

Principles for Church Growth

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Initiatives

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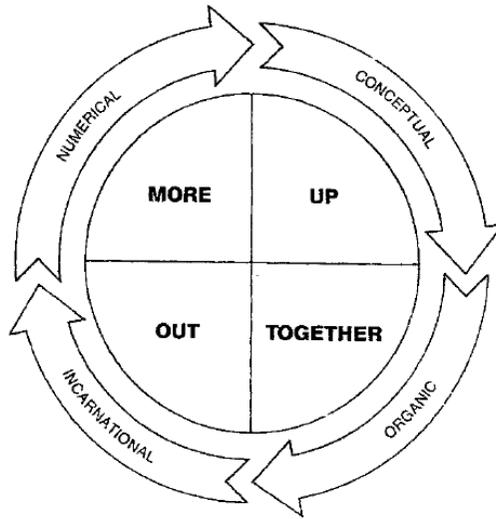
“GO ANYWHERE” CHURCH GROWTH

Introduction

Growth is an essential quality of the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed and taught. His short and long parables; principles of fruitfulness; commission to go and make disciples; and more examples, all make it clear that growth is not negotiable. The book of Acts is a story of mission, church planting and church growth and underlines that growth through the church is a significant part of the wider Kingdom growth. So if church growth is a given, let's explore HOW. We can get to the essentials with four sets of four.

4 Dimensions of Growth

The diagram below comes from the Bible Society, and shows there are four dimensions of church growth... UP, in maturity and discipleship; TOGETHER (IN), in fellowship and community; OUT, in mission and engagement with society and MORE, in numbers.



Church growth thinking is often criticised as just about numbers and head counting – this should not be true since it's about all four dimensions.

See how UP; IN; OUT corresponds to the 3 dimensions of church life that we are taught to expect at every level and in every aspect of our life at St Thomas'... but on that note... we must not forget the fourth dimension, growth in numbers. In the New Testament God added to their numbers daily, as they did the other 3 things (Acts 2:42-47).

Growth may not happen in all four dimensions all the time. In some contexts of very hard mission fields, it's right to expect slower growth in numbers, and even in a declining population a healthy church may not grow numerically. So church growth isn't just about numbers, but with some important exceptions, there is something wrong if increasing numbers never come! The knowledge

of the Lord is promised to fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9 & Hab 2:14).

4 Internal Dynamics of Growth

The following four internal dynamics of Kingdom Growth are in each case the power for Church Growth.

1. God the HOLY SPIRIT is the only SOURCE of growth. Again church growth ideas are criticised as too mechanistic and man centred, whereas most teachers/writers emphasise that they are observing God's ways with his people, the church. The church is a living body and any healthy organism must grow and whilst God is the ultimate source of life and growth, he works through observable conditions, processes and people doing the work.

Jesus made the only source of Growth abundantly clear. You cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches, apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:1-8).

Paul further emphasised the point:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. Neither planter nor waterer is anything, but only God who makes things grow (1 Cor 3:6-7)

2. The Bible and especially Jesus' teaching on growth, makes it abundantly clear that the SCALE of Kingdom growth is nothing less than MULTIPLICATION.

From Genesis 12 and God's covenant to Abraham:

God's promise is of a people who will multiply as the stars in the sky and as the grains of sand on the seashore. A specially blessed people but with the mission to multiply the blessing so that all peoples on earth may be blessed.

From the growth parables, the sower and especially the "leaven":

The promise of Jesus is of growth based on multiplication. Multiplication of cells, of seeds, of fruit, of talents, of hardship and struggles. Always the scale is not addition but a process of MULTIPLICATION... from 2 to 4 and 5 to 10; from 1 to 30, 60 or 100.

3. If the scale of Kingdom growth is multiplication, its SYSTEM of working is SACRIFICE... we are not talking about consumerism and the market economy. Biblical church growth challenges us to lay down our lives.

Again Jesus gives many indications that we gain through losing – letting go. He stresses that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone... but if it dies, it bears many seeds (John 12:24).

4. Lastly, church growth works through a STREAM of RELATIONSHIPS. The power of sacrifice functions through the network of relationships of love through which the life of the Kingdom is transferred from one to another...

