**◉C INTERNATIONAL**

# A Nationwide Denominational Survey

*One of a series of practical missions research case studies*

**Key Words:**   institutional research, denominational growth, surveys, graphs.

**Abstract:**   The purpose of this survey was to learn about denominational church growth in the Philippines. Denominations were sent a form showing the denomination's statistics for previous years so that they could confirm the figures for previous years. Blanks for the most recent years were left for them to fill in. A follow-up letter was sent and many follow-up calls and sometimes personal interviews were required to obtain information from the denominations. The results were reported in a national conference and in a national church growth journal. Tables and graphs were used to communicate major trends.

**Background:** Surveys of various denominations in the Philippines had been done before by Jim Montgomery, Paul Neumann and Jeanie Curryer. Forms from previous surveys were in the file under the respective denominations. It had been several years since the last survey was done and a national conference was coming up. It was appropriate to do another survey to discover any changes in growth rates of the various denominations and affiliations.

**Methodology:** Getting the information from the denomination offices was not easy. There are more than two hundred denominations in the Philippines. Some are concentrated in one region and some in another. Communication is difficult there. The mail is unreliable. Phone service is poor. There was not enough time for personal interviews with representatives from each denomination. For these reasons a mail survey, supplemented by phone calls and personal interviews was chosen to obtain information from as many denominations as possible.

The survey instrument (Figure 1) asked a representative of the denomination to verify statistics from past years and to provide the denominations most recent figures. The statistics requested were church membership, Sunday School membership, financial giving by the membership, number of churches, number of preaching points, etc.

The accuracy and validity of the figures varied greatly. Some denominations have only the faintest notion of how many churches or members are associated with their denomination. Others keep meticulous records and are faithful to purge old names and transfers from their roles. Never-the-less, the figures which were reported by the denominations were used in the report without any adjustment. The figures were put into a computer spreadsheet program for easy aggregation and calculation of sums, rations and growth rates. (Tables 1 and 2)

In a study of this size it is appropriate to come up with an estimate of the total number of churches and the percent Protestant for the nation. After all, this was a national survey. Certainly, people want to know the total number of churches and the percent Christian for the whole country.

In the Philippines people sometimes divide the population into Muslims, Catholics and Christians! By Christians they usually mean the *born-againers*, the new, fast-growing movement of evangelical and pentecostal churches. The older mainline Protestants were not thought of in the same way as the born-again Christians. They were something else.

But even after you have decided what you're looking for, whether it is percent Christians, percent Protestant, percent Evangelical, or percent really and truly born-again, washed in the blood, filled with the Spirit Christians, a good estimate for this percentage is elusive. The Philippine Census of 1970 has 3.1 for the percent Protestant (they didn't ask about religion on the 1980 census), Patrick Johnstone shows 10.7 % Protestant in 1986.

Given that we had membership information from all the major denominational groups in country and for many of the smaller ones, how could we estimate the percent Protestant? And how could we make an estimate for the total number of churches? We knew the number of churches for all the denominations which

returned a questionnaire but there were many other denominations and many other churches which were not really a part of any denomination. How could we estimate their number?

In a thorough geographic survey of one of the provinces we found that there were many independent churches which would not have shown up in any of the denominational reports. We found that about one-third of the churches fit into this category. We made an assumption that the nationwide ratio of churches not on any denominational list to churches on a denominational list was the same that we found in that province, about 1 to 2. Using this ratio we estimated that since we know of 12,478 churches from denominational lists, and that that was only two-thirds of all churches, then there were about 18,700 churches in the whole country. This implies the existence of about 6,200 which were not included on any of the 25 denominations we had reports on.

Next, to get the percent Protestant, we had to do some more educated guesswork. It is clearly inaccurate to derive percent Protestant simply by dividing church membership into total population. The membership figures represent only part of the total worshipping community. They represent only part of the group of people who would say that they were Christians, (i.e. Protestants). So how could we estimate the total Protestant community based on membership?

We learned that Jim Montgomery used a 2.5 multiplicative factor to relate membership to Christian community in other contexts and since we had no better information at the time, that is what we used. So percent Protestant was given by:

$$\frac{\text{Total Membership} \times 2.5}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100\% = \% \text{ Protestant}$$

We would like to do some further study to try and estimate this multiplicative factor better. We believe that it might be different depending on whether the area is rural or urban or on the group/ individual orientation of the culture. (And growth rate of population, i.e. number of kids/family)

We also had to allow for the membership of the 6,150 other churches which we assumed were out there. To figure the total Protestant church membership we did the following:

1) 1,184,739 members were found in the 12,478 churches.
2) This implies an average membership of 95 people per church.
3) This implies another 592,883 members in the 6,200 churches.
4) Total membership is 1,184,739 + 592,883 = 1,777,262.
5) Total country population in 1987 was 58,721,000.
6) (1,777,262 x 2.5) / 58,721,000 x 100% = 7.6% Protestant.

