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PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF CANADA'S CONGREGATIONS: VITALITY, DIVERSITY, IDENTITY AND EQUITY

SAM REIMER

INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism in Canada began just over one hundred years ago, tracing its origins to the Azusa Street Revivals in Los Angeles and the Hebden Mission in Toronto. It has since spread rapidly around the world to become arguably the most important Christian religious movement in the last century. The late historian George Rawlyk wrote, "The fastest-growing segment of the evangelical population, it should be stressed, is the charismatic/Pentecostal one."¹ British scholar Scott A. Thomas states that "[t]he most dramatic religious explosion in the world today is the spread of Pentecostalism and evangelical Protestantism."² This pattern of exponential growth is also true of Canada. Census data show that Pentecostals in Canada grew from 515 affiliates in 1911 to over 400,000 by 1991.³ In spite of their growing prominence, little is known about the current state of Pentecostalism in Canada.

¹ George A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?: In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 14.

² Scott A. Thomas, "A Globalized God: Religion's Growing Influence in International Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 89:6, 94.

³ Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

The recent publication of *Canadian Pentecostalism*, edited by Michael Wilkinson, significantly added to our historical, theological and sociological understanding, but does not tell us much about Canadian Pentecostals and their churches today. This article fills part of that void with a current snapshot of congregations from the largest of the “classical” Pentecostal denominations, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). It will focus specifically on 1) vitality and diversity, 2) identity (particularly vis-à-vis evangelicalism), 3) worship and 4) egalitarianism and inclusivity. I chose these themes because of their historical and current importance to the discussion of Canadian Pentecostalism, themes emphasized in *Canadian Pentecostalism*.

The data are from the larger Canadian Evangelical Churches Study (CECS), which includes 478 phone interviews with lead pastors of evangelical congregations in 2009. Prior to the phone interviews, face-to-face interviews were completed with 50 other lead pastors in major regions across Canada (Maritimes, Toronto area, Calgary area and Vancouver area). The response rate for these interviews was roughly 40%.⁴

The congregations were from five major evangelical denominations in Canada, including the PAOC. The other four were the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Mennonite Brethren (MB), the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), and the four Baptist Conventions: the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches

⁴ For more information about the response rate and representativeness, see Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson. “A Demographic Look at Evangelical Congregations,” *Church & Faith Trends* 3:2 (August 2010): 1-21.

(CABC), the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Québec (BCOQ), the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada (CBWC), and the French Baptist Union / Union d'Églises Baptistes Françaises au Canada (FBU). These are the largest denominations in the Pentecostal, Reformed, Mennonite, Holiness, and Baptist traditions respectively within Canadian evangelicalism. In total these denominations represent about 3,100 congregations, or about one-third of all the evangelical congregations in Canada. The PAOC rivals the Baptist Convention for the largest denomination, with roughly 1100 congregations.

VITALITY AND DIVERSITY

PAOC's growth over the last hundred years is related to its mission, which currently is to "to glorify God by making disciples everywhere by proclaiming and practising the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit."⁵ Ronald Kydd classifies them as a "conversionist" sect, driven by a passion for evangelism.⁶ Evangelistic fervour has spawned churches among Canada's Aboriginal population,⁷ and Pentecostals have also grown in diversity through immigration.⁸

⁵ <http://www.paoc.org/about/what-we-believe>.

⁶ Ronald Kydd, "Canadian Pentecostalism and the Evangelical Impulse," 293. In *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, edited by George Rawlyk (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 289-300.

⁷ Robert K. Burkinshaw, "Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia." In Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism*, 142-170.

⁸ Michael Wilkinson. *The Spirit said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

Thus, a modern telling of the PAOC must attend to its diversity and vitality.

