

This book, *The House Church Revolution* (by Rad Zdero), can be downloaded free from the "Resources" section at www.housechurch.ca

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CONTENTS

Part 1:	The World House Church Movement Today	4
Part 2:	New Testament Foundations for the House Church Movement	22
Part 3:	House Church Movements Across the Ages	33
Part 4:	Practical Lessons for Starting a House Church Network	42
Recomr	nended Resources	51

Part 1:

The World House Church Movement Today

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What is a House Church?

House churches are fully functioning, self-governing churches, in and of themselves.

They desire to get back to the Bible basics of church life and mission.



They are free to eat the Lord's supper, baptize new believers, marry, bury, exercise church discipline, and chart their own course.

They are volunteer led and meet in homes in small groups for participatory and interactive prayer and worship, Bible study and discussion, mentoring and outreach, and the use of all spiritual gifts.

They are *not* event oriented, building centered, or clergy led.

They are part of a movement of grassroots Christianity that is spreading all around the world!

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How are House Churches different than Cell Groups?

Cell Groups	House Churches
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PHILOSOPHY of MINISTRY

Operating Principle	Scripture is "descriptive" for church forms	Scripture is "prescriptive" for church forms
Practical Application	"Retrofit" or "add on" to otherwise traditional church structure	"Restoration" of apostolic patterns for church life and mission

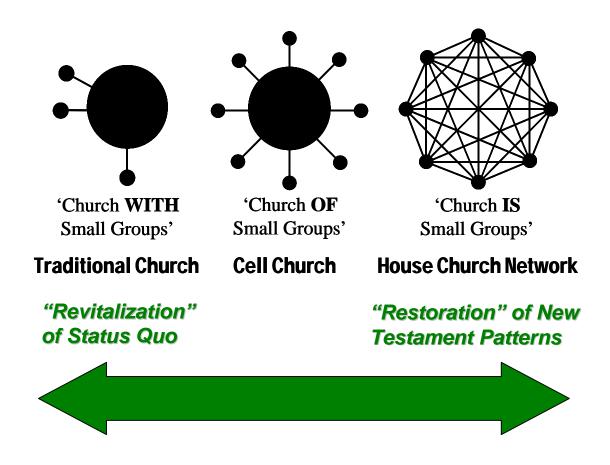
EXTERNAL ASPECTS

Operating	A segment of the church		Full-fledged church in itself	
Principle	("church <u>OF</u> small groups")		("church <u>IS</u> small groups")	
Practical	Pyramid Structure	₹.	Peer Network	
Application	of Cells	AL	of HC's	

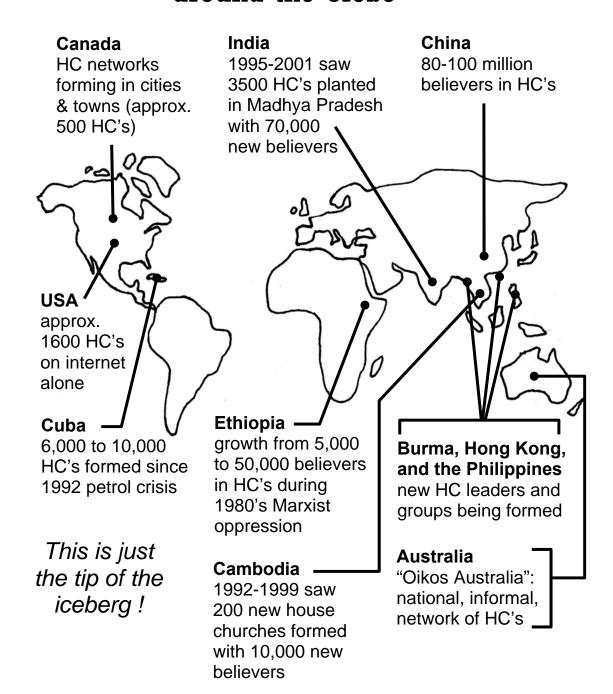
INTERNAL ASPECTS

Operating Principle	Accountable and Dependent	Self-governing and Self-sustaining
Practical Application	Big decisions (e.g. church discipline) by board/pastorFormat/Content approved by board/pastor	Internal decision makingParticipatory meetingsinvolving all spiritual gifts

What's the Difference?



House Church Movements around the Globe



300,000 house churches started (outside China) between 1998 and 2006!