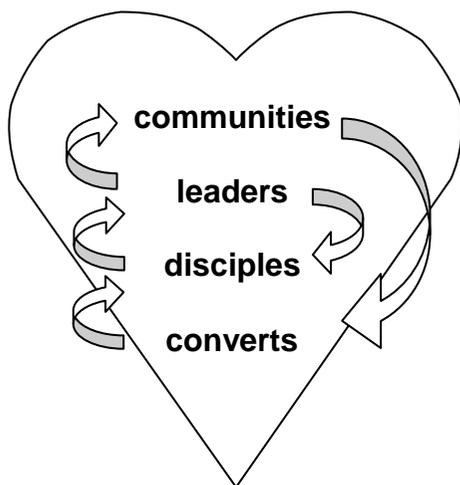
This life transfer through relationships Paul describes as death being at work in us, but life in you.

4 Elements of Growth

There are 4 elements or units that are multiplied in Kingdom growth in the church. These are the building blocks for growth and multiplication.

First there is a multiplication of **Converts**, then of **Disciples**, then of **Leaders** and lastly of **Communities**. Communities are structures or vessels for the relationships to grow and reproduce more of all four elements.

*Jesus only speaks of calling and making disciples who grow into ministry and leadership. So strictly we should see the whole process as **discipleship**, which involves converting, maturing and leading. So Jesus' biblical terms for these three stages of Christian discipleship that need to be multiplied, could be followers, friends and fathers, gathered in fraternities.*



The Heart of Church Growth:

Multiplying these 4 elements

Each should produce growth in all the others – forming a circulation system.

So growth in individuals moves from followers (converts) to friends (disciples) to fathers (leaders) and happens in highly relational communities (fraternities), which all produce more of each other by multiplication (individually and corporately) in a self-reinforcing cycle.

And don't forget, because Kingdom is the full context for multiplication growth, the church and also needs to work with the King for multiplication beyond itself, or righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, Justice and Jubilee throughout creation!

4 Levels of Relational Community

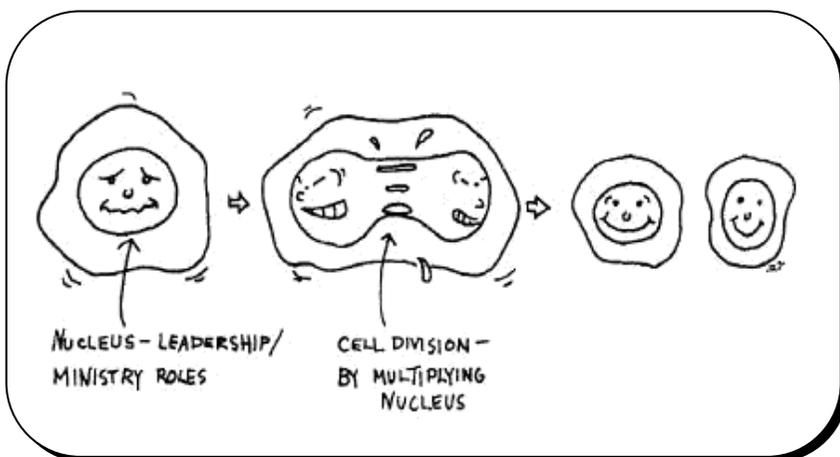
Traditionally church growth has identified three levels of social sizes of community in which the church can express its life. **Cell**, **Congregation** and **Celebration**. We explore these crucial concepts in the next section and see why we rename congregation as **Cluster**.

However, we need to add a fourth indispensable level of relational community if we are looking at growth through life transfer and multiplication. This is the one to one pairing we have called **Couplets**, which may also be called accountability relationships.

Jesus spoke of a disciple not being above his master but when he is fully taught he is as his master... the master:disciple relationship therefore being key to growth. The New Testament has many examples of these mentoring couplets so strategic to the mission through multiplication. Jesus also sent out two by two and endorsed this smallest unit of church growth by promising that where two or three gathered in his name... he was present.

Cells are the most basic and multipliable unit for multiplying converts, disciples and leaders. They do this best when one to one mentoring is part of cell life.

St Thomas' has been transitioning for the past 4 years precisely to put in place these structures of couplets, cells, clusters and celebrations, to release further growth through multiplication.



