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A Statistical Analysis and Comparison of My Pastoral Ministry in the Light of Church Growth Principles From Acts and Current Literature

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**A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON
OF MY PASTORAL MINISTRY
IN THE LIGHT OF CHURCH GROWTH PRINCIPLES
FROM ACTS AND CURRENT LITERATURE**

**A Research Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
Western Evangelical Seminary**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
James Robert Hall
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APPROVAL PAGE

D.Min. Product Title A Statistical Analysis and Comparison of My
Pastoral Ministry In the Light of Church Growth Principles From
Acts and Current Literature

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze my ministry in four churches in order to discover its strengths and weaknesses. It was believed that an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses evident through my ministry would enable corrective and supplemental measures to be taken.

The reason this study was undertaken was because of the fact that in some church settings certain ministry methods worked. Then again, in other church settings, the same or similar methods did not seem to work. The questions: "Why did it work there?", and "Why did it not work somewhere else?", were the motivating factors that began this searching study of my ministry. It was our concern to understand and be better equipped to serve the Lord more effectively in the work of the church.

The Limitation of the Study

In order to relate the statistical findings of my ministerial career to a wider field of experience, a chapter on a survey of church growth literature was required. Also, a study of the growth of the early church in Acts would provide a firm foundation for the entire study.

The statistics for the four churches of our pastoral ministry were compiled from The Official Record of the Pacific Conference of the Evangelical Church of North America. These journals report the statistics under three main headings, that of Ministry and Outreach, Christian Education, and Finances. Not all of the items listed under each heading are graphed. Only the more prominent indicators were chosen to show rates of growth or decline on the charts. Yellow highlighting

was used to indicate our periods of ministry on the appropriate graphs.

The survey of the vast field of church growth literature was focused to a consideration of principles seen as pertinent to the aims of this study, under the headings of The Pastor, The Church, and The Outreach. The leading principles uncovered in the study were then applied to my ministry in the four churches in the final Summary and Evaluation chapter.

The study of the book of Acts was conducted with a view to discovering growth principles operative in the life of the early church. Three of these principles that occupied a prominent place in the growth of the church are reported under the general titles of Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results. The three emphases are seen as inherent in the key verse of Acts 1:8. Then these principles are seen operative in the life of the church, and are reflected in the later ministries of Peter and Paul.

The study in Acts was conducted in the New King James Version of the Bible. The listing of representative Scriptures in each category is included in the Appendix. Leading commentaries were consulted to supplement or correct the subjective findings of the present researcher. Other secondary sources were also used in the ascertaining of valid interpretations.

The Organization of the Study

Chapter two presents growth principles as derived from the books of Acts. It does not attempt to explicate all the principles in Acts. The growth principles are organized under the general headings of: Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results.

Chapter three is a general survey of church growth literature that uncovers principles for growth. This survey, not intended to be exhaustive, is organized under the heading of The Pastor, The Church, and The Outreach, as they relate

in practice to my ministry.

Chapter four presents a background of the church at Maupin, Oregon. The statistical analysis of my ministry, as developed from the conference journals, is compared with the previous and subsequent periods of ministry there. A personal reflection on our period of ministry at Maupin concludes the chapter.

Chapter five provides a background of the church in Portland, Oregon. A statistical analysis, developed from the conference records, is compared with the previous and subsequent periods of ministry, in order to gain some historical perspective. A personal reflection follows.

Chapter six presents a background to the church in Toppenish, Washington. The statistical analysis of the ministry, as developed from the records, is compared with the periods previous to and subsequent to, our ministry there. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection.

Chapter seven provides the background of the church at Vernonia, Oregon. The statistical analysis of my ministry, having been developed from the available statistics, is then compared with the previous ministry period. The personal reflection of the present pastor concludes the chapter.

Chapter eight contains a summary of church growth principles as they apply to an evaluation of my ministry in the four churches, and includes areas for further study in the strengthening of my ministry.

The Bibliographies and Appendices compose the final section. The Bibliographies include references quoted, and a Selected Bibliography of background sources. The Appendix supplies the statistical charts and graphs of the four churches studied. The churches are identified in historical sequence as Church A, B, C, and D. The letter of each church corresponds to the same letter of their Appendix section of charts. The years of our ministry at each church are highlighted in yellow on the appropriate charts. The list of Scriptures used in

the survey of Acts completes the presentation of the study.

Chapter 2

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF CHURCH GROWTH FROM ACTS

This chapter focuses on the growth of the church in Acts. Yet, in researching the Biblical basis of church growth, it was found insufficient to simply catalog the numerical results. What preceded and prepared for the growth of the church also required attention. So what if the early church grew in numbers. What made it possible, what was the spiritual dynamic behind it? These wider questions surrounding the phenomenon of church growth then lead our search naturally from the results back to causes. All of these concerns fall under the general headings of:

Spiritual Preparation

Proclamation of the Gospel

Preservation of the Results

The chapter first of all demonstrates the validity of the three emphases arising out of the key Scripture of Acts 1:8. Further, the study shows the practical application of these principles in the practice of the early church. Finally, these church growth principles are shown being applied in the ministries of Peter and Paul. The most clear occasions in the Scriptures were selected as representative of the many other references in Acts that support these observations. The Appendix section lists more fully the Scriptures that apply under the three headings: Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results. The Biblical quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

The Key Scripture

In looking for a clue as to the structure of the book of Acts, it is the consensus of scholarly opinion that Acts 1:8 gives the basic outline of the book.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

This Scripture is commonly looked at as simply giving the geographical extension of the church in Acts, such as, beginning at Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ending up at the farthest reaches of the then civilized world. Ferris states that view clearly. "The widening circle -- Jerusalem - Judea - Samaria - the end of the earth -- suggests the plan of Acts."¹ Yet there is more to it than that. The Scripture can also be viewed as delineating the methodology behind church growth. If the Scripture is approached with the view to finding the methodological basis of church growth, then three areas come to the fore, arising from the structure of the verse itself.

The first part, "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," could speak of the spiritual preparation of the church for growth. The second division of the verse, "and you shall be witnesses to Me," would show the part the church plays in growth through the proclamation of the gospel. The third section of the Scripture, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth," then demonstrates the geographical extension of the church.

Concerning the growth of the church as depicted in the key verse under discussion, it is logically implied there, that the spiritual power to witness of Christ will naturally result in converts to the faith. If this is not the central meaning of the promise, then it is meaningless. If Jesus was only referring to the apostles (verse 2), or if he were even including the one-hundred and twenty disciples (verse 15), his promise of power to be witnesses in all parts of the earth would not make sense without the prospect and assurance of their witness being

¹Theodore P. Ferris, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol IX (New York: Abingdon, 1954), p. 29.

received. That is, it must be assumed that not only the twelve, or even the one-hundred and twenty, would become witnesses, but that as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit, a growing number of adherents to the faith would become a part of this broadening world-wide outreach of the faith. In other words, the power of the Holy Spirit is not simply power to embolden cowardly people to stand up for their faith, but, in addition, power to reproduce their faith in others.

The point of all this is that Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the other parts of the world are not just the places where the disciples would go to give a witness, or to proclaim their faith. The physical location of the places are not all that important. It is rather, that those are the places where people would come to faith in Christ. It is the results of the proclaiming of the faith in those places that should command our attention here. This emphasis is confirmed by the rest of the record of the book of Acts itself. Gerber forecasts this development in Acts.

It is the Holy Spirit who brought the church into being on the Day of Pentecost and who launched her on her evangelistic course. And our interpretation of Acts 2 will be distorted and out of focus unless we recognize that the Holy Spirit was given for the specific purpose of enabling Christ's disciples to fulfill their evangelistic role.²

The methodological base then of this key verse of the book of Acts can be designated as three integral parts in the growth of the church. These three movements, or emphases, in the extension of the faith, can be expressed by the following phrases: Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results.

The three emphases, taken from the key verse of the book of Acts, will consequently be our guide in the discussion and selection of representative sections of Scripture under those headings, throughout the rest of the study of Acts.

²Vergil Gerber, A Manual For Evangelism/Church Growth (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973), p. 22.

The Practice of the Church

Since this is a study of church growth, let us look first at the results of growth. The results on the Day of Pentecost, the day of the birth of the church as recorded in Acts 2:41-47, are astonishing. Two Scriptures are sufficient to give us the picture of the great influx and growth on that first day of the church.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them . . . and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:41, 47b).

Here is the explosive growth of the church taking place. Not only were three thousand people added to the church at one time, but in addition, new people were continually being added daily as well. Now, when we contemplate the growth of the church in the present day, the results recorded in these Scriptures are enough to set us back on our heels in bewilderment. It is certainly something to wonder about, especially if we limit ourselves to calculating the numerical results, and striving vainly to match them in our own churches. It is necessary to ask why and how, and to search back further in the Scripture to examine the preceding events from which the results came.

In Acts 2:14, 32, and 40, these verses take us one step back in the sequence of time that issued in the phenomenal growth of the church.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words' (Acts 2:14).

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:32).

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation' (Acts 2:40).

Peter rises to the occasion to explain something of his faith beginning in verse fourteen and on. In verse 32, Peter is continuing in his witness of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 40 tells us that with other words also Peter was testifying to the people and exhorting them to come to repentance and salvation by faith

in Christ. The Expositor's Bible Commentary notes that which becomes characteristic of the proclamation of the gospel. "The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance."³

The words "then those who gladly received his word" (Acts 2:41), leads us directly into the account of the explosive growth of the church. The event immediately preceding the church growth was the proclaiming of the good news of salvation to the assembled people.

So far, from the Scriptures looked at, we have the growth of the church depicted under the subject of the Preservation of the Results. Then the event of Peter witnessing, testifying, and exhorting the people which ties intimately to, and issues in, growth, is represented as the Proclamation of the Gospel.

At this point in our study, we might agree that, though it is insufficient to simply calculate the growth rates of churches and then strive to outdo them, it is also necessary to consider the method or vehicle used to bring about growth. Certainly, it is acceded that preaching the Word and making known the good news to people is the method of spreading the message of faith in Christ. But there is more. The study is about the Biblical basis of church growth. The method of research adopted and arrived at to this point is that of considering the cause and effects of events. That is, what happened before the numerical increase of people, Peter's preaching. But to apply the method further, what happened before Peter's sermon? That is the question which we must now ask.

Acts 2:4, 17-18, 33 and 38, speak of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon God's people. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

³Frank E. Gaebelin, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 278.

Acts 2:4, in fact, verses 1-4, tell of the event of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in power. Notice that the direct response of the disciples to the infilling with the Holy Spirit was to speak out about God, speaking in such an empowered way that the visiting Jews and god-fearers with foreign languages could hear and understand them. "We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

Peter's sermon that follows upon this empowering of the Holy Spirit, itself speaks about the coming of the Spirit. "And having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Peter further extended this promise to those who were listening.

Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you' (Acts 2:38-39a).

Up to this point, we can see, in studying the Biblical basis of church growth, that in looking at numerical growth, alone, they give no clues, in and of themselves, as to how they were arrived at. Backtracking in the Scriptures, looking for possible causative factors, led us undeviatingly to Peter's proclamation of the gospel as the precipitating event of the growth results. However, even Peter's sermon was centered upon not only a witness to Jesus' death and resurrection, which was the reason for the powerful event that confirmed the message, but, pre-eminently, upon the coming of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

So, in backtracking, we found first, the results, then the proclamation, and finally, the preparation by the Holy Spirit. Looked at as sequential and causative steps, we have the Spiritual Preparation, enabling the Proclamation of the Gospel, necessarily resulting in the Preservation of the Results. Bruce puts it in different words, but the elements are all there.

When the Holy Spirit came upon them Jesus assured them, they would be clothed with heavenly power that power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching made effective. As Jesus Himself had been anointed at His baptism with the Holy Spirit and power, so His followers were now to be similarly anointed and enabled to carry on His work. This work would be a work of witness-bearing. A theme which is prominent in the apostles preaching throughout Acts.⁴

Acts 2:17-21, which Peter quotes, is from Joel 2:28-32. The main points of the prophecy can fit under the three emphases by which we are studying church growth in the book of Acts. The pertinent portions of the prophecy are quoted below under the three guiding principles from the key verse, Acts 1:8.

<u>Spiritual Preparation</u>	<u>Proclamation of the Gospel</u>	<u>Preservation of the Results</u>
"I will pour out of My Spirit" (vs. 17)	"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (vs. 17)	"And it shall come to pass that who- soever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (vs. 21)
"I will pour out My Spirit" (vs. 18)	"And they shall prophesy" (vs. 18)	

The sequence of events that the prophet Joel speak of, happened exactly that way on the Day of Pentecost, that first great day of the church. The Spiritual Preparation of the empowerment with the Holy Spirit, enabled a bold Proclamation of the gospel to all people, which brought results that were garnered, under the Preservation of the Results. Again, Ferris in his clear way focuses on the main event.

⁴F. F. Bruce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 38-39.

Now they became conscious of the Spirit as power, in accordance with the promise of 1:8 -- wherein they might go forth to their work of witness-bearing. Accordingly, the great central fact of the day was not that on it the Spirit was given for the first time, but that it marked the beginning of their active missionary work.⁵

Notwithstanding, one may still wonder if these unusual events were limited simply to the birth of the church by way of a beginning impetus. What happened later in Acts? Did not the church get away from the phenomenology of Pentecost? Let us look at the practice of the church at a later stage in order to find an answer to that.

The sixth chapter of Acts brings us to a crucial stage in the growth and development of the church. It is called "crucial" because at that point the church, under the mounting pressures of rapid growth, could have consciously abandoned the three Biblical principles that comprise the foundation of church growth. The New Testament church, that from its inception was an empowered, proclaiming, preserving movement, was at the dangerous cross-roads of becoming simply, or primarily, a social service agency. The Regions Beyond missionary magazine has devoted an entire recent issue to examining both sides of this controversial subject.⁶

But again, looking at these three emphases of the early church, in what has become reverse order, verses one and seven of chapter six tell about the numerical growth in believers being added to the church. Between verse one and verse seven, however, there is a discernable increase in the rate of church growth. Notice these verses arranged in parallel lines:

"The number of the disciples was multiplying" (vs. 1).

"The number of the disciples multiplied greatly" (vs. 7).

"And a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (vs. 7).

⁵Op. cit., Ferris, p. 36.

⁶Joseph F. Conley (ed.), Regions Beyond "Two perspectives on the subject of community development", 2-14 Mr 1985.

The beginning point of the story has the disciples multiplying. The sequel tells of the disciples multiplying greatly. Somewhere, somehow, in-between verses one and seven, something must have transpired in the life of the church, to issue forth in a more rapid rate of growth. What was that improvement? In fact, it was a problem, that came to the fore. The problem was that the church was growing too fast. That is not exactly correct either. The church was growing too big, apparently, for the twelve apostles (vs. 2), to oversee all of the functioning of the church. It was supposed that the twelve apostles would leave what they had been doing to be available for the more pressing task of giving food to the new converts (not only from among the local Jews, but in addition, the Hellenists), referred to in verse one.

Now this was a sticky problem which must be handled delicately. After all, Peter had a growing church on his hands. That was great, but there was a big problem brewing, causing murmurings and the potential of a possible split. E. M. Bounds commented on the problem:

Now these Apostles, when they looked into this matter, determined to put aside these hindrances growing out of Church finances, and resolved to 'give themselves to prayer.' Not that these finances were to be ignored or set aside, but ordinary laymen, 'full of faith and the Holy Ghost' could be found, really religious men, who could easily attend to this money business without in the least affecting their piety or their praying, thus giving them something to do in the Church, and at the same time taking the burden from the Apostles who would be able now to pray more, and praying more, to be more blessed themselves in soul, and at the same time to more effectually do the work to which they had been called.⁷

Peter had better run to fix the problem fast, before both sides of the potential split blamed him for not doing his job. God certainly gave spiritual wisdom to those leaders, to keep a steady, sure hand upon the church in directing it in the path of empowered fruitfulness.

⁷E. M. Bounds, The Weapon of Prayer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), pp. 15-16.

Spiritual lay leadership was delegated to meet the legitimate needs of the growing and diverse congregation, but the temporal needs of people were not allowed to usurp the primary focus of the church. The principle purpose of the church continued to be maintained, that of Spiritual Preparation, the Proclamation of the Gospel, and the Preservation of the Results. Notice how these three areas come to light right out of the account itself. We have already looked at the growth results in verses one and seven. The emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel are contained in verses two, four, and seven. Verse two says, "it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." Also, it says in verse four, "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Then finally, verse seven says, "and the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

The word of God, of course, is the Scripture, but more particularly, it is the message of the gospel of Christ, which is the content of the preaching, teaching, witnessing ministry of the church. The danger highlighted in chapter six of Acts is that the church would forsake this primary function of proclaiming the gospel to people, and turn aside to just meet their physical needs, legitimate as these may be. Getz agrees. He states that priorities must be observed in our ministry.

A spiritual leader in the church must learn to establish priorities in the ministry. The apostles of old, when confronted with the problems in Jerusalem, said to the people, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.' They solved the problem by establishing priorities, by having seven men appointed to handle this matter, and they continued to 'devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word' (Ac. 6:2, 4). Not that these matters were unimportant, nor were they matters that did not call for leaders with spiritual qualifications (Ac. 6:5), but they were matters that could have taken the apostles away from their primary work.⁸

⁸Gene A. Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 125.

The final emphasis, in reality the first emphasis, is the spiritual preparation. Verses three through six highlight this need. Notice that one of the qualifications for the proposed lay leadership was the fullness of the Holy Spirit in verse three. Again in verse five this qualification was emphasized in the case of Stephen, who was soon to become the first martyr. As a side note, among that selected company of head-waiters, Philip too, soon graduated to become an evangelist. What the Holy Spirit can do through yielded men of lowly position! But also for the apostles themselves, their concern for continued spiritual preparation was revealed in verses four and six, as they determined to continually give themselves to prayer (vs. 4). They were even consistent in relying upon prayer in the setting apart of the seven laymen for their work (vs. 6).

You may recall that the one-hundred and twenty disciples were in the upper room in prayer when the Holy Spirit filled them, and they were powerfully thrust out as witnesses of Jesus (Acts 1:14; 2:1-4).

Praise the Lord that he kept the growing church true to its founding impetus, and to its experience of spirit-empowered evangelism! Oh, may we still find it true in our church experience today as we seek the growth of the church in outreach with the gospel of Christ.

The Ministries of the Leaders Peter and Paul

First Peter, and then Paul, as the historical sequence of the book of Acts unfolds, continued to demonstrate through their growing ministries the Biblical basis of church growth under the present headings of Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results.

In turning to the ministry of Peter, the experience of Peter with the Roman centurion, Cornelius, was selected as typical of the three Biblical principles of church growth displayed in the other references to his ministry.

As before, we look first at the church growth results of the episode, then back up to look for the presence of the two preceding principles that are preparatory and causative of the results.

In Acts, chapters ten and eleven, is recorded the results of Peter's vision and obedience that brought him to Cornelius' house.

"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

"The Gentiles had also received the word of the God" (Acts 11:1b).

"Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (Acts 11:18b).

The Scriptures above are limited to the specific references to the household of Cornelius that came to faith in Christ. The verse in chapter ten is the narrative of the event of Cornelius and his household receiving the gospel at the time it happened. The verses in chapter eleven refer back to the event as reported to the Jerusalem church.

The event is an important extension of the outreach of the gospel to include Gentiles along with Jews as believers. Again, however, we must look behind the result of people coming to Christ, to recognize the preceding steps that led up to it. Chapter ten gives us the necessary details to piece the sequence together.

Peter, "opened his mouth and said" (Acts, 10:34a), as he began to share the gospel with Cornelius and those gathered with him. In the course of his presentation, Peter repeated again and again that "we are witnesses of all things which he did" (Acts 10:39a), and that God revealed himself "to witnesses" (Acts 10:41a), "and He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify" (Acts 10:42a). It was "while Peter was still speaking these words" (Acts 10:44a), that the listening Gentiles believed and the Holy Spirit fell on them. The preceding event is clear, before those of Cornelius' household became converts, someone, Peter in this case, was witnessing to them about Christ. Getz and others have made a special point of

Cornelius' household coming to Christ.

The primary target for evangelism should be adults and consequently whole households. . . . The New Testament pattern is clear! . . . In the book of Acts, the apostles won adults to Christ first of all. . . . They went after adults -- knowing that parental conversion meant reaching the whole household. Dr. George Peters goes so far as to say in his excellent book Saturation Evangelism that 'Household evangelism and household salvation are the biblical ideal and norm in evangelism and salvation.'⁹

Getz adds further emphasis:

'Family units' are the building blocks for a healthy church. Again Dr. Peters reminds us: 'Only churches that are built out of basic social units have the true health and the potential of rapid growth and steady expansion. The decisive question in founding a church is not how many people are interested in the project, but rather how many families form the foundation of the church. Churches founded by families have the potential to flourish.'¹⁰

But then, let us not stop here in our search for the Biblical bases for church growth. Something before the event, in this case as well, prepared the way for the end-results.

Further back in Acts chapter ten, is found the picture wherein Peter was prepared spiritually to speak the gospel so that Cornelius and his friends would come to believe. Peter had found a place to pray up on the housetop of the home he was staying in (Acts 10:9). During his prayer time, he fell into a trance and saw a vision. In response to the vision, Peter uses the name "Lord" (Acts 10:14) to speak to him who was speaking with him. After the vision, as Peter was pondering its meaning, "the Spirit said to him" (Acts 10:19) to go with the men who were seeking him. Then as Peter arrived at Cornelius' house, he said that "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Here is definite reference to God preparing Peter, as he prayed, by the Holy Spirit,

⁹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 45. Gene Getz quotes from the book by George Peters, Saturation Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 155.

to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. The sequence leading to the results? Spiritual Preparation, along with the Proclamation of the Gospel, and the Preservation of the Results in the baptizing and the filling with the Holy Spirit. The conversion results cannot be taken alone when one is seeking to find how the results were obtained. As mentioned before, the episode represents the many other scattered references to these three emphases and their sequence in the resulting outcome.

Paul's ministry now remains to be scrutinized to see if the same Biblical principles of church growth applied in his experience. Since we are studying church growth from Acts, we examine the growth of the church in numbers of converts first. Then we back up in time to searching the preceding narrative to find a sequence of preparatory events.

The particular event used to illustrate this process and to stand as a model of Paul's further ministry, is his first missionary journey as recorded in Acts, chapters thirteen and fourteen. In Cyprus, "the proconsul believed" (Acts 13:12). At Antioch in Pisidia, "many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). It is further recorded that "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region" (Acts 13:48-49).

Later at Iconium "a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1). At Derbe also they "made many disciples" (Acts 14:21). Then returning back through those several towns Paul, along with Barnabas, strengthened "the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22), and, "when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). Then when Paul arrived back home it was reported how God "had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

It is plain that on Paul's first missionary journey there were results wherever he went, and that he took pains to preserve those results by further instruction and exhortation. The question must be asked once more, what caused this growth of the church? What was Paul's secret? Did he have a charismatic personality? Was it just the luck of favorable circumstances? No. It is no great secret, yet one often overlooked.

Paul proclaimed the gospel to those people as he traveled through their towns. That in itself is no magic formula. However, it is an essential element of the whole process by which God brings men to faith in Christ. We dare not ignore or downgrade the simple Biblical steps that bring about church growth results.

When Paul was in Cyprus, he "preached the word of God" (Acts 13:5), and also was sought after by the proconsul "to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:7). The proconsul is the one recorded as having subsequently believed. So too at Antioch in Pisidia Paul stood up and spoke (Acts 13:16), stating that "we declare to you glad tidings" (Acts 13:32). He further urged "let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). The Gentiles who heard him "begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42), and that on that day "about the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:44). Many people became converts from that exposure to the gospel.

Later on in his journey at Iconium Paul and his companion Barnabas, "stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace" (Acts 14:3), then, "they were preaching the gospel" (Acts 14:7) at Lystra. There Paul said: "We . . . preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God" (Acts 14:15). At Derbe also, he "preached the gospel to that city" (Acts 14:21).

Paul carried the gospel of the good news of Christ and experienced much growth in the number of new converts and in the establishing of the converts. Yet, still, what was the motivating force behind Paul's preaching that brought such church growth?

Before Paul's first missionary journey, a prayer meeting was going on at his home church in Antioch at which the Holy Spirit was present. It is interesting how, from time to time, starting with the disciples in the upper room, that prayer and the Holy Spirit are so often linked. It so happened in this case, that:

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went (Acts 13:2-4).

The presence of the Holy Spirit was also evident through their ministry as the Scripture testifies, "and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).

From this study of the Biblical principles of church growth from the book of Acts, it is clear that people are susceptible to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Particularly is this so when there has been the Spiritual Preparation, followed by the Proclamation of the Gospel, resulting in a garnering of results in the Preservation of the Results.

This chapter provides the Biblical foundation for the next chapter, which surveys church growth literature under the general headings of The Pastor, The Church, and The Outreach. The insights gleaned from the study of Acts and from the literature will then be applied to the four churches of our pastoral ministry in the remaining chapters.

In this overview the necessity for Spiritual Preparation falls, not totally but in practice, predominantly on the pastor. Ideally, responsibility for church growth is shared with the people of the church. In reality, however, traditional mutual expectations have laid the burden on the pastor's shoulders.

Then, the Biblical emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel is expressed under the heading of The Church. A great deal of church growth literature underscores the problem of getting churches to set goals for growth. Three areas of controversy came to light. First, there is a basic contention of whether the purpose of the church is evangelism or nurture. Second, some churches, it is purported, fail to set goals out of fear of failure, while others use goals for motivation. Third, there are the cases of apparently self-centered introversion, yet others are actively training their laity in the proclamation ministry of the church.

Finally, the church growth chapter concludes with a discussion under the section The Outreach. A specific problem in this area is that many churches appear to settle for a Christian "presence", in substitution for evangelistic outreach. Being a "silent" witness may appear to be preferable to being a vocal witness. So the emphasis in Acts on gaining conversion is evidenced in the modern concern of church growth.

Chapter 3

A SURVEY OF CHURCH GROWTH LITERATURE

There are many helps available to pastors and churches that are interested in growth, from the growing resource of current church growth literature. This chapter is a general (not exhaustive), survey of insights provided by this literature. These findings are reported under three general headings, that of The Pastor, The Church, and The Outreach. The Bibliography of sources used is included in the Appendix.

The Pastor

Pastoral leadership in a local church is an important factor in any discussion of church growth. Responsibility for growth is usually assumed to rest entirely on the leader's shoulders. This undoubted influential position of leadership in the church calls for an examination of leadership qualities.

The recognized successful church leader Robert Schuller forcefully states his conviction that leadership is the main key to a growing church:

There is no substitute for dynamic, aggressive, positive, inspiring leadership! Almost without exception, the lack of success means the lack of effective leadership. And the reverse is true. Great success is the result of great leadership.¹

He further emphasizes:

Leadership is the key to church growth. If the church is to really succeed in its mission of witnessing effectively to the non-churched world in the Twenty-First Century, we must develop dynamic, aggressive and inspiring leaders.²

¹Robert H. Schuller, Your Church Has Real Possibilities! (Glendale: Regal Books, 1974), p. 48.

²*Ibid.*, p. 49.

This is a popular conception of the leadership role in the church. There is much to recommend it. Certainly no one else in many congregations can claim to have the theological and Biblical training that the pastor has. Also, since the pastor is often the only paid staff member of a church, he has more time than others to devote to growing the church.

Schuller adds to his argument by sharing some general observations, possibly from his own past experience.

Leadership is an enormous responsibility that cannot be irresponsibly placed in the hands of people who do not put the church first in their lives. And no matter how dedicated the members of a local congregation are, the church does not take first place in their lives. The same can be said for members of the church board.³

Schuller's challenge is hard to answer.

Let there be no dodging of this issue. Pastor? Do you hear me? You should be the spark plug. You should be the inspiring commander leading the troops up the hill!⁴

From the obvious growth of the Crystal Cathedral, it appears that Dr. Schuller certainly embodies the dictum he preaches of the primacy of the leader in church growth.

There are others, however, who also sense the important role of the pastor in a church, and who try to work it out in their own ministry, but who seem stymied by the burden of it all. Robert Girard asks:

Will the Lord mimeograph the bulletin, sing the solo, teach the Sunday school class and contact the families who need to be contacted before Sunday? Will the Lord write my sermon, prepare my Sunday school lesson and meet Mrs. So-and-so for counseling? Will the Lord see to it that the lawn is mowed and the janitor work is done right? Will the Lord recruit those substitute teachers we need for tomorrow morning and deliver the materials to them tonight? Will the Lord run down to the newspaper office with these news releases? Will the Lord go on the air for my Sunday morning

³Ibid., p. 53.

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

radio broadcast? If I don't do it, nobody will! . . . Next morning in my 'devotions' I would beg His forgiveness for all my resentment against Him (never really sure He would be willing to forgive me for the same sin over and over again). And then I would dive into another day, never quite satisfied unless I was planning some new program to add to an over-burdened calendar. Some new program designed by me, energized by me, sparked by me, worked by me, organized by me, handed to the people by me, and (hopefully) 'blessed' by the Lord.⁵

Probably every pastor has wrestled with the "ideal" and the "reality" in their own church leadership and met with some degree of frustration along the way.

Robert Maner pastored a small church and has seen it grow. He affirms that:

The people, not the pastor, are the only ones who can really build a great church. For the people are the church. The pastor is but the shepherd. And sheep are the ones who should reproduce sheep.⁶

What swings in dogmatic assertions! Which side is right? Can there be truth on both sides of the issue? These are not statements by disgruntled failures. All of them show a measure of successful church growth in apparently adhering to their own philosophy of ministry. Is there a middle ground? Is there a stance that can be taken that incorporates the insights from both sides?

Donald McGavran has given us a balanced view of the relationship that leadership in the church bears to church growth.

Churches which are not growing are usually churches in which the responsibility for growth is all loaded onto one person, usually the minister. On the other hand, a church where everybody is working for growth, where everybody is concerned that the Gospel be known, that is a church which grows. Where everybody works at getting obstacles out of the way, where everybody learns as much as possible about the growth of the church, where the church board or session spends half its time planning for church growth, there church growth occurs.⁷

⁵Robert C. Girard, Brethren, Hang Loose (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 30.

⁶Robert E. Maner, Making the Small Church Grow (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1982), p. 30.

⁷Donald A. McGavran, with Win C. Arn, How to Grow a Church (Glendale: Regal Books, 1973), pp. 12-13.

Pastor Girard acknowledges later in his book Brethren Hang Loose, that:

I had founded the church and had trained it to follow me, implicitly impressing upon it the importance of my leadership. So it seemed natural to me (not knowing any better) to set my own goals and to present them to the church, not as an ultimatum or a 'do-it-or-else' program, but as 'information' about the direction I, as pastor, intended to lead the church. How fast we moved toward these goals was, of course, up to them. The congregation and its leaders in turn could veto the whole thing by terminating my call as pastor. I see now that it's a rough-and-tumble way to go. But it was the only way I knew at the time.⁸

Parrott also recognized the limitation of pastoral leadership.

The pastor who will become a real leader in the church learns how to work through other people in developing a team capable of dealing with all the challenges the church faces. . . . But the pastor who feels he must be the center of all the activity, doing all the work himself, is limited in the size of the congregation he can build and serve.⁹

He also expressed a more hopeful future for those of us who do not pastor a super-successful church.

The giant of a leader is the man who has a combination of charisma, hard work, good preparation, and an understanding of people. However, these persons are few and far between. It is not for you and me to be concerned about them. God has built His kingdom with millions of ordinary people and only a handful of leadership giants. Let us leave the giants to themselves while we give our energies to developing whatever potential God has given us to lead the people in the place where we serve.¹⁰

It can be seen that the truth that leadership is important can be overstated for emphasis sake, but that it does not say everything. Leadership needs followership, and how leadership accommodates itself to developing those who follow is an important task in the interests of church growth.

The early church leaders wrestled with a similar situation. In Acts 6:4, the apostles realized the importance of their Spiritual Preparation, "we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." They also realized

⁸Op. cit., Girard, p. 101.

⁹Leslie Parrott, Building Today's Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 44.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 46.

they could not take care of all the needs of the growing church by themselves. The need for other spiritual workers was apparent. Other workers were enlisted to become involved with the apostles in the oversight of the church, exercising delegated authority. The church "chose", and these were then "set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:5a, 6). The resulting rapid church growth vindicated their actions (vs. 7).

From personal experience, I also have seen both ends of the spectrum, either where the pastor tries to do everything, from the lawn to the pulpit, or where too much is expected to happen spontaneously through the congregation. A more balanced, participative mode of leadership has now been adopted in our present pastorate in order to help the church to grow.

One of the important places that leadership can fill in a local church is in helping the congregation determine what its purpose is and what its goals are. This involves an analysis and planning process to determine how the church got where it is, and what its future could be.

Dr. Schuller is certainly on target when he states that "most churches that fail do so simply because they never really planned to succeed."¹¹

Leslie Parrott also shares the benefits that result in the planning process when participated in by the pastor and the people.

