

CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

Church growth literature over the past decade has focused on the different variables that contribute to the effective functioning of churches. One of the most important variables that has come out of this research is the importance of the role of the pastor as leader of the church. This research represents an attempt to assess the opinions of Costa Rican pastors in the areas of their lives and ministry environments and to construct a profile of the pastors. It is hoped that this research will help church leaders and mission agencies become more aware of the opinions, needs, and worldviews of this unique group of dedicated people.

In this chapter information will be presented to help the reader to better understand the country, religious, and ministerial environment the pastors work in. Information will also be given to define the limitations, terms, and research questions that were used to shape this study. At the end of the chapter will be explained the importance of the research.

Country Profile: Costa Rica

Costa Rica was discovered in 1502 by Christopher Columbus on his fourth and final voyage. He was Costa Rica's first "tourist," landing on the Atlantic shore, at Cariari beach, near Puerto Limón. Believing, or perhaps hoping, that the area was rich in gold, he christened it Costa Rica, which means "rich coast."

The conquest and colonization of Costa Rica was relatively bloodless compared to that of other parts of Central America. The people who settled the area were mostly farmers from Northern Spain. The city of Cartago, founded in the Central Valley in 1563, became the first capital of Costa Rica. A limited population and a small demand for Costa Rican agricultural products created an economy based largely on the barter system, which also produced something of greater value: a more equal distribution of land, work, and wealth than in other Latin American countries.

Costa Rica is a country of peace, where slavery never existed and where the death penalty was abolished over a century ago. It is a country that abolished its army in 1948, converted barracks into schools and rechanneled its resources to education and social welfare, becoming more and more dedicated to respect law and human dignity. In 1986 Costa Rica proposed the International Year of Peace to the United Nations and this was adopted.

In 1988, President Oscar Arias put Costa Rica in the world political limelight by proposing and securing approval for his extraordinary Peace Plan for Central America. This earned him the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize. These recent achievements delineate the modern self-image of Costa Rica before the international community.

Land and Climate

Costa Rica is approximately the size of New Hampshire and Vermont combined, with a total land area of 19,575 sq. miles. Approximately 60% of the land is covered by forests and 30% is used for agriculture. Costa Rica lies entirely in the tropical zone, but the climate is tempered by its altitude: hot on the coastal lowlands, temperate in the

highland plateau (where the capital, San José, is located), and cool in the mountains. The rainy season (winter) lasts from May through November and the dry months (summer) from December through April.

Politically Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces: Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limón, Puntarenas and San José. The states are further subdivided into counties (cantones) and districts (distritos) for political and administrative purposes (Appendix A).

Demographics

According to the 1997 census, the population of Costa Rica is 3,442,920 with an annual growth rate of 2.04%. There are slightly more men (1,740,117 or 50.54%) than women (1,702,803 or 49.46%). Approximately 51.5% of the total population lives in the greater San José metropolitan area (see map Appendix B).

Of the seven provinces San José is the most populous with a population of 1,248,472 inhabitants, 36.3% of the country total. The other provinces in order of population size are Alajuela 598,446 (17.4%), Cartago 401,434 (11.7%), Puntarenas 366,304 (10.6%), Heredia 324,800 (9.5%), Limón 285,101 (8.3%) and Guanacaste 218,363 (6.3%) (INICEM, 7).

Racial groups within the county are; white (including mestizo) 96%, black 2%, Indian 1%, Chinese 1%. Spanish is the official language of the country but English is spoken in the vicinity of Puerto Limón among the Jamaicans who were brought into the country in the 1870's to build a railroad from San José to Limón and to work on the banana plantations.

Economy

Costa Rica is among the more prosperous countries of Central America. In 1996 the average annual gross national product (GNP) per person was \$2,640 (compared to \$14,300 in US). Also in 1996 the economy had a slightly negative (-.8%) annual growth rate. Inflation is at 11.2% which is low in comparison with other years when it has been as high as 22.56% (1995). Unemployment in 1996 was 6.2%, the highest in the last six years. The minimum salary in Costa Rica as of February 1997 is \$198.37 a month (MIEC 3).

