New Zealand culture and way of life than Australians generally (Jan Campbell, Interview, 20/08/2003). At the same time, the training of the New Zealand leaders in Australia helped to maintain the unity and uniformity of the COC practices and beliefs.

**The megachurch and Australian COC at their zenith: 1986–1989**

The continued viability and vitality of the COC were enhanced by balancing periods of centralized, institutional developments with the continued encouragement of decentralized, deinstitutional developments that had innovative programmes, new products, mergers, acquisitions, and the starting of new offshoots. This balance is typical of organizations in general (Meyer, Brooks & Goes 1990). While the identity and vision for the COC in its early years had been maintained by camps, retreats, conferences and pastoral visits, this became more difficult as the movement expanded. The expansion of the COC into a national and international movement of widely dispersed churches was accompanied by the development of centralized organizational and administrative structures. Growth at the Brisbane megachurch appeared to peak in 1986 after the

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completion of a new building extension at 3,600 weekly attendees (National office statistics, Mulheran interview 2002) with similar attendance continuing to 1989. In 1988, a national office was established to oversee the Australian and overseas churches and to manage the finances, property, assets and statistical reports. The office also produced and distributed pastors’ manuals, ethics manuals and other support literature as well as coordinating overseas ministry teams, organizing pastors’ and leaders’ conferences and developing the ministry training school.\textsuperscript{271} Rob Couper, who had experience in bank administration and accountancy, was placed in charge and appointed to set up the administration centre.

From 5 February 1988\textsuperscript{272} \textit{A New Way of Living} was again televised in Brisbane. These broadcasts aided the further growth of Mansfield COC to reach a peak of over 3,800 weekly attendees.\textsuperscript{273} Broadcasting ceased in late 1988 because of costs. Church records show that the Brisbane COC church membership peaked in March 1989 at 4,231, with 3,914 confirmed as being actively involved. The school and tertiary college were also growing. Many churches around the country were modelling themselves on the COC and its approach to ministry. The COC was training potential leaders and seeking to plant churches across Australia. By 1989 the COC movement had established 164 churches, employing 350 pastors, with 20,100 people attending COC meetings each week. COC statistics claim that over 50 per cent of these attendees were not previously attending another church regularly (Chapple 1995 \textit{History of COC}).

In the late 1980s the COC worked to strengthen its presence in Australia’s capital cities. David and Trish McDonald moved from the Brisbane megachurch to Parramatta in Sydney on 24 August 1989 and over three years the church in Sydney grew from 120 to 450 people. Craig Anderson moved from Brisbane to Melbourne, Victoria and Geoff Woodward from Brisbane moved to Perth in Western Australia. The COC also expanded

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{A New Way of Living} Magazine, March, 1989, p. 2; Rob Couper, Interview, 11/03/2002.
\textsuperscript{272} \textit{Australia for Christ}, March 1988, pp. 2, 8.
\textsuperscript{273} \textit{Australia for Christ}, November, 1986, p. 11; \textit{Australia for Christ} Oct 1985, p. 5.
its influence overseas. Australian Pastors Ian and Sue Spencer pioneered a church in Swindon in the United Kingdom in 1989 which would provide a bridgehead for further growth in Europe.

As the COC grew, the range of motivations for involvement was increased by further programmes that met the needs of the disadvantaged. By November 1987, thirteen Caring Arm shops had been established\(^{274}\) to raise money for needy people and a ‘Byways’ programme was set up to provide food and help for the homeless.\(^{275}\) While these shops and programmes closed within a few years, similar programmes took their place.

### The Bible belt as social context

In Brisbane, the rapid population growth in the adjoining south east Brisbane suburbs of Holland Park, Mansfield, Mount Gravatt and Carindale assisted the growth of some of Brisbane’s largest shopping, entertainment and school complexes in this band of suburbs. The large numbers of young families and youth moving into the area aided the growth of three large Brisbane megachurches, just five minutes’ drive from each other. This led some journalists to refer to the existence of ‘Brisbane’s south side Bible Belt’\(^{276}\). The Garden City AOG purchased 10 acres in the Garden City suburb in 1977, about five minutes’ drive from the Brisbane COC. An auditorium was completed in 1983 with seating for over 2,000 attendees. The charismatic Baptist Holland Park–Gateway Church purchased 32 acres of land on Capalaba Road in nearby Mt Gravatt in 1989. A 1,500 seat auditorium was opened in 1993. Although the classic Pentecostal Garden City AOG church, charismatic mainstream Gateway Baptist church and the neo-Pentecostal Christian Outreach Centre (COC) met slightly different demographic and clientele needs, the combined drawing power of the three churches, and the free flow of attendees between them, aided the growth of each one. Vaughan (1993:77ff) and Thumma and

\(^{274}\) Australia for Christ, June, November, 1987: 2.
\(^{275}\) Australia for Christ, November 1986.
\(^{276}\) Times on Sunday, 26/10/1986.
Travis (2007) observed a similar trend for North America megachurches to be located mostly in the populous suburbs of the largest cities, so as to develop Bible belts.

Over time, and with growth, the three Brisbane megachurches also became more interested in exerting political influence. The support of the Pentecostal Garden City AOG Church at Mt Gravatt, the neo-Pentecostal Christian Outreach Centre at Mansfield and the charismatic Holland Park Baptist Church, formed a ‘Bible belt’ of electorates that included Mt Gravatt, Mansfield and Greenslopes (Harrison 1991:457ff). Ian Henderson, a member of the Garden City megachurch, was elected to parliament from 1983 to 1989. He argued that the outcome of the elections depended on the Christian vote.²⁷⁷ Leisha Harvey, a Roman Catholic, attended a number of churches including the COC to gain support and in 1983 she won the blue ribbon Liberal seat of Greenslopes from sitting Liberal member Bill Hewitt. Craig Sherrin, a Church of Christ deacon who identified with the neo-Pentecostals won the seat of Mansfield in 1986. Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen spoke of his identification with these megachurches and their reaction to the perceived liberalism of the mainline churches, stating he had sympathy with their cause and with their emphasis on prosperity and progress.²⁷⁸

The three megachurches appear to have contributed to the outcome of the 1983 and 1986 Queensland state elections which helped Bjelke-Petersen’s National Party to hold power and win enough seats to govern in its own right. Joh Bjelke-Petersen even pre-emptively announced the ‘Joh for PM’ campaign in the Garden City megachurch in 1986.²⁷⁹ However, Bjelke-Petersen’s regime began to crumble in late 1987 when revelations of corruption were made by the Fitzgerald Inquiry. There is a profound irony in the notion of a ‘godly government’ led by Bjelke-Petersen largely being remembered as a state government associated with corruption allegations. The National Party held on to power

²⁷⁸ Typical of this support was Bjelke-Petersen’s involvement in the ‘Australia In Crisis rally, For Faith, Family And Constitution’ at Brisbane Town Hall on 22 July 1984, see leaflet, Audacity, No. 23, November 1984, p. 10.
for two more years, but was defeated on 7 December 1989. Interestingly, the Bjelke-Petersen government fell at about the same time that the leaders of the three megachurches resigned for a variety of reasons, all of which can all be linked to the weakness of giving a great deal of autocratic power to charismatic leaders with insufficient systems of accountability. The three conservative Christian politicians in the Bible belt seats who were supported by the megachurches, Henderson, Harvey and Sherrin, all lost their seats in the 1989 Queensland state election, about the same time.

In other Australian states during the 1980s, other Australian Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches that had experienced a similar rapid growth began to look for acreages on which they too could build larger auditoriums to cater for increased attendance. In Sydney the Hills Christian Life Centre (CLC) purchased land at Baulkam Hills that assisted the congregation to grow to 7,000 weekly attendees by the late 1980s. The Sydney Christian City Church (CCC) purchased a large acreage during the late 1980s, and built an auditorium that was able to cater for a congregation that had grown to 4,000 weekly. Similar developments were seen in Australia’s second largest city, Melbourne. The Waverley Christian Fellowship in Melbourne purchased acreage and built an auditorium in the suburb of Waverly that provided facilities for Australia’s second largest congregation. In Melbourne also, the Blackburn Baptist Church and Careforce Church of Christ churches also purchased acreages and built large churches about that time.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the COC as it grew from a central city, healing evangelism centre during the charismatic renewal in the 1970s, and transitioned into a megachurch located on suburban acreage in the 1980s. The chapter showed how initial growth of the COC was aided by local Australian leaders’ early adoption of global movements associated with demonstrative approaches to divine healing, instant conversion, words of knowledge, faith confession and millennialism. The early growth of the COC was shown to be an entrepreneurial stage that was dependent on Taylor’s charismatic leadership, as
is often the case in fast growing churches (Wagner 1976:63) and organizations (Schein 2004:225, 299). Further growth was enhanced through the collectivity stage where potential leaders were empowered to start COC churches and new activities in new locations which contributed to the enlarging of the goals for the COC and national and international objectives. As with many organizational developments, this required diversification and functional specialization (Mintzberg 1984:213). As Greiner (1972:37) notes, growth requires delegation, decentralization, adaptation and willingness to pursue revolutionary change so as to exploit new opportunities while also avoiding the difficulties arising from insufficient coordination, communication and centralized control. The growth of the COC was also assisted by the use of television and other media, contemporary music and preaching themes. This chapter also showed how COC expansion into new locations and its development as a national denomination was aided by the use of a low-cost model to reproduce churches that can be likened to franchising. However, this model was found to be costly in terms of a high failure rate. Growth of the suburban megachurch and a national church network was further assisted by the decision to leave isolationist, sectarian developments represented by the Mt Tuchekoi retreats and to engage more fully with society. At the same time, it could be argued that COC pursuit of large attendance and conversions, use of television and contemporary media, and consumer orientated approach to marketing its message have also created difficulties for the COC, potentially causing it to deviate from core evangelical Christian beliefs and practices and adopt a contemporary consumer oriented message. The question of whether this is the case will be examined in the final chapter.

The growth of COC was further assisted by diversification into schooling. The next chapter will examine the expansion of the COC into primary, secondary and tertiary education more fully. The transition from isolation from society to increased interaction with the wider society was increased through requirements for school and tertiary college government accreditation and support. The next chapter will consider the contribution that this made to changes in the identity and development of the COC. The next chapter also provides further evidence that the COC decision to abandon its initial aim of isolating attendees and their children from the wider society, and replacing it with a fuller
engagement with society, has helped it to become a more effective organization that is more beneficial to attendees, the church and society.
Psalm 78:4 New King James Version, ‘We will not hide them from their children, 
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, 
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.’

One of the great challenges that churches face is the need to pass on their beliefs, values and culture to the next generation while simultaneously equipping the younger generations to fully engage with the wider society. This challenge has become even more urgent as societies have become more multifaceted and secularized, as the length and role of education has increased, and as the government education sector has grown in complexity and size (Bouma & Hughes 1998:18ff). The COC and other Pentecostal churches and megachurches have sought to respond to the increased demands and emphasis on secondary and tertiary education in a number of ways.

Firstly, they have sought to challenge the secular notion of the importance of education, to disempower it by mocking it, emphasizing the value of pragmatism, experience, supernatural revelation and relationships as alternative sources of knowledge.280 Hutchinson (2009) observes that this attitude of anti-intellectualism, ‘essentially locked Pentecostals out of one of the most influential areas of idea formation in Australian life.’ At the same time, these Pentecostal groups were not opposed to scholarly learning. They were opposed to an overemphasis on one form of academic intellectualism that excluded other sources of knowledge from practical experience, spiritual revelation, and relational learning.281

281 Alison Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003.
Secondly, some Pentecostal groups sought to control the knowledge, values and world views that their children were exposed to by establishing their own alternative educational institutions. By doing this, they hoped to isolate their students from the corrosive effects of the wider world and secular schools. Their efforts were motivated by concerns arising from developments and changes brought about by progressive educational developments and wider changes in society, including greater pluralism and secularism. As the COC founder Clark Taylor said, the COC School provided opportunities for parents ‘to bring up their children in a Christian environment that would shelter them from the changes occurring in society’. 282

Thirdly, having established alternative education systems, many Pentecostal groups including the COC increasingly recognized the benefits that these private education systems brought when combined with a willingness to engage more fully with contemporary society, and educational, social and government support networks. Opportunities for the development of new, low fee, church schools increased in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s because of greater ecumenical co-operation and increased government state aid to private education. However, state government accreditation and federal government financial aid required increased networking, accountability and openness to contemporary education developments. The government system provided a forum for the dissemination and resolution of concerns about differences in standards and aims of government and non-government schools and a means by which educational standards, curricula and approaches were standardized and developed. While these requirements led to some secularization, they also provided opportunities for a more complete fulfilment of the churches’ mission and a fuller engagement with the needs and opportunities in society. Having entered into dialogue with government and higher education institutions and wider networks, the Pentecostal schools and churches have been changed by this engagement, increasingly accepting other, more complex systems

of belief and practice, and developing new approaches that combine concerns raised by secular society with Christian ideals.

Many of the goals of Christian schooling have fitted well with the goals of megachurches. In Queensland, the strong growth of COC and AOG churches and megachurches provided support for establishing some of the largest Christian schools in that state. The establishment of new Christian schools in Queensland was assisted by the conservative Bjelke-Petersen government. Fewer COC and AOG church and megachurch schools were started in New South Wales, where new Christian schools were initiated mainly by Baptists and were smaller than in Queensland. Some megachurches also developed schools in Victoria, but most new Christian schools in Victoria and Tasmania were ‘parent controlled schools’ developed by the Dutch Reformed church movement. The large size of the Brisbane COC school, with over 1,400 students, and the development of an associated tertiary college is a unique development. Although many COC churches sought to establish schools, only the four largest churches were able to establish viable schools that continue to exist. Of these, the Brisbane COC ‘Citipointe’ school remains the largest with over 1,400 students.

This chapter examines the development of COC schools, including the initial pursuit of isolation and use of the fundamentalist North American Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system. It then examines major transitions in COC schools, including the appointment of new leadership, relocation of the Brisbane school to the suburbs, replacing the ACE system with the Queensland government curriculum, increased engagement with wider education networks and society, and the events that led to the establishment of a tertiary college in 1986.

**The emergence of the New Christian Schools movement**

The COC schools did not arise in isolation, but as part of a low fee Christian schools movement that sprang up in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s. Growth of this movement
was supported by an increased demand for education, increased ecumenical openness and the provision of government financial support. It was modelled on similar European and North American developments (Hogan 1987:252). Up until the 1960s, most Australian church schools either charged high fees or were Catholic private schools. However, the 1962 ‘Goulburn strike’ highlighted the contribution that Catholic and private schools were making to Australia’s education systems (Ward 1977:315; Barcan 1980:317). In 1963, the federal government reintroduced state aid to private schools, reversing the secularizing trend in government relationships with Australian private schools and the absence of state aid from 1870 to 1960 (Hogan 1987:252). The first low fee evangelical ‘parent-controlled’ Christian schools were established by Dutch migrants in 1962, and their success provided a model from which other denominations could learn (Bouma 1997:41).

The reforming Whitlam government introduced changes that provided further government assistance for new Christian schools, establishing the Australian Schools Commission under the leadership of Professor Peter Karmel in 1972 (Barcan 1980:390; Oswald 1990:2). The government aid not only made church schools more financially viable, it also encouraged participation in associations, networks and systems of accountability that promoted the values and practices that governments and educationalists deemed to be important. A period of rapid growth followed, from the mid 1970s until the late 1980s (Long 1996a:21). In more recent times, the number of new schools has slowed while existing Christian schools continue to grow in size (Kew 1993:vi). Resources, identity and support for the movement was provided by the formation of a number of associations including the Christian Parent Controlled Schools (CPCS), the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. (AISQ), established

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283 Many of Australia’s earliest schools were started and owned by churches and often supported by government aid. However, the demand created by the expansion of the primary education in the 1870s, accompanied by increased tensions between the main religious denominations, led all six Australian states to pass Education Acts between 1872 and 1895 that established State-governed education systems and removed state aid to church schools (Barcan 1980, 1988; Lambert 1996:14).


in 1968, and the National Council of Independent Schools’ Association (NCISA) in Canberra. Although the COC was not initially a part of these associations, the associations were to play an important role in the development of COC schools. At the same time, the larger Protestant denominations showed less concern over the changes occurring in society and they sponsored fewer new schools (Long 1996b:8). They were resistant to the new Christian schools movement, because of differences in values and concerns over the lack of resources and educational approaches of the new schools.

**Issues at stake: Are Christian schools and colleges good for Australian society?**

Like many Pentecostal churches, the COC schools initially had a tendency towards isolation and fundamentalism that was a concern to many outside their movement. In his study of the new Christian schools in Australia, Long (1996a:235) expressed his concern that these schools pursued a naïve realism, rigidity of thought, uncritical adherence to conventional values, certainty and closed mindedness that conflicted with the needs of the modern education system. Drawing on the work of Adorno *et al* (1969) and Meissner (1971), Long argued that these new religious schools placed an overemphasis on ‘indoctrination’, ‘inerrancy’ and ‘biblicist’ teachings that encouraged passive acceptance of knowledge and authority, and in turn devalued critical thinking and ruled out openness, diversity or dialogue. He further argued that the new schools encouraged premature closure in thinking that leads to misperception and distortion of information. When critical approaches were present in new Christian schools, they are often shallow, limited and focused on narrow moral issues. Long (1996a:341) notes that this is linked to the Christian school’s concern that open mindedness is interpreted as a weakness.

Lambert (1993:48ff) identified similar concerns, while Thiessen (1984:224), also makes similar claims about the teaching methods of religious schools, which he says often include indoctrination, non-evidential teaching, misuse of evidence, one-sided presentations, teaching uncertain beliefs as though they were true, misuse of authority in
teacher–student relationships, rewards and punishments and failure to cultivate intellectual virtues including a critical spirit and open mindedness.

An examination shows that these concerns were clearly present in the early years of the COC schools and tertiary college. Like their churches, the COC schools initially pursued a policy of isolation and indoctrination. The weaknesses associated with this were accentuated by the COC adoption of North American education systems. However, as Long (1996a:21, 235) concedes, these narrow, dogmatic approaches to education appeared to diminish as the new Christian schools pursued government accreditation and funding which required interaction with government agencies, accrediting bodies, school networks, parental pressures, wider society and market pressures. Pentecostal groups such as COC show a considerable openness to change (Dempster, Klaus & Petersen 1999:3).

**The COC school beginnings**

The major developmental changes in the COC Education from 1974 to 2010 are illustrated in the diagram below (Figure 6.1).

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286 Alison Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003.
1970 Nth American ACE system starts

1973 ACE in NZ & Australia
1970 Nth American ACE system starts

1973 CCS association established

1974 COC Begins

1978 COC schools start with ACE system

1982 COC school moves to Mansfield, adopts government curriculum

1982 COC schools adopted Queensland Government curriculum

1986 COC tertiary Christian Heritage College started

1983 COC schools at Maryborough & Townsville started

1980s COC schools started using ACE at Nambour, Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Dalby, Gympie

Problems with the Nth American ACE system

1983 COC schools at Maryborough & Townsville started

1980s merging of smaller Christian school associations

Wider contexts: Growth in Education sector
Ecumenicism, USA education innovations
Aid to Australian non government schools

1970s Increased government aid to private schools

Low fee Christian Schools movement 1962 Reformed Church school

1982 COC schools adopted Queensland Government curriculum

1980s merging of smaller Christian school associations

1970s Increased government aid to private schools

Problems with the Nth American ACE system

1980s COC schools started using ACE at Nambour, Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Dalby, Gympie

1982 COC school moves to Mansfield, adopts government curriculum

1978 COC schools start with ACE system

1974 COC Begins

1973 CCS association established

1970 Nth American ACE system starts

1973 ACE in NZ & Australia

Wider contexts: Growth in Education sector
Ecumenicism, USA education innovations
Aid to Australian non government schools
The COC and Accelerated Christian Education (ACE)

The North American Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) system was developed by Texas educators Dr. Donald R. Howard and Dr. Ronald E. Johnson in 1970. Howard was an American fundamentalist Baptist preacher who was concerned about the secularization of the public school system. He developed a low cost, church based, alternative education system that emphasized conservative understanding of the Bible as the core primary source of knowledge and authority (Howard 1979:244). In 1987, Howard wrote,

> The Bible … is the foundation of all human relations and principles of teaching. It is the basis of all Accelerated Christian Education text materials ... designed for programming the mind to enable the child to see life from God’s point of view ... Humanism, progressivism, situation ethics and the new morality ... are replaced by the absolute standards of right and wrong (cited in Parsons 1987:175).

The schools were church based with the dominant responsibilities resting with the church pastor. The ACE system used inexpensive self-paced workbooks or PACEs (Packets of Christian Education) that could be produced at little cost for use by untrained teachers with small student numbers. In these materials, the world was viewed in absolutist terms of good and evil, right and wrong. Governments were typically characterized as humanistic and evil. The dominant enemy of Christianity was described as secular humanism and the secular world was viewed as the Old Testament ‘Egypt’ from which Christians must flee.

Clark Taylor’s interest in establishing a Christian school was aroused in 1976 when he saw the ACE Christian school system in operation in the United States and in New Zealand New Life Centre churches. Rob Wheeler (Auckland New Life Centre) established the Auckland Christian Fellowship School in 1977, with just 45 pupils. The Nelson New Life Centre school was established in the same year. Impressed by what he saw, Taylor returned to Brisbane with a plan to start a similar school in Brisbane. By 1980, 13 New Zealand schools were using the ACE system. Most were Pentecostal. However, only five were able to obtain registration with the New Zealand Department of Education (Knowles 2000:217).
The COC school opens

Taylor looked for a founding principal to lead the new school, and in August 1977 he asked Ian Feeney, a COC attendee who was Principal of Xavier School and a former Queensland State Education Department official, to set up the school.\textsuperscript{287} Feeney was a committed evangelical who had been converted at the 1959 Billy Graham crusade. Under Feeney’s leadership, the Christian Outreach Education Centre School (later known as the Christian Outreach College) commenced on 16 May 1978. A floor of the COC church complex in a converted warehouse in West End was used to house the school. A total of 136 students initially enrolled in Years 1–10. The College was fully staffed from within the membership of the COC church.\textsuperscript{288} Lin Powell, who was the state government Minister for Education, was a close friend of Feeney’s and he assisted with the application for government accreditation. Despite the cramped conditions of the inner city location and the limited budget, accreditation was granted.\textsuperscript{289} Three months later, the Block Grant Authority provided federal government funding and state government funding soon followed. In 1979, Feeney resigned because of his concerns over the use of unqualified staff, the slow progress in developing the Mansfield campus and concern that more efforts were needed to meet government accreditation requirements (COC Administrator, Interview 18, 25/01/2001).

Lloyd Eastgate followed Feeney as Headmaster of the school. He was a COC pastor with little training as an educator and he relied heavily on the ACE system to meet the school’s educational needs.\textsuperscript{290} He promoted the ACE system as a cure-all for reading and literacy problems, and an alternative to new developments in the state education system.

Other COC schools

After seeing the growth of the Brisbane COC school, the Nambour COC opened a school two years later in February 1979 with 80 students. The Gympie COC Christian Academy was established in 1980 by Pastor Trevor Holmes, followed by the Toowoomba COC School 1982. Other COC churches at Chinchilla, Dalby, Maryborough, Toronto, Bateman’s Bay and Townsville also started schools. Most used the ACE system, which avoided the high cost of employing qualified teachers and establishing extensive facilities.

Queensland tended to be more conservative and less open to new secular education developments than other parts of Australia and, by 1980, the number of new Christian schools per head of population was higher in Queensland than in any other Australian State (Barcan 1980:307, 311).

The motivation for the New Christian Schools

Parents gave many reasons for sending their children to the COC School, including the desire that the beliefs, values and world views that were taught at school would align with those taught at home and church. The parents sought a higher quality education, stricter discipline, a greater commitment to study and the hope of increased employment opportunities. Mrs Carol Foster of Gympie said,

Our children themselves are relieved to be at Gympie Christian Academy where they are being taught the same principles and morals as we teach them at home.

Mrs Sandra Moss recalled,

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I send my two sons to the Suncoast Christian Academy because of the discipline and Christian character they receive and basically because I know they are safe there.\textsuperscript{294} They also viewed the ACE system as progressive and innovative, and a stand for conservative values.\textsuperscript{295} One COC parent said that the ACE system provided a strong grounding in the education basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, a strong link between parental and church values, and encouragement of parental involvement, all of which were believed to be lacking in the overcrowded state system.\textsuperscript{296} The COC parents also expressed concern about state schools’ emphasis on scientific world views, the big bang theory of origins, evolution and a materialist, rationalist world view that seemed to exclude the roles of God, divine revelation and divine providence.\textsuperscript{297} Some COC parents expressed concern over particular school teachers in government schools.\textsuperscript{298} Support for the growth of the new low fee Christian schools was further motivated by concerns about the changes in society, the introduction of progressive approaches to education and the difficulties associated with the expansion of the state education system (Walker 1971; Anderson 1992:217). The rapid growth of state education systems produced centralized hierarchical bureaucracies and complex policies which alienated students and parents (Seward 1964:354; Barcan 1996).\textsuperscript{299}

Parental concern was increased by rapid growth of the education system which meant that Queensland had some of the largest schools and largest class sizes in Australia (Barcan 1980:311, 359). Christian schools offered smaller classes and stronger teacher student and parent relationships. Changes to the physical layout of schools also raised

\textsuperscript{294} Australia for Christ, July, 1986.
\textsuperscript{295} Ron Woolley, Interview, 25/09/2002
\textsuperscript{296} Under the ACE system her two daughters did well but her son had difficulties adjusting to the self-paced approach. Anne Crawford, Interview, 24/09/2002.
\textsuperscript{297} Wuthnow (1986:13).
\textsuperscript{298} Concern over teachers promoting communism’, ‘holding a séance in class’ and being ‘homosexual’ were mentioned in the COC magazine, Australia for Christ, July, 1986.
\textsuperscript{299} These changes contributed to an acute shortage of teachers and resources. As one example, in 1964 primary school teachers were given two days’ training before being transferred to the new high schools and the proportion of secondary teachers with tertiary qualifications dropped from 51% to 20% (Barcan 1980:311).
further concerns. The first Australia open space schools were started in Queensland in 1968 and by 1972, 44 open space primary schools had been built there (Flynn 1985:3).

The parents also expressed concern about changed approaches to education. Whereas in previous decades schooling placed a strong emphasis on memorizing information and promoting fixed cultural and religious values, the modern education system promoted liberal, democratic ideals and human advancement through rational thinking and human effort. Parents also expressed concerns about the secular emphasis on rational thinking, analysis and consideration of alternative claims to truth which challenged the notion that adolescents needed to unquestioningly accept the truth claims of conservative religious and societal authorities (Wilson 1982:128). Further agitation came in 1971, when the Junior Public Examination system for Year 10 students was replaced by a moderation system coordinated by the Board of Secondary School Studies. Senior public examinations were held for the last time in 1972. By the end of 1973, over 148 different subjects had been introduced into schools, including new recreational and vocational subjects that seemed to lessen the value placed on traditional subjects (Barcan 1980:358). Concerns were also raised about the decline in emphasis on traditional subjects following the introduction of ‘new’ English, ‘new’ mathematics and ‘new’ social sciences. Many expressed concern about the introduction of new curricula such as sexual and drug education, the withdrawal of corporal punishment, changed attitudes to homework and the relaxation of school dress codes also concerned many parents (Flynn, 1985:3). The Christian schools claimed to emphasize a renewed emphasis on traditional subjects. The goal of Christian schools was not simply to add Christian studies to the existing system, but to establish schools that were founded and infused with a Christian ethos and world view (Riding 1997:6).

**The shift from ACE to the Queensland government curricula**

The Brisbane COC ACE school was able to gain primary and early secondary school accreditation but after three years of operation, it could not gain accreditation for the ACE programme in Years 10, 11 and 12 of the secondary school. Many students and
their parents felt let down when their upper secondary qualifications were not recognized.\textsuperscript{300} Despite these difficulties, many students in Years 10, 11 and 12 enrolled for extra coaching to sit external examinations and many did well academically in them.\textsuperscript{301}

The COC school faced a number of other difficulties. As one parent recalled, ‘In hindsight, the school lacked a lot of facilities, resources, sporting equipment, and a library.’\textsuperscript{302} Another parent recalled, ‘The playground was only a little stretch of bare earth between the two buildings.’\textsuperscript{303} There was also a perceived overemphasis on religion. A parent recalled, ‘There was a strong emphasis on tongues speaking and physical healing. My son reacted against that and has left the faith’.\textsuperscript{304} Others expressed concern that the pre-millennialist belief that they were living in the end times led to an attitude whereby study and careers were treated as unimportant. One parent recalled her increasing concerns, saying, ‘The school was quite anti-academic to start with and few students went on to university’.\textsuperscript{305}

The greatest difficulties faced by the COC school were associated with the ACE system. While it appeared to suit the American Southern Baptist communities where it originated, it lacked the local content and educational approach that Australian schools, churches and educational authorities were seeking. Speck and Prideaux (1993:279) observed that this strong American and fundamentalist orientation failed to give children a broad understanding of Australian society or the appropriate knowledge, values and skills needed to participate in it. Other critics of the system said that it gave the students large amounts of facts, but it encouraged little analytical or critical thinking. The ACE education model emphasized individualized rote learning, fundamentalist beliefs and American content. It gave little encouragement to the development of higher level

\textsuperscript{300} Anne Crawford, Interview, 24/09/2002.  
\textsuperscript{301} Ron Woolley, Interview, 25/09/2002.  
\textsuperscript{302} Anne Crawford, Interview, 24/09/2002.  
\textsuperscript{303} Chapple, Video, \textit{COC History}, 1995.  
\textsuperscript{304} Anne Crawford, Interview, 24/09/2002.  
\textsuperscript{305} Anne Crawford, Interview, 24/09/2002.
independent learning skills, to socialization between students, or to Australian content that was highly valued in Queensland and Australian government education systems. The ACE system encouraged a zealous form of discipline that was based on Skinner’s theories of behaviour modification. ‘Paddling “on the seat of learning” was the preferred manner’. These ACE approaches were of concern to outsiders (Parsons 1987:33). The ACE system also offered little extension work for bright students, little support for the less academically able, and few activities for students with interests in creative arts, manual arts or sport. Worst of all, the ACE system was difficult to accredit through the Australian education system.

Despite its limitations, by 1981 the North American ACE enterprise grew into a $15 million a year operation with over 200 employees and outlets in fifty countries, including Australia. In Australia, the number of Australian ACE schools grew to over 120 but most faced difficulties developing resources and gaining accreditation. By 1981, the COC ACE School had reached a crisis point due to its inability to gain accreditation for the senior graduates. The church administrator, Brian Millis, was asked to investigate. He found that the introduction to Queensland of the new system of school based curricula and assessment in the early 1970s meant that the Christian schools could develop an accredited curriculum that combined their Christian aims with the requirements of the (then) Board of Secondary Studies. When Millis visited the Auckland Christian Fellowship School on which the COC was modelled, he found they had changed from ACE to the New Zealand government education programme in 1980.

On returning to Australia, Millis developed guidelines for the COC to use the school based Queensland state government accredited curriculum as the basis for COC

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308 http://www.hebron.ac.nz/history.asp  The school moved from City Road to the former Karitane Nursing Trust site in Mt. Albert in 1981. A secondary programme was commenced in earnest in 1983. The number of students had increased to 220 by 1985. In 1990, after facing considerable financial challenges, the school became independent of Auckland Christian Fellowship and began operation under the non-denominational Biblical Education Services Trust. In 1998, the school’s application to the Auckland City Council for a roll increase from 220 to 320 was granted.
schooling. Millis also built links with the wider Christian Schools Movement and their Associations and these strengthened the COC School and gave it greater credibility. The shift from ACE to the government curriculum and wider networks was significant, marking a transition from a dualistic, fundamentalist education system based on North American models to a local Australian development that combined a Christian ethos and world view with the requirements and values of Australian state government credentialing and federal government financial support.

In June 1982, Millis was appointed as the new School Principal to oversee this accreditation process. Millis’ background as a Presbyterian Church attendee, a pupil of Brisbane Boys’ College and a graduate of the University of Queensland in Education and Journalism provided him with many resources from which to draw. His background also gave him a concept of Christian schooling that was very different to the fundamentalist beginnings of the COC school.

While the inner city location of the COC school had restricted its development, the COC purchase of 25 acres in the Brisbane suburb of Mansfield in the early 1980s provided ample room for expansion. The West End building in Brisbane’s inner city was sold in August 1982 and the school moved to the Mansfield property. Initially, due to financial and time restraints, the school struggled, with classrooms that were underprepared, no specialized facilities, and only one teacher on the secondary school staff with any recent Queensland teaching experience. On seeing the limited facilities, the Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools (QATIS) raised objections to their

310 Brisbane Boys’ College, which had been pioneered by Arthur Rudd in Brisbane in 1902 with little money, just four students and a strong desire to establish a Christian college, provided a model for Millis. Just under a century later, the BBS student, Brian Millis would accomplish a similar feat for the new COC high school and for the COC tertiary Christian Heritage College in not dissimilar circumstances.
accreditation. This union\textsuperscript{312} also opposed the accrediting of other new Christian schools, particularly when their salaries were below Award rates, and their staffing and facilities seemed inadequate.

The founding headmaster, Feeney, recalled

The COC schools generally followed a similar series of leadership development to the COC churches. Pioneering leaders were initially appointed to break the ground. This required a great deal of ‘faith’ in God to establish the school. They often underestimated the size of the task involved. The next appointment was usually a caretaker leader who held the school together for a time. A long-term manager was then appointed who had considerable expertise that is needed to oversee the development of the school over many decades.\textsuperscript{313}

\textbf{New Brisbane COC school leadership in 1984}

The Brisbane COC school moved further away from its overseas fundamentalist ACE beginnings and towards greater integration with the state education system with the appointment of Ron Woolley as principal in 1984. He had 16 years’ secondary teaching experience in New South Wales. His experience and holistic approach to education is revealed in his description of the mission of the COC school as:

\begin{quote}
the development of the student for adult life in its various dimensions - work, leisure, learning, citizenship, and living within the framework of a Biblical world view and by a commitment to service, quality and innovation.\textsuperscript{314}
\end{quote}

Under Woolley’s leadership, well-formed ideas about education and Christian schooling were combined with a range of study options that included manual arts, sporting competitions, performing arts, music and cultural developments.\textsuperscript{315} Parental confidence grew and enrolments increased to ensure a steady income stream that supported further

\textsuperscript{313} Ian Feeney, Interview, 27/11/2002.
\textsuperscript{314} \textit{A New Way of Living}, Sep/Oct 1994, p.14.
school expansion and more facilities. In reflecting on COC schooling, Dr Harro van Brummelen argued that COC graduates were not only able to hold their own academically, the school placed an emphasis on whole person development that helped its students grow socially, morally and spiritually as well as academically.\footnote{Dr Harro van Brummelen, 1998, Forward to \textit{In God’s Hands: A History of the COC School Brisbane}.} Ron Woolley responded to claims that this form of Christian school was fundamentalist and closed off to a diversity of views, saying, this is a ‘profound oversimplification of how a Protestant Christian views the authority of Scripture.’\footnote{Ron Woolley, Interview, 25/09/2002.} Woolley said that the main difference between the COC school and state schools was in the greater congruence in the values, beliefs and culture of the school, teachers, parents and students. He argued that this contributed to a stronger commitment by the parents and students to the school and its education programmes and that this led to improved learning.

The COC were not alone in abandoning the ACE system. By the end of the 1980s, many of the Australian ACE schools had either closed or changed to the easier to accredit government curriculum. The Australia ACE organization changed its name to Southern Cross Educational Enterprises and it shifted its target audience to the more specialized Australian home school market.

The COC move to incorporate the state curricula required more qualified teachers, a greater number of students and larger budgets. By this time the three largest COC churches at Mansfield, Nambour and Toowoomba and their schools had built up sufficient resources to aid the transition. Their greater size gave them sufficient students to be educationally and economically viable.\footnote{Alison Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003.} By 2000, all the smaller schools at the smaller COC churches had closed except for the school at Gympie COC.
Creationism

Because of its reliance on the state government curriculum, COC teaching is very similar to that of secular schools in most areas. However, beliefs about the origins of the world, life and humanity expressed by the school communities is frequently found to be very different to the views held by the Australian population at large. Many COC teachers and students hold to a form of creationism that has its origins in the North American Creation Research Society that was established in 1963 and publications such as John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris’, *The Genesis Flood* (1961). Visiting North American evangelists and their publications (Numbers & Stenhouse 2000:335) brought these creationism movement beliefs to Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. The growth of interest in creationism is partly a reaction to increased government spending on science and science education, as well as to religious concerns about the implications of evolutionism for religious beliefs, views of humanity and human ethical behaviour. At the same time, Numbers (1992; 2006) argues that evangelical and Pentecostal interest in creationism is not strictly because of an anti-scientific stance but is a protest against the ways in which science is presented and used to promote atheist world views that challenge core religious beliefs. Support for creationism in Australia is further encouraged by the Australian Creation Science Foundation, which was founded in Brisbane in 1978. It is located within thirty minutes’ drive of the three large Brisbane megachurches from which it gains considerable support. By the mid 1990s the Australian Creation Science Foundation had grown into the second largest creation science ministry in the world, distributing about 35,000 copies of its quarterly journal, *Creation Ex Nihilo* (Numbers & Stenhouse 2000:335).