Where am I going? All of the little questions are suddenly answered when this issue is settled. The penalty for failing to answer this question is eventual boredom and often cynicism. If the sails aren't set, the ship drifts. The first six months in any new pastorate may well be spent in trying to determine one or two specific goals toward which the pastor feels everything in the ministry of this church must be turned. . . . The most difficult kind of goal is the changing of a set of attitudes in a church that has bogged down numerically and spiritually. . . . Organizing a new church, or filling up an empty one, or demonstrating the possibility of growth in a difficult spot, might all be suitable answers to the question, Where

¹¹Op. cit., Schuller, p. 37.

am I going? . . . The Holy Spirit will help a man to develop a style of leadership that brings out the best in people.¹²

The master church growth analyst, Donald McGavran, states the regular, recurrent need for statistical measurement as a means to aiding the health and growth of the church.

Doctors and dentists tell us of the need for regular checkups. The same is true of the church. Every church board needs to have at least an annual picture of the health and growth of the church and its various departments. In the room where the board or session meets, a large graph should cover the whole side of the room. On this would be a dozen different lines showing exact statistical pictures of a dozen significant aspects of the church, not merely how much money has been given or how large the overall membership is. Many significant aspects of the church could easily be charted month after month, quarter after quarter, and year after year. Then as the board or the session met, it could see at a glance the health and vitality of the church, and also those areas needing attention.¹³

Along with setting goals for the ministry of the church, many church growth authorities link the willingness of the pastor and people to work together long enough to help the church achieve its growth goals. Robert Schuller advises:

Set successful goals and you will succeed. Fail to set successful goals and you can be assured of failure. Success or failure starts at this point, for goal setting is nothing more than planning ahead. And when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Putting it another way, when you set no goals for growth, you set your goals for no growth! The terrible truth is that tens of thousands of churches around the world today are experiencing no growth simply because nobody established any growth goal. . . . Perhaps the biggest single reason is that the typical pastor comes to the church without the determination to stay there long enough to make it a great church.¹⁴

Schuller points up a further reason for the failure to set goals in the church.

Another major reason for lack of goal-setting by church leaders is the fear of failure. When I had established a clear mental picture of the walk-in, drive-in church that I hoped to build, complete with fountains,

¹²Op. cit., Parrott, pp. 36-37, 43.

¹³Op. cit., McGavran, p. 74.

¹⁴Op. cit., Schuller, pp. 72-73.

landscaping and tower, I was a very excited young man. Remember, goal-setting is a major source of enthusiasm -- and enthusiasm is all-important for success.¹⁵

Again, the resistance to goal setting may have psychological roots.

Still another reason why people resist setting goals is their own lack of self-confidence. . . . Obviously, if it fails to excite people, they will not get behind the project. And people will get excited about goals if they see that these goals are really practical -- and if they will help human beings who are hurting. People will get excited about goals if they see that these goals can be creative and can lead to something beautiful.¹⁶

In the book, Making the Small Church Grow, Maner agrees with Schuller on the point of stressing longer pastorates, as well as seeing the importance of sensing exciting prospects in store for the church. He even believes that a pastor's work improves over a longer period of time.

Excitement is attractive. If church members are excited about their church, others will come to see why. If the pastor is not excited and the members seem bored or indifferent, there is little incentive for visitors to return. There are too many other churches around today that are excited about what they are doing. I would never remain as pastor of a church that did not excite me. It is not fair to the church or the pastor's ministry. This is one of the reasons I always insist on visiting a church and preaching for them before I accept a call as pastor. I don't go with the feeling that I am on trial, though I am; the converse is also true -- they are too. If they don't excite me, then they don't need me as their pastor. It's a two-way street. . . . After the pastor has been at this church for a year or so, he begins to see the people as they really are. Then, and only then, can he help them be the kind of Christians they ought to be. It is at this point that the depth of commitment is really put to the test. It is then that the pastor will do his best work -- after the honeymoon.¹⁷

As can be seen, many scholars recognize the validity of setting goals for growth, and even that the goals must have the element of excitement about them, but Curry Mavis adds an additional benefit of goal-setting for the church. He distinguishes between two types of goals: quantitative and qualitative. He believes these help to form a self-image of the church which can guide it toward success.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁷Op. cit., pp. 95-96.

Goals are as important in the work of the church as in the life of a person. . . . Goals serve two important functions in local churches. In the first place, they give direction to the activities. . . . Secondly, goals help to motivate the people of a local church in their Christian activities. . . . Local congregations should have both quantitative and qualitative goals. . . . Many churches set goals for numerical gains. This often stimulates interest and activity. . . . Simple goals for numerical gains, however, may be superficial and represent the wishful thinking of a lethargic minister and congregation. . . . If quantitative goals alone are used there are likely to be few permanent numerical gains because no adequate basis had been laid for an advance. . . . The qualitative goals are less vivid but more basic in the life of a church. . . . Goals become a guiding image to local churches when they are formulated, on the one hand, in reference to the church's resources and, on the other hand, in reference to the needs and opportunities of the community. The concept of the guiding image is derived from the German word, Bestimmung, which suggests the vivid master sentiments and motives of persons and institutions. The concept includes also a vision of what can be accomplished. There are hundreds of local churches that need nothing more than a luminous guiding image that has the power to capture the interests and motivate the activities of the people. Realistic objectives may be the first step toward progress.¹⁸

The place of leadership in the church is important, and a valuable function of that leadership is in helping the church in developing growth goals that they can work together to achieve for the glory of God.

One of the benefits of this study has been the impetus to do the necessary groundwork analysis of my own ministry and using that information and insights gained to develop a growth ministry in our present pastorate.

The Church

It may be well, in turning our attention now to the local church, to consider qualities or characteristics that play a part in church growth. We have seen that the place of leadership in the church is vital, but we have also recognized that church growth is not simply a matter of good leadership. The whole church has its place and function in the process of bringing about and experiencing growth.

¹⁸W. Curry Mavis, Advancing the Smaller Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 63-65.

To begin with let us take the standard definition of church growth as it promulgates the purpose and mission of the church. In this way we can survey the function of the church in relation to it. In The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook, George Hunter gives us the basic purpose of church growth.

The church growth definition of 'evangelism' is: 'Proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Savior and persuading people to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church.'¹⁹

Hunter states that the above is not only a definition, but it also delineates the task of the church, which is that of fulfilling Christ's Great Commission on the earth.²⁰

Now this seems like a straight-forward, clearly explained statement of the purpose of the church, yet there are those who would object to this becoming the primary focus of the church. Their contrary emphasis is undoubtedly buttressed by some very good Scriptures. Pastor Ray Stedman certainly carries authoritative weight when he takes issue with this emphasis as the primary aim and action of the church.

Note that the supreme purpose of the church is not the evangelization of the world. I know that is often held up to us as the supreme aim and purpose of the church. Certainly there is a great commission in the Bible and Jesus sent us out to preach the gospel to every creature. This is a most important thing, but it is not the supreme thing, not the final goal. Romans 8:29 speaks of God predestinating his own to be conformed to the image of his son. That is the ultimate end of all evangelization.²¹

Stedman is not alone in sounding this divergent note from the church growth statement. As well known a writer as Gene Getz, in one of his chapters on Building the Church, adds further Scriptural support for this position.

¹⁹Win Arn (ed.), The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook (Pasadena: Church Growth Press, 1979), p. 34.

²⁰Ibid., p. 35.

²¹Ray C. Stedman, Body Life (Glendale: Regal Books, 1972), p. 116.

Disciples were to be taught! This is the second great task spelled out in Christ's commission. . . . Edification should lead to maturity or completeness in Christ. 'And we proclaim Him,' wrote Paul to the Colossians, 'admonishing every man and teaching every man complete (mature) in Christ' (Col. 1:28). The apostle's primary concern for the body of Christ was that we 'all attain to the unity of the faith, and a knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13).²²

Getz further fortifies his position by drawing our attention to examining the maturity level of a church.

How can you recognize a mature church? By what criteria can we measure ourselves as a body to see if we have arrived at a degree of completeness? Again the New Testament is explicit. 'But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love' (Co. 13:13). Maturity in the body of Christ can be identified by the enduring virtues. The degree of completeness can be measured by the degree to which the church manifests faith, hope, and love. This is quite clear from Paul's writings, since he frequently used these three virtues to measure the maturity level of the New Testament churches. . . . Obviously it is transparent what the New Testament criteria is for determining the maturity level of a local body of believers. First of all, is there love manifested toward other members of the body of Christ? Second, is there a strong and vital faith? Third, is there a demonstration of hope?²³

Again, these are strong arguments that take exception to what is viewed as an over-emphasis on church growth (that is, on numbers).

To counter these obviously sincere objections, different writers on the church growth side would point out the vital part that goals play in motivating a church to outreach. Rev. Ken Parker, when he speaks of edification, speaks in terms of the development of disciples, and then added that the references to numbers of new people saved in the book of Acts showed a heavy emphasis on the growth of the Body.²⁴ Also, in the book Design for Church Growth, the authors hint that a lack of setting growth goals may simply evince a fear of failing, rather, as some insist, that it is actually a sign of spirituality and trust in God!²⁵ Kennon

²²Op. cit., Getz, pp. 51, 53.

²³Ibid., pp. 53, 55.

²⁴Op. cit., Arn, pp. 64, 66.

²⁵Charles L. Chaney, and Ron S. Lewis, Design for Church Growth (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977), p. 168.

Callahan puts this position more clearly when he says:

A successful church delivers effective missional outreach, shepherding of its families and friends through life's pilgrimage, primary groups of sharing and caring, corporate and prayerful worship, and a thoughtful, streamlined organizational structure -- all toward developing the congregation's mission in the world, growth in grace, and understanding of everyday life in the light of the Christian faith. Decisive to the genuine success of any congregation is its capacity to share substantive mission in the world. Indeed, the first and most central characteristic of an effective, successful church is its specific, concrete, missional objectives.²⁶

These are all serious considerations in favor of the original church growth definition, but what appears to be the most convincing concept is that put forward by Curry Mavins, in his chapter on The Tendency Toward Introversion, in it he says:

This is not an 'either-or' matter. It is not a matter of spiritual introversion or religious extroversion. The church does not have to choose between an intensive or an extensive program. It may have both. . . . Let introverted churches accept the fact that God himself seems little interested in tiny isolated colonies of holy people who are unconcerned about others. Such churches should know that spirituality has little value if it is unrelated to Christian witnessing and Christian action. Piety becomes uninviting if it is unconcerned with impious things. It is unhealthy if it is unconcerned with Christian service. Let the introverted church recognize that Christian action is a means of grace. As a matter of fact, Christian character cannot be developed genuinely apart from active Christian service. Most Christians grow more in an evening of sincere lay evangelistic visitation than in an evening of religious meditation. The hearty protest of a community evil sometimes occasions more Christian growth than the reading of a good religious book.²⁷

The venerable Andrew Murray succinctly sums this emphasis:

Missions are the chief end of the church, and therefore the chief end for which his congregation exists. . . . He must see how every believer is called to witness to Christ's love and claim, and how healthy spiritual life depends on the share the believer takes in work for his Lord.²⁸

²⁶Kennon L. Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 1.

²⁷Op. cit., Mavis, pp. 35-36.

²⁸Andrew Murray, Key to the Missionary Problem (Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1979), p. 18.

It has certainly been stated that church growth, in terms of the beginning definitive statement must be of vital concern for a congregation wishing to grow.

It would seem clear also from Acts 1:8, and the key relation it bears to the geographical spread of the church that witnessing, in the proclamation of the gospel, is to be central in the concern of the church.

Of course, this study is not meant to be exhaustive on the subject, yet, there has been a recurrent thought included in this two-sided issue of the place of evangelistic goals in a church that deserves to be considered further. It is the subject of lay involvement in the ministry of the church. Lay involvement is the necessary correlary to establishing growth goals. On the necessity of this subject virtually all sides are in agreement. Getz himself stresses the urgency of this matter:

The evangelical church cannot and must not allow itself to get locked into forms and patterns, either first century or twentieth century, that have been designed as a means to biblical ends. Every church in every culture and subculture needs to develop its own unique approaches to community evangelism. Under the creative leadership of the Holy Spirit, and using all of the human resources available, we need to develop dynamic twentieth century churches that are creating contemporary evangelistic strategies that are built upon New Testament principles and guidelines.²⁹

Chaney and Lewis issue a categorical statement to the effect that lay involvement is a must in the matter of church growth. "There never has been, nor will there ever be, multiplication of disciples and churches apart from the mobilization of the laity to the work."³⁰

Especially is the need noted for the training of lay workers for active involvement by both Mavis and Maner. These men both have written books to help the small church grow. Here is their focused judgement:

²⁹Op. cit., Getz, p. 49. (The underlined words are the emphasis of the present writer).

³⁰Op. cit., Chaney & Lewis, p. 173.

The matter of training a corps of workers is uniquely important in smaller churches. These churches lack trained workers more than the large congregations. Furthermore, a little church cannot hope to have capable lay service unless it gives special attention to leadership or service training.³¹

Also:

Attention must be given to developing quality disciples. This means that church membership must lead to discipleship. . . . They are challenged to develop their abilities to contribute to their church in a vital and meaningful way. When people begin to see themselves as important parts of the operation of the church, they will try harder to be better disciples. They will study and read. They will also have more cause to rejoice over the victories won. And, above all, they will feel more responsible for the success of the church.³²

This counsel from seasoned veterans deserves to be heard, but even more than that, to be put into practice.

Kenneth Van Wyk has contributed a chapter on church growth entitled, A Workable Model for Training the Laity. In it he holds out for us the positive hope that training can be done, because it has been done, and is being done successfully.

There are churches that are motivating and training their people to be involved redemptively in the human hurts around them. People are being helped and lives are being changed. The church is obedient to Christ when it is fulfilling His mission in their community. Growth essentially is determined by a church's obedience to Christ's mission as set forth in Scripture. It is for this high calling that the church trains her laity. The great need of our time is that the church take this calling seriously.³³

The Scripture certainly agrees with this, as pointed out earlier. In Acts, chapter six, the early church was continuing to grow at such a rate that the qualified involvement of laity was necessitated. It is recorded in chapters seven and eight that two of those original chosen laymen went on, in the utilization of their spiritual gifts, to broader fields of service for their Lord. Stephen and

³¹Op. cit., Mavis, p. 67.

³²Op. cit., Maner, p. 71.

³³Op. cit., Arn, p. 33.

Philip played vital roles in the development and enlargement of the influence of the early church.

This survey of the literature, admittedly only preliminary in extent, opens up the very large place that a church and its members can play in effecting vital church growth. It has been instructive, to the present writer, to challenge him to see more of the possibilities in this matter of lay involvement.

The Outreach

The final area covered in this literature survey focused on that of outreach. Church growth observations and lessons are more numerous than can be enclosed in a single study, but a consideration of the more pertinent matters under outreach may prove instructive. In considering outreach, for purposes of understanding, we must clarify what is meant. There seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding commonly among church people when the subject of outreach is discussed. The joint authors of the book Design For Church Growth have captured the essence of the debate rather well.

Growing churches major on direct evangelism. Evangelism is one of those words that Christians love and revere but seem utterly unable to define with precision. There is a worldwide debate in Christian circles today between what has been identified as proclamation evangelism and presence evangelism. Many sincere Christians believe that the evangelistic task worldwide is fundamentally to give everyone a chance to hear. At the other extreme are those who insist that evangelism is primarily expressed in service. If the Christian is only present within the non-Christian world, serving in Jesus' name, he has performed his evangelistic responsibility. . . . Growing churches have gone beyond this debate. They employ evangelistic methods which renounce quietism for enthusiastic verbalization of the good news. They have moved from emphasis only on evangelistic preaching to concerned persuasion, to decision, and on to responsible Christian discipleship within the local church. In doing this they have recovered the biblical pattern. Peter not only preached on the day of Pentecost, he also 'testified' and 'exhorted' with 'many other words' (Acts 2:40). Paul reported that, 'knowing the fear of the Lord,' he persuaded men, begging them, in behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:11, 20). Methods vary, but growing churches always major on direct confrontation of the non-Christians with the claims of Christ and gentle persistence in bringing the new Christian to baptism, fellowship and personal growth within the local congregation.³⁴

³⁴Op. cit., Chaney & Lewis, pp. 179-180.

There appear to be two understandings of the word evangelism, one of making converts by persuasion, the other by a quiet presence. There is also another way to look at evangelism, that is, that which is done solely "overseas" by missionaries sent out to do it, period. Gene Getz explains this "type" more clearly.

Every local body of believers must be responsible for its own community. . . . This principle is very clear from the activities of the New Testament and the directives given to local groups of believers in the epistles. They began in Jerusalem, and then, as churches were established in other communities and countries, Christians were instructed to live like Jesus Christ in every human relationship so as to be able to share the gospel forcefully. Frequently local churches neglect their own communities. A virile foreign missions program becomes a substitute for local outreach. Missionary budgets replace on-the-spot evangelistic activity. Overseas missionaries supported by the church become a substitute for engaging in local evangelism. . . . True, one of the greatest accomplishments of evangelical Christianity has been its foreign missionary thrust. It is commendable! And it should be continued and expanded. But the words of Jesus apply at this juncture, 'These are the things you should have done without neglecting the others' (Mt. 23:23).³⁵

Indeed this makes a very forceful case, and for sure, we need to be about our Father's business. In the matter of evangelism, though, Robert Maner sounds a warning that has often been overlooked. His caution is that in evangelism, there needs to be as much thought given to follow-up after evangelism takes place, as to the actual evangelism itself. Otherwise the hard-won results may well be lost.³⁶

However, even when the minor battle over what constitutes evangelism is over and done with, there looms an even stickier controversy over the matter of groups of persons to be won to Christ. This is the issue of the homogeneous principle.

Here is a brief description of what the homogeneous principle entails. The homogeneous principle in church growth observes that the gospel seems to be shared more naturally, and thus, potentially faster, among people who are either related or linked by common social factors. For instance, among a group of people with

³⁵Op. cit., Getz, pp. 40-41.

³⁶Op. cit., Maner, pp. 83-84.

kinship relationship, common racial, linguistic and economic bonds, there are potentially fewer hindrances or barriers to the delivering and reception of the gospel message. However, given these differences, a greater effort may be required to bridge the cultural gaps that can impede the progress of the gospel.

In speaking of the principle of "homogeneity" Chaney and Lewis declare that:

No man should be forced to cross a language, racial, or socio-economic barrier to find Christ. He should be able to hear of Christ in his own dialect from his own people, and confess him among his own peers. The recognition of similarities and differences between an individual and a group is often described in terms of comfort. Individuals 'feel comfortable' with some groups and 'feel uncomfortable' with others. Every man should be invited, but no man should be compelled to become a Christian among people with whom he is uncomfortable. Nothing causes more distress among American Evangelicals today than to insist that one church in a community cannot serve all segments of society. The statement sounds like racism or snobbery. It violates our theology of church and gospel. It suggests the inadequacy of a local congregation. In short, it makes us angry!³⁷

Discussion over whether the "homogeneous principle" has any place to play in evangelism, or if it is a law that causes, of necessity certain reactions to happen, rather than just an observed phenomenon, and even if it is ethical and moral, have consumed more paper and ink than, I suppose, any other tenet of church growth. Peter Wagner has written a whole book, Our Kind of People, explaining what is meant by it. Likenesses and divergences between people are not just skin deep, they create social classes and within groups penetrate to vocational groups, even to the unseen differences in types of tramps!

One example from Wagner will be sufficient to illustrate the point. "The major determinants of social class are economic status, vocation, and formal schooling."³⁸

³⁷Op. cit., Chaney & Lewis, p. 171.

³⁸C. Peter Wagner, Our Kind of People (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 72.

But to cut through all the debate, again, Chaney and Lewis come to our aid. "In short, find homogeneous units and attempt to penetrate them. Growing churches do this with great success, and often do not even know it."³⁹ Then in their helpful way, they go on to introduce the method of small groups to meet people where they are. "Through felt needs, the manifestation of gifts, and open doors, the Holy Spirit leads churches into various growth ministries."⁴⁰

It is interesting to note the parallel agreement of the early church, when, on the very day of its birth, 3,000 converts were added to the original 120, along with others included daily. Note that this mass of people were "continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:46). Can you imagine all those people going to a single house, then moving on to another? Logistics would seem to indicate that the crowd broke up into smaller groups, meeting in private homes for their daily fellowship.

At a later time Peter related the unexpected experience of the Gentile Cornelius and all his household being converted, "who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved" (Acts 11:14). Even in crossing cultural, racial, or religious barriers, the efficacy of a homogeneous unit, in this case Cornelius' household, was proven.

Still later, Paul, in being a cross-cultural missionary, reported the success of the gospel in household evangelism at Philippi, "she and her household were baptized" (Acts 16:15a), and again, "he . . . having believed in God with all his household" (Acts 16:34b).

³⁹Op. cit., Chaney & Lewis, p. 171.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 176.

Both Robert Girard and Ray Stedman, in their respective churches utilize heavily the potential of the small group movement. They even appear to focus and organize the whole church around these groups that meet for mutual edification.

One of the best, because simplest, presentations of what small groups are about is given by Pastor Maner:

Since the church is people oriented, the small groups will be built around the need of the people. What the people need and want will to a large extent tell you what groups to organize. . . . The point is, the needs and interests will to a large extent determine the number and nature of small groups operating in the church. . . . Before we begin any new small group, we try to make certain that we have dependable, dedicated leadership that will stay with the undertaking and see it to a successful conclusion. . . . Basically, the small-group ministry can be classified into two categories. There is the conventional and there is the special. . . . What is being suggested here is that we capitalize on these already existing groups. . . . This is important. If every organization within the church is reduced to small groups, they can undertake projects and sponsor campaigns in far greater number than one large group that meets in the church sanctuary, say on a Wednesday night, for their monthly missionary meeting. Not only does the average church have the basic small groups already in existence and operating in the church, but special-interest small groups already exist also. Why not capitalize on this special interest? People are doing things together. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the church could capture the energy that is generated in this fashion and put it to work for Jesus?⁴¹

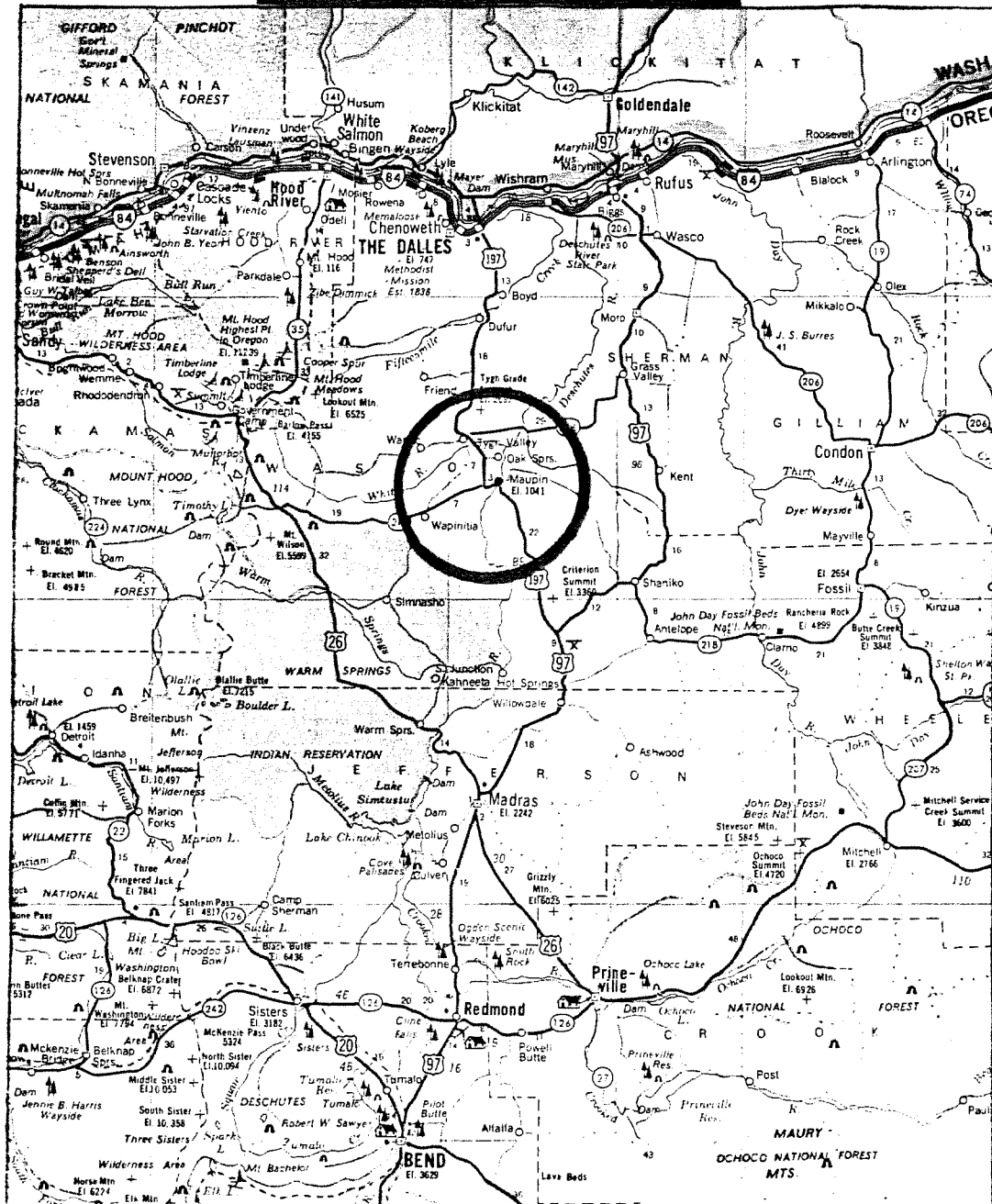
Wouldn't it indeed! The door is wide open through the use of small groups to penetrate in an evangelistic way our diverse society all around us. I am challenged with the potential that lies all around, in the church, and outside it, for the evangelistic outreach of the gospel of Christ. May the Lord help us, pastors and churches, to have church growth eyes of faith that seek Him for empowerment to preach the word to every creature!

To help the present writer in this very endeavor the remaining chapters are devoted to the statistical analysis of my ministry in four pastorates. Growth insights gained from Acts and current literature are applied in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of my pastoral ministry. The four churches are looked

⁴¹Op. cit., Maner, pp. 34-37.

at in historical sequence, and for simplification of reference and comparison, the churches are designated by A, B, C, and D. Each chapter identifies by name the church under discussion.

MAUPIN EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA



Chapter 4

AN EVALUATION OF CHURCH A

Background

The town of Maupin is located in central Oregon, 40 miles south of The Dalles, on the edge of an Indian reservation. The Deschutes River flows through town, and for its length, it is the fastest flowing river in Oregon, thus making it popular for white water rafting. The river is also noted for its fishing, and the surrounding area for hunting. The area is semi-desert with scrub-brush the main vegetation along with scattered juniper trees. These characteristics all contribute to Maupin being known as a recreational area.

Dry-land and irrigation farming are the common occupations of the area. Cattle ranching is also practiced on a small scale. The biggest employer in town is a lumber mill that trucks its logs from the Mt. Hood forests. This town of 500 people boasts a volunteer fire department and ambulance crew, but it only has a part-time policeman, and no doctor, bank, or newspaper. Opportunities for local employment are limited, so many young people have left through the years for the cities. Continuing evidence of this can be seen in the many abandoned pioneer homesteads across the landscape.

About the only source for an increase in the population has been from farmer's widows moving into town. A few retirees from other areas occasionally move in to be near the hunting, fishing, and to enjoy the sunshine.

Besides the Evangelical Church in Maupin, there is a Catholic Church, and another protestant church that started a few years ago and then closed again. The Evangelical Church inherited the records from a couple of other pioneer churches of former years.

The period previous to our ministry at Maupin started with 1968. That was the year the present denomination of the Evangelical Church of North America formally reorganized from its parent denomination, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, after its merger with the Methodists. Consequently, those years were disruptive to local congregations because of breaking of old ties, realignment, and repurchasing of properties. Individual members and local churches made hard decisions as to their future denominational destiny.

The Maupin Church, for the period of 1968 to 1971, had one pastor, who saw it through the transition years. My pastoral ministry at Maupin spanned the years from 1972 to 1977, a five-year period. Outside factors that brought a measure of stress during this period were the dramatically rising inflation rate accompanied by the slow-down of the lumber industry. The period subsequent to our ministry, 1977 to 1984, saw two pastors at Maupin. The first one was there six years until retirement, while the second pastor has been there one year so far. It has been a period of continuing economic pressure.

For purposes of comparison and simplicity of reference, the Maupin Church will hereinafter be referred to as Church A. To begin with, my period of ministry is looked at in itself. Then, to gain some objectivity and perspective, the periods previous to, and subsequent to, are compared with the rates of growth during my ministry. The Conference Journal, the Official Record of the Evangelical Church, designates four areas of statistical reference: Ministry and Outreach, Evangelistic Response, Average Attendances, and Financial Statistics. Each of these are looked at in turn. Appendix A contains the graphs developed from these records for Church A.

Analysis

Ministry and Outreach

Total membership increased for the period of my five-year ministry by 10%. Eighteen new members were added to the church, making an average of 3.6 new members per year. The resident membership increased by 15%. Six members were received by confession of faith, and twelve were from other denominations. Under age thirteen members increased by 100%. Twelve of the new members were brought in by the pastor's membership class. There were four deaths during the period, making an average loss by death of 0.8 per year.

The total membership growth was greater than the period before or after. Most of the new members were received from other denominations. The means by which they were brought into the church was through the pastor's membership class. The largest single source of new members coming into the church was the new people moving in. The next largest source of new members was the children of church members.

With new people moving into the area and becoming members, the resident membership increased over the previous period. That healthy trend continued in the subsequent period. More people were received into church membership through confession of faith than previously. Membership by confession of faith also increased over the subsequent period. The rate of growth for the under age thirteen membership remained the same as previously, but has declined subsequently. During our ministry at Church A, no members from other Evangelical churches moved to our area. As a consequence, this means showed less growth than both previously and subsequently.

Evangelistic Response

The total number of conversions was 111, and average of 22.2 per year. Reclamations totalled 60, averaging twelve per year. Reported sanctifications were thirteen, an average of 2.6 each year. There were six baptisms and four dedications, totalling ten, an average of two a year.

The total average of conversions per year was larger than the previous period and the period following. The same was the case for the reported reclamations. The rate of sanctifications per year was less than previously, but more than in later years. The baptisms and dedications figure have a similar record. The full-time service listing shows none for our time there. In contrast, there were some reported before, and since.

The total evangelistic response divided by five years comes to over 38 various responses per year. This is no mean figure. However, when these figures are compared to the number of new members garnered, there is revealed a considerable gap.

Average Attendances

Attendance at Morning Worship Service increased 3%. Evening Service attendance increased 26%. Prayer Meeting decreased 42%. Bible Studies increased by 44%. The total Sunday School went up 3%. Adults in Sunday School increased 37%. Sunday School enrollment was up 10%. Senior High Sunday School attendance was down 16%. The Men's Fellowship increased 44%. The Women's Fellowship remained the same. Total Summer Ministry outreach was 322, an average of 64 a year.

Sunday School enrollment increased less than previously, but was greater than the time following. The Senior High Sunday School attendance was less than the time before, yet it was still stronger than the time since. Attendances at Summer Ministry outreach programs was larger than before, and has continued to outstrip itself in subsequent years. The Morning Worship showed a smaller rate of gain in attendance than both previously and subsequently. Prayer Meeting

attendance was weaker than before and after as well. Total Sunday School attendance was less than the two comparable periods. Adults in Sunday School showed a lesser rate of growth than the other two periods. The Women's Fellowship attendance grew less than before or after.

The Summer Ministry teams made available through the Conference, and the local vacation Bible school program, accounted for the majority of the reported evangelistic statistics. The yearly evangelistic campaign and the released-time Bible club constituted the second largest increase in evangelism results. But the gap already noted between evangelistic response and increased membership widens in the light of the attendance at the programs designed to attract and reach people.

The combined outreach efforts of the bus ministry, the gym night at the grade school, the film ministry at the high school, the released-time Bible club, the Gideon Bible program, and the door-to-door visitation campaign, reflected some increase in attendance statistics. The re-activating of the men's program caused a large percentage increase. Yet the same increase was gained by the women's home Bible study, even though a green pastor viewed the apparent pull-away from the church building with quiet alarm.

Attendance at Men's Fellowship showed the strongest growth in comparison to both previous and subsequent periods. The Evening Service attendances showed greater gain than previously, and it has increased since. Attendance at home Bible studies was more popular than during the previous time, and subsequently has gained even more.

Financial Statistics

The total church budget increased by 81%. Total pastoral support went up 44%. Giving to missions was up 39%. The number of reported tithers went from zero to 27. Reported average giving increased by 63%.