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INDIA (1990's)



Madhya Pradesh

- In 1995, Victor and Bindu
 Choudhrie begin an experiment in church planting in the Indian state
 of Madhya Pradesh
- no buildings, no Sunday morning services, no professional clergy
- deploy young men with basic

training from low caste as church planters

- 3500 house-churches by 2001, with 70,000 people
- Strategy plant a house-church in every one of 17,000 villages in Madhya Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh

- In 2001, 1250 new house-churches formed and 6000 new believers willing to be trained
- young believers go door-to-door and offer prayer
- healings and demonic deliverance are common
- converted families host "houses of prayer" that become multiplying house-churches

100,000 house churches started between 2001 and 2006!

CUBA (1990's)



Thanks Castro!

History

- 1992 petrol crisis led to traffic standstill
- Protestant church re-organized congregations into neighbourhood house groups
- by year 2000, emergence of 6,000 to 10,000 house-churches

Characteristics

- house-church within walking distance of nearly every Cuban
- 1 house-church for every 1,500 people
- part-time preachers/teachers traveling from group to group

Critique of some Cuban house churches ...

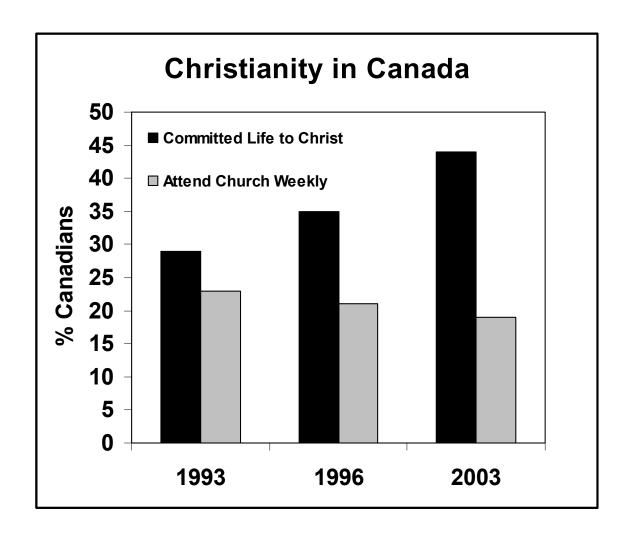
- o very traditional services and meetings
- o very traditional mindset re: clergy and leadership
- would construct buildings if they had opportunity

Top 10 Ingredients for Church Planting Movements Today

"A Church Planting Movement is a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment."

(David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 2004)

- 1. PRAYER
- 2. ABUNDANT GOSPEL SOWING
- 3. INTENTIONAL CHURCH PLANTING
- 4. SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY
- 5. LOCAL LEADERSHIP
- 6. VOLUNTEER "LAY" LEADERS
- 7. HOUSE CHURCHES (10 to 30 people)
- 8. CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES
- 9. RAPID REPRODUCTION
- 10. HEALTHY CHURCHES: outreach, discipleship, worship, fellowship



(Source: Ipsos-Reid Poll, commission by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2003, www.outreach.ca/research)

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TRADITIONAL CHURCHES ARE CLOSING THEIR DOORS

72 existing churches shut down every week 24 new churches started every week



net loss of 48 churches every week

(Source: Larry Kreider, House Church Networks, 2001)

TRADITIONAL CHURCHES ARE NOT REACHING THE LOST

75 % of churches → no growth

24 % of churches → growth by migration

1 % of churches → growth by conversion

(Source: Rick Shrout, "New Culture, New Church," Chapter 54, in *Nexus:* The World House Church Movement Reader, Rad Zdero (ed.), William Carey Library Publishers, 2007)

NEWER CHURCHES ARE BETTER AT EVANGELISM

AGE OF CHURCH CHRISTIANS → CONVERT

10 years or more	85	\rightarrow	1
4 - 7 years	7	\rightarrow	1
3 years or less	3	\rightarrow	1

(Source: Larry Kreider, House Church Networks, 2001)

SMALLER CHURCHES ARE BETTER AT GROWTH

SIZE OF CHURCH	% GROWTH IN 5 YEARS	
1000 or more people	4	
300 - 400	7	
200 - 300	17	
100 - 200	23	
1 - 100	63	

(Source: Wolfgang Simson, Houses that Change the World, 1998)

HOUSE CHURCHES ARE MORE "MISSIONAL"

In a survey of 255 house churches in the USA:

91 (or 36%) were "missional"!

In a study of 33 "missional" house churches in the USA:

24% to 43% of members are <u>new</u> believers!