Table 1 presents data from the PAOC's official website, which includes information about the number of churches, the primary language/ethnicity of the church, new churches and number of adherents. These denominational data suggest that the PAOC has plateaued in the last 5 years. This trend seems to be at least a decade old, however, as the PAOC reported 232,000 adherents in 2001.⁹ While the actual numbers of churches have declined slightly, it would be premature to call this a downward trend. Note that the number of total adherents is stable, or up slightly. This stability does not match data from the Canadian Census, which purports that the number of Pentecostals in Canada dropped from 436,435 to 369,475 between 1991 and 2001.¹⁰ Over the same decade, Pentecostal denominations reported a 23% increase in membership and a 33% increase in attendance. The declining Canadian Pentecostal population reported in the census is related to the fact that "Pentecostal" was dropped from the list of religious groups from which a respondent could choose. Thus, the apparent decline is largely an artefact of changes in question wording on the census form.¹¹

⁹ Michael Wilkinson, "Pentecostalism in Canada: An Introduction." In Michael Wilkinson, ed. *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

¹⁰<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/religion/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1a&Code=01&Table=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Canada&B2=1>

¹¹ Rick Hiemstra, "Evangelicals and the Canadian Census," *Church & Faith Trends* 1:2 (February 2008).

Table 1 PAOC Statistics, 2011

	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Total churches	1,077	1,084	1,102	1,116	1,108
English	15	720	738	753	743
First Nations	85	89	90	92	88
French	80	80	80	73	85
Spanish	40	40	39	41	38
Korean	1	18	18	21	19
Slavic	9	19	19	19	19
Chinese	5	15	14	15	15
Filipino	3	13	13	13	12
Portuguese	2	13	14	14	16
Church plants	7	40	-	-	-
Conversions	-	13,937	14,583	13,126	20,769
Total adherents	-	234,385	233,400	232,000	228,000
Credential holders	3,555	3,551	3,511	3,485	3,465

Source: www.paoc.org.

Table 1 shows that about one third of PAOC congregations primarily serve a minority group. This number is likely to go up, as 40% of the church plants in 2009-10 are minority congregations. The PAOC reported that nearly all new congregations started in the 1990s were new immigrant congregations.¹² Overall, their racial/ethnic diversity is higher than average in our CECS data, and puts them slightly behind the C&MA and far ahead of the CRC in terms of diversity.

The demographic characteristics of the congregations, shown in Table 2, are an important part of diversity and vitality, including their location and size. For example, the CECS data show that urban congregations are more likely to be larger, growing, and be immigrant congregations. This has a lot to do with the fact that cities are growing, and the majority of immigrants eventually settle in the cities. Size also matters, as larger churches often have greater stability and corporate energy. Based on denominational statistics from 2008, the average attendance (total number of attendees on a typical weekend, including children) for PAOC congregations is 148, and the median attendance is 75.¹³ In Table 2, the estimates are based on the CECS data, and indicate slightly larger church size

¹² Michael Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada*. Peter Lang, 2006.

¹³ The median is the middle case, and is a better estimate of the typical size of a church than the average, which is skewed upwards by the presence of very large churches in the sample. The 148 average and 75 median for the PAOC is very close to the average of 150 and the median is 89.2 for all five denominations in our study, as reported by the denominations.

averages than the denominational data. The medians are in parentheses.

Table 2 Church characteristics

	PAOC	Other
Church size	181 (84)	217 (150)
% in metro areas	30.2%	44.0%
West	425 ^a	
Ontario	481 ^a	
Quebec	108 ^a	
Maritimes	65 ^a	
% of churches with attendance increase over previous year	55.2%	43.2%
# who joined	47.0 (18.0)	31.9 (17.0)
# who left/deceased	13.9 (8.0)	13.2 (8.0)
# of converts	6.3 (4.0)	4.8 (2.0)

Source: CECS 2009, ^a2008 PAOC denominational data.

In the CECS data, the average attendance at PAOC churches is 181 and a median of 84. PAOC churches have a smaller median size than other denominations in the study (150), partly because of the PAOC's rural/northern churches and older churches. About one third of their congregations are in rural areas, and the median size of the rural churches is 55 while the urban median is 140. These rural churches tend to be older (median year rural churches were founded is 1950 compared to 1969 for urban churches). The congregants of rural churches tend to be much less educated (median of 85% of adults have a high school diploma or less, compared to 59% in urban churches) and are somewhat more likely to be

poor (median of 15% have household incomes less than \$25,000, compared to 11% in urban churches). These churches lack the stability that larger size and higher social class affords, as well as lack the growth potential of urban areas. Not surprisingly then, the PAOC has a smaller percentage of churches in metro areas (metro areas have populations of 100,000 or more). The lack of churches in metro areas is probably not good news for denominational growth, since metro areas are growing in population, particularly immigrant populations.