Neither before nor since, have tithing units been reported. The total giving toward the church budget grew less than the beginning years, but the rate of growth was greater than in the later years. The average giving per member showed the same trend as the total budget figures. The rate of growth of pastoral support was less than that before or after. The rate of increase in giving to missions was also less in comparison to those periods. The increased activity and involvement of adults in the programs of the church strengthened the financial base of the church. An emphasis on tithing helped lift the awareness of people to contribute more to the general church budget.

Comparisons

The three columns below show a comparison in each area, of periods of ministry. The terms "stronger" and "weaker" indicate whether my ministry showed a stronger or a weaker rate of growth, in each area, than the previous or subsequent period.

<u>Previous</u>	<u>During</u>	<u>Subsequent</u>
1. Ministry and Outreach		
stronger	total membership (10%)	stronger
stronger	new members (3.6 per year)	stronger
stronger	resident membership (15%)	weaker
stronger	by confession of faith (6)	weaker
weaker	from sister church (0)	weaker
stronger	from other denominations (12)	stronger
same	under age 13 members (100%)	stronger
stronger	pastor's membership class (12)	stronger
2. Evangelistic Response		
stronger	conversions (22.2 per year)	stronger

stronger	reclamations (12 per year)	stronger
weaker	sanctifications (2.6 per year)	stronger
weaker	full-time service (0)	weaker
stronger	baptisms and dedications (2 per year)	weaker

3. Average Attendances

weaker	Morning Worship (3%)	weaker
stronger	Evening Service (26%)	weaker
weaker	Prayer Meeting (~42%)	weaker
stronger	Bible Studies (44%)	weaker
weaker	total Sunday School (3%)	weaker
weaker	adults in Sunday School (37%)	weaker
weaker	Sunday School enrollment (10%)	stronger
weaker	Senior High Sunday School (~16%)	stronger
stronger	the Men's Fellowship (44%)	stronger
weaker	the Women's Fellowship (0)	weaker
stronger	Summer Ministry (64 per year)	weaker

4. Financial Statistics

weaker	total church budget (81%)	stronger
weaker	pastoral support (44%)	weaker
weaker	giving to missions (39%)	weaker
stronger	tithers (0 to 27)	stronger
weaker	average giving (63%)	stronger

The following areas were stronger than before, and stronger than after our ministry at Church A.

total membership

new members

from other denominations

pastor's membership class

conversions

reclamations

the Men's Fellowship

tithers

The areas below were weaker than before, and weaker than after our ministry at Church A.

from sister churches

full-time service

Morning Worship

Prayer Meeting

total Sunday School

adults in Sunday School

the Women's Fellowship

pastoral support

giving to missions

My experience in Church A seems to indicate ministry strengths in the areas of:

1. The recruitment of new members from other church backgrounds through the use of the pastor's membership class.
2. The utilization of various children's outreach programs.
3. The area of managing conflict does not find its place in the statistical record. However, this is an item of particular interest because a pattern emerges in all four churches studied. At Church A we became rather proficient at conflict-management, since we felt secure in our relationship to the church.

Also, it appears that these areas needed to be strengthened or supplemented:

1. The challenge of, and recruitment to full-time service.
2. The enlistment and commitment to attendance at church meetings.

A summary evaluation, in the light of Scriptural principles and church growth insights, is included in the final Summary and Evaluation chapter.

Reflection

We came to Maupin fresh out of five years in college and five in seminary, working on a part-time basis. We were eager to try our hand full-time in the ministry, even though the church gently suggested that a part-time job might be needed to supplement the salary. Since we were following an older experienced minister, it was a bit of an inward challenge to see if the Lord could bless our ministry at least as well as his. It was with surprise and satisfaction in later years to realize that in some ways he prospered us more.

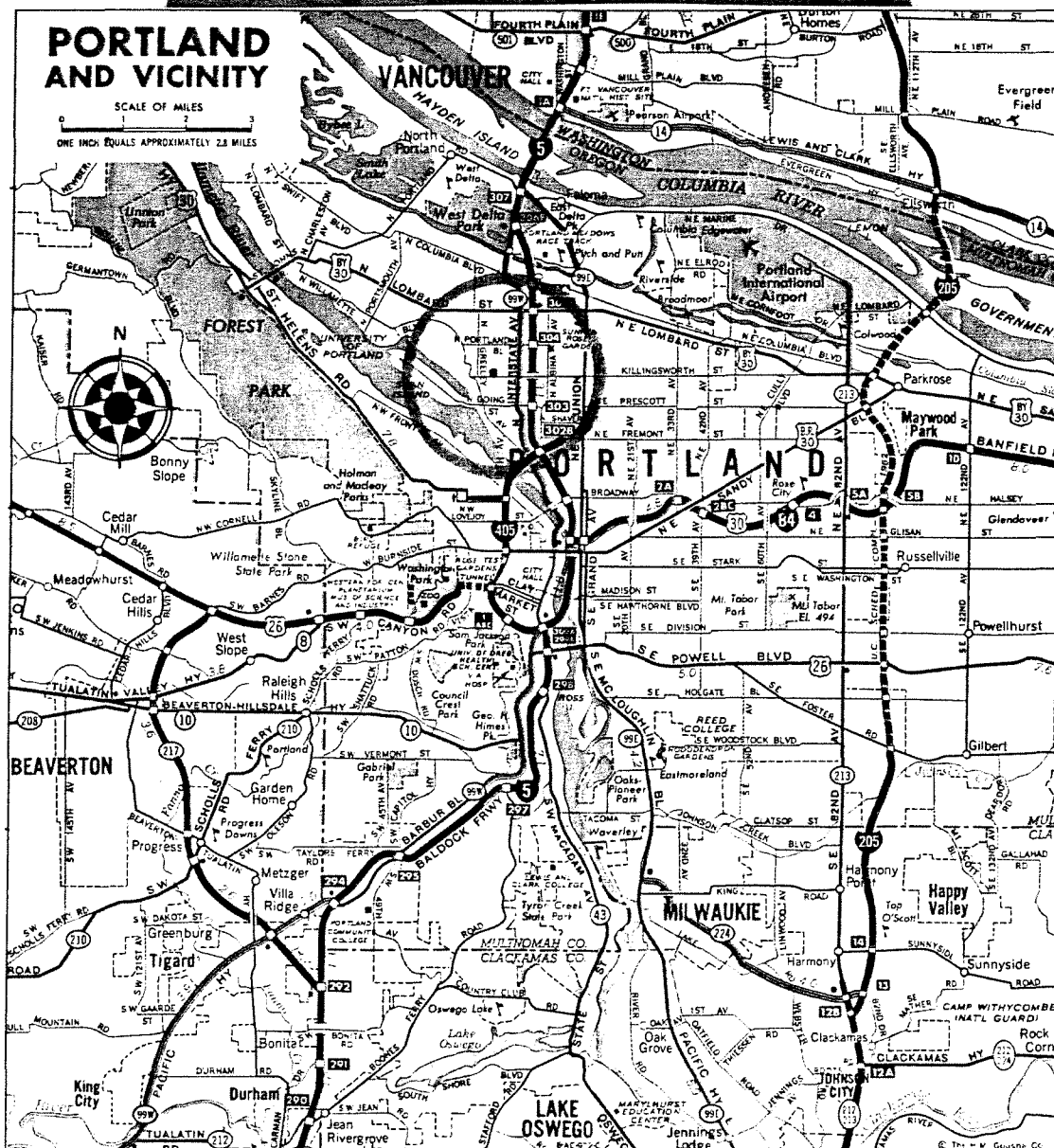
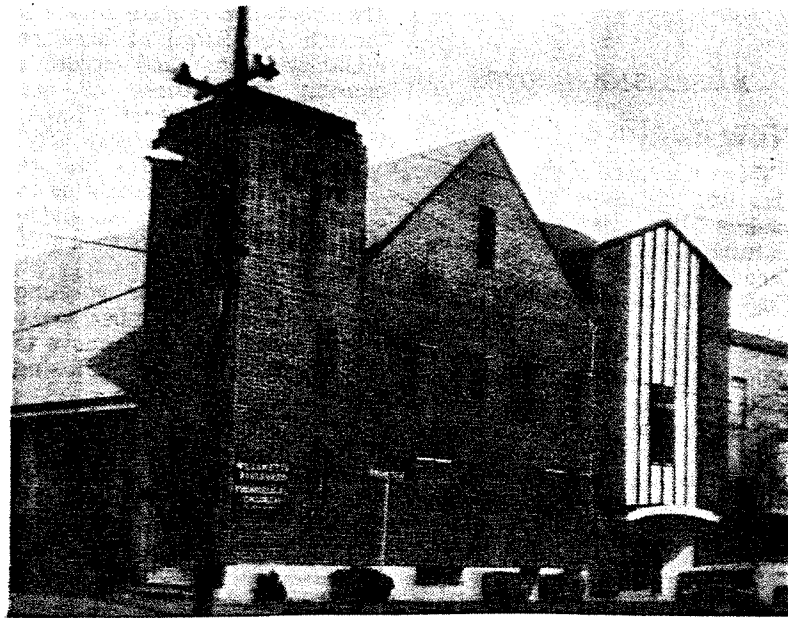
The relationship between pastor and church was harmonious. Indeed, the church patiently taught the green pastor the ropes, and willingly cooperated with our leadership. Because of the dispersal of the few churches over a wide area, little competition was encountered. So the geographical area was pretty well open to whatever church happened to be located there. Another factor that entered in, I believe, was that people were so few and far apart, that people had to pool their human resources in order to support community activities.

The major recollection of those years is the outreach ministries that were tried. I suppose the best symbol of that emphasis was the bus that was purchased for use. The Tygh Valley Fair film and literature ministry was another means of outreach. A junior church program was also started for the benefit of the bus kids. We learned too, how to baptize in the local river. Most of these programs continue yet, for which we are pleased.

After four years at Maupin, things were beginning to get routine in the running of the church (or maybe I was just running out of new ideas). Then after five, it seemed more so, where the people and pastor were too comfortable and taking each other for granted. I began to feel restless and look for larger challenges. Maybe things came too easily there. You crank the church machinery and out come the results. I also began to wonder if, yes, I could make it here in a small place, but what about in a place of greater opportunity? Well, the people did not want us to go, but we felt that for their sakes as well as ours, we should ask for a change. It subsequently proved true that a new man would take them on to new and fresh challenges. We were glad to have our subjective feelings substantiated.

The second church of our pastoral career was the Willamette Boulevard Evangelical Church in Portland, Oregon. As it is the second church in sequence, it is referred to as Church B for facility in later comparisons. The following chapter analyzes my ministry at Willamette Boulevard.

WILLAMETTE BLVD. EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA



Chapter 5

AN EVALUATION OF CHURCH B

Background

The city of Portland is in north-western Oregon at the confluence of the Columbia and the Willamette Rivers. The Columbia River, originating as it does far up in the Canadian Rockies, produces a vast hydro-electric output for the city and surrounding towns. The deep river provides commercial access to the Pacific Ocean, as well as recreational use. Portland was named because it early became an important port. Farmer's produce and manufactured goods could find an outlet for world trade through Portland. These characteristics enable Portland to be a commercial center of major importance.

Portland is a commercial and business center majoring on exporting wheat and lumber, and importing manufactured goods like cars. There is little local manufacturing carried on. The population of Portland is approximately 357,000, excluding the growing suburbs. The opportunities for employment are varied. In recent years efforts have been made to attract more businesses to the area, such as the high-tech industry, with some success.

The population has increased not only originally as people left farms to look for jobs in the city, but lately as people from larger cities, such as in California, have come to get away from congestion and pollution. Portland, with its warm summers and raining winters gives a clean, fresh atmosphere. Being close to the mountains and close to the beach also makes Portland a popular place to live.

There are seventeen Evangelical Churches in Portland and the surrounding areas. Given the fact that we are one of the smaller denominations, there are multitudes of other churches as well. But this does not mean Portland is over-

churched. Studies from the Conference have indicated we ought to have several more started in Portland.

As has been stated before, 1968 was the reorganization of the present Evangelical Church of North America, although its denominational roots go back hundreds of years. Of note, though typical generally, with the Willamette Boulevard Church, in its more than seventy-five year history, is the relatively short term of pastorates averaging only three years. Just as significant is the general decline that can be observed starting from a little over twenty-five years previously. Related to this, the north Portland community was undergoing socio-cultural-economic change. A formerly high class white neighborhood was becoming run-down. Poorer whites and blacks moved in to fill the gap in the now lower-middle class community.

The Willamette Boulevard Church, for the period 1968 to 1977, had three pastors, two for two years and one for five. The closing of Cascade Christian College at the beginning of the period had a drastic effect on the number of young adults attending the church. The school closure vividly highlighted the non-growth pattern of the church as never before. These pressures called forth solutions, none of which stopped the drain of people from the church. My pastorate there was from 1977 to 1981, four years. This period saw a continuing exodus of members from the church. The Indonesian "Boat People" were also being settled in north Portland starting during that time.

For the purposes of this study, the Willamette Boulevard Church will hereinafter be designated as Church B. As before, the period of my ministry will be analyzed, then compared with the growth rates of the period before and after, for perspective. The statistical information has been drawn from the Official Record of the Evangelical Church of North America. The charts constructed from the records are in Appendix B. Four areas are recorded in the statistics: Ministry and

Outreach, Evangelistic Response, Average Attendances, and Financial Statistics. Each of these areas are looked at in turn.

Analysis

Ministry and Outreach

Total membership decreased for the four years by 29%. Twelve new members were added to the church, making an average of three new members per year. The resident membership decreased by 50%. Eleven members were received by confession of faith, and one was a transfer from a sister church. Under age thirteen members decreased by 80%. Five of the new members were brought in by the pastor's membership class. There were fifteen deaths during the period, making an average loss by death of 3.75 per year.

The under age thirteen membership growth was the same as the previous period, however, it was greater than the period following. Resident membership declined more during our tenure than before or since. The same trend follows in the sister church membership category.

Evangelistic Response

The total number of conversions for the four years was 38, an average of 9.5 per year. Reclamations totalled four, averaging one per year. Reported sanctifications was thirteen, an average of 3.25 each year. There was one listed under full-time service. There were sixteen baptisms and four dedications, totalling twenty, or five a year.

The rate of reclamations was less than before and after. The spiritual help category was not in use during the years of our pastorate, but was re-instituted later, so growth from this source showed less than the previous and subsequent periods.

Average Attendances

Attendance at Morning Worship Service decreased 21%. Evening Service attendance decreased 34%. Prayer Meeting decreased 63%. Bible Studies increased by 41%. The total Sunday School went down 27%. Adults in Sunday School decreased 21%. Sunday School enrollment was -25%. Senior High Sunday School attendance was -66%. The Men's Fellowship increased 10%. The Women's Fellowship decreased 34%. Total Summer Ministry outreach was 135, an average of 33.75 a year.

The rate of growth in average attendance at Morning Worship was stronger than the time previous to, and following our ministry. The same rate of growth is also reflected in adults in Sunday School, and compares similarly to the other two periods as the attendance at Morning Worship. Attendance of the Senior High at Sunday School is weaker than before our time, and also weaker than after.

Financial Statistics

The total church budget increased by 41%. Total pastoral support went up 9%. Giving to missions was -6%. The number of reported tithers remained the same. Reported average giving increased by 112%.

The sole area of giving to missions showed a higher growth rate than the previous time, it was also stronger than the time following. The financial statistics show that in every case the financial growth was greater than the subsequent period.

Comparisons

The three columns below are a comparison, in each area, of the three periods of ministry at Church B. The words "stronger" and "weaker" indicate if my ministry showed a stronger or weaker rate of growth, in each area, than the previous or subsequent periods.

Previous	During	Subsequent
1. Ministry and Outreach		
stronger	total membership (-29%)	weaker
weaker	new members (3 per year)	stronger
weaker	resident membership (-50%)	weaker
weaker	by confession of faith (11)	stronger
weaker	from sister church (1)	weaker
weaker	from other denominations (0)	same
same	under age 13 members (-80%)	stronger
stronger	pastor's membership class (5)	weaker
2. Evangelistic Response		
weaker	conversions (9.5 per year)	stronger
weaker	reclamations (1 per year)	weaker
stronger	sanctifications (3.25 per year)	weaker
weaker	full-time service (1)	stronger
weaker	spiritual help (0%)	weaker
weaker	baptisms and dedications (5 per year)	stronger
3. Average Attendances		
stronger	Morning Worship (-21%)	stronger
stronger	Evening Service (-34%)	weaker
weaker	Prayer Meeting (-63%)	same
weaker	Bible Studies (41%)	stronger
weaker	total Sunday School (-27%)	stronger
stronger	adults in Sunday School (-21%)	stronger
stronger	Sunday School enrollment (-25%)	weaker
weaker	Senior High Sunday School (-66%)	weaker
weaker	the Men's Fellowship (10%)	stronger

stronger	the Women's Fellowship (-34%)	weaker
weaker	Summer Ministry (33.75 per year)	stronger

4. Financial Statistics

weaker	total church budget (41%)	stronger
weaker	pastoral support (9%)	stronger
weaker	giving to missions (-6%)	stronger
weaker	tithers (0%)	stronger
weaker	average giving (112%)	stronger

The following areas were stronger than before and after our ministry at Church B.

Morning Worship
adults in Sunday School
giving to missions

The areas below were weaker before and after our ministry at Church B.

resident members
from sister churches
reclamation
spiritual help
Senior High Sunday School

My experience in Church B seems to indicate some ministry strengths in the following areas:

1. A certain amount of strength in Summer Ministries and home Bible studies that garnered some spiritual decisions and baptisms.
2. An involvement of adults in Sunday School that may also be carried over into attendance at Morning Worship.
3. The recruitment of sustained support for missions, this financial strength showed up in every category when compared to later figures.

It also appears that the following areas need to be strengthened or supplemented:

1. A lack of recruitment of people from other churches in the area to build resident membership.
2. A low performance in conflict-management when there is a sense of insecurity in our relationship to the church.

A composite evaluation of my ministry, in the light of Scriptural and church growth principles, makes up the concluding Summary and Evaluation chapter.

Reflection

In coming to Willamette Boulevard Church we felt like we were coming to familiar territory. Both my wife and I were raised in Portland, along with our two children being born there. For two years during our college days we attended that church as newly-weds. We were warmly welcomed, and the college crowd made it one of their regular local churches. But that was ten years before. In the interim, the church drastically declined, with the Christian college closing, and blacks displacing whites in the neighborhood. What remained was a faithful remnant of leaders who yearned to have the former years restored. But with the rapid sociological changes occurring, the pressures and problems were exacerbated.

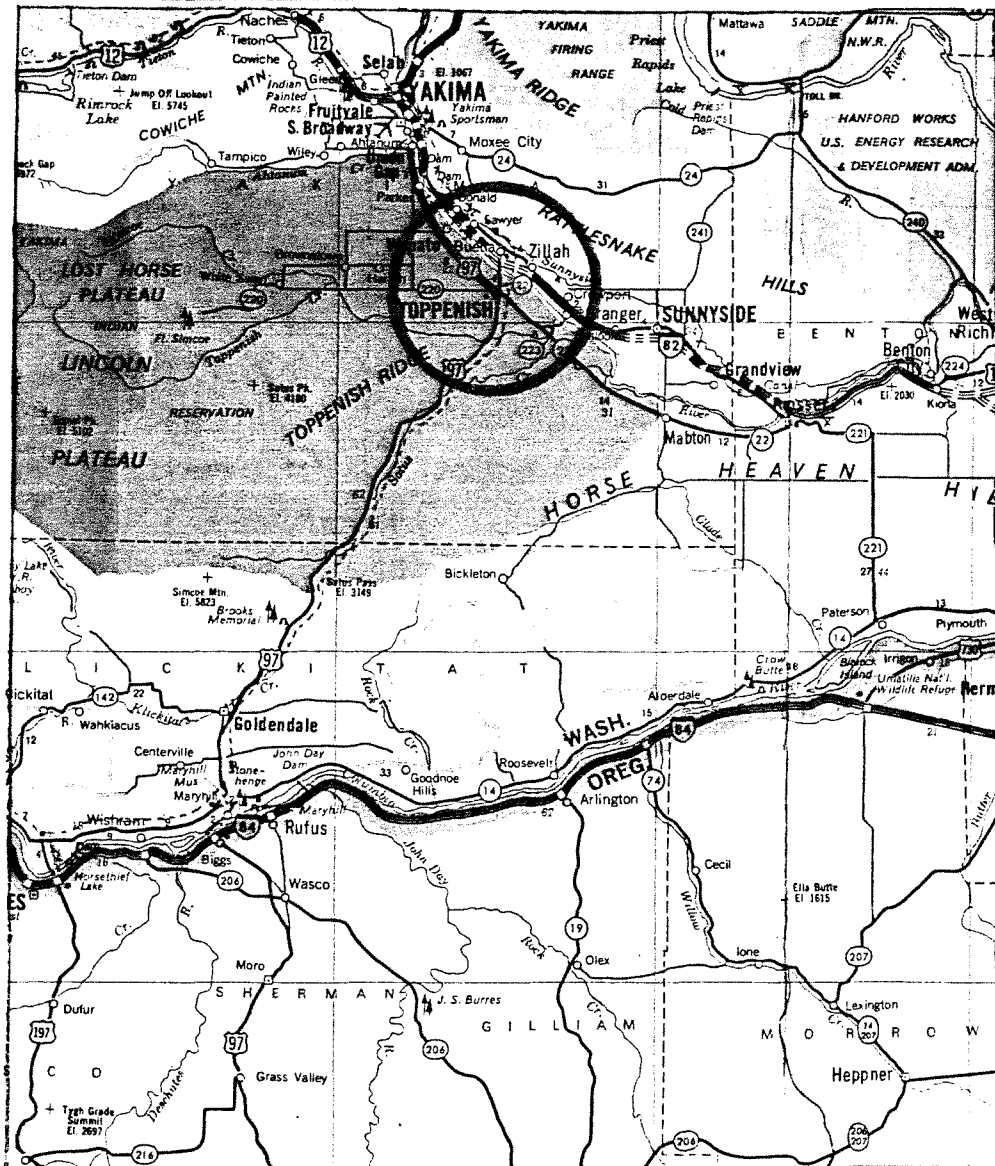
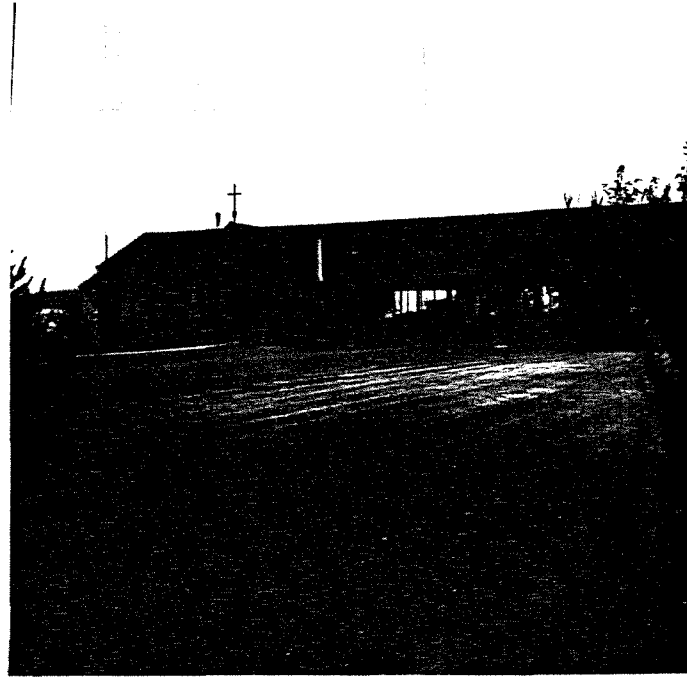
In coming to Willamette Boulevard to pastor, we were following a long line of illustrious pastors. This made us intensely conscious of the interest of many from around the Conference in the turn-around of the work there. So we labored with an idealistic vision of rallying the church and launching out on a new day of growth. We attempted various programs to revitalize the church and reach out. The traditional parish went east and west to incorporate the Christian college community, which was no more. It was discovered through the city demographics report and the map, that our natural ministry area may now run north and south.

This was a predominant housing area, including apartments. We promoted home Bible studies in the community for spiritual nurture and evangelistic outreach. The growth problems were addressed in sermons, by church growth teaching, and by enlisting new people into the leadership circle.

The remembrances of those years are bitter-sweet. The emotional involvement in people's hopes and hurts had become our own. It was with deep disappointment that finally we decided to move. Idealistic hopes disillusioned by hard realities. It is sad to see the church having declined even more since our ministry there. No one likes to see a church close its doors. I still hope a way may be found for it to grow.

The next chapter leads us into a study, in historical sequence, of my ministry at the Evangelical Church in Toppenish, Washington, referred to in this study as Church C for ease in comparative references.

TOPPENISH EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA



Chapter 6

AN EVALUATION OF CHURCH C

Background

The city of Toppenish is in south-central Washington on the Yakima Indian Reservation. It is situated in a beautiful flat valley surrounded by distant hills covered by scrub-brush and a few juniper trees. The semi-desert climate makes the area ideal for the growing of fruit and vegetables. The Yakima River provides much of the needed irrigation water for the abundant crops of apples, cherries, corn, and asparagus. Its early development and growth in food production has caused the Yakima Valley to be compared favorably with the famous Yaquina Valley in California.

Fruit and vegetable production is the largest industry in the valley, importing, as it does, many Mexican workers every year. Often the migrant workers stay on through the year to work in the canneries. Beef production is a large secondary occupation. The local Indian population and the large influx of Spanish-speaking immigrant laborers makes the white community the third in size by comparison.

At first sight it appears that Toppenish, a little over 7,000 people, is well-churched. However, a discrepancy comes to light when it is realized that the white minority has 90% of the churches. Only a couple of churches minister exclusively among the Indians and Spanish-speaking population. To use one example to emphasize the point, the Methodist Church there started out as a mission to the Indians, now however, it is a high class white congregation.

The development of local industry, beyond food production, is hampered somewhat because, being located on Indian land, the ownership of land for business purposes is restricted.

The years previous to our pastoring at Toppenish began with 1968, the formal organization of the present Evangelical Church of North America. Those years of new beginnings caused some disruptions of relationships, realignments, and repurchasing of properties. The Toppenish Church from 1968 to 1981, had two pastors who regrouped and rebuilt the congregation. Our pastoral ministry there was for the years 1981 to 1983. The period subsequent to that was 1983 to 1984.

Hereinafter, for facility of reference, the Toppenish Church will be referred to as Church C. Our period of ministry is analyzed for strengths and weaknesses, and, for comparison, is related to the period before and the period following. The Conference Journal of the Evangelical Church was researched for the growth statistics under: Ministry and Outreach, Evangelistic Response, Average Attendances, and Financial Statistics. Appendix C contains the developed graphs of the pertinent data for Church C.

Analysis

Ministry and Outreach

The total membership increased for the two years by 3%. Four new members were added to the church, making an average of two new members a year. Resident membership increased by 4%. The four members were received by confession of faith. The under age thirteen members decreased by 200%. The four new members were brought in by way of the pastor's membership class. There was one death during the period, making an average loss of 0.5 per year.

The total membership rate of growth per year was less than the previous period, the same is the case in the following period. The recruitment of members from other denominations also showed a weaker rate of growth than the two comparable periods. The growth in members under the age of thirteen was less than before or after. The pastor's membership class garnered less new members

than either before or after as well.

Evangelistic Response

The total number of conversions for the two years was seven, an average of 3.5 per year. Reclamations totalled one, averaging 0.5 per year. Reported sanctifications was three, an average of 1.5 each year. There were none listed under full-time service. There were two baptisms and one dedication, totalling three, or 1.5 a year.

The number of reclamations reported on a yearly average was less than the previous period, and also for the following period of time. The spiritual help category was not in use during our stay at Church C, and consequently shows no growth from that source, in contrast to the before and after periods, which did utilize that reporting category.

Average Attendances

Attendance at Morning Worship Service decreased 10%. Evening Service attendance remained the same. Prayer Meeting increased 9%. Bible Studies went from zero to 39 on the average. The total Sunday School went down 2%. Adults in Sunday School decreased by 6%. Sunday School enrollment was -12%. Senior High Sunday School attendance was -30%. The Men's Fellowship increased from zero to eight. The Women's Fellowship increased 25%. Total Summer Ministry outreach was twenty, an average of ten a year.

The single division of reported statistics that showed a greater rate of growth per area than either previously or subsequently was the division of Average Attendances. Bible studies showed a stronger growth than either of the other periods. The Men's Fellowship also showed a strength of growth greater than before or after our ministry. Likewise, the Women's Fellowship demonstrated a larger rate of growth than those periods. The one area in this division that was weaker than

previously and subsequently was Sunday School enrollment.

Financial Statistics

The total church budget increased by 20%. Total pastoral support went up 11%. Giving to missions was up 26%. The number of reported tithers went up by 85%. Reported average giving increased by 1%.

The Financial division has one lesser rate of growth over the other two comparable time periods, which is in the area of average giving.

Comparisons

The three columns that are listed below compare the three ministry periods at Church C. The terms "stronger" and "weaker" indicate whether my period of ministry demonstrated a stronger or weaker rate of growth than the before or after period.

<u>Previous</u>	<u>During</u>	<u>Subsequent</u>
1. Ministry and Outreach		
weaker	total membership (3%)	weaker
weaker	new members (2 per year)	same
weaker	resident membership (4%)	stronger
weaker	by confession of faith (4)	stronger
same	from sister church (0%)	same
weaker	from other denominations (0%)	weaker
weaker	under age 13 members (~200%)	weaker
weaker	pastor's membership class (4)	weaker
2. Evangelistic Response		
weaker	conversions (3.5 per year)	stronger
weaker	reclamations (0.5 per year)	weaker
weaker	sanctifications (1.5 per year)	stronger

weaker	full-time service (0)	same
weaker	spiritual help (0%)	weaker
weaker	baptisms and dedications (1.5 per year)	stronger

3. Average Attendances

stronger	Morning Worship (-10%)	weaker
stronger	Evening Service (0%)	weaker
stronger	Prayer Meeting (9%)	weaker
stronger	Bible Studies (0 to 39)	stronger
weaker	total Sunday School (-2%)	stronger
weaker	adults in Sunday School (-6%)	stronger
weaker	Sunday School enrollment (-12%)	weaker
weaker	Senior High Sunday School (-30%)	stronger
stronger	the Men's Fellowship (0 to 8)	stronger
stronger	the Women's Fellowship (25%)	stronger
weaker	Summer Ministry (10 per year)	stronger

4. Financial Statistics

weaker	total church budget (20%)	stronger
weaker	pastoral support (11%)	stronger
weaker	giving to missions (26%)	stronger
weaker	tithers (85%)	stronger
weaker	average giving (1%)	weaker

The following areas show greater strength than before or after our time at Church C.

Bible studies

the Men's Fellowship

the Women's Fellowship

The areas listed below show a lesser rate of growth than both before and after our ministry at Church C.

total membership
 from other denominations
 under age 13 members
 pastor's membership class
 reclamations
 spiritual help
 Sunday School enrollment
 average giving

My experience at Church C seems to indicate some ministry strengths in the areas below:

1. The use of small groups to nurture and foster fellowship.
2. The increasing involvement of adults in Sunday School and in Summer Ministry Programs.

It appears also that the area listed below needed to be strengthened or supplemented:

1. A low performance in conflict-management experienced because of a sense of impermanence in our relationship to the church.

A further evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses, in view of Scriptural and church growth insights concludes the final chapter of Summary and Evaluation.

Reflection

In coming to Toppenish, Washington, we came at first with a sense of reluctance. Given the personal disappointment at our previous charge, and then coming naively to live in a strange state, it took several months to orient ourselves once again. However, we began to settle in and to search for a ministry through

the church.