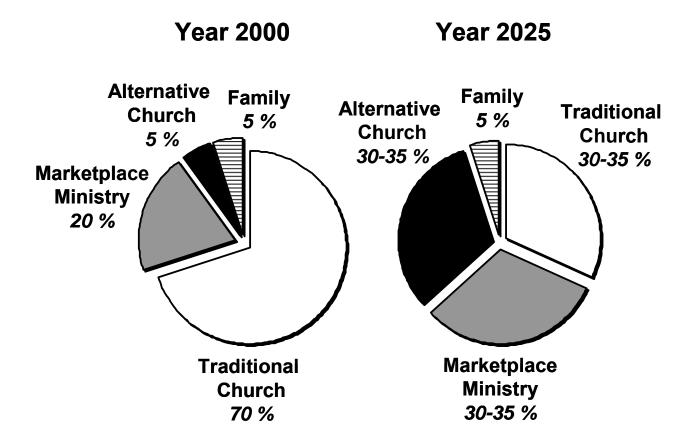
"missional" house church = baptized at least 1 person in previous year, and planted at least 1 other house church in previous 3 years

"Ratios of this size automatically place these [house] churches ... among the most effective evangelistic churches in North America."

(Source: Prof. J.D. Payne, *Missional House Churches*, 2007)

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The Changing Church in North America



Source: George Barna (2005), Revolution.

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House Church Movement in North America

In addition to many independent HC networks, the following groups are sponsoring the HC movement in a North American context ...

Denominations

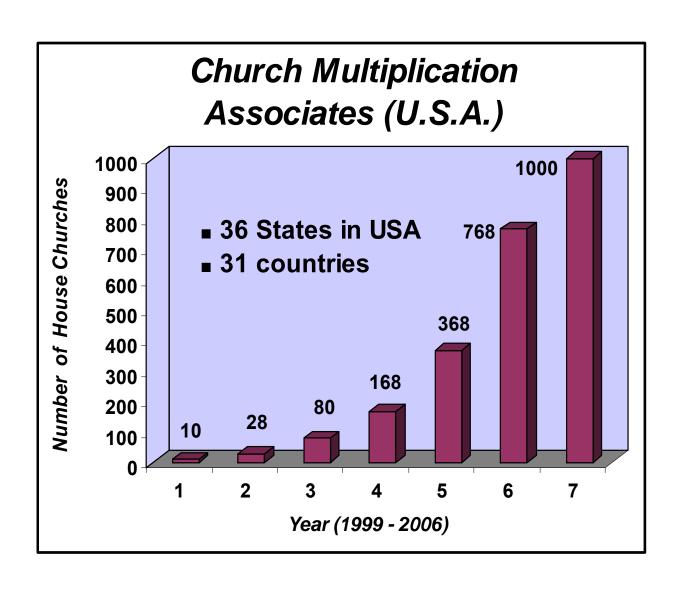
- The Canadian Evangelical Christian Churches
 - Waterloo (Ontario)
- Dove Christian Fellowship
 - cell group and HC focus internationally
- Evangelical Missionary Church in Canada
- The Free Methodist Church in Canada
 - HC projects in BC and Alberta
- The Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada
 - National director for cell and HC's
- Partners in Harvest
 - Barrie (Ontario)
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada
 - o Cariboo (BC)
- The Southern Baptist Convention
 - "Church Planting Movements" internationally
 - o HC networks in Dallas area and Colorado
- The Vineyard
 - o Cincinnati (Ohio)

Mission Agencies

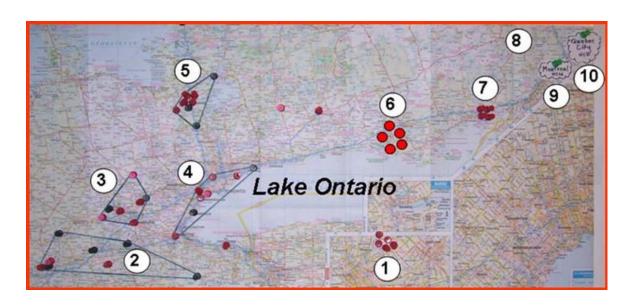
- DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation)
 - o HC coaching network vision for 4 million HC's
- The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - National HC database and regional facilitators
- YWAM (Youth with a Mission) international HC ministry of Robert Fitts, Sr.



First Canadian House Church Roundtable 2002 (Sponsor: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)



The House Church Movement of the Lake Ontario Region (Canada)



- 1. Rochester (NY)
- 2. Oxford County
- 3. Golden Triangle
- 4. Golden Horseshoe
- 5. Barrie

- 6. Trenton
- 7. Kingston
- 8. Ottawa / Gatineau
- 9. Montreal
- 10. Quebec City

Why are people getting involved in the House Church Movement?

- Called by God: personal calling and sending by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3)
- Restoration: getting back to the New Testament apostolic "blueprint" for "function" and "form" in the Church
- Participatory
 Meetings: "each one"
 contributes to the
 "spiritual potluck"
 (1 Cor 14:26, Col
 3:16, Eph 5:19-20,
 Heb 10:25)



- Community: build relationships and "one anothering"
- **Discipleship**: maturing new believers
- Evangelism: neighbourhood or "oikos" outreach
- Multiplication: new leaders and new churches
- **Stewardship:** funneling money toward mission and poverty, rather than buildings and staff
- Personal: preference or need for small group settings
- Other?

