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Setting the Stage: Religious and Cultural Landscape in Canada
Defining a Flourishing Congregation … A Start

- **Active spiritual life** within congregations - prayer, scripture reading, small groups, volunteering, etc.
- **Belonging** - people are invited and welcomed into a vibrant sense of community and participation
- **Inspiring Mission** - worship services and mission are inspiring
- **Quantitative growth** - church attendance, membership, finances, etc.
- **Leadership** - leaders empower others to use their skills to lead and serve
- **Outreach and Service** - faith-based outreach and service, within and beyond
- **Community Presence** - an active presence in the community at large
Method

- Vancouver
- Calgary
- Winnipeg
- SW Ontario
- Halifax

9 Focus Groups
(66 participants)
109 Interviews

- 20 Catholic
- 36 Mainline Protestant
- 46 Conservative Protestant
- 2 Parachurch
- 5 Academics
Institutional/Contextual Factors

“Contextual factors are external to the church. They are in the community, the society, and the culture in which a church exists. A church has little control over them. Institutional factors are internal to the church and are aspects of its life and functioning over which it has some control” (Hoge and Roozen 1979: 39).

• Church as “gathered” and “scattered”

• Growing churches tend to stress internal factors; declining congregations tend to emphasize external variables.
A faith community in exile

- Declining levels of religiosity
- Christianity perceived as bad for society
- Religion and politics are separate
- Religion in a private matter
- Canada between United States and Europe
Canada: A Diverse, Inclusive, and Tolerant Nation

- Inclusivity, social justice, and tolerance
- Reverse discrimination toward Christianity
- Christianity on the margins of Canadian social life
  - *Great opportunity in this social context*
Cooperation vs. Competition

Partnering with …

- Congregations in one’s denomination
- Congregations in other traditions
- Other faith groups
- Secular agencies
Immigration

- Benefits Canadian congregations (especially Catholic and conservative Protestant)
- Foreign-born appear more conservative and countercultural
Few Churches are Large

- Canadian churches generally smaller than in the United States (aversion toward large churches in some cases in Canada)
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