The PAOC is spread across Canada, with 481 congregations, or 44%, in Ontario. The number of Maritime churches is low partly because the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador, with its roughly 130 congregations, forms a separate denomination.

Quebec has long been a difficult place to start and grow evangelical churches. Yet, the PAOC has 108 congregations (nearly 10%) in Quebec, compared to less than 4% for the other denominations in our study. While evangelical churches in Quebec tend to be small, there are eight Quebec churches (of those that report attendance figures) that are larger than the PAOC average (of 181) according to 2008 denominational data. There are more PAOC churches and attendees in Quebec than the other four denominations combined (according to 2008 denominational data).

Why the relative success in Quebec? Di Giacomo argues that “Aimee Semple McPherson’s meetings in 1920 should be considered a major turning point for it not only contributed to the expansion of the Pentecostal movement in Quebec, it also breathed new life

Table 3 Demographics of Congregants

	PAOC	Other
<18 years	20.8%	21.9%
18–29 years	14.9%	14.9%
30–64 years	47.5%	43.4%
≥65 years	17.7%	20.1%
Female	56.6%	56.4%
High school or less	57.4%	48.7%
4-year university degree or more	28.6%	36.3%
Grad degree or more	7.6%	8.0%
<\$25,000 family income	21.2%	14.0%
>\$100,000 family income	10.8%	14.2%

Source: CECS 2009.

into a dying francophone evangelical movement in Canada.”¹⁴ In the 1970s, Pentecostalism in Quebec got another boost from a PAOC initiative called FLITE, or French Language Intensive Training for Evangelism, where over 60 Anglophone missionary families moved to Quebec, spent a year learning French, and went on to start at least 25 new Francophone churches in the next 17 years, more than had been started in the pre-

¹⁴ Michael Di Giacomo, “Aimee Semple McPherson: ‘Shot in the arm’ for French-Canadian Protestantism.” In Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, eds., *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, 151-168 (Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 152.

vious 50 years.¹⁵ By the 1970s, Pentecostalism became “the largest sector of francophone evangelicalism.”¹⁶

Over half of the pastors reported that their churches are growing as compared to the previous year (2008), well above the other denominations. PAOC churches also have higher numbers of people joining the church (average number of joiners per church is 47) and converts (6.3 new converts per church) than the other denominations in the study. By comparison, PAOC churches do not have more people leaving. This bodes well for future growth.

In Table 3, I turn from the characteristics of churches to the diversity of the people in the pew. PAOC congregations are typical in terms of age and gender. However, they tend to be somewhat less educated and less wealthy, according to pastor estimates. This relationship between lower education/income and PAOC affiliation remains even when we control for rural/urban location and the year the congregation started (based on regression analysis, not shown). In other words, the reason PAOC attendees are lower class (lower education and income) is because they have more rural or older congregations. Pentecostalism has been viewed as a lower class religious movement for most of its history, but more recently it is correctly understood to be class diverse.¹⁷ However, it

¹⁵ Michael Di Giacomo. “FLITE: Religious Entrepreneurship in Quebec in the 1970s and 1980s,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, XLVI (2004): 49-88.

¹⁶ Di Giacomo, “Aimee Semple McPherson,” 165.

¹⁷ See, for example, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-*

has not yet fully caught up with the other denominations in our sample.

Finally, pastors in the PAOC have a slightly more positive view of their churches than pastors in other denominations. Combining 20 questions¹⁸ that

First Century (Reading, MA; Perseus Books), 1995. Cf Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostalism and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ The 20 questions scale had a fairly normal distribution, with a Cronbach's alpha of .782. The questions were:

1. "In general, this congregation is wary of change and innovation."
2. "The vast majority of lay people are not aware of the goals and direction of this church."
3. "Everyone enthusiastically participates in congregational singing."
4. "The pastors and staff of this church often scramble to complete tasks that are dropped by the lay person responsible for them."
5. "Newcomers find it hard to form friendships with people in this church."
6. "The lay leaders are committed to this church and fully endorse its mission."
7. "The participants in this church are pessimistic about its future."
8. "I think we have problems with communication between the clergy, lay leaders, and the congregation."
9. "Attendees frequently invite unconverted friends and family to this church."
10. "The contributions of our youth and children are appreciated in this church."
11. "I don't think we are doing enough for our children and youth in this church."
12. "In general, the congregation is satisfied with the quality of the programs provided for the adults in this church."
13. "The congregation is committed to praying for this church's ministry and programs."

asked the pastors opinion on their church, we found that the average rating for PAOC churches was 78, compared to 74 for other denominations (on a scale of 39-99, where higher scores are more positive). Since the pastor's opinion of their church is strongly correlated to their own job satisfaction,¹⁹ this is a good sign for the PAOC. Healthy leadership is important to healthy churches.