Despite Darwinian evolution and the ‘Big Bang’ theory of origins being widely taught in all Australian government schools, the 1991 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) found that 51 per cent of the sampled Australian church attendees did not accept these theories (Kaldor & Powell 1995:68). Rejection of evolution and acceptance of creationism is particularly strong among Pentecostals. The 1991 NCLS survey also found that over 80 per cent of Pentecostals held creationist accounts of origins, compared to 26 per cent of
Anglicans and 31 per cent of Uniting Church attendees. The 1991 NCLS survey also found that creationist beliefs are highest among young people, and that they decreased with age as attendees resolved the creation–evolution conflicts in favour of more reconciliatory stances.

At the Brisbane COC school, Principal Woolley (Interview, 25/9/2002) observed that the emphasis on millennialism, creationism and other esoteric beliefs has declined in the COC schools. He said that evolution is now taught alongside creation, where it ‘is viewed as the theory that is currently most accepted by the scientific community.’

His statements provide further support for the argument that COC schools are not pursuing isolation from secular society, as they first intended, but greater interaction with society.

The Christian Schools Associations

As the COC became more established, it began to look for opportunities to join wider associations and networks that could provide support and resources to aid further growth and development. Robert Frisken had established the Christian Community Schools (CCS) movement in 1974 to cater for Baptist and Pentecostal schools using the ACE system. As the ACE emphasis was replaced by the needs of the government curriculum, membership in these associations became more significant. The COC joined AISQ and other associations that gave them greater credibility and resources in the early 1980s. They were also part of the Australian Association for Christian Schools (AACS), which formed in 1985 from the merger of the Christian Parent Controlled Schools (CPCS) and the Christian Community Schools (CCS). They merged in recognition of the need for greater national co-ordination and co-operation. A state based Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ) was founded in February 1989 to represent the newer Pentecostal schools, including the COC and AOG schools, and by 1992 it had 49 member schools. In 2001, the schools run by Pentecostal, Baptist, Reformed and other evangelical

schools united to form Christian Schools Australia (CSA) of which the Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ) was a member organization. These associations helped to coordinate member school developments, promote professional development and coordinate lobbying for state and federal government support. The case study of COC schools demonstrates that these networks and associations, together with requirements for government accreditation, teacher registration and professional development, have increased teachers’ awareness of concerns arising from isolationism, indoctrination and narrow mindedness, while also increasing awareness of the need to encourage autonomy, open mindedness, tolerance and higher levels of critical thinking. Government funding and registration requirements have further encouraged this. The government also sets requirements in terms of enrolments, buildings, teacher registration, curriculum and other resources, and examines the impact proposed new schools could have on existing schools. In 1997, the Queensland School Curriculum Council was established to coordinate and accredit state schools, Catholic Education Commission schools, and schools operated by the Association of Independent Schools in Queensland.

Contrary to notions of religious decline predicted by secularization theorists, new Christian schools have grown in number, partly due to increased Government funding. In Australia, the number of non-government school enrolments increased from 21.3 per cent of students in 1977, to 24 per cent in 1982 and 28 per cent in 1992 before reaching 31 per cent in 2000.321 Non government enrolments increased to 38% by 2005 (ABS Research Paper 2006:36). The growth of the COC schools and increased government and church partnerships can be seen as evidence of a reversal of earlier secularization trends in Australian education. At the same time, Bruce (1998a) suggests that these partnerships may also be a classic example of secularization, whereby the churches are being changed and secularized by the society. In reality, a more complex interaction is developing, in which the new Christian schools are not simply surrendering to society, or being dominated by it, but negotiating with society in broad, complex and creative ways. While the changes required by the government may be viewed as encouraging the secularization

and institutionalization of Christian schools, they could more correctly be viewed as promoting accountability to society at large, and avoidance of isolation and narrow sectarian views.

**Expansion into higher education**

After the successful establishment of COC schools, in the mid 1980s Millis and other COC leaders began to consider the possibility of establishing a tertiary college. The COC had only a few Australian examples of a Christian university to follow. Because of their size and influence, over many years the Catholic Church had gained increased government support for Christian tertiary colleges. The much smaller Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) church in Adelaide had established Tabor College in 1979. It trained Pentecostal leaders for various ministry roles, and it also began to expand into counselling, pastoral ministry and teaching. Tabor campuses were established in Melbourne in 1988, and Perth and Sydney in 1992. However, the COC leaders did not look to these developments, but to North American models, including those provided by Oral Roberts and Tim LaHaye. The COC was also unique in that it viewed tertiary education for teaching and other professions separately from the requirements for ministry training.

**COC and Christian Heritage College**

History is full of small events that have large, ever-widening, effects. Almost insignificant triggers or accidents can release the potential of larger, barely visible undercurrents and trigger new developments that give expression to much larger social movements. When Taylor discovered that the University of New England had introduced

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322 The Australian government granted funding to assist the development of the Catholic tertiary system in 1973 in an effort to encourage consolidation of its smaller colleges and improve quality. The Australian Catholic University (ACU) was formed in 1991 by the merging of state colleges. It has grown into one of the largest private providers of tertiary education in Australia. Its size, lobbying for government support and openness to innovation has also benefited other tertiary Christian institutions such as the CHC.

unisex toilets and showers, he expressed his concern that this event was evidence of the decline in society. He said

To get a degree, young Christians have to go through a system that attempts to destroy their faith. They develop a lot of spiritual hurts and scars through their exposure to the secular university system that offers few restraints or moral and spiritual guidelines. \(^\text{324}\)

This led Taylor to encourage Millis to prepare plans for a Christian university. Millis’ experiences in establishing COC secondary education provided the experiences and insights that would be useful in establishing a tertiary college. The National Party member for Mt Gravatt, Ian Henderson, suggested, ‘What you really need is another institution as a model that you can link up with.’ \(^\text{325}\) This prompted Brian Millis to telephone the North American Christian Colleges. \(^\text{326}\) The first person to reply to Millis’ enquiries was the President of Christian Heritage College in San Diego, USA, who offered the COC use of their distance education programme. This was viewed as the provision of God and the CHC began to develop an association with the American Christian Heritage College. Millis and the COC leaders prepared a submission for the recognition of the American course in Australia. \(^\text{327}\)

In 1986, the COC megachurch was growing strongly and ‘everything seemed possible’. Aided by this optimistic spirit, the Brisbane Christian Heritage College (CHC) opened on 23 February 1986 as a tertiary institution to train Christian teachers. Their use of video recordings and course materials from the American degree course provided a sense that the college was using cutting edge technology of the time. The estimated development cost of $20 million was beyond the church’s budget, but a gradual development

\(^{324}\) Clark Taylor, Sermon, CT 08/02/86 A
\(^{325}\) Brian Millis, Interview, 28/07/2000
\(^{326}\) Oral Roberts had started the Oral Roberts University in 1963, Jerry Falwell founded Liberty University in 1971, ‘Pat’ Robertson sponsored Regent University at Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 1978 and Jim Bakker commenced Heritage University near Charlotte, in South Carolina in 1978. The first college that Millis contacted was Christian Heritage College, founded by Tim LaHaye in 1971. It is now known as San Diego Christian College.
\(^{327}\) Brian Millis, Interview, 28/07/2000
programme that began with American materials and spread over 20 years seemed achievable. In a step of ‘faith’, the first classes were offered before government accreditation was received. Despite high hopes of enrolling a hundred or more students, only nine students enrolled in the first year of the CHC teacher training programme, with just two staff.\(^{328}\) By late 1986, the Queensland government accrediting body expressed their concerns about the United States programme. The American system had different approaches, educational goals and standards to Australian tertiary institutions and the materials did not match any education courses offered by Australian universities. The emphasis on rote learning from text books and use of video lectures did not prepare the students well for the research assignments that were predominantly used in Australian universities or for the needs of Australian schools. The accreditation submission was rejected at the end of 1987. As a result of this, the Heritage College videos were abandoned in favour of a more conventional tertiary education programme delivered by local lecturers. A consultant was employed to assist the preparation of a revised submission in 1988. This submission also addressed the need for stronger documentation and assessment procedures, the encouragement of greater academic freedom, promotion of higher standards, and the inclusion of evolution and psychology in the curriculum.\(^{329}\)

After making these changes, the Christian Heritage College received accreditation for the Diploma of Teaching from the Queensland Board of Advanced Education in 1988.\(^{330}\) This qualified CHC graduates for registration to teach in any type of school in Queensland. Most of the graduates entered the new Christian schools that were forming.\(^{331}\)

The growth of Christian schools created a strong demand for trained Christian teachers and the increasing number of Year 12 graduates from the new Christian schools fostered growth. The COC received further encouragement from the Premier, Johannes Bjelke-

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328 Brian Millis was the Principal and Jacqueline Hawkins was his secretary. *Australia for Christ*, May 1988: 9.
329 Brian Millis, Interview, 28/07/2000
330 *A New Way of Living* Magazine, September, 1988, p. 3.
331 Brian Millis, Interview, 28/07/2000; *A New Way of Living* Magazine, September, 1988, p. 3.
Petersen and from Education Minister Lionel Powell, who were both conservative evangelical Christians who favoured the establishment of Christian tertiary colleges. At the same time, the submission for government accreditation had to stand on its own merits and the COC had to develop the required infrastructure, teaching staff, facilities, curricula and accountability systems that were needed to gain government accreditation.\footnote{Brian Millis, Interview, 28/07/2000}

As the Christian Heritage College developed, its objectives were formalized into a mission statement with the aims:

To provide..., an expanded range of higher education courses and learning experiences..., in response to community needs; in addition to serving general societal needs, to satisfy the particular needs of Christian communities and institutions, by setting its programmes with the context of a Christian world view as a basic philosophical underpinning; to undertake the pursuit of truth, knowledge and wisdom within the context of a commitment to academic freedom and other traditional values of Christian scholarship; to establish and maintain a standard of Christian scholarship, and to develop a commitment to excellence in scholarship among staff and students; to serve the local, state and national communities through teaching, research, consultancy and related professional activities by its staff, and thereby to contribute to national well being.

After considerable lobbying, Austudy was made available to CHC college students and other non-government colleges in 1992. This swelled CHC enrolments further. It also increased the CHC dependence on government credentialing and guidelines. Under an agreement with the Board of Teacher Registration, only courses in primary education were offered until 1993 when a secondary teaching programme was developed from the primary teaching electives, in order to lift the quality of its graduates. The Bachelor of Teaching was approved and commenced in 1993.\footnote{New Way of Living, Dec-Jan. 1991, p. 10.} A Bachelor of Social Science programme followed with human behaviour, counselling and humanities studies being added to the core education electives. The Heritage College accreditation and resources
provided support for upgrading the ministry training programmes. An Associate Diploma of Ministry was accredited in 1993 and the Bachelor of Ministry and postgraduate Diploma of Ministry followed. In 1999 a Bachelor of Business was introduced using links between business education, counselling and arts electives. More recently, the introduction of FEE–HELP student loan arrangements in 2005 and HECS loans and government supported places in the following years assisted enrolment growth and further expansion of the college.

An Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audit in February 2007 identified the strengths of CHC as including: a caring academic community, providing a distinctive Christian higher education, a student centred approach, and using external points of reference through professional associations. It also expressed concern over the need for improvement through increased input from external stakeholders, greater openness to a range of different world views, stronger funding and changes to workloads. It recommended that CHC develop a stronger research infrastructure to aid its eventual goal of becoming a university.

The expansion of CHC was aided by the growing demand for tertiary education created by the expansion of Australia’s tertiary education sector and growth in the Australian economy. By 1999, Australia’s higher education system had grown to 674,700 students and 2.3 million people were undertaking post-compulsory education of one form or another. This expansion made the evangelical and Pentecostal churches aware of the need for greater investment in higher education and the need to integrate the Christian faith and academic learning (Sharpham and Harman, 1997:25, 32f). It also led to the recognition that church-sponsored tertiary education needed to expand beyond its traditional emphasis on theological and ministry training into a wider range of tertiary education areas. By being one of the first megachurches to establish a tertiary institution, the CHC was well positioned to capture this growing market. It was one of the few

335 ABS Statistics. See also Sharpham and Harman (1997:13ff).
Australian tertiary colleges to offer courses in education, humanities, social sciences and business from a Christian world view perspective, in addition to the traditional church area of ministry training.\[^{336}\]

**CHC epistemology**

Insights into the continued tension between the narrow, dogmatic, sectarian views desired by many evangelical and charismatic churches and the more complex viewpoints encouraged by highly trained educationalists is highlighted in Irene Brown’s thesis titled ‘Epistemic Development in Early Adolescence’ (1996). This study, conducted in 1993, compared the epistemic development of CHC students and students enrolled at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Brown’s (1996:4.9) study found that first year CHC students continued to show a high levels of confidence in the unchangeability and certainty of knowledge, which contrasted with QUT students’ increasing belief in the subjectivity, changeability and uncertainty of knowledge. The CHC students emphasized the importance of knowable, objective, absolute truth and the need to trust in external authorities for answers (Perry 1981, Stage three; Brown 1996:5.3). Brown’s studies suggest that even in the 1990s CHC teachers and students continued to ‘bunker down’ and emphasize absolutes such as those promoted in CHC text books by Schaeffer (1976) and LaHaye (1980). Her findings support Long’s (1996a:235ff) concerns that the new Christian schools and tertiary colleges continue to pursue a closed minded, uncritical adherence to conventional values, certainty and rigidity of thought in ways that conflict with the needs of contemporary education. This sense of certainty was accentuated by the homogeneity of staff and students at the CHC and a low exposure to people who hold different values, cultures and perspectives, particularly when compared to public universities. While of concern to academics, this homogeneity, sense of certainty and support are appealing to many students, parents and COC leaders. However, Brown (1996:4.9) also argues that CHC students are still moving towards epistemological

\[^{336}\] Tabor College, Avondale Seventh Day Adventist College and the Australian Catholic University also offered multidisciplinary tertiary education.
maturity and complex thinking, but in different ways and along different pathways to other university students. While QUT students move from childhood dependency to multiple, subjective views of truth before reaching more complex ways of knowing, COC students tend to move to a belief that truth can be objectively known through external authorities, divine revelation and scientific testing, before maturing to more complex views on knowing (Brown 1996:4.68).

As with the COC schools, government accreditation and financial support requirements for the tertiary college have increased the emphasis on openness to a plurality of viewpoints and efforts to avoid over-emphasis on dogmatic adherence to a narrow range of views. The CHC pursuit of a larger market of students from many denominational backgrounds has further increased their openness to diversity. Interviews with the COC Principals (Millis, 2000; Woolley, 2002), and COC and CHC staff show that, in more recent times, staff and students of the COC school and college have been encouraged to consider the plurality and complexity of viewpoints and knowledge more deeply. The accreditation of postgraduate and research higher degrees and development of a research culture at CHC further increased the emphasis on the development of higher level critical thinking skills. As in other churches (Burtchaell 1998), the increased openness to more complex ways of thinking is distancing the CHC college from those COC attendees and leaders who were seeking to retain a narrower and more fundamentalist set of beliefs.

The tension between the narrow, church based perspectives and more complex ways of knowing is discussed by Millis (2005:9) in his Doctor of Education thesis titled, ‘Faith, Learning And Christian Higher Education’. His thesis highlights the ongoing tension within each teacher and student and in the CHC college between maintaining the narrow absolutes of their heritage and engaging more fully with challenges and needs of contemporary society and education. Millis (2005:154, 172) argues that there must be continued resistance to the secularizing of Christian higher education, but in ways that integrate faith and scholarship. The need to ensure progress towards more complex ways of knowing was recommended by the AUQA report (2007), in which the panel recommended that the college seek to articulate more clearly open intellectual inquiry in
its course documentation and demonstrate that students are encouraged to analyze different world views.

Petersen (Dempster, Klaus & Petersen 1999:3) observed that in contrast to those fundamentalist religious groups that seek to exclude the world, Pentecostal colleges and academics have more openly applied scholarly advances to the needs of their faith traditions. Pentecostal churches and schools continued in the Protestant and Reformed traditions of encouraging individual responsibility, critical evaluation of church practices and beliefs. As Casanova (2001:437) notes, Pentecostals do not simply isolate from local culture, or surrender to it, but they wrestle with it, often in creative ways that lead to innovative developments. These interactions encouraged the development of a system that valued open mindedness, tolerance and critical thinking in ways that were similar to the wider society. Despite some examples of isolationism, the system of schooling that the COC developed appears to reflect the Pentecostal efforts to engage with society rather than isolate from it.

These tensions are major issues for the five largest Pentecostal tertiary colleges in Australia, namely Tabor Adelaide, Tabor Victoria, Alphacrucis, Harvest Bible College and Christian Heritage College. Despite their small beginnings in the 1970s and 1980s, these colleges now receive over one-third of all theology and ministry enrolments at degree level or above, in Australia (Hutchinson 2009).

**Conclusion**

This chapter provides further evidence that the history of the interaction between Pentecostal churches and education is too rich and varied to be described by any simple formula of fundamentalism, institutionalization or secularization. Scholars who dismiss megachurch and Pentecostal schools and colleges as narrow, isolationist developments on the one hand, or simply replications of the state system on the other, fail to consider the complexities, or theological and organizational diversity within such schools and colleges, and the changes that take place over time. The development of the COC schools
and its tertiary college reflects the efforts being made by megachurches and other associated churches and their leaders to develop complementary activities that further assist their core aims, to acculturate the younger generations into core beliefs and values, while also equipping to benefit from engaging more fully with the wider society. It also shows their openness to organizational learning and change.

This study confirmed that the COC schools and college were initially motivated by efforts to isolate and protect children from the secular society and progressive educational developments, and by efforts to indoctrinate children into narrow, authoritarian belief systems. This was accentuated by the COC decision to adopt North American educational systems that included ACE and the LaHaye models and resources. However, recognition of the broader needs of the students and school, together with the requirements for state and federal government accreditation and funding and participation in wider associations and networks all contributed to the development of a unique education system that was better integrated into government requirements but with a Christian world view and ethos. Initial efforts to provide an easily reproduced, inexpensive, model of schools that could be franchised have largely failed due to the weakness of the ACE system, and the high costs and staffing requirements of the present system. Only four COC schools and one college remain, and these are associated with the largest COC churches in large population areas.

The next chapter will examine further changes in the COC megachurch and movement following the resignation of the COC founder in 1990. It will examine the effect of this resignation on the megachurch and movement, and overview major developments in the COC that followed in the 1990s.
Chapter Seven: Beyond Taylor: Organizational maturation and global expansion of the COC in the 1990s

A dramatic change in momentum, structure and direction of the COC megachurch and its network of churches came in 1990 when Taylor admitted to allegations of sexual impropriety and resigned. This chapter examines the implications of the resignation of the charismatic leader and the accompanying cessation of national expansion. It also considers questions these changes raise about charismatic leadership, efforts to attract large attendance through supernatural, miraculous phenomena, divine healing and words of knowledge, and franchise like approaches to training, while noting that some changes were introduced that were beneficial for the COC and its leadership structure. The chapter notes that continued survival and sense of mission, purpose and identity were gained through increased accountability structures, broadening of the leadership base, appointment of new leaders and expansion into new activities and locations. Local and overseas aid programs, Red Frogs chaplaincy and political lobbying are examples. While national growth slowed, there was increased interest in COC beliefs and practices among overseas Christian groups that hastened the global expansion of the COC. The COC participation in ‘the Toronto Blessing’ brought further renewal, transformation and fresh impetus to overseas expansion. These new experiences were seen in the COC a year before they reached the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church which gave the ‘Toronto blessing’ its name.

Brisbane COC attendances and communion participants at the large morning meeting peaked on 9/06/1985 at 1760 attendees and they remained fairly constant, never exceeding 1700 attendees through to 1989. In an effort to encourage further growth, an extension to the auditorium in 1986 increased seating from 3000 to 5000 seats. This created a debt of 800,000 which was only paid off a decade later after the sale of some of the Brisbane COC land in 1997. A costly ‘give it a go’ television program was trialed in 1986, but it did not increase attendances. Further growth was slowed by congestion on the access roads to the megachurch and over filling of the large car parks so that extra
attendees had to park on less welcoming dirt areas. Interest in charismatic gifts, divine healing and other Pentecostal phenomena had also waned, competition from Sunday sports and other activities had increased (COC records, interview with the senior executive pastor, Brian Mulheran 8/02/2011).

The national expansion of the COC was also requiring personnel and financial resources that were a drain on the megachurch. Key leaders such as Geoff Woodward were sent out to lead COC churches far afield in Western Australia and overseas. Some of new COC churches that had been started with few resources and little pastoral training were failing, or straying from accepted COC beliefs, values and practices. In response to this, the ministry training school for potential pastors was increased from 4 weeks to 8 weeks training before a new minister was sent out (which is still very short by comparison with mainstream church training). Stricter criteria for ordination were introduced in 1986, requiring increased education, a longer probation period for new pastors and greater resource support (Mulheran interview 8/02/2011).

**The COC leadership crisis: 1989–1990**

By 1989, the pressures associated with the rapid expansion of the COC were beginning to show. At the Brisbane megachurch, increased attendance led to parking and traffic difficulties and high demands for pastoral care and follow up (Interview with staff member, 2002). Pressures arising from the rapid growth of the COC also contributed to physical health problems and family relationship strains among the COC leaders. Clark Taylor suffered a heart attack in July 1984, with further heart attacks in 1986 and 1987.\(^{337}\) These meant that Taylor often felt weak and discouraged. He underwent bypass surgery in the late 1980s,\(^{338}\) but recalled that inner mental difficulties remained. ‘Since my heart

\(^{337}\) Clark Taylor, Sermon, ‘Unless the Lord Builds the House’ Dedication Service for the Church Extension, 23/02/1986.

\(^{338}\) Norma Ormsby correspondence.
attack my life went to pieces. I became negative. I became obsessive. I was depressed.\textsuperscript{339} Other Brisbane COC leaders also experienced health difficulties related to stress.

Allegations of sexual misconduct had been raised against Taylor in 1978. After Taylor appeared repentant the COC leadership agreed to continued support of his leadership. At that time, Taylor took six weeks’ leave and sought counsel from the New Zealand and Australian New Life Centre churches, as well as from Latter Rain movement leaders. Many, inside and outside of the COC, expressed concern that insufficient disciplinary action was taken and that the issues involved remained largely unresolved.\textsuperscript{340} Consequently, some pastors and congregations left the COC. Leaders from other Pentecostal churches, including the dominant Assemblies of God denomination, expressed their disapproval by banning COC pastors from preaching in their churches.

Fresh revelations of sexual misconduct were raised in 1989. Taylor agreed to take a year’s leave and to seek marriage counselling, but the reasons for his absence were not widely disseminated. During the 12 months that followed, news of Taylor’s moral failure spread, mostly among Pentecostal denominations other than the COC. Those in the COC who had not been informed of his misconduct expressed concern about the lack of transparency (Interview 10, 2002). When further allegations of sexual misconduct with other women emerged in 1990, the COC leaders agreed that stronger action was needed. Taylor agreed to prepare a letter of resignation which was read out to the Mansfield COC church by his brother, Max Taylor, on Sunday 8 April 1990. On 9 April 1990 (p.1) the \textit{Courier Mail} ran an article titled, ‘Sex Scandal: Church’s leader quits’ followed by a similar article in the \textit{Sunshine Coast Daily} on 12 April 1990. Many in the COC expressed their shock, frustration and disappointment, particularly after they had sacrificed and given so much to the COC (Woodwood, Interview, 06/04/2003).

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339 One surgeon told Taylor that a loss of serotonin from the base of the brain was a major cause of these changes. In more recent times serotonin replacement therapy has been used to overcome this. Clark and Anne Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001.
340 Brian Mulheran, Interview, 20/03/2001; the lady involved transferred to Adelaide. She later served as a missionary before returning to Brisbane.
The admission of sexual misconduct by the COC founder challenged the faith of many COC leaders and attendees, and the COC organizational system with its emphasis on charismatic leadership and COC beliefs and practices. The resulting loss of confidence led many to express concern that the COC would collapse (Interview with AOG leaders from that time). To maintain continuity, Neil Miers from Nambour was appointed as the national and international leader and Clark’s brother, Max Taylor was appointed as leader of the Brisbane COC megachurch.

**Charismatic leaders and the strains of megachurch growth**

In the late 1980s, a number of North American megachurches faced similar difficulties that point to the weakness of overdependence on charismatic leaders with inadequate systems of accountability and support. On 19 March 1987 the televangelist Jimmy Bakker resigned after it was discovered that he was involved in ‘adultery’ with his church secretary. Bakker was convicted of fifteen counts of wire fraud, eight counts of mail fraud and one count of conspiracy in 1989.[^341] He was also found guilty of defrauding contributors to the Praise the Lord (PTL) Club of $3.7 million.[^342] Less than a year later, Jimmy Swaggart was found to have been involved in sexual misconduct, and he was defrocked by the American Assemblies of God on 21 February 1988.

Some Australian churches and megachurches also experienced difficulties in the late 1980s. The founder of the Logos religious–political movement and the Logos churches in Australia and the New Zealand, Howard Carter, resigned in August 1990 after being found guilty of sexual affairs that dated back many years. The Logos movement subsequently declined and eventually ceased to exist. Brian Baker from Perth’s largest megachurch faced allegations of a sexual nature. He resigned and handed over leadership

of the church to his son, Phil Baker, who introduced restructuring of the church that aided its continuation. In Sydney, the founder of Australia’s largest megachurch development, Frank Houston, resigned his ministerial credentials following allegations of sexual abuse whilst ministering in New Zealand some thirty years earlier. The Sydney CLC merged with the Hills CLC church that his son, Brian Houston, had started. This multicampus church grew into Australia’s largest Pentecostal church, Hillsong, with over 19,000 weekly attendees. In Brisbane, three of the largest megachurches also faced difficulties, though for different reasons. The founder of the Garden City AOG megachurch was accused of financial misappropriation and he resigned and transferred to a church leadership position in the United States. The Gateway Baptist megachurch felt the strain of expansion that contributed to a disagreement between the founder and church elders that led to his resignation in 1996. He transferred to another denomination. As already noted, the COC founder resigned after allegations of sexual misconduct. The reasons for these megachurch leaders’ resignations varied greatly, the common theme of an overemphasis on charismatic leadership with insufficient accountability and support was present in each case. While some megachurches such as Hillsong continued to grow under their new leadership, the attendance of some has levelled off or declined from the peaks they reached in the late 1980s.

Interpreting sexual misconduct and leadership failure

Accusations of abuse of authority in the megachurches became more apparent in the 1980s and 1990s. This was partly the result of aging of movements with limited accountability, as well as a wider societal unwillingness to cover up such activities. After being widely disregarded in the 1950s and 1960s, acknowledgement of sexual impropriety increased in all the professions in the 1970s and 1980s. Thumma (2007a)

345 Sexual abuse in the medical, counseling, religious and other professions was largely unacknowledged in the mid 20th century. The increased scrutiny in all professions reached a peak in the 1980s.
also suggests that sexual and other forms of leadership abuse were related to the over-reliance of megachurches on a single charismatic leader with highly centralized power and few checks and balances. In New Zealand, the New Life Centres, which many Australian megachurches had modelled themselves on, also faced leadership failures in the mid to late 1980s. Knowles (1994:282) attributes these moral failures to an overemphasis on the ‘charismatic’ personality, the authoritative role of the pastor and the ‘autonomy of the local church’. He also identifies problems arising from the low accountability of the leaders to their congregations and to ministry peers. The potential for the misuse of power and for sexual abuse within the religious profession is of particular concern because a minister is said to represent the power, ideals and person of God. This is also concerning because the ministry places an emphasis on dealing with the most intimate, sacred and fragile dimensions of other people’s lives and this increases the risk of ministers’ engaging in inappropriate and unethical behaviours (Fortune 1994).

A 1984 study of sexual abuse among clergy in the USA found an abuse rate of 12 per cent. This exceeded the rate of abuse reported for physicians and psychologists (Trull and Carter 1992:80f). Newsweek (28 August 1989:48) described the typical minister who fails morally as being a lone ranger who is isolated from his clerical colleagues, middle aged, disillusioned with his calling and neglectful of his own marriage. Some would say this is true of Taylor (Interview 14). Birchard (2000:136) found the principal causes of clergy sexual misconduct were boundary ambiguity, institutional inattentiveness, a failure to deal with the deeper problems and needs of the clergy, the dangers of multiple relationship roles and unequal power dynamics. These are often greater in the charismatic megachurch leadership. Finkelhor (1984) identified other preconditions that contribute to sexual abuse as including opportunities, motivations and overcoming of internal inhibitors and resistances. Balswick and Balswick (1999:469) also argued that sexual misconduct is linked to the lack of healthy development of authentic human sexuality. In an article titled the ‘Bathsheba Syndrome’, Ludwig and Longenecker (1993) argued that ethical leadership failure was a by-product of successful leaders becoming complacent and losing focus, having unrestrained control of organizational resources, information and people, and developing an inflated belief in their ability to manipulate outcomes.
They offer suggestions to help avoid moral failure, including the need to live a balanced life, to avoid complacency, to recognize that resources are not provided for personal gratification but for the long term good of the organization, and the need to build an ethical team that challenges, supports and holds the leader accountable.

The similarity in patterns of failure by many megachurch founders in different locations in the late 1980s points to the common dangers of overdependence on solitary, autocratic, charismatic leaders with insufficient systems of accountability and support. It also exposes the difficulties that megachurches founders and leaders face in balancing their portrayed public self, their private lives and their inward sense of personal identity. While the charismatic leadership style helped Pentecostal churches to respond rapidly to new market opportunities and attract support and increased attendance, Wallis (1993:176) reminds us that, because a charismatic leader’s claims to authority rest ‘purely on subjective factors’, charismatic leadership ‘is fundamentally a precarious status’. Robbins and Anthony (1995) warn that as charismatic leadership has few institutional restraints or routinized structures of accountability, it tends to be inherently unstable. Benyei (1998:54) writes that charismatic personalities in particular face the danger of developing egotistical, self-absorbed, narcissistic personality disorders and moral and other forms of leadership failure. Charisma can often override the deeper values needed to distinguish good, moral leadership from immoral leadership, and this leads Howell and Avolio (1992:43) to warn that ‘the risks involved in charismatic leadership are at least as large as the promises.’ In recognition of these dangers, Burns (1978:43) argues that leadership must have an ethical and moral dimension that transforms leaders and followers to higher levels of reflection and action.

Clark Taylor’s legacy to the COC

Emerson (1841) wrote that ‘An institution is the lengthened shadow of a man’. Taylor’s role in establishing the COC illustrates both the benefits and difficulties that charismatic leadership can provide and the contribution that the founder can make to their organization. Experiences and decisions made in his early ministry life remain central to
the beliefs and practices of most COC churches, but we must question whether these commitments left room for continued life course development by Taylor and the COC.

Taylor’s experiences of sudden conversion, divine healing, Holy Spirit empowerment and tongues speaking contributed to his confidence in these approaches as an aid to the early growth and beliefs of the COC as a new Australian charismatic church (Taylor interviews, 1999, 2001, 2002). At the same time, his rugged, outback upbringing provided an image of what it meant to be a ‘typical Australian’ in ways that added to a unique Australian character for the COC (Thorburn in Waugh 1995:8f). Taylor’s background as a rural cattleman resonated with the mythic constructions of Australian identity and nationhood that were a major Australian cultural concern in the 1970s (Millikan 1981). Taylor (Interview 1999) depicted the COC leaders as practical, independent people and this fits Ward’s (1966:2) description of the Australian bushman. This image was reflected in Taylor’s use of Australian colloquial expressions and the value of an earthy Australian ‘pragmatism’. Taylor’s emphasis on egalitarianism and empowerment (Taylor Sermon, 15/09/2002) had appeal in an Australian society that was seeking a sense of identity that incorporated these qualities. This mythic image encouraged independent, innovative, charismatic leaders who pursued new developments (Earle, Peter, Interview 15/08/2000) and this aided organizational growth. This picture of the typical COC leader was also a conflation of the rurality, individualism and freedom that Taylor had been exposed to in his visit to North America in 1972 and 1973. In Australia, as in North America, it fitted with the notion of the frontier society made famous by Frederick Jackson Turner (1920:259), who had argued that the western frontier of North America pressured pioneering settlers from Europe to shed their baggage of traditional ideas about culture and institutions and develop innovative solutions to the problems they faced. It was claimed that this encouraged a greater measure of individualism, egalitarianism, personal freedom, self-reliance and the pursuit

346 Ward (1966:1ff, 207ff); For a criticism of Ward’s myth making, see White (1981:158–166).
of liberty (Billington 1966:1, 13). Just as North American institutions and evangelists had adopted and exported these frontier images globally (Bell & Bell 1998:4), so too the COC founder had adopted a similar combination of global and local frontier imagery that was woven into the exportable religious culture that the COC leader promoted. While this COC organizational culture have been replaced by COC leaders who have questioned Taylor’s emphasis on individualism, sacrifice and faith visualization, in other leaders these beliefs continued to provide the dominant culture for them and their churches, long after the founder’s resignation (Geyser, Interview, 7/6/2010).

The developments following Taylor’s resignation continue the biographical life course description of the COC founder begun in Chapter 4. After Taylor’s fall, many COC leaders found difficulty accepting much of what Taylor stood for. In an effort to put the reproach and failure of the founder behind them, the COC leaders chose to destroy the audio and video tape recordings made by Taylor and his name was expunged from almost all COC church literature. Using the language of Sigmund Freud, it could be said that the identity of the COC was cemented by the ritual killing of the father figure. Taylor’s name remains absent from all COC literature and websites to this day. This attempt to rewrite history also has its dangers, particularly if the past heritage is not well understood, or if lessons are not learned from the past. As George Orwell wrote in his novel, 1984, ‘Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past’. Similar destruction of past leaders’ recordings and messages were reported in other Australian megachurches (personal correspondence, 2010). This disconnection from the past can also take the COC into uncharted territory that may be evident in the increased diversity within the COC.

349 This suggestion was made by Scott Stevens, Garden City AOG, in 2002. 350 The COC Australia website in 2008 contained no references to the founder. Similar examples can be found for other megachurches. E.g. Pritchard records that Dave Holmbo has been written out of the Willow Creek history after a similar leadership crisis which also involved sexual misconduct. Pritchard, GA 1996, Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI. Similarly, References to Ted Haggard are absent from the New Life Colorado Springs website.
Taylor (Interview, 07/03/2001) recalled that, after his fall, he faced a time of loneliness and insecurity, coupled with a crisis of faith and self-doubt in which he began to wonder whether his faith, Christianity, and way of doing ministry were real. Taylor’s moral failure led him to question deeply his life, ministry and identity. This deep sense of loss is shared by ministers who have invested heavily into their ministry identity and in their strong religious communities. More difficulties followed. In mid 1990, Taylor’s marriage to his wife of 26 years ended. He remarried, but the second marriage did not last. He then married a third time, hoping this would lift his fortunes, but this too, did not continue. Taylor found an outlet for his energies in establishing a large wholesale palm nursery with his son, on acreage not far from the COC church. However, his strongest sense of identity came from his unique approach to Christian ministry.

Taylor’s concern for generativity was evident in his efforts over the next ten years to re-establish his ministry. Despite trying other activities he repeatedly returned to his identity as evangelist and faith healer that he first discovered after his conversion at the Billy Graham crusade 30 years before. Taylor established the Victory Christian Centre in the Brisbane suburb of Logan. It grew to a congregation of about 200 but then disbanded. In January 1993, he held a tent crusade at Mansfield High School, but the church did not grow beyond a few hundred and it closed after one year. Taylor also established a church in a warehouse at Eight Mile Plains during the mid 1990s and it grew to 150 before discontinuing. Taylor found ministry opportunities in the United States where he preached at Ruth Heflin camps. However, his heart problems continued and questions over his personal life persisted, so his ministry opportunities were limited. The next chapter will show how his ministry opportunities improved in the new millennium.

352 Sunday Mail, Brisbane, November 11, 1990.
353 Glenis Green ‘Disgraced pastor sets up church’ The Courier Mail, (Brisbane); 26 May 2001 p. 9; Courier Mail, Brisbane, Saturday, 20 February 1993.
Responding to Taylor’s failure

The moral failure of the COC founder was a formative event for the COC, contributing to the questioning of over-reliance on charismatic leadership and the beliefs and practices Taylor stood for, including demonstrative approaches to divine healing, instant conversion, sacrificial starting of new churches with little outside support and other beliefs and practices.

Within the COC there was a tendency for some attendees to blame the founder’s fall on insufficient prayer, spiritual attacks of the devil and rumours of a nearby witches’ coven. Little mention is made of organizational weaknesses, accountability or the need for deeper levels of support. This further illustrates a tendency for Pentecostal groups to over-spiritualize leadership failure and to give insufficient consideration to organizational difficulties and the weakness of charismatic leadership. The leadership failures also point to the weaknesses of an overemphasis on experientialism, the notion of the divine authority of leaders, simplistic theologies and narrow world views. In addition, these leadership failures point to the neglect of cultivating broader and more realistic attitudes towards life and sexuality, failure to engage the complexity of worldly realities and failure to develop stronger supporting relationships. Interviewees commented that Taylor cultivated few close friendships, peer relationships, or people whom he could lean on or talk to about difficulties (e.g. Interview 13, 2002).

As noted in Chapter 4, studies by Erikson (1958) and other developmental theorists show that failure to fully resolve development issues in earlier life stages can have long lasting consequences for a person and their life’s work. The narrative of the COC founder suggests that Taylor had become overcommitted to the beliefs and practices he developed early on, with an over-reliance on his charismatic leadership abilities, faith confession and Latter Rain belief systems that left important life development issues unresolved.