Challenges facing the North American House Church Movement?



- Legitimacy: misperceptions about HC's among more established churches and the broader community
- Links to Larger Body: what is HC's relationship to other parts of the Church? Work inside or outside established denominations?
- Funding: for 5-Fold Circuit Riders to travel to existing HC's and to start new HC's
- Networks: seeing HC's form cohesive, healthy, long-term links with one another
- **Mission:** having healthy focus on church growth, evangelism, and practical community service
- "Fuzzy" Factors:
 - o pride
 - o anger/hurt
 - o personality cults
 - o heresy
 - o "catch the next new wave"

Part 2:

New Testament Foundations for the House Church Movement

THE GREAT WORK

Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have taught you. And I will be with you always."

(Matthew 28:19-20)

Growing Disciples

Go → Make → Baptize → Teach

Growing Trees

Till → Plant → Fertilize → Water → Prune



JESUS MODELS HIS "SMALL GROUP" STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT WORK

"[Jesus] ate with [his 12 disciples], slept with them, and talked with them for the most part of his entire active ministry. They walked together along the lonely roads; they visited together in the crowded cities; they sailed and fished together on the Sea of Galilee; they prayed together in the deserts and in the mountains; and they worshiped together in the synagogues and in the Temple."

(Robert Coleman, The Master Plan of Evangelism, 1999)



JESUS' METHOD TO START HOUSE CHURCHES

(Luke 10:1-11,16)

Have a "Vision"

1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

Pray about the "Vision"

2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Go!

3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Trust God to Meet Your Needs

4"Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way."

Make Contact with People – Friends, Family, Neighbors, Strangers, etc.

5"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'

Follow-up with Open People

6 "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

Build a Base of Operations in their Home – Start a House Church!

7 "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8"Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

Minister to their Needs

9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Go Elsewhere if You are Rejected

10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

Remember - This is God's Work Not Yours

16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

The Early Church of the New Testament



Common Homes homes and house-sized churches

Common Meetings

Spirit-led, open, and participatory gatherings

Common Leaders

Local leaders

- elder = presbyter = bishop = overseer = pastor = shepherd
- · local house-church leadership, long-term, teams, co-equal
- unpaid volunteers

Traveling Leaders

- apostles
- start new house-churches, lay foundations, temporary role, work in teams, move around from place to place
- · financially supported when needed

The Early Church - Common Homes

"The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with *the church that is in their house*." **1 Cor 16:19**

"Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house." Romans 16:3-5

"Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house."

Colossians 4:15

"Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker and to Apphia our sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church in your house." Philemon 1:1-2



"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your house* and do not give him a greeting."

2 John 1:10

"And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple* and breaking bread from <u>house to house</u>, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." **Acts 2:46**

^{*} Does meeting in the temple contradict "house-to-house" patterns? What did they do when they visited the temple? Transitional time from Judaism to Christianity?

The Early Church - Common Meetings

"What shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these things must be done for the strengthening of the church." **1 Cor 14:26**

"But to <u>each one</u> is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit ... to another the word of knowledge ... to another faith



... to another gifts of healing
... to another effecting of
miracles ... to another
prophecy ... to another
distinguishing of spirits ...
to another various kinds of
tongues ... to another
interpretation of tongues".

1 Cor 12:7-10

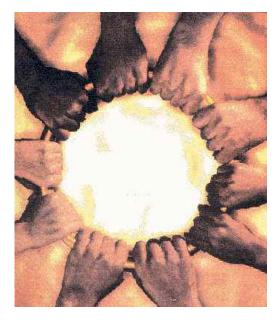
"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish <u>one another</u> with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Colossians 3:16

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage <u>one another</u>, and all the more as you see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

The Early Church - Common Leaders

"And from Miletus [the apostle Paul] sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church ... he said to them...'I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house ... be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy



Spirit has made you <u>overseers</u> to <u>shepherd</u> the church ... I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes ... these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak."