IDENTITY

Tension and division, partly in relation to other Pentecostal, evangelical, and fundamentalist groups, have marked the history of the PAOC. As a result, the PAOC has struggled to locate its identity vis-à-vis these groups.

The denomination officially began in 1919 by a legal charter from the Canadian Parliament. Its inception was wrought with bitter disputes, as many were against the organization of Pentecostalism in Canada, including the Hebden, leaders of Toronto's Hebden

14. "People in our church are encouraged to ask questions and challenge ideas."

15. "The laity expect the pastors and other church staff to do most of the work in this church."

16. "This church is very committed to leadership development and formation."

17. "It is often difficult to fill voluntary positions in this church."

18. "Overall, I would consider this to be a very healthy church."

19. "I am worried about the long term future of this church."

20. "This church tends to burn out its leaders."

¹⁹ Reimer, Sam. "Pastoral Well-being: Findings from the Canadian Evangelical Churches Study." *Church & Faith Trends* 3:2 (August 2010).

mission, which many see as the start of Pentecostalism in Canada.²⁰ Institutional structures could easily stifle the Spirit, it was feared. According to the Hebden, “Not only is the free leading of the Spirit against man-made organizations, but the unity of the Spirit demands its abolition.”²¹ Yet, without structures, a growing movement is difficult to control. Theological disputes, fraudulent preachers, and misuse of spiritual gifts must be reined in. Practical matters of relationships with governments and other religious groups also pushed toward institutionalization.²² In Weber’s terms, the “routinization of charisma” is inevitable.²³

Tensions were not just structural, but also theological. The PAOC adhered to Oneness theology at its inception, but later embraced Trinitarian beliefs when it joined with the Western District council of the Assemblies of God, which were then affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the United States. This brought structural unity to the PAOC, even though divisions and tensions continued.²⁴ One such tension was be-

²⁰ Michael Di Giacomo, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Canada: Its Origins, Development, and Distinct Culture.” In Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 15-38.

²¹ Cited in Kydd, “Canadian Pentecostalism,” 293.

²² Di Giacomo, “Pentecostal”

²³ See Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press), 1989.

²⁴ Kydd, “Canadian Pentecostalism.” Also David A. Reed, “Oneness Seed on Canadian Soil: Early Developments of Oneness Pentecostals.” In Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, eds., *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Early Pentecostal Movement*, 191-213 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

tween Pentecostals and the larger evangelical movement. Even though Pentecostals identified as fundamentalists and evangelicals, Pentecostals remained separated until at least the 1960s. Evangelicals were suspicious of perceived Pentecostal emotional excesses, while Pentecostals looked down on evangelicalism's lack of real power and openness to the Spirit.²⁵ Instrumental to warming relationships was Dr. J. Harry Fraught, a PAOC minister, who brought together evangelicals in Toronto, an effort that eventually led to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Fraught became EFC's second president in 1966. EFC grew substantially under the leadership of Brian Stiller, another PAOC minister, who became executive director in 1983, and later became president of the evangelical school, Tynedale University College and Seminary. Regarding Pentecostalism's relationship with fundamentalism, Althouse argues that there is a tension between fundamentalism and early Pentecostals, but admits that "Pentecostals today have settled for fundamentalist dispensational eschatology that has taken a conservative stance with regard to the world..."²⁶ On the other

²⁵ See Grant A. Wacker, "Travail of a Broken Family: Evangelical Responses to the Emergence of Pentecostalism in America, 1906-16," In Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler and Grant A. Wacker, eds. *Pentecostal Currents in American Pentecostalism*, 23-49 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

²⁶ Peter Althouse, "Apocalyptic Discourse and a Pentecostal Vision for Canada," 74. In Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 58-78.

hand, Guenther²⁷ argues that Western Bible College ameliorated the exclusiveness, anti-intellectualism and fundamentalism of Canadian Pentecostalism in the first half of the 20th century. Given these dynamics, present identification with evangelicalism and fundamentalism is worth exploring.