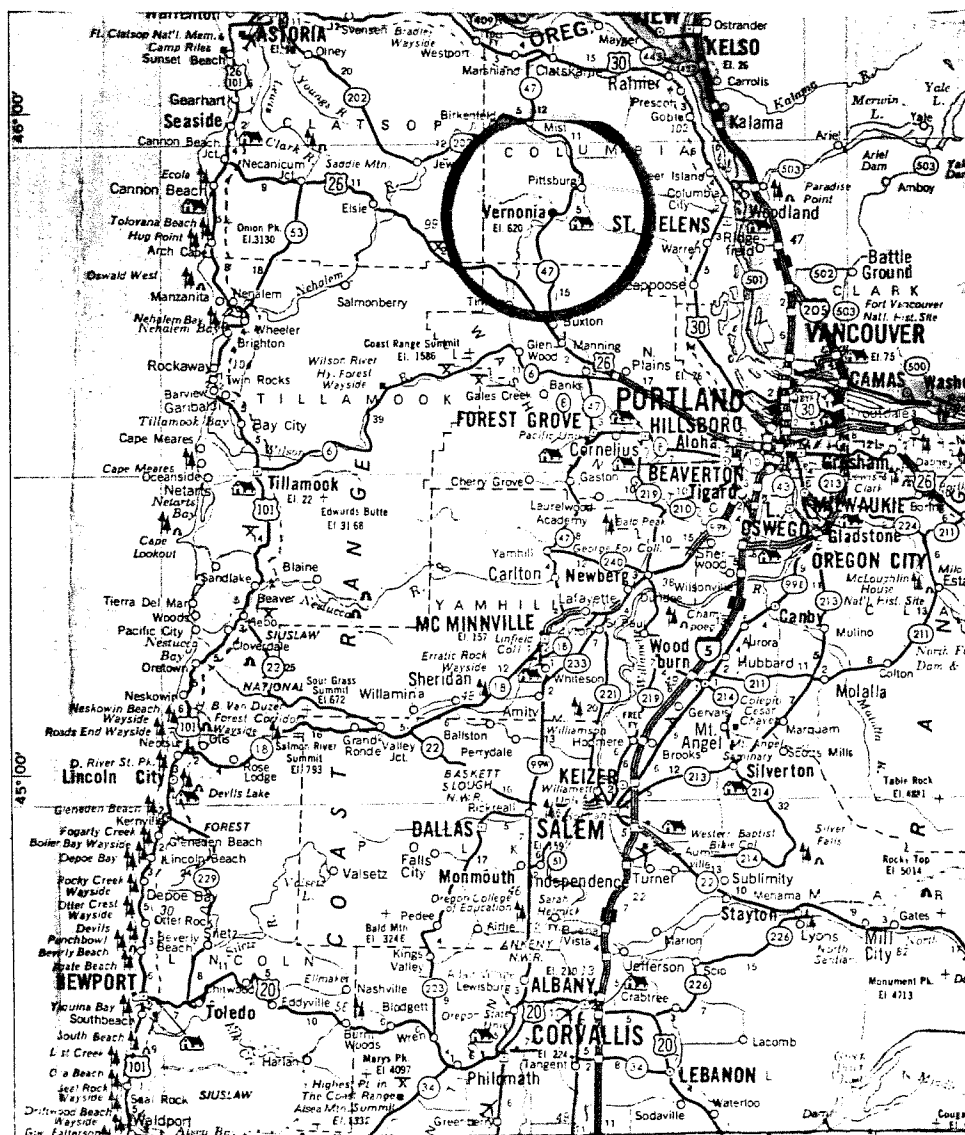
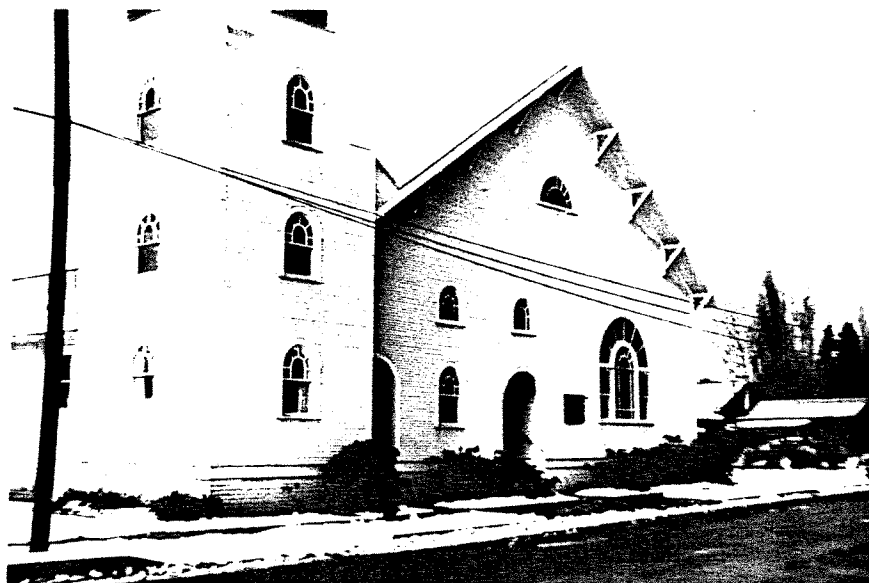
The two years at Toppenish were comparatively quiet, yet with a reaching out to find a ministry that was expressed in an inter-denominational women's Bible study that on occasion went beyond the 60's in number. The Mid-Week Prayer Service also branched out to become a home Bible study that eventually grew to where two area home Bible studies were formed.

Though we got what might have appeared, on the surface, to be a slow start, our last year of ministry at Toppenish began to see things happen: the exciting inter-denominational outreach, the increasing interest shown in the new format and location for the Mid-Week Meeting, as well as the building of new sidewalks at the church, the insulating of the parsonage, and the gathering of moneys and finalization of plans for the construction of a new church sign.

The sudden move from the church left many things yet untried, but the new pastor has carried through on some of the things we started. Somehow, the Lord in His wisdom, brought us back to Oregon to be closer to Portland, relatives, and familiar territory. I thank the Lord for his learning experiences, as well as for his matchless provision of all our needs.

The final church in this study is that of the Evangelical Church in Vernonia, Oregon. My present ministry at the Vernonia Church, or Church D, for reference, is the focus of study of the following chapter.

VERNONIA EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA



Chapter 7

AN EVALUATION OF CHURCH D

Background

Vernonia is located in the extreme northwest corner of Oregon, among the low wooded hills of the coast mountain range. The city was built at the confluence of several rivers and streams. The west coast climate creates a lot of rain and fog, but it also brings its share of sunny weather. Being located among wooded hills causes the warm summer days to cool nicely in the evenings, with a fresh breeze stirring the air. The town of Vernonia is off the main thoroughfares that go straight to the beach or follow the Columbia River, yet it attracts a good share of elk hunters and fishermen.

In the early 1900's the Vernonia area experienced a logging boom, in which the largest logging operation in the world was built. The Evangelical Church, being the pioneer congregation and only church in town at the time, moved from their smaller quarters into a newly built, larger sanctuary. From the early records and photos of that time, it seemed the whole town must have attended the church. It can now be seen, in retrospect, that it was after the peak of the logging boom, that the other churches began organizing, syphoning off their portion of people from the original "community" church. The Evangelical Church building is still the largest church structure in town, and is often used for the larger weddings and funerals in the community.

The demographic studies of Columbia County, show that though the population number has remained somewhat the same, that now however, the economic make-up has changed dramatically. Instead of having any longer a booming economy based on the lumber industry, that boasted a doctor in town, a newspaper, a Penney's store, a Safeway store, and a car dealership, along with numerous subsidiary

businesses, it is different. Vernonia now has the highest rate of welfare service recipients in Columbia County. A large number of working families commute to the greater Portland area for their jobs. Several small shop owners have had to close in the one year of our residence.

Apparently the only foreseeable source of new jobs and an increase in population is to come from the expansion or introduction of high-tech industries within commuter distance of Vernonia. Many who live in Vernonia stay because they have nowhere else to go, or they choose to live in a backwoods town, surrounded by quiet scenic beauty. It is a place in which one could find rest and contentment.

Previous to our coming to Vernonia, the newly-formed denomination went through a breaking-away and a re-forming in 1968. Since that time, coming up to our time of ministry, five pastors have successively served the church. That period records some of the effects of a dislocation of workers in the lumber industry caused by a slow-down in the sale of wood products. Many people left the church to find employment elsewhere. Then the current ministry period began in 1983.

The Vernonia Church, hereinafter, is referred to as Church D, for purposes of comparison. Our period of ministry is examined, then compared with the period before, for perspective. The Conference Journal of the Pacific Conference of the Evangelical Church of North America is the source of the statistical data used in construction of the graphs used in the analysis. Four areas of statistical inquiry are focused on in the Journal: Ministry and Outreach, Evangelistic Response, Average Attendances, and Financial Statistics. The charts displaying this data are contained in Appendix D.

Analysis

Ministry and Outreach

The total membership increased for the year by 3.5%. One new member was added to the church. The resident membership was increased 13%. No members were added by confession of faith. The rate of growth from sister churches grew by 3.5%. There was no rate of increase from other denominations. Nor did the rate increase from the under thirteen age group. No members were added from the pastor's membership class.

The total membership rate of increase was greater than that for the previous period. The resident membership rate of increase was also stronger than before. The rate of gain of members from sister churches was also higher for the one year. The average number of new members gained per year was less than the previous time. The rate of growth for confession of faith was less than the comparable period. The rate of growth in members gained from other churches was not as great as before. The rate of gain in the under age thirteen member category did not keep pace with the previous time. Also, the pastor's membership class did not garner the average per year as did the first period of ministry.

Evangelistic Response

The average number of conversions per year was three. Reclamations averaged two per year. One a year was the average for the sanctifications category. There were no statistics reported for the full-time service area. The numbers reported for spiritual help went from zero to three. There were no baptisms and dedications reported.

The average number of reclamations per year was the single area that showed a higher rate than previously. The other statistics for conversions, sanctifications, full-time service, spiritual help, and baptisms and dedications each showed a lesser

rate of growth than before.

Average Attendances

The Morning Worship attendance grew for the one year at the rate of 20%. The Evening Service likewise was up by 45%. The addition of combined activities during the Prayer Meeting resulted in an increase of 100%. The home Bible Studies decreased by 50%. The rate of growth for the Sunday School declined by 12%. However, adults in Sunday School increased by 8%. The Sunday School enrollment was down 16%. Also the Senior High Sunday School average attendance went down 27%. The rate of growth for the Men's Fellowship remained even. The same rate of growth was experienced by the Women's Fellowship. Likewise, the rate of growth of the Summer Ministry program did not increase.

The growth in attendance at Morning Worship was stronger than the previous period. In comparison, the rate of growth in attendance at Evening Service was also greater. The growth rate of attendance at Prayer Meeting was higher than previously. The Home Bible Study rate of growth was less than before. The total Sunday School's rate of growth was greater than before. Adults in Sunday School showed a higher growth rate than the previous period. Sunday School enrollment growth rate was also stronger than before. The growth rate of the Senior High Sunday School attendance declined more than previously. The Men's Fellowship rate of growth was higher than the comparable period. The Women's Fellowship rate of growth was identical as before. The Summer Ministry rate of growth was weaker than previously.

Financial Statistics

The total church budget increased by 9.7%. The rate of growth for pastoral support was up 12%. Giving to missions also showed a rise of 31%. Reported tithers likewise showed an up-swing of 42.8%. The over-all average giving came up 5.9%.

The reported tithers was the one financial statistic whose rate of growth increased over the previous time. Giving to the total church budget showed a lesser rate of increase than the time before. The rate for pastoral support also showed less increase than before. The rate of giving to missions was not as much as the previous time. Also, the average giving increase was not as much as in the previous period.

Comparisons

The two columns below compare the ministry period before and during our ministry at Church D. The use of the words "stronger" and "weaker" indicate the relative strength or weakness of my ministry with the previous time.

Previous During

1. Ministry and Outreach

stronger	total membership (3.5%)
weaker	new members (1 per year)
stronger	resident membership (13%)
weaker	by confession of faith (0)
stronger	from sister church (3.5%)
weaker	from other denominations (0%)
weaker	under age 13 members (0%)
weaker	pastor's membership class (0)

2. Evangelistic Response

weaker	conversions (3 per year)
stronger	reclamations (2 per year)
weaker	sanctifications (1 per year)
weaker	full-time service (0)
weaker	spiritual help (0 to 3)

weaker baptisms and dedications (0 per year)

3. Average Attendances

stronger Morning Worship (20%)
 stronger Evening Service (45%)
 stronger Prayer Meeting (100%)
 weaker Bible Studies (-50%)
 stronger total Sunday School (-12%)
 stronger adults in Sunday School (8%)
 stronger Sunday School enrollment (-16%)
 weaker Senior High Sunday School (-27%)
 stronger the Men's Fellowship (0%)
 same the Women's Fellowship (same)
 weaker Summer Ministry (0 per year)

4. Financial Statistics

weaker total church budget (9.7%)
 weaker pastoral support (12%)
 weaker giving to missions (31.8%)
 stronger tithers (42.8%)
 weaker average giving (5.9%)

The areas below showed a greater rate of increase over the previous time period.

total membership

resident membership

from sister church

reclamations

Morning Worship

Evening Service
Prayer Meeting
total Sunday School
adults in Sunday School
Sunday School enrollment
the Men's Fellowship
tithers

The listing below records those areas having a lesser rate of growth compared to the previous time-frame.

new members
by confession of faith
from other denominations
under age 13 members
pastor's membership class
conversions
sanctifications
full-time service
spiritual help
baptisms and dedications
Bible Studies
Senior High Sunday School
Summer Ministry
total church budget
pastoral support
giving to missions
average giving

My ministry experience at Church D seems to indicate strengths in the areas listed below:

1. Moderate strength in rate of growth in attendances at the church functions.
2. Good results in conflict-management was experienced in a secure relationship of the pastor in the church.

It also appears that the following areas need to be strengthened or supplemented:

1. A lack of evangelistic outreach programs.
2. A slow growth in the area of financial support for the church.

The next, and concluding chapter, is a comparative evaluation of my ministry from the findings of Acts and the church growth literature.

Reflection

We came to the Vernonia Church with more eagerness than we had experienced for some time. Vernonia was within easy driving distance of Portland, closer to relatives and friends, and as a bonus, not far from the beach. The cooler summers and milder winters were also a relief from scorching heat in central Washington. Nestled among the wooded hills Vernonia afforded much fresh air, walking trails and rivers to fish. All in all, a very quiet, but pleasant place to live.

It soon became apparent to us, which was already depressingly obvious to everyone else, that for a small non-growing town, Vernonia seemed to have too many churches for the attending population. It was with dismay that among the competing churches, one of the larger ones under-went a painful split. Oh no, another church, but no new people to minister to!

However, near the end of our first year at Vernonia, the Lord, I believe, gave me a vision to reach the unreached, hidden people out among the hills and valleys surrounding the town. A look at the newly-acquired postal route map revealed what seemed to be a multitude of post boxes on a dozen roads meandering through the large surrounding area. We have subsequently found, at the writing of this

report, that there are indeed many families, over and above the small population of the town, that have no church and no pastor. Those already contacted have proven friendly to our approach. We want to reach those that have not been reached, and so we labor in hope!

The Summary and Evaluation chapter which follows draws some of the learnings gained from the Scriptural principles found in Acts and insights gleaned from church growth literature. These highlights are applied to these four churches of my pastoral career to reveal strengths or weaknesses in each of my ministerial settings.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

The nature of this study lends itself to a summary and evaluation that proceeds from major insight to major insight hand in hand with the individual churches involved. Leading principles have come to light and are applied to the four churches as appropriate. Every church is not examined by every principle in the same depth, but only in the more obvious areas of my ministry. The final page of this chapter is devoted to areas where further study or supplementation of my ministry is needed.

The Household Evangelism Principle

Having seen whole households come to faith, as recorded in the Acts account, Getz' and Peters' observations from page seventeen of chapter two, warrant application:

The primary target for evangelism should be adults and consequently whole households. . . . The New Testament pattern is clear! . . . In the books of Acts, the apostles won adults to Christ first of all. . . . They went after adults -- knowing that parental conversion meant reaching the whole household.¹

On the same page, Dr. George Peters says that "Household evangelism and household salvation are the biblical ideal and norm in evangelism and salvation."²

The principle of household evangelism experienced a degree of success under my ministry while we were at Church B. Through the emphasis of promoting home Bible studies in the community some growth was seen. Growth was seen in the area of nurture, mutual caring, and prayer support of young Christians. Growth

¹Op. cit., Getz, pp. 43-44.

²Ibid.

was also reported in numbers as new believers included their unsaved relatives in the open Bible study time.

The present writer admits to having had occasional feelings of anxiety as these loosely structured groups functioned according to an unseen agenda of human needs. There was some element of emotional risk in getting close to people, but at the same time it was exhilarating and fulfilling.

However, I was not secure enough in my pastoral authority at Church B to prevent a capture and take-over of these loosely-knit Bible study groups by the church organization. I could see as the church formally "incorporated" these groups and "officially" determined the accepted agenda for each group, that the fluid, open doors, that characterized the groups, would be effectively shut to outsiders.

I felt powerless to intervene in the process. A lack of understanding of the human dynamics of the groups, combined with the fear of provoking a crisis at the church base, kept the pastor from preventing these groups from dying on the vine. In time they became just another church group, with no discernable nurturing growth, or any new converts. The potential for household evangelism was lost in those instances.

The principle of household evangelism had a different application in Church C. It was found, at Church C, that the Sunday School had a bus. The children who rode the bus to church were predominantly of Mexican descent. The linguistic, not to mention the cultural and economic, barriers were great. The attempts to bridge the language barrier through the Sunday School choruses and in the classes were not very successful.

Consequently, attendance was erratic. When all of the kids came, the Sunday School was perceived as growing. When they were absent, the Sunday School was perceived as dying. The problem, or rather, the key to the situation was to reach

the parents, and thus win the whole household.

There were at least two hindrances, though, to overcoming those barriers: the linguistic lack of the pastor, and the social difference of the church. If our ministry had continued at Church C, the long-term resolution would have been to learn, or obtain someone who knew Spanish, and to form a Spanish congregation around that person.

The Preparation, Proclamation, Preservation Principle

The Biblical principles under this heading seem to have had a fair balance in our ministry at Church A. Prayer, by way of preparation, was emphasized as important in the church, and was sincerely experimented with by the pastor. The Proclamation of the Gospel found expression in the multitudinous outreach programs, from films at the fair, and house-to-house tract distribution, to beginning the Sunday School bus route, and released time from school for religious instruction. The Proclamation had the heavier emphasis of the three principles. The garnering of results in the Preservation of the Results had its fair emphasis as well in the baptism and membership classes, issuing in church membership. But the follow-up may have been the weaker of the three principles.

In the light of the three Biblical principles uncovered, my ministry at Church B appears lop-sided. By far the larger emphasis was put on the Spiritual Preparation of the church for growth. Through prayer, preaching, teaching, and leading in the church council, efforts were made to resolve what were perceived as spiritual problems in the areas of faith, love, mercy, forgiveness, judging, and legalism. Some ventures were made in Proclamation through the home Bible studies and in visitation. In the Preservation of the Results we experienced an almost total lack of emphasis, believing as we did, that troubles on the home front needed to be rectified before we could be entrusted with new spiritual life.

A similar, but milder form of this emphasis hung over our ministry at Church C, where the first place was given to a Spiritual Preparation of the church that would engender a reaching out in Proclamation leading to Results.

However, even by our second year at Church C, the emphasis was shifting to the Proclamation of the Gospel through such ministries as the inter-denominational Bible study, the midweek home prayer meetings, the building of sidewalks to make the building more accessible, and preparations for an attractive new sign.

Our present ministry at Church D appears back on a more evenly balanced emphasis. Spiritual Preparation through Bible study and prayer are still heavily emphasized, but is counter-balanced by an extensive door-to-door visitation outreach and youth ministries. The follow-up area is still the weaker of the three emphases, yet is being consciously worked on to garner and disciple the Results of outreach.

The Pastor

As previously noted, in chapter three, Pastor Girard shared what had been his leadership style. It is quoted here again because of its relevance in comparison to my ministry.

It seemed natural to me (not knowing any better) to set my own goals and to present them to the church, not as an ultimatum or a 'do-it-or-else' program, but as 'information' about the direction I, as pastor, intended to lead the church. How fast we moved toward these goals was, of course, up to them. The congregation and its leaders in turn could veto the whole thing by terminating my call as pastor. I see now that it's a rough-and-tumble way to go. But it was the only way I knew at the time.³

The style of leadership depicted by Girard seems to characterize my ministerial leadership more than I should like to have thought. It worked alright

³Op. cit., Girard, p. 101.

in Church A where the church was used to going along with its pastors. In Church B, however, it came in for a rude awakening when tried in a setting of traditionally strong local lay leadership. A period of floundering and searching for a different style of leadership compatible with my own personality traits characterized our leadership at Church C.

Now, at Church D, a more comfortable, natural type (for me) of leadership is emerging, where personal desires are more freely expressed, but wherein the wishes of the church leadership are also given more equal weight in the direction and activities of the church.

Donald McGavran advocated the use of charts and graphs as an educational tool in the church. I can see from experience that these are fine and useful, but if they are perceived as manipulative gimmicks and indoctrinational tools, they cannot supply the lack of trust between pastor and people. I came to see this later in my pastoral ministry at Church B.

There is a legitimate sense, we have seen, in Leslie Parrott's advice, in which the pastor must have his own sense of direction as he seeks to guide the church. He said:

The first six months in any new pastorate may well be spent in trying to determine one or two specific goals toward which the pastor feels everything in the ministry of this church must be turned. . . . The most difficult kind of goal is the changing of a set of attitudes in a church that has bogged down numerically and spiritually . . . filling up an empty church, or demonstrating the possibility of growth in a difficult spot.⁴

A pastoral leader cannot fuel his own impetus strictly on what other people want. The pastor needs to have his own assessment of his spiritual gifts and the capacity for ministry of a given church. According to Parrott, in my second pastorate, it looks like I took on "the most difficult kind of goal." I can testify

⁴Op. cit., Parrott, pp. 36-37, 43.

to it being difficult. However, given a longer pastorate there, and a willingness to keep at it through thick and thin, may have brought the changes in attitudes sought through the building of a long-term, trusting relationship.

At our present church, we have assumed this attitude in order to fill up an empty church and demonstrate the possibilities for growth in a difficult spot.

Robert Schuller's observation at this point is certainly apropos. "Perhaps the biggest single reason is that the typical pastor comes to the church without the determination to stay there long enough to make it a great church."⁵

Our ministry at our first pastorate was long enough to make some significant changes in the church, and was long enough for us to seek fresh challenges elsewhere. At Church C, however, the length of ministry did not conform to the advice above. Some things were indeed beginning to happen by the second year, yet these were far from fundamental changes in the ministry situation. It is our desire at our present pastorate to remain long enough to be able to see some long-term changes occur in the life and ministry of the church.

Schuller also reminded us that "goal-setting is a major source of enthusiasm -- and enthusiasm is all-important for success."⁶ I remember at our first church being non-pleased for several minutes when the evangelist for the revival meeting asked me what visible goal I wanted the church to accomplish issuing out of the meetings.

I had never thought of revival services in that light before. I had always assumed that the purpose of revival meetings was to help people grow spiritually. Anyway, as a direct result of the impetus of those meetings, a house-to-house visitation program began that developed into a permanent Sunday School route.

⁵Op. cit., Schuller, pp. 72-73.

⁶Ibid., pp. 73-74.

A first for Church A! I guess that was a pretty good return from a week of revival meetings.

Schuller also stated in chapter three, that "another reason why people resist setting goals is their lack of self-confidence."⁷ We have this facing us in our present church. The first and only church in the area, going from a large flourishing congregation to a struggling handful, apparently undermined through the years through spin-offs to form a dozen other churches among a non-growing population, can be upsetting. It may also become demoralizing. It is our hope that through long term, confident pastoral leadership that hope and confidence can be restored as hitherto outsiders are won to faith in Christ and brought into the church.

The insights of Maner in his discussion of the relationship of goals and excitement, in chapter three, also contributed to my ministry. He said: "I would never remain as pastor of a church that did not excite me. It is not fair to the church or the pastor's ministry."⁸

Near the end of our ministry at Church A, I think there was mutually no more excitement, and it was best for both parties to work with fresh faces. Our ministry at Church B quickly lost its excitement, until it was replaced by disappointment and discouragement. It would have taken a fresh commitment of both pastor and people to each other to have enabled the excitement to be restored to both parties.

Church D holds out the challenge of nurturing and holding the flock together, as well as of possessing the opportunity to pastor those who have no pastor, and enabling the church to minister to those who have no church.

⁷Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁸Op. cit., Maner, pp. 95-96.

We have seen in this study too, that growth goals can be set, yet somehow lack the effect of stimulating excitement and accomplishment. Mavis pointed out that aspect in chapter three:

Simple goals for numerical gains, however, may be superficial and represent wishful thinking. . . . If quantitative goals alone are used there are likely to be few permanent numerical gains because no adequate basis had been laid for an advance.⁹

This truth was demonstrated during our ministry at Church C. An annual Sunday School contest can become simply another routine we go through on the church calendar. Without sufficient planning for special outreach, prayer and activity leading up to, during, and following the attendance contest, the results were strictly what Mavis predicted. The superficial emotion and excitement needed to be harnessed to practical outreach activity.

Mavis noted further, though, that:

Goals become a guiding image to local churches when they are formulated, on the one hand, in reference to the churches resources and, on the other hand, in reference to the needs and opportunities of the community.¹⁰

The task at Church D is to keep the church open long enough to be able to respond to the opportunities in the community. Flagging resources need to be conserved and reinvested in the work in order to sustain an outreach. The results of blanket visitation of local areas suggest that possibly a fourth, or even a third, of the homes contacted may be approachable by the ministry of Church D. To me this presents itself as a fantastic opportunity for the gospel, since it is a common complaint among the local churches that there are just too many churches!

⁹Op. cit., Mavis, pp. 63-65.

¹⁰Ibid.

The Church

Under the caption of The Church in the church growth survey chapter, Hunter gave the standard church growth definition of evangelism. From it can be seen its applicability to my ministerial career, "Proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Savior and persuading people to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church."¹¹

The results of this study have shown me that we did this almost unconsciously at Church A. At the two following churches we allowed our ministries to become too one-sided by emphasizing Spiritual Preparation, and neglecting the balance offered by the Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results.

However, here at our present church, we are endeavoring to carefully observe and implement these three essential features into our ministry.

It was noted in The Church section of chapter three that quite a divergence of opinion exists as to the purpose of the church, whether that of evangelism or, contrariwise, that of nurture. Getz in particular argued for the development of faith, hope, and love as the chief end of the church. However, Mavis corrected the tendency toward spiritual introversion by declaring that evangelistic outreach can become a means of spiritual growth. A look back at the purpose of the church as stated in Acts 1:8 put things back in evangelistic focus.

I found that applying the foregoing discussion to my ministry in the four churches was a fairly reliable standard of measurement. At Church A, our ministry focused outward on ministry and reaching people for Christ. Our ministry at the next two churches reflected a response to an environment wherein people wanted to "save" their church from decline and extinction. A self-centered focus to be sure. At Church D, a similar situation exists, except with a decided difference.

¹¹Op. cit., Arn, p. 34.

There appears almost a passive acceptance that "the best days are gone." It may be a reaction like those who apparently abandon a relative who is terminally ill. In the light of this situation, our ministry here includes nurturing and preserving what remains, but is largely characterized by its looking to fields that are white for the harvest.

When it comes to training the laity for ministry, Getz comes through with a healthy emphasis, "creative leadership of the Holy Spirit . . . using all of the human resources available."¹²

During our ministry at Church A, a wide variety of outreach ministries were tried. At Churches B and C, we felt hemmed in, narrowed in the potential number of ministries that would be supported by the respective churches. Yet at Church D we are encouraged by the support of even the small variety of outreach programs that have been started to date.

The Outreach

Under the section of The Outreach, the discussion of the nature of evangelism was carried forward further to consider whether evangelism is to be understood as proclamation or merely "presence." Getz came out on the side that evangelism was to be primarily proclamational, a persuasive sharing of one's faith that resulted in conversions. He reminded us of the Biblical pattern in Acts and elsewhere in the Scripture. Getz concluded from the Biblical base in Acts that "every local body of believers must be responsible for its own community."¹³ He even dared to go further and boldly declared:

¹²Op. cit., Getz, p. 49.

¹³Op. cit., Getz, pp. 40-41.

Frequently local churches neglect their own communities. A virile foreign missions program becomes a substitute for local outreach. Missionary budgets replace on-the-spot evangelistic activity. Overseas missionaries supported by the church become a substitute for engaging in local evangelism.¹⁴

Through my ministry at Churches B and C, it was not encouraging to realize, in the one case, that though heavy share support was raised to support missionaries in Africa, blacks of our own community did not seem comfortable in our church. In the other case, a Spanish-speaking missionary could communicate with the Sunday School children in their own language, but the pastor and people could barely communicate with them in English! In both cases, this revealed a lack in ministering to their needs.

The issue of greatest concern in reaching people for Christ, under the section of The Outreach, was that of the homogeneous principle. Chaney and Lewis explained the implications for the gospel in the racial, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic differences between groups of people, as well as how the similarities within these various groupings can become natural pathways for the transmission of the faith.

This tenet of church growth has been as enlightening to the understanding of my ministry as any that I found. The homogeneous principle along with the other Biblical and church growth principles have provided me a way to view my career in four churches more objectively. From the beginning to the rewarding completion of this study, many of the questions that I began asking at our second church of "Why did it work?", to "Why didn't it work?", have to a large degree been answered. Yet even this is not the end of the search for making my ministry more effective for the Lord.

¹⁴Ibid.

Areas For Further Study

Areas that were not within the specific scope of this study, but which were revealed in the course of it are the following:

1. How to motivate and enlist laymen for the work of the Lord.
2. Learn more about evangelistic methods in personal soul winning.
3. Further study in developing disciples.
4. Acquire more effective follow-up procedures.

These are areas which I definitely intend to follow through on in order to be a growing servant of the Lord and a more capable leader in the church.