Acts 20:17,20,28,33-35

(see Matthew 23:6-11, Acts 14:23, 15:2,4,6,22, 20:17-38; 1 Cor 9:1-5; Eph 4:11; Philip 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-3)

New Testament Leadership

Governmental Leadership (Acts 15) Equipping Leadership (Eph 4:11-12)

Apostles Apostles

Prophets

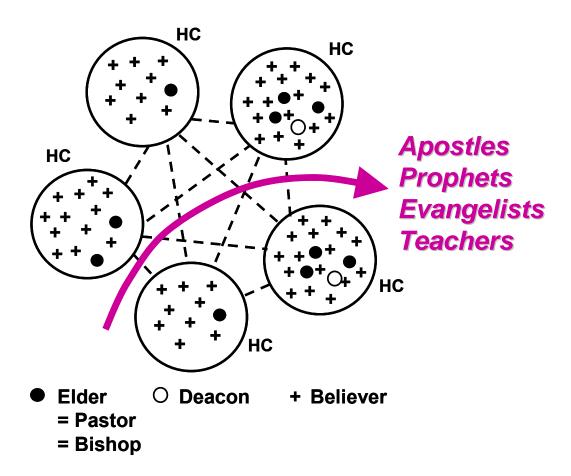
Evangelists

Teachers

Elders Pastors

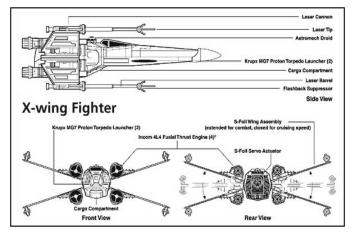
The New Testament Church

(House Church Network)



The Early Church - The Apostolic Blueprint

Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the *traditions*, just as I delivered them to you. 1 Cor 11:2



So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the *traditions* which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

2 Thes 2:15

[Timothy] will remind

you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Cor 4:17

But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have **no other practice**, nor have the churches of God.

1 Cor 11:16

Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is *the Lord's command*. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

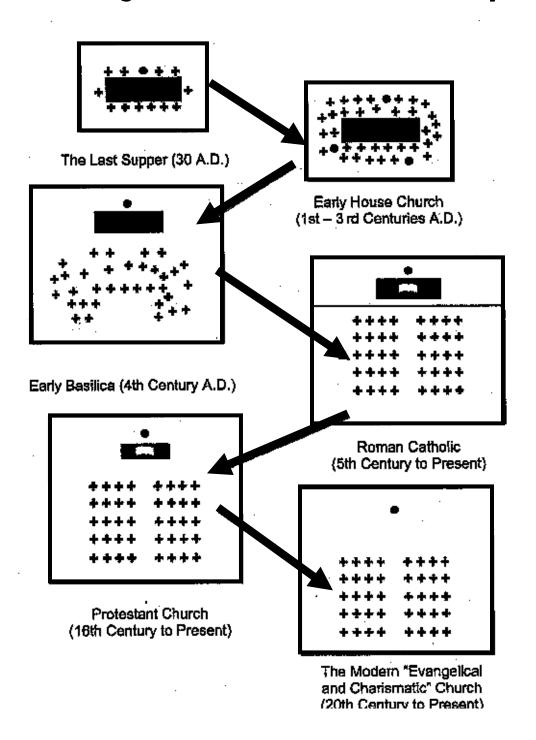
1 Cor 14:36-38

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philip 4:9

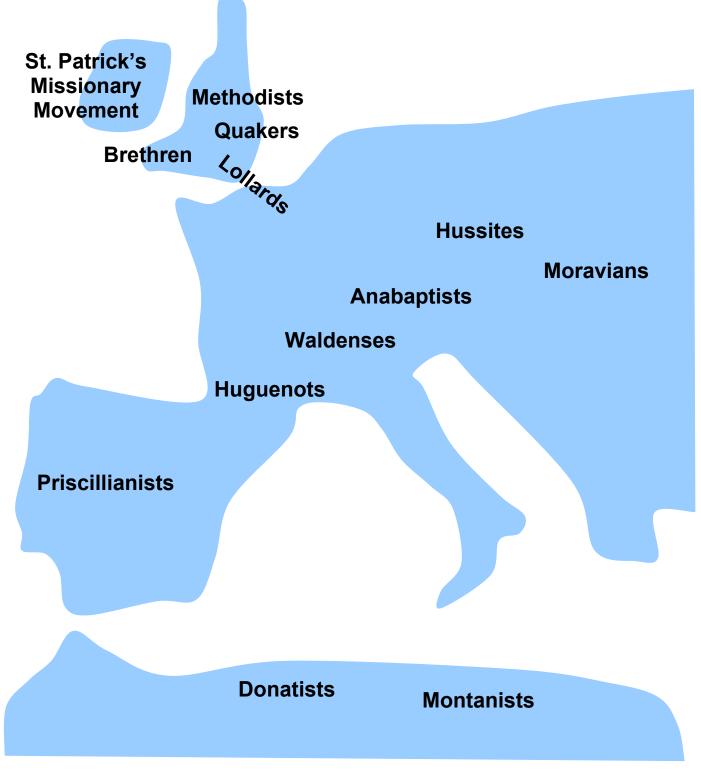
Part 3:

House Church Movements Across the Ages

The Big Bad Drift of Church History

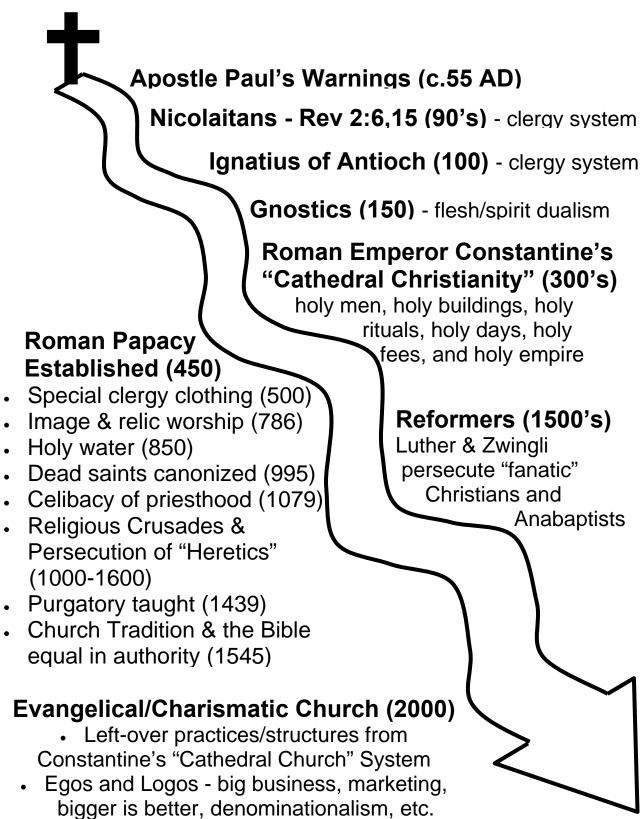


House Church and Small Group Movements in History!

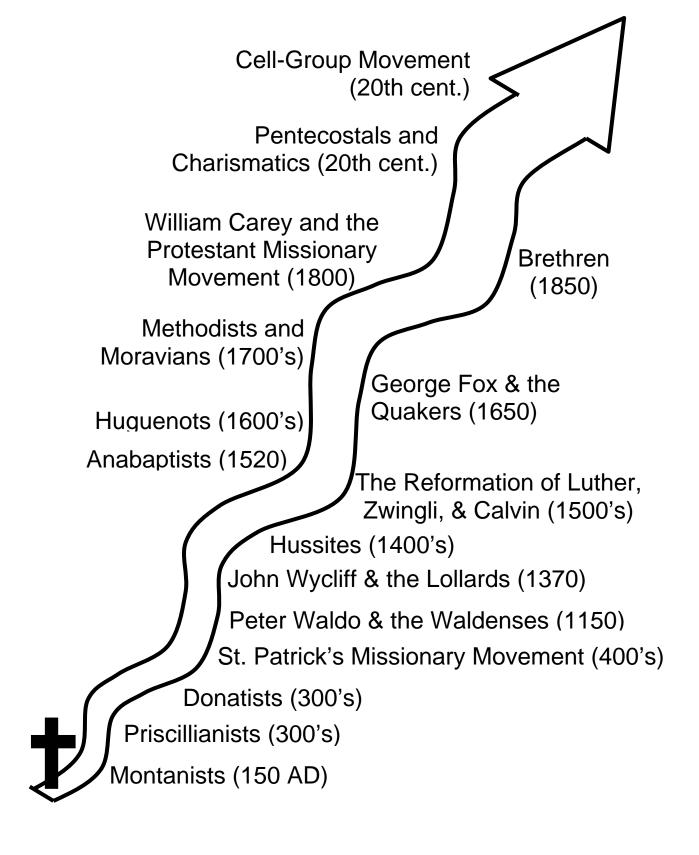


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The Fall of the Church



The Rise of the Church



Priscillian (340-385 A.D.)



History

- Spanish nobleman, wealthy, educated, charismatic
- converted as adult
- diligent Bible student, ascetic life
- began to preach and teach
- became a Bishop, but opposed by some Spanish clergy
- Emperor had Priscillian and 6 friends beheaded in France
- movement spread to Spain, Portugal, and France
- 200 years before movement totally suppressed by state-church

Characteristics

- lay movement, little distinction between clergy and laity
- "brotherhoods" = Bible reading sessions
- met in private homes
- both men and women participated
- only converted and baptized believers could participate
- joined by many bishops, priests, and the educated

George Fox and the Quakers (1650)