Since this study deals with the socio-economic situation and worldview of the Costa Rican evangelical pastor, it is important to be able to define his/her place within the Costa Rican labor force. The active labor force of Costa Rica is estimated to be 1,046,694 people, or 30% of the total population. Of the total, 723,117 (69%) are men and 323,577 (31%) are women. To analyze the work force the Costa Rican Ministry of Economy uses the following categories and sub-categories (along with their average salaries in U.S. dollars).

Table 1:1 Work Force Categories

Category	Number of People	% of Total	Ave. Salary (Monthly)
Salaried Employees	764,049	72.0%	\$310.14
Public Sector	150,543	14.4%	\$511.32
Private Sector	613,506	57.6%	\$260.78
Independent	282,645	28.0%	\$318.39
Self-employed	70,059	7.7%	\$480.24
Other	212,586	20.3%	\$265.06
Total	1,046,694	100%	\$312.37

To further define the work force the Ministry of Economy identifies ten groups. The following chart lists these ten groups with their respective number of workers, the percentage of each group within the work force and their average monthly salaries.

Table 1.2 Work Force by Groups

Group	Number	Percent %	Salary (USD)
Agriculture	212,761	20.3	\$199.51
Mining	1,319	.1	\$280.61
Industry/Manufacture	167,853	16.0	\$295.76
Utilities	11,523	1.1	\$428.47
Construction	72,111	6.8	\$295.23
Commerce	188,709	18.0	\$309.86
Transportation	57,966	5.5	\$362.16
Financial	50,723	4.8	\$490.00
Community Service	279,377	26.7	\$336.34
Other	4,352	.4	\$256.49
Total	1,046,694	99.7	\$325.44

Costa Rican evangelical pastors best fit into the group known as “Community Service” where 26.7% of the work force is classified and which, as a group, has a monthly income average of USD\$336.34 (MIEC, 8).

Education

Costa Rica has one of the finest systems of public education in the Americas. Primary education (through the sixth grade) is compulsory and free. This is why the literacy rate is 95%, the highest in Central America.

In 1997 the total student population was 901,458 students or 26.2% of the population. In all there are 5,194 educational centers in the country. By categories there

are 1,128 preschools, 3,623 regular schools, 358 high schools and 85 universities and night schools. The school year runs from February to November (INICEM,10).

Religious Profile of Costa Rica

The Costa Rican religious worldview is significantly different from that of people in North America. In order to better understand the religious worldview of those among whom the pastors are living and working, it will be helpful to look at two studies that have highlighted the inner soul of the Costa Ricans.

The first study was conducted in 1984 by Arturo Molino for the International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth (IINDEF) ministry and focused directly on the relationship between the Catholic and evangelical communities in Costa Rica. The second, done in 1997, was commissioned for the Costa Rican *La Nación* newspaper and focused on the religious beliefs of the Costa Ricans in general.

Arturo Molino's 1984 investigation, *Imagen del Protestantismo en Costa Rica 1983*, studied 850 randomly chosen people to discover the image that people had about evangelicals. The study included 400 people from the greater metropolitan area of San José and 150 people from each of three rural areas of the country totaling another 450 people.

The study touched on eight areas, four of which are relevant to this research:

- How often are the two communities (evangelicals and Catholics) attending church services? Reading the Bible?
- What is the image of the evangelical population in the eyes of the Catholics?
- What is the opinion of Catholics about the work of the evangelical pastors?

- What are the principal problem areas between evangelicals and Catholics?

The results showed the following:

83.8% of the evangelicals attended church services once a week (cf. 50% of the Catholics).

95.3% of the evangelicals read the Bible once a week (cf. 27% of the Catholics).

27% of the Catholics said they had a “good” opinion of evangelicals.

25% indicated an indifferent opinion.

17% had a negative attitude regarding evangelicals.

31% had no opinion.

70% of Catholics perceive that evangelical pastors take good care of their members and try to live what they preach.