In Table 4, I look at the identities that pastors feel described their congregations “very well.” These five identities—evangelical, missional, charismatic, purpose-driven, and fundamentalist—are a mix of recent and historic identities. 83.3% of PAOC congregations are described as “evangelical”, similar to the Baptists, C&MA and MB level of identification. In Table 5, the average for the other denominations is lower (69.9%) because the CRC churches are much less likely to identify as evangelical.

Table 4 Identity

% “describes congregation very well”	PAOC	Other
Evangelical	83.3%	69.9%
Missional	57.3%	33.8%
Charismatic	46.9%	4.5%
Purpose-driven	26.0%	14.7%
Fundamentalist	25.0%	7.1%
Identify with their denomination (extremely or very closely)	54.2%	50.9%

²⁷ Bruce Guenther, “Pentecostal Theological Education: A Case Study of Western Bible College, 1925-50.” In Michael Wilkinson, ed. *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation*. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009).

The majority of PAOC churches were described as “missional” (57.3%). Advocates of the missional church seek to take the church back to Jesus’ mission by reaching out to their community and world. They focus on the needs external to the church, attempting to “incarnate” Christ to their neighbours, and are less focused on needs and program development inside the church. Key spokespersons include Alan Hirsch, Darrell Guder, Tim Keller and others.²⁸ This term is popular among evangelical churches and denominations, but is probably not well understood.²⁹ Whatever their understanding of the term, PAOC pastors are more likely to ascribe the missional label to their churches than pastors of other denominations.

There is no surprise that the majority of congregations that identify as charismatic are PAOC churches. Still, only 46.9% of PAOC pastors think the label describes their congregation very well, possibly

²⁸See Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006); Tim Keller, “The Missional Church” (June 2001) - downloadable at http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Missional_Church-Keller.pdf

²⁹ My analysis suggests that the churches that were considered “missional” did not show many unique characteristics, except that they seemed to have higher vitality. For example, “missional” is correlated with more internal (for attendees in the church) and more external (for the community) programs in the church, and is strongly correlated with a pastor’s positive opinion of his/her church. Our literature review and the pastoral interviews suggested that the term “missional” had become so widely used that its meaning was not clear.

because they distinguish between classical Pentecostalism and the more recent charismatic movement.³⁰

Ranked fourth is “purpose-driven” (26.0%), an identity that follows the strategy laid out in *The Purpose Driven Church*, a best-selling book by Rick Warren.³¹ The church, argues Warren, needs to align its purpose with the five biblical purposes of the church, the result of which will be a healthy congregation that is growing in depth and numbers. Here is Warren’s definition:

Purpose Driven is a church health model that provides your pastoral team with a unique, biblically-based approach to establishing, transforming, and maintaining a balanced, growing congregation that seeks to fulfill the God-given purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and missions.³²

³⁰ Margaret M. Poloma and John C. Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), provide a helpful typology that distinguish Assemblies of God churches as Traditional (Pentecostal), Renewalist (Charismatic), Evangelical, and Alternative (23-44).

³¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

³²http://www.purposedrivenchurch.com/PurposeDriven/MCMS_Templates/Legacy/Generic/AboutUsTemplate.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID={A7F460DB-392C-4ADE-9B5F-A7F92F77E49}&NRORIGINALURL=%2fen-S%2fAboutUs%2fWhoWeAre%2fFAQ.htm&NRCACHEHINT=Guest#whatispd

PAOC pastors are almost twice as likely as pastors of other denominations to feel this label fits their congregation. However, PAOC churches are not more likely to have mission statements than other evangelical churches, although the vast majority do (PAOC 85% compared to 89% for other denominations).

The fundamentalist label (25.0%) is much more common among the PAOC than the other denominations. Fundamentalism is strongly correlated with those PAOC churches that have a high percentage of low-income attendees, and is also more commonly applied to rural and older PAOC congregations. Yet, rural or low-income congregations do not account for the higher acceptance of this label among the PAOC. It is more common in the PAOC than in the CABC, for example, which also has many poor and rural congregations.

Overall, the PAOC pastors are more likely to embrace all of these labels. This may reflect the general enthusiasm that PAOC pastors have for their churches. Finally, 54% of PAOC pastors state that their congregation identifies extremely or very closely with their denomination. This level of identification is typical of other denominations.