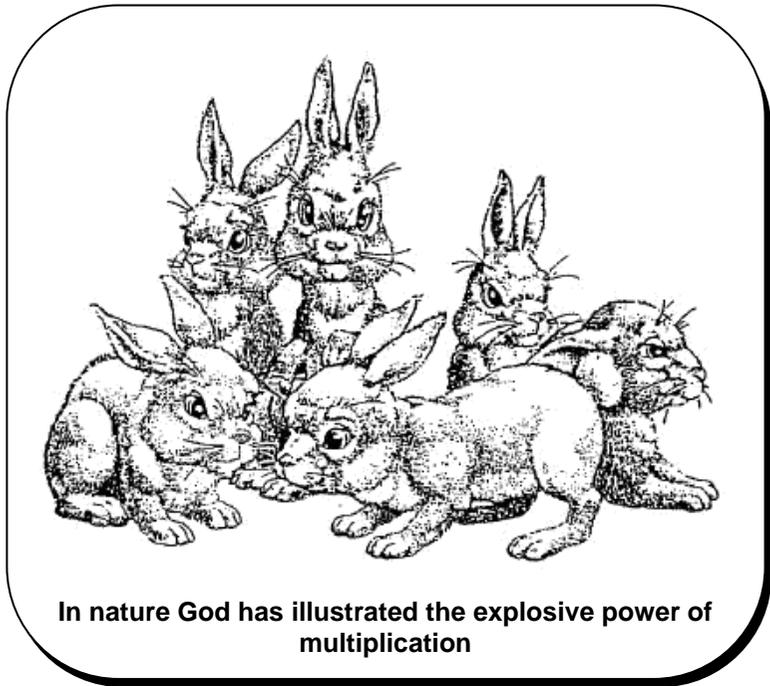
The phenomenal success of Alpha has worked by combining multiplication through a relational community/group context. In fact its effectiveness draws on its multiplication of 3 out of the four elements. It helps multiplying converts, leaders and small groups. This highlights the need to complement Alpha with the fourth element – discipleship, and to ensure continuity of converts in small groups post-Alpha.

BIBLICAL VISION OF KINGDOM MULTIPLICATION IN CHURCH

One of Jesus' shortest parables is the story of the women baking with leaven (yeast). Matthew 13:33 tells how she took a large amount of dough and put leaven with it... mixing it till the leaven had leavened the whole dough. Yeast in leaven is a classic organism growing through multiplication and able to colonise or infiltrate the whole lump.

Kingdom Growth is Multiplication Growth

Jesus' parables were special sorts of truth tales, usually designed perfectly to tell one central truth. To do this they often had a startling detail acting like a hammer to hit home the intended truth... arresting the hearer's attention. The NIV version of this single verse relegates the surprise detail to a footnote! It's the amount of dough the women took... not just a lot, but 22 litres in today's equivalent! In those days when everyone home baked she either had the first New Testament deepfreeze, or was baking for a party for the whole town! The impact would have been like Jesus telling today's farmers of the power of multiplication and spread of rabbits! Jesus intended us to realise this multiplication produces such limitless growth that it will fill as much dough as you could imagine... multiplying witnesses from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, even to the ends of the earth! (Acts 1:8)



In nature God has illustrated the explosive power of multiplication

Mission Multiplication of Kingdom Growth Knows No Bounds

One lump of leaven can spread throughout as much dough as you could imagine ever taking. This shows that its power to multiply results in the yeast colonising and infiltrating the whole lump. It penetrates and permeates every bit of dough.

Kingdom Multiplication Produces Incarnational Growth

Jesus uses the original word leaven not the modern translation yeast. Yeast is the pure organism with the power of life to multiply. However, leaven is just a bit of yesterday's dough that already had active yeast in it and

was put aside before baking. Kingdom growth works in the same way. It spreads from an ordinary person just like all the rest of us... except they have the active ingredient of the life of Jesus in their heart. This spreads as it is passed from one human being to another. It'd an active agent that can be transmitted to any other heart and so transform lives, families, neighbourhoods, societies and the world.

Kingdom Growth Works Through Ordinary People Multiplying Changed Hearts

Such is the power of live yeast to grow and multiply that it could spread through limitless dough. Having started, the only thing to stop it would be to subdivide the dough into plastic bags. I wonder if our poor experience of growth in the Church in Europe is due to our metaphorical "plastic bags". One such may be our inflexible structures and concepts of the church, which we carry in our minds.