44% of the Catholics believe that most evangelical pastors are foreigners (Molino, 25).

Among the negative comments/impressions that the respondents made about evangelicals were:

- Evangelicals are isolated from their communities. (Molino, 19)
- The growth of the evangelical church is viewed negatively by 60% of those surveyed and viewed positively by 25% (Molino, 21).
- Catholics do not think that becoming an evangelical makes one a better person (Molino, 21).

It can be concluded from these figures that Costa Rican evangelicals are more likely to attend church and read their Bibles than Catholics. Molino’s study also demonstrated that Costa Rican Catholics have a good opinion about evangelicals and their pastors and are tolerant of their views. In terms of perceptions and prejudices, there are still distinct stereotypes about evangelicals in the minds of most Catholics.

The newspaper study was entitled “Faith and Beliefs of the Ticos,”* and focused on what modern Costa Ricans believe about religion, superstition and other themes. The results were published on March 17, 1996, by Larissa Minsky Acosta.

The study surveyed 1,200 randomly chosen people and consisted of 177 questions. The study was carried out between November 1 - 29, 1995, and was done on a nation-wide basis (Demoscopia, 6).

Religious affiliation was reported to be 78.8% Catholic; 12.2% were Christians but not Catholics, and 8.9% were of other religious persuasions. While nearly eighty percent (80%) of the respondents declared themselves to be Catholics, only 42% of them attend mass every week and only 8% go to confession each month.

Among the interesting facets of the Costa Rican spiritual worldview, the study found:

87% believe that “God loves me and takes care of me.”

More women (92%) think about God than do men (72%).

More people over 51 years old (93%) think about God than do those who are younger.

When asked about the frequency of their prayers, 44% responded that they pray at least once a day and 41% pray more than once a day.

When they pray, 95% responded that it was to give thanks to God.

90% pray to feel closer to God.

74% pray to ask for something from God.

69% of Catholics believe there is a personal devil; 90.5% of non-Catholic Christians believe the same.

65% of Catholics believe in hell; 85% of non-Catholic Christians agree.

54% of Costa Ricans believe in a purgatory.

*“Tico” is an affectionate name the Costa Ricans call themselves.

Men (64.3%) are more likely than women (45.3%) to believe that people can have special psychic powers.

Nearly half (45.6%) of the people believe in witches or magic.

65% of the respondents would vote for an evangelical presidential candidate, but only 33% would vote for a Jewish candidate.

The study also found that among those calling themselves evangelicals 51% had always been evangelicals while 41% had come from a Catholic background. When those who had changed were asked why they had left the Catholic faith, the three most frequent answers were: a desire to have their spiritual needs met (27.8%), to feel closer to God (13.9%), and that they had found the truth in their new church (13.9%) (Demoscopia, 16).

These two studies show that Costa Ricans are a God-fearing and God-seeking populace who are open to a message of hope that will make them feel closer to God. While the studies show that there are good relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants, it is interesting to note that while 70% of Catholics have a good perception of evangelical pastors, 60% feel that the growth of the evangelical church is bad for the country as a whole.

The Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC)

In Costa Rica the legal entity that represents the majority of the evangelical community is the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC). The “Alliance,” as it is popularly known, was founded to “promote the creation of a ministerial association for mutual support and protection.” Present at the first meeting to form the alliance on June 19, 1950, were the following churches and groups: National Baptists, Wesleyan churches, Jamaican Baptists, Assemblies of God, Central American Mission churches, Association

of Bible Churches, Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Latin America Mission, and the Central America Mission.

The purpose of the Alliance, as first defined by the member groups was to:

1. Promote Christian life in all of its manifestations by having committees in charge of specific activities to provide cooperation between members in achieving a common goal.
2. Encourage the creation of a ministerial association with a body of laymen having common purposes and norms.
3. Represent the interests of the evangelical Christians before the civil authorities and achieve effective judicial equality for evangelicals in the rest of the country.
4. Contribute to helping affiliated members acquire a better understanding the importance of the adoption of common norms and to help resolve difficulties between entities when they themselves have been unable to reach an agreement.