History

- late teens and early 20's traveling England searching for personal enlightenment
- Pendle Hill vision of masses of people who would respond to his message
- 2x2 traveling preaching teams
- 20,000 converts in 5 years
- persecuted by state & by both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches

Characteristics

- called themselves "Friends", nicknamed "Quakers" by critics
- referred to their mission as "The Lamb's War"
- serious devotion to Biblical authority in personal and church life
- open and participatory meetings
- inner light within everyone
- complete pacifism, no swearing oaths, prison reform
- equality between sexes
- opposed Catholic and Protestant "steeple houses" and clergy
- open air preaching and meeting in homes

John Wesley and the Methodists (1750)



History

- Anglican priest
- "holy club" at Oxford for prayer, Bible study, accountability, communion, & outreach
- failed missionary to American Indians in Georgia
- "heart strangely warmed"
- outdoor preaching begins
- "Great Awakening" in U.S./Britain
- 100,000 Methodists by Wesley's death in 1791

Characteristics

- renewal movement within Anglican church, but spilled over
- lay leadership involving men and women
- "classes" and "bands" of 6-12 people = cell groups meeting in neighbourhood homes of members
- "circuit riders" traveled from town-to-town to evangelize in open air and teach believers
- 10,000 home cell groups by Wesley's death in 1791
- social concern for poor, imprisoned, and sick

Pros

- lay involvement, massive growth, added to Great Awakening
 Cons
- Unbiblical pyramid leadership structure
- House groups were overly programmed and pre-planned
- House groups not considered self-governing "house-churches"
- Wesley hesitant to allow movement to go beyond Anglicanism

The Rise of the Church



"If we would reform the Church, we must make use of the Holy Scriptures and especially of Acts, where it is clearly to be found how things were in the beginning, what is right and what is wrong, what is praiseworthy and acceptable to God and to the Lord Christ."

Caspar von Schwenckfeld (1490-1561) Church Reformer

"Events in the history of the churches in the time of the apostles have been selected and recorded in the book of Acts in such a way as to provide a permanent pattern for the churches. Departure from this pattern has had disastrous consequences, and all revival and restoration have been due to some return to the pattern and principles in the Scriptures."

Edmund Broadbent (1861-1945)
Author of *The Pilgrim Church*

Part 4:

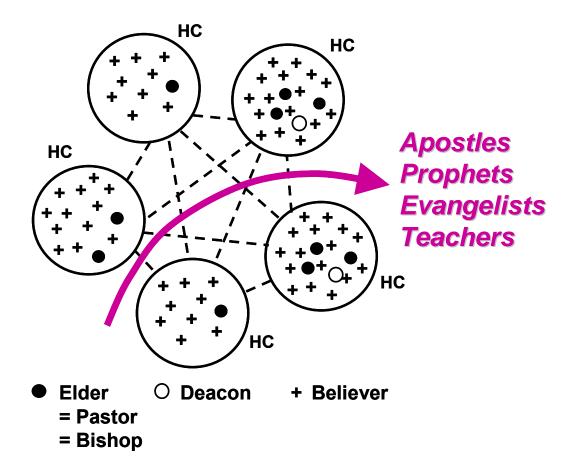
Practical Lessons for Starting a House Church Network

The Mission

"To see the kingdom of God established in our region,
by linking arms as a relational, intentional,
and missional network of house churches,
that develop and deploy all believers
into maturity in Christ
to impact others"

The New Testament Church

(House Church Network)



How to Start House Churches?

Prophetic Direction

- house-churches are started and leaders appointed through God's guidance through dreams and visions and other supernatural ways
- see Acts 13:1-3, 16:6-15

Public Outreach

- outdoors, house-to-house, market square, streets, temple courts, synagogues, wherever people gathered, etc.
- see Acts 2:14-41; Acts 8:5-8; Acts 17:16-28

Private Outreach

- family, friends, workmates, neighbours, strangers, hospitality, etc.
- see Acts 8:26-38, Acts 28:23,30-31

Power Encounters

- demonic deliverance, healings, prophecy, miracles, etc.
- see Acts 9:36-42, Acts 14:8-11

Plant House-Churches by Sending Teams

- Send a team to start a new group somewhere when it gets too big
- see Luke 10:1-11, Acts 13:1-3

WHAT DO YOU DO IN A HOUSE CHURCH?

KEY PRINCIPLE #1 – EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE

"What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:26)

KEY PRINCIPLE #2 – HAVE TRUE FELLOWSHIP

"And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."