New Ways of Being Church Could Release Multiplication Growth.

SHAPES OF THE GROWING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The 3 C's of Church Growth

The church growth movement helped us see that it is not a case of “the church is the church is the church.” But rather, the church as a community, is a social organism that can express its life in different sized groups, each having distinctly different characteristics and ways of organising themselves. Each level is best suited for district qualities and ways of working.

The church growth movement has analysed world trends and identified three broads sizes of social expression of Church. Small = Cell; medium = Congregation and large = Celebration. The table on the next page is the way the Bible Society seminars over the past 25 years presented these 3 social sizes and linked them to home, parish church and cathedral. The table also makes a claim for the main function of each level of church life. This may reflect our pastoral centred church in that none of the 3 levels is described as having primary mission purpose.

	<p>CELL 3-12 people MAIN FUNCTION PERSONAL INTIMACY</p>
	<p>CONGREGATION 25 – 175 people MAIN FUNCTION SOCIAL FELLOWSHIP</p>
	<p>CELEBRATION 175+ - THE BIGGER THE BETTER! MAIN FUNCTION WORSHIP</p>

The 3 C's of the Bible

It is my contention that the biblical roots expressing these three levels are the healthiest and are substantially different from the images in our table.

Firstly the people of God in the small was represented by the extended family. This has been the most common expression of family since biblical times and still persists in much of the non-Western world cultures. It is not the modern Western nuclear family represented by the two up, two down. Some would consider that this nuclear family was bound to suffer a high breakdown rate, being too small to provide the stability to withstand the pressures that a more extended network could take. "Nuclear family" having an unavoidable tendency to "fission."

The biblical extended family included aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc. This was the context for all aspects of the life of the people of God. The extended family included worship and learning the faith in the weekly Sabbath meal with readings and shared cup, and also in the annual Passover celebrations. The equivalent of our communion was a family ceremony with a requirement that it includes a stranger! The faith was also passed on at home through bible texts in phylacteries, on doorposts, family bibles, etc.

The medium size expression of the people of God would be the village community or synagogue. This might not be equivalent to our larger congregations of two or three hundred. It only required 10 circumcised males and seemed to have been interactive in style. Anyone who sat down indicated they would interpret the scriptures as did Jesus and Paul.

The celebrations at regional shrines or festivals at the Temple are perfect examples of the people of God gathering in the large. Here the tribes of the Lord went up and celebrations were extravagant and could last days. They were impersonal gatherings where it was easy to get lost in the crowd and their size meant that representative, priestly, leadership was fully appropriate. These were memorable occasions talked about for months afterward.

The Shifts in the 3 C's over History

Through history the church in the home persisted through Christian family for many centuries and is still alive in some parts of the world today. However, it has been largely lost in England now for decades.

The medieval cathedral probably represented very well the biblical temple tradition being the spiritual centre of a wide region, with pilgrimage and grand festival celebrations to remember and recount the events of the much wider and comprehensive people of God.

However, over time this cathedral tradition declined in its breadth of influence. Also the local parish church as the mid-sized expression took on many elements of the social elements most appropriate to the large celebration level. Unlike the more interactive synagogue, it seems to have aped the cathedral (perhaps because pilgrimage venues are so special). So we have robed choirs, processions, mini-cathedral organs, representative priestly leaders and the main parish service is even called “celebration of the Eucharist.” Furthermore the parish congregation became impersonal, private worship, where there was little meeting in the meeting... all more appropriate social aspects of celebration rather than community qualities of synagogues.

This analysis shows that the church in England 50 years ago had much to recover from the richest expression of Cell, Congregation and Celebration life of the church. We had largely ended up with only one level – the parish church... which we called the congregation even though its character resembled more celebration... and this form of congregation we even used to define what church was (Article).

In the last 35 years we have re-introduced church in the small with “Home Groups”, Lent groups, Bible study groups and fellowship groups. We have also begun to rediscover celebration level, with recovery of festivals and pilgrimage at Cathedrals, as well as newer events like

bible weeks, songs of praise in stadiums, etc. These developments are taking us in the right direction and we shall take them further.