In 1955, according to FAEC president Claudio Soto, 90% of the evangelical churches were members of the Alliance. Wilton Nelson (*Historia del Protestantismo en Costa Rica* (1983) points out that in the beginning the Alliance was very active. It solicited and received from the government tax-exempt status for evangelical churches, raised funds for disaster relief, and helped evangelical families fight religious persecution in public schools (Nelson, 309).

In the 70's apathy took hold of FAEC. One of the most significant factors to have caused this was Vatican II. With the designation of the Protestants as "separated brethren" persecution began to wane. Many evangelical groups began to feel that there was no need nor benefit to being a part of FAEC and simply stopped supporting it.

In the 80's, FAEC began to adopt reforms to structure itself more informally. Figures from 1982 show that FAEC had 36 member organizations, 15 (42%) of which were para-church organizations. In 1972 a pastors' prayer meeting was started in the Templo Bíblico. Over time other smaller groups of pastors started to meet and organize themselves as fraternities. These activities helped to create an ambiance of mutual respect and support in the larger body of the evangelical population, which in turn has strengthened the role of FAEC and makes it the single most important representative of the evangelical community in Costa Rica.

Today FAEC is recognized both in the evangelical community and by the Costa Rican government as the entity that represents most of the churches and ministries of the evangelical faith. Working under the theme of "defending and confirming the gospel," the Evangelical Alliance currently has 105 members, 31 (30%) of which are para-church. The purpose of FAEC is to promote unity among evangelical churches, preach the gospel, and collaborate in the well being of the country. Internally FAEC has been seeking to strengthen the unity of the leadership of the evangelical churches, establish legal, moral, and ethical boundaries for the protection of its members, and to challenge the churches to think about how they can respond to the needs of society today. In 1993 FAEC created various committees to carry out its goals and objectives. One of these committees is the Socio-religious Research Committee (CISRE) (FAEC, 1).

Socio-Religious Research Committee (CISRE)

The Socio-Religious Research Committee (CISRE) of the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC) was established to “investigate, collect, interpret, and distribute data about the evangelical church in its context, with the goal of helping the church in its growth and well-being.”

The original mission entities forming CISRE were: Christ for the City International (CFCI), the International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth (IINDEF), the Federation of Costa Rican Evangelical Missions (FEDEMEC), the Latin America Mission (LAM) and the Missiological Institute of the Americas (IMDELA). Currently the officers of the committee are:

Rev. Alberto Pozo:	President	IMDELA
Rev. Carlos Ulate:	Secretary	Evangelical Alliance
Mr. Duane Anderson:	Treasurer	CFCI
Mr. Clifton Holland:	Member	PROLADES
Mr. Paul Pretiz:	Member	LAM

In 1995, the committee researched and published a *directory (Where is the Church? 1995)* of churches in the greater San José metropolitan area. In the course of gathering information for the directory, the committee also began to investigate areas of the country that had no evangelical churches. After the publication of the directory, presentations were made to the Evangelical Alliance and other groups concerned with the growth of the evangelical churches in Costa Rica.

As a result of the research carried out for the directory and the discussions in the presentations of the committee’s findings among these groups of evangelical leaders, it became clear that research was needed concerning the life and ministry of

Costa Rican evangelical pastors. The method used to construct this study will be dealt with in further detail in Chapter III.

Evangelical Growth Background

Over the years there have been many attempts to calculate the size of the evangelical population in Costa Rica. In 1983, Wilton Nelson estimated that the evangelical community before 1864 consisted of 268 people and that these were mostly foreigners.

By 1921, again according to Nelson, the evangelical community had grown to about 5,000 of which 1,000 were said to be Costa Ricans (Nelson, 329-330).

In recent times there have been more studies done to verify the size of the evangelical community. In 1978, the International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth (IINDEF) published its *Directory of Churches* showing a total of 729 congregations and 488 mission planting areas and an average church attendance of 59.6 people per church. The Protestant community at that time was estimated to be 93,900 people, multiplying the number of members reported by pastors by a factor of 2.0. This factor generally was used to give a more realistic projection as to the actual number of people participating in the churches but who for various reasons are not counted as members.