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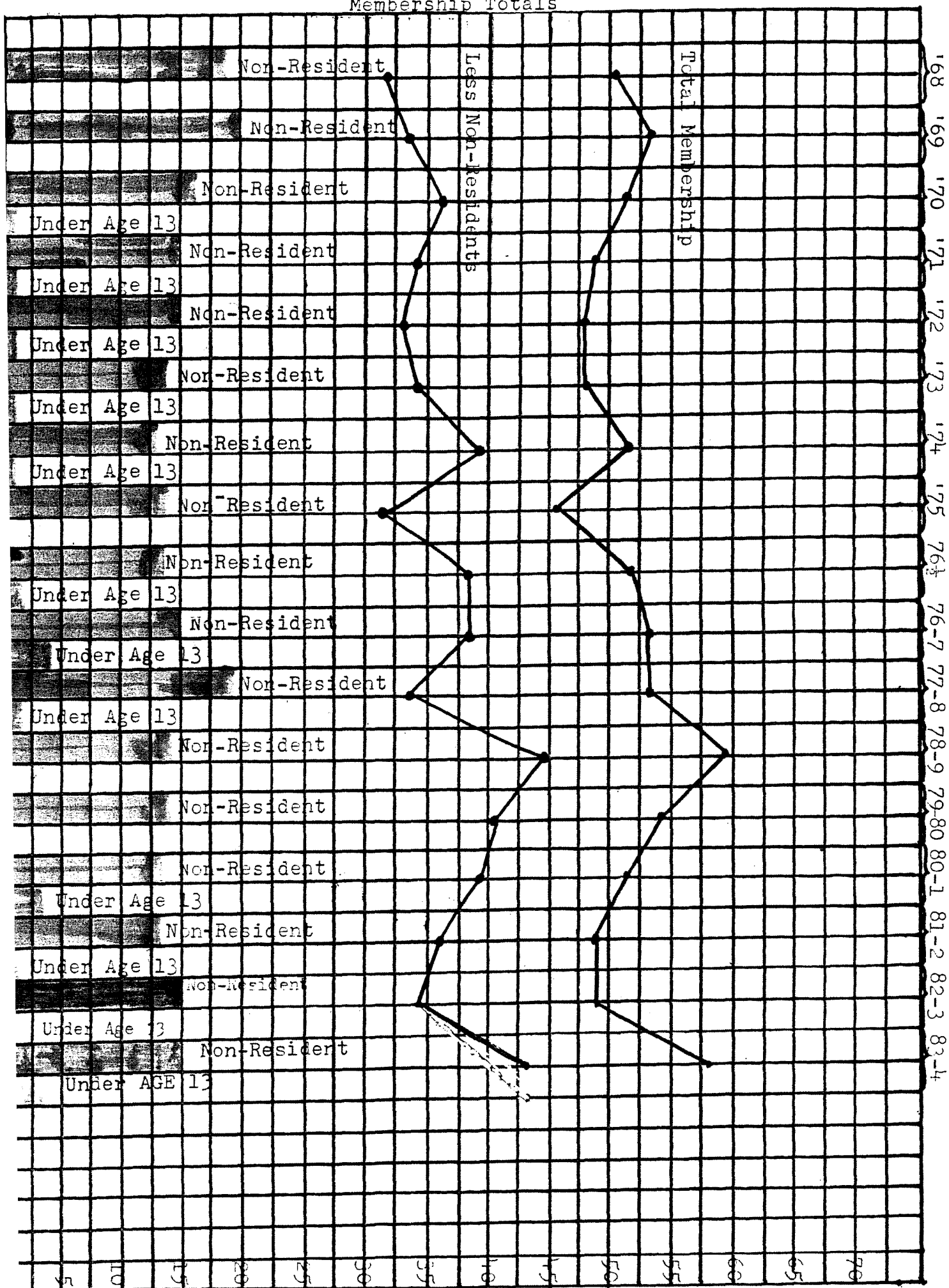
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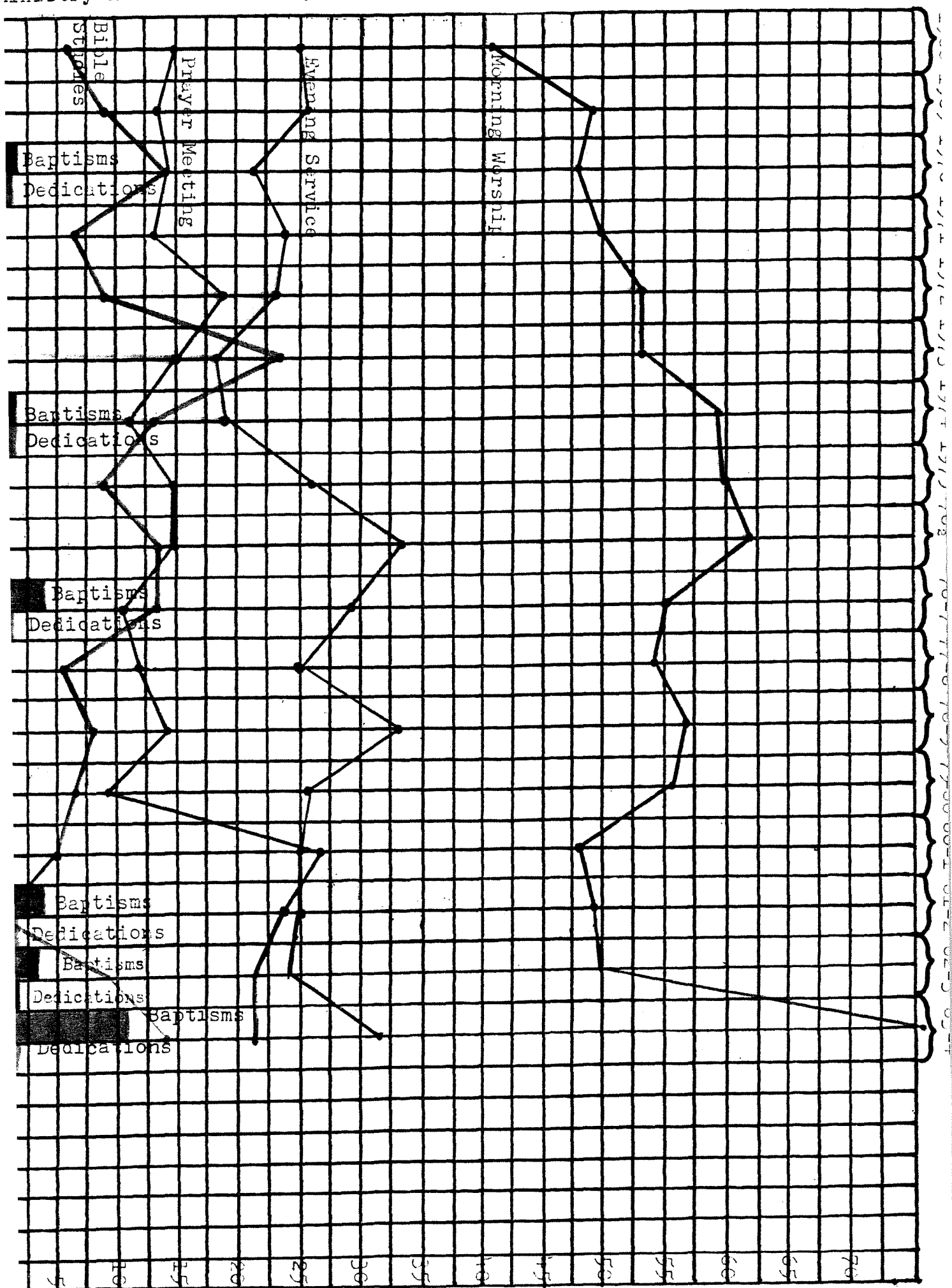
APPENDIX A

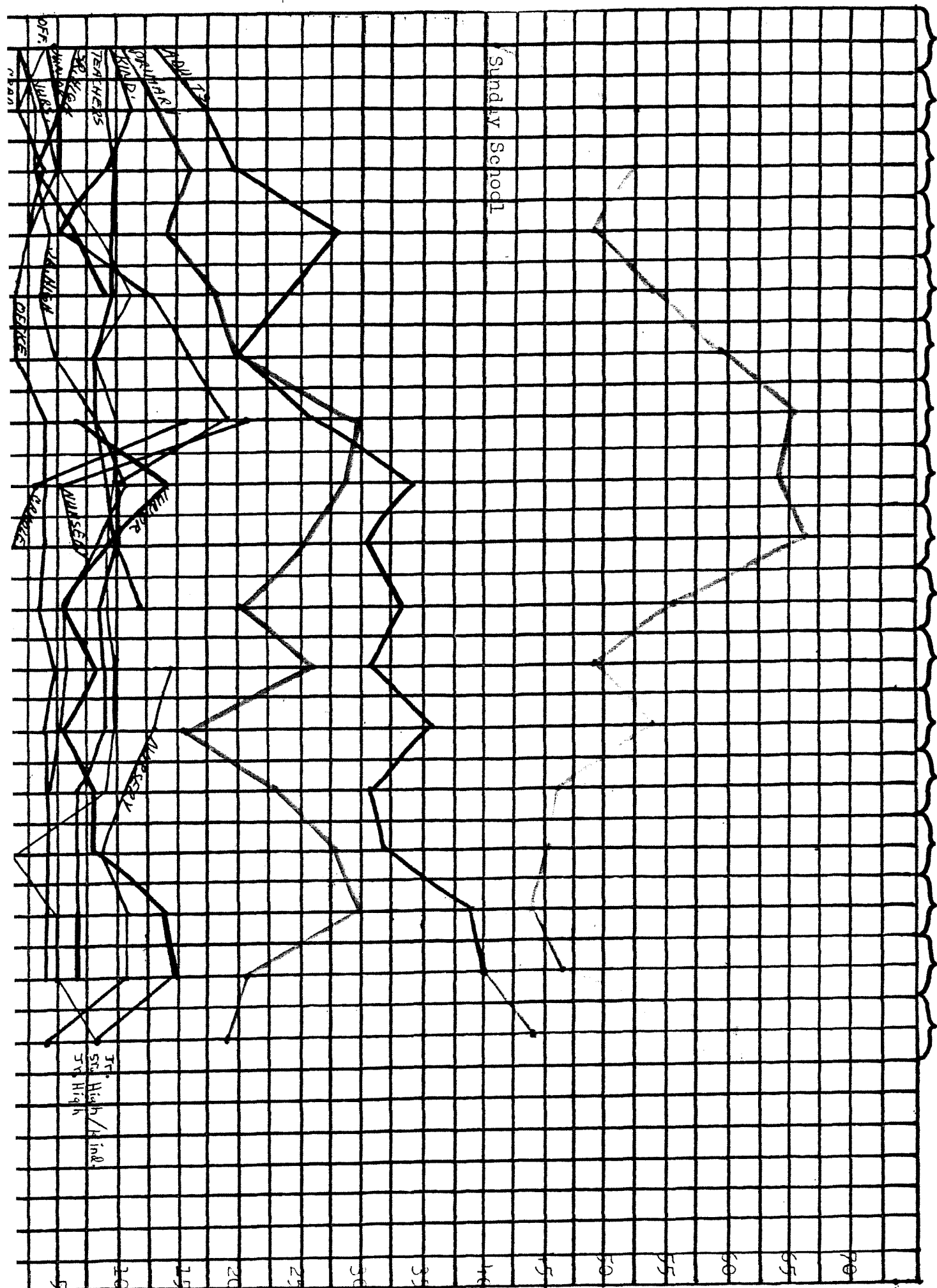
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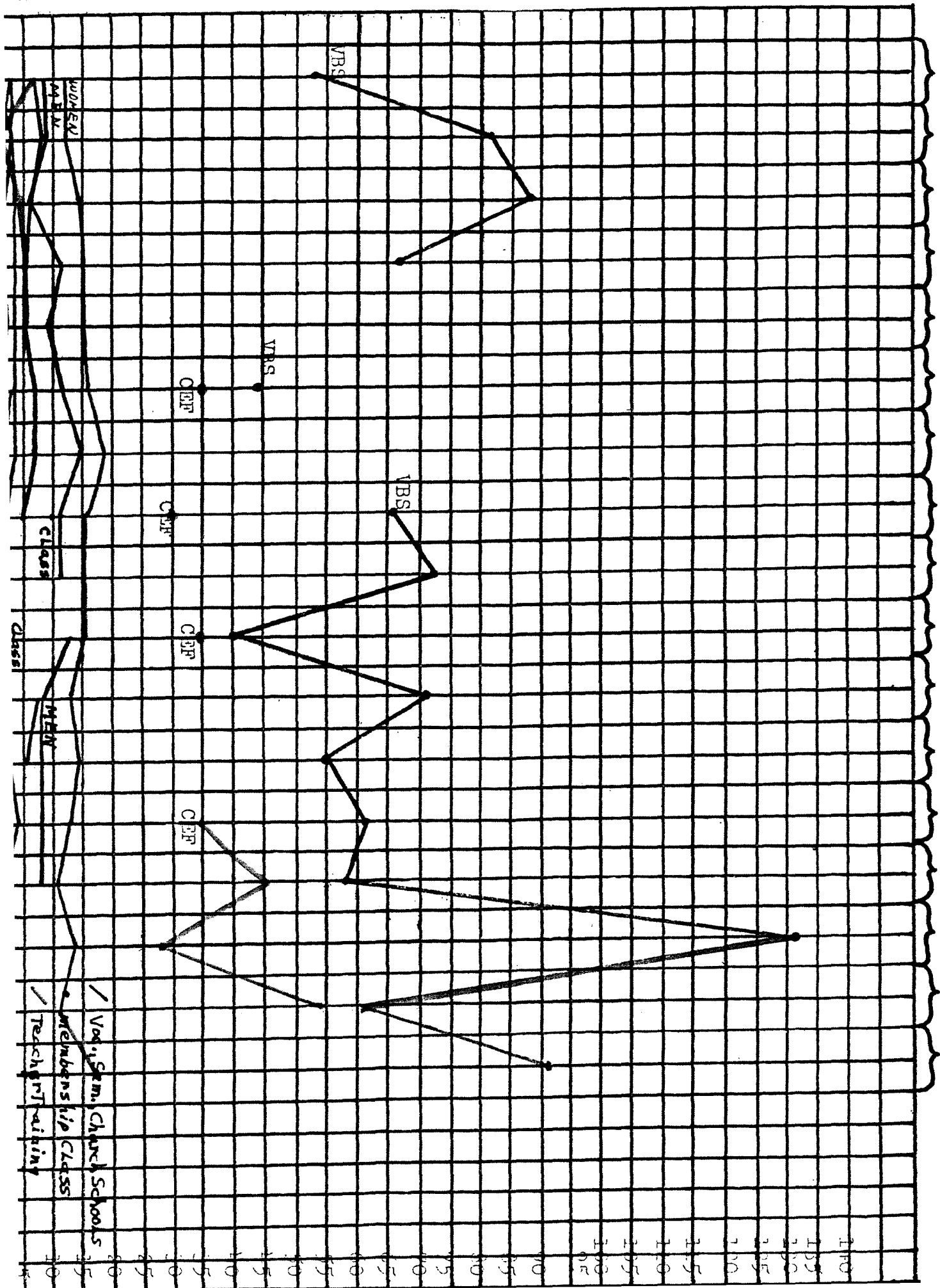
I. Ministry and Outreach - Church A
Membership Totals



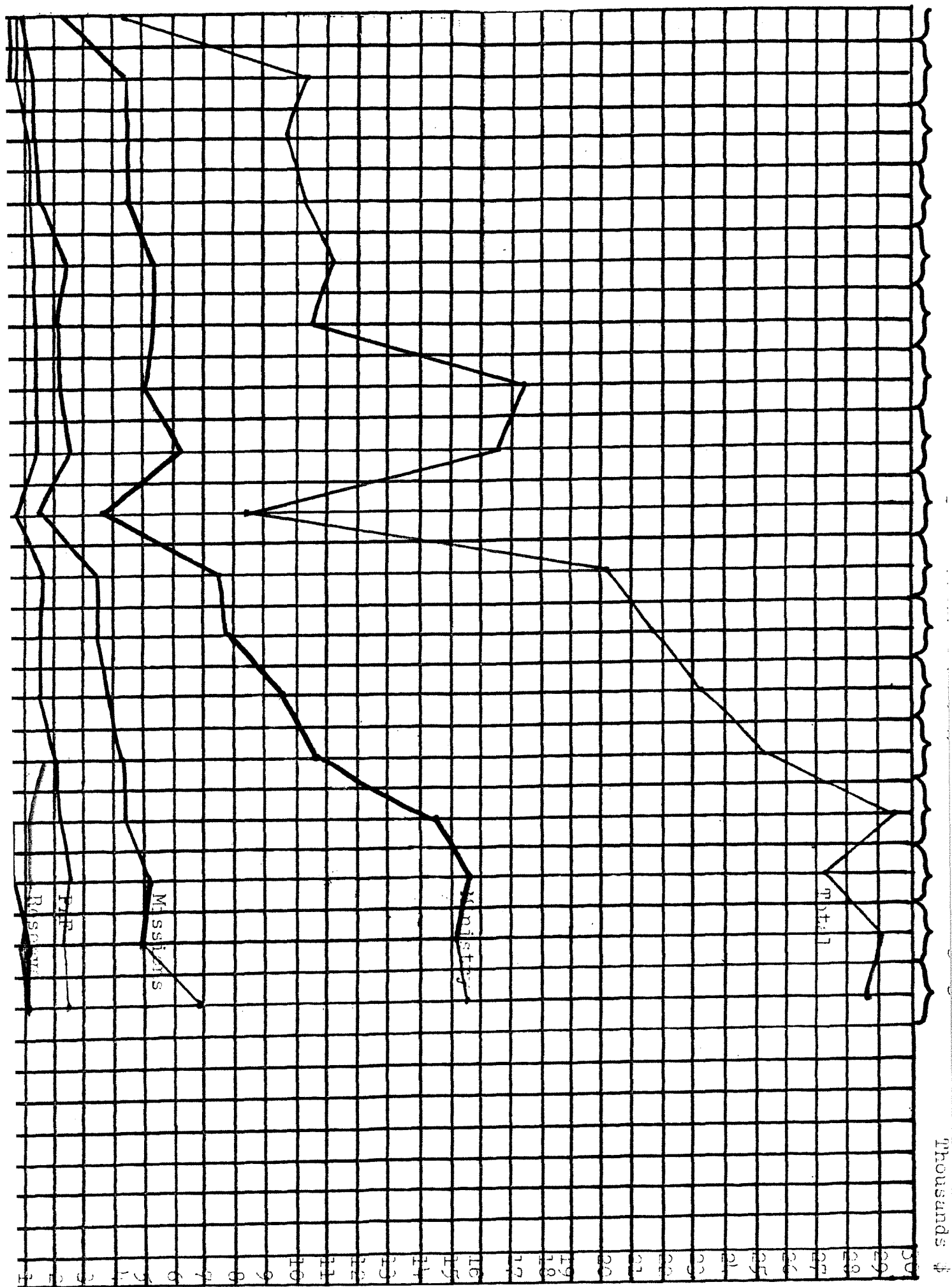
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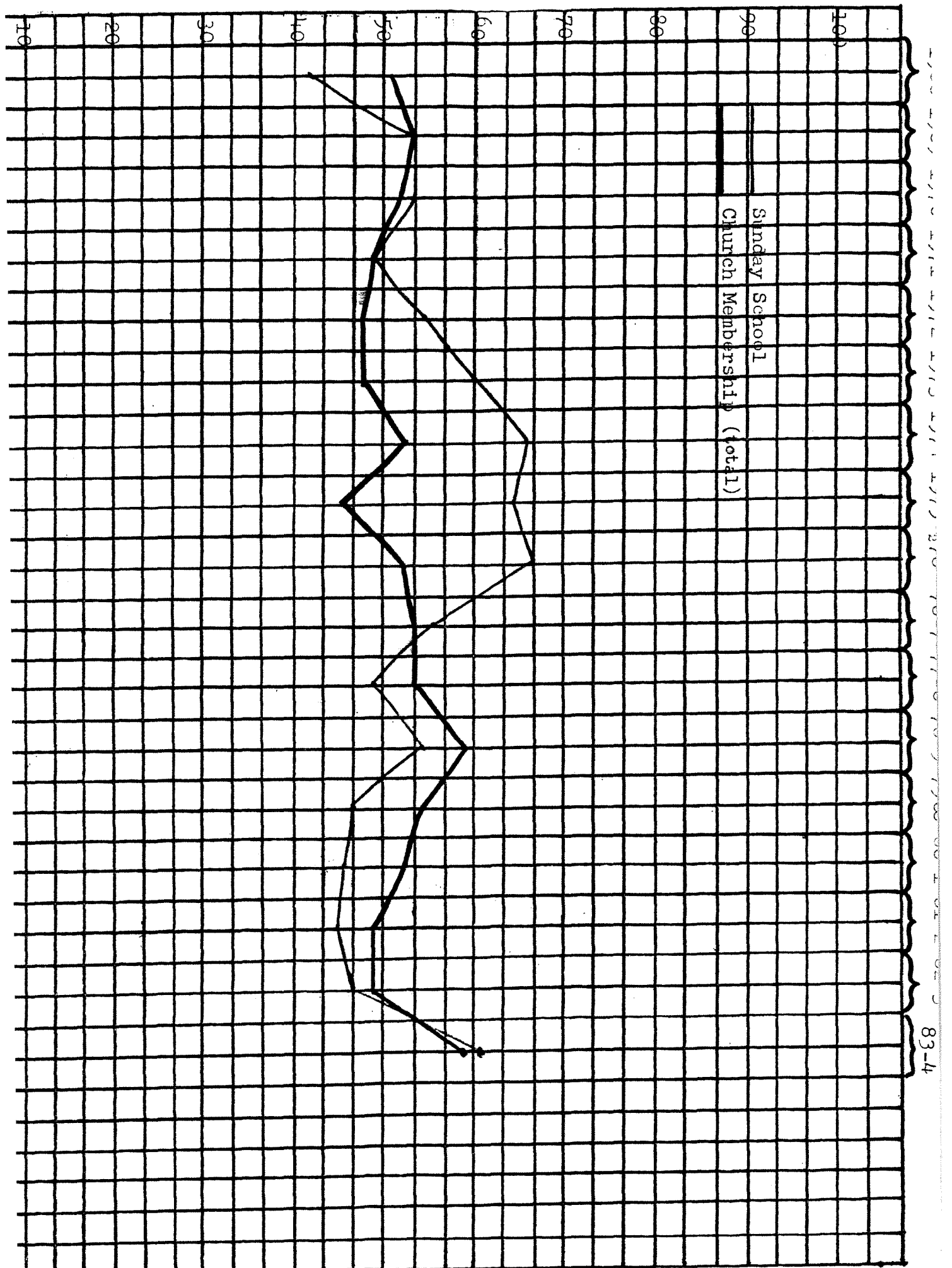




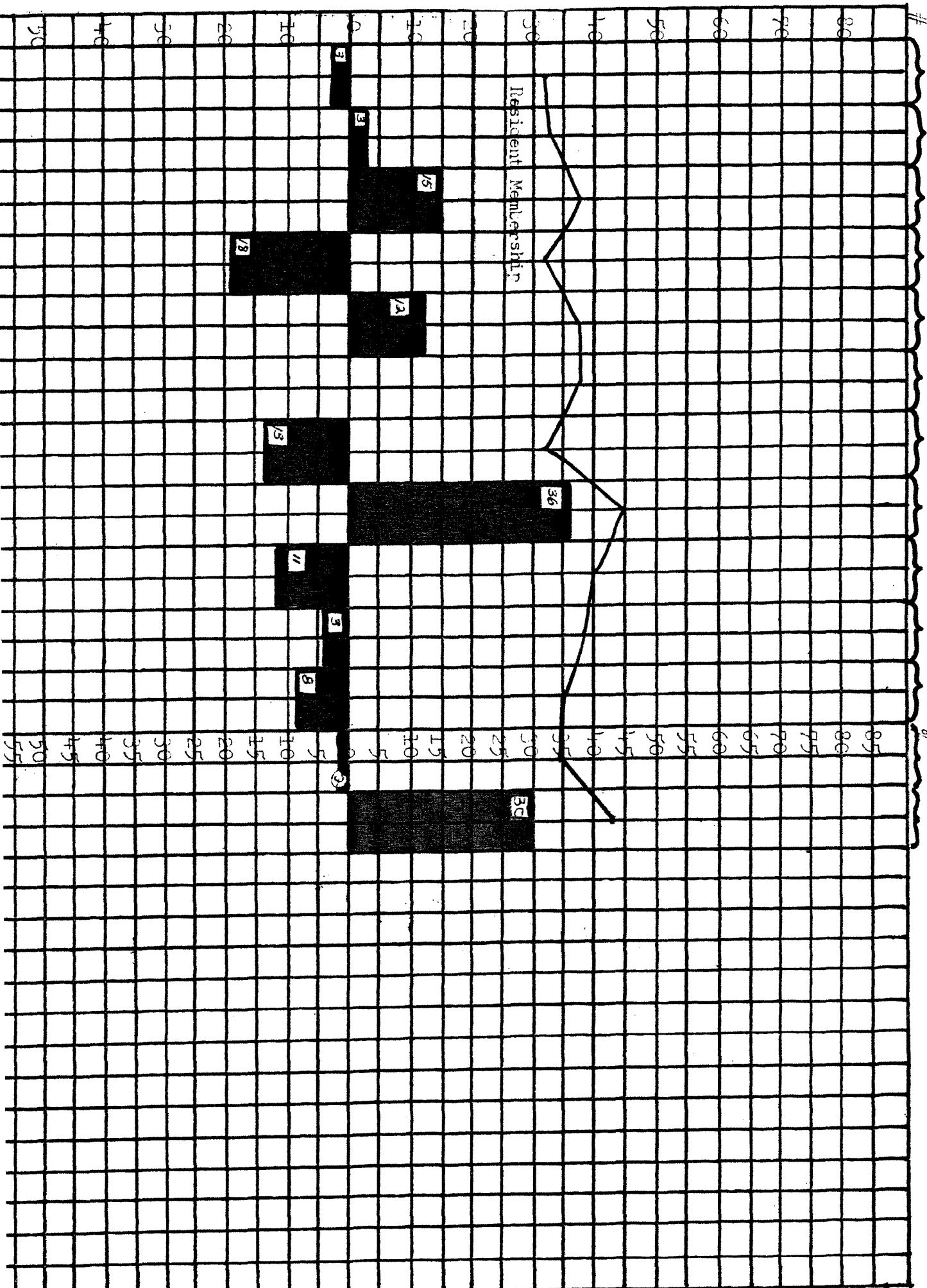
III. Finances - Church A



Church A



Annual Growth Rate, Church A



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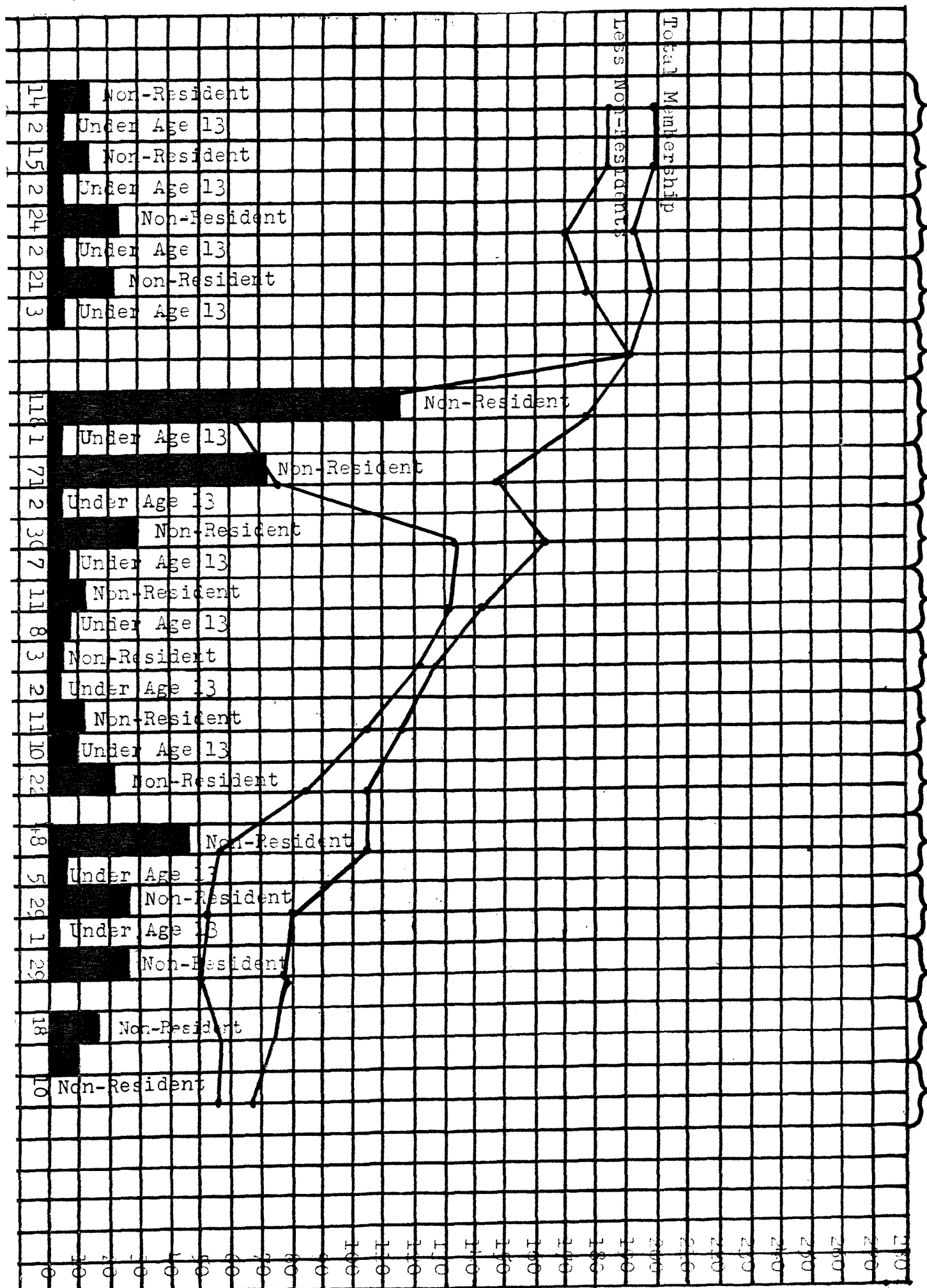


Deborah G. Brown, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B

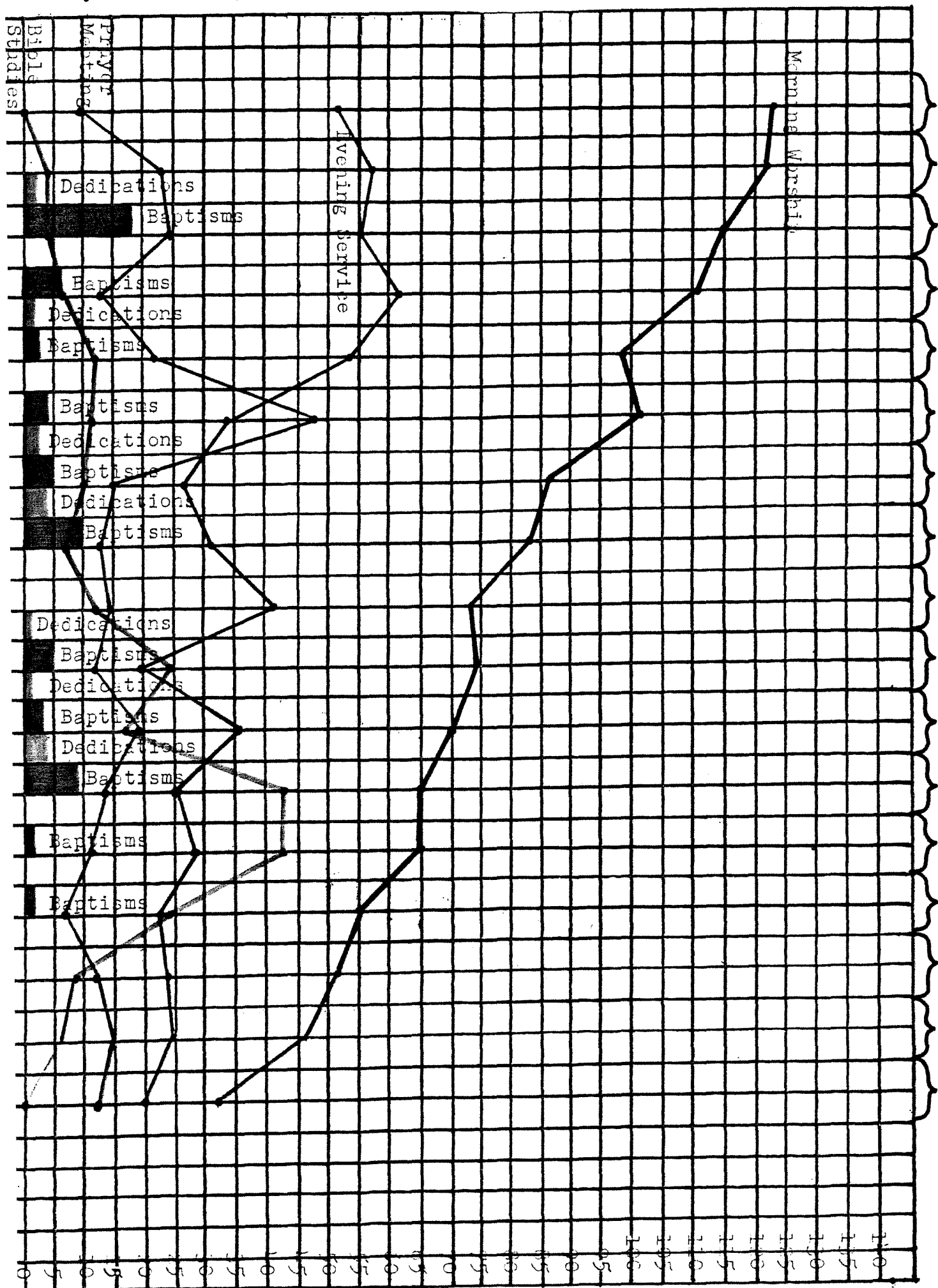
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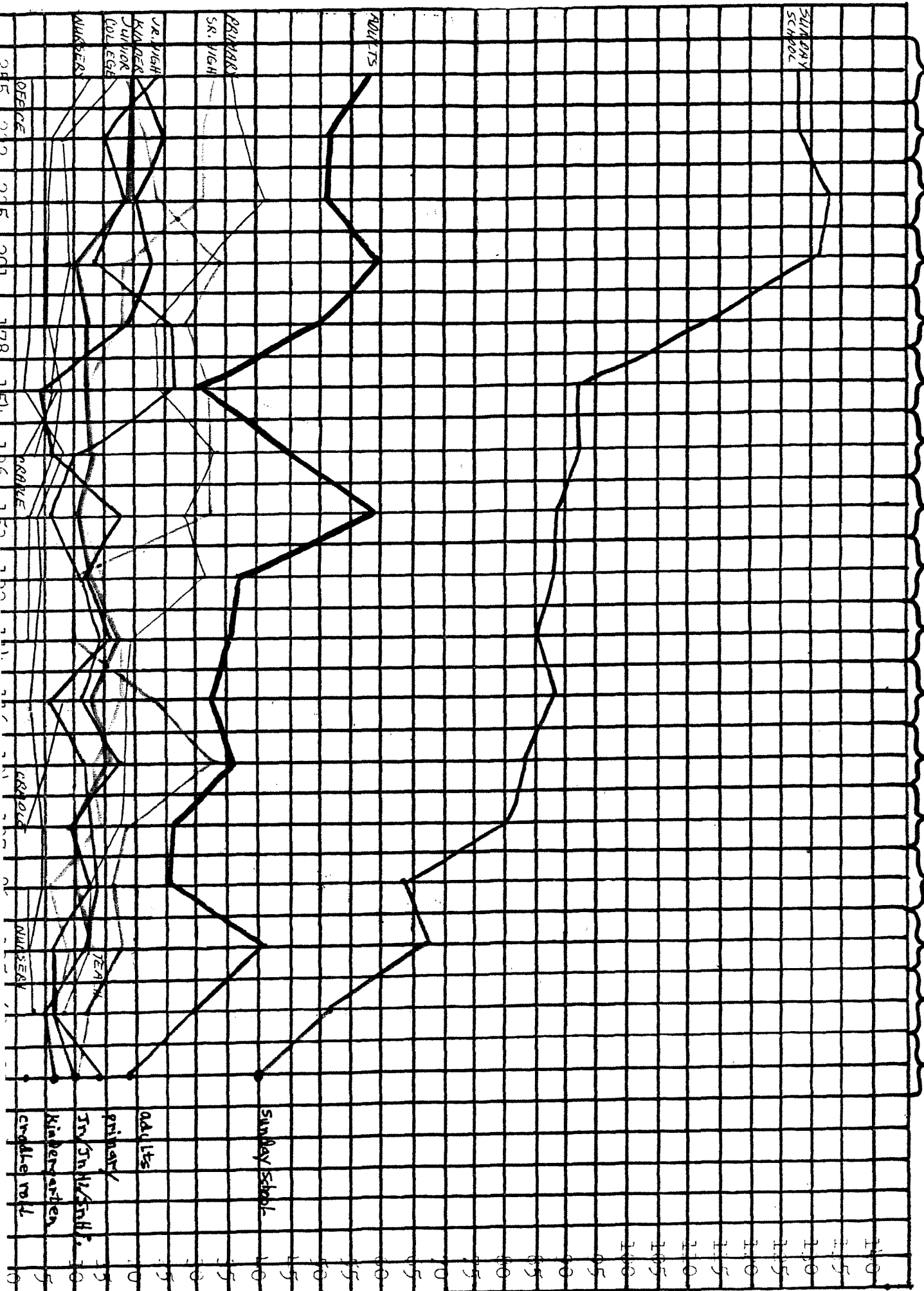
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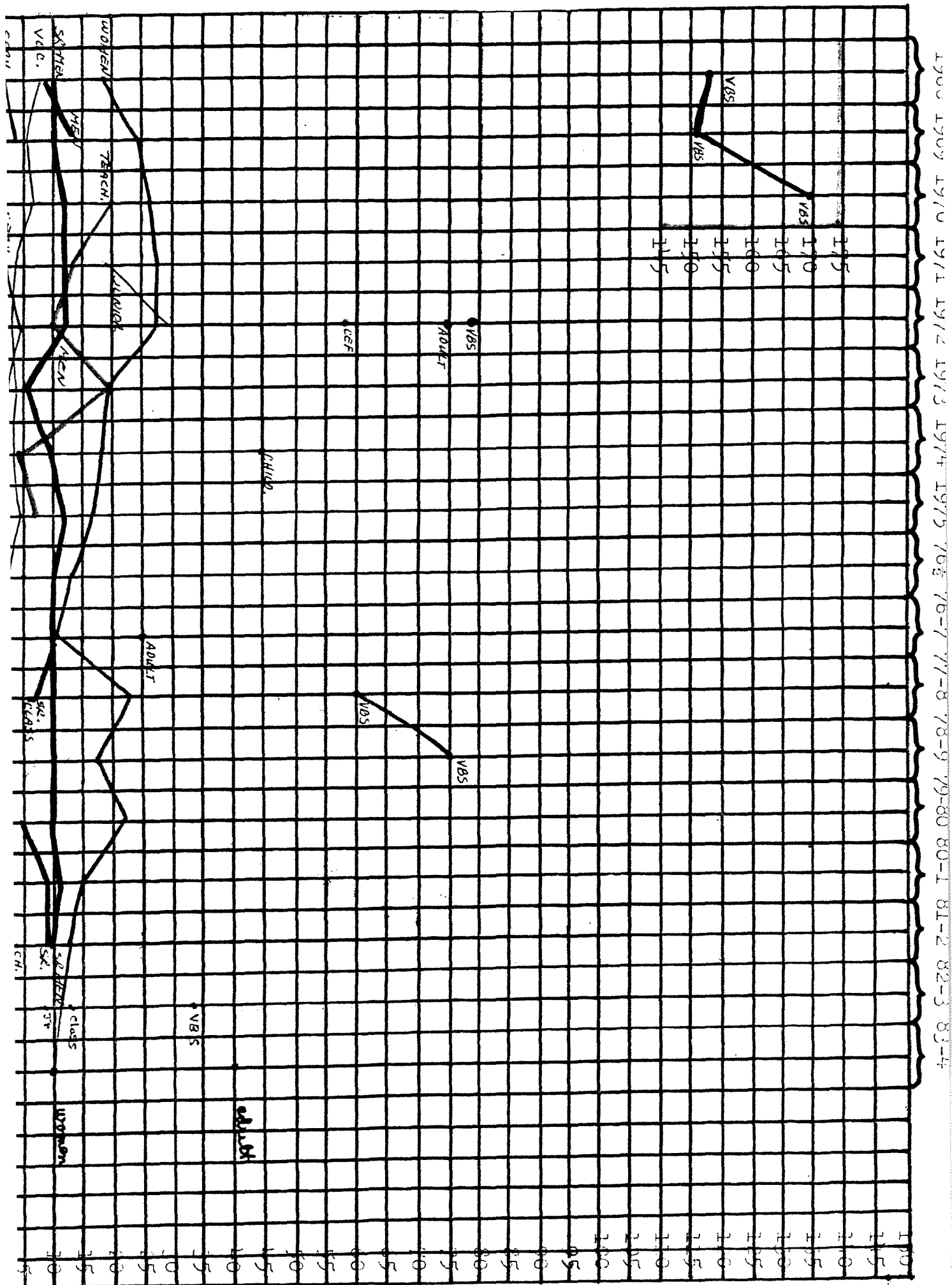