As these developmental models show, charismatic leadership can be damaging to the leader in that can be associated with an over commitment to early unresolved developments, including autonomy, innovation, industry and a fixation on early experiences, other people or programmes that hinder later identity development. Tate and Parker (2007) argue that the notion of Erikson-like stages is also useful in identifying the pathologies and psychosocial problems that can develop in later life and the ways in which these might be resolved. Flaws in the leader’s identity development can also affect the organizations and movements they found, as was shown in Chapter 3 in the case of Logos and the Melbourne and Brisbane Christian Fellowships.

These crises provided an opportunity for the COC to develop a more durable model of leadership together with more highly developed organizational structures that went beyond the charismatic leadership model they began with. It contributed to COC leaders reflecting deeply on the nature of leadership, and the development of leadership that is more authentic (Shamir & Eilamb 2005:401), open to admitting the dangers of self-delusion and considerate of the true needs of followers. Fowler’s (1981) *Stages of Faith* suggests ways in which changes in faith positions can bring benefits to individuals, leaders and movements. Leadership became more transformational (Burns 1978:20) in that it raised the level of human, ethical and moral conduct of the leaders and followers. It led to a leadership that was more servant like (Greenleaf 1977) in terms of putting attendees’ true needs, aspirations and interests above the needs of the leaders. Further change may be needed. Howell and Avolio (1992) point out that ethical leadership must go further than many megachurches have shown. It requires a commitment to justice, equity, integrity, dialogue, questioning, serving, meeting the needs and aiding the personal growth of followers. They argue that leadership is unethical when it lacks these values and commitments, demands unquestioning obedience, quenches the development of followers and uses power to meet self-centred interests of the leaders. These developmental models also point to the benefits of moving to wider relationships, systems of accountability and willingness to change to more universal ways of thinking.
New directions under fresh leadership

New directions under Neil Miers from 1990

Despite the difficulties, the COC expansion into new locations provided a pool of experienced leaders who were able to continue providing leadership to the COC. The Methodist based administration model of the COC provided structures and body of overseers able to provide direction, guidance and stability for the COC at this difficult time.

Shakespeare wrote ‘Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them’. Neil Miers was one of the latter. In 1990, after Taylor’s resignation, Miers was appointed as the President of the COC movement and he became the most influential leader in the development of the COC after Taylor’s demise. He was typical of many COC pastors, a working class Australian who had overcome great odds in his life to establish a house building business, develop the COC children’s and youth work at the Brisbane megachurch and establish the second largest COC church at Nambour COC. He had similar experiences of adult conversion, full immersion adult baptism, pursuit of divine healing and participation in the charismatic and Pentecostal renewal movements. Like Taylor, Miers found the Methodist Church over-organized and not able to meet spiritual, emotional and physical healing needs. His similar background in Methodism, experiences of conversion, seeking healing and charismatic movement involvement ensured continuity with earlier developments. His success in life, despite having few formal qualifications, contributed to a similar suspicion of middle class church leaders, intellectual views and an over-reliance on education. Yet, like Taylor, he

356 William Shakespeare Twelfth Night, Act 2, Scene V.
357 Nance Miers, Interview, 23/01/2001; Neil Miers, Interview, 16/02/2001; Miers, Sunday am, 01/07/2001; New Way of Living (NWL), June/Aug 1993:19f.
worked hard to establish COC primary and secondary schools at the Nambour church and to support the tertiary CHC institution at Mansfield.\textsuperscript{358}

Miers was also a different leader to Taylor, and a leader whose world view had matured through observing fifteen years of COC development. He recognized that he did not have the same charismatic gifts or Methodist theological training as his predecessor. In contrast to Taylor’s emphasis on mystical Christianity, ‘words of knowledge’ and divine healing, Miers pursued motivational preaching topics\textsuperscript{359} and his preaching topics in 1990 included ‘Victory in your life’, ‘We can win’, ‘Success’, ‘Preparing for war’, and ‘Stir yourself’ and the ever present ‘Faith’. In the house building and real estate industry, Miers had demonstrated the value of establishing clearly defined organizational structures and a firm, direct approach and this helped him build a sizable business, youth work and church. In beginning to lead the COC in the 1990s he again emphasised organizational structures and the support of a strong leadership team.

Mier’s appointment as COC President separate from the Mansfield megachurch, together with the move of the national and international office of the COC and the magazine production team to Nambour lessened the power and influence of the Brisbane megachurch.\textsuperscript{360} The separation of the roles of Brisbane megachurch leader and COC movement leader encouraged a creative tension, giving each state and regional group and leader greater opportunity for the development of their regional networks and increased freedom for local and international initiatives and expansion. This freedom is reflected in a range of new church names that were adopted as alternatives to the previous emphasis on Christian Outreach Centre. However, these changes also made it more difficult for the COC movement to develop and maintain a core identity and culture.

\textsuperscript{358} Nance Miers, Interview, 23/01/2001.
\textsuperscript{359} Marcia Ford, Interview, 25/01/2001.
\textsuperscript{360} NWL Aug 1990:26; Rob Couper, Interview, 11/03/2002.
In May 1990, in order to maintain continuity with the previous leader, Clark Taylor’s brother, Max, was appointed as the leader of the Mansfield COC megachurch. However, difficulties arose as he did not have experience of running a church the size of Mansfield COC and he was said to be ‘out of his depth’ (Interview 10, 2002). His continued relationship with his brother, Clark, also created difficulties. Attendance and financial support for the Mansfield centre declined and the church and COC movement seemed to be on a knife’s edge with the possibility of both being closed.\(^{361}\) A disagreement arose between Max and the megachurch elders and Max tried to take the Brisbane megachurch out of the COC movement. The elders and national body acted to prevent this.

In September 1990, Max Taylor resigned and Neil Miers was asked by the COC oversight to move to Mansfield and lead the Brisbane COC megachurch flagship. Unfortunately, with Miers’ move to Brisbane, the growth of the Nambour and Sunshine Coast COC churches largely halted. Nambour COC reached a peak attendance of 1,500 weekly attendees in 1989. David Jackson (Ray Jackson’s son), who was employed at Nambour COC in 1987 to lead the Bible College, was appointed as senior pastor in 1990. This did not work out, and Nambour COC attendees left to establish further independent churches. In September 1991, Ivan Nosworthy was appointed as Nambour senior Pastor. However, more attendees left to join David Jackson’s independent church at nearby Yandina, and others left to join Stuart Gramenz’s church. The appointment of Chas Gullo as Nambour leader in 1996 helped to stabilize attendances at the Nambour COC.

Miers worked hard to develop annual conferences and new programmes and resources to support the national and international movements. Levies on member churches were increased from 5.0 to 7.5 per cent to further aid the development of national and international programmes, and to promote the identity of the movement (Nance Miers, Interview, 2002). Neil Miers also introduced a renewed emphasis on Australian and overseas aid projects and established Global Care to boost the COC identity. The Queensland State Government (Hansard 13 March 1991, Vol 314, p. 6709)

\(^{361}\) Ross Abraham, Interview, 02/10/2001
acknowledged the financial support that the COC was making. One particularly effective project was started by Ralph Parker and his Vietnamese wife in 1991 (NWL Jan 1991:10). The Vietnam Outreach programme provided hospital equipment and medical operations worth over $AUD 2.5 million for needy Vietnamese from 1991 to 1994. The growing COC interest in local and overseas aid projects also helped to motivate their expansion internationally. Miers established Ministry Training Institute (MTI) as a support centre for supplying ministry training resources for COC churches and it was heavily promoted from 1990 onwards (Gary Morton, Interview, 30/09/2003). At the same time, the appointment of Miers as the person responsible for international COC expansion, combined with the increased allocation of resources for international development, may have contributed to a reduction of resources and less emphasis on national growth (NWL Mar 1993:5).

**Brisbane COC under David McDonald**

During 1991 and 1992 Miers struggled with the enormous load of managing the Mansfield megachurch while also coordinating the national and international COC movements. In an effort to lessen this load, David and Trish McDonald, who had established the largest New South Wales COC church in Sydney with over 800 weekly attendees, were appointed as Senior Pastors of the Brisbane COC megachurch on 31 January 1993 (NWL Mar 1993:5). While the McDonalds’ move to Brisbane helped to secure attendance at the Brisbane megachurch, growth of the COC in Sydney and NSW declined after this move.

McDonald’s Methodist background and his charismatic movement experiences helped to emphasize these qualities in the Brisbane megachurch. He also recognized the importance of small home cells in a large megachurch and the number of home cells again increased to over 160 under his leadership. McDonald also employed full time musicians and technical crew to make the music more appealing, and this contemporary style of music and worship was a significant factor in the defection of youth to the COC (Kaldor et al 1997:29). McDonald’s emphasis on youth programmes and his employment of youth
leaders helped to develop this aspect of the COC. However, the momentum of the earlier charismatic revival and Brisbane COC growth had passed and numbers at the Brisbane megachurch gradually declined in the following years.

**The levelling of national growth**

The resignation of a founder and removal of the initial charismatic driving force of any organization generally forces a shift towards institutional structures and these often slow further growth (Conger & Kanungo 1987). After the departure of a highly charismatic founder, those who remained will often seek to institutionalize the preceding charisma in the form of norms, traditions and ideologies, and in missionary efforts that provide a strong sense of continuing purpose for the organization (Mintzberg 1984:215). However, institutional mechanisms that are necessary for the preservation and security of the existing churches often become the very forces that restrict further expansion (Flamholtz, 2000:318). This period following the resignation of a charismatic founder tends to be accompanied by the development of closed systems in which the needs of the organization and its leaders override missionary endeavours. Mintzberg (1984:217) also warns of the danger of enhancing the power of administrators at the expense of those on the ground who are able to respond most rapidly to external environmental factors. He writes,

> As organizations develop, their procedures tend to become routinized as formal standards, their administrators tend to augment their own power (even in the face of concentrated external influence), and the full-time insiders in general come to think of the organization increasingly as a vehicle to serve themselves rather than serving some outsider or some noble mission.

Mintzberg (1984:219) further warns that an inwardly focused closed feedback loop can develop and become even more restrictive. It can also promote the development of a politicized organization characterized by pervasive conflict and in-fighting which can only be sustained by privileged position or external forms of support. This contributes to the loss of the initial strategic purpose and direction, increased resistance to new ideas
and innovations and a decreased ability to respond quickly to new market opportunities, and it is often followed by a shift to maintenance mode.

In the COC, the slowing of growth was further accentuated by the difficulties created by the moves of Miers from the Sunshine Coast and McDonald from Sydney, thereby removing their strategic input into COC regional areas where expansion was most likely to occur. The slowing of COC growth nationally in Australia was also accompanied by a loss of confidence in millennialism and divine healing, a decline in willingness to make sacrificial commitments to the high costs involved in starting new Australian churches, and loss of confidence in COC low cost approaches to expansion.

Growth was also slowed by the COC organization rule that only one church could be planted in each town. This contributed to saturation level by the late 1980s because the COC had ‘ran out of places to start churches’ (Millis, Interview, 04/06/2010). Even in the large cities of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne the number of COC churches was restricted in order to protect the growth potential of the few existing COC churches. This is a weakness of a franchise like model in which protection of established territories and churches restrict further growth. As in other forms of franchising (Zech 2003:323) the leader’s failure damaged the COC brand name and potential for growth. Growth also slowed because of efforts by established leaders to protect the reputation of the COC by not allowing new COC groups to start with few resources in rented premises. Tighter rules for ordination and much higher levels of support for new churches introduced in the early 1990s reduced failure rates, but they also made it more difficult to ordain new pastors. The number of COC churches reached a peak of 238 in 1991.

New churches were started from 1990 to 1995 in the following locations:

1990  Alice Springs, Devonport, Dorrigo, Fremantle, Hamilton
1991  Brisbane North, Brisbane West, Yeppoon
1993  Cowra, Cummins, Gayndah (closed after 1 year)
1994  Adelaide beachside, Biggenden (closed in 1996), Camden Haven, Goulburn (closed after 2 years)
1995  Coolum, Cunnamulla, Cygnet, Byron Bay
However, during the 1990s, more COC churches were closed in Australia than were opened. Although 193 Senior Pastors were ordained between 1981 and 1992, a staggering 132 no longer served as Senior Pastors by 1992, giving a withdrawal rate of 68 per cent. The number of COC churches fell to 160 by 1999. Of the 115 Senior Pastors ordained between 1993 and 2002, only 29 were no longer serving in that capacity at the end of that time, but this more cautionary growth was much slower.

The COC was not alone in this slowdown. The rate of Pentecostal growth in Australia also slowed (ABS 2004) to 2.2 per cent per year between 1996 and 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Affiliates</th>
<th>5-year growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>71,148</td>
<td>142.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>107,007</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>150,619</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>174,720</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>194,600</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poloma (1989; 2000:4) argues that a similar slowdown occurred in the American AOG, as institutionalization changed motivations and structures, encouraged accommodation to the wider society and promoted routinization of symbols. Knowles (2003:336) noted a similar change in the sister movement to the COC, the New Life Centres in New Zealand, saying that they were ‘an example of the routinized, institutionalized, traditionalized “denominations” that the early movement had so abhorred’. The breadth of this slowdown indicates that the wider contexts and social environment had also changed, so that the wider social setting was no longer as conducive to Pentecostal growth.

362 COC Oversight Ordinations Records.
Greiner (1972) and Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) argue that a return to growth for an organization requires new leaders who balance preservation of core identity with new strategic purposes and direction, innovative responses to environment changes, further opportunities for domain expansion, decentralization, increased flexibility and resource acquisition. For the COC, the slowing of Australian growth was overshadowed by increased opportunities for overseas expansion. These opportunities reflected a broader worldwide increase in Pentecostal growth in non-Western countries after a slowing of growth in Western nations (Dempster, Klaus & Petersen 1991). As Casanova (2001:437) has noted, the de-territorialization of Pentecostalism and its freedom from localized places and traditions, combined with its capacity to localize among local people who address local concerns, has aided its global spread.

The changes in the COC movement are reflected in changes to the COC magazine and its logo. The logo ‘Australia for Christ’ was joined in November 1988 by the all encompassing mission statement ‘Reaching our World for Christ’ to reflect the growing opportunities for the COC overseas (Australia for Christ magazine, November/December 1988). In March 1989, the COC magazine was renamed from ‘Australia for Christ’ to ‘A New Way of Living’ (NWL) to recapture some of its earlier vitality and to include this wider international focus. In May 1991, the order of the logos was reversed, placing ‘Reaching our World for Christ’ first. In February 1994 the ‘Australia for Christ’ logo was removed, reflecting the increased international emphasis in the COC movement’s vision and direction in the mid to late 1990s.

**Further International expansion**

Opportunities for the overseas expansion of the COC had arisen in New Zealand in 1978, the Solomon Islands in 1982, Fiji in 1987 and PNG in 1989. Despite these overseas opportunities, at the time of Taylor’s resignation, almost all of the COC’s churches were still located in Australia (NWL Mar 1989:2). Overseas growth was initially limited by the need to concentrate resources in established COC churches in order to meet local and national needs. However, in the late 1980s, the COC began to attract more interest from
overseas people who wanted to establish COC like churches in their nations and the movement developed greater confidence in their capacity for overseas expansion. Like the earlier national COC expansion, the international expansion of the COC initially grew out of informal *ad hoc* opportunities, the success of which led to more deliberate and planned expansion programmes. Like other religious and social movements (Gerlach & Hine 1970), COC growth as a global movement was also aided by its openness to being a movement organization with a reticulate, polycephalous organic organizational structure linked by personal, structural and ideological ties. The pace of COC expansion overseas increased during the 1990s.

**COC expansion in South America**

In 1989 Neil Miers, Kevin Dales and Ron Holmes Brown travelled to Argentina to prepare the way for establishing Christian Outreach Centres there. Advertisements were placed in an English language newspaper under the heading ‘Revival in South America’ and expressions of interest were invited. This led to relationships being established between these countries and the COC in Australia. Outreach meetings followed and up to 4,000 people attended each meeting. Around 400 people were said to be converted. There was interest in the COC use of ‘divine healing’, ‘words of knowledge’ and ‘laying on of hands.’ Many said that they had never seen anything like that before (*NWL* Mar 1989:9). Based on this interest, arrangements were made for potential leaders to come to Australia to be trained, and in 1991 the first nine students from South America attended the COC Bible College in Brisbane. The lectures were translated into Spanish.

These students returned to Chile a year later and they established four Christian Outreach Centres, two with their own buildings and two in rented premises. Buildings were expensive to construct and this became a major hindrance to evangelical church growth in Chile. While studying at Mansfield COC the Pastor of the Puente Verde COC saw the way COCs in Australia had rented school buildings. He became one of the first COC churches to use low rent buildings from local schools in Chile. (*NWL* July/Aug 1991:16). Pastor Ozzie Saavedra saw their group of fifteen people grow to over a hundred in two
months. \((NWL\ May/June\ 1991:28)\). The Pueble Nuevo COC also grew rapidly from 30 to 137 in a matter of months. On 9 June 1991 the San Bernando COC opened their new building.

By the end of 1991, there were 13 COC centres in New Zealand, 5 in Fiji, 22 in other Pacific Islands, 12 in Papua New Guinea, 2 in Malaysia, 4 in England, and 7 in Chile \((NWL\ July\ 1991:18)\).

**Expansion into Russia in the 1990s**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, opportunities to establish new evangelical churches in the Soviet Union arose. The sociocultural dislocation and interest in a free market economy that followed the collapse of Communism flowed into religion and, on 25 October 1990 a law was passed granting full freedom of conscience and religion. This allowed all religious groups including Pentecostals to share their faith, hold meetings, own property and distribute literature \((Durasoff\ in\ Burgess\ 2002:219)\). These opportunities increased further in 1991 when the Soviet Union was divided into fifteen independent states and further laws were passed that guaranteed freedom of religious belief and practice \((Pankhurst\ 1998:127)\). Pentecostalism in the Soviet Union was already noted for being decentralized, having a large degree of autonomy and being most popular among the young. However, opposition from the Russian Orthodox churches and atheist establishment restricted the growth of new Pentecostal churches such as the COC, which were viewed as a further example of the intrusion of Americanization.\(^{363}\) Despite these difficulties, the COC international president, Neil Miers, participated in the ‘Breakthrough USSR’ outreach campaign in Kiev in 1991 \((NWL\ July\ 1991:30)\). Miers also attended the large Pentecostal conference in Moscow with Yonggi Cho in 1992 that attracted over 40,000 participants and claimed to have 15,000 converts. Miers and other COC leaders helped establish new Soviet evangelical churches that were supported by the COC \((NWL\ Sep\ 1992:11)\). However, these churches have not taken on the COC name.

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\(^{363}\) *Church Growth*, Winter 1992, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 12–13
COC expansion in the Philippines

In September 1992 Neil Miers and a team from Darwin COC spoke to 100 people who attended the first seminar for COC pastors and leaders held in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, in the Philippines. The COC leader’s demonstrations of supernatural power aroused much interest and many Filipino pastors expressed a desire to learn how to move in the power of the Spirit. As a result, several churches in the Philippines joined the Christian Outreach Centre (NWZ Oct 1992:20). By 1994 there were 26 COC churches in the Philippines. Support from Australia helped the Philippines COC establish feeding programmes and medical assistance for the poor and ministry training programmes (NWZ Feb 1994:32). At the International Pastors and Leaders Conference in 1994 it was announced that further churches in the Philippines were joining the COC (NWZ Jan 1994:32).

Changes in the New Zealand COC

As the number of New Zealand COC churches expanded, the Australian COC leaders initially sought to impose more centralized structures and accountability on them. The resulting disagreements over the ownership of church property and decreased freedom to make independent decisions led to a number of New Zealand churches leaving the COC and forming a new independent movement. The Australian COC leaders learned from these experiences and they developed national administration systems that provided for greater recognition and encouragement of independent development for overseas churches, while also maintaining a strong sense of COC identity and unity. Fourteen New Zealand churches remained affiliated with the COC in the mid 1990s. Alan and Ngaire Falivau, who were Samoan Islanders who had grown up in New Zealand, came to Brisbane and started a COC church in Brisbane in 1993. They returned to New Zealand in 1994 to lead the South Auckland COC.
Papua New Guinea (PNG)

Francis Apurel started the first COC at Mt Hagen Central in 1990 using a picture theatre for his meetings. The pastor of Cairns COC, the closest Australian church, was appointed as the COC oversight responsible for the PNG churches. During 1990, two groups of students from PNG went to the Solomon Islands Bible College in Balasuna for training alongside other students from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. In September 1991, Kevin Matthewson, John Gear and Steve See travelled to PNG to hold the first PNG National Pastors’ Conference. Seventy pastors and leaders attended. Matthewson reported that the Ialibu COC had grown from 50 people at the first meeting twelve months previously to 350 attendees. Meetings at Mt Hagen attracted a crowd of more than 1,500 people (NWL Nov 1991). During the next ten years Kevin Matthewson continued to visit PNG once or twice every year to assist with COC work there. With Matthewson’s encouragement and under Francis Apurel’s leadership the COC in PNG continued to grow strongly and it had nineteen churches in PNG in 1992 (NWL July/August 1992). In the latter part of 1992 Apurel moved back to Port Moresby where three COC churches were operating. In 1992 the COC church at Waiganui had six hundred people attending and two new churches were planted in the Milne Bay Province. Willie Tauhusu brought his church under the umbrella of COC. After returning from training in the Solomon Islands, Igo and Ellen Arua took a group of people from Port Moresby to Alotau where they established a church (Tobitt 1989:7).

A new move of God: Participating in ‘the blessing’

Miers found the early 1990s a difficult period and he often spoke of the need for renewal and refreshing to help the COC through this time (NWL 1990 to 1992). In April 1993, Miers attended a crusade in Christchurch, New Zealand, and at meetings led by Jill Austen and Mike Bickle he experienced the Holy Spirit being poured out in a new way that involved weeping, laughter and falling in the Spirit. Miers took this experience to the PNG church conference that he led and this contributed to considerable interest in the PNG COC churches that greatly increased attendance. On 2 May 1993 Miers returned to
the Brisbane COC megachurch and he called the leaders in the church to come forward to receive these new experiences. One of those present recalled:

Many came forward and caught the experience. People were laughing, crying, seeing visions and being pinned to the ground. Some staggered drunkenly, others had fits of laughter, others lay prostrate on the floor, still more were on their knees while others joined hands in an impromptu dance. People who had never prayed publicly for others moved among the crowd and laid hands on those present. Some people were so affected that they had to be assisted from the meeting and driven home. (NWL, June 1993).

Many likened the experience to being ‘drunk in the Spirit’, a term that was used pejoratively in Acts 2 to describe those who were under the influence of the Holy Spirit. As with many such moves, hundreds of people took offence at the new developments and many left. Miers explained, ‘There are some who are going overboard with it; just like when someone gets drunk on earthly wine for the first time. The next time it happens, they’ll understand it a little better’ (NWL June 1993).

During the weeks that followed, Bible College staff recall that lectures were cancelled as the students spent time absorbing these new experiences. Some laughed uncontrollably; others were crying. Those who were not having the experiences became concerned. The outpouring was also experienced by many at the school. The Chaplain at Mansfield COC College, Koula Konstantinos, said that compulsory chapel times that normally lasted 30 minutes were extending to two hours. Voluntary chapel times at lunch times were consistently attended by 50 to 60 students. She said:

Students go back to class drunk, some just crying with the Holy Spirit doing work in their lives. I have been told by one primary teacher that the behaviour has changed in the actual classroom. We've had recommissions, baptisms in the Holy Spirit, habits being broken off their lives. I just see real excitement. Students who usually spend lunch times playing football or talking with friends lined the door of the chapel waiting for praise and worship sessions to begin (NWL, June 1993).

Similar experiences were recorded by Phil Radnedge, at Redcliffe COC children’s church.
He said:

Parents are speaking of children who can’t put their Bibles down; other children are praying more now than at any other time in their life. These children have developed a great hunger for God. (\textit{NWL}, June 1993).

At Taree COC, Pastor Ron Jones recalled:

Many times over the three days laughter broke out, sometimes with as many as 200 people involved. Many were ‘slain’ supernaturally in the Spirit and rested in God’s power for hours on end. Many wept uncontrollably. Others were prayed for on the floor and set free from demonic oppression (\textit{NWL}, June, October 1993).

These outpourings in the COC continued for many months. It broke out in camps, conferences and seminars and spread to many COCs throughout the Australia. For many COC attendees, these new experiences of God restored their confidence in fresh experiential encounters with God and vitality that appeared to have been lost.

The 1993 National Social Science Survey found that experience was particularly important in Pentecostal churches, with 86 per cent of respondents saying such encounters gave them a feeling of being close or very close to God, compared with 56 per cent of Uniting Church members (Evans & Kelley 1993).

These new experiential encounters with God continued to spread globally through the ministry of South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne, Jill Austen and others. Many participants report an accompanying sense of closeness to God and a stronger relationship with Jesus. A transnational renewal movement mushroomed in size. It was characterized by not being strongly focused on any one individual charismatic leader (\textit{On Being}, April 1995:32–38). Many who had been hurt by the failure of charismatic leaders that they trusted in the late 1980s found the ‘nameless’ and ‘faceless’ traits of this movement particularly refreshing (Poloma 1997:267).

By late 1994 the new movement had grown into a massive global phenomenon. On 20 January 1994, the experience was taken to Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, and this Vineyard Church, due to its proximity to Europe and North America, soon became known as the centre of the global revival. The name ‘Toronto Blessing’ was coined by
British and other media to describe the movement as thousands of leaders from a wide variety of Christian churches began a pilgrimage to the Toronto church to catch the new experiences and take them back to their churches.\textsuperscript{364} Rodney Howard-Browne and John Arnott from Toronto visited Australia often in 1995, strengthening participation in the new movement. Howard-Browne was the main speaker at the 1995 AOG Biennial National Conference in Brisbane. By that time many attendees from Pentecostal and mainstream churches travelled to Toronto to ‘catch the fire’ (Hutchinson 2001:84). These new experiences continued for several more years before fading in the late 1990s.

Many COC attendees reflected positively on their experiences and spoke of breakthroughs that this had brought to their lives. Julie Webb from the Brisbane COC recalled that her big breakthrough came in 1994.

I attended a youth camp and went forward for prayer. I felt the power of God and received a fire and zeal that I had not had before. All of my self-consciousness dropped off and I have a confidence to do the things that I always had wanted to do for God. I led a home group that grew to over thirty people, and I took a higher profile in the church in singing and leadership.

While many who participated in the ‘blessing’ spoke positively of their experiences, those who had not participated in the experiences found them disconcerting. Non-participants, mainly from middle class backgrounds, left and joined mainstream or AOG churches. The Brisbane megachurch continued to emphasize the ‘blessing’ from May 1993 until mid 1994 and overall attendance dropped to under 2,000 as a result of this. The approach to the blessing changed in 1994 with a greater emphasis being placed on repentance, and this led to a baptism tank being erected on stage for baptisms during the church service (Mulheran, Interview, 10/07/2010).

In contrast to many Australian churches that declined in numbers as a result of the ‘blessing’, most overseas COC churches grew in size and number as the blessing

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{364} The term Toronto Blessing was first used by Ruth Gledhill to describe the new movement, ‘Spread of Hysteria Fad Worries Church’, London \textit{Times} on 18 June 1984, p.12.
\end{itemize}
attracted increased interest and new attendees. The ‘blessing’ gave the international COC churches a new sense of identity, renewal and abandonment to God that aided their global expansion.

**Further expansion in Papua New Guinea**

After Miers visited Port Moresby in 1993, one pastor recalled, ‘We couldn’t train enough pastors for the high level of interest that was shown.’ The interest generated by Miers’ impromptu crusade at Port Moresby swelled the numbers attending the COC in Milne Bay and other PNG provinces (*NWL* Jun 1993). Consequently, a number of people from PNG travelled to the Balasuna School of Ministries in Honiara to be trained as pastors in 1993. Responding to this interest, Miers appointed Alan Tobitt from Australia as the new National Chairman for PNG in October 1993. Tobitt had been an active evangelical Anglican in Sydney and with his wife, Min Tobitt, had worked for seven years in PNG during the 1960s with Wycliff Bible Translators. On returning to Australia, he found the high church Anglicanism at Port Macquarie held little attraction for him. He stopped attending church for ten years, before joining Port Macquarie COC after the Pastor had a word of knowledge regarding his heart difficulties (Tobitt 1989:10). He accepted the appointment to PNG in 1993, and under Tobitt’s leadership, the COC in PNG grew from 53 churches in 1993 to over 200 churches by the late 1990s. Most of these were started in the Highlands.

**The COC in Europe**

A ‘beach head’ for the COC in Britain and Europe had been established by Australian pastors Ian and Sue Spencer who travelled to England in 1989 and started a small COC church in Swindon. In the next three years, two more churches were started in England, two in Scotland and one in Holland. A COC church was also started in Germany in 1991 by Dieter Popp, an Australian carpenter who came to Australia from Germany when he was 10. He returned to start the first COC church in Germany. However, COC growth in Europe was slow.
In 1993, Ashley Schmierer, who led the COC expansion in the Pacific, relocated to Brighton in south east England to assume oversight of the COC in the United Kingdom and Europe. Schmierer had been raised in Pentecostal, Methodist and Baptist churches, but was resistant to COC involvement until his daughter was healed of a milk allergy. He then became convinced of the COC approach and led the COC work in the Pacific Islands from Innisfail. Just before leaving for in England, Schmierer experienced the ‘new move’ of the Holy Spirit that was reviving churches in the Australia and globally. This gave him new experiences and an associated message of renewal that attracted a sizable following on his arrival in England. The new experiences had by then become known as the ‘Toronto blessing’. They aroused a lot of interest in Britain and the COC was able to capture this wave of interest to aid its further growth. While some COC leaders in Australia moved away from the earlier COC emphasis on miracles, healings and millennialism, Schmierer retained these approaches and this helped the COC to attract further interest in Britain and other European countries. Over 300 people were soon attending COC meetings at Brighton and other potential groups were asking if they could join the COC.\footnote{Ashley Schmierer, Interview, 02/10/2002; A New Way of Living Magazine, \textit{NWL} January, 1994:6.} As interest increased, Schmierer set up short courses, similar to those Taylor had run, to train potential COC leaders to start further churches.\footnote{Ashley Schmierer, Interview, 02/10/2002.} He then established a six-month Pastors’ Training School to train potential COC leaders to establish outreach churches in European nations. This exporting of the COC message from Australia to Europe provides an example of the reverse colonization and two-way exchange that are encouraged by the global spread of Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena.

**Difficulties in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea**

Attendance at COC churches in PNG and the Solomon Islands continued to grow, boosted by the new experiential ‘blessing’ movement and by the accompanying emphasis
on miraculous encounters with God. However, in PNG, land and intertribal conflicts led to discontinuation of training at the PNG Bible College in 1996 and its move to Honiara, in the Solomon Islands.

These difficulties prompted efforts to train and appoint more local indigenous leaders in the Pacific Island COC churches. The 1996 National Pastors’ Conference at Bundung in PNG was the first conference where PNG pastors were ordained in PNG rather than in Brisbane, reflecting the move towards indigenization of the COC movement. Alan Tobitt returned to Brisbane to live in 1997 and responsibility for the leadership of the COC in PNG was placed in the hands of regional PNG chairmen. Peter Solomon was appointed as chairman of NCD, Gulf, Central, Oro, Western and New Britain Provinces; Matthew Rone was chairman of the Western Highlands Province. Kawage Gagma was appointed Chairman of Simbu, Ben Solu chairman of Southern Islands. Francis Kuruf’her was chairman of Momase and Manus Island and Mark Parimahi chairman of Milne Bay. In 1997 a further 22 pastors were trained at Balasuna, and more pastors were ordained at the National Pastors’ conference. Sixteen pastors were trained in Balasuna in 1998.

Tribal conflicts over land and property in the Solomon Islands increased and the Balasuna Bible College was closed in late 1998. Ministry Training Institute (MTI) materials were then used in local church settings. Despite the difficulties, by 2004 the COC had 80 churches in Milne Bay, 21 churches in the Islands, and 14 churches in Lae in PNG.

**Further concerns about the COC expansion in the Pacific**

Lyon (1998:53) noted that in Pacific Island nations, Pentecostal groups such as the COC are largely indigenous groups that tend to be self-supported and administered. They tend to send more missionaries to other countries than they receive. However, while these groups bring many benefits to locals, particularly in terms of improved education and health, Robbins (2004a:327) identifies a number of difficulties that these revivalist charismatic Christian groups like the COC bring to the Pacific Islands, particularly where
they give insufficient consideration to the particular needs of each local setting. Robbins argues that the adoption of Western Christian beliefs, values and cultural norms with an emphasis on individuality and modernity creates unreal expectations that conflict with the relationality and realities of indigenous Pacific Island cultures. He also warned that Western belief systems are often unsuited to the needs of subsistence agricultural communities that live off land that is owned by kinship groups.

Manfred Ernst (1994)\(^{367}\) completed a major study of new religious groups in the Pacific in 1994. In his study, Ernst noted that Pentecostal churches, including the COC, brought a mixture of benefits and concerns to these people. Ernst also observed that the use of local personnel and finances was encouraged by Pentecostal growth. However, he argued that Pentecostal groups such as the COC brought with them conservative, oversimplified interpretations of the Bible and narrow ethical directives. He also found that the Pentecostal churches tended to follow the views of dominant Pentecostal religious cultures of the West, which adhere to rigid moral codes, taking a strong stance against abortion, homosexuality, gay rights, labour unions, minimum wages and feminism. Ernst (2002) expressed particular concern that new religious groups such as the COC, tend to replace traditional communities with church based relationship networks that divide tight knit family and pre-existing village relationships. As Anderson (2000:193) notes, Pentecostal groups also tend to be overly optimistic and triumphalistic and they tend to overlook their inevitable cultural blunders. Pentecostals also tend to rush into efforts in evangelism through signs and wonders, while they appear blind to serious issues of sociopolitical contexts, political oppression and social justice (Anderson 2005:37). Bosch (1991:422, 432) uses the term ‘contextualization’ to describe the need to express core Christian truths in and through contemporary cultures while showing sensitivity to local cultural contexts. Kraft (1979:291) too observes that, ‘all theologizing is culture-bound interpretation and communication of God’s revelation.’ These scholars’ writings

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\(^{367}\) Ernst (1994) is based on a study from 1990 to 1994 of a number of new religious groups including the Pentecostal AOG, the evangelical Campus Crusade for Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) and the Jehovah’s Witnesses.
highlight the need for greater cultural sensitivity by the COC if its activities are to be most effective.

Mainstream church leaders also warned that the loose application of beliefs in ‘evil spirits’ and demons to deeper human problems and needs was one of the most worrying aspects of the Pentecostal movement. The COC and Pentecostal belief in an invisible spirit world, ‘spiritual warfare’ and strong emotional experiences shared affinities with the spiritual and tribal world view of the Pacific Islanders, which aided the growth of Pentecostalism in the Pacific Islands (Stritecky 1998). The COC use of the ‘Spiritual Warfare’ metaphor is also concerning.

The newer Pentecostal groups such as the COC introduced free market competition between churches that challenged the established order in which Christian denominationalism had previously been apportioned between the Methodists in Fiji, the Anglicans in the Solomon Islands and the Presbyterians in Vanuatu, and these established groups expressed concern over the intrusion, the competition that the COC introduced and their innovations and new practices.

Despite these objections, PNG and Pacific Island COC attendees interviewed for this study expressed their appreciation of COC contributions to their churches and communities, particularly in terms of revivalist developments, medical aid, education, business innovations and personal friendships. The COC encouraged the rapid adoption of modern Western attitudes including pursuit of education, vocational development, health, progress, individual self-determination, equality, democratic participation, wealth, consumerism and conservative views of society and morality. Participants in the COC were less involved in Pacific Island feasts, dances, ceremonies and the consumption of certain foods and drinks. While some of the COC world views on millennialism, spiritual warfare and divine healing are questionable, the COC churches encouraged participation

368 See for example, the Pentecostal Ministry Report adopted by the Methodist conference of Victoria and Tasmania, 1975, Methodist Publishing House, Melbourne.
in local and global networks which increased social and educational engagement that assisted participants to become more educated and informed. One Fijian attendee who was interviewed, David Inoke, provides an example of the benefits that participation in the COC can bring. Inoke found that his attending the COC improved his English language skills, encouraged his pursuit of further education, and provided a network of contacts that aided his vocational advancement.369

Bernice Martin (1998:126ff) also notes more broadly the benefits that Pentecostal churches can bring to participants in overseas locations, particularly by promoting strong family based relationships, increased interaction with the wider society, greater democratic participation, health education, through moderating violence and antisocial behaviour, by greater opportunities for women and youth, and by helping to avoid the damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and prostitution. Hovey (1990) too argues that Pentecostalism in Papua New Guineas brought many benefits including improved literacy, increased education, medical knowledge and vocational training. The beneficial contributions of the COC have been generally acknowledged for its role in these areas, and particularly in social welfare, global care, political lobbying and overseas aid.

David Wakefield (Correspondence, 16/12/2002) who is International Anthropology Coordinator SIL International recalled that COC attendees maintain their village family ties as best they can and show real concern for the welfare of their non urban family members. Wakefield states,

‘so far as I can see, joining COC was based on personal dissatisfaction with his religious experience to date. It was not an act of rebellion against extant social structures (Anglican or Miniafia), but rather a choice for experiencing God more ecstatically and intimately than he had known within the Anglican tradition.’