This figure is a rough estimate and in my opinion it overestimated the actual number for these reasons. I believe that there is significant double counting in the membership in line 1 above. Several denominations said that they never purged their roles. Consequently, people who left those churches for other churches would have been counted twice. Secondly, I believe that the average number of members per church would be smaller for those churches which were not included

on denominational lists. Those churches tend to be younger churches and would often have smaller membership.

Calculating growth rates can be tricky. It is critical to be sure of the dates of the numbers. If you are using figures for membership or churches at the end of the year, use end of year figures for all your calculations. Make sure that the date you are using is the correct date for the figure. It was two days before my presentation, after I had made all my graphs, when I realized that the church and membership figures for 1988 were really for the end of 1987. Denominations published the figures in 1988 from the reports they had received from the churches at the beginning of 1988 for the end of 1987! 1987 was the appropriate year for the figures I was presenting.

The report was to be given at a conference where pastors from all denominations would be represented. Presenting data on the 25 denominations from the platform in one hour was not going to be easy. To speed the process and to highlight broad trends, the 25 groups were aggregated into four large *affiliations* to simplify the presentation. The groups were divided on the lines of theological tradition: liturgical, Baptist, evangelical (non-pentecostal) and evangelical (pentecostal). Theologically, Baptists could have fit in with the non-pentecostal, evangelical group, but they were such a large group I assembled them by themselves.

Other methods of dividing the denominations are possible. One is to divide the groups by the historical development of Protestantism in the Philippines. There were two distinct councils of denominations which were well known to the pastors. (The National Council of Churches of the Philippines - NCPP, and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches - PCEC). Another possible way to divide them is to cluster them by growth rates. Group one having high growth rates, group three low growth rates, and group two with medium growth rates.

A table was handed out which reported on all the denominations for which we had current information. Charts and graphs were prepared for the four groups and for some of the larger denominations.

Bar charts are used to show the relative sizes of the groups. (Figure 2)  Line graphs are usually used to show growth in terms of absolute numbers of churches or members. (Figures 3 and 4)  I wanted to highlight the changes in growth rates and used bar charts to do that. Bar charts were used to show both church and membership AAGR's for different periods and for different denominations and affiliations. (Figures 5 and 6)  It was important to choose the breakpoints for the various periods carefully to show the trends present in the data.

Analysis:    (Some analytical comments are made on the pages with the graphs.)

Evaluation:    The extra work involved in the phone calls and personal interviews to get statistics from as many denominations pays off. The more information you can have, the more confident you will be in the results because your data will be more comprehensive.

Since I wanted to report an estimate of the percent Protestant and I had no first hand knowledge of the membership to community ratio I had to rely on anecdotal

evidence (the 2.5 factor from Jim Montgomery). We still don't have an estimate for the membership to community ratio. This is an area for valuable future study.

After doing this denominational survey we found that the 1 to 2 ratio for unlisted churches to listed churches was a little high. Rizal, the province we surveyed and had based the estimate on, has a higher representation of unlisted churches. This is perhaps due to its proximity to Metro Manila, the scene of lots of church planting by new, and independent groups.

Aggregating many denominations into a few groups was a big help in the overall presentation, however it can hide what is happening in the individual denominations. Careful selection of the members of the groups should take this into account.

Even though this report dealt with membership figures, I prefer to work with attendance rather than membership. I believe that they come closer to measuring the health of a church or denomination. In the past, denominations tended to record membership figures, but more and more are beginning to track both. Comparing membership figures, attendance figures and growth rates across denomination would be an interesting study.

It can be seen from the numbers in the spreadsheet (they are actual numbers though the denominational names have been disguised) that many groups keep very poor records. The nice large round numbers obviously are estimates. There is little you can do, but to accept the estimates of the denomination. But this does indicate the need for motivation and training in good record-keeping for denominational staffs and leadership.

I believe that the percent Protestant is overestimated by the method we used. This is due primarily to inflated membership figures from the denominations. In my experience, denominations frequently do not keep accurate records. This causes dead people to be counted and causes members who have left for another church to be counted twice.