In 1990 the Missiological Institute of the Americas (IMDELA) prepared a directory of national churches. In their research they found 1,928 evangelical churches and church plants. Of these, 122 churches did not report their attendance figures. The other 1,806 churches and missions reported a total of 110,267 people attending, an average of 61.05 people per church. It was further estimated that the total 1990 evangelical community was 235,430 people or 8% of the total Costa Rican population (Gómez, 25).

Jorge Gómez, in an attempt to measure the evangelical population of Costa Rica for his 1995 study, *Protestant Growth and Desertion in Costa Rica: Viewed in the Relation to Churches with Higher Attrition, Lower Attrition, and More Mobility Rates, as Affected by Evangelism (i.e. Message and Method) and Discipleship*, relied upon surveys of the general population carried out in 1987, 1989, 1991, and 1994 by CID-Gallup. The 1989 CID-Gallup study estimated the evangelical population at 9.8% of the general population and the 1991 study estimated the population to be 10.6%.

The CID-Gallup study of 1994 indicated an evangelical community of 323,415 people or 10% of the general population. In 1995 another sampling of the general population of Costa Rica by Demoscopia S.A. showed that 12.2% of the people surveyed described themselves as “Protestants.”

In September of 1997 CID-Gallup did yet another study that indicated that 14.0% of the population declared themselves Protestant. At about the same time as the CID-Gallup study (July 1997), another company, Borge & Associates carried out a study for the Arnold Bergstraeser Institute of Friburgo, Germany that showed the evangelical population was 18.3%. Due to the large variations shown in the studies Clifton Holland, editor for the CISRE publication which summarized the studies done between 1983 to 1997 states:

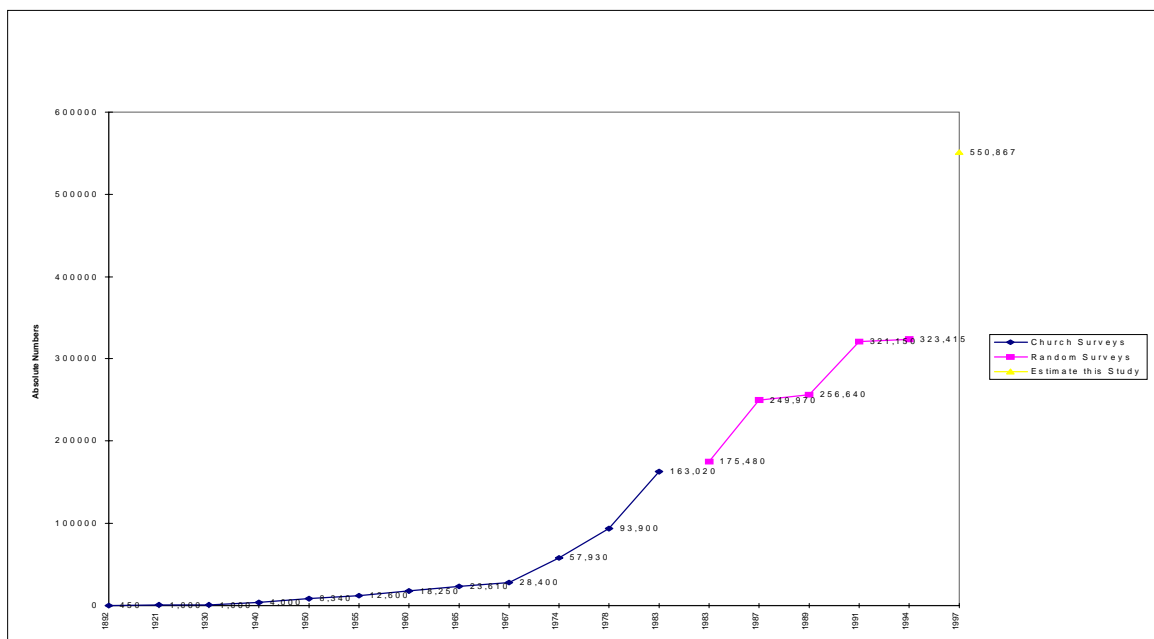
Without entering into a discussion here about all the factors that play into this type of study, one could come to the general conclusion that, for the period of July to September of 1997, the Protestant population of Costa Rica was 16.2% of the national population (14.0 plus 18.3 = 32.3 divided by 2 = 16.2). (CISRE, 2)

Using the figure of 16%, it can be estimated that the 1997 evangelical population was 550,867 people.