WORSHIP

Possibly the best known characteristic of Pentecostal congregations is their exuberant worship. It includes supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, including miracles and speaking in tongues. This worship seems somewhat more restrained in Canada than in the United States and other parts of the world, possibly be-

cause of the Canadian evangelical tendency toward moderation.³³ Or it may be that mainstream evangelicalism's worship is moving in the Pentecostal direction, making PAOC worship seem more typical. For example, Kydd notes that EFC's Stiller stated that he does not find much difference between evangelical and Pentecostal congregations in Canada, partly because other denominations have become "pentecostalized" in their worship.³⁴

Table 5 presents the percentage of congregations within the PAOC that always or usually have the following worship elements in their largest (in terms of attendance) worship service. Again, the Table is sorted from the most to least common practice for the PAOC.

Nearly all PAOC churches regularly have people raising their hands and clapping (94.8%) during worship. This is true, however, of a smaller majority of the churches in other evangelical denominations (53.7%). Most evangelical congregations have contemporary praise bands, although the PAOC churches are even more likely to have them (83.3%). Three-quarters of PAOC pastors (76%) say they always have praise bands and only 11% say they never do. This penchant for the contemporary, however, does not necessarily mean a rejection of the old hymns, since 37% of those congregations who say they always have a praise band

³³ Mark Noll, "Canadian Evangelicalism: A View from the United States." In George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 3-20.

³⁴ Kydd, "Canadian Pentecostalism."

also always sing hymns, and over 60% do so at least sometimes.

Table 5 Worship Elements

% of pastors who say this is always or usually part of their worship service	PAOC	Other
Raising hands and clapping	94.8%	53.7%
A praise band with drums and/or electric guitars	83.3%	67.5%
Altar call or an invitation to receive Christ	66.7%	18.5%
Public speaking in tongues	35.8%	1.5%
A printed order of worship, like a bulletin	30.2%	64.4
Spontaneous dancing, jumping or shouting	13.6%	4.7%

Source: CECS 2009

Surprisingly, the greatest difference (between PAOC and other denominations) in the Table is related to having an altar call or invitation to receive Christ. Two-thirds of PAOC churches do this regularly (66.7%), and less than one in five congregations in other denominations do. The majority of congregations in other denominations, however, have altar calls/invitations at least sometimes. While publically speaking in tongues is not uncommon within PAOC congregations, it may not be as common as many assume. About one third (35.8%) of the PAOC congregations hear tongues regularly. One quarter of the pastors interviewed say it is rarely or never part of their

largest worship service.³⁵ Not surprisingly, only 1.5% of churches in other denominations have public speaking in tongues, and 81% never have it. Spontaneous dancing, jumping and shouting are surprisingly rare. Less than one in seven PAOC churches see them regularly, and 61% rarely or never do. Some openness to spontaneity may be reflected in the fact that less than 1/3rd (30.2%) of PAOC churches distribute an order of worship or bulletin (as compared to almost 2/3rd of the other four denominations), but whatever openness there is, it is rarely as exuberant as spontaneous dancing, jumping and shouting.

I combined four items to create a “traditional Pentecostal worship” scale: 1) tongues, 2) spontaneous dancing, jumping, shouting, 3) raising hand or clapping, and 4) altar call or invitation.³⁶ Regression analysis (not shown) indicates that the strongest predictor of this style of worship is income. PAOC congregations with a higher percentage of poor (household income below \$25,000) attendees are more likely to have this style of worship, and multiethnic congregations are somewhat more likely as well. Middle/upper class PAOC congregations, then, may not look that different than congregations of other denominations, which match Stiller’s experience. Nonetheless, the data show that PAOC churches are higher in

³⁵ These findings are similar to Poloma and Green’s findings in the English speaking sectors of the Assemblies of God in the US, Poloma and Green, *The Assemblies of God*, 25.

³⁶ The resulting scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .734, which indicates that the items can be combined.

worship elements typical of Pentecostal churches, even if worship styles are not always distinctive.