A good way to get to know denominational leaders is to take the information they gave you and work up some graphs showing their church and membership growth over the last decade or so. Then help them think through the factors which caused swift growth, declines or stagnant periods.

I offered each denomination a graph of their growth as a reward for responding to my initial mail request for information.

**Other ideas:** DAWN Ministries specializes in this kind of research. Roy Wingerd has developed a DAWN Research Manuel which would be helpful here.

Keeping track of individual churches is quite different than tracking the statistics for a denomination. Occasionally a denomination would send a directory of its churches along with the other statistics. Philippine Crusades entered these individual churches into a database. Keeping such a database would be helpful if you are anticipating a National Church Survey to canvass every church of every province in the country.

Further research is indicated for comparing membership to attendance across denomination. Further research is also indicated to ascertain the relationship between membership and Christian community.

A spreadsheet with summation and AAGR formulas already included is available from the OC Research Department.

In the current study, no adjustment was made to account for the different ways denominations count children. Some adjustment could be made to account for variations in the way denominations count children. Using LOTUS spreadsheet functions the formula is (@EXP (@LN (End No./Beg.No.) / years )-1) x 100. To make sure your formula is right, test the following: Going from 500 churches to 700 churches in 6 years implies an AAGR of 5.7 %.

**Exhibits:** Information request form (Figure 1), summary tables (Tables 1 and 2) and graphs (Figures 2 to 6).

Figure 1

## DAWN 2000
### Denominational Survey
Please: 1) Check the figures below for accuracy.
2) Insert figures for the more recent years stats.

Name:_____

Address:_____

CEO:_____ Year founded:_____

| Year | Members | Churches | Pastors | Income |
|------|---------|----------|---------|--------|
| 1975.0 | | | | |
| 1976.0 | | | | |
| 1977.0 | | | | |
| 1978.0 | | | | |
| 1979.0 | | | | |
| 1980.0 | | | | |
| 1981.0 | | | | |
| 1982.0 | | | | |
| 1983.0 | | | | |
| 1984.0 | | | | |
| 1985.0 | | | | |
| 1986.0 | | | | |
| 1987.0 | | | | |

Are children included in your membership figures?
Yes___ No___
If no, at what age can people become members of your membership denomination?___

Table 1
## Membership Growth Summary Table

| Denomination | NUMBER OF MEMBERS | | | | AAGR* FOR PERIOD | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1973 | 1978 | 1983 | 1987 | 73-78 | 78-83 | 83-87 |
| 1 | 155,000 | 175,000 | 300,000 | 300,000 | 2.5 | 11.4 | 0 |
| 2 | 64,923 | 124,368 | 160,881 | 175,000 | 13.9 | 5.3 | 2.1 |
| 3 | 5,476 | 80,780 | 92,124 | 92,431 | 8.1 | 2.7 | 0.1 |
| 4 | 7,613 | 26,983 | 3,200 | 44,964 | 8.9 | 3.5 | 8.9 |
| 5 | 6,000 | 11,190 | 15,000 | 20,500 | 13.3 | 6.0 | 8.1 |
| 6 | 600 | 1,129 | 2,600 | 2,800 | 13.5 | 18.2 | 1.9 |
| **Total Liturgical** | **298,900** | **419,450** | **602,605** | **635,695** | **7.0** | **7.5** | **1.3** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 9,169 | 33,879 | 76,546 | 52,057 | 12.1 | 17.7 | -9.2 |
| 8 | 34,000 | 47,000 | 62,000 | 72,845 | 6.7 | 5.7 | 4.1 |
| 9 | 10,000 | 15,000 | 26,000 | 39,750 | 8.4 | 11.6 | 11.2 |
| 10 | 2,215 | 5,644 | 14,408 | 29,641 | 20.6 | 20.6 | 19.8 |
| 11 | 1,400 | 2,670 | 5,757 | 8,192 | 13.8 | 16.6 | 9.2 |
| 12 | 150 | 980 | 4,404 | 15,140 | 45.6 | 35.1 | 36.2 |
| 13 | 2,170 | 2,850 | 3,761 | 4,545 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 4.8 |
| **Total Baptist** | **69,104** | **108,023** | **192,876** | **222,170** | **9.3** | **12.3** | **3.6** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 14 | 25,654 | 51,629 | 80,230 | 130,000 | 15.0 | 9.2 | 12.8 |
| 15 | 811 | 6,058 | 10,000 | 17,136 | 49.5 | 10.5 | 14.4 |
| 16 | 3,653 | 5,390 | 8,736 | 13,063 | 8.1 | 10.1 | 10.6 |
| 17 | 4,002 | 5,220 | 6,525 | 8,170 | 5.5 | 4.6 | 5.8 |
| 18 | 1,797 | 4,097 | 5,498 | 7,400 | 17.9 | 6.1 | 7.7 |
| 19 | 1,560 | 5,168 | 5,005 | 7,968 | 27.1 | -0.6 | 12.3 |
| 20 | 2,219 | 2,232 | 3,234 | 4,665 | 0.1 | 7.7 | 9.6 |
| **Total Evangelical** | **39,696** | **79,794** | **119,228** | **188,402** | **15** | **8.4** | **12.1** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 35,000 | 36,232 | 40,000 | 67,056 | 0.7 | 2.0 | 13.8 |
| 22 | 17,878 | 26,951 | 28,329 | 34,795 | 8.6 | 1.0 | 5.3 |
| 23 | 3,321 | 4,800 | 8,170 | 12,800 | 7.6 | 11.2 | 11.9 |
| 24 | 3,356 | 4,910 | 7,200 | 21,636 | 7.9 | 8.0 | 31.7 |
| 25 | 3,300 | 2,399 | 2,096 | 2,185 | 6.2 | -2.7 | 1.0 |
| **Total Pentecostal** | **62,855** | **75,292** | **85,795** | **138,472** | **3.7** | **2.6** | **12.7** |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Total All** | **470,555** | **682,559** | **1,000,504** | **1,184,739** | **7.7** | **7.9** | **4.3** |