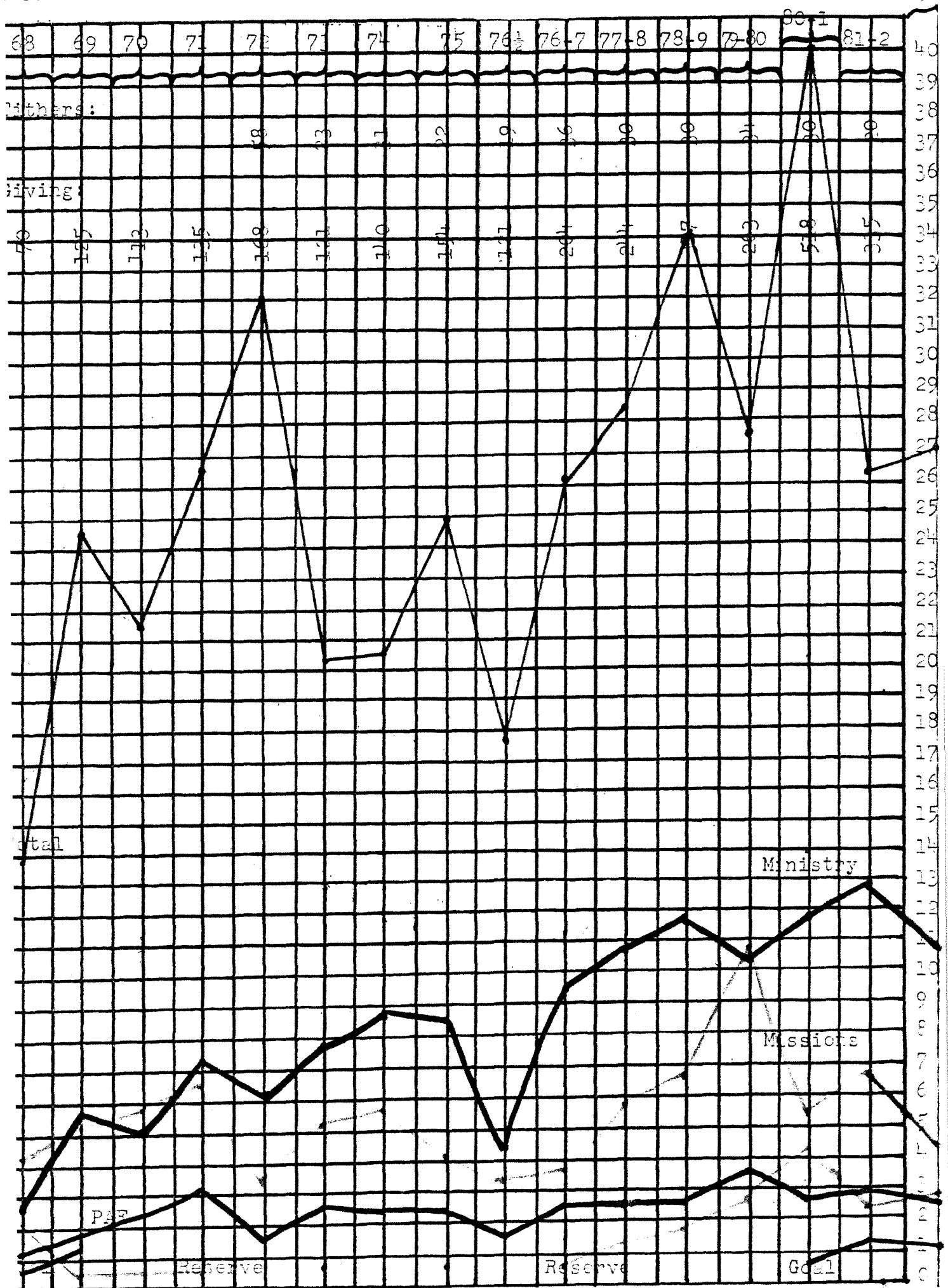
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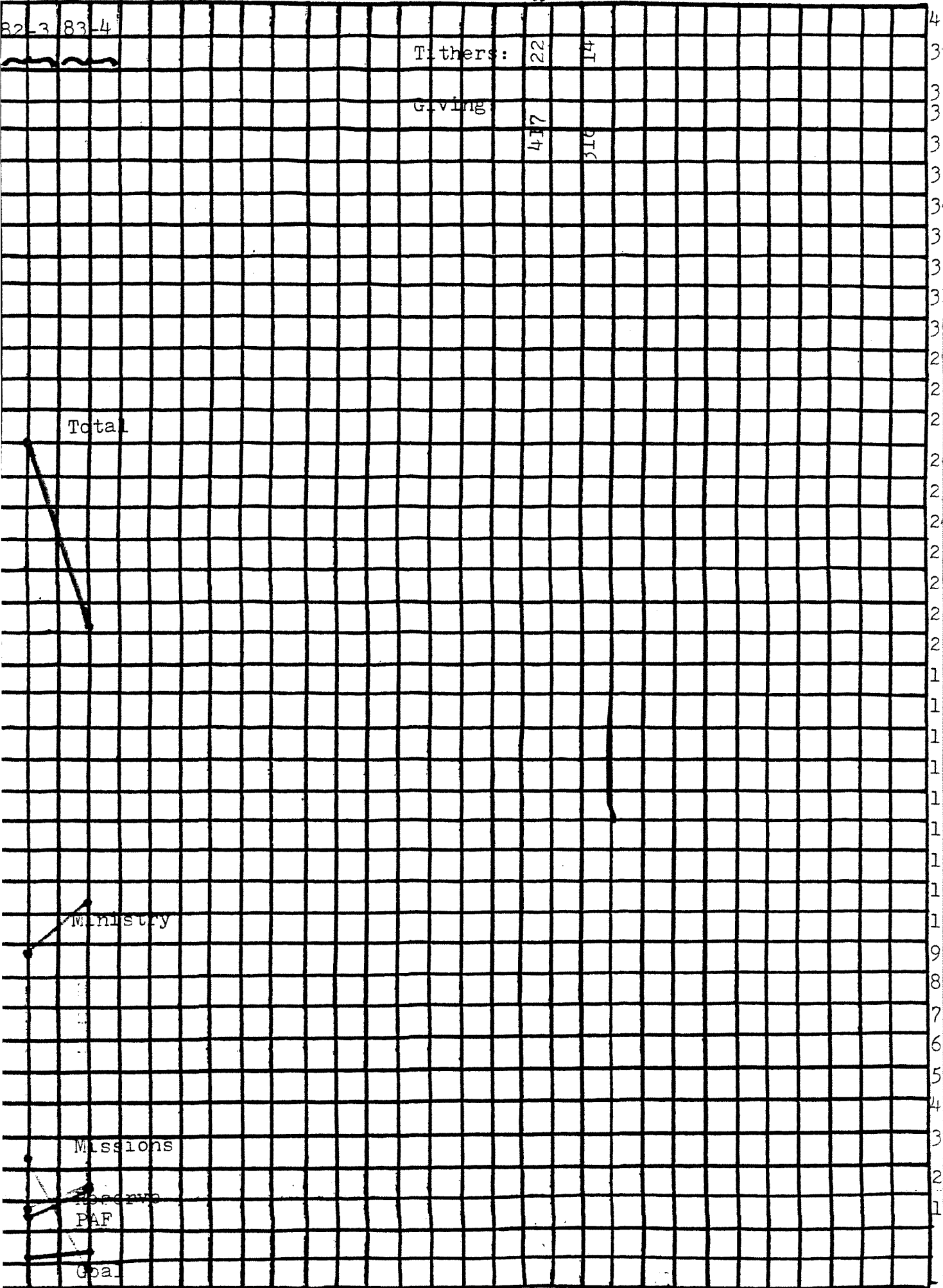
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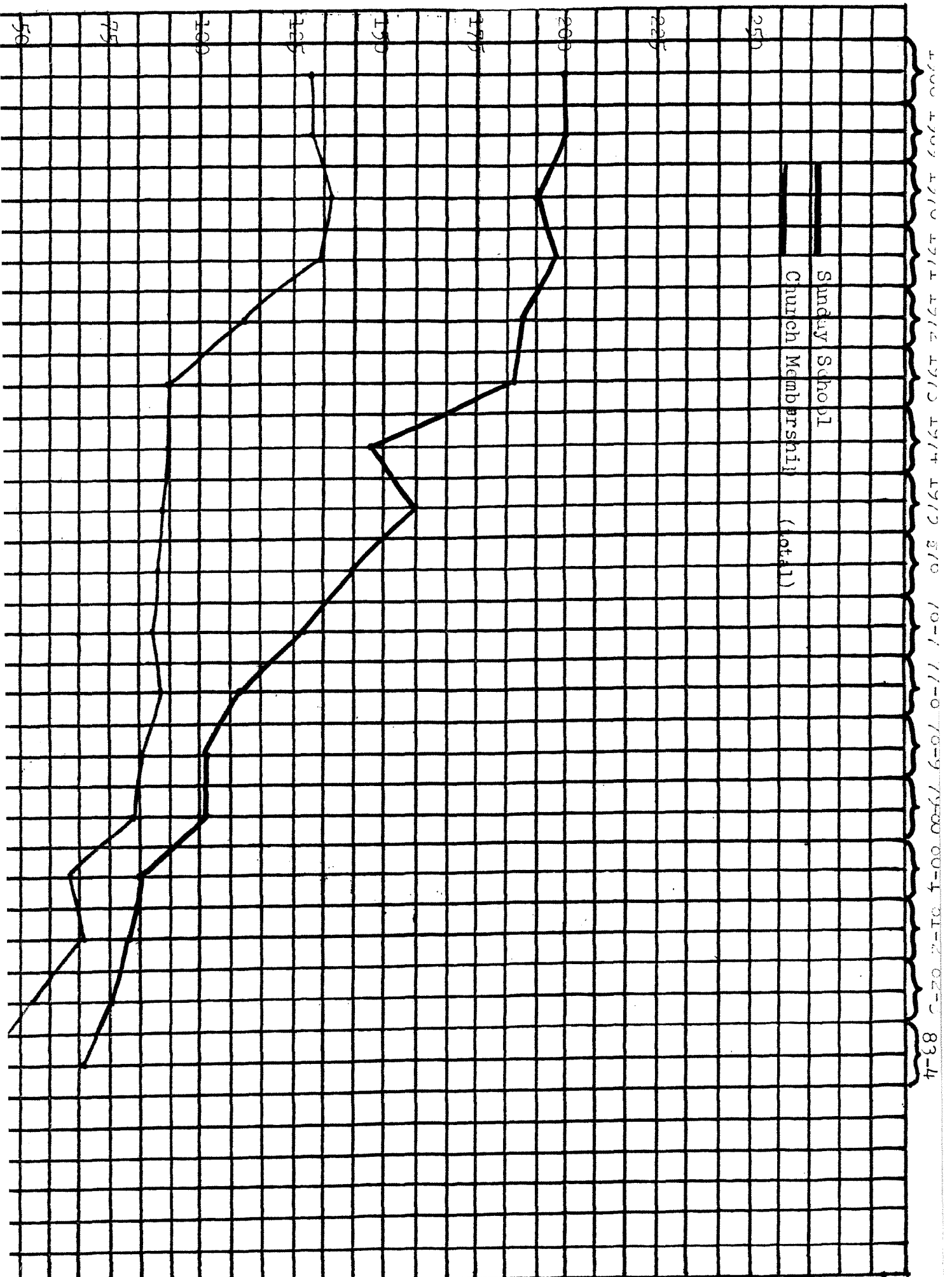




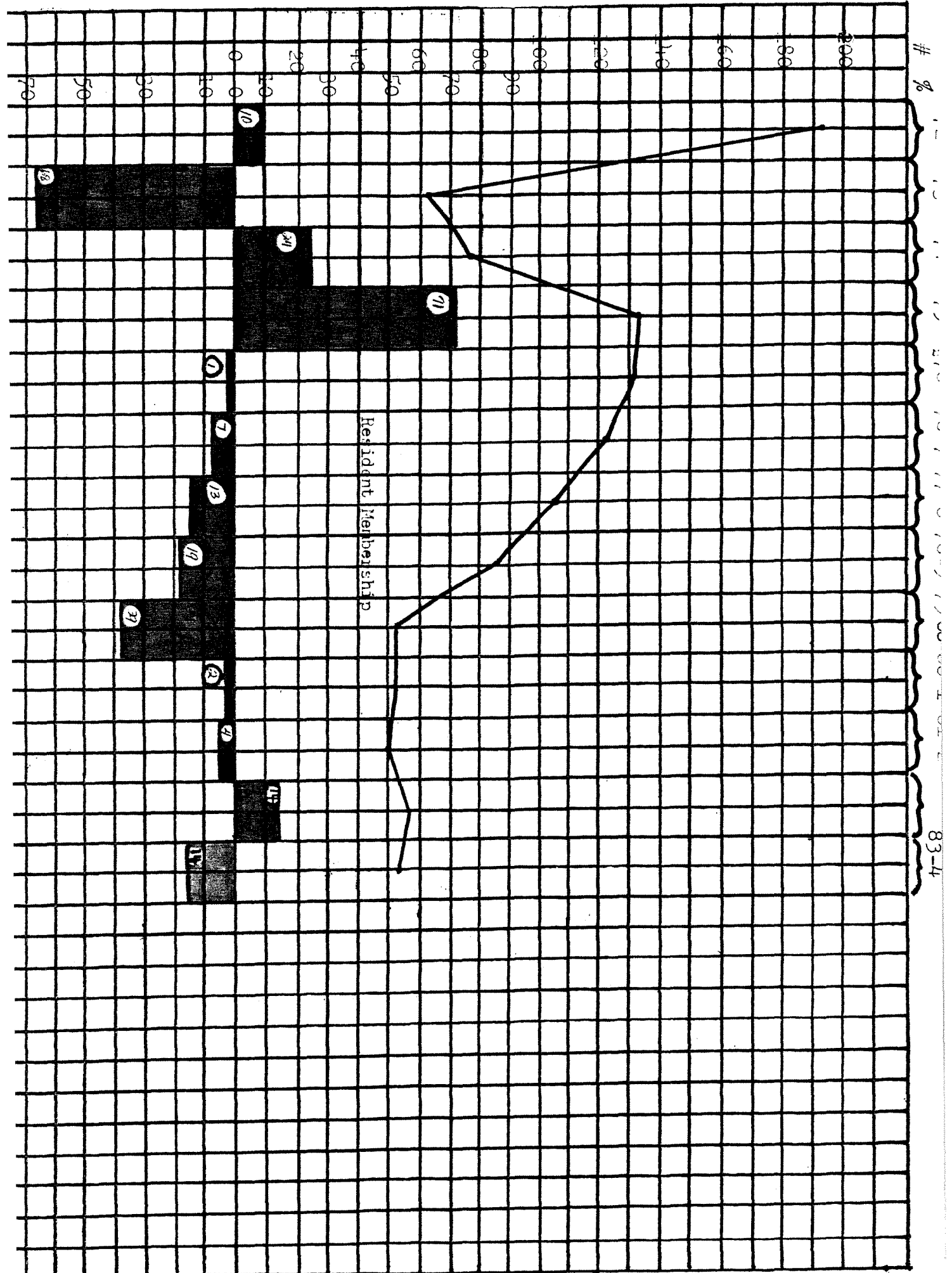




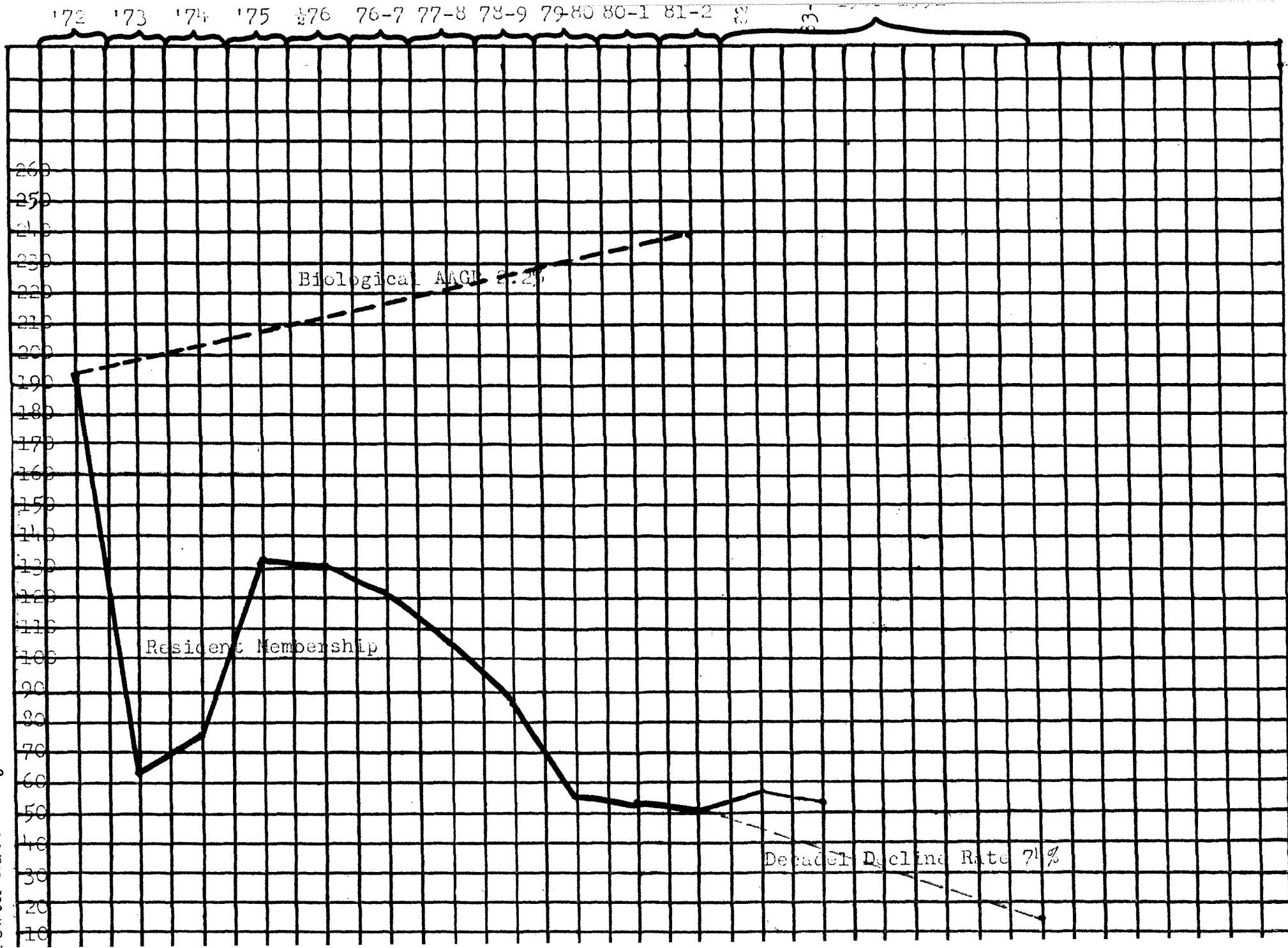
Church B



Annual Growth Rate, Church B



Growth Rate Projected - C church B

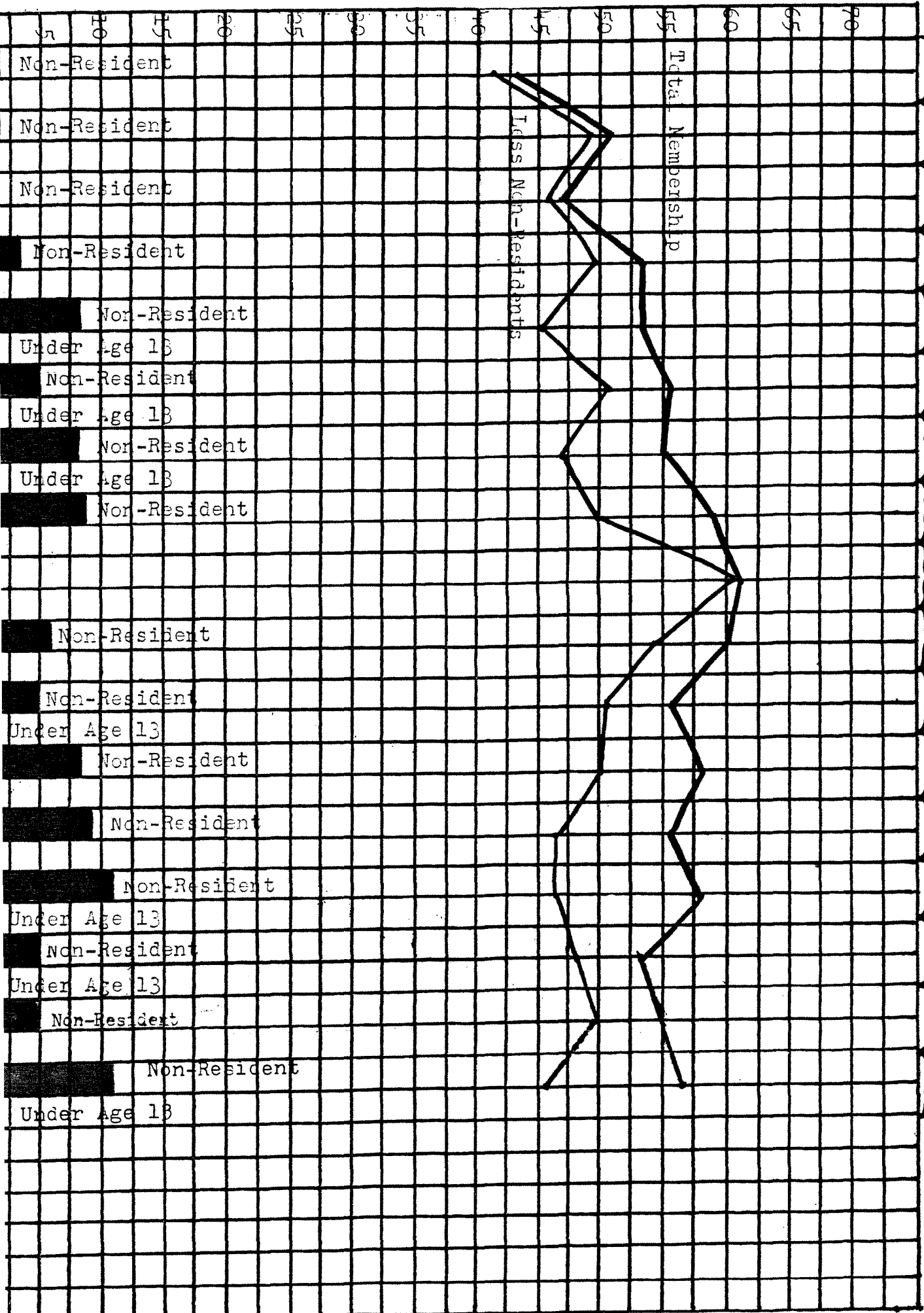


APPENDIX C

I. Ministry and Outreach - Membership Activity - Church C

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Ministry and Outreach - Membership Totals - Church C



1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970

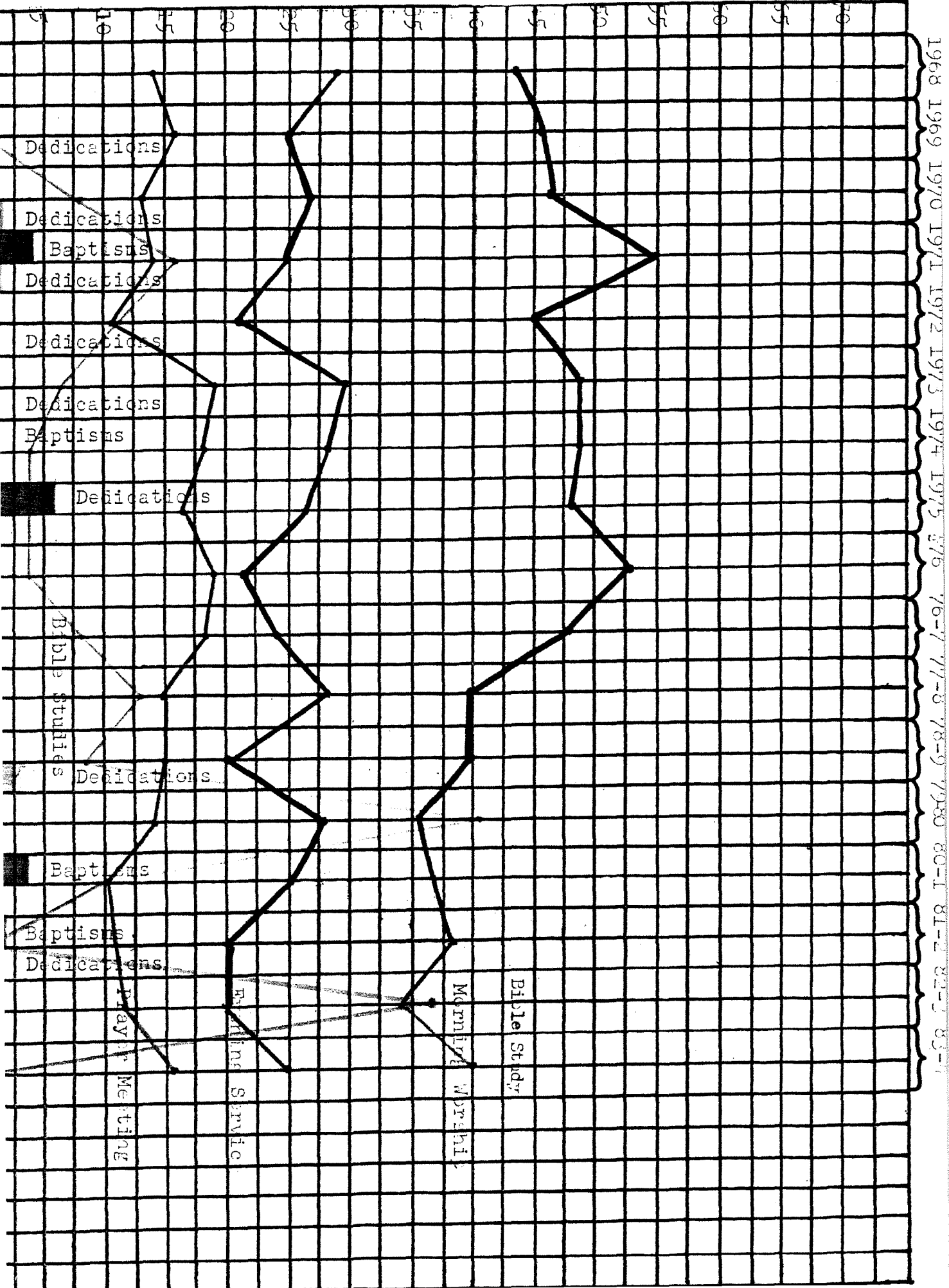
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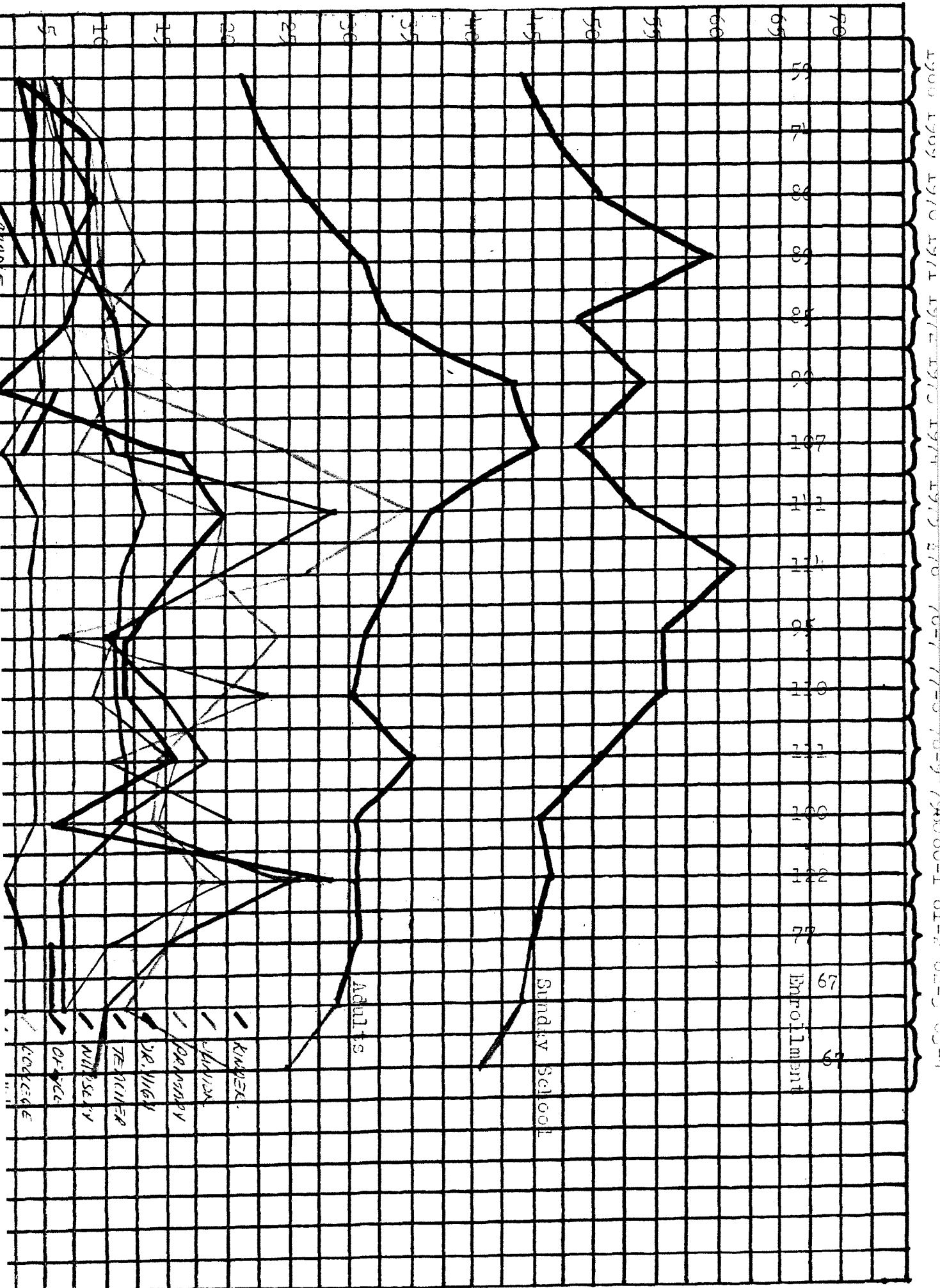
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. Ministry and Outreach - Weekly Services - Church C