(Acts 2:44-46)

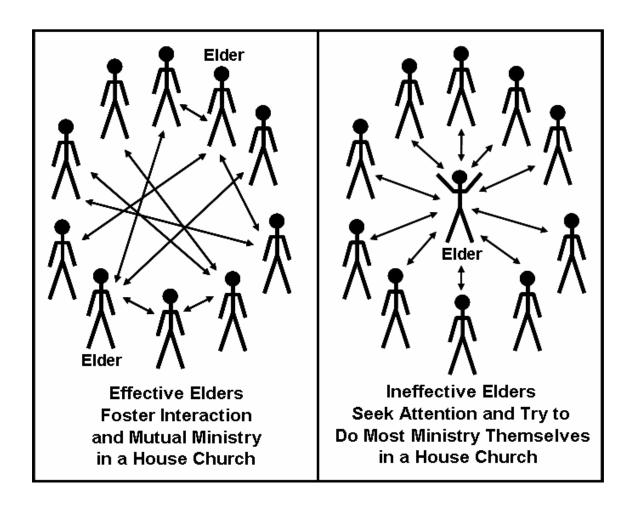
KEY PRINCIPLE #3 – REACH OUT TO OTHERS

"Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"....
So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

(Acts 2:38,41)

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Local House Church Leaders





CASE STUDY: CANADA



Phase 1. **Missionaries Sent**

promises of God for spiritual generations (Isaiah 60:22)



with Students initial contact

- student survey
- student clubs day

Phase 2. **Began Relationships**

- social events etc.



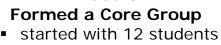
Phase 6. Evangelism and the **House Church**

- vision for evangelism
- personal evangelism
- public evangelism
- spiritual surveys
- discussion dinners etc.



Phase 5. Established a Strong **House Church**

- 50-70 students
- meeting in a home
- large group time
- "cells" meeting in rooms of the house



Phase 3.

- "invest in the individual"
- one-on-one discipleship
- small group meeting in home (Bible study, prayer, worship, friendship, food, fun)



Phase 4. Found a

"Person of Peace"

- influencer and insider
- outward focused
- invited friends to house church meetings
- grew to 50-70 students



Lessons for the Future

Early Church Example

- "Living-room Revolution" for the first 300 years
- No "holy" buildings, rituals, or clergy required
- Biblical "house-churches", not just "home cell groups"

Exponential Growth

- Multiplication of simple house-churches
- · Get small to grow big

Efficiency

Think "simple, cheap, adaptable"

Equal Opportunity

- · "Open and Participatory" meetings
- · Everyone's skills used
- Flat leadership structures ...
 No Big Pyramids Please!

Economics

- Mutual support or Communal living
- Financial support for traveling apostles / teachers

Entropy

- house-church "networks", not stand-alone groups
- outside rather inside institutional church

Essential Elements of Healthy Movements

- Revival outreach / mission
- Renewal passionate faith and obedience
- Reform New Testament church "organizational" structures

A Prophetic Word ???

"A revolution is coming to Christianity that will eclipse the Reformation in the sweeping changes that it brings to the Church.

When it comes the present structure and organization of the Church will cease to exist, and the way the world defines Christianity will be radically changed.

What is coming will not be a change of doctrine, but a change in basic church life. The changes that are coming will be so profound that it will be hard to relate the present form of church structure and government to what is coming.

The future leaders of the Church are now being given a vision of radical New Testament Christianity being restored to the earth."

Rick Joyner
The Morning Star Prophetic Bulletin
"Revolution", May 2000

Recommended Resources

For more on the history and nature of the house church movement

Books

Rad Zdero (ed.) (2007)

Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader

(Best price at www.missionbooks.org)

Rad Zdero (2004)

The Global House Church Movement
(Best price at www.missionbooks.org)

Roger Gehring (2004)
House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household

David Garrison (2004)

Church Planting Movements

Structures in Early Christianity

Peter Bunton (2001)

Cell Groups and House Churches: What History Teaches Us

Wolfgang Simson (1998)
Houses that Change the World

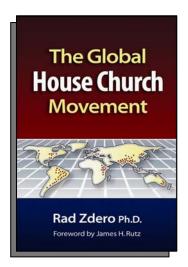
E.H. Broadbent (1931/1999) *The Pilgrim Church*

Websites

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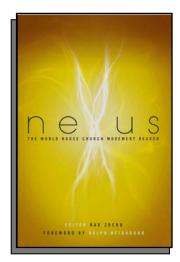
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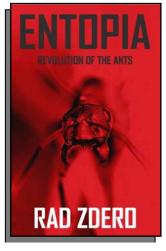
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RAD ZDERO earned his Ph.D. degree in Mechanical Engineering from Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario, Canada), specializing in orthopaedic biomechanics. He is currently the director of a hospital-based research lab in Toronto. Rad has been actively involved in the house church and small group movement since 1985 and is dedicated to encouraging the full restoration of original New Testament Christianity in our day. He lives just outside Toronto, Canada.