369 David Inoke, Interview, 27/02/2004.
Social welfare

As the COC has grown older, its willingness to be countercultural and be seen as a wild and untamed religious alternative has waned, and it has looked for even greater opportunities for social respectability. In part, this respectability was obtained through an increased emphasis on social welfare initiatives that included food aid, counselling, crisis care and other programmes, and an increased involvement in political engagement and political lobbying. The COC has moved away from accepting the reproaches of Australian society to seek to become a new religious establishment in it. The increased identity from social involvement also fits with Thumma and Travis’ (2007:79) observation that megachurches in America and globally have shifted in recent decades from their emphasis on meeting private spiritual needs to an increased emphasis on social action and meeting physical, educational and economic needs of the wider society. Clifton and Ormerod (2009) have noted a similar change in Australia. Miller and Yamamori (2007:132–3) also observe that a social justice branch of Pentecostalism is emerging that is noted for being democratic, egalitarian, communal and energizing. They note too that the Pentecostal message of Holy Spirit empowerment encourages a belief that such changes are possible and necessary (2007:221).

Global Care

Building on earlier social welfare activities, in February 1996 the COC national office launched Global Care as an Australia-wide and international ‘caring arm’ that could reach into communities around the world and touch the poor in practical ways with the love. Oscar Micari and Kevin Mills, who had previously worked for an international ministry ‘Feed the Hungry’ and with the poor in many parts of the Third World, helped establish Global Care. This committed the COC national office to coordinating increased support for overseas aid projects, orphanages, medical centres and relief for victims of

370 www.coc.org.au/globalcare
natural disasters, war and famines in locations that included the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, South Pacific, South America, Africa, Kosovo and East Timor.\(^{371}\)

The following year, in 1997, Global Compassion was launched in England and Europe as a sister organization. The main focus of Global Compassion has been on assisting Jewish people in Russia to return to their homeland, Israel. Mobile medical clinics were also launched, helping poor villages. These now operate in Thailand, Philippines, Africa and Cambodia.

The establishment of Global Care in Australia as an overseas aid organization further strengthened the links between the Australian COC and the PNG churches. During 1997 the newly formed Global Care mission and relief arm sent $12,000 worth of food aid to highland areas that were badly hit by drought (Tobitt 1989:18). Global Care PNG was launched in Port Moresby on 28 May 1998. In an act of “uncanny timing” this launch occurred only three weeks before three massive tidal wave tsunamis crashed onto the shores of the north western coastal area of Aitape, killing over 2,000 people. The infant organization was quick to use its Global Care contacts in Australia to send teams into the area with food, clothing, medical equipment and people to assist in rebuilding the village (Outreach January 1999). Many COC participants said that these activities gave them a greater sense of involvement and self-worth. In December 1998, Global Care Operations Coordinator Pastor Russell Wright and PNG COC National Chairman Pastor Alan Tobitt, led a Global Care team of eight tradesmen to help construct communal buildings and water tanks in the badly damaged villages around Aitape. This operation prepared the COC for their response to the much larger tsunami that followed a few years later.

\(^{371}\) The concept of Global Care was born out of a conversation between Pastor Graeme Rogers, George Stileanos and Theo Masselos about how COC could have an Australia-wide and international ‘caring arm’ that could reach into communities around the world and touch the poor in practical ways with the love of Jesus.
Red Frogs

Andy Gourley, a Brisbane COC pastor, initiated ‘Red Frogs’ in 1997 to help protect students from harm during ‘Schoolies’ Week’ by providing 24-hour pastoral care, outreach support and diversionary activities at major accommodation sites. The name ‘Red Frogs’ comes from the partnership established with Allen’s Confectionery to distribute over ten tonnes of ‘red frog’ confectionery as part of the chaplaincy activities. Over 1,500 community volunteers are involved with the Red Frogs chaplaincy programme each year. The Red Frogs programme also provides support for the National Association of Australian University Colleges. This hotel chaplaincy network cooperates with state and local government efforts to manage the 100,000 and more school leavers who converge on holiday destinations around Australian in November each year to celebrate the end of their secondary education. Under Citipointe’s leadership the hotel chaplaincy programme has been established in most of the locations where school leavers converge. Like many other COC programmes, Red Frogs chaplaincy programmes have been established in other states around Australia, and overseas interest has led to Red Frogs programmes being set up in Europe, Canada and North America. A leader in Red Frogs explained, ‘This is like a franchise. The new groups establish their own programmes but they look to us for ideas.’

Australian Pentecostalism and political lobbying

A further example of the growth in COC engagement with the wider society is seen in the increased sophistication of their involvement with the politics and political lobbying. As Steigenga (2003) notes, the role of religion in politics is often understudied and poorly understood. At the same time, the rise of the New Christian Right, and the increased influence of religion in politics in many countries challenges the secularization hypothesis and affirms the extent to which religions are able to adapt to modernity,
secularism, urban life and influence the future direction of society and politics (Butler 2003). The increased political involvement by religious groups in the late 20th century has been further encouraged by new sectarian and institutional religious developments and by increased opportunities for political expression (Wallis & Bruce 1985). In Australia, politics has frequently interacted with religion as is evident in the formation of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) in 1955, the Logos Foundation in 1969 and the Christian Democrats in 1977. The formation of the Salt Shakers in October 1994 by members of the charismatic Crossways Blackburn Baptist megachurch and the Family First party in 2002 by members of Paradise AOG megachurch in Adelaide show the increasing influence of the megachurches on politics. The Pentecostal megachurches were initially apathetic towards mainstream political concerns due to their millennialist, other-worldly world view and efforts required for evangelism and church establishment. However, their belief in the Holy Spirit empowered transformation of the present world and their capacity to mobilize considerable resources and attendance encouraged an increased level of political involvement as their resources increased. In the United States, the megachurches played a role in the growth of the New Christian Right and the Moral Majority. Knowles noted a similar growth in interest in politics in the New Zealand New Life Churches in the 1980s (Knowles 2003:290). As Knowles observed, the political concerns of these groups initially tended to focus narrowly on issues of individual morality and family matters such as homosexuality and abortion, but tended to broaden over time.

**COC contributions to the Australian Christian lobbying**

As the COC megachurch and its schools, college and other facilities became more established the church has become increasingly aware of the important influence of state and federal governments its activities and mission, and the COC potential to influence government and its agencies. COC members were instrumental in forming the Australian Christian Coalition (ACC), which was modelled on a similar movement in the United States (Ranganui 2009). A meeting between the COC lay leader John Gagliardi, a former editor of the *Townsville Bulletin*, and the retired conservative Baptist minister John
McNichol in 1995 at a national prayer breakfast in Canberra led to a decision to establish the Australian Christian Coalition (ACC). John Gagliardi from the Mansfield COC megachurch was appointed as the first ACC president. The COC leaders Neil Miers and David McDonald were foundation members and the associate Pastor of the Mansfield COC megachurch, Peter Earle, was an early leader of the ACC. The ACC was officially launched in Canberra in 1995. It was supported by a research committee established with Brian Millis from the COC’s Christian Heritage College as leader and deputy chairman of the ACC think tank. Interest among conservative Christians was considerable and by November 1995 Gagliardi claimed that the group had attracted 100,000 members. The group supported pro-family initiatives and sought to counter the influence of homosexual, euthanasia and abortion lobby groups.

In 2001, the ACC changed its name to Australian Christian Lobby in recognition of the need to develop forms of lobbying that are more attentive to the needs of local Australian contexts. Jim Wallace was appointed as the executive chairman. These changes reflect a maturation of the organization, a lessening of its dependence on American influences, an increased sophistication in its beliefs and processes and the further development of a Christian lobby organization adapted to local contexts.

While Pentecostal groups such as the COC megachurch and denomination can play a role in increasing the informed democratic participation of its participants, the extent of this engagement tends to vary according to the models of participation that the leaders and the churches encourage. By fostering in-group trust at the expense of more general social trust these religious groups can have a negative impact on the development of social capital (Uslaner 2000). Their narrow focus on issues of private morality and religion, and their time restraints due to religious and other commitments divert attendees away from

373 ‘Christian Coalition Set to become Force in Politics’, South East Advertiser, 8 November 1995.
374 John Gagliardi, Open letter to delegates of the 1995 COC Annual General Conference.
greater community and political involvement. The structure of religious associations means that they are often more limited than secular networks in encouraging political efficacy and participation. Scheufele, Nisbet and Brossard (2003) argue that evangelicals in particular are less knowledgeable about political developments and less politically efficacious.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the continued development of the COC in the 1990s following the resignation of the COC founder and the appointment of new leaders. It considered questions raised by the founder’s failure and identified the weaknesses of over-reliance on charismatic leadership, the importance of accountability and the need for more highly developed organizational structures. This chapter shows that megachurches can learn from other social movements about the need to view attendees as active participants who shape their personal and the organization’s realities, structures and futures (Porta & Diani 2006). They can also benefit from viewing themselves as learning organizations (Senge 1990:4, 69).

The slowing of growth of the COC in Australia points to difficulties arising from the loss of input from the charismatic founder, and the accompanying loss of confidence in the COC brand, and beliefs including millennialism, demonstrative approaches to divine healing, trust in charismatic leadership and sacrificial willingness to participate in franchise-like approaches to church planting. The lost momentum may also point to the difficulties arising from relocation of key leaders, institutionalization and over-organization that restrict a free-flowing organic movement development (Poloma 1989).

The slowing of growth in the Brisbane megachurch from 1986 to 1989 points to saturation and change in the existing market that preceded the founder’s resignation. This slowing of growth may have been associated with the passing of interest in charismatic movement phenomena including divine healing and this is reflected in changes observed in the newer churches and megachurches that were trying new ways of reaching a
changed audience in the 1990s and beyond. These changes are associated with organizational institutionalization and maturation stages (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40) which helped to preserve the organization and its gains, but they also appear to have restricted further adaptation and development.

At the same time, the crises of leadership also provided an opportunity for new appointments, and reassessment and maturation of the COC leaders’ view of themselves, their organization and their beliefs. This reassessment encouraged the transition from a movement focused around a single charismatic leader into a complex organization governed by a network of state, national and international leaders, and constitutional, organizational and institutional structures. The durable model of leadership and organization that has developed is likely to be more authentic (Shamir & Eilamb 2005:401), more open to admitting instances of self-delusion, being more genuinely servant-like (Greenleaf 1977) meeting the true needs of followers, and a form of transformational leadership that was transforming the leaders and followers and their ethical aspirations (Burns 1978:20).

The expansion of the COC into new global locations in the 1990s reflects how Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on supernatural experiences, divine empowerment and openness to localized contemporary innovations continues to be ‘a religion made to travel’ (Cox 1995:102). This global growth reflects the tendency of smaller independent groups to seek affiliation with larger megachurches and the teachings of megachurch leaders.

Details of the overseas churches joining the COC and reasons for joining the COC are described in the COC magazines of the time. Further insights into the churches joining the COC and reasons for joining were obtained from interviews with leaders of the COC.

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376 E.g. NWL Mar 1999, p.3, the European nations, COC in America; NWL July 1997, p. 8, former soviet nations, USA churches; NWL April 1997, Britain, Ukraine; NWL June/July 1996 p. 17 Solomon Islands; NWL Aug/Sept 1996, USA churches join COC; NWL April 1996, p. 30, Fiji; NWL May 1995, p. 30, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia; NWL Jun 1993, PNG.
overseas including Ashley Schmierer, international president, former leader in the Pacific, now based in London (Interview, 02/10/2002); Tobbit, former PNG missionary (Interview 1989), Townsend, former leader of the COC in the Pacific, Schier, leader of the COC in the Pacific. Interviews were also conducted with overseas COC attendees including Inoke (Interview 28/02/2003), Osea, (Interview, 14/01/03), from Fiji, Levi from the Solomons, and Roni from PNG. These articles and interviews in this study report that overseas church attendees were attracted to the COC by its less formal, ‘less traditional’ ways of doing things, its rural and working class origins, its openness to innovation and its strong emphasis on supernatural phenomena including divine healing. It was said by the COC church administrator in the early 1980s, Brian Millis (Interview, 2000) that, ‘No one else was offering the same support, networking, practical emphasis or the sheer audacity and vision that the COC offered’.

The ongoing international expansion of the COC shows the benefits that flow from an organizational ability to balance flexibility, diversification and decentralization of local groups with the organizational systems of standardization and the centralization needed to maintain the identity and unity of a diverse but within a unified church organization, consistent with observations made by organizational theorists such as Schein (2004:303). The global expansion of the COC indicates the capacity of the COC franchise like model to harness interest in glocal Pentecostal phenomena, organizational approaches and market orientation in different nations, particularly in the Pacific, Europe and South America. However, as with other forms of franchising (Zech 2003:323), the COC model of reproduction encourages a standardized set of practices and beliefs that do not always fit well in different times and locations. It raises questions about the validity of the COC beliefs and practices that are addressed more fully in the final chapter of the thesis. This chapter also showed how new revival developments such as the so called ‘Toronto blessing’ had mixed results for the COC. While Brisbane COC megachurch attendance declined after their participation, attendees at a number of overseas churches grew through participation in this new movement.
The global expansion of the COC also highlights concerns over the need for the COC to develop a greater contextual awareness of the true needs of local communities. Like many Pentecostal groups, the COC is changing so that a stronger sense of its identity is generated by increased involvement in providing local and overseas aid, social action and political lobbying. Some scholars point out potential concerns associated with these developments, particularly if the approaches are poorly thought out, with insufficient consideration of the deeper implications of local contextual needs. The increased sophistication of the COC overseas aid and other programs shows that COC is a learning community.

The next chapter examines further changes in the COC megachurch, COC leadership and movement during the first decade of the new millennium. It considers changes involving the rebranding of some of the largest churches, including changes in the Brisbane COC that accompanied its name change to Citipointe Church. The chapter also considers COC participation in the Natural Church Development (NCD) church health programme and the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) and efforts to monitor COC developments and promote organizational health. It also looks at changes in the beliefs and practices of the COC megachurch and movement leaders, comparing beliefs and practices in the new millennium with those of the early years of the COC, particularly in the case of the Brisbane COC megachurch.
Chapter Eight: The COC in the new millennium: Organizational decline and renewal

By AD 2000, the COC movement that began as a small Brisbane church under a charismatic leader had grown into a widely dispersed and increasingly diverse organization with churches in all Australian states and in 40 nations around the globe. Due to this dispersal, early identity forming events such as the annual Brisbane conference were replaced by regional conferences in different Australian states and overseas nations. Training has also diversified with regional Bible colleges and training centres replacing the single centralized Brisbane college and training events. Within this increasingly dispersed and diversified body, smaller networks emerged, many based on earlier relationships, including south east Queensland and many globally dispersed churches led by Neil Miers, northern New South Wales and the Australian states led by David McDonald, a British and European network led by Ashley Schmierer, Pacific Islands churches led by their national leaders, and South America and Malta led by Fred Bartolo. There was also an increased variety of missions, social welfare, youth and other programmes led by a miscellany of different leaders. Interestingly, many leaders of the global expansion of the COC came out of small beginnings in a small number of regional churches such as Innisfail COC, Nambour COC and Taree COC.

In describing these changes, the COC State Chairman in Western Australia, Geoff Woodward (Interview 2003) stated,

The COC were transitioning in the new millennium from a rural based movement to one that would have a greater impact in Australia’s two largest cities. They were transitioning from a working class movement to one that would have appeal to the middle class… They were transitioning from a movement built on relationships to a structured organization.

The COC organizational approaches and beliefs have also diversified, indicating different approaches by different sub groups within the COC to changes in Australian society, as well as a perceived decline in interest in the earlier charismatic movement phenomena.
that aided initial COC growth. While disliked by some in the COC, diversification and decentralization are described by organizational theorists such as Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) and Schein (2004:225) as a way of aiding an organization’s growth, adaptation and renewal. Schein argues that this diversification and differentiation is a sign of organizational health, as subgroups develop in the pursuit of functional segregation, market and product differentiation, hierarchical differentiation and divisionalism as they exploit opportunities in decentralized geographic locations. Schein (2004:274) also argues that as organizations age and grow they inevitably undergo differentiation as subgroups within the organization evolve their own sub cultures and respond to a range of external environmental settings and opportunities. The Brisbane COC megachurch is a prominent example of this. Their earlier emphasis on pre-millennialism, demonstrative claims of divine healing, instant conversion and charismatic gifts were no longer viewed as effective in attracting or benefiting attendees.\textsuperscript{377}

Many of the other COC churches, particularly smaller regional and rural COC churches, and numerous overseas COC groups, continued to hold on to their earlier revivalist, charismatic movement beliefs, particularly as they often had few other resources. A creative tension has emerged between the COC groups that are pursuing new innovations and those that seek to maintain their earlier heritage. Diversification is also evident in a range of other COC activities, including education, with the school expanding into new courses and roles, and the tertiary college expanding beyond teacher training into business, social science, chaplaincy and other programmes. Additionally, the social welfare arms of the COC have expanded into new areas including Global Care, Red Frogs chaplaincy and other programs. Diversification and tensions have also emerged between the older and younger participants, those who are seeking more mystical experiences and those seeking a more rational and pragmatic faith, as well as between people from different demographic and educational backgrounds. The benefits and
limitations of decentralization, diversification and differentiation provide important themes in the analysis of the COC that follows.

The continued global expansion of the COC brand

In the new millennium, the strongest growth of the COC was in nations outside Australia. In 2002, the European chairman, Ashley Schmierer said,

   The biggest change in the new millennium is that we have gone global … and have gone seriously into the non-English speaking countries. We are now training people in every nation to take their nation for Christ.378

COC growth in the Pacific, which includes some of the closest nations to Australia, continues to be strong, with over 200 churches in PNG; 66 churches, 3 schools and a Bible College in the Solomon Islands; 34 churches in Vanuatu and 23 churches in Fiji. The COC that started in the Philippines in 1993 has 53 churches, 10 schools and numerous business activities and humanitarian aid programmes. The COC also has churches in Europe, with 25 churches in Britain as well as churches in Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Iceland, Malta, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine. There are 23 COC churches in Chile, and churches in the Middle Eastern and African nations. Some overseas COC groups have grown very large. The COC in India has 7,280 house churches and 107,536 believers.379

At the same time, the demographic profile of many of the overseas COC churches is changing. Some of the COC churches, such as churches in Chile that began among poorer people, now have a more middle class profile, with greater financial resources and schools (Peter Earle, Interview, 2010). The COC welfare initiatives have also expanded and diversified. Global Compassion was established as the international charity arm of COC and it has pursued new aid projects including assistance to poor communities in

378 Ashley Schmierer, Interview, 02/10/2002.
379 Figures obtained from the web sites of COC Australia, COC international and the COC Australia national office. See www.coc.org.au, http://www.coc.org.uk/churches/european-churches/
Ukraine, church building programmes in Bulgaria and pastor training in Eastern Europe and the Middle East (Bartolo 2010).

In 2008, Ashley Schmierer was elected as the International President of the COC and the COC international headquarters moved to his church in London. This supports Park’s (2005:445) observation that religious innovations tend to emerge on the margins where innovations are often greatest, before spreading along migration and trade routes to more central and populous geographic areas. As the COC has expanded globally, tensions have also emerged between the allocation of resources and development of institutional structures needed to maintain existing more centralized national and local churches and the unity and common identity of COC, and the freedom and decentralization needed for new local initiatives and identities. The increasingly international character of the COC reflects the globalization of and diversification of Pentecostalism in general, as well as the continued capacity of the Pentecostal belief in the Holy Spirit enablement to empower local indigenous groups to start self-supporting and self-governing churches. While other Australian megachurches such as the CLC (which developed 205 overseas churches) and AOG/ACC megachurches have also developed overseas churches, the COC stands out as an Australian megachurch movement that has developed the greatest number of overseas churches.

Further study of the continued global expansion of the COC is beyond the scope, resources and space requirements of this thesis. The remainder of this chapter briefly overviews developments in the Australian COC and then returns to the thesis case study of the Brisbane COC megachurch as it examines more fully the Brisbane COC developments after 2000 AD.
The COC in Australia

Corporatization and governance

The COC corporate structure continues to reflect its Methodist origins as well as newer developments adapted from the charismatic movement and its own initiatives. Encouraged by the Pentecostal belief in Holy Spirit empowerment of the laity and a loose, flexible organic, organizational structure, each church and senior pastor has freedom to develop initiatives and churches within the guidelines set by their regional and national COC bodies. Local churches are unincorporated, non-profit associations within their national COC movements. They are led by senior pastors, whose main role is to provide the visionary and pastoral leadership of their local churches. Local ‘committees of management’ that are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of each church govern the business affairs of the local churches. The property and assets of each church reside with the national COC bodies, lessening the likelihood of defections. A national property commission administers property matters. The management of each national COC is through an oversight committee comprising a national chairperson, secretary and between two and ten advisory pastors. The executive management of the Australian national COC is through the national Ministry Support Centre. It provides training, ministry, administrative support, financial management, insurance, coordination of national conferences, facilitation of communication within the national COC and ensures auditing and accountability.

COC churches are grouped together in regions and districts. There are currently 31 districts in Australia, each of which is accountable to their state and area executives. Monthly reporting by each local church aids the national, state and district bodies to monitor details such as attendance, income and expenditure. Major national decisions are made at the COC annual national conference and AGM in October/September each year. Each church is required to send delegates (one lay delegate per 100 members up to a maximum of five members per church). The COC also holds annual State and district Conferences where appointments and decisions for the following year are made.
COC schools are governed by local school boards that report to their local church and the Ministry Support Centre. Local welfare initiatives are mostly through Global Care offices that operate under the oversight of the local churches. Churches are free to develop further welfare initiatives within preset guidelines. All major activities are subject to annual external auditing in conjunction with the Ministry Support Centre oversight and reports are presented to the annual local and national AGMs for ratification (COC National Office report, 2010).

The COC denomination in Australia

The increased variety within the COC is evident in the increased range of church sizes. Table 8.1 shows the size of COC churches in Australia in 2004.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Centres</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small 0–99</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 100–249</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10,350</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large 250–499</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Large 500+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mega 2,000+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>26,250</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most COC churches are classified as small (0–99 members) with 63 per cent of churches having less than 100 attendees and 90 per cent of churches with less than 250. The largest COC attendance occurs in the medium size churches (100–249 members).

Despite this, the best resourced and most influential COC churches are identified as mega (2,000+ members), extra large (500–1,199 members) or large (250–499 members).
The largest COC churches are:

Mega (2,000+):
- Citipointe Church, Mansfield, QLD, 5,100 members

Extra Large (500–1999):
- Suncoast Christian Church, Nambour, QLD, 1,000 members
- Metro Church, Perth, WA, 800 members
- Coastlands COC, Noosa, QLD, 700 members
- Nowra COC, Nowra, NSW, 600 members

Large (250–499):
- Taree COC, NSW, 450 members
- Port Macquarie COC, NSW, 450 members
- Shellharbour COC, NSW, 400 members
- Brisbane North COC, QLD, 400 members
- Robina Gold Coast COC, QLD, 350 members
- Toowoomba COC, QLD, 350 members
- Cairns, COC, QLD, 350 members
- Bundaberg COC, QLD, 350 members
- Gympie COC, QLD, 350 members
- Beenleigh COC, QLD, 300 members
- Innisfail COC, QLD, 250 members

While the number of COC churches in Australia declined from 238 in 1991 to 168 in 2004 and 138 in 2009, it is generally argued by many COC leaders that the Australian churches today are larger and more financially secure (Brian Millis, Interview 2010; Ken Wooton, Interview, 2010). Many of the larger churches have satellite campuses and if these were counted as separate churches, the total number of COC churches would be greater. Australian COC membership appears to have increased from 20,000 in 1990 to 30,000 in 2010, although some question these claims (Interview 35, 2010).

David McDonald leads the Australian national COC council. He moved from the Brisbane megachurch back to Sydney in 2000 to strengthen development of the COC in Sydney, New South Wales and nationally. He was given the title of National Chairman in 2000 (David McDonald, Interview, 12/05/2000). His Methodist background and charismatic movement experiences continued to strengthen these evangelical and
revivalist values within the Australian COC churches. However, his goal to rekindle their original vision of reaching the nation for Christ through establishing new centres \((Outreach\ Aug\ 2009:9)\) is restricted by limited resources and unwillingness by many churches and attendees to take the risks and sacrifices needed for a renewed expansionary phase. Most established COC churches believe they have ‘gone through the hard times and they want to protect their assets’ (Ken Wooten, COC general manager, Interview, 2010).

Queensland, the birthplace of the COC, continues to have the largest number of COC members, with 50 per cent of Australian COC members in its 58 churches. One reason for this is that attendance in Queensland is swelled by the megachurch, extra large and large churches. Chas Gullo, based at Nambour COC, currently leads the Queensland State COC in 2010. After hesitant expansion of the COC into New South Wales (NSW) in 1980, the NSW region has grown to have the largest number of COC churches, with 64 churches. Most are in northern NSW where McDonald led an expansionary drive in the 1980s, and where the \textit{New Way of Living} television programmes were broadcast.

Smaller COC churches networks are found in Victoria, which has 25 churches, Western Australia with 10 churches, South Australia with 6 and Tasmania with 4. The COC has one church in the Northern Territory (See Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: COC church size in each state (2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Extra Large</th>
<th>Mega</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greater concentration and size of churches in Queensland and NSW reflects the geographic origins of the COC movement in south east Queensland and northern NSW, the success of television broadcasts in those states, and the difficulties the COC had in establishing churches where television broadcasting was not used. The four COC schools are all located in Queensland.

The Brisbane megachurch and its leader, Mark Ramsey, continue to have a considerable influence in the COC, although this influence has diminished due to the separation of the megachurch and national COC organizational leadership in 1993 and the growth of independent regional networks. The sense of connection between the megachurch and smaller COC churches has further declined as the Brisbane mother church has oriented itself more towards the middle class clientele of its surrounding area rather than the working class and rural orientation of its origins and the situation of many COC churches.

**Current management practices: Natural Church Development**

As in many Pentecostal churches and megachurches, leaders in the Australian COC have recognized the limitations of its earlier emphasis on measuring success in terms of attendance, conversions and numerical growth. Many former advocates of the ‘Church Growth Movement’ recognize the same limitations, with critics arguing that this emphasis on numerical success and homogeneity and quantitative growth encouraged insufficient consideration of deeper spiritual needs, heterogeneity, and qualitative growth (Elliott 1981:799). The Australian COC leaders found that the ‘Natural Church Development’ (NCD) approach developed by Christian Schwartz was more useful as it provided a broader range of measures of success. Schwartz (1996) conducted extensive studies of ‘church health’ and he concluded that growing churches had higher scores in eight areas of church life. However, critics of NCD such as McIntosh (2004:22) argue that NCD is based on the same premises as the Church Growth movement and that it suffers the same narrowness and weaknesses of the earlier Church Growth approaches.
Schwartz sought to expand beyond these narrower paradigms by identifying the eight most important areas of church health as Empowering Leadership, Gift-oriented Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Functional Structures, Inspiring Worship Services, Holistic Small Groups, Need-oriented Evangelism and Loving Relationships.  

The COC leaders began to use the NCD questionnaires in 2001 to help them identify the existing culture of COC churches and ways in which changes in church culture could benefit members and their churches. By 2003, 90 COC churches were participating in NCD. Figure 8.1 shows survey results from the 87 participating Australian COC churches in 2003 and 2006, demonstrating the relative strengths for each of the eight categories and the overall improvements that came through conscious efforts to address their weak areas. In addition to the 90 COC churches, 900 other Australian churches in 25 denominations also participated in the NCD by 2010, further demonstrating the similar resources and paths of many Australian and global evangelical churches and megachurches.

As can be seen in Figure 8.1, the NCD profiles identified strengths of Australian COC churches as Passionate Spirituality, Evangelism, Relationships, Structures and Worship. Areas of greatest concern included Gift-oriented ministry and Small groups. These reflect the COC emphasis on the Sunday service and platform ministry at the conclusion of the survey. The participating COC churches were encouraged to use coaching and lay leadership empowerment programmes to help develop balanced COC church cultures and a well rounded and holistic ministry, while retaining distinctive COC approaches to ministry.

380 While the materials developed by Schwarz and the Institute of Church Development are sometimes considered to be a rejection of church growth movement approaches, they are more correctly an example of the more subtle and nuanced development of church growth literature. See Simpson (1997:12).

381 Information from COC National Office and Gary Hourigan, Interview, 2008.
Figure 8.1: Australian COC Natural Church Development Survey profiles, 2003 and 2006. Source: COC national office, 2010.

The National Church Life Survey

A new source of information about the megachurch and Australian COC churches became available for the first time in 2006 (available in 2007/8) when the COC participated in the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). This quantitative data uses a different methodology than the earlier qualitative oral history collected from 2000 to 2003 and used to study the development of the COC from 1974 to 2003. Because of these differences, more research will be needed before more definitive conclusions can be drawn from the NCLS data. However, despite the different nature of the data, the NCLS data provides a valuable source of information about the COC churches and the ways in which the COC viewed itself in 2006. The NCLS data also enabled a more extended comparison with other Pentecostal and Protestant churches in 2006. It enables a
comparison between the Brisbane COC megachurch (966 respondents), all Australian COC churches (3,357 respondents), Australian Pentecostal Churches (34,667 respondents) and participating Protestant churches (234,943 respondents).

**Openness to innovation**

Quinn & Cameron (1983:40) and Schein (2004:225) argue that organizations in general appear to be assisted in their growth by openness to innovation, flexibility, diversification, decentralization, domain expansion and adaptation to environmental changes. These characteristics appear to have played a role in the development of Australian megachurches. The NCLS shows that 36% of Brisbane COC and 33% of Australian COC attendees believed that their churches were open to innovation and change. This fits with interview data from earlier years of the COC that indicate that openness to innovation and change aided early COC church growth and vitality.

Table 8.3: Openness to innovation. Source: NCLS survey 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2 Organizational Qualities</th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and always willing to try new things</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage innovation</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to change this service to include other worship styles</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer another service with a different worship style</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Millis, the COC administrator in the 1980s, recalled:

> You could never say that we ever had one doctrine...COC had a diversity. What was preached in the 1990s has a relationship to what was preached in the 1970s, but it is not the same. The movement has a capacity to grow and change and to look for the new thing, and not to be bogged down with the 1970s message. There is a willingness to recognize what has become unfruitful and to try new things. I think that is a sign of health (Millis, Interview, 2001).
O’Dea’s studies (1961) suggest that openness to innovation might be expected to decline as the COC and other Pentecostal churches age, and there is some evidence that this is occurring.

**The Brisbane Citipointe megachurch since 2000**

The diversification within the COC, openness to innovation, and willingness to try new approaches is particularly evident in the new practices and views that the Brisbane COC megachurch have pursued since 2000. The appointment of Mark Ramsey as the new person in charge in 2000 marked a generational change in the megachurch’s leadership. Ramsey came from a younger generation and an unchurched background that was different to the older Methodist backgrounds of many early COC leaders. His experience as a business manager gave him skills that he later applied in COC church leadership. Ramsey was converted in 1984 at a Steve Ryder meeting at Maroochydore and he then attended Nambour COC and midweek meetings at a home in Noosa. After a home group leader left, Ramsey’s leadership abilities became evident as the home cell grew to 50 attendees by 1987. This led Miers to say, ‘You’ve got to start a church, mate’, and with this simple, pragmatic, sink or swim approach, Ramsey established a new COC church at Noosa. Sunday services were initially held in a rented arena and funds were raised to purchase an acreage property and build a large auditorium. In order to increase the funds needed to purchase five acres of land on which to build a church, Ramsey continued to work as a full time sales manager and not to draw a salary until 1991, further aiding the building of resources needed to pursue a large church building programme. Under his leadership, the Noosa COC church grew to 300 by 1991, 600 by 1993 and 1,400 attendees by 1995. Noosa COC grew into the third largest COC after Brisbane and Nambour, and one of Australia’s largest non-urban churches (Ramsey, Interview, 30/07/2001).

In 1996 Ramsey was invited by the COC executive to start Australia’s first COC church in the United States, in Denver, Colorado. During his three-year stay in the United States the church grew to 300. Ramsey also assisted other churches in the United States to join
the COC. However, despite having some success, he found that Americans were largely unreceptive to the Australian COC approach to Christianity. Ramsey returned to Australia to lead the Brisbane megachurch in 2000. Ramsey’s experiences in America introduced him to new approaches that he has introduced to the Brisbane megachurch. Ramsey brought back to Australia many aspects of this more sophisticated and entrepreneurial form of American Christianity with him. The pursuit of new ways to present and market religion have become a hallmark of the Brisbane COC since Ramsey’s appointment.

Ramsey’s business background further contributed to his awareness that innovative, pioneering ideas that were invaluable for the continuity and growth of the COC megachurch (Ramsey, Interview 22/06/2010). Ramsey rebranded the Brisbane megachurch as ‘Citipointe Church Brisbane’ and he pursued contemporary presentations of the Christian message with which he hoped to equip the Brisbane megachurch for growth (The Vision Continues, 2009). Rebranding can typically provide an opportunity to respond to social change and to promote the movement of an organization in new directions, as well as enabling a new leader to place his distinctive mark on an organization (Moore & Reid, 2008:429).

While many of the older COC churches sought to retain their earlier charismatic movement values, Ramsey (Brisbane Citipointe church) and younger COC pastors like Woodward (Perth Metrochurch), Abraham (Elevation Church, Gold Coast) and Anderson (Melbourne North COC) experimented with new approaches to church and ministry. These included new church organization structures, meeting programmes, music styles and other activities that they believed would assist growth in the new social contexts of the new millennium. Ramsey’s willingness to experiment with new approaches to church, organizational structures and perspectives has moved the Brisbane megachurch and its meetings away from its earlier charismatic movement orientation towards a more contemporary consumer focused orientation.

Under Ramsey’s leadership, the Brisbane Citipointe COC established further church services each weekend that included a Friday night meeting, multiple Sunday morning
services, services in Afrikaans and Mandarin, as well as specific services for families, youth and older attendees. Major refurbishment was undertaken that included air conditioning of the main auditorium, changes to car parking and contemporary colour schemes. Five large video projection screens were placed behind the stage, and more sophisticated lighting, sound and multimedia systems installed. Explaining these changes, Ramsey (Interview, 17/05/2010) said that these innovations were attracting the sort of audience the Brisbane church were seeking to reach in the new millennium. Ramsey stated that those COC churches that have not changed ‘are on the way out’, while ‘the ones that have changed considerably are the ones that are seeing growth in the last 10 years’. This fits with the observation by organizational development theorists (Wolfe 1994; Schein 2004:225) that such openness to innovation is a useful characteristic that aids the ongoing viability and development of organizations. At the same time, scholars (Cox 1995; Noll 2005) warn that efforts to make Evangelical and Pentecostal churches more contemporary tend to promote accommodation to the contemporary culture of individualism, inward focus, consumerism and narcissism, rather than following the biblical mandate to offer a prophetic critique of the wider society.

The Brisbane COC became noted for its openness to innovation, including employing management and marketing specialists, professional music team members and promoters, sound and video production engineers, as well as production of an annual music CD at a cost of about $70,000. They established a variety of new facilities including a crèche, increased children’s and youth facilities and staffing. The development of a commercial coffee shop at the front of the Brisbane COC megachurch is a notable example of innovation. Other COC churches have similar cafes attached to them, including Ramsey’s Noosa Church, as well as other Australian megachurches, including the Hills CLC and Christian City megachurches in Sydney. In England, Jamie Doward observed a similar worldwide rise in the use of cafés to attract people to church. He said that this café church

382 Interestingly, Nabi Saleh, who is on the Sydney’s Hillsong church management board, is co-owner of the Gloria Jean’s chain of coffee shops. The Gloria Jean’s headquarters is located next door to the Hillsong church.
was an approach that originated in New Zealand before spreading globally.\textsuperscript{383} It combined the tradition of sharing food, drink and community formation with the commercialism that is typical of shopping centres.

When Ramsey took over the Brisbane megachurch attendance had declined from 3,600 to 1,100 weekly attendees. With the aid of the changes that Ramsey introduced, attendance steadily increased to 3,680 weekly attendees by April 2010. The membership is calculated as larger than attendance, reaching over 5,100 in 2010, the Brisbane Citipointe megachurch remains as the most visible and well resourced COC churches. Ramsey’s innovative actions are examples of the type of action required to avoid decline and encourage organizational renewal (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40).

\textbf{The changing demographic profile of the Brisbane COC}

Many of the changes that Ramsey and the Brisbane COC leadership introduced can also be viewed as market oriented responses to changes in the demography of the surrounding suburbs associated with increased urbanization and subdivision. The COC began as a working class movement (Earle Interview 2000; Crystal interview 2002). Following the relocation of the Brisbane COC to Mansfield in 1982, the church continued to attract mainly working class attendees, although this decreased (Mulheran interview 2002). However, the city of Brisbane has grown from 798,000 in 1970 to 1,780,000 in 2010. As Brisbane’s population increased, there has been outward migration of more middle class young families into Mansfield and Carindale and many of the previous working class occupants from Mansfield have moved to less expensive and more outlying suburbs. Although there is great variation in the definition of working class and middle class, the COC interviewees were consistent in their belief that attendees backgrounds have changed from a more working class orientation to more middle class attendees. In supporting evidence of this, thirteen interviewees mentioned that the early COC attracted

\textsuperscript{383} Jamie Doward, 2004, ‘Church to serve up coffee with religion’ \textit{The Observer}, 1 Feb.
more working class attendees, while twelve mentioned that the present COC is attracting more middle class attendees. Appendix 2 shows how the occupations of the original attendees in the 1970s compared to the occupations of attendees in the new millennium reflect these changes. Appendix 12 further illustrates these changes by showing the weekly income levels of the adjacent suburbs of Carindale and Mansfield in the recent 2006 census. COC church and interview data shows that many attendees come from surrounding suburbs. The senior executive pastor, Brian Mulheran (interview 8/02/2011) recalls that occupants of 4 of the 20 houses in the nearby street attend, at least 10 families in the nearby 6 streets attend, and many more in the surrounding suburb attend.