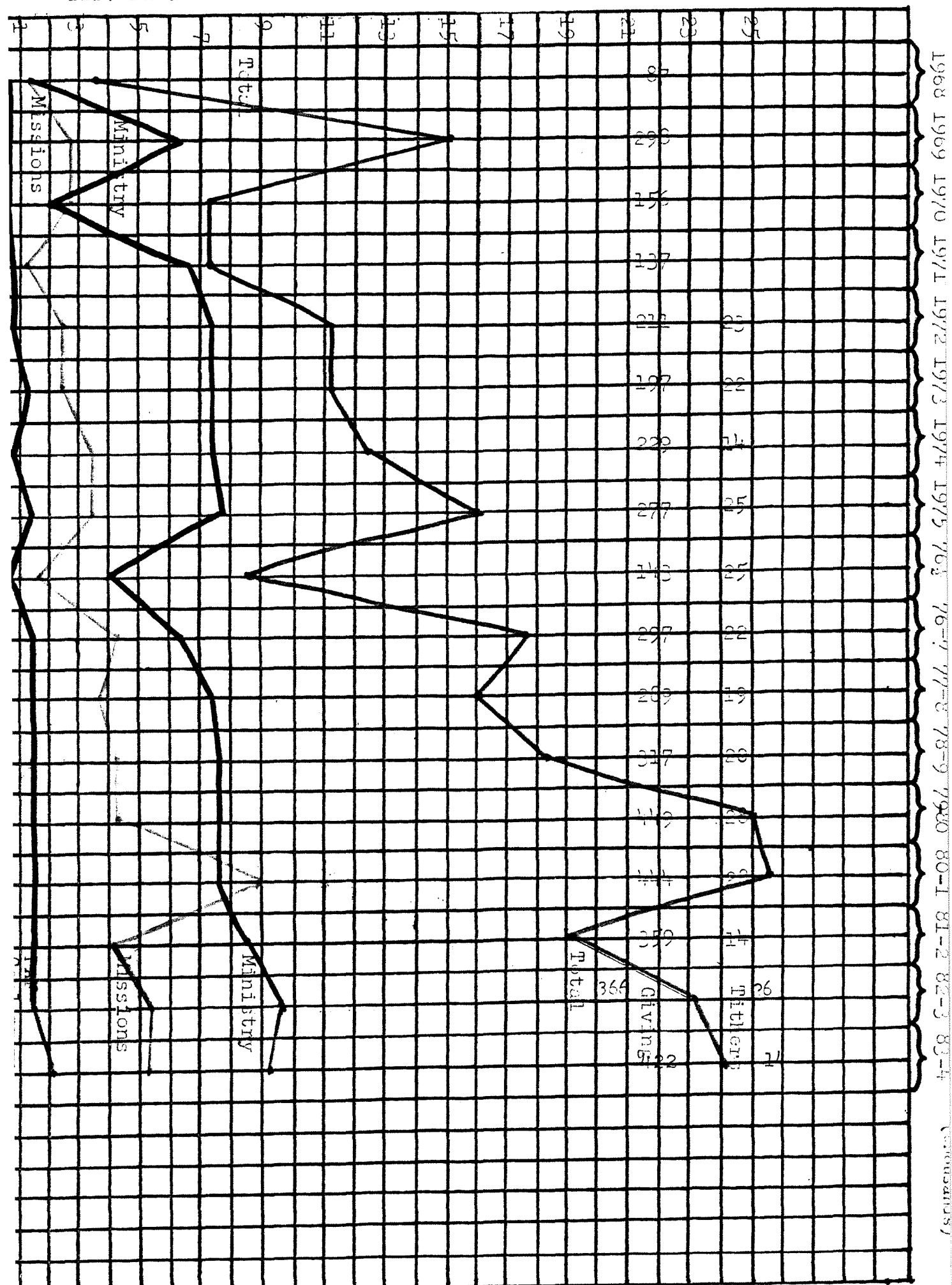
II. Christian Education - Sunday School - Church C



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4-363-8 82-2 81-1 80-6 79-9 78-1 77-0 76-7 75-4 74-1 73-0 72-7 71-4 70-1 69-8 68-5 67-2 66-0 65-7 64-4 63-1 62-8 61-5 60-2 59-0 58-7 57-4 56-1 55-8 54-5 53-2 52-0 51-7 50-4 49-1 48-8 47-5 46-2 45-0 44-7 43-4 42-1 41-8 40-5 39-2 38-0 37-7 36-4 35-1 34-8 33-5 32-2 31-0 30-7 29-4 28-1 27-8 26-5 25-2 24-0 23-7 22-4 21-1 20-8 19-5 18-2 17-0 16-7 15-4 14-1 13-8 12-5 11-2 10-0 9-7 8-4 7-1 6-8 5-5 4-2 3-0 2-7 1-4 0-1

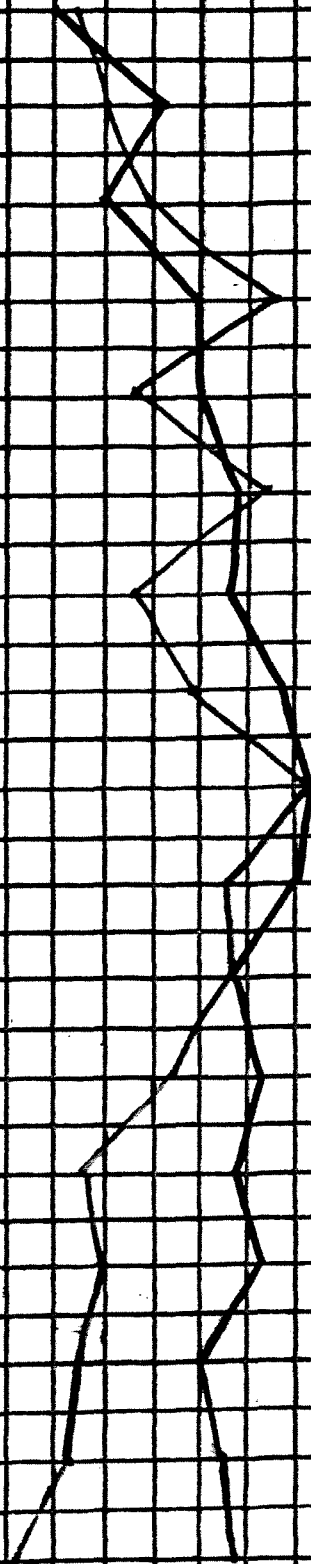
III. Finances - Church C



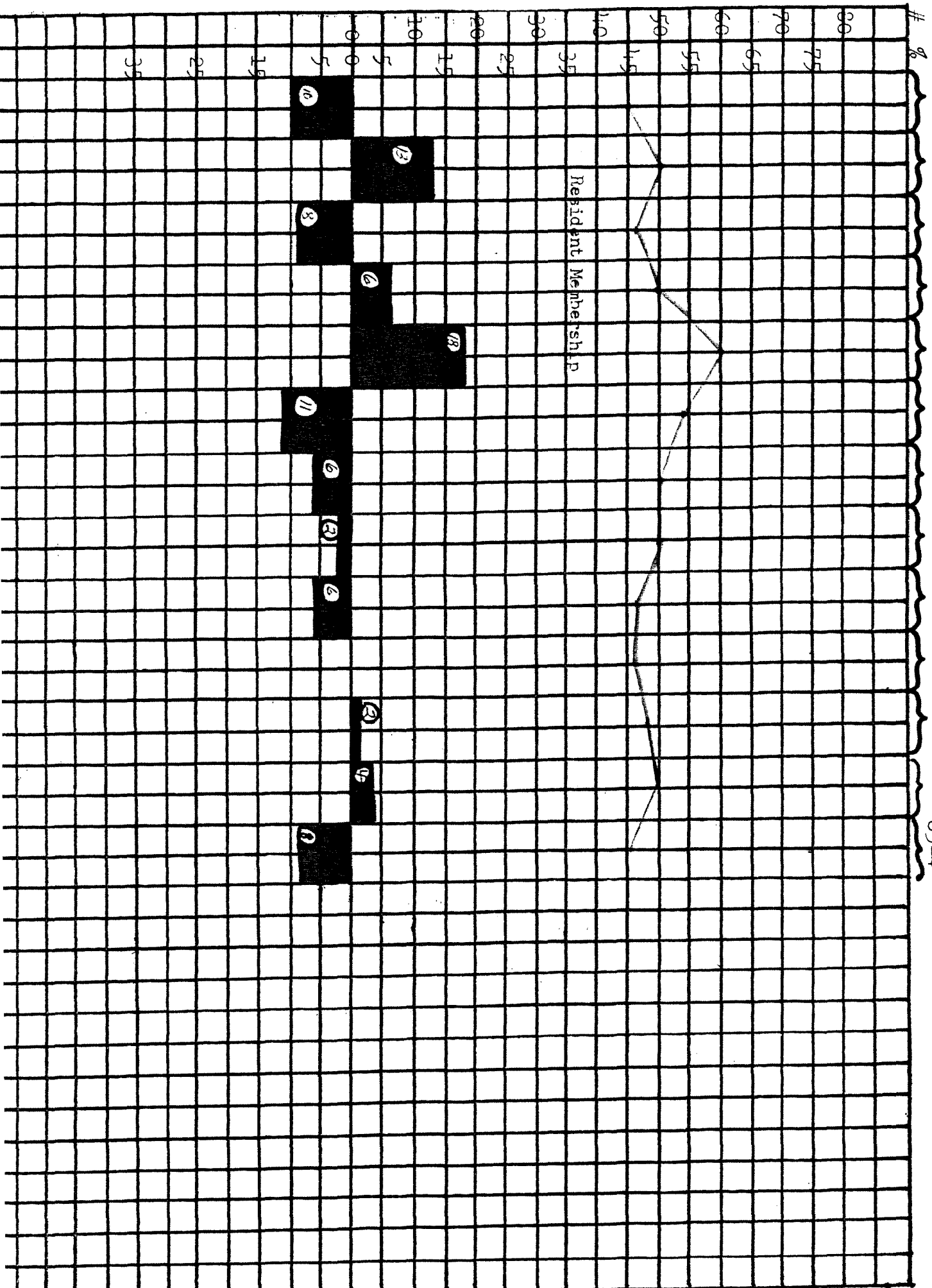
Church C

Sunday School
Church Membership (total)

1900 1901 1902 1903 1904 1905 1906 1907 1908 1909 1910 1911 1912 1913 1914 1915 1916 1917 1918 1919 1920 1921 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927 1928 1929 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945 1946 1947 1948 1949 1950 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959 1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040 2041 2042 2043 2044 2045 2046 2047 2048 2049 2050 2051 2052 2053 2054 2055 2056 2057 2058 2059 2060 2061 2062 2063 2064 2065 2066 2067 2068 2069 2070 2071 2072 2073 2074 2075 2076 2077 2078 2079 2080 2081 2082 2083 2084 2085 2086 2087 2088 2089 2090 2091 2092 2093 2094 2095 2096 2097 2098 2099 2100

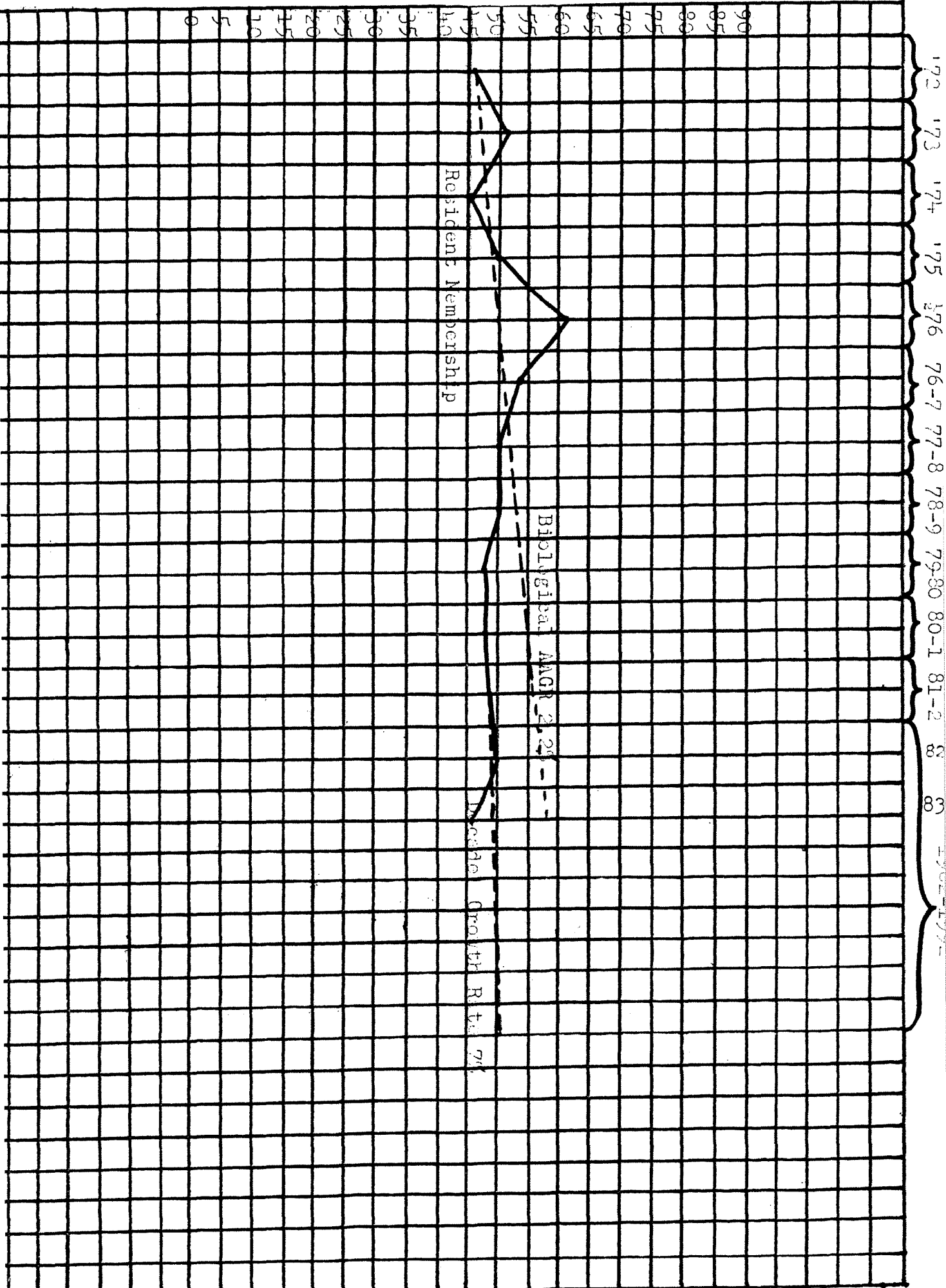


Annual Growth Rate, Church C



Resident Membership

rowth Rate Projected - Church C



APPENDIX D

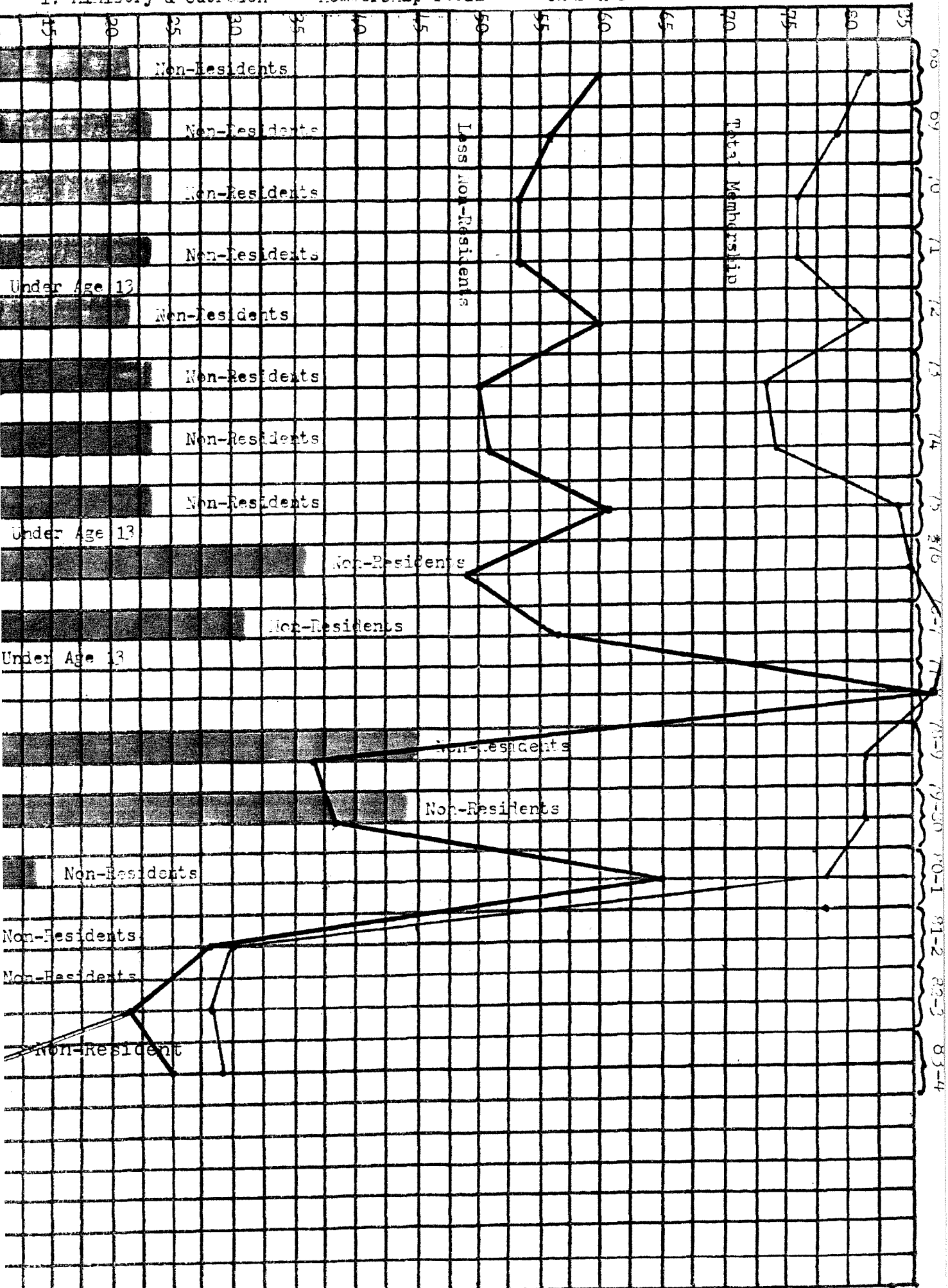
I. Ministry & Outreach - Membership Activity Church D

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I. Ministry & Outreach - Membership Activity - Church D

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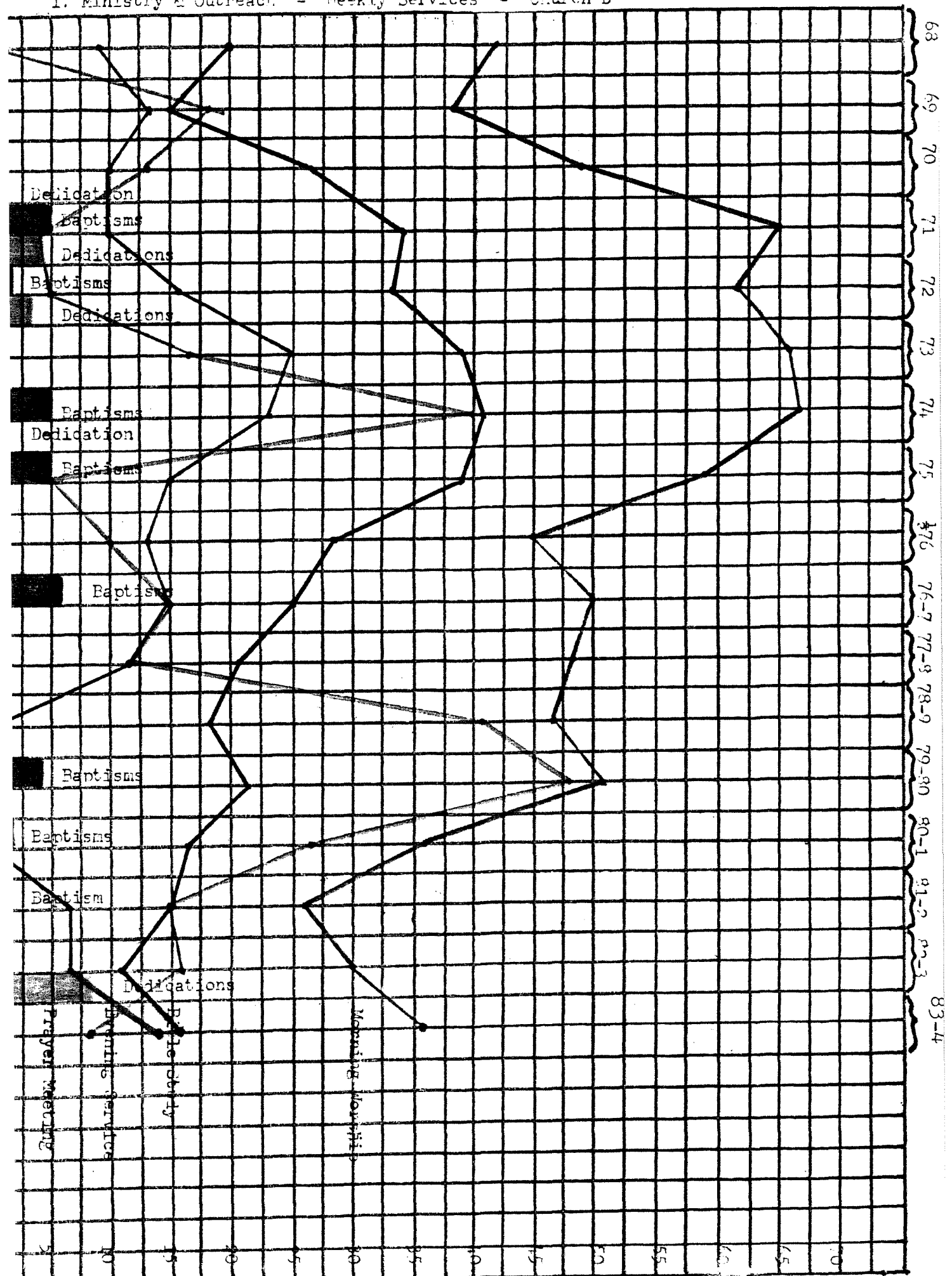
I. Ministry & Outreach - Membership Totals - Church D



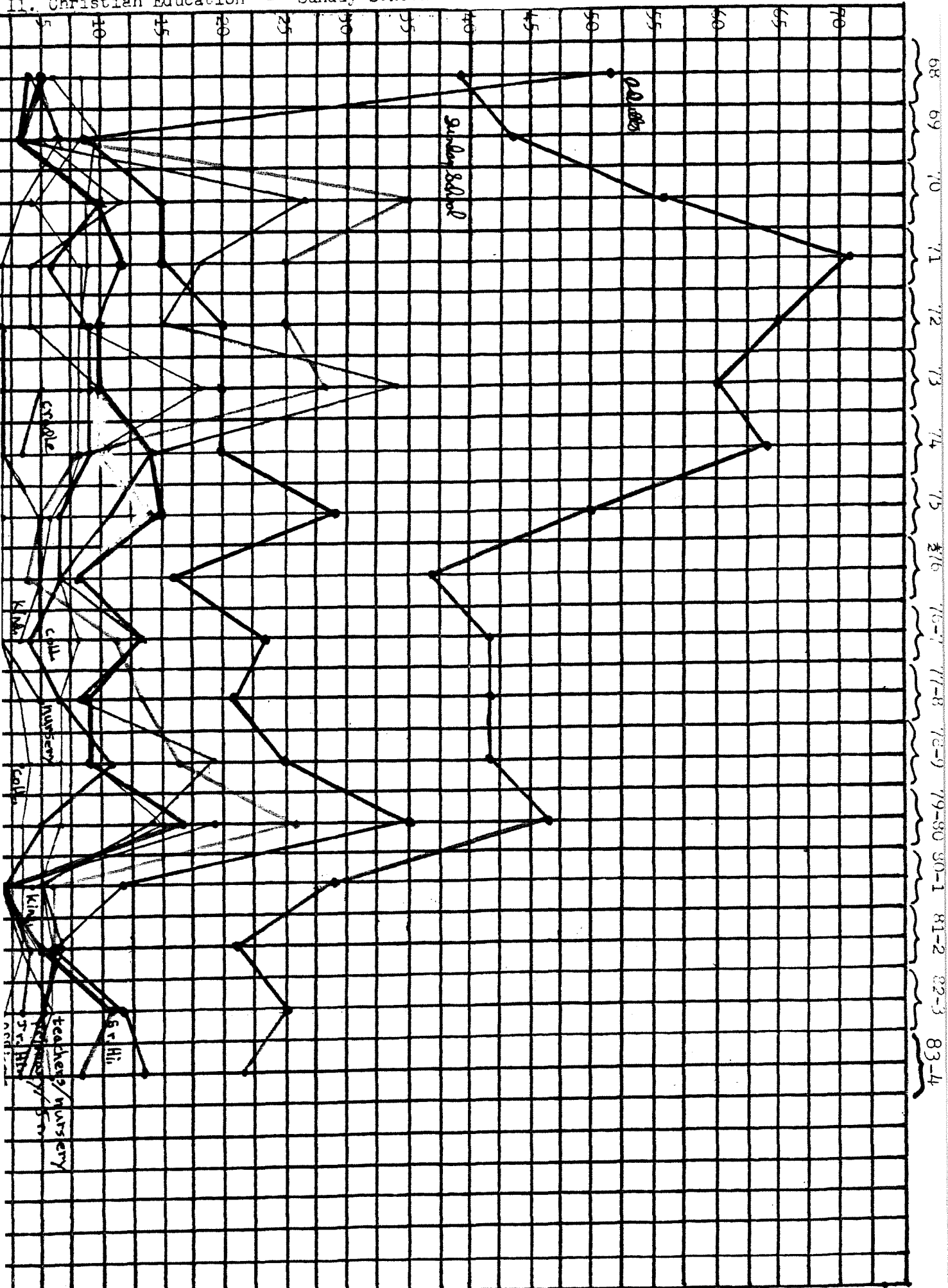
I. Ministry & Outreach - Evangelistic Response - Church D

1. Ministry & Outreach										Evangelistic Response										Children									
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Conversions																													
Spiritual Help																													
Conversions																													
Reclamation																													
Sanctifications																													
Spiritual Help																													
Conversions																													
Sanctifications																													
Full-Time																													
Conversions																													
Reclamations																													
Sanctifications																													
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Conversions																													
Reclamations																													
Sanctification																													
Spiritual Help																													

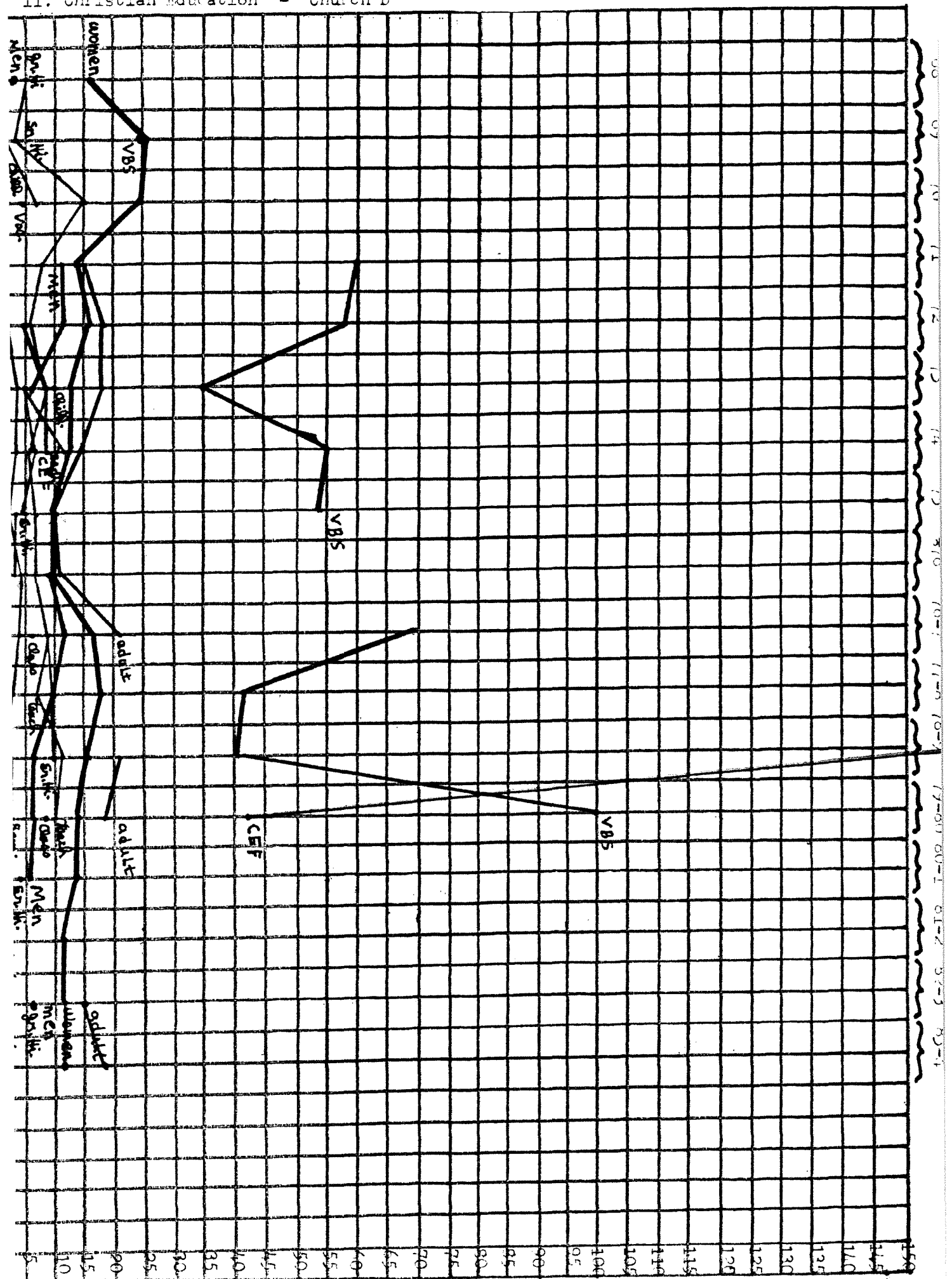
I. Ministry & Outreach - Weekly Services - Church D