EGALITARIANISM AND INCLUSIVITY

Finally, the early Pentecostal movement was characterized by egalitarianism and inclusion across gender and racial lines.³⁷ Regarding racial inclusion, the 1906 Azusa Street revival brought Black and White together at a time of racial tension. William J. Seymour, Azusa's Black leader, quickly found that his interracial movement was criticized by Whites (who embraced racial divisions), including a Pentecostal contemporary, Charles Fox Parham. For Seymour, "finding that some people could speak in tongues and continue to abhor their black fellow Christians convinced him that it was not tongue speaking but dissolution of racial barriers that was the surest sign of the Spirit's Pentecostal presence."³⁸ Racial divisions led to separate Black and White Pentecostal denominations as early as 1908, which held through most of the 20th century. More recently however, there has been a significant push toward reconciliation among Pentecostals.³⁹ The PAOC,

³⁷ Martin Mittelstadt, "Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition: A Contemporary Reading of Luke-Acts." In Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 123-41.

³⁸ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (HarperCollins, 1998), 63.

³⁹ Edith L. Blumhofer, "For Pentecostals, A Move Toward Racial Reconciliation," *Christian Century* 111, no. 14 (April 27, 1994): 444.

and many Pentecostal denominations in Canada and the United States, are members of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA),

Table 6 Racial/Ethnic Diversity within Congregations

	PAOC		Other	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
immigrant (came to Canada in last 5 years)	3.5%	6.3%	1.4%	7.3%
Asian	2.6%	5.0%	0.8%	11.7%
Latin American	0.2%	1.8%	0.4%	2.1%
African/Black	1.0%	7.1%	2.6%	3.8%
Aboriginal	12.8%	4.9%	2.5%	1.6%
White	82.0%	79.3%	94.0%	79.6%
Multi-racial (no race >80%)	14.8%	31.9%	2.1%	22.5%

Source: CECS 2009.

who “are committed to the message of reconciliation through the cross and unity in the power of the Holy Spirit, which became a reality on the Day of Pentecost and was demonstrated at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street at the beginning of the twentieth century.”⁴⁰ The PCCNA replaced the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA), founded in 1948. The PFNA cemented the racial divide, as membership was made up of White denominations, and their leadership were White males. The “Memphis Miracle” of 1994 occurred in a PFNA meeting, at which time the PFNA was disbanded and the more inclusive PCCNA was formed. The reconciliatory tone of the Memphis meeting reached its climax in a foot-washing ceremo-

⁴⁰ (http://www.pccna.org/about_mission.htm).

ny, where a White pastor washed the feet of a Black bishop, and the Black bishop washed the feet of a White denominational leader.⁴¹ How does race/ethnic inclusivity look today?

I have already stated above that minority congregations constitute about one third of PAOC congregations, but multiracial and multiethnic congregations may better show the spirit of reconciliation and inclusion. The PAOC is near the top in multiethnic congregations according to our data, roughly equal to the C&MA. Following researchers in the United States, I define multiethnic congregations as those where no single racial/ethnic group makes up more than 80% of the attendees. By this measure, 26 of the 96 (27%) PAOC congregations in the sample were multiethnic, based on pastor reports. By comparison, research shows that 8% of congregations in the United States are multiracial, but only 4.5% of evangelical churches.⁴² Table 6 shows the racial/ethnic diversity of PAOC and other congregations from the CECS data. I divide between rural and urban congregations because of the much higher diversity of urban congregations (except for Aboriginal congregations, which tend to be rural and northern). The percentages in the Ta-

⁴¹ Vinson Synan, "Memphis 1994: Miracle and Mandate," *Reconciliation* No. 1 (Summer 1998), 14-16, 18.

⁴² Note that U.S. studies used different methodology than pastoral estimates (as we did in the U.S.), so percentages may not be perfectly comparable. U.S. percentages are from Michael O. Emerson and Rodney M. Woo. *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

ble represent the average percentage of regular attendees that belong to that racial/ethnic group.

The PAOC appears to be pretty typical in terms of the percentage of new immigrants in their churches. They have a lower percentage of Asians, but higher percentages of Aboriginals. It is interesting that PAOC churches have higher percentages of minorities in rural congregations, as compared to other denominations.