Estimate of members in other denominations: 583,498
Estimate of total membership in country:     1,768,237
(1,768,237 x 2.5) /58,721,000 x 100% = about 7.5% of the total population.

*Average Annual Growth Rate

Table 2
Church Growth Summary Table

| Denomination | Number of Churches | | | | AAGR* For Period | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1973 | 1978 | 1983 | 1987 | 73-78 | 78-83 | 83-87 |
| 1 | 1200.0 | 1,600 | 2,000 | 2,164 | 5.9 | 4.6 | 2.0 |
| 2 | 473.0 | 667 | 960 | 1,100 | 7.1 | 7.6 | 3.5 |
| 3 | 156.0 | 223 | 235 | 418 | 7.4 | 1.1 | 15.5 |
| 4 | 79.0 | 126 | 150 | 295 | 9.8 | 3.5 | 18.4 |
| 5 | 0.0 | 3 | 10 | 17 | -na- | 27.2 | 14.2 |
| 6 | 67.0 | 81 | 140 | 178 | 3.9 | 11.6 | 6.2 |
| **Total Liturgical** | **1,975** | **2,700** | **3,495** | **4,172** | **6.5** | **5.3** | **4.5** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 212 | 522 | 940 | 1,239 | 19.7 | 12.0 | 7.1 |
| 8 | 310 | 442 | 565 | 702 | 7.4 | 5.0 | 5.6 |
| 9 | 230 | 350 | 500 | 750 | 8.8 | 7.4 | 10.7 |
| 10 | 36 | 81 | 163 | 266 | 17.6 | 15.0 | 13.0 |
| 11 | 32 | 46 | 97 | 133 | 7.5 | 16.1 | 8.2 |
| 12 | 3 | 50 | 72 | 304 | 75.5 | 7.6 | 43.3 |
| 13 | 49 | 56 | 59 | 76 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 6.5 |
| **Total Baptists** | **872** | **1,547** | **2,396** | **3,470** | **12.1** | **9.1** | **9.7** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 14 | 456 | 822 | 1,173 | 1,505 | 12.5 | 7.4 | 6.4 |
| 15 | 18 | 108 | 170 | 257 | 43.1 | 9.5 | 10.9 |
| 16 | 117 | 136 | 191 | 226 | 3.1 | 7.0 | 4.3 |
| 17 | 46 | 60 | 75 | 80 | 5.5 | 4.6 | 1.6 |
| 18 | 26 | 37 | 54 | 83 | 7.3 | 7.9 | 11.3 |
| 19 | 41 | 86 | 105 | 157 | 16 | 4.1 | 0.6 |
| 20 | 31 | 28 | 58 | 52 | -2 | 15.7 | -2.7 |
| **Total Evangelicals** | **735** | **1,277** | **1,826** | **2,360** | **11.7** | **7.4** | **6.6** |
| | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 542 | 567 | 770 | 1,016 | 0.9 | 6.3 | 7.2 |
| 22 | 254 | 419 | 532 | 770 | 10.5 | 4.9 | 9.7 |
| 23 | 81 | 117 | 220 | 291 | 7.6 | 13.5 | 7.2 |
| 24 | 37 | 80 | 104 | 290 | 16.7 | 5.4 | 29.2 |
| 25 | 87 | 114 | 192 | 109 | 5.6 | 11.0 | -13.2 |
| **Total Pentecostals** | **1,001** | **1,297** | **1,818** | **2,476** | **5.3** | **7.0** | **8.0** |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Total of all groups** | **4,583** | **6,821** | **9,535** | **12,478** | **8.3** | **6.9** | **7.0** |