Our Mission Context and Priority of Discipleship Groups & Reformed Shapes

Through centuries of Christendom, the churches mission job was the discipling of the next generation in the faith and challenging societies institutions back to Christian values. These tasks, when they were performed, were largely not done by what we called church, but by extended Christian family and Christian schools where children were disciplined in small classes. Some analysts claim that where the Orthodox faith has survived in Russia through a couple of generations of institutional atheism – it is due to the discipling by Christian grannies, quite apart from institutional church.

Our mission crisis today in the West is that Christendom is passing; the extended family has gone; Christian nuclear family as a place of prayer, bible story and discipling values is going, and Christian schools have largely gone. Add to this the breakdown of neighbourhood and communities and we can say that the paramount importance of the recovery of a small missionary discipling faith community – small group, cell, base community or household church – seems overwhelming. For centuries the main job of the church has been performed outside the structure/building we called church. Now all these expressions of discipling relationships have gone, we have to recreate these small group shapes of the church with full missionary vigour (see next chapter). Somewhere we have to do the

community-based discipling job that Jesus did with the twelve.

Equally, we have seen how over history, our mid-sized shape of congregation has shifted from its biblical identity and function. These changes have limited its contribution to the mission and growth of the church overall. We need to rediscover new ways of configuring this shape. The “cluster” is one exciting example of renewing this shape of church (see chapter 5).

THE RADICAL “SIGNIFICANT RENEWED SHAPE”

So what is a cluster? It doesn't seem so radical! Just a group of small groups... a combining together of some cells or house groups. And in terms of size... yes, it's in the mid-range. It's somewhere larger than a cell and less than a celebration... so it's equivalent to a congregation, and it's radical and very significant for three main reasons. We look at the first two now and the third later.

1st Key Significance of Cluster

Anything that enables us to re-imagine congregation is very important, precisely because the congregation level is what historically we have all known as church and even defined church by... it's all our congregational assumptions that are the plastic bags to inhibit growth and mission effectiveness. I believe that... “Congregation is the concrete in which our cultural concept of church is set” (set – as in concrete!). Hence to release mission and growth we need to re-imagine new ways of being church at the congregation level... and that's just what a cluster is!

2nd Key Significance of Cluster

Closely linked to this is the second key factor. Western church is incredibly building centred and Sunday (religious event) centred. We have taught for years that

church is the Body of Christ – but out congregations having special services in special buildings reinforces old ideas. But with clusters suddenly where I belong is a community of people. On “Cluster Sundays” we are pilgrims looking for any places to meet... our primary identity at last is as an organic Body of Christ. Ever since I heard of clusters I thought WOW! Groups meeting Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday, here, there, anywhere. Communities of Jesus’ disciples meeting wherever, whenever! That’s church!

Under Robert Warren, St Thomas’ grew on the old model of multiplying to 4 congregations, which were experienced as 4 services on Sunday in the parish church building. Each was structured to be a separate congregation with their own leadership ministry team and ethos, etc. It was one of these different services that was the place where you belonged. Truly wonderful so far as it went. However, there is a limit to the number of Sunday time slots in a building of limited size... and we reached this arbitrary limit.

Under Mike Breen we have undergone a process of restructuring to free us from the arbitrary limitation of building size/hours on Sunday.

- a) The Sunday services became Celebrations not Congregations – so there were no set leaders for one particular service, no specifically allocated ministry team and folk could go to whichever suited this week.
- b) The place of belonging, with fixed leadership, worship/ministry team, ethos and identity became **THE CLUSTERS.**

Because Clusters aren't related to the parish church building or a Sunday event – we could suddenly grow well beyond just 4 of these congregation level groups. Explosive multiplication has resulted with more than a dozen clusters. The limitation is no longer the building/hours in a day... but the increase God gives!

Figs 1 and 2 show the shift from service based congregations to Body based Clusters with 4 Sunday celebrations. Then Fig 3 (at the end of the chapter) shows how this new structuring has enabled the subsequent shift at celebration level in January 1999, to two new focuses of mission and ministry, Crookes and City. This highlights the third radical significance of Clusters.