Two things should be noted about these studies in general. One, it should be pointed out that while there very well may be many people who would identify themselves with the Protestant faith, not all these people may attend church. Secondly, it needs to be said that depending on the formation of the questions used in the questionnaires differences may occur in the results of the studies.

Figure 1:1

Estimated Evangelical Population 1935 - 1997



Also included in the Borge & Associates 1997 study of the national population was an attempt to assess the distribution of the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and “Christian cults” population by province. This part of the survey produced the following information.

Table 1.3
Provincial Distribution of Religious Groups and Number of Protestant Churches

Province	Catholic %	Protestant %	Protestant Churches
Heredia	74.9	7.8	110
Guanacaste	87.4	9.4	200
Cartago	72.4	9.7	100
Puntarenas	79.7	18.4	360
San José	87.4	20.3	500
Limón	67.4	28.3	310
Alajuela	83.6	12.6	320
Total			2300

(CISRE)

These data are important to this study because it shows that there were at least 2,300 evangelical churches operating in Costa Rica in 1997. Subtracting the 1990 figure (1,928 churches) shows that in seven years an additional 372 churches had been planted, an average of 53 churches a year. This means that the number of evangelical churches was increasing at a rate of 2.7% a year.

To support the above figure, mention should be made of the 1995 directory *Donde Esta La Iglesia? [Where is the Church?]*, which listed churches in the metropolitan area of San José, Costa Rica. Though the research for this directory was not as extensive as IMDELA's 1990 study nor the studies done by CID-GALLUP and Borge & Associates, an increase of 34.9% was found in the number of churches in the San José greater

metropolitan area between 1986 (29 denominations with 192 churches) and 1995 (29 denominations with 259 churches). This represents an annual growth rate of 3.0%. In all, 432 churches were found in the greater metropolitan area. Of the 432 churches, 196 (45%) gave the number of people attending their services, a total of 36,040 people. The average attendance of the churches (after subtracting nine churches with over 500 people, churches whose characteristics were not the same as the those studied) was 103 people (FAEC, 7). To estimate the current number of churches in the greater metropolitan area in 1997 we can take the 1995 figure of 432 and multiply it by the annual growth rate arriving at 472 churches.

The last reliable figures concerning evangelical church family distribution come from the 1990 IMDELA study. This study discovered that 66.7% of the churches were Pentecostal/ Charismatic, 25.8% were from historical or traditional church families and 7.5% were from some other background.

This study will assume, for the basis of analysis, the following:

1. A total evangelical population of 550,867 people or 16% of the national population (3,442,920 times 16.0%).
2. Approximately 2,300 churches throughout the country.
3. About 472 churches or 20.5% of all the churches are in greater metropolitan San José.
4. A 2.7% annual church plant growth rate.
5. A 3.0% urban church growth rate.

6. That 66.7% of the churches are Pentecostal/ Charismatic, 25.8% are from historical or traditional church families, and 7.5% are from some other background.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background for this study comes from two sources. Both are church growth studies conducted in Latin America. The principal source material for this study arises from a 1992 Fuller Theological Seminary doctoral dissertation, *Urban Ministry Factors in Latin America* by John Hall. The second background source of material comes from Jorge Gómez' 1995 Columbia International University study on *Protestant Growth and Desertion in Costa Rica: Viewed in the Relation to Churches with Higher Attrition, Lower Attrition, and More Mobility Rates, as affected by Evangelism (i.e. Message and Method) and Discipleship*.