Estimate of other churches: 6,150
Estimate of total churches in country: 18,628

*Average Annual Growth Rate

Figure 2

**Liturgicals Claim 50% of all Members, 33% of Churches**
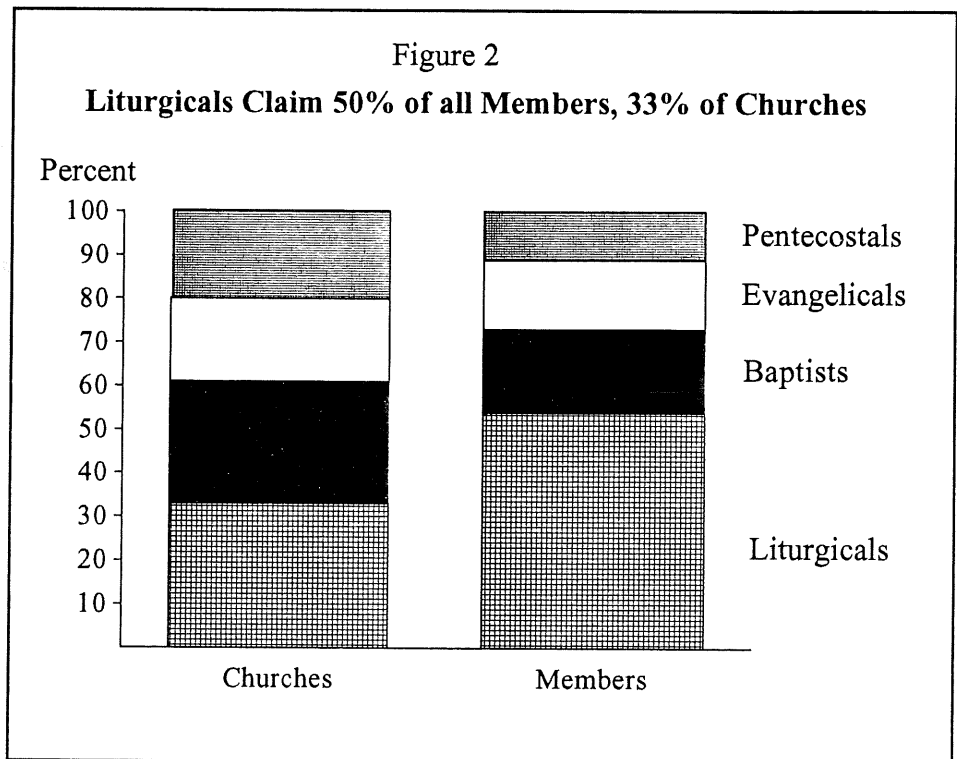
These bar charts show the relative size of the four Protestant traditions in the Philippine Church. The Liturgical group is the oldest group and the largest with 33% of the churches and 54% fo the members. The Baptist groups represent about 28% of the churches and 19% of the members. The Pentecostal group is the newest movement and it has quickly become a major player in church growth in the Philippines. It has been around for less than half the time of the liturgical groups but has already planted about one-fifth of all the Protestant churches which exist. It represents about 12% of the membership.

Looking at these two sets of statistics together we can see that the Liturgical group has the largest membership per church. From the tables we can divide 636,000 members by 4,172 churches and get about 152 members per church for the Liturgical group. The Pentecostal has the smallest with 56 members per church. These figures are probably misleading for several reasons. 1) the Liturgical group, being older, has had longer to collect names and they probably do not purge names of the deceased or those who transfer out consistently. This results in inflated membership figures. 2) The Pentecostal groups don't stress membership in their church and so may have a community of believers significantly bigger than what their membership figures indicate.