The COC leader’s and attendees’ aspirations have also changed since the COC founding in 1974, as many have pursued progress in their employment and professions, leading to subsequent higher educational qualifications and higher pay levels among attendees. Reflecting this combination of changes, the educational status of Brisbane COC attendees in 2006 also appears to be different to that reported by earlier COC interviews. Table 8.4 shows how the number of attendees with university degrees had increased by 2006 when compared to other COC and Pentecostal churches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade certificate or diploma.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary/secondary school</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, Australian COC churches continue to have a lower proportion of university graduates and a higher proportion of people with primary and second schooling as their highest qualification, reflecting the more rural and working class location of most COC churches (NCLS data above, Interview 16, 2000). However, the Brisbane megachurch is increasingly differentiating itself from many of the COC churches as the socio economic
status of attendees changes. This trend of change in the social and educational status in the Brisbane COC megachurch is also evident in the COC school and in its Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) ranking. The average score is 1000 with most schools scoring between 900 and 1100. The Brisbane Citipointe COC school has a score of 1063, which is relatively high, with 33% in the top quartile, 37% in the next, and just 20% and 10% in the bottom two quartiles ([http://www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)).

Further changes in the makeup of COC attendances were associated with changes in the migrant groups joining the COC. In the late 1990s, the COC began to establish stronger links with South Africa, with the employment of Grant and Hayley Jenkins in the COC school, and the employment of further South African teachers that followed. COC pastoral and school staff also visited South Africa and established links with South African schools and churches. The growth in African attendances led to an Afrikaans language service commencing at the Brisbane megachurch in 2009. Many South African immigrants have subsequently sought out the Brisbane Citipointe Church as their first point of contact on migrating to Australia. Many of these migrants brought their business expertise, wealth and values with them and their attendances have contributing to further shifts in the demographic profile of the megachurch. Additionally, the Chinese mandarin service that was established in 2006 has encouraged attendances people with a Chinese ethnic background (Mulheran interview 8/02/2011).

Changes in the megachurch demographic profile have been accentuated by the high turnover and ‘switchers’ in attendances. By 2006, only 14 per cent of attendees at Brisbane Citipointe megachurch (approximately 700 out of 5,000 potential attendees) were attending from 20 years before, while 56 per cent had started attending within the last five years. Table 8.5 shows the changes in attendance in Pentecostal churches, and similar changes are also seen in other Pentecostal and COC churches.
Table 8.5: Church attendance. Source: NCLS survey 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of attendance</th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended for more than five years</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended for more than 20 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomers to the church</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switchers from other denominations</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers from the same denomination</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar observations on the increased frequency of attendee change in Pentecostal denominations are made by scholars including Black (1991:106), Hughes, Thompson and Bouma (1995:4) and Millikan (2000). They argue that much of the growth in Pentecostal churches and megachurches has largely come from transfers from other denominations. The need to replenish attendances has further driven Pentecostal megachurch efforts to identify and respond to market opportunities and to use contemporary presentations, music and other activities to attract new attendees, particularly from nearby surrounding suburbs.

**Bridging the generational gap**

Scholars such as Wuthnow (1976:850), Strauss and Howe (1991), Finke and Stark (1992:247), Blumhofer (1993:272), Roof (1999) and Putnam (2000) have noted that one of the main reasons for decline in attendance at traditional churches is the difficulty of they had in attracting younger cohorts while also preserving traditions and meeting the interests of older members. Kaldor et al, (1995), Hughes (1996:v) and Bouma and Hughes (1998:18ff) make similar observations in Australia. At the same time, a major reason for the growth of the charismatic and Pentecostal churches and megachurches has been their ability to align themselves more closely with the values, interests and subcultures of the younger generations (Hughes 1996:v). This led Kaldor et al (1995:xxii) to observe that there has been a defection to Pentecostalism of a large core of ‘baby boomer’ and younger age cohorts who felt that the faith of their childhood was ‘not touching the issues of their adulthood or resonating with the hopes of their generation’.

301
The present COC megachurch leader continues the COC emphasis on employing youth leaders to attract young attendees (Ramsey Interview, 17/05/2010).

You will not find church in Australia that is growing unless it is reaching young people. That seems to be more the market. They are the people that respond the best to salvation, conversion, vision and discipleship. The churches that are not reaching young people are probably dying.

The growth of the COC in its early years was also assisted by employing full time youth leaders (See page 172). Nancy and Neil Miers used a similar approach by emphasizing youth ministry in the building of the Nambour COC church (Nance Miers, Interview, 23/01/2001). More recently, Ramsey has devoted considerable resources to youth ministry at the megachurch, employing five full time and three part time youth and children’s work leaders, seven Red Frogs chaplaincy workers, as well as day care and school workers. COC Brisbane also has separate buildings and programs devoted to work with children, youth, chaplaincy, schools and day care. The COC emphasis on conversions in COC churches has also contributed to efforts to attract attendees from younger age groups where response to conversion efforts is more likely (Granqvist, 2003:174).

Table 8.6: Age Profiles. Source: NCLS 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15–29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30–49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 43 per cent of attendees over 50 years of age, the COC age profile appears older than for Australian Pentecostal churches in general. A possible explanation for this is the ageing of the COC and its higher proportion of rural churches. As the COC churches age, they have also found it difficult to promote the interests of younger cohorts without offending older, more established cohorts. The above statistics also show that half of
Brisbane COC megachurch attendees are in the mid-life, family age range of 30–49 years. This is higher than all COC churches (44 per cent) and much higher than Protestant churches (28 per cent).

An explanation is needed for the Citipointe statistics showing low youth attendances, as the interviews and observations indicate high youth attendances. On further investigation, it was found that the COC youth meetings are held in a different building to the main church and the Brisbane COC youth did not participate in the NCLS survey. These survey results point to a weakness in the NCLS data relating to the way in which the survey was conducted.

**Gender and the COC**

The issue of women in the church in general, and in Pentecostalism and the COC more specifically, is a large and important topic that is outside the scope and resources of this research project. However, some predominant themes of interest came out of the interview data. Firstly, some women who were interviewed said that they found greater opportunities for involvement in COC than in their traditional churches (e.g. Interviews 2, 7, 10, 28, 42). This involvement was greatest in the children’s, youth, women’s, counseling, prayer and pastoral care ministries and overseas missions (e.g. F. Potts Interview, 1999; Smith interview 2007; A Sudholz interview 2007) and in these areas, the female leaders outnumbered males. Pastor Jan Campbell’s book *For God So Loved Women* also provides some support for increased lay female involvement, though her overall argument that women are a dynamic and often under-utilized force in churches points to the limited nature of women’s involvement.\(^{384}\)

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\(^{384}\) Jan Campbell, *For God So Loved Women* was reviewed and promoted in *A New Way of Living* Sept/Oct 1991.
Secondly, the NCLS data suggests that the Brisbane COC has a larger proportion of male attendees than other COC and Protestant churches.

Table 8.7: Attendee Gender. Source: NCLS 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who are female</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who are male</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high proportion of male attendees and leaders in the COC may also reflect a COC characteristic of emphasizing male lay involvement and a COC emphasis on ‘rugged Australian’ male role models. The COC leaders encourage male attendees to establish cell groups that are attractive to other males in particular. The COC leaders also provide buses and other forms of transport that make it easier for their male friends to attend. Broader support for the Australian churches capacity to attract men is suggested by O’Farrell (1988) O’Brien (1993), who argue that the fissure between religion and Australian culture is not as deep as is commonly imagined.

Thirdly, despite the COC and Pentecostal claim that all participants are equally empowered by the Spirit for service, all the upper leadership in the Australian National COC, the COC state executives, the Brisbane COC megachurch, and many of the COC churches are men (Information available from COC websites). Some COC female leaders also stated that they felt that they had fewer opportunities for advancement to higher church leadership positions. This fits with Weber’s (1963) observation that new sects are ‘characterized by a tendency to allot equality to women’, but that this soon disappears. It also fits with observations by Poloma (1989, 2006) and Kay (2009:302) more generally that women’s involvement in Pentecostal churches more generally has declined.
Changing beliefs and theology of the COC leaders

The beliefs of the COC leaders appear to have changed over the COC’s 35 year history in parallel with changes in the COC organization. Some of these changes reflect a maturation of the leaders as they have had time to reflect on their own beliefs and practices and those of their churches and attendees. This fits with the argument that growth in ones beliefs is likely to occur as leaders deal with the challenges associated with faith development (Fowler 1981:187; Kegan 1983; Oser and Gmunder 1991).

The delay of the parousia

One major difference between preaching in the early years of the COC and the church in the new millennium is the decreased emphasis in COC sermons on the expectation that Jesus will soon return, despite interviews indicating that many attendees still believe in the immanence of Jesus return. In the New Testament, the Greek word ‘parousia’ is used in passages such as Matthew 24:3\footnote{Matthew 24:3 ‘And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming (in Greek – parousia), and of the end of the world?’ The Holy Bible, KJV.}, and 1 Thessalonians 4:15–16\footnote{1 Thessalonians 4:15–16. ‘For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.’ The Holy Bible, KJV.} to refer to the anticipation of the Messiah’s return and the term millennium is possibly used in Revelation 20:2 to describe this event. As noted in chapter five of this thesis, the popularity of this North American form of pre millennialism, originally associated with Darby and the Scofield Bible, and in the 1970s, by the writings of Hal Lindsay and Tim LaHaye, was a common feature in many Australian Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the 1970s and 1980s. Geoff Woodward, who is State Chairman for Western Australia, recalls that in the COC in the 1970s there was ‘a phenomenal emphasis on end time teaching’ but that there has been a transition away from this in more recent times (Woodwood sermon, 06/04/2003). In the Brisbane COC, every year from 1986 to 1992
(except 1990) the New Zealand ‘end-time’ preacher Barry Smith conducted week-long seminars, which fanned the flame of expectation of Jesus’ soon return.\(^{387}\) Despite the repeated failing of many of the more specific predictions, many Pentecostals continued to hold to these millennialist expectations\(^{388}\) and the majority of COC interviewees continue to state their belief that the world is getting worse and they continue to expect Jesus to soon return. Mulheran’s (2002) survey of 24 COC Senior pastors and interviews with two national and one state chairperson, however, found evidence of a decline in millennial expectation in the COC and he asserts that this has contributed to a decline in the motivation to give up worldly activities to pursue Christian ministry. The Senior Pastor and main preacher at Citipointe, Mark Ramsey (recorded by Sheppard 2006) explains:

> When I got saved, Barry Smith was big time. End of the world. Mark of the beast. The rapture. Jesus coming back very, very soon. I look back now and after seeing what I’ve seen in the Bible I just think that it’s not majorly significant. That’s not the issue. And it’s almost like then that Christianity was all about who you are when you die. And I am starting to think about, maybe it’s more important about who you are when you live. So, not only is God about eternity, though He is and that’s our bottom line, but He’s also about the rest of this life.

More recently, Ramsey (Interview, 17/05/2010) said,

> In the 1970s and 80s there was a concept that Jesus would be back before the year 2000... He didn’t come back then and we tend to think that it’s going to be longer rather than shorter. [Reaching] the next generation is going to become more important rather than [the notion that] it will all finish in the next 10 years.

This transition suggests that COC leader’s life journeys have prompted a rethinking about earlier COC beliefs that require changes in the views and practices of the present COC movement and a decreased emphasis on the soon return of Christ to motivate followers. Greater efforts are now being made to promote involvement in education, social action, Red Frogs youth chaplaincy programmes and other activities oriented towards societal provision for future generations as forms of church involvement. Warrington (1988:141),

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387 Catalogue, Centre Productions COC Audio and Video Cassettes, 1976 to present.
388 Powell (2000).
Silveira (1996) and Macchia (2002) observe a similar change within Pentecostalism on a broader, global scale. It has changed from a millennialist expectation of Christ’s soon return that will suddenly change a world that is getting worse to an a-millennialist acceptance that Christ’s return may be a long way off and the need to work for gradual change to improve this present world.

**Changed views on conversion**

Another area of change in the COC and Pentecostal churches suggested by the 2006 NCLS data is the increased acceptance that conversion is a gradual process associated with other human development processes rather than as an immediate, supernatural solutions to humanity’s needs. This view contrasts considerably with the notion in early COC sermons that conversion and divine solutions to life’s problems are heaven sent and instant and dependent on the recipient’s high levels of faith.

The case study interviews suggest that the COC and Pentecostal megachurch emphasis on ‘confrontational evangelism’ has also declined, being replaced with an emphasis on being an intentionally ‘contagious Christian’ who is engaging with others and with the wider community (Interviews with COC leaders). The term ‘contagious Christian’ was used to describe evangelism that is less direct and hard hitting, while being more culturally relevant and innovative (Mittleberg 2000:40, 48, 211). This term was popularized by Bill Hybels and the North American Willow Creek megachurch, whose top selling literature is also sold in the Brisbane COC bookshop. The reduction in confrontation may also be associated with parallel changes in general organizational use of consumer marketing that is also endeavouring to be less confrontational (Rainer 2001:90).

The diversity of COC views on conversion, faith commitment and devotional practices in 2006 is reflected in the 2006 NCLS data. See table 8.8 below.
Table 8.8: Religious Qualities. Source: NCLS 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 Qualities – Religious</th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>NCLS total Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith commitment came as a gradual process</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific moments of commitment</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith that has grown much in the past year</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private devotional activities on most days</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of God in your life, most important (cf more important)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of God’s presence</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 8.8 shows, the notion of conversion as occurring at a specific moment is high in all Protestant (50 per cent) and Pentecostal (69 per cent) churches. At the same time, the notion of faith commitment as a gradual process is also present in 2006, with 47 per cent of Protestants and 29 per cent of COC attendees describing conversion as a gradual process. This appears to be much higher than participant interview descriptions of the early days of the COC. The similar responses in COC and Pentecostal churches possibly points to their similar histories and development paths.

A transition from ‘conversionist’ views of faith towards more gradual ‘conventionalist’\(^\text{389}\) views of faith maturation is also suggested in the preaching and other church practices at the Brisbane COC and other Australian megachurches in 2000 to 2010 when compared with preaching in the 1970s.\(^\text{390}\) The Brisbane Citipointe COC megachurch has largely replaced the ‘altar call’ calling for an instant public commitment to faith at the front of the church with a ‘Yes Desk’ at the back of the church where those who are interested in

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\(^{389}\) Hughes (1991:101, 104) uses the notion of conventionalist faith to describe the emphasis on gradual life long change involving relationship with others and church sacraments, as is emphasized in most traditional churches.

\(^{390}\) This is evident in the sermons on COC, CLC, CCC, Hillsong and other megachurch web sites and on their televised programmes.
making a decision for Christ can enrol in ‘discipleship’ studies over an extended period of time. The Brisbane megachurch pastor, Ramsey (Interview, 18/05/2010) stated:

> We have changed our philosophy on what to do with salvation. We are trying to work with those who are really serious and who will make the effort rather than to try to persuade everybody. I think it is trying to get people to take personal responsibility and it’s not just about a good meeting but it is about building strong Christians.

Ramsey later added (Interview, 22/06/2010) ‘I tend to think that salvation is more of a process than a moment’. He previously explained, ‘I’m trying to get people to take responsibility for their own lives. That they need to deal with issues, you know, change habit patterns, get self-control, all those sorts of issues’.391 ‘This notion of salvation as a gradual change is also reflected in the statement of Australian COC President, David McDonald (2002) that, ‘Our concept of disciple making can’t stop at getting “decisions for Christ”, we must make disciples of them’.392 Such changes may also reflect a broader change as evangelicalism moves towards post-evangelicalism (Jamieson 2002). The increased emphasis on conventionalist faith rather than conversionist faith is assisted by the growing number of leaders and pastors undertaking studies in education, counselling and ministry where more complex models of faith development are taught. This transition may also be due to the increased number of attendees being born into the faith. Similar changes in preaching themes and leadership style are observed in the younger generation of upcoming COC district and state leaders, including Geoff Woodward (Perth, Western Australia), Craig Anderson (Victoria), Peter Pilt (Northern New South Wales) and Ross Abraham (Gold Coast). These changes in belief about conversion parallel similar changes observed more broadly in the ‘Emergent Church’ movement, away from an other-worldly Bible narrative of creation, fall and salvation for heaven or hell, towards an emphasis on broader themes of creation, liberation and peace (Gibbs & Bolger 2005; McLaren 2004).

391 Interview conducted by Sheppard, Nov 2003.
Tongues speaking

As Spittler (2002:670) and Poloma (1989:184) point out, the characteristic Pentecostal practice of tongues speaking gains much of its meaning from the expectant social setting in which these practices occur. In Pentecostal circles, tongues speaking has traditionally encouraged a sense that each individual has direct access to God and to individualized revelations from God. In the COC, as in Pentecostalism more generally (Poloma 1989), tongues speaking, reliance on spiritual empowerment and laity-driven initiatives appears to have declined as the spiritual gifts and lay driven initiatives are more tightly controlled by the leadership hierarchy. Crawford (interview 13/01/2010) said that Brisbane COC attendees are no longer encouraged to practice tongues in church meetings, but it continues to be practiced in smaller homes meetings and prayer meetings. Tongues speaking has also been replaced by an increased emphasis on the complex and rationalized language of educationalists, highly trained professionals and administrators. The early COC understanding of tongues speaking as related to a sense of individual empowerment contributed to many initiatives led by laity in the COC, encouraging many to start new churches and new projects, local and overseas missions, social action and education initiatives. This is in contrast to traditional churches where access to God is often viewed as mediated through sacraments, ordained ministers and academic study in ways that can reduce lay involvement and initiatives. It is possible that the declining emphasis on tongues speaking in the COC may be associated with a declining emphasis on lay involvement and an increased emphasis on professional, hierarchical church leadership.

At the same time, the unique attraction of tongues for the COC has also lessened as it has become more widely accepted among mainstream churches. While 13 interviews with early COC attendees spoke of tongues as attracting them, only 2 of the more recent attendees mentioned this. This appears to reflect a loss of confidence in tongues speaking and its symbolism of divine empowerment to attract attendees and an increased reliance
Divine healing

Divine healing continues to be an attraction for attendees at COC churches, although there is less emphasis on it than in earlier times. These appeals to divine healing appear to show the providential care of God for each individual, providing hope of an instant solution to health difficulties that are sometimes almost incurable, and placing healing in the hands of close, relational communities rather than remote professionals (McGuire 1988:233). In the COC, healing also reflects the ‘faith confession’ movement belief that the mind has power over a person’s physical surroundings.

Critics of divine healing express similar concerns about the dangers of disappointments, premature withdrawal from medical treatment and lack of acceptance of incurable physical ailments (Masters 1988). These criticisms appear to be addressed, at least partly, by the Brisbane megachurch and many other COC churches in more recent times. Divine healing has moved away from a focus on performance by the church leader to an increased emphasis on the responsibility of the congregation members to pray for each other and to encourage the benefits of healthy lifestyles such as diet and exercise. At the Brisbane megachurch, prayer requests and testimonies of healings and miracles are now confined to brief prayer and praise reports near the beginning of each meeting and prayer during smaller gatherings. Divine healing is no longer promoted as a major reason for attracting attendees to COC meetings, and the ability to minister divine healing is no longer seen as a major qualification needed by COC leaders. In an interview (24/10/2005) reflecting on this, the COC megachurch leader, Ramsey said,

The healing emphasis has become more holistic. We still pray for the sick, but it does not take up all of the service or become the focus of the service. We still want sick people healed but we do not focus on healing as the proof that God is here. We are not just focused on the sick people but also the well people. When people walk out of church we want everyone to go out with something.
On another occasion, Ramsey (17/5/2010) explained,

> It is not as though we have gone away from praying and healing and miracles but now we feel we can get the same results with a little less time involved and more participation from the [whole] church rather than just the use of somebody’s Ministry gift… [and personality in ways that make] people become too co-dependent.

Macchia (in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:1136) observed that in global Pentecostalism more generally, the emphasis on divine healing is broadening to include God’s activity through natural processes, medicine and education, and changes to cultures and societies. The changed views on healing may be associated with broader changes in COC beliefs from human capacity to obtain instant solutions from God by faith confession to efforts to more fully understand the complexities of this world and faith.

**Demonology**

Early COC sermons and magazine articles were noted for the belief that personal and social evils are caused by the devil and demons (Burning Bush Sept 1981). These beliefs were supported by books on spiritual warfare, including those by Lindsey (1965), Harper (1970) and Hagin (1982). The 1991 National Church Life Survey found that 80 per cent of Australian Protestant church attendees and 94 per cent of those who speak in tongues still believe in the activity of the devil and evil spirits (Kaldor & Powell, 1995:66). Many mainstream church leaders hold that the personification of evil in terms of ‘demons’ and ‘evil spirits’, and the loose application of these terms to emotional and personal difficulties, are among the most concerning and potentially dangerous aspects of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. They argued these beliefs can be used to support dominant authority structures and to cover up the real sources of evil (Hoffer 1951:54).

Leaders in the Methodist Church in Victoria and Tasmania, at this time said that these beliefs lessened the consideration of the underlying psychological and social causes of

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393 E.G. Clark Taylor, Sermon, 23/1/77p.m. ‘Being in Christ’.
personal difficulties and negated the effectiveness of efforts to deal with these more systemic evils.\textsuperscript{395} The emphasis on demons also tended to misinterpret the biblical text descriptions of Satan and evil, by ignoring their original contextual settings (Kelly 2006). It could be because this view can promote a view of Satan’s power that challenges belief in an all powerful God.

However, over time, Taylor came to see that counselling, Bible based teaching and a willingness to change were as important as prayers for instant deliverance (Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003). Additionally, COC leaders in the new millennium increasingly are describing problems and evil in terms of aspects of society that need to be changed. They have increasingly turned to trained counsellors, social workers, education institutions and social action initiatives to address the difficulties that people face.\textsuperscript{396} At the Brisbane megachurch, recent preaching contains few references to Satan, the devil, demons, or exorcism. Ramsey (Interview, 18/05/2010) explained,

> It becomes a legal liability to have people exorcized, so you have to be a lot more careful with what you do now. We are still trying help people to get a breakthrough, but the terminology has changed so what we do now is to pray for people to be set free rather than specify what a demon’s name is.

These changes also reflect the COC’s increased openness to wider social and government interactions. This fits in with Radin’s (1937:8) observation that new religious groups tend to begin with primitive, irrational, magical and coercive forms of religion, and they then tend to move towards more volitional and rational religious forms.

\section*{Changing beliefs and practices of the COC laity}

In the COC, changes in the beliefs of the laity and leaders are strongly influenced by, and reflected in, the literature and media they consume. While much of this media in the first

\textsuperscript{396} Alison Stanton, Interview, 10/05/2003.
half of the twentieth century came from Britain, in the second half of the twentieth century, most of media sold by the largest Australian Christian bookshops, Word and Koorong, came from North America and it reflected the prominent interests and themes of popular Christianity there.

**Evidence from COC bookshop literature**


By the 1990s, the most purchased literature had changed. Weiler (2000:184) conducted a study of the COC bookshop literature in 1996. He noted that 57 of the 60 best selling books came from North America, one from New Zealand, one from Sweden and one from England. Sales of books on older themes such as the return of Christ had declined, while books on newer themes such as the ‘Toronto Blessing’ associated with the Toronto Vineyard Revival in Canada had grown. Ten books on future prophecy and the coming end of the world included publications by Charles Capps, L S Savard, Hal Lindsay and Tim LaHaye (North America) and Barry Smith (New Zealand). They demonstrated the continued, but declining, influence of Darbyite pre-millenialist thinking regarding Christ’s second coming. Fifteen of the most sold books that year came from the Brownsville Assemblies of God ‘Revival’ in Pensacola, Florida. Charismatic personal

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397 Report from former Brisbane COC bookshop staff who worked there in the 1970s and 1980s.
prophecy books authored by Rick Joyner, Frances Frangipane and Paul Cain reflected these Latter Rain Prophecy School influences were also popular. Eight books by the North American telepastor Joyce Meyer reflect the pragmatic, lifestyle emphasis. Books by North American prosperity preachers, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, show that the faith confession movement that originated with E W Kenyon continued to attract interest, even though Kenyon’s books no longer sold well. Ulf Ekman’s book from Sweden was part of the continued but more contemporary Faith Movement. A book by Noel and Phyl Gibson (from England) on deliverance reflected charismatic approaches to deliverance from the demonic. The most popular COC bookshop literature reflects the Australian Christian bookshop’s increased dependence on North American publishers, which is also reported by other Australian Christian bookshops including Koorong and Word bookshops.

The survey of the 60 best selling books from the Brisbane COC bookshop in 2009 examined in this current study uncovered more recent changes in COC reading habits. Many of the Faith Movement and Second Coming books identified by Weiler in 2000 no longer sold well in 2009. The most purchased publication in 2009 was *The Purple Book*, written by American missionaries in the Philippines, Steve Murrel and Rice Brooocks (2006). This discipleship book was recommended for all new Christians at the Brisbane COC, reflecting the increased emphasis on discipleship and gradual transformation. It sold 331 copies in 2009. The next highest selling publications were devotionals by Bob Gass (Atlanta, Georgia, 172 copies) and Selwyn Hughes (Surrey, England, 144 copies) and a marriage guidance devotional, *The Love Dare* (103 copies), based on a movie screened at the COC church. Rick Joyner’s *The Morning Star Journal*, (Fort Mill, South Carolina, 91 copies) shows the continued influence of the Latter Rain and Personal Prophecy movements. John Maxell’s books, *Be the Change* (42 copies), and *Developing the Leader within You* (22 copies), reflect the continued pragmatic leadership emphasis. *The Shack*, (27 copies), which depicts God as an African American woman, reflects the acceptance of more contemporary literary developments. Sales of *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren (16 copies) show the continued influence of the ‘seeker friendly’ approach to outreach. *How to Read the Bible* (12 copies) and *The Battlefield of the Mind*
Six titles written by local Brisbane COC pastors show the development of local COC material. These included: *Jesus, Author and Finisher*, by Ps Brian Mulheran; *God Girls*, by Ps Amy Jorgensen; *Ordinary People, Extra Ordinary Lives*, by Ps Tony Scown; and *Iggly Wig* children’s phonics books by Kathy Francis. The Brisbane COC megachurch also produced and sold over 5000 copies of their own music CDs and DVDs in 2009. This further reflects the growing influence of the Brisbane Citipointe megachurch through their music.

**Tithing and financial prosperity**

The National Church Life Survey (2006) showed that tithing, or giving of 10% of one’s income to the church, continues to be a high priority in COC and Pentecostal churches, which it is higher than most other Protestant churches (See Table 8.9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularly give 10% or more of net income</th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Pentecostal preachers of earlier generations placed an emphasis on frugality, avoidance of financial issues and awaiting ‘other worldly’ rewards, in more recent times, the preaching and publications of the Australia’s megachurch leaders, such as Phil Pringle (1991, *Faith*), Phil Baker (2001, *Wisdom of Wealthy Achievers*), Brian Houston (2000, *You Need More Money*) and the Brisbane megachurch leader, Mark Ramsey, have often emphasized the belief that God wants attendees to pursue financial prosperity. This increased emphasis on prosperity preaching reflects a contemporary Pentecostal readiness to attribute religious, theological and moral meaning to financial habits and efforts to increase income and avoid unproductive debt and this appears to have promoted upward

social mobility.\textsuperscript{399} It includes an encouragement of efforts to increase income, pursue freedom from debt, teaching principles for financial freedom and budgeting (\textit{Australia for Christ} May 1986). The COC emphasis on financial achievement in churches in less developed overseas countries such as those in the Pacific Islands has promoted the Western emphasis on material advancement and starting new businesses (interview with COC Fijian pastors).\textsuperscript{400} The emphasis on financial advancement has encouraged COC attendees to start new enterprises, develop financial management skills, support the establishment of a Business Studies School at the CHC and establish national COC business support networks. At the same time, differences are emerging between COC churches that make a separate offering message a major part of their service and those churches that see this emphasis as inappropriate to Australian culture.

The emphasis on finance has also contributed to accusations of financial manipulation and misappropriation in some Pentecostal churches. Ridge (2003:91) warns that in a faith-based setting people are particularly vulnerable to abuse of influence since they are less vigilant in protecting their own interests. This is particularly so where strong and intimate relationships develop between leaders and followers and when followers are seeking help during times of crises. For this reason, the receipt of financial benefit by ministers and churches warrants greater legal and ethical regulation.\textsuperscript{401} These concerns have also led to appeals for increased monitoring of megachurch collections and charity work and questioning of their tax exempt status (\textit{Sunday Herald} 25 July 2010).

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\textsuperscript{399} See for example, the COC magazine, \textit{Australia for Christ}, May, 1986.
\textsuperscript{400} The COC magazine, \textit{Australia for Christ}, (Oct 1985; May 1986) provides examples of this emphasis on finances and testimonies of financial ‘miracles’.
\textsuperscript{401} Ridge cites five cases involving the abuse of spiritual influence for financial gain in support of her argument, one of which is Illuzzi v Christian Outreach Centre (1997).
Social welfare

Like many Pentecostal churches, the COC has found that the most positive feedback from the wider community has been for its social welfare programmes. Pastor Anderson (2009) reflects on this transition from an early COC emphasis on revivalism:

Revival methods began to be less effective. In recent years, we have seen the value of community impact work raise the profile of the COC in almost every location around the nation. Today, it is the entrepreneurial pastor who is leading the change with ideas and faith that makes a big connection with leaders in the marketplace, politics and education.

Anderson, who is also a Police chaplain, has led a number of COC Global Care welfare initiatives including the provision of resources to help residents after the Kinglake fires of 2009 (*The Whittlesea Leader*, 2 Feb, 2010). Most COC churches have established a range of local social care initiatives and over 60 COC churches have established branches of the national Global Care programme to raise money for combined welfare initiatives. In another example of COC welfare expansion, the Brisbane megachurch has focused overseas aid on establishing ‘She Rescue homes’ in Cambodia to assist young girls out of prostitution into education and vocational training. This program developed after a visit to Phnom Penh in Cambodia in 2006 where the megachurch pastor’s wife, Leigh Ramsey, was introduced to the problem of trafficking of children in the sex trade.

Motivated by her experiences, Ramsey raised funds and established four She Rescue homes. Partnerships have been established with local government and international agencies to ensure that affected children are not simply taken from their families, but the entire family are provided with accommodation and assistance. At the shelters, they receive education, counselling, health care and training for long term employment.402

The Brisbane megachurch also provided aid for other overseas welfare projects including the restoration of a village in Sri Lanka devastated by a tsunami, establishment of churches in Nepal, an orphanage in China and schools in Vanuatu (*The Journey

402 *KHMER NZ News Media*, Sunday, June 8, 2008
Continues 2009:3). The megachurch operates a local food parcel and aid programme and an opportunity shop and extensive local aid activities through its Citipointe west campus in the relatively disadvantaged western suburbs of Brisbane. In order to meet these needs, the Brisbane and national COC have developed an extensive set of policies to ensure that fund raising follows strict guidelines and is fully audited (Mulheran interview 8/02/2011).

The emphasis on social action in the COC was reported in the 2006 National Church Life Survey, as shown in Table 8.10. The results show that Pentecostal and COC attendees are more likely to lend money, give possessions, assist drug and alcohol addicts and contact an MP or counselor about issues than many traditional Protestant church attendees. The high levels of COC volunteering fit with observations by Leonard, Bellamy and Ollerton (2009:6), who found that Pentecostals volunteered more hours than other denominations.

Table 8.10: Outward Care Qualities. Source: NCLS 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brisbane COC</th>
<th>All COC</th>
<th>Pentecostals</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lent money outside the family</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave possessions to a needy person</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited someone in hospital</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted an MP or counsellor about an issue</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service care or welfare groups</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendees who helped others in three or more ways</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like other Pentecostal churches, the COC encouragement of flat organizational structures, which means that participants must generate their own opportunities for volunteer initiatives rather than relying on a church hierarchy to organize them.
Megachurch competition

The final section of this chapter traces the development of some of the other megachurches and related developments in the first decade of the new millennium, showing the different developmental pathways that these megachurches and potential megachurches have followed.

Meanwhile, 10 minutes down the road

While changes in megachurches such as the Brisbane COC indicate a shift away from earlier revivalist practices and beliefs, many in the COC continued to hold that the revivalist beliefs and practices used by the charismatic founder in the 1970s and 1980s still had the power to attract sizeable audiences and bring growth in the new millennium. An opportunity to test the potency of this claim and show the continued attraction of revivalist and divine healing emphases came in 2000 when Taylor returned to the Brisbane suburb of Carina, just 10 minutes down the road from the Brisbane COC, to restart his ministry in Brisbane.

After leaving the COC in 1990, Taylor made several efforts to establish a new church in Brisbane with limited success, and he continued to pursue overseas preaching opportunities. In 1999, Taylor recalls that while preaching in Alaska, he felt deeply challenged to put things right with people and with God. His letters to his first wife, Anne Taylor, whom he left 10 years before, provide insight into his convictions, some of which are available on [http://www.worshipcentre.com.au/](http://www.worshipcentre.com.au/). In 2000, he scraped together $5,000 deposit and signed an Intent to Buy for Croatia House in Carina, near Mansfield. The ‘Worship and Ministry Centre’ opened in November 2000. The ‘Worship Centre’ grew as attendees were attracted by the Taylors’ unique emphasis on divine healing,

403 Clark Taylor, Testimony, 17/02/2001.
spiritual gifts, words of knowledge, choruses, prayer and worship. The Worship Centre reached 400 weekly attendees within a year (Taylor, Interview, 07/03/2001) and was registered as a new denomination. The Centre initially attracted older COC attendees, but in more recent times, it has also attracted an increasing number of younger people that is aided by the employment of youth and children’s workers. The meetings were broadcast on Briz 31 community television, further increasing his audience. Despite continued heart difficulties that led to his receiving a pacemaker, artificial heart and then a heart transplant, Taylor continued to resolutely preach divine healing and faith confession message and attendance increased to over 1,000 by 2010. The growth of the Worship Centre points to the continued appeal of the charismatic leader and his demonstrative approaches to the supernatural. The Worship Centre has emerged as a major competitor to the Brisbane COC and this has stimulated renewed efforts and innovations by both Brisbane churches to attract attendees. Other COC churches, including the North Brisbane Bridgeman Downs COC also grew large churches using the early COC emphasis on divine healing, miracles and supernatural encounters with God, further showing the potency of these beliefs.

As with commercial businesses, competition between the large and megachurches appears to have stimulated innovation and growth. The earlier development of a Bible Belt in Brisbane’s south eastern suburbs has been followed in recent years by an another emerging Brisbane Bible Belt of very large churches on the city’s outer northern suburbs, comprising Bridgeman Downs Christian City Church, the Bridgeman Downs Christian Outreach Centre and the Northside AOG/ACC at Everton Park.

Other Australian megachurches

The growth of megachurches appears to have increased competition and pursuit of innovations and resources that are able to attract increased adherents to Australia’s largest churches. Of the 21 megachurches in Australia, the independent neo-Pentecostal churches such as the COC, CCC and CLC have found the greatest organizational freedom to start new churches and new denominational networks. In Sydney, the Christian City Church, rebranded as the C3 (formerly CCC) churches, has expanded to 64 churches in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. The C3 denomination is most similar to the COC. It is still led by its founder, Phil Pringle, who continues to emphasize divine healing and Holy Spirit empowerment, although less overtly. It has its own television production studio (C3TV), art gallery, cafe, book store and children’s indoor play facility. It founded Oxford Falls Grammar School. Researcher Marion Maddox (‘Megachurch future’, 18 July 2010, ABC Radio National) noted that the C3 megachurch was attracting the same youthful age profile of 18 to 30 year olds as it did 20 years ago, but they were a different group of people. She reported that C3 has grown into an ‘international franchise’ with 200 churches across Australia and around the world. Interestingly, five of Australia’s largest megachurches have grown further after leadership of the megachurches passed to their founders’ sons.405

In Melbourne, the independent Waverley Christian Fellowship grew to a similar size to Brisbane COC under the leadership of Kevin Conner. Leadership passed to Conner’s son, Mark Conner in 1996. He rebranded the church as CitiLife Church Knox. Mark holds a Master’s degree in theology and this has fostered a move away from the narrow Latter Rain theology of his father. Like the COC and CCC, CitiLife has multiple campuses that

405 Five of Australia’s largest megachurches (Waverley VIC, Planetshakers VIC, Riverview WA, Paradise SA and Hillsong NSW) have continued to grow further after leadership of the megachurches passed to the sons of the megachurch founders. Waverley Christian Fellowship with Kevin then Mark Conner, Riverview Christian Church with Brian then Phil Baker, Christian Life Centre Sydney with Frank then Brian Houston, Paradise Community Church with Andrew then Ashley Evans, and Planetshakers City Church with Russell then Sam Evans. This suggests the value in continuity of vision that is able to be maintained. At the same time, the sons have introduced changes that have taken the churches away from their fathers’ revivalist approaches.
lift attendance to over 5,000. Like the COC, the church also established a Christian school, Waverley Christian College, which has over 1,000 students. Unlike COC and CCC however, it did not grow into a new national denomination.