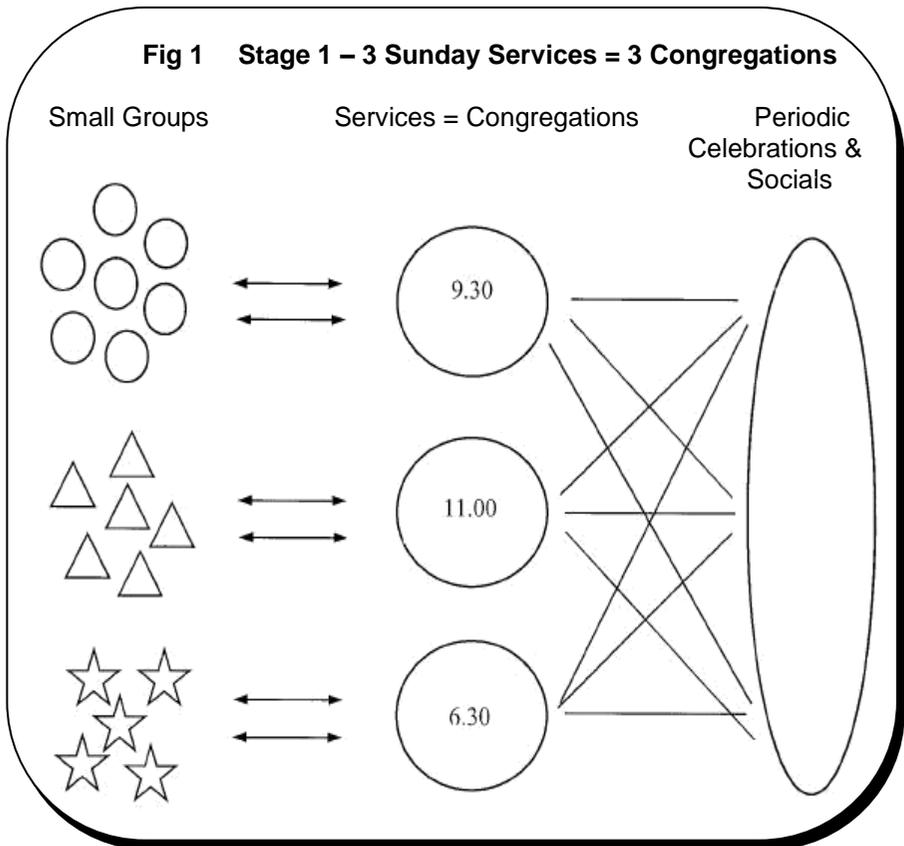
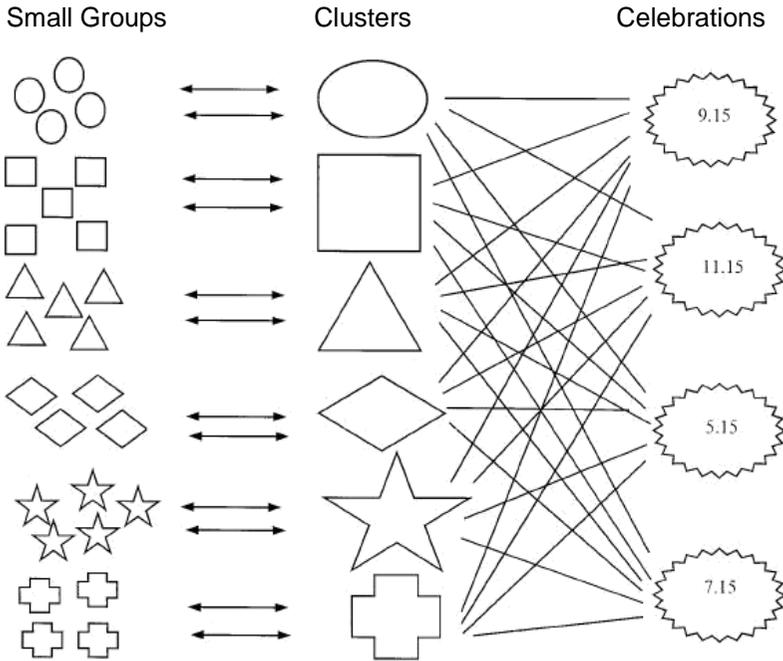


Fig 1 Stage 1 – 3 Sunday Services = 3 Congregations



3rd Key Significance of Clusters

Cluster has not only released multiplication at the congregation level... it has provided the stability to enable us to cope with phenomenal change (even if with some stresses!). Most churches experience mayhem if you move the lectern by 1 foot! These figs show the phenomenal change we have undergone in our Sunday habits in 4 years... and especially at January 1999.