From these two sources the following key church growth principles can be derived that are valid in the context of Latin America.

1. That the role of the leader is very important in the development of a healthy church (Hall, 193, 201) (Gómez, 531).
2. Pastors of large churches recognized the need to train and involve their church members in evangelistic efforts and involved a growing circle of leadership in service ministries (Hall, 183, 201) (Gómez, 540).
3. That desertion from the evangelical churches truly is a problem, the main cause of which is the personal conduct of the people (Gómez, 531).
4. That there were four categories of people most vulnerable to desertion; members born Protestant, new believers, young adults, and men (Gómez, 223-225).

Because the role of the pastor was shown to be pivotal in the development of the church and in order to understand how these principles work in the field, church and mission leaders need to know two things:

What are the personal realities that Costa Rican pastors face?

What are the ministry realities within which Costa Rican pastors work in?

Ministry Background: Christ for the City

Christ for the City International (CFCI) is a mission agency focused on proclaiming Christ in an urban context. Christ for the City was established in 1983 under the Latin America Mission (LAM) as a response to the growing urban crisis impacting Latin America. In 1995, as a result of many factors, CFC was allowed by the LAM to become a separate mission agency and began to be designated Christ for the City International (CFCI).

CFCI is guided in its work by eleven principles that form the hub from which all CFCI ministries work. They are also used as a guide for decisions and future ministry thrusts. Following these principles means:

1. Constantly searching God's heart to understand His vision for the city.
2. Being involved in effective evangelism.
3. Cultivating Christian unity among all believers in Christ.
4. Engendering widespread and sustained involvement in prayer for the city.
5. Compassionately caring for people at risk.
6. Sharing the gospel across classes and cultures
7. Committing themselves to leadership enablement.
8. Focusing ministry on the next generation.
9. Modeling a worshipping community.

10. Openly advocating the integrity of the family.
11. Communicating core values in a culturally transforming manner.

Today, after more than fourteen years, CFCI is active in nine countries and 35 cities. In all there are 114 CFCI missionaries, 84 of whom are loaned to CFCI from the LAM. Of the missionaries serving in CFCI, 56 (46%) are Latins and several are pastors with their own churches. The eleven principles serve as the backbone of what is today Christ for the City International. Because the key principles of CFCI revolve around serving local churches, the person and ministry of the Costa Rican pastor is a key element to the success of many of the programs and projects in which CFCI is involved.

Potential Limitations

There is a problem when social research draws on sources outside the culture being studied. Terminology and concepts employed may not correspond to the realities that the subjects experience. In the case of this study the problem has been minimized as much as possible through the involvement of the Socio-religious Research Committee of the Evangelical Alliance (CISRE). Besides providing direct input into the development of the survey instrument, the committee also served as a sounding board for possible areas where terminology and cultural concepts were vulnerable to misinterpretation.

A second means adopted to assure that the study remained culturally valid was to consult Costa Rican church pastors and leaders regarding the appropriate terminology between the first and second drafts of the survey instrument. The church and mission leaders consulted were external to the committee. The suggestions obtained were then incorporated into the second draft of the survey instrument.

A third way that cultural integrity was maintained was by making presentations of the preliminary findings in several FAEC meetings. At the end of each presentation questions were answered that further helped to reduce any areas of ambiguity.

Definition of Terms

In order to define the parameters and concepts used in the structuring of this study, the clarification of key terms is important.

Church attendance (local)

For the purposes of this study, church attendance will be considered to be the number of people, men, women, and children, who regularly attend either the worship services or the Sunday school of a church.

Denomination

A denomination is a religious organization united in a single legal and administrative body grouping together a number of local churches that share common doctrine, purpose, and historical background. In this study “denomination” and “association” will be used interchangeably.

Evangelical

The term evangelical will be used to describe a religious group of people holding the same doctrinal position as the Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica (FAEC).

Evangelical Church (local)

A local evangelical church is an organized group of Christians with or without international connections that share common doctrines, principles, and values congruent with the FAEC statement of faith and who emphasize the authority of scripture, and

salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion.