In the early 1900s, women were active in various ministry roles, including pastors, missionaries and evangelists, and were encouraged to do so by men. Ellen Hebden, a woman who was possibly the first to be baptized in the Spirit in Canada, was instrumental in the emergence and spread of early Pentecostalism in Canada. Holmes concludes that the “early Pentecostal movement was an egalitarian one, in practice, if not in theory.”⁴³ As the PAOC became institutionalized, however, the informal, charismatic style of leadership transformed to a formal, institutionalized authority “with men holding the most prestigious positions.” As a result, “the early freedom of gifted women [was] quickly eclipsed by the coexisting patriarchal assumptions and practices.”⁴⁴ The tension between the authority of scripture (women’s submission) and authority of the Spirit (who were called and gifted) was real, but seemed to settle with the solution that a woman’s

⁴³ Pamela M.S Holmes, “Ministering Women in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: A Feminist Exploration,” 174. In Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation*. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 171-194.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 175.

call to leadership must be understood to have a limited sphere of authority. Also important was the “anti-cultural” stand of the PAOC, who reacted against the feminist movement. Regarding women’s ordination, it was not until 1984 that the denomination officially began ordaining women, and it was 1998 before women were allowed to hold leadership positions at the national and district levels.⁴⁵ In comparison, the Assemblies of God in the United States granted full clergy rights to women in 1935, and the Foursquare Gospel in 1927.⁴⁶

Table 7 Women Pastors

PAOC	Ratio	% of all pastors who are women
All pastors (men/women)	2,654/901	25.3%
Lead pastors (men/women)	921/ 43	4.5%
CABC		
All pastors (men/women)	567/79	12.2%
Lead pastors (men/women)	340/26	7.1%

Source: www.paoc.org

Regarding gender, Table 7 shows that 901 of the 3,555 (25%) of the credential holders in the PAOC are women, but only 43 of the 964 lead pastors are

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

women (4.5%). In our interviews, we spoke to four female PAOC lead pastors (out of 96), and they tended to work in smaller churches. This is typical of female pastors in all five denominations, who also lead small congregations (female median congregational size=60, male median=140). For comparison, I was able to receive data on the CABC, which has roughly 500 churches in Atlantic Canada. Out of 646 ordained pastors, 79 are women (12.2%), much lower than the 25% for the PAOC. However, 26 of 366 senior/lead pastors are women. This accounts for roughly 7% of lead pastors, above the 4.5% for the PAOC. CRC ordained women in 2007, MB in 2006, and C&MA seem to have discussions underway. Overall, the PAOC is ahead of the other denominations in our study in terms of ordaining women, but has drifted from its historically egalitarian roots in this regard.

CONCLUSION

So what of the future of PAOC congregations in Canada?⁴⁷ There are reasons to be optimistic. PAOC congregations are among the best at attracting immigrants, a key source of evangelical growth for the future. They also claim a higher than average number of conversions and are more likely to be growing. The pastors have favourable views of their congregations, which correlate with a sense of pastoral well-being. Pastors feel their churches are purposeful and have

⁴⁷ I write from a sociological perspective, recognizing that Pentecostals will point to other factors beyond the scope of the social sciences, such as the work of the Holy Spirit and prayer.

missional traits that are also correlated with congregational vitality. Vibrant worship, a hallmark of Pentecostals, is another correlate of vitality.⁴⁸

There are also reasons to be less optimistic. According to 2008 denominational data, there are 527 of 869 churches (who reported their attendance estimate) with less than 100 attendees, and about 400 rural congregations (based on area codes where the second digit is 0). As the CECS data show, this is higher than most other denominations. Small, rural churches tend not to be as well situated for future growth, particularly immigrant growth. PAOC attendees tend to have slightly less education and income, which is negatively correlated with congregational vitality in this sample.⁴⁹

Fortunately, the PAOC has a passion for evangelism and church-planting/reproduction. Locating new churches in growing neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas will be important for its future. Furthermore, like all other denominations we studied, the PAOC is aware of the need to retain pastors and attract well-equipped young leaders, and is making efforts to do so. The average age for senior PAOC senior pastors is 50 years, and only 20% of their senior pastors are age 40 or less.⁵⁰ Since the leaders of the five denominations we spoke with were nearly unanimous in saying that leadership was the key to vibrant churches, the im-

⁴⁸ See Sam Reimer, "Congregational Vitality in Evangelical Churches in Canada," *Church and Faith Trends*, (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Denominational counts, 2008. I want to thank to David Wells and PAOC staff for making denominational data available.

portance of leadership is difficult to underestimate. With strong leaders and well-located congregations, there is reason to be optimistic.