In Brisbane, the Christian Life Centre (B–CLC) from which the COC emerged has grown into a denominational group with 27 Australian and 205 overseas churches. The founder of CLC, Trevor Chandler, no longer accepts the divine healing or millennialist views of the earlier Pentecostal movements. He challenges these views in his books and promotes more widely accepted views among mainstream church leaders of end times arguing that Biblical books such as Revelation needs to be interpreted in their own ancient times and contexts (Chandler 2008b:50). Leadership of the CLC Brisbane Church was handed over to Brian Andrew in 2000. After relationships between Andrew and the CLC International denomination deteriorated, Andrew and the Brisbane CLC mother church left and joined the larger AOG movement. In 2007, the Brisbane church merged with Metro Church Brisbane under the leadership of Paul Geerling (Chandler 2008). The retirement of its founder and loss of the flagship mother church to the AOG means that the CLC group has slowed in its growth, and has reached maturation in organizational terms. The Christian Life Centres International continues as a denomination in 2010 with 27 Australian churches and 205 overseas churches, led by Ps Phillip Mutzelburg in Brassal, in Queensland.

Changes are also evident in the charismatic movement megachurches. Blackburn Baptist relocated to acreage at Burwood East in 1995 and it changed its name to Crossways Baptist Church. Dale Stephenson replaced Stuart Robinson as pastor in 2008. Architectural changes included extensions and a coffee shop. Gateway Baptist Church in Brisbane has been led by Jason Elsmore since 2004 and it too places less emphasis on earlier charismatic revivalist phenomena. ‘Careforce’ Church in Melbourne continues to be the largest Church of Christ in Australia. It too has developed a range of new programs. Each of these three charismatic megachurches has lessened their earlier emphasis on tongues, healing and charismatic gifts and have increased involvement in other activities including social welfare.
In recent years, the Brisbane COC and other large megachurches have been overtaken in size and influence by the Hills CLC (Hillsong) gigachurch, which is a term used to describe churches with over 10,000 attendees (www.startribune.com/25636704.html). Brian Houston’s pragmatic messages on this-worldly action and social justice concerns is markedly different to that of his father, Frank Houston, and earlier Pentecostal generations, who emphasized divine healing, tongues speaking and mystical encounters with God (Connell 2005:330). After his father, Frank Houston’s, resignation in 2000 amid allegations of sexual abuse, 406 the Sydney Christian Life Centre (CLC) merged with Hills CLC. The combined weekly attendance at the multisite Hillsong megachurch grew to over 18,000 by 2010, making it Australia’s first gigachurch with over 10,000 attendees. Using the Sydney church model as a base, Hillsong churches have also commenced across Australia, as well as overseas in South Africa (Cape Town), Ukraine (Kiev), England (London and Leatherhead), France (Paris), Sweden (Stockholm), Germany (Berlin) and Russia (Moscow). Hillsong Music is Australia’s most widely purchased popular Christian music and the Hillsong annual conferences have 14,000 attendees, making them the largest conferences of this type in Australia. With the success of its Hillsong music, the Hills Christian Life Centre changed its name to Hillsong Church in 1999. In a move that can also be likened to franchising, on 1 May 2009, the Garden City AOG megachurch in Brisbane became an interstate campus of the larger Hillsong Sydney church in which they submit to the programmes, branding and promotions that have helped to grow the very large Sydney Hillsong gigachurch.

In May 1997, Brian Houston was elected as national president of the Australian AOG. Under his leadership, in April 2007 the AOG changed its name to the Australian Christian Churches (ACC) reflecting efforts to relate more closely to contemporary...

Australian society and to avoid limitations that may be associated with the term ‘Assemblies of God’, such as Americanization and the resignation of former AOG leaders. The AOG/ACC has the largest number of megachurches with ten churches having over 2,000 weekly attendees.

In an article in *Business Review Weekly*, Adele Ferguson critically examined Hillsong’s approach, describing Hillsong as ‘a new, commercial breed of entrepreneurial Christianity’ that is sweeping across Australia and bringing change to religion, society and politics. At the same time, Ferguson reaffirmed concerns about the under-regulated leadership structure of these megachurches, particularly as they allow the senior pastor to be chairperson of a handpicked board with limited scrutiny and accountability. Due to its large size, media productions and conferences, Hillsong has become the dominant model and influence on many of Australia’s churches, including many mainstream churches (Ferguson 2005:38). While this has some benefits, it also tends to promote limited homogeneity, and limits the diversity and influence of smaller churches and movements. Clemens and Minkoff (2004) observe that growth of organizations and institutional structures to very large dominant size can restrict innovation, reduce diversity, stifle the growth of smaller groups and organizations, change the direction of older movements and reduce abilities to adapt to future changes. Others argue that their large networks and resources can encourage competition and adaptation to future change. It is yet to be seen whether Hillsong will avoid the dangers of over dominance, consumerism and competition and profit from the need to address these concerns or from the lessons that can be learned from earlier Australian megachurch difficulties such as those detailed in this thesis.

Other Australian megachurches continue to develop and change. The largest ACC (formerly AOG) church after Hillsong is Paradise in Adelaide with over 6,000 weekly attendees. In 2000, leadership passed to Andrew Evan’s son, Ashley Evans. This church helped launch two other megachurches, Edge Church in the suburb of Reynella, South Australia, and Planetshakers church in Melbourne, Victoria, led by Ashley’s brother, Russell Evans. One of the oldest AOG/ACC churches, Richmond Temple, has grown to
megachurch size. It was rebranded as Bridge Church in 2009. The oldest Brisbane AOG/ACC church, formerly called ‘Glad Tidings Tabernacle’ had declined in numbers at its inner city location. Wayne Alcorn was appointed as leader in 2000 and it relocated to Bowen Hills, was renamed City Church, and it has grown from 200 to over 4,000 attendees. In Sydney, Liverpool Christian Life Centre, led by John McMartin was renamed as ‘Inspire Church’ in 2008. It has grown to over 2,500. Many of these AOG/ACC megachurches show a similar transition away from the earlier supernatural emphasis towards a more seeker friendly approach as seen in the COC.

Conclusion

While the growth of the COC has continued strongly in many overseas locations, in Australia, the number of COC churches has declined, reflecting the challenges of organizational maturation. At the same time, the size, resources and stability of the Australian COC churches appears to have grown. This has been assisted by participation in the Natural Church Development programme which promoted organizationally ‘healthy’ COC churches that are more fully integrated into the wider society.

This chapter also noted that the beliefs and practices within the COC churches in Australia have increased in diversity. Many COC churches continue to emphasize early COC beliefs and practices that included millennialism, the expectation of Christ’s soon return, demonstrative approaches to divine healing, sudden conversions, tongues speaking and other-worldly aspects of faith that aided growth in the 1970s and 80s. However, many COC churches have also moved away from an emphasis on these earlier beliefs and practices as they stressed newer approaches that they believed were more likely to attract participants. Willingness to pursue newer beliefs and practices was shown to be particularly evident in the Brisbane megachurch following the appointment of a new Brisbane megachurch leader in Mark Ramsey in 2000 AD and the rebranding of the megachurch as ‘Citipointe’ church. These changes were accompanied by efforts to respond to transitions in the demography of the surrounding suburbs, as well as changes
attendee aspirations and educational status. The changes in the COC also reflect the ageing of COC leaders and the appointment of a younger generation of new leaders. These changes appear to reflect efforts to pursue organizational renewal such as those described by Quinn and Cameron (1983:40) and Schein (2004:303). The changes observed in the COC may also be associated with the changes associated with institutionalization (e.g. O’Dea 1961) and the routinization and rationalization of the administrative order; concrete delimitation of practices and beliefs; broadening of earlier views on conversion and other beliefs and lessening and missionary motivation and sacrifices. Developments within the COC have also reflected increased education of leaders and changed perceptions of the church’s mission from narrow forms of evangelism to a wider range of social welfare concerns. These changes can be viewed as examples of organizational learning (Levitt & March 1988:319; Schein 2004:393), promotion of spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall 2000) as well as the changes associated with organizational growth.

The changes in the COC may also reflect maturation in the life course development of the leaders and attendees. Fowler (1981:200; 2004:418) argues that for more authentic faith development to occur, churches must encourage engagement with broader, more carefully considered and reflective faith positions that encourage dialectic and dialogic thinking, recognition of the limits of rational knowledge, the polarities and opposites in life, and the valuing of post critical faith positions. An examination of COC sermons, interviews with COC attendees and outsiders shows that the COC leaders are wrestling with a complex range of issues faced by attendees and leaders, such as compliancy, ethical decision making as well as meeting a wide range of church needs that are encouraging more extensive interaction with government agencies and extensive social networks (Ramsey interview, 2010; Woodward interview 2003, Mulheran interview 8/02/2011). The schools and tertiary college are likely to provide important sites where these changes can be considered.

Increased diversity and change may be of concern to some COC participants, but organizational researchers such as Schein (2004:303) note the organizational value of
increased diversity. They observe that while diversity in organizational subcultures may be a threat to young organizations, or under resourced older organizations, it is frequently an advantage as organizations reach maturation, enabling them to be better positioned to respond to increased environmental diversity and change, threats and opportunities for renewal and future growth.

The 2006 NCLS and Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics show that Pentecostal churches and megachurches continue to be one of the faster growing edges of Christianity in Australia (Bouma 2007).\textsuperscript{407} At the same time, the ABS figures\textsuperscript{408} also point to a slowing of the rate of growth of Pentecostal and megachurch groups. This may be associated some of the changes observed in this case study of the COC. Slowing of growth may be related to institutionalization and maturation of Pentecostalism in Australia, the saturation of its potential market, social and religious change, and declining interest in uniquely Pentecostal churches due to the acceptance of Pentecostal practices by mainstream churches.\textsuperscript{409} A former member of the AOG national executive, Philip Hills (Interview, 07/05/2010) suggests that this increased institutionalization and professionalism may not be attracting the unchurched as effectively as earlier mystical, charismatic encounters with God. In reflecting on these developments, Croucher (2001:2) argues that the wave of interest in Pentecostalism in Australia has largely passed:

\begin{quote}
Between 1986 and 1991, Pentecostal denominations grew by 42%. Between 1991 and 1996, they grew 16% (half of this by the birth of children). National Christian Life Survey (NCLS) discovered in 1996 that 28% of worshippers in Pentecostal churches had transferred from elsewhere in previous five years and 10% of newcomers had no church background, but also 15% of that number went to another denomination and 17% drifted out of church completely.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{409} ABS census figures, as quoted in Bouma (1995:288).
The rate of growth of Australian megachurch movements and reasons for their growth or decline varies greatly. Some, such as the Christian Outreach Centre, Christian Revival Crusade, Brisbane Christian Life Centre, and Full Gospel Churches have slowed in growth. Other megachurch denominations such as the Christian City Church and Australian Assemblies of God (renamed as Australian Christian Churches or ACC in April 2007) continue to grow strongly, reflecting their more successful transitions to approaches that are effective in changed social environments. Despite the difficulties associated with megachurch religion that are identified in this chapter, Miller (1997:154, 183–84) and Noll (2005) see a real possibility that megachurches can pursue a creative, faithful adaptation of a historic message to contemporary circumstances.

The following final chapter of the thesis will also address the thesis questions more fully. It reviews the earlier chapters of recollected history and what they tell us about the COC and other Australian megachurches, as well as suggesting areas for future research.
Chapter Nine: Discussion and conclusions: Review, thesis propositions from and future prospects of the COC and Australian megachurches

**A suburban COC megachurch: The Spirit in action**

The growth of the COC, like the growth of other Australian megachurches, was largely unanticipated, particularly in the light of the predictions made by secularization theorists of an inevitable decline in religious participation in Western nations (Bruce 1998b:223). The following account of a COC church service from the COC magazine[^410] in 1977 reminds us of the early enthusiasm and innovation that made the COC growth possible. At this point in its history, the COC was three years old and in the early phases of growth in the inner city Brisbane suburb of West End.

At 6.50 the evangelist begins. Those present have come to understand a climactic conclusion will follow and settle back to listen intently to the prelude…Clark Taylor is the evangelist’s name. A lithe, former stockman from the Northern Territory, he preaches as though he were still in the saddle. Woven into the subject of every sermon is the need for every person to be saved - to be forgiven, restored to God. The evangelist asks for decisions and for a public commitment. Twenty come to the front. ‘There is a person here tonight, and you suffer from a severe pain in your neck… right about here’ (the evangelist points to an area of his own neck). ‘God will heal you.’ He raises his hand: ‘Where is that person?’ The television cameras capture the drama of the moment - thousands will later view a miracle of healing in their own living room - proof positive that Christ is alive … Church: was it ever like this?, a refreshing new approach to basic Christianity by people from all walks of life.[^411]

This account provides insights into the character of the COC and its expansion into one of Australia’s largest megachurches in the late 1980s, together with growth into a denominational network of 160 national and over 1000 overseas churches.

[^410]: Christian Outreach Centre Magazine, (1977), *A New Way of Living* Vol 1, No 1, p. 3ff.
[^411]: Extract from *A New Way of Living Magazine*, 1977, Vol 1, No 1, p. 3ff.
The development of the Brisbane COC megachurch and the COC movement over the
next three decades appears to reflect the typical life cycle of organizations in general
(Quinn and Cameron 1983:40). The COC transitioned from less formal beginnings in
which a charismatic founder introduced religious innovations that were new to Brisbane.
Expansion followed, assisted by the development of people, land, buildings, new media,
organizational structures and other resources. This growth was accompanied by
diversification into a wider range of activities. These included schools, a tertiary college
and social welfare activities, as well as extension into a national and international
denominational network of churches. By the late 1980s, the growth of the Brisbane
megachurch and Australian COC movement had plateaued as markets became saturated,
surrounding environments changed and their founder resigned. The slowing of growth
was followed by decline, particularly in the smaller and more isolated churches, as well
renewal as fresh innovations and entrepreneurial ideas were trialed.

Developments in the COC also appear to reflect market oriented efforts to respond to
opportunities arising from changes in the surrounding social and religious environment
and the increased consumer orientation of society in general (Twitchell 2004; Miller
2005; Ritzer 1996:1; 2008:1). It also appears to show the processes of institutionalization,
solidification (Weber 1968:809; O’Dea 1961) and secularization (Bruce 1998b:224). In
more recent efforts to attract attendees, lengthy appeals for instant conversion that were
characteristic of the early COC in the 1970s appear to have largely been replaced by
messages on life transformation. In addition, words of knowledge for miraculous healing
have given way to preaching on pragmatic approaches that address life issues. The
megachurch’s orientation has transitioned from being a revival centre that is inclined
towards the working class to being an established church that is more open to the middle
class and the wider society. The look of the megachurch building has changed, from a
hired hall to an unadorned warehouse, and more recently to an air conditioned and
extensively decorated amphitheatre fronted by a commercial coffee shop and a large
information foyer. However, the earlier revivalist emphasis on supernatural experiences
involving tongues, divine healing, visualization and confession has not disappeared
entirely, and many attendees still look to these practices as very important for the church and its growth, though often in different forms and emphasis from earlier years.

In the new millennium, the COC has emerged as a diverse organization, with large national and international networks. Leaders and attendees hold to a wider range of beliefs and practices, some adhering to the original revivalist emphases, and others experimenting with newer ways of being church, engaging with society and meeting attendee needs and COC missional aims.

This thesis examined some of these transitions at length. It examined changes in the COC organization, the changed roles of charismatic leadership, and in leaders’ and attendees’ beliefs and practices, as well as market oriented responses to opportunities arising from broader changes in the social and religious environment. It also documented the shift from the pursuit of isolation in its early years to greater engagement with the wider society in more recent times. This final chapter draws together the findings from the case study of the preceding chapters and discusses their implications for understanding the COC and Australian megachurches more generally.

**The thesis chapters reviewed**

The opening chapter introduced the main thesis themes in this case study of an Australian megachurch. This project began with the research question:

> What does the recollected oral history of the COC say about the organizational development and growth of Australian megachurches, with a focus on the COC megachurch and denomination, the role of charismatic leaders, and their responses to changing markets?

The first chapter outlined the methodology used to answer this question, focusing on the collection, collation and analysis of the oral history, sermons, church magazines and other records as well as recollections of some who had left the COC. This was supplemented by interviews and studies of leaders and participants in the 21 other
Australian megachurches and related groups within the Pentecostal, evangelical, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal movements, as well as the Methodist and mainstream churches from which the COC attendees came. Other sources of information were also considered, including the more recent National Church Life Survey of 2006.

Australia’s 21 megachurches were identified and all were shown to have been local groups led by Australian and New Zealand leaders aided in their growth by participation in global Pentecostal, evangelical, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal revival movements. They were also found to have used similar organizational approaches, often adapting organizational practices that drew on North American and global developments. These included the Church Growth movement of the Fuller School of World Mission, the faith visualization and church growth paradigms of Yonggi Cho from Korea, and the Latter Rain and charismatic movement paradigms brought to Australia from North America, Europe and New Zealand. The combination of local and global religious and organizational characteristics could be said to provide an example of glocalization (see Hannerz 1990:237; Robertson 1992:73 Clifton 2005:107).

As in the United States (Thumma and Travis 2007:59), most Australian megachurches are located on acreage in fast growing suburbs of major cities. Their need to maintain large attendances to support extensive facilities has encouraged a consumer orientation whereby they have adopted contemporary music, building designs and contemporary preaching themes to attract supporters. These features were combined with a common Pentecostal heritage of other worldly, millennialist hopes that drew on similar North American and global literatures. They tend to grow to megachurch size under a single charismatic leader who articulates attendee’s common concerns and hopes, usually within a global Pentecostal paradigm. The growth of the COC and related Australian megachurches has raised questions about their authenticity of their approaches in terms of the contribution they are making to preserving and spreading core beliefs of the church universal, and their contribution to the lives of attendees and to society.
Chapter Two reviewed the scholarly literatures on religious and organizational developments that formed the background to this study of an Australian megachurch. It noted that since Australian megachurches began as revivalist developments that offered alternatives to the institutionalization and secularization often witnessed in mainstream Australian churches (Hynd 1984; Sturmey 1988:1ff) they often show sectarian tendencies. These new religious developments often raise concerns that can include intolerance, inflexibility and dogmatism (Freud 1927:43, 54; Ellis 1988:27) and a tendency towards isolationism and over-reliance on authoritarian charismatic leaders with insufficient accountability systems (Watters 1992:148f). However, Australian megachurches do not appear to fit the idealized 19th century descriptions of sectarian developments well (Wilson 1970:24) because of their Pentecostal belief in the Spirit empowerment of attendees and pragmatic efforts to maintain the huge voluntary attendances needed to support their large facilities.

The megachurches also appear to avoid the organizational restrictions of institutionalization (Weber 1968:809; O’Dea 1961; Poloma 1989) and secularization (Bruce 1998b:224). However, these concepts face the weakness of imprecise over generalization (Percy 2003; Martin 2005). The organizational development literature was shown to offer potentially useful insights into the developmental of Australian megachurches and the stages they might typically go through. It describes how they often transition from embryonic organizations that exploit new opportunities, entering a rapid growth phase where the location and contexts are most suitable, plateauing when markets become saturated or external environments change, and pursuing fresh efforts at avoiding decline and engage in renewal (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40).

The scholarly literature on the megachurches market orientation was also reviewed. Australian megachurches were shown to frequently adopt businesslike approaches to identifying market opportunities and creating new religious products that respond to emerging consumer trends. Opportunities for megachurch growth have benefited through increased openness to the free market religious competition associated with the expansion of new suburbs with fewer religious and community resources and the emergence of
youth and other distinctive sub cultures. The megachurches appear to have responded to the demands of increased individualism and consumerism. Megachurches have also emerged as active agents that pursue new ways of making religion relevant to unchurched people. At the same time, the research literature points to the complexity and multiplicity of factors impinging on the real life of the individuals, organizations and their social environments of megachurches that need to be considered in this study, and the limitations of consumerism, individualism, use of contemporary media and experiential religion (Ritzer 1996:1; 2008:1).

These scholarly literatures on religious change, organizational development, charismatic leadership and market orientation provided theoretical frameworks for the case study of the COC megachurch and its denomination in the chapters that followed.

Chapter Three traced the historical roots of Australia’s megachurches and the changing 20th century social and religious contexts from which they emerged. Using a combination of original oral history interviews and study of church publications, sermon records and other media sources, as well as interaction with research by other scholars, this chapter traced four waves of global revivalism that set the contexts for the development of Australia’s 21 megachurches. It showed how global revival movements in the early 20th century adopted the beliefs of Charles Parham and William Seymour to give rise to classical Pentecostalism (Goff 1988:14f, 51). This early 20th century Pentecostal movement contributed to the development of small local Australian groups, many of which merged into the Australian Assemblies of God (A–AOG), Australia’s largest Pentecostal denomination, in 1937 (Chant 1999:103; Hutchinson 2002:26).

Australian megachurches were shown to be influenced by the larger evangelical religious gatherings in Australia that were further stimulated by growing interest in neo-Evangelicalism and the visit of Billy Graham to Australia in 1959 as well as the social changes of the 1960s (Pollock 1966a:249; Pigg 1989:2). Increased openness to new religious practices in traditional churches in the 1960s and 1970s aided the spread of the charismatic movement and three Australian charismatic churches grew into
megachurches. These were identified as Holland Park Gateway Baptist in Brisbane, Mount Evelyn ‘Careforce’ Church and Crossways Baptist Church in Victoria. Participants who left traditional churches to establish new, independent neo-Pentecostal churches showed a greater openness to new religious innovations, including the Divine Healing, Latter Rain, Faith Confession, Prosperity, charismatic, Pre-millennial and Church Growth movements. Eight of these churches grew to megachurch size and due to their greater freedom, four of these formed new denominational networks. Institutionalization within classic Australian Pentecostalism restricted the growth of the Australian AOG (A–AOG) until 1977, when organizational changes and the appointment of new leadership initiated denominational expansion and the growth of ten megachurches within the A–AOG/ACC churches.

These ‘glocal’ revivalist developments were shown to have contributed to distinctive, but interrelated, groups of Australian megachurches. Although some potential Australian megachurches such as Melbourne Christian Fellowship began with sectarian tendencies towards isolation and dogmatism, most Australian megachurches did not continue along this path, pursuing greater engagement with society instead (Cox 1995; Martin 2002). This chapter confirmed that Australian megachurches and their denominations tend to transition through the organizational development, decline and renewal, and market orientation pathways identified in chapter two.

Chapters Four to Eight examined these developments in the case study of the Christian Outreach Centre.

Chapter Four overviewed the life course biography of the COC founder and its relationship to the megachurch growth of the COC. Organizational theorists have shown that the founder of an organization is a major contributor to the character and culture of any organization (Schein 2004:225). This is particularly the case with megachurches, which have been shown by Thumma and Travis (2007:59) to typically grow to megachurch size under a charismatic (to use Weber’s term) leader. Interviews and participant observations showed that Taylor possessed typical charismatic leadership.
characteristics that included high levels of self-confidence, vision and innovation (House and Howell 1992), a desire to reject old ways and rules (Tucker 1968:737) and a willingness to take risks in order to pursue a desire for change (Conger and Kanungo 1998:66). This contemporary charismatic leadership model which aided megachurch growth is markedly different to the more traditional pastoral leadership models of mainstream churches that appear less suited to promoting church growth within contemporary western contexts (Majdali 2003; Thumma, Travis & Bird 2005). Drawing on insights from Erikson’s identity development theory, Chapter Four showed how developments in the COC founder’s life were potentially paralleled by developments in the COC organization and its beliefs, practices and organizational culture. In Taylor’s case, significant life events were identified that included his rural upbringing, his father’s death, adoption of the neo-Evangelical instant conversion and Biblicist emphasis of Billy Graham, a personal illness, and the subsequent adoption of divine healing practices of North American healing evangelists, including Oral Roberts. It also identified early ministry crises, the adopting of Latter Rain innovations, the faith confession movement beliefs that originated with Esseck W Kenyon, as well as the visualization practices of Yonggi Cho. Finally, this chapter traced Taylor’s connections to wider global, New Zealand, Korean and North American networks through Taylor’s ministry travels, reading and other relationship networks. This chapter also examined the links between Taylor’s charismatic leadership characteristics and the contexts of time and place and how these related to the development of the COC organization, and to charismatic leaders more generally (Hutch 1997:45).

Conger & Kanungo (1998:217) identify a number of limitations of charismatic leadership that include congregants being easily exploited by the leader, the encouraging over-ambitious and demanding projects, and insufficient systems of accountability. Other scholarly literature also suggests that unresolved issues in the leader’s life journey can also have dramatic effects on the development of the organizations they found (Erikson

412 This led Miers to ponder, ‘Perhaps it’s our natural Australian style that makes us different from other denominations, Outreach magazine, Dec 1999.
Subsequent events in the life of Taylor and the COC organization point to the ways in which these limitations affected the COC and its participants.

Chapter Five traced the development of the COC from its beginnings in inner Brisbane in 1974 to the founder’s resignation in 1989. It noted how early establishment of the Brisbane COC was assisted by charismatic leadership, strong Methodist influences and early attendance of former Methodists, openness to people from a range of denominational backgrounds, and the adoption of international religious innovations from the Pentecostal, divine healing, Latter Rain, millennialism and other related movements identified in chapter three.

The use of television and other media and leadership development increased audience awareness and attendances that assisted growth. The ability to attract large audiences provided the finances needed to mobilize the resources that supported further expansion, land purchase and building construction. The COC extension into a national denominational network of churches across Australia was also aided by the use of a franchise like system of new church startups with minimal leadership training and use of hired halls and localized building programs at low cost to the movement. The strengths and limitations associated with franchise like reproduction of new churches was discussed in the light of other scholar’s writings (Zech 2003:325; Ritzer 2008:1). This growth phase was motivated by religious beliefs including millennialism, visualization and faith confession and the adoption of church growth methods from the Fuller School of World Mission. The decision to relocate to a large acreage at Mansfield in a rapidly growing Brisbane suburb, together with the sale of the isolated Mt Tuchekoi camp, and the diversification into schools and a college that required integration with government and society were shown from interviews to represent a transition towards increased engagement with society. The Brisbane COC also employed a full time staff of over 70 workers. These changes helped the Brisbane COC megachurch to reach peak attendance of over 3500 attendees between 1986 and 1989. These also helped the national COC movement to expand in the early 1990s to 238 Australian COC churches.
Chapter Six examined the COC diversification into education in detail. The first COC school was established in 1978 with the goal of isolating children from the perceived secularizing effects of the state education system. Increased government assistance and ecumenism were shown to have assisted the expansion of low fee Christian schools. The establishment of COC schools was initially aided and influenced by the use of the American Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Although the ACE system enabled the establishment of small church schools, it was shown to be ill suited to Australian contexts and it was replaced by a system more widely accepted by the Australian community and government authorities, that combined an evangelical Christian world view and the Queensland government curriculum. Without the ACE system, the franchise like reproduction of small COC schools was found to be unsustainable and only the four largest COC schools remain. The COC also established a college, initially to isolate tertiary students from the secularism and to train teachers for Christian schools. In order to do this, it used Christian Heritage College materials from San Diego in the United States. These tertiary education materials and programmes also unsuited to Australian needs and they were replaced with content and practices that met Australian government requirements for teacher registration. Due to the high cost of establishment, this tertiary system is difficult to reproduce and as a result, only one COC tertiary college has been established. Rather than promoting isolation from society, as was originally intended, the COC schools and tertiary college have become agents for increased interaction with the society. Instead of promoting Americanization of Christian education, the COC has offered a locally developed evangelical alternative to it, as well as a conservative Christian option to secular Australian education institutions.

Long (1996a:235ff) and others raise concerns about tendencies towards dogmatic thinking in the new Christian schools that megachurches and others establish. At the

413 Clark Taylor, ‘Unless the Lord Builds the House’ Dedication Service for the Church Extension, 23/02/1986.
414 Clark Taylor, Sermon, CT 08/02/86 A
same time, the COC school and tertiary college are also the sites where the strongest engagement with scholarly learning and society are most likely to take place (Interviews with Millis, 2000, and Woolley, 2002).

Chapter Seven began by observing that growth of the Brisbane megachurch and Australian COC churches was difficult to sustain. It examined the ways in which a plateauing of Brisbane COC growth from 1986 to 1989 and the resignation of the COC founder in 1990 reshaped the COC megachurch and movement. Reasons for the slowing of growth in the Brisbane COC megachurch and Australian COC churches were considered. These included saturation of the market of potential attendees, the loss of input from the charismatic founder, the need to relocate key leaders to cover this loss, declining confidence in the COC ‘brand’ and charismatic movement culture of miraculous experiences, the inability to sustain high levels of church planting with little training or financial support and the changed external social and religious environments. This plateauing of growth fits with predictions arising from organizational development research discussed in chapter two and the observation that organizational requirements change markedly as an organization develops. Paradoxically, those organizational features that contributed to initial innovations and organizational birth are often incompatible with requirements for the survival of institutions in the longer term (Kimberly 1979:437). Guder (2000:188) observes that the problem accompanying this maturation is not so much the institutionalization of the church, for this cannot be avoided, but the reductionism, divisiveness, politicization and lack of a unified vision that often accompanies it.

While the national expansion of the COC in Australia declined after the resignation of Taylor, the leaders interviewed in this thesis generally argued that overall attendance and health of the Australian COC churches improved, particularly in the larger and more centrally located COC churches. At the same time, overseas opportunities for the COC increased as bridgeheads into new locations were followed by further expansion. The COC became an agency for adapting and rebranding the beliefs and practices they had developed, and exporting these into new localized contexts in new national and
international COC church networks. COC efforts to present a standard COC approach to faith and ministry in overseas locations have been questioned by some scholars who argue that insufficient sensitivity was shown to local overseas cultural contexts and needs (Robbins 2004a:327; Ernst 1994). Other scholars such as Touraine (cited in Beckford 1993:163) also observe that religious groups such as the COC have a capacity to motivate social and cultural change is often limited by insufficient training and is easily misdirected.

Additional challenges associated with diversification became evident as the COC expanded into further activities that included Global Care, Red Frogs Chaplaincy, Australian Christian Lobby, counselling and political lobbying which required the development of more widely informed approaches to welfare and the ways these activities related to core Christian mandates.

Chapter Eight examined the increased diversity within the COC movement in the first decade of the new millennium and the decline and efforts at renewal that followed. It briefly reviewed developments in the COC internationally, and changes in the Australian COC associated with application of Natural Church Development (NCD) approaches to improved organizational health. It also considered insights from the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) data after it became available for the first time in 2006. Although some churches and attendees sought to adhere closely to initial COC revivalist beliefs and practices that had aided early growth, in more recent times, many COC leaders appear to view these earlier revivalist developments as less suited to church needs in the new millennium and they have shown willingness to experiment with newer approaches. A decline in leadership emphasis on millennialism, instant notions of conversion, speaking in tongues, demonstrative approaches to divine healing and demonology was observed. The Brisbane COC, which was rebranded as Citpointe Church Brisbane in 2000, was presented as a leading exemplar of these changes, no longer emphasizing the soon return of Jesus and demonstrative appeals for divine healing in favour of an emphasis on the ‘life style’ of Christianity as shared through discipleship. Increased diversity and changing patterns of beliefs of attendees through the 1970s, and 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.
were further illustrated by examining the best selling books in the COC bookshop. These show a transition from faith confession, to Toronto and Pensacola revivals, the pragmatic, lifestyle emphasis of Joyce Meyer and the more recent discipleship emphasis of Steve Murrel and Rice Broocks (2006).

Faith development theorists, such as Fowler (1981:14,244), provided a model that shows how these changes can be interpreted in terms of faith maturation from intuitive, mythic-literal faith, to synthetic-conventional faith, then transcendent-conjunctive and more universalized faith. Fowler’s model suggests that faith development is prompted by the leader’s need to respond to the crises raised during the life course of leaders and attendees. Fowler (1981:200; 2004:418) argues that for the spiritual health of participants and their organizations, higher levels of faith development involving dialectic and dialogic thinking need to be encouraged. The school and college could be places where these higher levels of reflection could be encouraged. Fowler (2004:418) observes that megachurches typically encourage synthetic-conventional faith and offer little encouragement for the critical examination of beliefs and values, or for exploring contradictions arising in churches and life. However, there is evidence from interviews with COC leaders that changes in the COC reflect efforts to encourage more open, reflective faith development that considers critical and post critical faith positions.

This concluding ninth chapter draws together the findings of the previous chapters and discusses their implications, as well as their relationship to more recent social and religious developments. It reviews the COC thesis case study and reasons for the development of the COC and what these transitions say about the nature of megachurch organizations, the role of charismatic leaders and market oriented efforts to respond to the needs of contemporary societies.
Explaining megachurch growth in the Australian context: Five thesis propositions

What does the recollected oral history of the COC say about the organizational development of Australian megachurches, with a focus on the COC megachurch and denomination, the role of charismatic leaders and response to changing markets in their growth?

In answering this question and the related question of, ‘what enabled a small Brisbane evangelical group to grow into a megachurch and denominational network at a time when many mainstream churches were declining in attendance?’ this thesis case study found that the growth of the COC was associated with five thesis propositions:

- the drawing power of Pentecostal beliefs and practices.
- the adoption of mega organizational forms that promote growth to megachurch size.
- the usefulness of organizational development life cycle stages in describing this growth.
- the role played by charismatic leaders.
- the identification and response to changed market opportunities.

The drawing power of Pentecostal beliefs and practices

The first proposition argued that Pentecostalism, with its more distant roots in Pietism and more recent roots in the revivalism of the late nineteenth centuries offered a number of beliefs, practices and experiences that attracted large attendances needed for megachurch growth. The capacity to draw large gatherings shows the continued capacity of Pentecostal claims to supernatural encounters with God to attract crowds, through demonstrations of divine healing, supernatural miracles, tongues speaking, other charisms, as well as conversions and millennialist expectations of Christ’s return (Cox 1995:81f). They continue to do this despite the rationalizing and secularization of the modern world and claims that Australians are not as interested in experiential religion as
some overseas cultures (Bouma 2006a:2,32). The potency of this form of revivalism contrasted with the difficulty that more remote and complex mainstream religious traditions had in attracting large attendances in contemporary Australia.

The founder of the COC observed that testimonies of his own divine healing and prayer for the healing of others showed the potency of these claims to attract large audiences (Interview, 17/01/2001). Instant conversion experiences through participation in ‘altar calls’ were also found to motivate increased commitment by large numbers of potential attendees. Tongues speaking as evidence of being ‘baptized in the Holy Spirit’ also provide the attraction of a strong sense of God’s presence in their lives. The COC leaders also found that beliefs and practices of the latter rain and faith confession movements provided novel approaches to faith in God that further attracted and motivated attendees. These intense, personal and individual experiences of God helped make the Christian religion appear more vital and real (Interviews 5, 8 15, 22). In Pentecostalism, the sacramental experiences had shifted from those administered through established hierarchies, priests and traditions to personal experiences of God that were transmitted through ‘born again’ conversions, communal worship, ‘quiet times’, devotional Bible reading, testimonies of miracles, baptism in the Spirit and tongues speaking. The notion of personal salvation and Spirit empowerment fits with the contemporary emphasis on individual choice in which growing churches must appeal to a diversity of attendee views by marketing attractive products. The Pentecostal notion of Holy Spirit empowerment of all lay participants also encouraged large numbers of lay participants to pursue new initiatives that contributed to greater involvement of women, youth and others who were less likely to be actively involved in mainstream churches. Others, including Bernice Martin (1998:126ff) and David Martin (2002) Harvey Cox (1995:81f) and Margaret Poloma (2002) have made similar observations in overseas locations.

415 New Way of Living, May/June 1991, p. 36.
Aided by the efficacy of these beliefs and practices, the COC, along with other Australian Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches began to reach megachurch size of over 2000 attendees in the 1970s and 80s. Growth was assisted by the charismatic movement as mainstream church attendees who accepted the Pentecostal practices and beliefs swelled attendances in Pentecostal, mainstream charismatic and independent neo-Pentecostal churches. The sense of revival and growth was accentuated by innovative responses to changed social settings and markets such as the emergence of distinctive new youth cultures, relocation of young families, and opportunities to use of contemporary media. At the same time, this thesis study found that the strong growth of the COC in the 1970s and 80s was not so much due to mass conversions of the unchurched as is sometimes claimed, but a transfer from established mainstream denominations of attendees with some religious knowledge who were seeking a greater sense of relationship with God and church involvement. As Gibbs (2005) notes more generally, ‘the bulk of ministry to the unchurched is more accurately described as reaching out to welcome back the ‘previously churched’.

The COC and other Australian Pentecostal megachurches appear to share weaknesses often seen in new revival movements, such as an over-emphasis on intuitive experientialism, difficult to prove supernatural claims, non-reflective pragmatic methodologies, unquestioning obedience to charismatic leadership and an underemphasis on critical scholarly reflection on their history, theology and faith development (Hocken in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:517; Percy 2003:105f). On the other hand, as Martin (2002:175) notes, this form of Pentecostalism that combines experiential revivalism with western pragmatism and ‘a repetoir of recognizable spiritual affinities’ has enable the attraction of very large attendances that are engaging with their faith, churches and society in meaningful ways.