Figure 3
All Traditions have experienced Growth
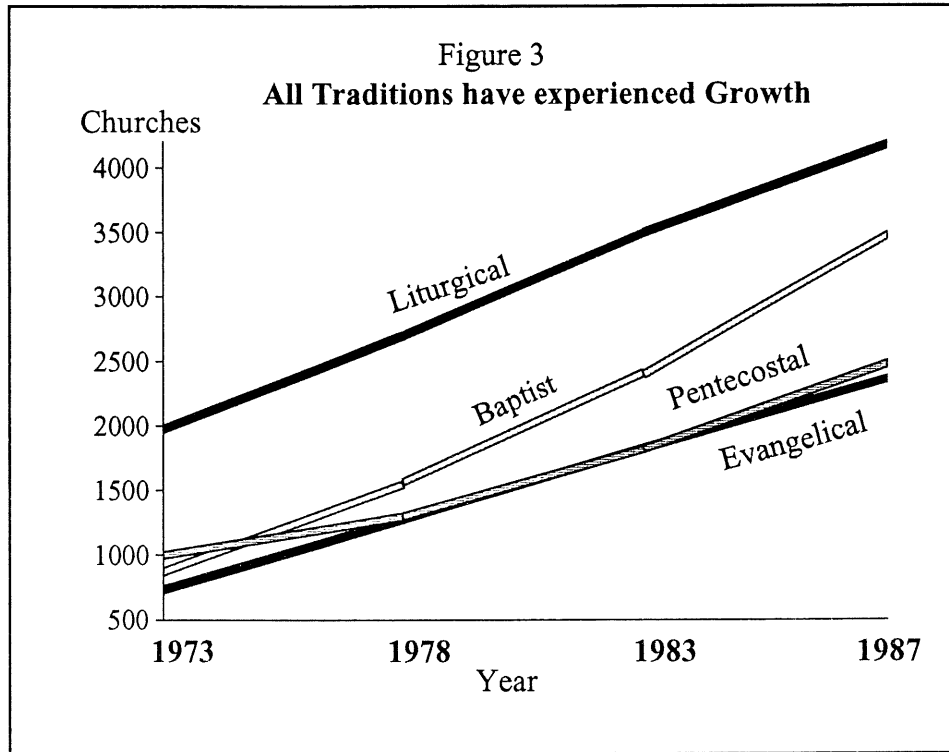
From Figure 3 it is plain that all four Protestant groups have experienced an increase in the number of churches for the four time points surveyed. The Liturgical group's growth rate has dropped during the last period. The Baptist group has seen an increase in growth rate during the last period. Plotting number of churches on logarithmic graph paper shows changes in growth rate even more clearly. (see graph on bottom of the next page)

From the above graph it is clear that the Baptist group is closing in on the Liturgical group in number of churches.

## Figure 4
## Membership Growth Slows for
## Liturgicals and Baptists
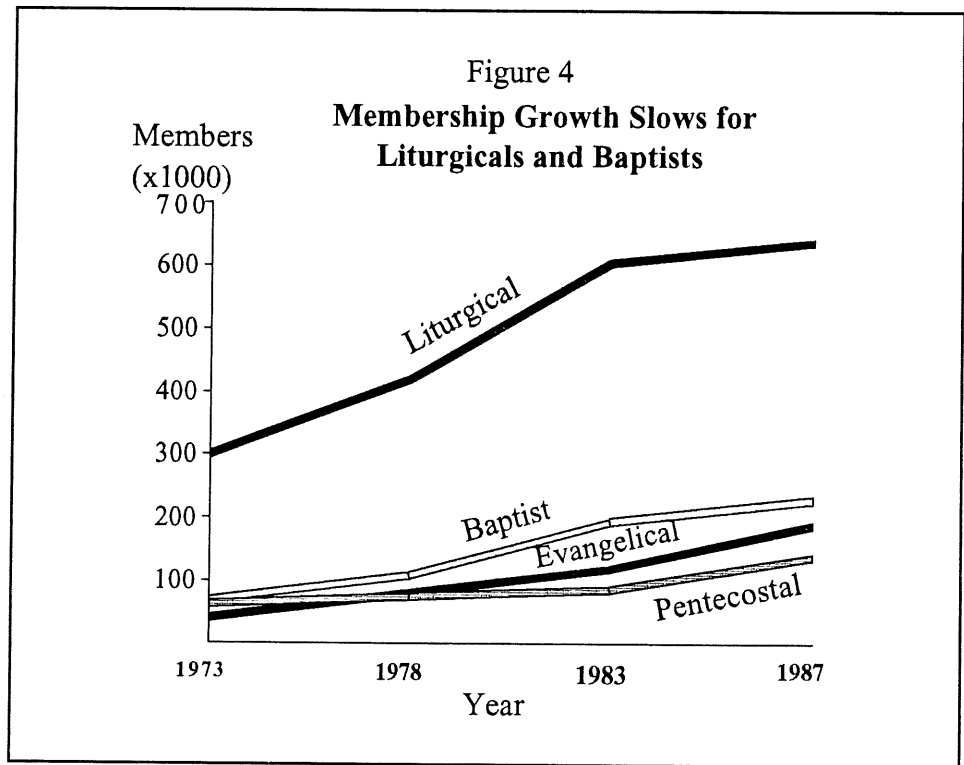
Members
(x1000)