With our rapidly changing, pluralistic society, its essential that our way of being church is able to cope with constant change. Change is a mark of the new missionary church.

The key is that our place of identity, belonging and primary task focus... is the new Clusters and they can hold us through substantial change... provided our clusters have three key ingredients!

Three Key Ingredients of Healthy Churches

If Clusters are to fulfil their roles as a) a completely new expression of the congregation level of church, b) a real experience of the Body of Christ, unrelated to buildings and Sunday services, and c) the place which holds us through the changes of growth and mission... THEY NEED what I call "GLUE!" This "glue" has 3 ingredients:

1. **VISION:** A clearly shared common **purpose** holds together a Cluster of small groups. We are bound together by the motivating power of the mission task we own together. It's therefore vital that Clusters pray and work to discern their vision. It's best to have it written down for all, especially new members and to repeat and revisit it often.
2. **VALUES:** A sense of **community** comes from shared values that are people related (vision is task related). Whereas purpose unites by motivation, community unites by belonging.
3. **VOCABULARY:** Thirdly, a common **language** to articulate our vision and values provides further "glue". It facilitates ownership of the purpose and the belonging in community. At best, it further cements unity without being exclusive.

CLUSTER GLUE:

VISION)	(MOTIVATION	
VALUES)	COMMON	(BELONGING
VOCABULARY)	(IDENTITY	

The High Calling: A Kairos Moment?

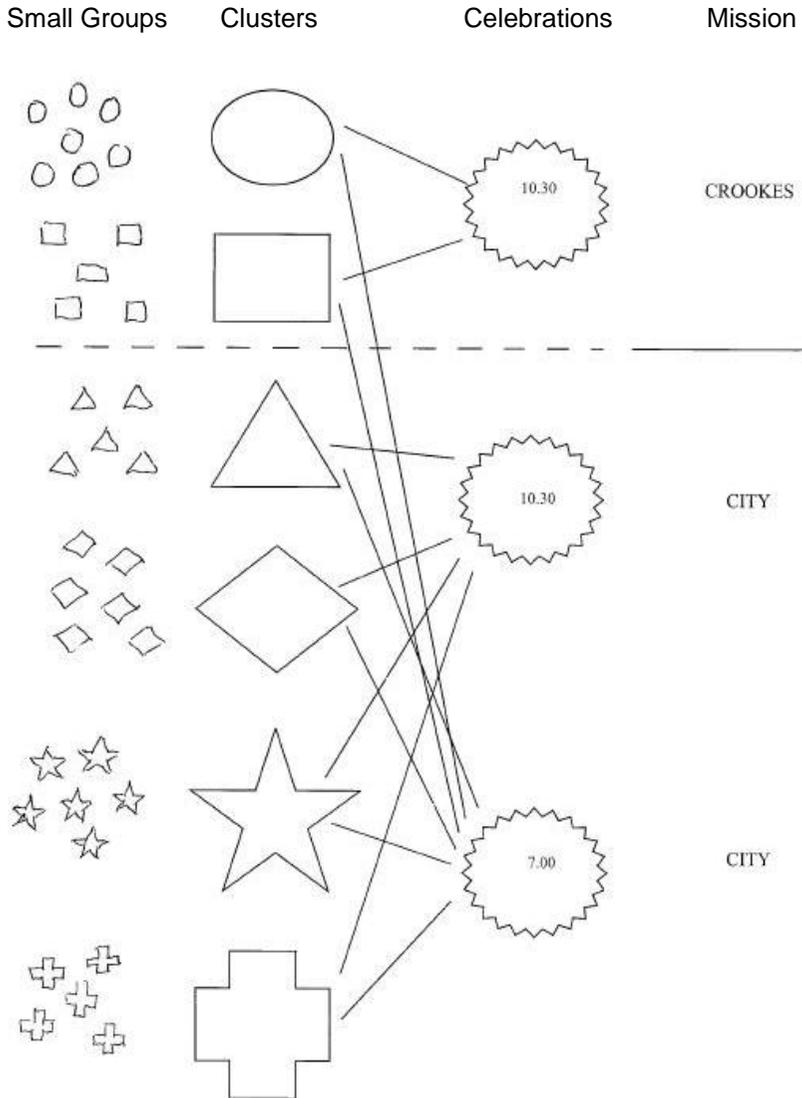
Putting all this in the language of the Exodus... I believe we could be standing on the banks of the Jordan with the Promised Land before us. The “wilderness wanderings! Of ineffective, non-missionary church behind us... The “Promised Land” of the missionary purposes of God to transform the Nation, ahead of us...