417 Only 4 out of 123 (3.3%) interviewees said they were previously unchurched. The interviewees said they came from the following denominations: Methodist, 45, Catholic 12, A-AOG 12, Anglican 10, Baptist 8, Lutheran 8, Presbyterian 5, Uniting 4, Other pentecostal 4, Reformed 4, Brethren 3, Church of Christ 2, New Zealand New life Centre 2, Unchurched 2, Greek evangelical 1, Greek Orthodox 1, (n=123). Thus claims to be reaching the unconverted should more correctly be viewed as a deepening of religious commitment and involvement thorugh ‘conversion like’ experiences.
The adoption of mega organizational forms that promote growth to megachurch size

Secondly, this thesis proposes that the initial growth of the COC, and other Australian megachurches, was associated with the adoption of contemporary, organizational structures that assisted the preserving of large gatherings and continued growth into even larger organizations (Burns & Stalker 1961; Aiken, Bacharach & French 1980). While some traditional denominational churches in America have mobilized the resources and innovations needed for megachurch growth (Thumma and Travis 2007:31) that has not been observed in the religious and social settings found in Australia (Bouma 2006a:2,32). At this stage, few non-Pentecostal or non-charismatic mainline churches have grown into megachurches in Australia. It appears that these older, more established denominations have invested heavily in buildings, liturgies, traditions and mechanical organizational arrangements and have found it more difficult to discard or revise their existing organizational structures, clergy roles and meeting formats that appear to be needed to develop Australian megachurches. Similar observations can be made about the more restrictive and formal bureaucratic religious environments of traditional state churches in Europe (Davie 1994; Dekker 1996). Australian churches that grew to megachurch size have followed the American model whereby they accepted free market competition in pluralistic environments, close alignment with contemporary culture and experimentation with newer organizational and religious innovations as well as pursuing growth and conversions as signs of church health and expected end time revival. The megachurches can also be considered ‘post bureaucratic’ in that they seek to avoid bureaucratic structures that can restrict growth, focusing instead on attractive cultures developed by charismatic leadership to aid the growth of a large, diverse organization (Heckscher & Donnellon 1994).

The relatively young age of the COC has also contributed to a greater openness to flexible, process-oriented, organizational approaches and innovations similar to those that aided the growth of mega businesses, shopping centres and other contemporary mega
institutional forms (Thumma and Travis 2007:14). The COC leaders also read and used literature that encouraged these approaches (McGavran 1980:418). This included the literature produced by Yonggi Cho (1979; See Majdali 2003:272), Peter Wagner (1976) and Donald McGavran (1980) from the Fuller School of World Mission Institute for Church Growth, and more recently by Schwartz (1996) and the Natural Church Development (NCD) literature. These provided further encouragement to using secular organizational approaches to aid church growth. To achieve these goals, these churches employed a large network of specialized staff with expertise in a diversity of tasks, many of which are unrelated to traditional religious approaches. These included sound engineers, web designers, public relations coordinators, property managers, legal advisors, welfare coordinators and leaders of a diversity of programmes that were perceived to be needed in megachurches to meet contemporary needs.

As the COC and Australian megachurches churches grew, they adopted the organizational structures needed to coordinate such large organizations, including the employing of staff with executive or senior management responsibilities, financial administrators, human resource executives, middle managers, operational directors and department supervisors. The overseeing leader of the COC megachurch and pastors of COC churches were encouraged to read organizational, motivational and leadership development literature and to take on a role not unlike that of entrepreneurial CEOs of businesses (Ramsey interview 2010). The COC appointed highly motivated potential leaders who had training in organizational approaches, leadership skills and charismatic beliefs, and this contrasted with the extended theological and academic training and traditional pastoral roles created scholarly and priestly church leaders who were isolated from the concerns and beliefs of ordinary attendees (Blaike 1979:32; Dempsey 1969; Thumma and Travis 2007:67).

The expansion of the COC into a national denominational network was also assisted by further organizational developments that encouraged potential leaders to establish easily reproducible models for starting new churches at low cost to the mother church. The COC developed an organizational structure that encouraged potential leaders to attend
two to six weeks training in COC methods before being sent out with little financial
support apart from that which was generated by the new congregation. Training for these
potential leaders focused on training in administrative tasks and practices that were
believed to assist growth rather than on the more traditional extended theological training
characteristic of mainstream denominations. In a development that is similar to
franchising (Zech 2003:325; Ritzer 2008:1), each church adopted the COC brand, culture
and operations manuals, contributing 5% of their income to the national movement, while
retaining 95% of their income for local use, thus increasing the motivation of branch
churches to pursue growth and further innovations.

This approach can be described as an organic organizational structure that encourages
innovation, diversity, complexity, decentralization, freedom, constant interaction with
and response to the surrounding environments and changing circumstances (Burns &
organizational approaches can be likened to a tree that integrates diverse, decentralized,
root and branch systems with central trunk systems that are laid down by many years of
previous growth so as to coordinate and provide unity through a common vision and core
organizational culture. Like a tree, the newer innovations and growth are more likely to
occur on the periphery of the organization where the greatest engagement with the
surrounding environment is often experienced. According to Lim, Griffiths, and
Sambrook (2010), this combination of strong leadership and a culture of voluntary
participation involve a ‘hierarchy-community model of organizational structure’ in which
an established hierarchy can be combined with a high level of lay participation and
communal involvement to aid growth. This contrasts with the less-flexible, more rigid,
mechanistic, hierarchical structures imposed by remote, centralized bureaucracies of
older organizations and churches (Burns & Stalker 1961; Aiken, Bacharach & French
for organizations to continue to grow, they must combine the preservation of past
successes, cultures and structures with openness to innovations needed to respond to
environmental changes.
The organizational structure of the COC also shows some similarities to other voluntary organizations such as new social movements and religious movements that also grew rapidly about this time. Their organizational structures are polycephalous, multicentred, decentralized and interconnected to global relationship networks. However, megachurches differ in the high value they place on charismatic leadership, submission to corporate authority, claims to divine revelation, conservative religious values and consumerism. These megachurch characteristics often discourage full lay participation, movement accountability, or negotiation of values, social norms and identities that fully challenge existing beliefs or practices. Many social movements (e.g. environmentalism, feminism) by way of contrast, provide examples of more inclusive, participatory decision making and more informed, critical evaluation of their organizations and the wider culture.

While ‘organic’ freedom and organizational innovation aided initial COC growth, this openness to innovation also contributed to splits as disagreements arose. The freedom to innovate also appears to have decreased as the COC aged and objections to change increased from older leaders and attendees whenever newer innovations have been trialed. This ossification and institutionalization can help explain why growth of many COC churches, the Australian COC denomination and some other megachurches has plateaued in recent years. The Australian megachurches tendency towards isomorphism has contributed to strong similarities which has further reduced the variety needed for more diverse responses to environmental change (Packard 2008).

Growth was associated with stages in the organizational development life cycle.

Thirdly, this thesis proposes that the growth of the COC was associated with stages in the organizational development life cycle such as those described by Quinn and Cameron (1983:40), Mintzberg (1984:213), Aldrich (1999:195) and Schein (2004:226).

In the case of the COC, four main developmental stages were identified:


The changed religious market of the 1960s and 70s (Bruce 2002:60) appears to have created opportunities for, and interest in, new religious phenomena (Carttledge 2000:129) and openings for the application of global Pentecostal and charismatic movement beliefs and practices to localized settings. This embryonic stage reveals the attraction, vitality and openness to experimentation generated by the ideas and practices associated with Pentecostalism and other associated religious movements.

The COC growth cycle began in 1974 with a charismatic founder offering innovative new approaches that responded to these opportunities. In the establishment stage, with the assistance of the early adoption of global Pentecostal beliefs and practices, the Brisbane COC grew from 100 weekly attendees meeting in a rented central Brisbane hall in 1974, to 500 meeting at West end in 1975.

The organizational development literature of scholars such as Greiner (1972), Quinn and Cameron (1983:40), Aldrich (1999), van de Ven & Poole (1995:512), Flamhotz (2000:313) and Schein (2004:299) sheds further light on the organizational start up phase and the ways in which new groups that are characterized by creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation are able to marshal the resources needed to exploit niche opportunities arising from changed social environments (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40; Mintzberg 1984:213).
Stage 2. Growth to megachurch size and expansion into a national and international denomination.

This growth phase followed a typical organizational pattern in which the early interest in new charismatic movement phenomena and the establishment of the COC by a charismatic founder was followed by more clearly defining and developing the organization’s mission and practices (Mintzberg 1984:213). This was followed by further leadership appointments, the mobilizing of collective resources (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40) and pursuit of additional market opportunities. This growth stage involved a number of sub-stages that benefited from leadership appointments, building constructions and paradigm shifts. The organizational consolidation and further growth in the COC was aided by the incorporation of the COC in 1976.

Like many Australian megachurches, the COC relocated many times, seeking more opportune locations each time. Although the initial inner city beginnings helped COC develop a high initial profile and early initial growth, like some of the other Australian megachurches, they found that growth in an inner city location was restricted by the high cost of venues and car parking restrictions. In response to this, the COC rented and then purchased a larger building in Woolloongabba where growth reached 800 attendees in 1977. Further growth was then assisted by increased exposure gained through television programmes that were broadcast from 1977 to 1979.

As with the growth of many suburban shopping and other megacentres, growth of the COC to megachurch size benefited from another relocation, this time to acreage in the populous middle to outer Brisbane suburb of Mansfield, close to a nearby house building boom and highway expansion.

The opening of a large megachurch auditorium with extensive car parking in 1983 enabled growth to reach megachurch size of over 2000 weekly attendees. The purchase of an additional 110 acres in 1986 and the extension of the COC auditorium and surrounding car parking and facilities in late 1986 enabled peak attendances of over 3,600.
weekly attendees to be reached in 1986 to 1989. Growth was further aided by organizational innovations that included the employment of section leaders and rejection of established denominational differences that might hinder growth. As with many megachurches (Thumma and Travis, 2007:51), further growth of the Brisbane COC appears to have been at least partly limited by traffic congestion, parking and noise restrictions that accompanied growth of surrounding housing developments and saturation of the market.

Growth into a national and international denominational network was assisted by the adoption of a franchise like reproduction of churches, which allowed for the establishing of 5 to 7 COC churches a year across Australia from 1978 to 1982, and even more rapid expansion from 1983 to 1990. This led to over 200 Australian COC churches by 1990 and to further churches in overseas countries. The COC model of church reproduction appears to have combined low resource and training requirements with the organizational franchising principles of simplification, efficiency, predictability, calculability and control (Ritzer 1996:1).

This study also found that, as with organizations diversification in general (Schein 2004:303), the COC benefited from diversification into a range of activities including schools, social welfare and political lobbying. These appear to have strengthened the COC by encouraging increased accountability and greater interaction with the wider society. While change and increased diversity may be viewed by some with concern, organizational researchers such as Schein (2004:303) argue that increased diversity and continued adaptation to change are signs of organizational health.

Similar relocation from central city beginnings, development of organizational structures, using large warehouse like buildings, relocation on acreage in fast growing middle suburban areas of major cities and use of wide ranging programmes were also important factors in the growth of other Australian megachurches such as Hillsong and Christian City Church (Ferguson 2005:38). The openness to developing similar organizational approaches, building styles and programs is also observed in other Northern American
and overseas megachurches (Loveland and Wheeler 2003; Thumma and Travis 2007:14) pointing to similar environments and organizational responses required for megachurch growth, as well as the common historical roots and information networks that encouraged their development.

Stage 3. Maturation and the cessation of growth.

This study found that the Brisbane COC megachurch attendances plateaued from 1986 to 1989 with weekly attendances around 3600. At this stage, the market for experiential religion that emphasized divine healing, words of knowledge, conversions, and contemporary worship and preaching themes appeared to have been saturated as the numbers of attendees peaked. This maturation stage may also have been due to the restraints of the size of the surrounding population, parking and other resource limitations. The plateauing of attendances can also be linked to institutionalization processes such as those identified by O'Dea (1961) and Poloma (1989:96; 2000:4).

These included:

(1) increased self-interest replacing the missional self-sacrifice as the movement became professionalized and motivations of security and respectability became more important. In the COC, there was a decreased willingness to make sacrifices and increasing concern for salaries and lifestyle benefits in line with mainstream society;

(2) formalization of church practices and administrative structures that were initially designed to aid growth reduced opportunities for experimentation and innovation and stifled growth. Structural elaboration is required as earlier structures that were neglected, such as legal compliance requirements, are found to be necessary (Quinn and Cameron 1983:40);
(3) organizational power structures that benefited leaders while at the same time restricting lay innovations, as well as accommodations to the benefits of the wider culture that reduced critical evaluation of these accommodations;

(4) changes in the message that focused on concrete, rationalized benefits of Christianity, often described as the ‘life style’ message; and

(5) increased objectification and routinization of mystical sacred experiences in ways that rob them of their appeal.

The franchise like model of church reproduction was also found to be difficult to sustain due to a high turnover of pastors and church closures due to a shortage of training and resources and the franchise model of sacrificial church planting with short leadership training times and few resources was largely abandoned in Australia after the mid 1990s. There was also a shift to a closed system with reduced inflow of new leaders, fewer growth opportunities and an increase in formalized procedures and controls in an attempt to maintain stability and efficiency (Mintzberg 1984:213; Quinn and Cameron 1983:40). In the COC, this maturation stage was also characterized by increased dependence on leaders who had grown up in the COC movement and a reduced openness to new leaders or attendees who would bring new ideas into the movement. The difficulties in maintaining centralized control over a large number of widely dispersed churches also contributed to a decline in the establishment of new churches. Plateuxing of growth was also partly related to changes in the external environment as the baby boomer founders grew older and new participants were younger generations who had different tastes and needs.

The plateuxing of growth was accentuated by the resignation of the COC founder in 1990 and efforts at consolidation of gains followed through efforts to preserve institutional structures, beliefs, practices and property acquisitions. This was followed by the need to establish institutional structures and resources to ensure the survival and continuation of
the COC churches and organizational denomination. The Australian COC denomination plateaued from 1991.

Stage 4. Decline and renewal.

By the mid 1990s, attendances at the Brisbane COC megachurch had declined below 2000 weekly attendees and the abandonment of the franchise like model of low cost reproduction of new churches with limited support resulted in the number of Australian COC churches falling below 200. At the beginning of the new millennium, many of the smaller COC churches are led by founders who are approaching retirement age. At the same time, all the smaller schools and many of the smaller COC churches have closed. Mintzberg (1984:213) has described this stage as typical of a politicized organizational framework in which competition between diverse interests and power groups restricts opportunities for renewal. According to the NCLS, the average age of all Australian COC attendees rose to 42 years by 2006, reflecting the ageing of the COC and its attendees, as well as their increased difficulties in attracting new attendees. According to Guder the cultural captivity that is typical of this stage is often accompanied by the refusal to question or examine these changes to a church’s underlying cultural and institutional structures. Guder also sees an answer to these difficulties in an incarnational approach in which the institutional church pursues organic structures and connectional systems that are true to the original mandate and vision of mission (Guder 2000:198).

At the same time, organizational renewal research suggests that renewal of the COC requires strong leadership, openness to experimentation and innovation, flexibility, diversification, and trial of new products that are needed to avoid the denial, division and conflict that can contribute to the further deteriorization of declining organizations (Hofer 1975:788; Mintzberg 1984:213; Klepper 1996:564).

The appointment of a new COC leader at the Brisbane megachurch in Ramsey in 2000 and his willingness to try new ideas that aided growth from 2000 to 3600 attendees is viewed by many within the COC as an example of the type of organizational renewal that
is needed if the Australian COC is to return to growth, though a division of perspectives within the COC has restricted Ramsey’s contribution to this renewal. The decreased age of Brisbane megachurch attendees under his leadership to 40 years in 2006, about the same as Pentecostals (39 years) and much younger than the average age of Protestants (50 years) also points to a renewal of organizational health in the megachurch. Conversely, a further plateauing of Brisbane COC megachurch growth, from 2006 to 2010, points to saturation and maturation again being reached.

The role played by charismatic leaders.

Fourthly, this thesis proposes that the growth of the COC and other Australian megachurches was aided by charismatic leaders who play an important role in developing rapid innovative assessment and responses to attendee needs in difficult times or changed social or organizational environments (Conger and Kanungo 1998:94). Charismatic leaders are described in the organizational development literature (Mintzberg 1984:214; Schein 2004:225, 299) as playing an important role in the founding of new organizations and in determining the culture, values, beliefs and ‘reason for being’ of the most rapidly growing organizations. Thumma and Travis (2007:59) and Ellingson (2007:111) show that almost all megachurches reaching megachurch size under a single charismatic leader who play a significant role in the origins, growth and character of the megachurches. Church growth researchers such as Wagner (1976:63) make similar observations.

The leadership style of the COC founder, Clark Taylor, fits Weber’s (1947:328) classic definitions of a charismatic leader well, including risk taking, articulating desire for change and framing innovations in ways that attract adherents and build new organizations and movements (Conger and Kanungo 1998:94). Taylor showed typical charismatic leadership characteristics that included high levels of authority, confidence, visionary thinking, an ability to create a sense of personal and social empowerment, sense of divine providence, unshakeable commitment to grand plans, and the ability to attract and motivate large numbers of people (See interviews with Earle 2000; McDonald 2000; Campbell 2001). Similar charismatic leadership characteristics are observed in other
Australian megachurch founders, Frank Houston (Sydney CLC), Phil Pringle (Sydney CCC), Kevin Conner (WCF, Melbourne), Allan Meyer (Careforce, Melbourne) Brian Andrew (Gateway, Brisbane), Klimionok (Garden City, Brisbane), Brian Baker (Riverview, Perth) and others.

This thesis case study also discussed the limitations of charismatic leadership in terms of possible over-reliance on the founder, insufficient accountability, pursuit of personal agendas and deep-seated desires, and pursuit of over-ambitious projects, rather than meeting the true needs of their followers (Conger and Kanungo 1998:211ff). Charismatic leaders of new breakaway religious groups may also encourage isolationism, unrealistic visionary thinking (Freud 1927:43, 54), dogmatic, irrational judgements (Ellis 1988:27), and over-reliance on self appointed religious representatives of God who can inhibit the development of self-aware, self-reliant and fully informed members (Watters 1992:148f).

In terms of religious group function, charismatic leaders can often encourage the surrender of opportunities for reflexive consciousness and wider interactions with society in favour of religious authority, authoritarian leadership structures and close ingroup dependencies (Hannigan 1990:248). Groups that accept leaders with authoritarian tendencies can leave the way open for power abuse and misappropriation of resources. In the case of the COC, the potential for these weaknesses is seen in relation to early tendencies towards isolation, dogmatism, and unquestioning acceptance of COC beliefs and practices. The difficulties became more apparent in events leading up to the resignation of the COC founder after allegations of sexual misconduct and cases of leadership misconduct and resignations in other Australian and overseas megachurches.

In the COC, as in megachurches more generally, the dependence on charismatic leadership is kept in check by attendees’ voluntary participation and voluntary financial giving. The ability to attract and hold attendees was reliant on the leader’s ability to continually demonstrate accepted Christian and Australian values and to persuade attendees of the value of what the church had to offer. Martin (1998:130ff) observes this tension more broadly, noting that, in Pentecostalism, the tendency towards authoritarianism is held in tension with the voluntary attendance of participants who are
free to leave at any time and go to another church, or even set up new, autonomous congregations. This appears to encourage consumer choice, where megachurch congregations promote a form of decision making through consumer support, attendance and tithing, with the option to boycott the church and all that they have to offer by ‘shopping’ or ‘church hopping’ elsewhere. This freedom to move or divide and start new groups may be one of the reasons for the global proliferation of Pentecostal churches and megachurches.

The next generation of leaders who followed these Australian megachurch founders were typically more management oriented and they displayed less of the typical charismatic leadership characteristics. While this transition to a managerial approach appears to have strengthened the COC organization and helped preserve its core beliefs, traditions and emerging heritage, it also appears to have lessened the COC capacity for further innovation and response to changed environments and new opportunities for growth.

In this thesis, Erikson’s studies of Luther (1958) and Gandhi (1970) were shown to provide a useful framework for studying the biography of the charismatic founder of the COC and the relationship between events in his own life and the beliefs, practices and organizational culture of the new COC organization and movement. Fowler’s (1981:187; 2004:418) faith development theory also provided additional insights into the biographical life course of the COC founder and the ways in which their personal life development can affect the character and beliefs of the organizations they start. Charismatic leadership also reveals a great deal about the followers and their motivations (Worsley 1970; B. Wilson 1975) as well as the wider contexts of social change that have contributed to the desire for change as well as efforts to oppose social and religious change.

Identifying and responding to changed market opportunities.

Finally, this thesis proposes that the growth of the COC and other Australian megachurches was aided by rapid identification and response to new market
opportunities arising from changed social environments of the mid to late 20th and early 21st Centuries. Many scholars including Wuthnow (1976:850), Strauss & Howe (1991), Finke and Stark (1992:247), Blumhofer (1993:272), Roof (1999) and Putnam (2000) have noted that one of the main reasons for the decline in attendance in traditional churches in the late 20th century has been the difficulties they faced in attracting attendees in the light of changes in society. These difficulties include population movements to fast growing suburbs, increased individualism, consumer choice, the growth of distinctive younger generations and the growth of subcultural diversity. These transitions created opportunities for Pentecostal and charismatic groups and leaders that were able to respond more rapidly and align themselves more quickly to new interests, values, needs and world views associated with these social changes (Hughes 1996:v).

In the 1960s and 70s, Australian society transformed rapidly due to rapid changes in transport, media, work, education, economic and transnational relationships (Hughes 1991; Mackay 1997; Hilliard 1997b). The increased emphasis on egalitarianism, individualism, acceptance of subcultural diversity and pluralism encouraged the growth of market oriented churches in which religious traditions were treated as consumer commodities Berger (1990:244). The COC appear to have responded to these changes by focusing on contemporary music, sermon topics and meeting styles, while avoiding references to traditional religious and denominational symbols that they might discourage potential attendees and converts from a broad range of denominational backgrounds. They oriented their meeting presentations and programmes towards youth, young families with children, the working class and the new middle class and attendees moving into new suburbs. Employing children’s workers and youth leaders, and establishing a Christian school and a college provided an effective aid to the enculturation of the younger generations (Bouma 2006a:15).

Like other megachurches (Thumma and Travis 2007), the COC leaders took a consumer oriented, business like approach that consciously pursued growth, identified needs and opportunities, and offered a range of ‘products’ designed to meet the demands of a different market segments. The COC held specialized church meetings for children,
youth, adults, and university students, as well as different language meetings for Chinese, African and other language groups. The Brisbane COC megachurch also operates satellite churches connected to the Carindale megachurch that are oriented towards different demographic profiles, including a church in the Western Brisbane suburbs oriented towards the working class and in the Northern Brisbane Suburbs oriented towards the needs of young families in that area.

Like Pentecostalism in general (Anderson 2009), the COC appears to be open to interaction with contemporary society through the contemporary media, including broadcasting televised highlights of meetings from 1977 to 1981, use of sound, lighting and projection systems, as well as a willingness to experiment with new delivery approaches and sermon themes. These combine a sense of certainty, relevance and meaning that is particularly appealing in an increasingly complex society.

This market orientation of the COC and Australian megachurches can also be viewed as one of their weaknesses. As Postman (1985) notes, the use of media and openness to contemporary society tends to re-shape the Christian message so as to couch it in contemporary, media oriented terms. Megachurch meetings look more like a television studio or rock concert than a traditional church service (Cawelti 2002). The preaching of an uncomplicated message focuses on pragmatic approaches to self-development and contemporary life with strong consumer appeal have replaced more traditional religious themes. The megachurch leader’s efforts to attract large attendances, including many who do not regularly attend church, can leave them to being open to secularization processes and close alignment with the popular consumerist culture to which they claim to offer alternatives (Guinness 1993:24; Wells 1994; Sargeant 2000:106; McGuire, 2002; Twitchell 2004). Ellingson (2007:164) argues that this megachurch tendency to surrender to contemporary cultural developments to attract a crowd contributes to a disconnection from long held historical practices, symbols, rituals and denominational traditions.

Whitt (1999:121) and Leaver & Zimmerman (1998:406ff) also warn that efforts to lift attendance by appealing to consumer interests can lead to the message becoming
simplistic and superficial, failing to develop Christianity’s true heritage of offering well
formed theological responses to the deepest needs of people, communities and society.
Bruce (1998b) and Wuthnow (1996:8) also warn that a market orientation often leads
Pentecostal megachurches to reflect the negative aspects of contemporary consumer
oriented societies, including an overemphasis on individualism, simplification and
rationalization of thought and organizational approaches, as well as promoting a non-
threatening prosperity message rather than offering prophetic alternatives that address the
injustices and weakness of contemporary society.

On the other hand, Vincent Miller (2005:8) argues for positive potential for Christian
faith in a consumer culture saying that it can lead to new ways of thinking about the
relationships between religion and culture, and the opportunity to develop critical literacy
that can aid engagement with culture.

However, while close alignment with, and enculturation to, contemporary society is
evident in COC churches and their efforts to foster growth, the values of contemporary
society have not been uncritically accepted. The challenges of interacting with society are
repeatedly discussed and reflected on by COC leaders and attendees and efforts have
been made to offer well considered theologically sound responses to social needs. This
thesis shows that the COC have made efforts towards engaging with culture, as well as
seeking to balance individualism with community responsibilities, secular, immaterial
hopes with material needs, and a critical evaluation of culture with accommodation to
culture. Nor have the COC and other Australian megachurches been unquestioning
participants in globalizing, Americanizing and revivalist influences. As Bell and Bell
(1998:41) and van de Ven et al (1999:16) have demonstrated more broadly, Australian
groups like the COC are selecting from, negotiating with, modifying, indigenizing and
adapting overseas developments to meet local needs.
**Public assessment of the COC**

At the end of the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the question of ‘how beneficial is the COC megachurch to attendees, the church universal and the wider society?’ remains central to evaluating the COC and its history. While time, space and resources do not allow a more extensive evaluation, the following points may be noted.

Many scholars have commented on the limitations of new sectarian groups, particularly in terms of their proclivity for isolation, narrowness and wishful thinking (Freud 1927:43, 54); intolerance, inflexibility, irrationality, and non-acceptance of ambiguity (Ellis 1988:27); as well as over reliance on religious leaders that inhibits the development of self-reliance, self-awareness and personal growth (Watters 1992:148f). Pentecostal churches also face weaknesses associated with a tendency towards overemphasis on intuitive experientialism, faith affirmation and supernatural claims; non-reflective pragmatic methodologies; under emphasis on critical scholarly reflection; and unquestioning obedience to charismatic leadership (Hocken in Burgess & van der Maas 2002:517; Percy 2003:105f). This thesis noted that while the COC showed some of these characteristics, particularly in its early development, it has not continued along this path. Their Pentecostal belief in the Spirit empowerment and divine commissioning of all participants, together with its mission orientation, the need to attract large numbers of attendees to maintain megachurch facilities, and promotion of faith development, encouraged a creative interaction with modernity, accountability, informed attendee decision making and engagement with contemporary society (Martin 1981:15).

Some scholars have also noted the tendency for megachurches to adopt negative aspects of contemporary society, including an overemphasis on individualism, consumerism and rationalization (Bruce 1998b). Efforts to be relevant in a contemporary society often promote disconnection from denominational traditions and their historical practices, symbols and rituals (Ellingson 2007:164). Some observe that megachurches tend to uncritically accept the view that material blessings and consumerism are signs of God’s favour with little consideration of the wider processes by which wealth is generated and
distributed. In order to promote the wholeness, health and well-being for all their participants, these megachurches must not only consider the values and ideologies of the prevailing culture, they must also offer well thought out alternatives to them (Bloesch 2002:266).

The question of ‘how effective are megachurches?’ is also related to how well they contribute to the mission of God (missio Dei) and how they embody and communicate the God-given promises of love, hope and liberation as exemplified in the servant oriented, self-sacrificing ministry of Christ (Bosch 1991:390,519). Ricci (2007:52) describes this call to mission as contributing to God’s ‘work to reconcile every person to union with Himself, communion with others, to fullness of life, and to harmony with Creation, in the context of community for the good of all’. The COC has come closest to fulfilling these mission aims when it has promoted orthodoxy in beliefs, well being for all its participants and positive contributions to society. The COC megachurch has played a valuable role in meeting a range of suburban needs, particularly through the establishment of schools, a tertiary college, aged care programmes and other facilities. These have contributed to social engagement and community formation (Putnam’s 2000:158). At the same time, COC development has been limited by organizational maturation and the limitations imposed by increased institutionalization. While the COC megachurch began by offering prophetic alternatives to contemporary society, this has decreased over time as institutional processes have increased. The future will judge how effective are megachurch efforts to overcome institutional stagnation and to promote renewal.

**What is the future for Australian megachurches?**

In describing the ‘Next Christianity’, Philip Jenkins (2002) argues that global Christianity is transitioning through changes as epochal as the Reformation, including growth and transformation as the vital centers of Christianity shift to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Pentecostal megachurches such as the COC reflect and play a localized role in
these global changes. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it is possible to look back over the early history of the megachurches and to reflect on the changing roles that megachurches are playing in the lives of their leaders, attendees, church and society. It is also possible to consider the likely roles that they will play in the future. As Jenkins (2002) states, the Christians who dismiss these conservative, supernatural groups as outdated, superstitious, and authoritarian, often fail to fully understand the changes that are taking place, or the ways in which these new groups are transitioning, developing and mutating over time. This thesis documented and analyzed some of the ways in which one of these megachurches and their new emerging denomination are playing in these broader, more global developments.

These changes are not confined to religion. Miller and Yamamori (2007:132–3) observe that a social justice branch of global Pentecostalism is emerging that is noted for being democratic, egalitarian, communal and energizing. They also argue that the Pentecostal message of Holy Spirit empowerment encourages a belief that such changes are possible and necessary (2007:221). Clifton and Ormerod (2009) have noted similar changes in Australia, observing that while Australian megachurches began with a strong emphasis on evangelism, conversions and religious experiences, these have lessened as the churches have diversified their activities to include a wider range of interests that include social welfare activities in particular. This transition can be observed in the COC with its increased emphasis on schools, a tertiary college and social welfare through local and ‘Global Care’ programmes. In the Brisbane megachurch this diversification is evident in the development of the Brisbane ‘Citipointe’ school, the CHC tertiary college, counselling facilities, aged care residences, ‘Red Frogs’ Chaplaincy and support for ‘She Rescue Homes’ in Cambodia. Interviews with COC participants indicate that these activities are providing participants with an increasing sense of identity and self worth that is diversifying beyond the narrower religious conversion focus of the earlier years. These transitions can partly be explained in terms of a shift from renewal to institutionalization (O’Dea 1961; Eisenstadt 1964:235; Poloma 1989:97); in terms of the organizational life cycle and organizational diversification of the COC, changes in
Australian society and religion more generally, as well as the response, faith development and maturation of leaders and participants (Erikson 1958:12ff; Fowler 1981:14,244).

More recently, the Emergent Church leaders such as Brian Mclaren (2004), as well as Karen Ward, Ivy Beckwith, Mark Oestreicher, Spencer Burke, and Dan Kimball, have argued that the megachurches may be entering a period of decline as attendees turn to smaller and more personal gatherings, less professionalized presentations and deeper engagement with their theology and past traditions. This thesis showed how this may contribute to a plateauing of growth in some megachurches, such as the COC, particularly as their organizations reach maturation stage. However, the COC also provided examples of megachurch participation in small group meetings, organizational renewal and development of new breakaway groups that are contributing to the continued spread and growth of new megachurch movements. This thesis study suggests that the future of Australian megachurches networks is likely to include the emergence and rapid growth of new megachurch groups. These are likely to show initial sectarian tendencies, followed by developmental pathways that follow organizational development life cycles. The megachurch groups that are most likely to grow the largest are those that are most willing to adapt and change, to maintain diversity, innovation, and organizational flexibility, as well as developing sufficiently strong organizational structures and identity to avoid dissipation and fragmentation. As Thumma and Travis (2007:182) note, claims of the demise of the megachurch are premature, since megachurches are continuing to be established and to respond in innovative ways to changed market opportunities.

The COC and other Australian megachurches appear to be making a contribution to Australian society and religion, by involving many who may not otherwise be involved in evangelical Christianity, promoting new religious experiences, organizational innovations and response to new market opportunities. However, for these developments to fully benefit attendees, these churches will need to avoid the dangers of withdrawal from society, and over accommodation to the individualistic, consumer orientation of contemporary society. They will also need to avoid the dangers associated with over
dependence on charismatic leadership, and encourage stronger systems of accountability and greater participant involvement in their decision making.

Majdali (2003:281) sums up the challenge for megachurch participants well:

One of the pitfalls leaders need to avoid, especially pragmatic Australians, is to remember that there are no formulas for big churches and big Christians. Concepts like prayer, fasting and “waiting on God” should not be viewed as abstractions for those who have nothing better to do, but as non-negotiable foundational practices, which will lead to God’s plan for the ministry and community. The truth of the gospel and the scripture must be held to like a lifeline. The most likely scenario is that God will use a unique, Australian-made solution, for Australia’s unique challenges and psyche.

Limitations of the study,

While this study has shed light on the COC and other Australian megachurches, a number of limitations are recognized. Firstly, the study was limited to 138 interviews and participant observation from 2000 to 2010 that focused on a single Brisbane COC megachurch. One hundred and forty eight interviews is large for a qualitative study, but it is still only a small portion of total COC attendance and different viewpoints could be expressed by those who were not interviewed. The study focuses on one Australian megachurch in Brisbane, Australia, and on the COC branch of Australian Pentecostalism. Such study does not reflect the total diversity of Australian or global Pentecostal movements, nor all COC churches. It is recognized that considerable differences exist between different churches in the COC movement and the different Pentecostal churches and movements more broadly.

Concluding reflections: Academic encounters with religious conviction

The study for this thesis provided opportunities to explore the interaction between personal faith, contemporary religion and academic scholarship, as well as opportunities
to participate in scholarly networks with people from a range of backgrounds that have more fully informed my insights. This investigation provided an increased understanding of contemporary religious developments in Australia and it addressed questions raised by my earlier experiences, as well as my present work as a tertiary college lecturer. This work shed light on the different ways in which Australian religious and social history may be viewed using insights from religious, organizational, human development and faith development studies. It provided insights into the ways in which Australia and its religious culture is changing, as well as the benefits that informed academic study can bring to better understanding these changes. The study shed light on the attraction of Pentecostalism as well as warning of the limitations and dangers of an overemphasis on experientialism, charismatic leadership, insufficient reflection on narrow sets of beliefs, isolation, disconnection from past traditions and the uncritical acceptance of market forces that are often associated with it. My research also helped understand how megachurches are using contemporary organizational approaches to aid growth and the ways new religious organizations develop. It showed how biographical studies of church leaders could shed light on how their life journeys contribute to the character of organizations. This case study of the COC also gave insights into more general processes such as institutionalization (O’Dea 1961) and secularization (Bruce 1998b) and their role in the development of new megachurches and denominations. It also shed light on how education, participation in wider networks, interaction with government departments and other developments can increase engagement with society and contribute to the health of religious groups.

This thesis also highlighted the challenges of describing complex and diverse religious, historical and sociological developments using the language, concepts and ideas of different scholarly and popular schools of thought. It highlighted the need to combine scholarly informed understanding of complex religious phenomena with dissemination of findings in ways that can effectively communicate to the average person. Like Poloma (1997:258), I found it valuable to explore the middle ground and dialogue that exists between scholarly reflection and personal reflexivity, as well as the objective scientific analysis as an outsider and the active participation of an insider.
Suggested areas for further research

This case study suggests a number of areas for further research, particularly relating to the place of Pentecostal megachurches in Australian society. While global Pentecostalism has been much examined, studies of the diversity and development of the different forms of Pentecostalism and megachurches within Australia are few. At the same time, many older paradigms, such as secularism and institutionalization, or newer rational choice models, are not able to give the depth of analysis and understanding needed to fully comprehend such religious developments in the 21st century. More case studies and further theoretical models are needed, particularly in the following areas.

1. Australian Pentecostalism. This thesis has collected and examined data on one neo-Pentecostal group. There is a need for further data and case studies on other Australian Pentecostal groups, and consideration of the ways that different groups develop. This thesis noted the continued appeal of divine healing, tongues and other Pentecostal phenomena in the case of the COC and the way this appeal tends to decline over time. There is a need for a greater understanding of the appeal of such phenomena in modern times and consideration of what this says about the functions of religion today, as well as a greater understanding of the ways in which views about such phenomena change over time.

2. This thesis identified some organizational developments that aided COC growth. Further investigation is needed into the organizational approaches of different megachurches, including the benefits, or otherwise, of various megachurch innovations, including the role of charismatic leaders, use of Church Growth and Natural Church Development initiatives, issues of empowerment of the laity and power relationships, as well as the place of women, youth and various subgroups in the megachurches. Recent scholarly literature on organizational development (e.g. Aldrich 1999:195; Schein 2004:226), social movements (e.g. Porta and Diani 2006:160) and psycho-social studies
(e.g. Fowler 1981; Ainsworth and Bowlby 1991; Hutch 1997) provide many insights that could be further explored.