Figure 4 is the same type of graph with membership totals. Comparing figures 3 and 4 shows that the number of churches and membership may not grow evenly. Again from Table 1 denomination 1 is seen to dominate what is happening in the Liturgical group. They report no membership growth during 1983 to 1987. In fact, they probably have seen significant defection of their membership to other groups. In addition, this denomination has not purged its roles in a very long time, perhaps never! Consequently they have probably seriously overestimated the actual number of bonafide members.

The use of logarithmic tables (below right) makes changes in growth rates more apparent. A line that plots straight on a log scale indicates a constant AAGR. An upward-turning line indicates increasing growth rate, a down-turning line indicates a decreasing growth rate.

### Membership Growth
#### Logrithmic Scale

Membership (x1000)

Liturgical    Baptist    Evangelical    Pentecostal

Figure 5
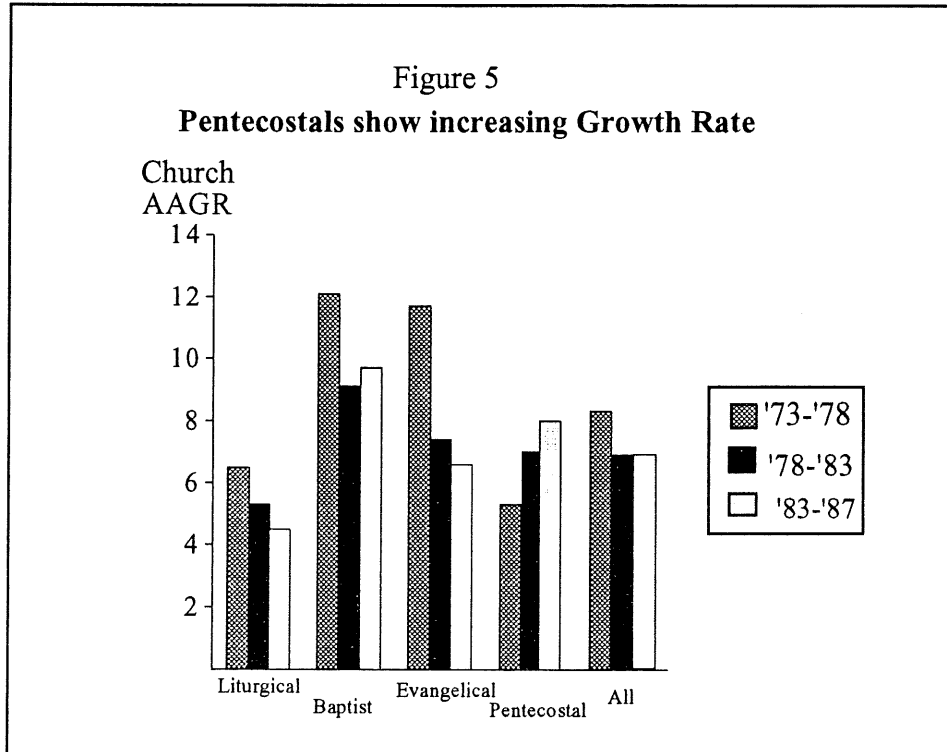**Pentecostals show increasing Growth Rate**
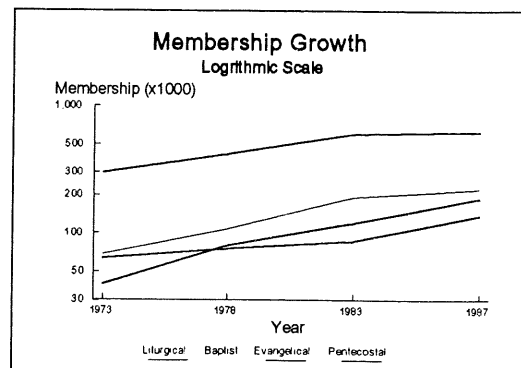
Figure 5 indicates church growth rates for the four different traditions. Each cluster of bars shows a growth rate history for three recent time periods. For example, the first cluster shows that the Liturgical group had a growth rate of about 6.5 during 1973 to 1978, 5 during 1978 to 1983, and about 4.5 during 1983 to 1987. The trend is clearly one of slowing growth over the last decade.