Latin

The term “Latin” in this study is used to describe concepts relating to the countries or people groups using languages developed from Latin or those values specifically identified with the people or countries of Latin America.

Metropolitan Area

The official definition of the Greater Metropolitan Area in the province of San José consists of the following cantones (counties):

San José
 Escazu
 Desamparados (certain districts)
 Aserri (Aserri district only)
 Goicochea
 Alajuelita
 Vázquez de Coronado
 San Isidro
 Patalillo
 Tibás
 Moravia
 San Vicente district only
 Montes de Oca
 Curridabat

Mission Agency

A mission agency is a legally incorporated organization dedicated to serving the church of Jesus Christ in the recruitment, training, sending, and supervision of missionaries.

Pastor or Minister

The pastor or minister of an evangelical church is the recognized leader of an organized group of believers associated with a denomination or association recognized by FAEC (FAEC has a standardized doctrinal statement).

Pentecostal Christians / Churches

Evangelical Protestants characterized by emphasizing the existence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as operating in the church today and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience after conversion demonstrated primarily by speaking in tongues.

Research Questions

From the input of the CISRE research committee, the interviews, and the two church growth studies, the following research questions have been developed to investigate the personal and ministry realities of the Costa Rican pastors:

1.0 Research questions dealing with the personal realities that the Costa Rican pastors face include:

1.1 What is the background profile of the pastor?

RQ1 What is the impact of age in the areas of conversion and pastoring?

RQ2 What is the family background of Costa Rican evangelical pastors presently serving in churches?

RQ3 What is the financial situation of the pastor?

RQ4 What is the academic background of the pastor?

1.2 What are the parameters of the pastor's ministry environment?

RQ5 What do pastors identify as their greatest areas of need?

2.0 Research questions dealing with the ministry realities that the Costa Rican pastors face include:

2.1 What is the profile of the churches where the pastors are serving?

RQ 6 What is the profile of the church he is currently serving in terms of location, age, denomination, attendance, gender, and people involved in leadership?

RQ 7 What programs are currently active in the church and what terms and/or qualifications would the pastor use to characterize them?

RQ8 What obstacles does the pastor face in trying to achieve church growth?

2.2 What is the relationship between the church and the general populace?

RQ 9 How would the pastor describe his community? Is there a community profile that dominates the viewpoint of the pastors?

RQ10 What is the impact of the evangelical church in the lives of its members, and outsiders?

RQ11 What does the pastor perceive to be the moral situation of the country?

RQ12 What do the pastors feel are the most effective methods of evangelism available to them?

Collecting data on these questions will help to construct a profile of the Costa Rican pastor as a person and as a professional. Examining these questions will also help church and mission leaders have a better understanding of the realities that pastors face in their personal and ministerial environments.

Importance of the Study

This study is important for two reasons. First, church organizations and leaders desire to know what areas of need exist among Costa Rican pastors, both at a personal and a professional level, so that steps can be taken to support them and enhance their effectiveness.

Second, the changing missiological landscape makes it necessary that mission agencies learn to partner with local church and organizational structures. In learning more about Costa Rican pastors, both mission agencies and Costa Rican church leaders will be able to develop good church-growth strategies more effectively.

In both cases the key component is found in the person of the leader of the church. It is expected that the research carried out through this study will help both churches and mission agencies in developing strategies that reflect an integrated approach to the task of developing programs and seeking resources that would help the pastor in his job.

By focusing on the opinions that the pastors have about themselves as people and about their ministries, it is hoped that this study will provide a profile of the Costa Rican evangelical pastor in terms of the context of his own life and ministry. It is also hoped that this survey will spur further research into the needs of Costa Rican pastors.

Personal Importance of the Topic

For many years the author has been working with Costa Rican pastors from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Many of these men (and women) lead sacrificial lives for the advancement of the gospel. The testimonies about their lives and their opinions about their work make them unique among the general Costa Rican populace. This study will allow the author a chance to understand the worldview of the pastors he works with and to present information beneficial to church and mission agency leaders.