3. Social Contexts. This thesis identified the market orientation of the COC and its adaption to changes in society as contributors to its growth. There is a need for closer study of the interactions between megachurches and the wider society, and processes such as suburbanization, generational change, pluralism, and marginalization. Further research is needed as to whether contemporary religion is being commodified and secularized in ways that are changing its message, content and practices or whether these developments are contributing to religious renewal and reformation that are aiding contextualization of the message. Further research is also needed into the role played by megachurches in specific areas of Australian society, including education, politics, and social welfare.
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ABC   See under the title of each programme.

ABS   See *Australian Bureau of Statistics*.


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Ringma, Charles 1994, Catch the wind: the shape of the church to come—and our place in it, Albatross, Sutherland, NSW.


Towns, Elmer L 1972, *America's fastest growing churches: Why ten Sunday schools are growing fast*, Impact Books, Nashville, TN.


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Appendix 1: Interviewee details

Interviews were conducted with 146 people. 45 female and 101 male.

Interviewees from Brisbane COC:
Allen, Peter, interview 2002, formerly Uniting Church, joined COC in 1984.
Amey, Margaret, interview 2002, formerly Methodist/Baptist, joined COC in 1996.
Anderson, Doug and Val, interview 21/09/2003, formerly Holland Park Methodist Church, joined COC in 1970s.
Bottomly, Rick and Ruth, interview 2002, formerly Methodist then AOG, joined COC in 1980.
Campbell, Dawn, interview 22/10/2002, formerly Anglican/Methodist missionary, joined COC in 1977, helped establish Victorian COC.
Carlisle, John, interview 16/02/2003, formerly Trainee Methodist minister with Taylor, joined COC in 1980s.
Christie, Chris (nee Anderson) and Kerry, interview 2002, formerly Methodist and Uniting, joined Brisbane COC in 1980s.
Cox, Margaret, interview 30/05/2003, Methodist and Uniting Church, joined Brisbane COC in the 1970s.
Ford, Marcia, interview 25/01/2001, Methodist, joined COC in 1974, author of an early history of the COC.
Green, Eunice, interview 2003, attended Brisbane COC from its early days in mid 1970s.


Kaloutsis, Marika, interview 27/11/2000, former Greek Orthodox, joined Brisbane COC early 1980s.

Lois, Elaine, Interview 2005, former Methodist then Garden City AOG, joined Brisbane COC in 1983.

Lois, Ron, interview 2005, former Catholic, sheep farmer, truck driver, then bank worker,


Maddings, Ray, Interview 2003, after attending Ulf Ekman’s Bible College in Sweden, joined Brisbane COC in 1990s.

Morton, Dorothy, former Anglican then Canberra CRC, joined Brisbane COC in 1980.


Mulheran, Brian, interview 10/07/2010, former Catholic, joined COC in 1978, Currently principle of Citipointe Ministry College, School of Ministries and senior executive pastor of Brisbane COC.


Smith, David, former Brethren, joined Brisbane COC in 2005.

Smith, Rachael, interview 2007, Joined Brisbane COC in 2000s, was a children’s worker and missionary in Cambodia She Rescue Home.
Stanton, Alison, interview 10/05/2003, Joined Brisbane COC in 1970s from Strathpine Methodist church, Operated the Mt Tuchekoi rehabilitation farm, Former COC school teacher.

Stillianos, George, interview 28/03/2002, former Greek Evangelical Church, joined Brisbane COC in 1978, became school finance manager.

Strelau, Deborah and Erol, former Lutheran, joined Gladston COC in 1980s, moved to Brisbane COC in 1990s.


Taylor, Ann, interview 23/6/1999, former Methodist, wife of Clark Taylor, Co founder of COC.


Taylor, Clark and Anne, interview 07/03/2001, As above.

Tragenza, Kent, interview 2005, former Uniting then AOG, then COC Canberra, attended Brisbane COC Bible College in 1996.

Wakefield, David C, Correspondence 16/12/2002 International Anthropology Coordinator SIL International, PNG and Texas.


Webb, Jim, former Church of Christ, Presbyterian, charismatic, joined Brisbane COC in 1982, committed to Creation Science.


Woolley, Ron, interview 25/09/2002, former Methodist, joined Taree COC, then trained at Brisbane COC Bible College, presently Principal of Citipointe College, prep to year 12 Brisbane COC - 56 total, 26 women, 30 men,
Other Australian COC attendees interviewed

Abraham, Ross, interview 02/10/2001, formerly Aitkenvale Uniting Church in Townsville, then charismatic Uniting, joined COC in 1985, became Youth Net leader, presently senior pastor, COC Robina (Elevation Church).


Banes, Bob, interview, 2002.

Bartolo, Fred, interview 21/06/2010, former Catholic, plumbing business, joined Innisfail COC, oversight of Chile and Malta COC churches.


Blackmore, Larry and Norma, correspondence, farmer / labourer new age, joined COC in 1983, pastors of Melbourne West COC.


Campbell, Phil, interview 19/04/2001, formerly NZ Brethren, COC Pastor of Coff’s Harbour COC since 2004, Member of the state executive and national COC oversight.

Campbell, Jan, interview 20/8/2003, formerly NZ Brethren, then NZ/Australian COC pastor then Worship Centre pastor.

Campbell, Peter, interview 16/04/02, formerly NZ Brethren, then NZ/Australian COC pastor then Worship Centre pastor.


Schaeffer, Dave, interview 2002, former Methodist, joined COC in 1980, presently, State Chairman of New South Wales COC.

Dales, Kevin, interview 17/01/2002, Grain, dairy and pig farming, joined COC after he was miraculously healed of a back injury, went to Bible College in 1979 and started
Innisfail COC in 1980, He started and provided oversight o many of the COC churches in the Pacific Islands.


Earle, Peter, interview 15/08/2000, Methodist, joined COC in mid 1970s, started Bunderberg COC in 1978, principal of Brisbane COC Bible College 1990 to 2000, pastored COC Denver Colorado, served on COC international oversight and financial board of COC Australia, presently COC pastor of Springwood ‘Networx’ Church.

Everett, Dennis, former Anglican, interview 2002, joined Nambour COC in1984,


Garson, Debbie, interview 2002, former Anglican, joined Paramatta COC in 1986,


Geizer, Peter, interview 3 June, 2010, Geizer is Manager, COC Investment Services and Director, Christian Heritage College.


Eastgate, Lloyd, former Brethren,then COC Pastor, 2005, principal of COC school for 2 years.


Graham, Beth, correspondence, joined COC in 1995, now a missionary to China.

Gullo, Chas, Interview 14/03/2003, Former Catholic, founder of Nowrah COC, presently Queensland State Chairman.

Harney, David, interview 2002, former Catholic, converted and joined Innisfail COC in 1982, carpenter and joiner, director of David Harney Constructions.

Hourigan, Gary, interview 2008, Gary Hourigan, former leader of Noosa COC, COC Australia Ministry Development Coordinator and Natural Church Development (NCD) coordinator.

Hill, Graham, formerly Presbyterian, joined Brisbane COC in late 1970s, became Ministry Training Institute Coordinator for COC nationally.

Kennedy, Bernice, joined Ayr COC in 1987.
Kennish, Mick, Testimony, Queensland COC, 29/5/1996.

McDonald, David, interviews 12/05/2000, 27-06-2001, former Methodist charismatic, joined COC in 1980, Founded Taree COC and Sydney COC, became Brisbane COC leader in 1993, Presently Australian national chairman and leader of Sydney COC.

McDonald, Trish, Interview 13/12/2000, As above.


Miers, Neil, interview 16/02/2001, former Methodist, joined COC, Founder of Nambour COC, Former International COC president.

Miers, Nance, interview 23/1/2001, former Methodist, joined COC. Founder of Nambour COC.

Nickles, Gloria, interview 2001, former Methodist, joined COC.

Penncuick, Peter, correspondence, 29/05/2002, former Presbyterian, Toowoomba Engineer, joined Toowoomba COC in 1983 then Nambour COC, President of Nambour COC P&F, Bible college in 1993, then pastor of Murwillumbah COC

Penncuick, Peter, correspondence, 1/10/2002, As above.

Pilt, Peter, interview 2005, Senior Pastor, COC Nowra.

Power, Des, interview 21/09/2005, formerly AOG, then COC pastor, descendents of Kanaka cane farmers from Vanuatu.

Riddell, Ken, interview 2000, formerly Uniting Church in Brisbane, joined Bunderburg COC when it was 12 months old, became pastors, in 1980, in Maryborough, Gladston, COC, then Bunderburg, retired in 2008.

Riddell, Mark, their son is now senior pastor in Buderburg COC, joined COC with the family in 1980, Bundaberg COC is doing well with 320-380 adults and 230 youth.

Robins, Graeme and Helen, former Anglicans, joined Tamworth COC in 1992 then Darwin COC.

Ryan, Val, interview 2002, former Methodist, Fiji, joined Beenleigh COC.

Saldanha, Robert, 2000, former Catholic, former QUT student, left his work as an engineer to work as assistant pastor at Modbury COC.
Schmierer, Ashley, interview 02/10/2002, formerly Methodist/AOG, farmer at Innisfail, joined COC in 1984, became Innisfail COC pastor, Pacific Islands chairman, currently European and International COC President, based in London.

Schaeffer, Dave, State Chairman of New South Wales, Interview 2002.


Smith, Kieran, interview 20/09/2005, Cairns COC, missionary to PNG.

Thompson, John, interview 16/7/2003, former NZ Catholic trainee priest/then NZAOG, then NZCOC, then Australian COC pastor.


Tobitt, Alan and Min, interview 2002, former Anglican, Wycliff Bible Translators, joined Port Macquarie COC in 1985, was national chairman of COC mission in PNG.

Townsend, Murray, interview 06/12/2002, joined Innisfail COC in 1980s, led the Pacific Islands Bible College in the Solomon Islands.

Winnington, Craig, interview Interview 07/10/2001, NZ CLC assistant to Rob Pullar, joined Australian COC in 1984, was pastor at Orange COC

Woodwood, Geoff, interview 06/04/2003, Formerly Salvation Army, Joined Brisbane COC in late 1970s.Western Australia State Chairman.

46+16 female = 62 total

Other Methodists interviewed

Cowin, Roy, Retired Methodist/ Uniting Church Minister, conversation, 17/02/2006.


Williams, Godfrey, interview 03/08/2001, Methodist charismatic minister, Prayed for Taylor’s healing.

Waugh, Geoff, interview 23/04/2002, Uniting Church charismatic missionary and teacher.

4 in total
**Overseas COC attendees interviewed**

Inoke, Sanawaka David, interview 28/02/2003, Fijian, joined Fiji COC.
Inoke, Sanawaka David, interview 27/02/2004, As above.
Kwisaqoro, Osea, interview 14/01/03, Methodist, joined Nadi COC, Fiji,
Lauasi, Levi and Melody, National Chairman Solomon Islands since 1992, Senior Pastors of the Mt Zion COC at Auki on the island of Malaita
Roni, Mathew & Ruth, National Chairman for Papua New Guinea since 2003, Senior Pastors of Newton COC, PNG.
4 in total

**Other Pentecostal Leaders and participants interviewed**

Chandler, Trevor, interview 03/05/2001.
Coleman, Katrina, interview 11/04/2002, Baptist charismatic at nearby Holland Park Baptist
Croucher, Rowland, correspondence 12/05/2007, founder of Blackburn Baptist Megachurch in Melbourne.
Hart, Tim, interview 05/05/2006, Apostolic church, Wynnum, who lost members to COC.
Hills, Bruce, interview 05/05/2010, Former leader of nearby Garden City AOG megachurch.
Hills, Philip, interview 07/05/2010, AOG state leader in Victoria, Former leader of Richmond Temple in Victoria, Australia’s oldest large Pentecostal church.
Johnson, Bill, correspondence 12/10/2004. Waverley Christian Fellowship, 1957, Brisbane Christian Fellowship, where Taylor was a regular guest speaker.


Miller, Jim, interview 02/04/2002, Gateway Baptist elder, the nearby charismatic Baptist megachurch.

Niedeck, Andrew, interview 10/06/2005, AOG and COC missionary to PNG and the Solomon Islands.

Dennis O Hara interview 03/2/1999, Catholic charismatic,


Pricket, Ron, Interview 07/08/2001, Baptist then attending Garden City AOG, nearby megachurch.


Rigma, Charles, interview 01/09/2004, trained in the Reformed Church, founder and first director of Teen Challenge in Australia, lecturer at Regent College, Vancouver, worked with Taylor.

22 in total
Appendix 2: Interviewee occupations in 1970s and 2000 compared.

Interviewee occupations in the 1970s and 80s, n=86
Youth 11, University Student 12, farmer 15, Builder 5, Plumber 1, Bulldozer driver 1, Sales 1, house painter 2, cafe worker 1, housewife 9, stone mason 1, nurse 2, insurance assessor 1, administration 2, bank worker 5, bank manager 1, university lecturer 1, methodist minister 7, other minister 2, missionary 3, youth pastor 1, senior pastor 2,

Interviewees occupations in 2000-2010, n=94
Builder 1, house painter 2, housewife now retired 9, aged care worker 1, retiree 11, financial manager 3, church management position 3, other management position 1 construction company manager 1, engineer 3, IT and computing 3, physiotherapist 1 accountant 2, counselor 2, teacher 2, school principal 1, college principal 1, college lecturer 3, COC minister 16, Methodist minister 3, COC missionary 4, other overseas missionary 3, other minister 4, retired minister 2, senior or district pastor 12.

This table provides evidence to support the statement that the occupational profile of COC attendees has changed, leading the COC megachurch leader and executive leaders responded to these demographic changes in terms of changed preaching themes, presentation approaches and seeking to provide a more contemporary experience for attendees.

Appendix 3: Other sources used

Organizational Records
Minutes of the Queensland Annual Conference, 1959, p. 104.
Minutes of the 59th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1960, p. 89.
Minutes of the 60th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1961, p. 104.
Minutes of the 61st Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1962, p. 89.

General Conference Commission on the Ministry of the Church, Report to the 1962 Annual Conference, Included as an appendix to the Minutes of the 61st Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1962, p. 104.

Minutes of the 63rd Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1964, p. 12.


Minutes of the 74th Queensland Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Australia, Paterson, Brisbane, 1975, p. 199.

Noel Preston homily delivered at the Bluecare 50th anniversary celebratory service, August 24, 2003.


**COC Organization Resources**


*Australia for Christ*, Nov. 1986.

*Australia for Christ*, Mar 1988,


Ford, Marcia *History of COC* 1968.

Ford, Marcia *History of COC* 1969.


Ford, Marcia *History of COC* 1971.

Ford, Marcia *History of COC* 1972.


*New Way of Living*, various versions.

Nickles, Gloria *History of COC* 1967.

Purpose of the Home Church, COC Video.


Appendix 4: Clark Taylor sermons: 1975 to 2003

Clark Taylor Sermon, Jan 1975, Heartfelt Faith.

C.T. 5/12/1976 Attitudes. We need to renew our minds and gain freedom from wrong attitudes of unforgiveness, envy, greed, pride, indifference, and rebellion.


C.T. 1976 January Four ingredients for the Christian life. The Lordship of Christ, the rule of His word, the voice of his Spirit and the privilege of prayer. Rom 15:1.

C.T. 1976 January Obedience Sin brings death but obedience brings life.

C.T. 23/1/1977a.m. New Wine in New Wineskins Eph 5. The Husbands role is to love his wife, the wife’s role is to submit as unto the Lord.

C.T. 23/1/1977p.m. Being in Christ Rom 3:23-25 Know who we are in Christ. Take hold of all that is ours, redemption from kingdom of darkness, the devil and the curse.


C.T. 3/3/1977 Church history gives an understanding of today’s move and the restoration of foundational doctrines to His Church.


C.T. 1/6/1977 Successful Living Matt 5. Nothing in me can reach heaven. I have learned dependence on God.

A. Poppi 3/6/1977 Soul Winning must be motivated by love.


C.T. 1977 Word of God Living in Us. Ps 19:7, 2 Cor 4:16 The natural man hopes in human achievement, the spiritual man hopes in God. Christ has authority over Satan and demons. Demons work on man through enchantment, feelings and curiosity.

C.T. 17/4/1977 All things under his feet
C.T. 5/6/1977 Undershepherds

T.Hamilton 5/6/77 The End Time Church 2 Chron 20:1, 7-9, The word of God is the key to revival. Also prayer and praise.

C.T. 12/6/1977 How to Believe God Find the Scripture of what God has promised. Be particular. There is a waiting period and battle against doubt.

G. Gibbs 19/6/77 Prayer Prayer produces people who think like God.

Acts 12:1-5. Without ceasing, of the whole church, unto God, specific prayer.

G. Gibbs 20/6/77 Church Functions. Keep replacing yourself.

G. Gibbs 21/6/77 Counselling.


K Conner 3/7/77 Seven kingdoms in the universe.

F Damazio 4/7/77 God’s Purpose for Man. Adam and Christ compared.

K Conner 4/7/77 Principles of the Kingdom and the Church

K Conner 5/7/77 Leadership

F Damazio 5/7/77 Qualities of a Leader

K Conner 5/7/77 Methods of Bible Study Topical, Character, Place, Textual, Expositional, Book.

C.T. 1977 The Cross to the Throne Jesus died and was taken to hell for three days, illegally. God restored and raised Him. We are raised with Christ.

C.T. 6/7/77 How to pray (and have your prayers answered). Your faith level is determined by what your heart can agree will happen.

1/1978 Youth Camp.

K. Greening. 1978 God Blessing your Latter End. Micah 7:8. “It is not failing that counts, but how it ends.” “we need to learn the ability to recover and to rise again.”

K. Greening. 1978 A good foundation.

K. Greening. 1978 Our life as a well. Opening up stopped wells

K. Greening. 1978 How to change your dialect. You are doing the speaking. Use your faith and use the faith lever. Do the possible and God will do the impossible.

C.T. 1978 Lest I be a castaway. 1 Cor 9:20-27.
C.T. 1978 Treasure in Earthen Vessels. Earthen vessels will desire earthen things. I can either yield to it, or draw on the Spirit of Christ within to bring the body under.


C.T. 17/1/78 Christ instead of self. Self must be replaced by Christ in the centre.

K. Greening. 1978 The door of opportunity, but many adversities in the way. Rev 3:7-8. D.L. Moody said “If the Spirit doesn’t move me, I’m going to move the Spirit.”

C.T. 1978 Songleading. Taylor said “Link people with God,” get them “Happy in Jesus,” “Release the Spirit within” and “Get people free.”

C.T. 1978 How to Run a Campaign. How to create an atmosphere and how to make an altar call. Use psychological techniques, that’s the way that God made us.


C.T. 26/12/1978p Jerusalem or Babylon, Mt Touchekoi.

C.T. 30/12/1978, Mt Tuchekoi Christmas Convention.


C.T. 10/1/1979 The Tabernacle of Moses is a picture of the redeemed man. The Outer court - man’s body, the Holy Place- man’s soul, the Most Holy Place-man’s spirit. The items correspond to aspects of salvation.

C.T. 14/1/1979 A time of Crisis. Do we trust God or natural wisdom. Attitudes – Problems are to be solved, God will help those who hang on, Don’t quit.

C.T. 17/1/79 Tabernacle of Moses. Is fulfilled in Christ, in Church history, in the life of the believer. made according to the pattern, made with material at hand, used willing skilled workers (Ex:35:5, 22, 29)

C.T. 21/1/79 The next step. The centre had a goal to provide exciting meetings and supernatural encounters with God. Angelic visitations and a sense of holiness were expected. The centre aimed to reach 2 500 by Christmas. It aimed to plant more centres

C.T. 6/5/79  Rewards and Judgements. There are two judgements, the great white throne judgement for the unsaved and the judgement seat of Christ for the saved.

C.T. 8/7/79  Expectancy. God will give us what we look for.

28/7/79  A. Lowe. Thoughts are things. Breaking habits by building new habits.

C.T. 1979  Knowing God. Faith is knowledge based on the word.


C.T. 1979  Lessons from the palm tree.

C.T. 19/8/1979  The words of our mouth. What you say will come to pass.

C.T. 21/10/1979  How to Pray.

Clark Taylor Sermon, CT 05/04/1981.

Clark Taylor Sermon, CT 20/06/1981. 7th Birthday Sermon.

Clark Taylor Sermon, CT 26/12/1982A.

Clark Taylor Sermon, CT 23/02/1986 ‘Unless the Lord Builds the House’, Dedication Service for the Church Extension.


Clark Taylor Sermon, 22/04/2001pm.


Clark Taylor Sermon, Briz 31, TV, 1/6/2003


Appendix 5: Sixty most sold books from October 2008 to October 2009.

at the Mansfield COC bookshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Description</th>
<th>Quantity sold per annum (pa.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve Murrel, formerly from the USA, was a guest speaker at Citipointe in 2008. His is located in Manila, in the Philippines. The Purple Book is used as the discipleship book for new and continuing Christians at Brisbane COC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bibles</td>
<td>235 copies pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNB Nt Mark 50, NKJ 46, NLT 30, Award 20, Beginner's Bible HC (Bible Society) 44, NLT Nt Youth 10, NIV Pers Pink 10, NIV- Denim 7 B- NLT New Believers Bible 6, Mark John 3:16 6, B/Mark Walking With God 6, NLT Metal Connect 6.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Word For Today – A Devotional, Bob &amp; Debby Gass, United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) Atlanta, Georgia. It sells over 4 million copies per annum globally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Every Day With Jesus – A Devotional, Selwyn Hughes, CWR, Surrey, England, 1 million copies per annum globally,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Love Dare (Paper back) – A marriage guidance devotional, 103 copies pa. Links to the associated movie shown at Brisbane COC in 2009, Fireproof, By Alex and Stephen Kendrick Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, GA. Fireproof PB 6 copies pa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 copies pa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Inspiring Women, 2 Mth – Devotional,</td>
<td>46 copies pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Be the change, PB John Maxell, His books have sold 13 million copies globally</td>
<td>40 copies pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Celebration Of Discipline, Richard Foster</td>
<td>40 copies pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Christian Woman Magazine, Australia’s most sold Christian Women’s magazine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. The Shack, 40 copies pa.
13. Iggly Wig Alphabet Book, Brisbane COC member’s Children’s Phonics 26 copies pa.
14. Rightly Dividing The Word, Ken Legg, Gold Coast, Queensland, 26 copies pa.
15. Jesus Author & Finisher, Brian Mulheran, COC Brisbane executive pastor, 25 copies pa.
17. Developing The Leader Within You, John Maxwell, His books have sold 13 million copies globally, 22 copies pa.
18. God Girls, PB Amy Jorgensen, Brisbane COC Pastor, Advice for early teens, 20 copies pa.
19. Surprising Insights From The Unchurched, Thom S. Rainer, Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY, 20 copies pa.
22. Alive magazine, Australia’s most sold non denominational Christian magazine, formerly titled On Being, 16 copies pa.
23. How to lead small groups, Neal McBride, 16 copies pa.
25. Truth aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal, Larry D. Hart Professor of theology in the School of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, PB, 15 copies pa.
26. How to study the Bible for yourself, Tim LaHaye, Time magazine Nov 2004 named LaHaye one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America, 12 copies pa.
27. Strengths finder 2.0, Tom Rath, Used by Pacific Island pastors, 12 copies pa.
30. Power of a praying wife, rev. 11 copies pa.
31. The relationship principle of Jesus, 11 copies pa.
32. Excellence in leadership, 10 copies pa.
33. Fasting, pb  
34. The Other Six Days, Paul Stevens,  
35. Sons Of Encouragement,  
36. Hope - PB  
37. How to read Bible for all its worth, Fee and Stuart,  
38. How you can be led by the Spirit,  
39. Nurture  
40. On becoming babywise,  
41. You have what it takes,  
42. Encounering the OT. 2nd editi Academic Text  
43. Experiencing heart of Jesus,  
44. Honour's reward, pb  
45. Lineage of grace, pb  
46. Manifest presence,  
47. The circle trilogy,  
48. 2000 years charismatic christi  
49. Christian ethics in plain lang, Academic Text  
50. Faith of Israel, the academic text  
51. Intro to biblical interpretati Academic Text  
52. Spiritual leadership, pb  
53. The gifts & ministries of the Holy Spirit  
54. Unleash heaven's power,  
55. Battlefield of mind, Tim LaHaye  
56. Extravagant worship, pb  
57. Five love languages, the  
58. Fruit that will last pb  

Music CDs  
COC Brisbane CD ‘Devoted’  
COC Brisbane CD ‘Commission my soul’  
Hillsong CDs,
Appendix 6: Christian Outreach Centre - Statement of faith


The Centre believes in and presents the following basic truths:

(i) The Holy Scriptures - Their inspiration and infallibility.

(ii) The Godhead - comprising Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(iii) The Lord Jesus Christ - His humanity, deity, virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death for the sins of the world, resurrection for our justification, ascension to the Father’s right hand, and personal return to reign upon earth.

(iv) Salvation - By faith in and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, producing an upright and moral life.

(v) The Ordinances - Water Baptism, for all believers by immersion, the Lord’s Supper, celebrated regularly in remembrance of Christ.

(vi) Divine Healing - Secured for every believer through the atonement of Christ; and deliverance from all bondage to the power of Satan.

(vii) The Baptism in the Holy Spirit - With speaking in other tongues.

(viii) The Gifts of the Holy Spirit - For the equipment of ministry and the edification of the Church; the fruit of the Holy Spirit as the expression of Christian character in believers.

(ix) The Church Universal - Comprising all born again believers of all nations and denominations under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(x) Bible Prophecy - Its fulfillment in world events, heralding the climax of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Appendix 7: MU interview agreement letter 2000 to 2004

Name of Project: History of Charismatic Movements during the late twentieth Century
   (including the Christian Outreach Centre movement)

You are invited to participate in a study of the history of Charismatic and Pentecostal Christian
groups during the second half of the twentieth century. This study is being conducted to meet the
requirements for the MA / Ph D in Modern History conducted through Macquarie University
under the supervision of Jill Roe (Head of Department) (02) 9850 8866 and Mark Hutchinson
(Lecturer) (02) 96459000. A shorter, edited version of the study may be used in a publication on
the history of charismatic movements in Australia.

The study is being conducted by Sam Hey, a student at Macquarie University. Contact by phone
at the COC Church office – 3343 8888, or email zzshey@hotmail.com If you decide to
participate, you will be asked to describe your recollections of the history of charismatic groups
that you have been associated with. An audio or video tape recording of the interview may be
used to assist the writing process. If you would like a copy of the interview notes, or published
material, these are available by contacting the interviewer by phone on 3343 8888.

Please indicate if you have restrictions that you wish to place on information that is collected.
Do you wish references to yourself as the interviewee to be deleted? YES/NO
Do you require the record of the interview be destroyed after five years? YES/NO
Can material from the interview be used by other students of charismatic history? YES/NO
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at
any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, ________________________________ have read and understand the information above
and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in
this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time
without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant’s Name (block letters)
Participant’s Signature       Date:
Investigator’s Name (block letters)
Investigator’s Signature       Date:
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone 9850 7854; email rachael.krinks@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S / PARTICIPANT'S COPY)

**Cover Letter**  
History of Charismatic Movements during the late twentieth Century  
(including the Christian Outreach Centre movement)

I am writing to thank you for your participation in the study of the history of Charismatic and Pentecostal Christian groups during the second half of the twentieth century. Your assistance will help to meet the requirements for the MA / Ph D in Modern History conducted through Macquarie University. A shorter, edited version of the study may be used in a publication on the history of charismatic movements in Australia.

I have included copies of information collected and transcripts of interviews that you have contributed to. Please read these carefully. I am only too happy to correct any points of clarification or recommended changes or inaccuracies that you may note as this will improve the history that is being prepared. I may be contacted by phone at the COC Church office – 3343 8888, or email zzshey@hotmail.com, or by writing to Sam Hey at Citipointe International Institute of Ministries, P O Box 2111 Mansfield, Qld, 4122.

Your consent is required before information you have provided can be used in this study. Please sign and return the attached consent form, together with details of any suggested changes. You are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

Thank you for your assistance,
Sam Hey.
Appendix 8: GU ethics committee approved interview agreement

(Interview agreement letter 2005 – 2010)

Name of Project: History of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements during the late twentieth Century (including the Christian Outreach Centre)  Protocol Number AMC/07/05/HREC The study is being conducted by Sam Hey, a Ph D student investigator at Griffith University. Sam Hey may be contacted by phone at the COC Church office 07 3343 8888, or email shey@citipointe.com.au

You are invited to participate in a study of the history and development of Charismatic and Pentecostal Christian groups during the second half of the twentieth century. The study will focus particularly on the history of the Christian Outreach Centre, and similar groups.

This study is being conducted to meet the requirements for the Ph D in the department of Arts Media and Culture, Griffith University under the supervision of Dr Malcolm Alexander, lecturer and senior investigator, Griffith University, Phone (07) 373 57169. A shorter, edited version of the study may be used in a publication on the history of charismatic movements in Australia.

In this study, you will be asked to describe your recollections of the history of charismatic groups that you have been associated with. Written notes and an audio or video tape recording of the interview will be made and information for inclusion in the thesis will be taken from it. These recordings will enable clarification and verification statements relating to the history and development of Pentecostalism.

Please write on this sheet any details of restrictions to be placed on these recordings. These interviews will provide a detailed history of the movements, and a greater understanding of their development, that will aid members and researchers in better understanding these developments.

A large sample of people involved in charismatic groups is being interviewed. Feedback to participants will be provided through open seminars presented by the student researcher at the Citipointe Ministry College. A summary of research findings will also be made available. A history often requires names of its participants to be mentioned. Care will be taken to avoid
potentially embarrassment in the records. Please advise of any information that you want left out
of the record.

Only the student researcher will have access to the original copies of the records, unless you have
advised otherwise. The recordings will be securely stored at the student researcher’s COC work
office and at his home office. If you would like a copy of the interview notes, or published
material, these are available by contacting the interviewer by phone on 3343 8888.

**Typical questions that you may be asked include** –
When did you first attend a Pentecostal Church?
What is your church background, and that of your parents and friends?
Describe your conversion, and your baptism in the Holy Spirit.
What led you to become interested in a Pentecostal group?
Describe your involvement in Pentecostal groups.
To what do you attribute the growth of Pentecostal churches?
What changes have you observed in the Pentecostal church over time?

**Please indicate if you have restrictions that you wish to place on information that is
collected.**
Do you wish references to yourself as the interviewee to be deleted? YES/NO
Do you require the record of the interview to be destroyed after a period of five years after
completing the study? YES/NO
Can material from the interview be used by other students and researchers of charismatic history? YES/NO

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at
any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

Agreement:
I, __________________________________________ have read and understand the information above
and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in
this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time
without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant’s Name: __________________________________________(block letters)
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Griffith University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact an independent contact person, the Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, Phone 07 3875 5585; or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S / PARTICIPANT'S COPY)
Appendix 9: The oral history methodology and interviewee selection

The interviews were semi structured and informal, letting the interviewee tell their story of the COC and their involvement in the COC. The gathered history of the COC was from the interviewee’s perspective and recollections. Clarification questions were also asked to obtain more detail about specific areas of interest to the thesis.

Participants were initially chosen who were likely to have the greatest knowledge of the history of the COC in its earliest years. Interviewees were selected who were leaders who had a significant role in the establishment of the COC and its subsidiary activities including schools, tertiary college, social welfare activities, political lobbying, and spread into new locations interstate and overseas. Other participants were selected who had a significant recollection of the events in the group’s history. Most interviews were conducted in 2000 to 2003 with attendees who had been involved in COC and related movements 20 to 30 years previously. Smaller samples of more recent participants were then selected from the more recent leaders and attendees.

The names of significant COC leaders and members are obtained from the COC literature, including the monthly magazine. This is available to the public and it includes contact details. All COC church contact details are also listed publicly in the white pages telephone directory and COC leaders are readily contactable. Many people were known to me as a researcher of and participant in the COC and through personal contact in my role as a pastor in the COC movement. Others contacts were also suggested by those who were interviewed. Participants volunteered their involvement, as they believed that had significant recollections of the history of the COC and other charismatic movement groups. Interviews were conducted on church premises whenever possible. Participants were chosen who are most likely to have a significant role in the development of the COC, or a significant recollection of the events in the group’s history.
Security of the data. Records are kept on a computer that is password protected and used only by the author of this study. Other records are kept in a secured office on the COC church premises and records are not made available to others, except where written permission from participants has been sought and given.
Appendix 10: Oral History Association of Australia guidelines

The interviews followed the Guidelines of Ethical Practice of the Oral History Association of Australia [http://www.ohaa.net.au/guidelines.htm](http://www.ohaa.net.au/guidelines.htm). These included:

The interviewer's responsibilities are to protect the rights of interviewees by:

- explaining: - the purpose of each interview, how it will be organized and recorded, whether it will be placed in a repository, and what interviewees will receive after the interview, such as a copy of the tape, transcript or planned publication; oral history copyright, the implications of assigning copyright to another party, and the rights of interviewees to have a say in the use of their material by asking for anonymity and/or placing restrictions on use of the interview during their lifetime
- possible future use of interviews by all parties involved such as the interviewer, interviewee, and a repository giving each interviewee an agreement to sign which clearly states whether the interviewee will retain copyright or assign it to another party and under what conditions assignment of copyright is granted; any change in use not covered in the original agreement would need to be renegotiated
- conducting interviews with objectivity, honesty and integrity
- being aware of defamation laws and the implications, for all parties concerned, of recording potentially defamatory material
- treating every interview as a confidential conversation until an interviewee gives the right to share information through an agreement
- ensuring that interviewees are given the opportunity to review, correct and/or withdraw material
- ensuring that interviews are preserved for future researchers by, if possible, placing them in a repository under conditions agreeable to the interviewee.
- the interviewer should ask that funding bodies or employers provide a written contract or agree to a written proposal that clearly states the purpose and intended use of interviews and what copyright provisions apply
• accept the confidential status of interviews until the completion of a signed agreement allows otherwise
• allow the interviewer to act professionally and to abide by the guidelines of ethical practice of the Oral History Association of Australia
• place interviews in a repository where they will be available for research, subject to any conditions placed by the parties involved
Appendix 11: Interview questions

The following interview questions were used. Questions were used to the recall and record the history of the COC and participants interactions with it. Further interviews with non COC attendees were also included. Interviews with other Pentecostal leaders and participants included further questions about the wider contexts of Pentecostalism and Australian churches in general, and the background of attendees and reasons for their attendance. The interview acceptance letter also contained sample questions that were asked in this thesis.

Background information
What is your age range, vocation, education (when), suburb you live in, and gender?
What type of accommodation do you live in, owned home, rented
Who do you live with?
What language do you speak at home? How widely have you travelled?
What is your current employment? What is your current income range?
Are you a leader in COC?
When did you first attend the COC or Pentecostal Church?
What is your church background before that, and that of your parents and friends?
Would you describe conversion as instant change or as a gradual change in a person’s life and spirituality? Explain.
Describe your conversion further?
Describe your baptism in the Holy Spirit.
What do you believe happens when you are baptised in the Holy Spirit? What is this baptism for?
What are your views on divine healing and reliance on doctors and medical professionals?
What are your views on faith visualisation and confession? How has this changed over time?
What are your views on demons and Satan as a major source of evil in the world?
What are the main sources of evil in the world?
Is this world getting better, worse or roughly the same? Explain.
What is your measure of success in life? How does a person become successful?
What books and Christian literature and media do you mainly read, view and listen to?
What social welfare and efforts to help others do you view as most important?
What led you to become interested in the COC or a Pentecostal group?
What attracted you to the COC or Pentecostal church?
What difficulties or limitations do you find with COC practices, methods and approaches?
Describe your involvement in the COC, Pentecostal or church groups.
To what do you attribute the growth of the COC, Pentecostal or other churches?
What changes have you observed in the COC, Pentecostal or other churches over time?
What views do you have on the organisational practices of the COC?
What changes have you noticed in the COC over time?
Describe the leadership style of Taylor and the COC leaders. How has the leadership style of the COC leaders changed over the years?
What are your views on diversification in the COC?
Do you view the COC as global, local or both? Explain.
Which characteristics of COC are Australian, and which characteristics are overseas or North American?
For interstate and overseas participants: How does the COC resolve the tension between helping the diverse group of churches and attendees while maintaining a central unity?
What are your views on Natural Church Development?
What views do you have on COC beliefs?
What are COC views and your views on creationism, i.e. when the earth, living things and people were made?
What are COC views and your views on evolution?
What are COC views and your views on millennialism, i.e. when will Jesus return?
Appendix 12: Income levels of the two suburbs adjacent to the Brisbane COC church in 2006

Analysis of individual income levels in Carindale in 2006 compared to South East Queensland shows that there was a larger proportion of persons earning a high income (those earning $1,000 per week or more) but a smaller proportion of low income persons (those earning less than $400 per week).

Overall, 27.3% of the population earned a high income, and 36.8% earned a low income, compared with 17.3% and 39.0% respectively for South East Queensland.

Analysis of individual income levels in Mansfield in 2006 compared to South East Queensland shows that there was a larger proportion of persons earning a high income (those earning $1,000 per week or more) but a similar proportion of low income persons (those earning less than $400 per week).

Overall, 20.7% of the population earned a high income, and 39.4% earned a low income, compared with 17.3% and 39.0% respectively for South East Queensland.
Weekly individual income, Mansfield and South East Queensland, 2006 (Enumerated data)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)