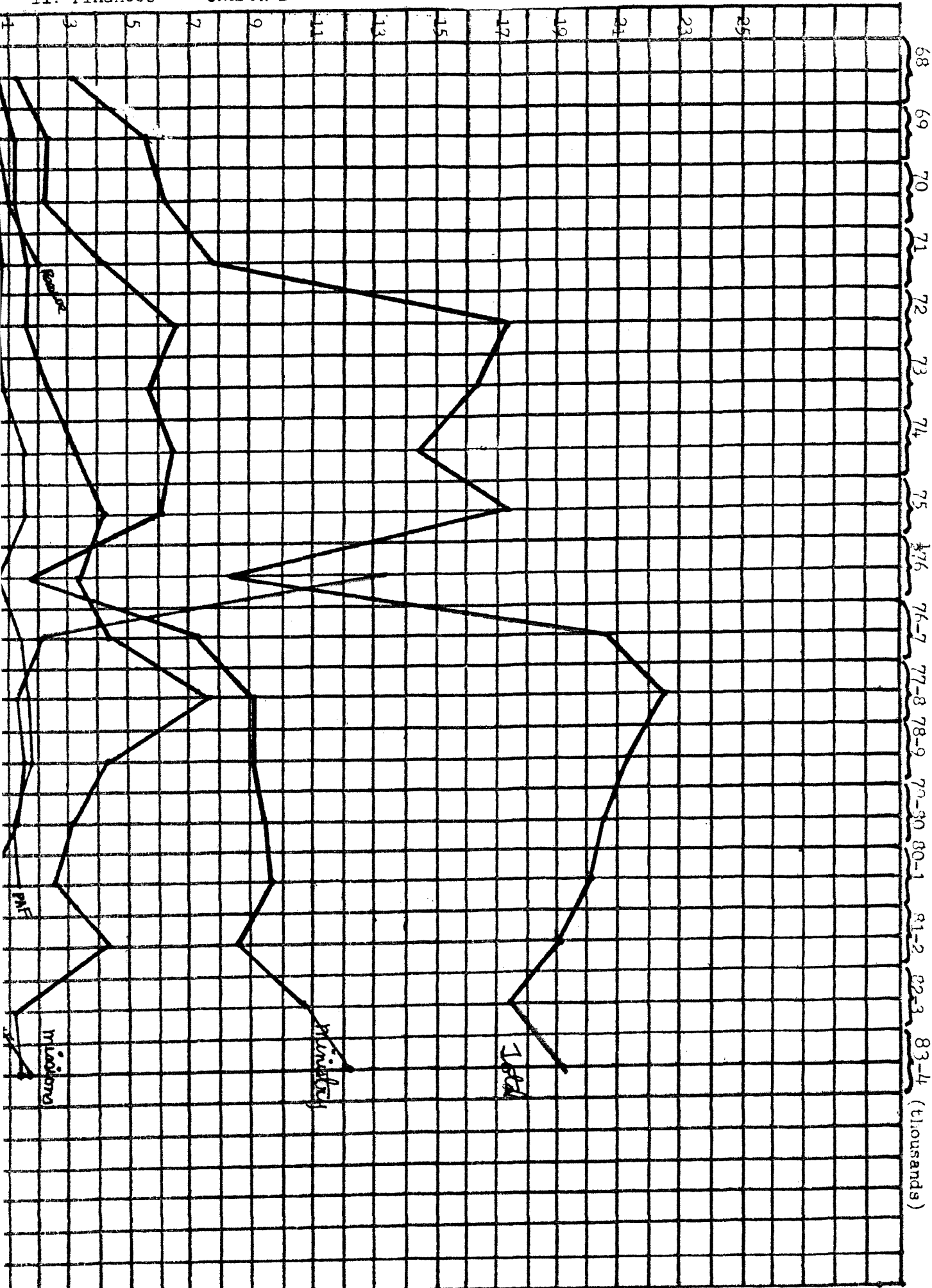
II. Christian Education - Sunday School - Church D



III. Christian Education - Church D



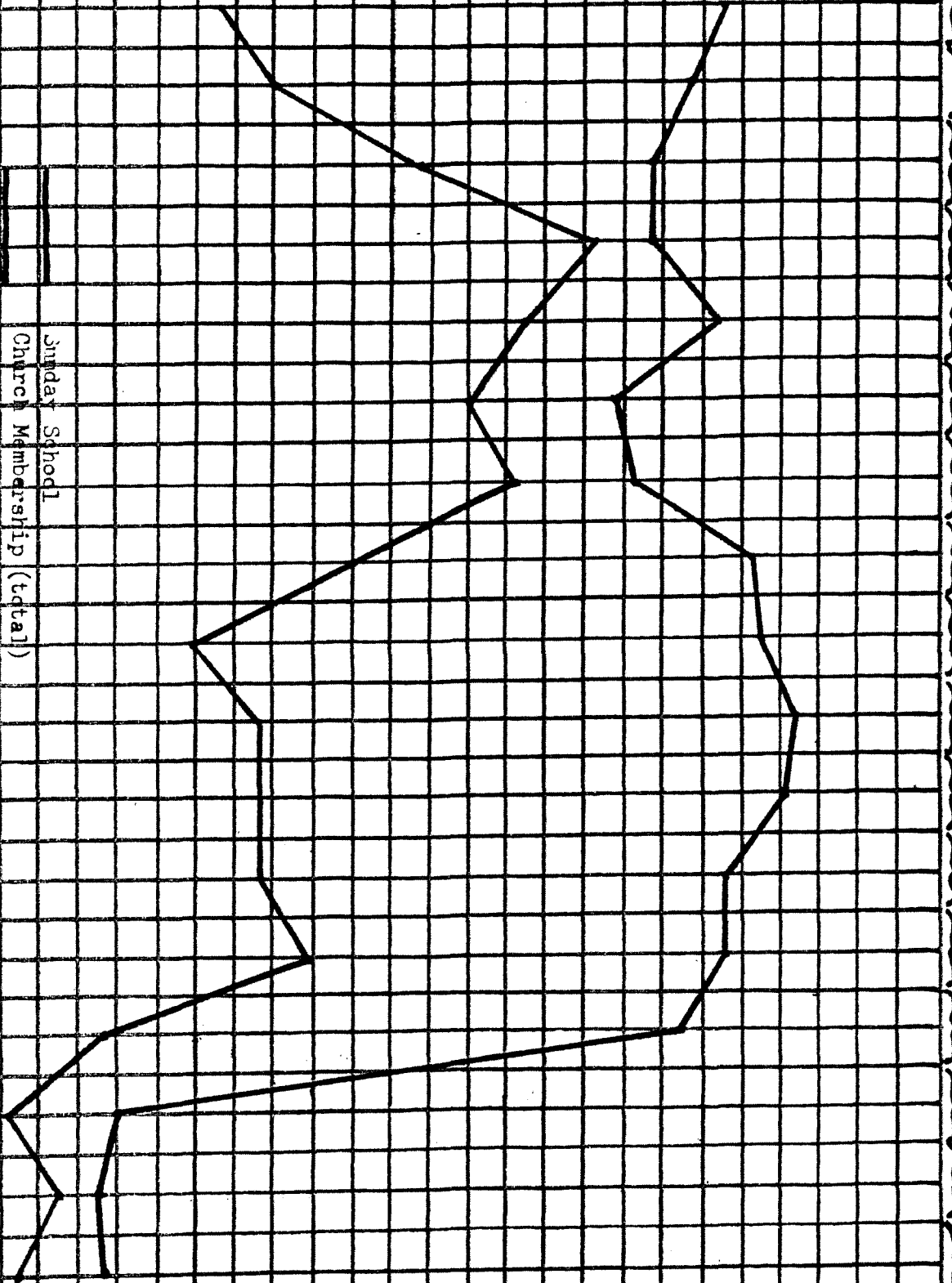
II. Finances - Church D



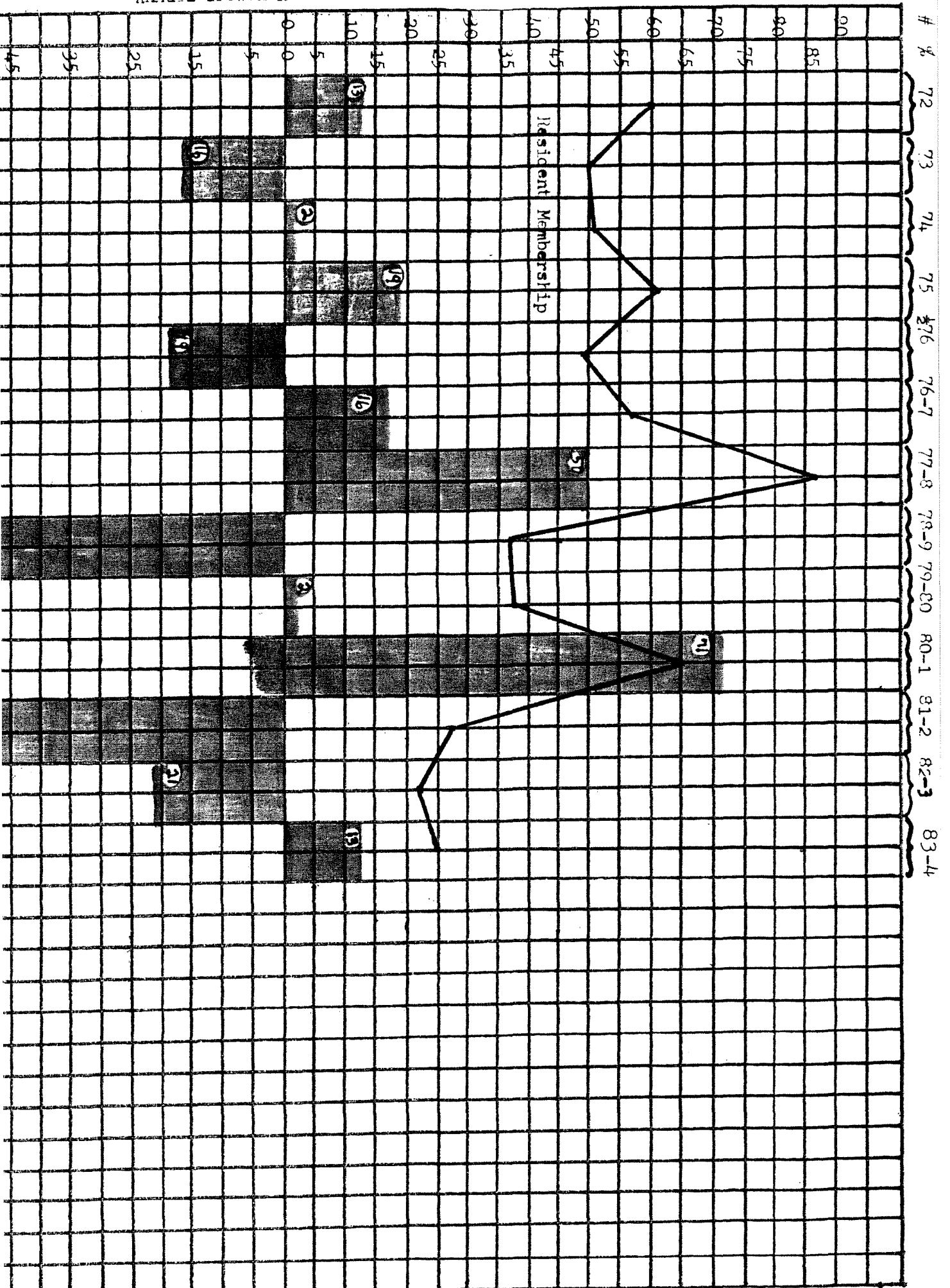
Church D

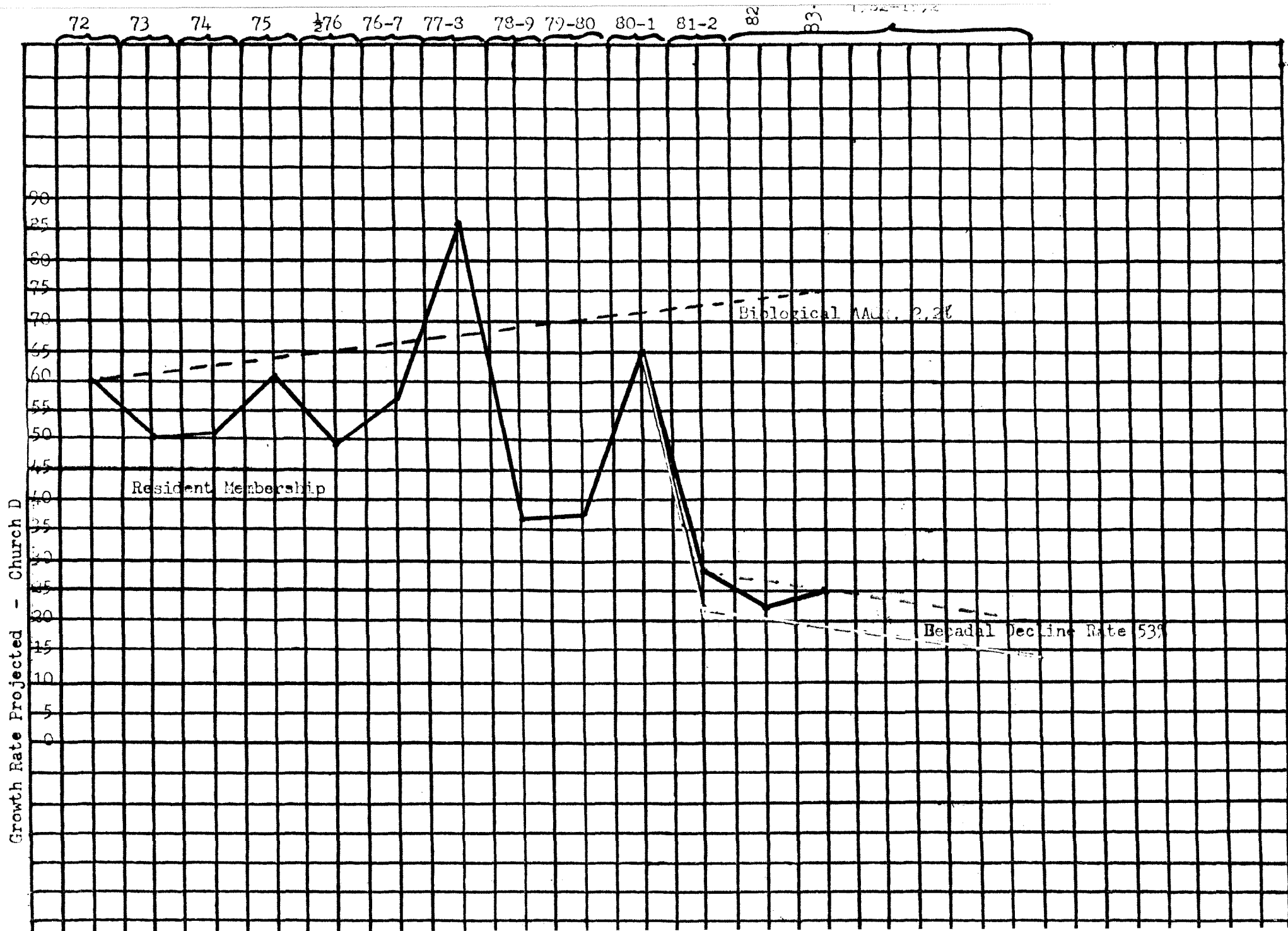
Sunday School
Church Membership (total)

68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76-77 77-8 78-9 79-80 80-1 81-2 82-3 83-4



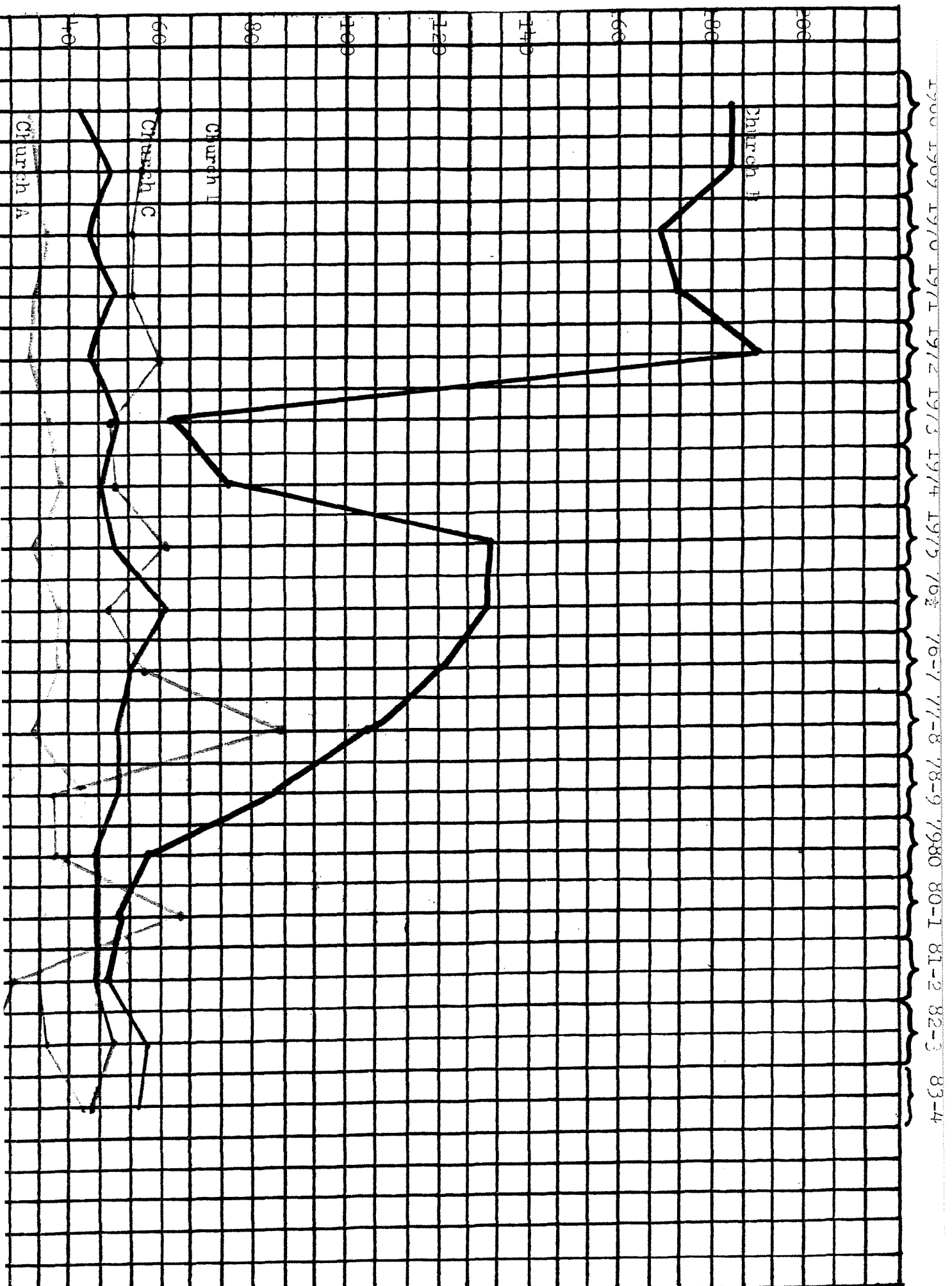
Annual Growth Rate - Church D



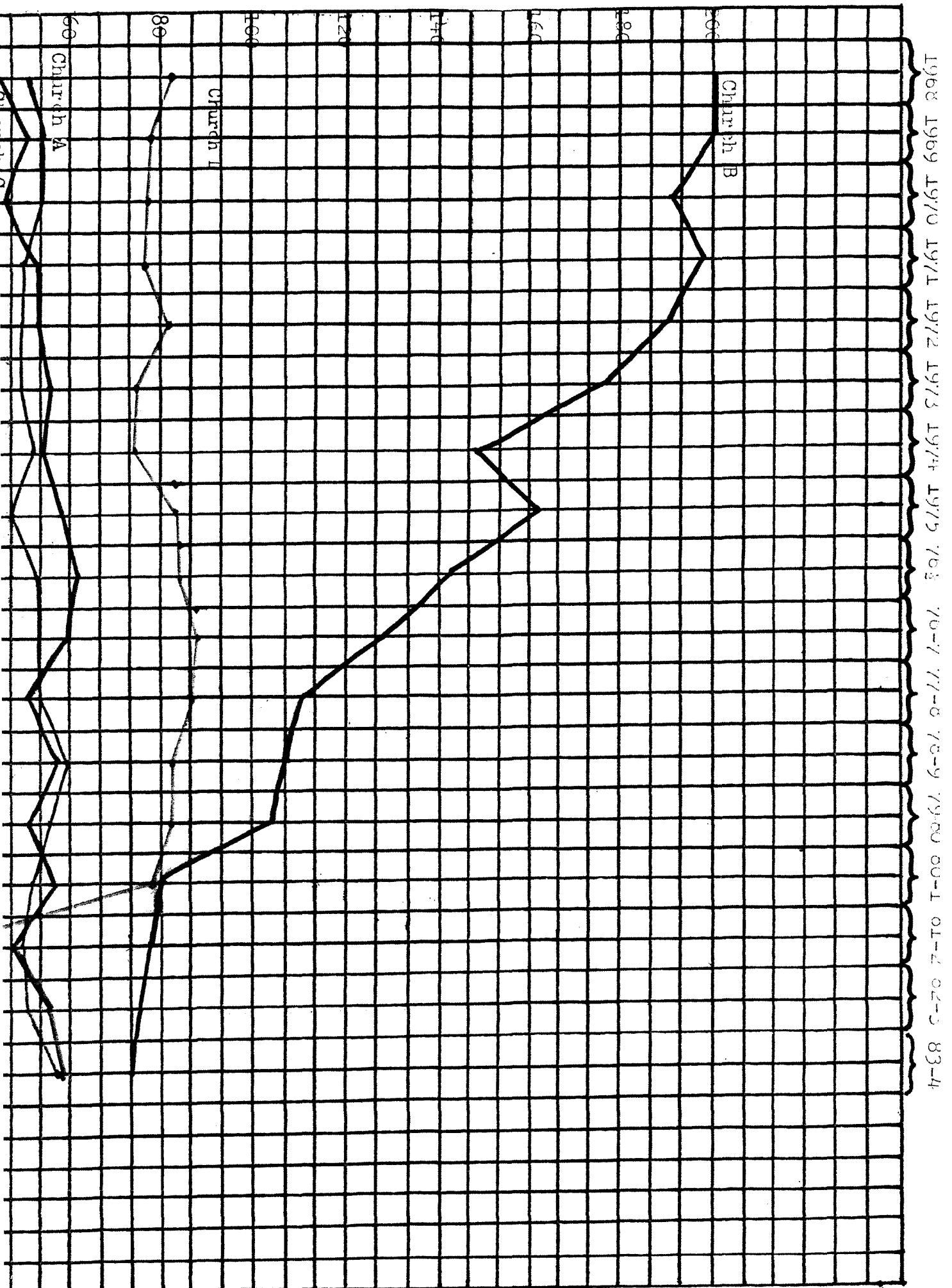


APPENDIX E

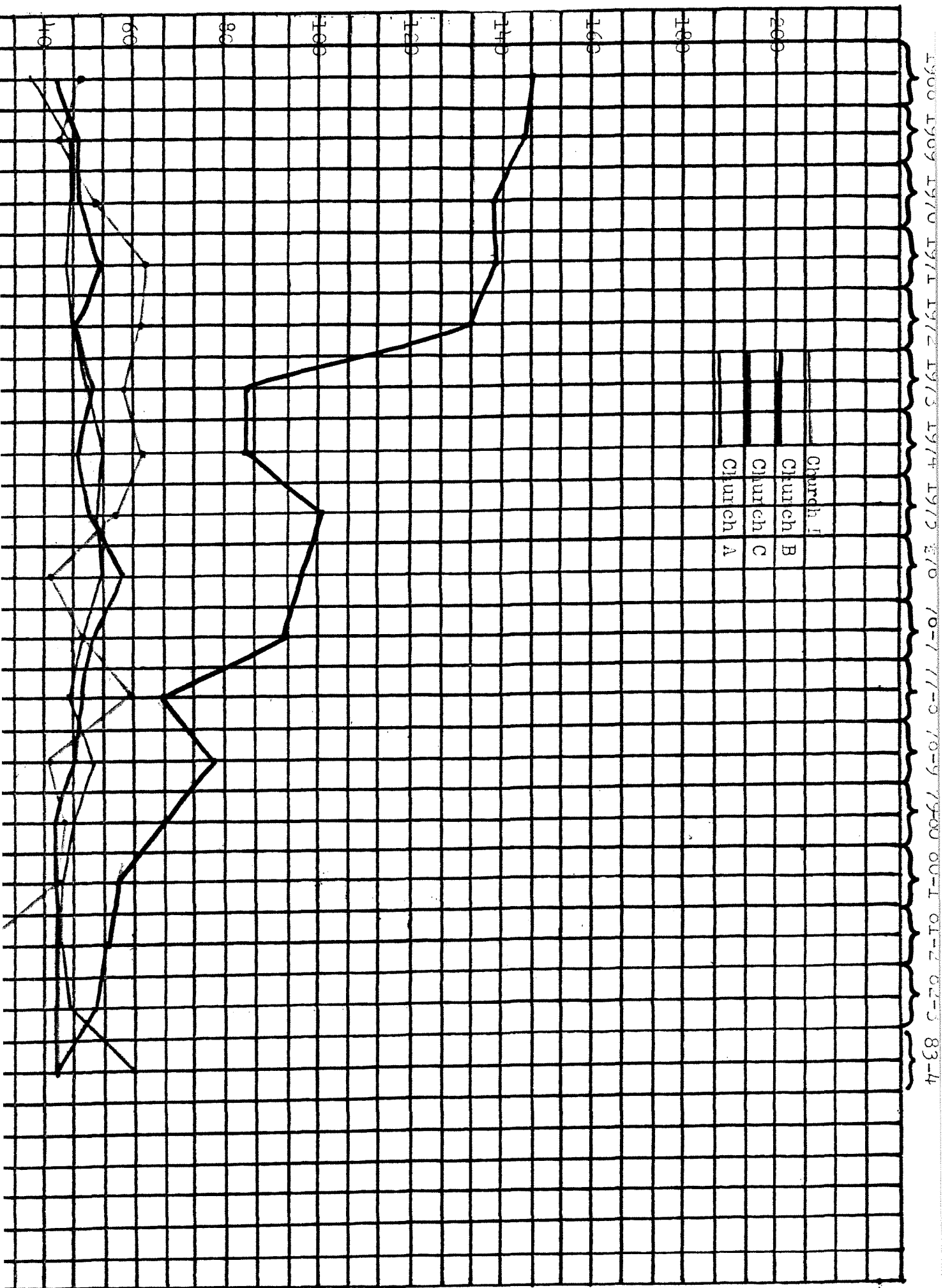
RESIDENT MEMBERSHIP



TOTAL MEMBERSHIP

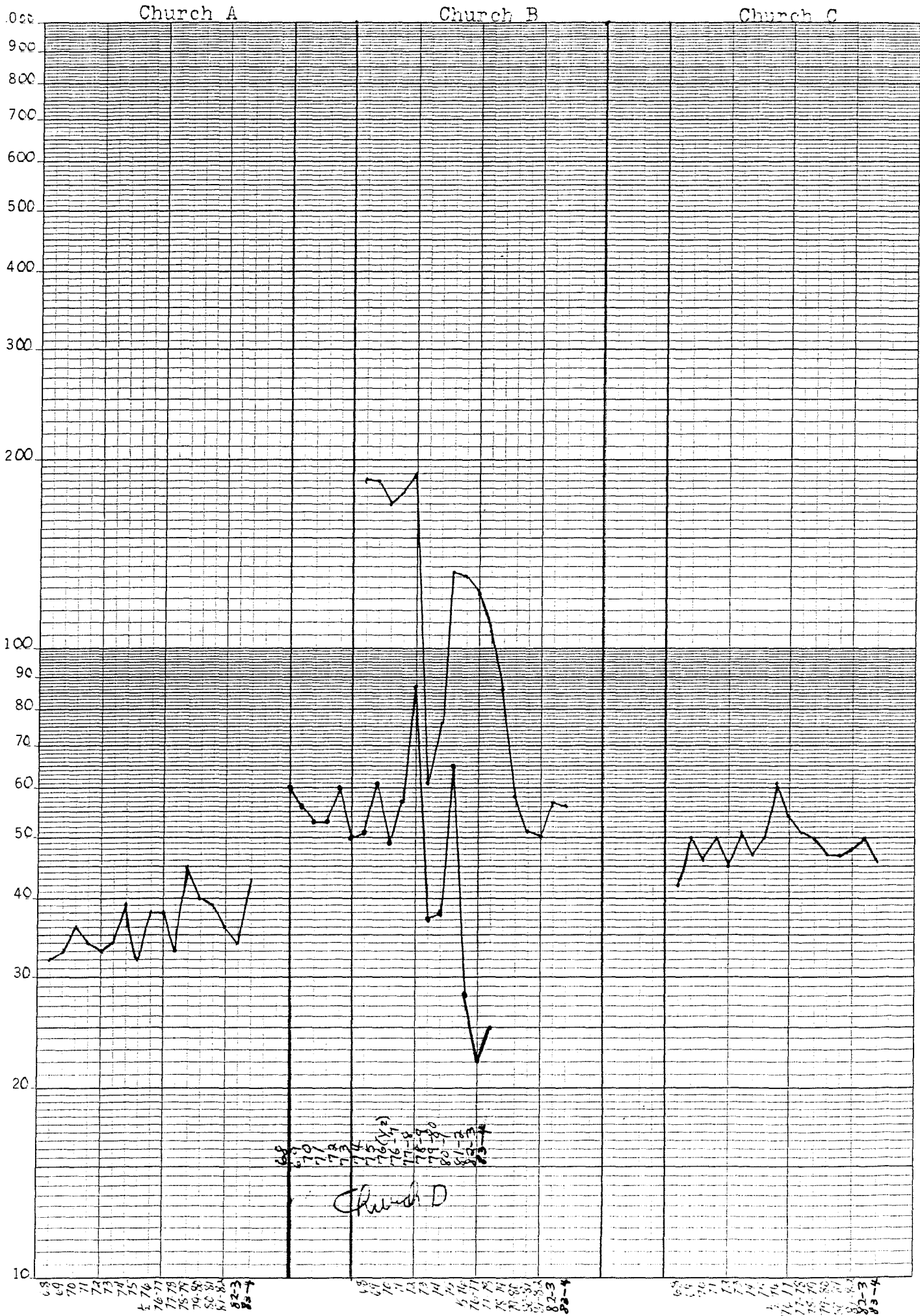


Composite Membership (Resident Membership/Morning Worship/Sunday School)



Resident Membership Annual Growth Rate Comparisons

150



APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F

This Appendix lists representative Scripture references from the Book of Acts. The references are listed under three categories. These categories are three movements of the gospel as expressed under: Spiritual Preparation, Proclamation of the Gospel, and Preservation of the Results.

Three Movements of the Gospel in Acts

<u>Spiritual Preparation</u>	<u>Proclamation of the Gospel</u>	<u>Preservation of the Results</u>
1:8		
2:4,17-18,33	2:14,32,40	2:41-47
3:1	3:12	
4:8,24,31	4:20,31,33	4:4,32-35
5:3,9,19-20	5:21,32,42	5:11,14-16
6:3-6	6:2,4,7	6:1,7
	7:2	
8:15-17,26,29	8:4-5,25,35	8:6-8,13-17,37-39
9:10-12,15-16,31	9:32,34	9:17,19,31,35,42
10:9,14,19,28,44-47	10:20,22,39,41-44	10:44-48
11:12,15-16	11:19-20	11:1,15,17-18,21, 23-24,26,29
12:5,7-12		12:24
13:2-4,52	13:5,7,15-16,32,38, 42,44	13:8,12,43,48-49
	14:3,7,15,21	14:1,21-23,27-28
		15:30-32,35,41
16:6-7,9-10,25	16:13,31-32	16:4-5,14-15,33-34

	17:2-3,17	17:4,12,34
18:9-10	18:5,11,19	18:8,10,27
19:2,5-6	19:8,10	19:18-20
20:22-23,28,36	20:20-21,24-25,27	20:28,32
	22:15	
23:11	23:11	
	24:25	
	26:16,22-23	
27:23		
	28:23,30-31	28:24