In Table 2, one can see that denomination 1 dominates the Liturgical group and anything that is happening in that denomination is sure to significantly affect the Liturgical group as a whole. Denomination 1 happens to be a denomination formed from several denominations and has taken many years to accomplish the merger. The merger process has consumed significant energy. This denomination has also focused on social justice issues rather than evangelism or church planting.

Another reason for slow growth is that it is just harder for a large organization to maintain high growth rates as its base grows. A ten percent increase for a 100 church denomination is just 10 new churches, for a 1,500 church denomination it is 150 new churches. There may also have been a push to increase the membership size of existing churches.

The cluster of bars for the Pentecostal group shows that they have seen an increase in AAGR during the same periods. These groups started from a smaller base of churches but have focused specifically on church planting. Using the network technique, they aggressively start new churches when one of their members moves to another city. Their form of worship has proved very attractive too.

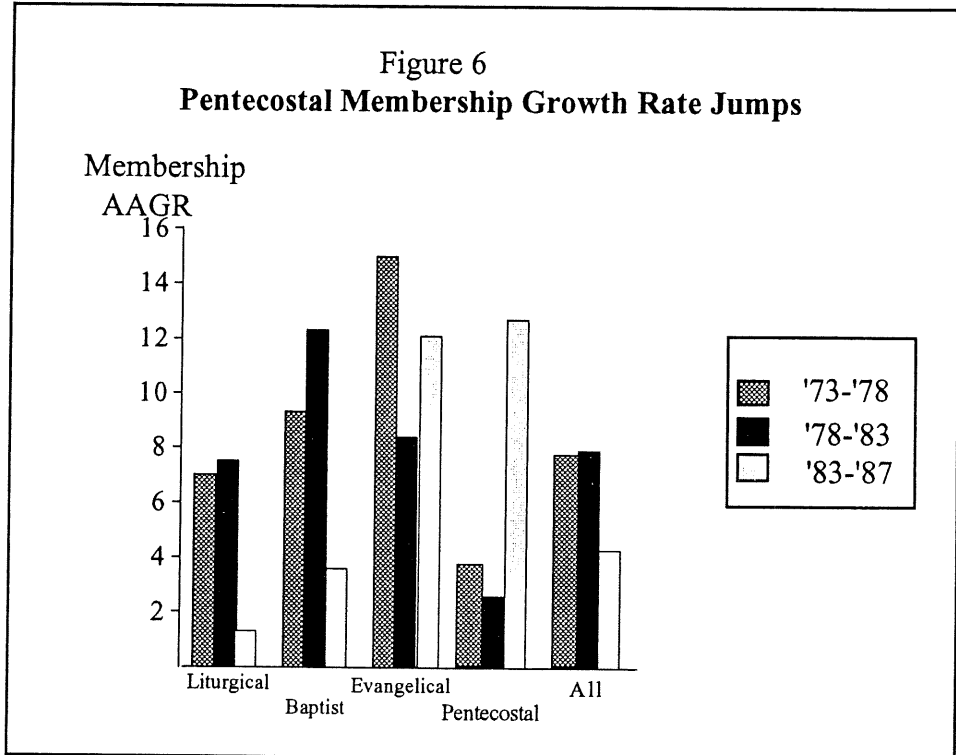Figure 6
**Pentecostal Membership Growth Rate Jumps**

Figure 6 shows membership growth rates for the four groups. The growth rate for the Liturgical group shows that between 1983 and 1987 they saw very little growth. Again, the largest denomination in that group dominates the whole. That denomination showed absolutely no growth during the period.

The Baptist's membership growth took a dive in the last period. This is due to the fact that the biggest denomination in that group, denomination 7, did a major update of its membership roles, purging duplicate listings, people who were deceased, and people who had left the denomination between 1983 and 1987. (See Table 2). Even though this caused the drop in growth, the figures reported are more accurate. Would you rather live in an uncomfortable reality or a pleasant world which is based on fallacy?

The Pentecostals showed significant growth of membership during the last period. This increase in membership is related to the fact that they have concentrated on church planting. It happened simultaneously with church planting.