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Setting the Stage: Religious and Cultural Landscape in Canada

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Defining a Flourishing Congregation ... A Start

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

Method

Vancouver
Calgary
Winnipeg
SW Ontario
Halifax

9 Focus Groups
(66 *participants*)
109 Interviews

20 Catholic
36 Mainline Protestant
46 Conservative Protestant
2 Parachurch
5 Academics

Institutional/Contextual Factors

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

- *Church as “gathered” and “scattered”*
- *Growing churches tend to stress internal factors; declining congregations tend to emphasize external variables.*



Canada: A Diverse, Inclusive, and Tolerant Nation

Inclusivity, social justice, and tolerance

Reverse discrimination toward Christianity

Christianity on the margins of Canadian social life

- *Great opportunity in this social context*



Cooperation vs. Competition

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graph TD; A[Partnering with ...] --- B[Congregations in one's denomination]; A --- C[Congregations in other traditions]; A --- D[Other faith groups]; A --- E[Secular agencies];
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Partnering with ...

Congregations
in one's
denomination

Congregations
in other
traditions

Other faith
groups

Secular
agencies

Immigration



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

Few Churches are Large



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





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