Clusters promise the ability to set us free from old structures of congregational church, the potential to hold us through change into new ways of being missionary church, and the possibility for the first time in generations to experience church as an organic community, as the Body of Christ...

In Clusters...

We can explore and enter the experiences of the church not as a building, but as a PEOPLE. (IN) with a PURPOSE (OUT) following the PRESENCE OF GOD (UP), and POPULATE the Earth (MORE).

Fig 1 Stage 1 – 3 Sunday Services = 3 Congregations



THE VITAL SHAPE TO RECOVER

Home Groups... Past Sell-By Date?

One movement to recover the small shape of church has been the introduction of Home Groups over the past 35 years. However, Robert Warren and others observing Home Groups across the country have described them as tired, stale, needing a revamp, even “past their sell-by date!”

Vicars and ministers keep looking for new programmes to freshen them up but Robert’s diagnosis is that the problem goes deeper than the need for a bright new bible study. He observes that any living thing with input but no output goes stagnant. Our small Groups at St Thomas’ should be overcoming this problem as they all develop Up, In and Out’s! Certainly Small Groups that grow and multiply have to add to their numbers and be involved in thoroughly mission/evangelism “outs.”

Multiplying Small Groups –Universal Growth Principle

Christian Schwartz has carried out the most comprehensive research into quality and growth characteristics of churches. He analysed 1000 churches from 32 countries in 5 continents. In his analysis he used 157 indicators and the one showing the highest

correlation with quality and growth was... **“intentionally multiplying small groups.”**

Schwarz’s study further concluded that multiplying small groups need to be “holistic” going beyond just bible study or fellowship groups, to shared life, discipleship, evangelising groups. This further reinforces our analysis of the priority need in our society today for a small discipling community (see chapter 3).

All the largest and fastest growing churches in the world are what are called “Cell Churches.” We need to adapt models from other cultures if they are to be effective in our context. Much of the rest of this material draws on insights from this Cell-Church movement for you to consider which elements may be helpful to incorporate into your small group(s).

Cell Values: St Thomas’ Values?

The table on the next page lists 5 core values of Cell-based churches. These are in harmony with our values and teaching.

It is important to base any development or change in Small groups on values the group owns. Otherwise the cost of change will always be too high. So work on the values in your group(s).

Because Cell Church believes that your values need to work out in what you do, the dictum is, “we do what we value and we value what we do.” Hence they have a loose framework for small group meetings to ensure none of the values get pushed out. There may be some helpful ideas for you here in their four-fold pattern...

1. Jesus in the centre
2. Small Groups are communities of sacrificial love with open and honest relationships.
3. Every member uses their gifts.
4. Every member is maturing in Christ.
5. Everyone is involved in friendship evangelism.

Four W's... The Shape of Cell Meetings

The four W's structure used by the Cell movement is listed in the Table below. Their order can vary and more time can be given to each at different meetings. Let's explain each element further:

WELCOME	W
WORD	I
WORSHIP	N
WITNESS	D

↓

Welcome: This opening to the meeting includes all sorts of activities to get to know one another better. Hence they act to welcome non-Christians and newcomers who are on a level playing field with existing members since no

Christian jargon or bible knowledge is involved. However, what is often missed is that this section also opens up members to one another to really know each other., their history, likes and dislikes and all that makes them tick. Exercises such as “Icebreakers” and “Quaker Questions” are used which some Christians despise... but beware... these are much more profound than at first glance. Just one or two have led Christians in Home Groups for over 20 years to admit they didn’t really know one another and have suddenly found compassion for the person they found most difficult. Another strength is that there are no right answers, everyone’s experience is valid and everyone is involved. It also helps to build a sense of family.

Worship: So often Home Groups either have no worship, or try a thin imitation of congregational or celebration singing. Singing can be helpful in a small cell but the gold to be mined is releasing those with gifts of creativity and imagination who can help a small group discover worship together in ways impossible in larger groups. They may bring objects that express their worship, write their own psalms, etc.

Word: Here is another major shift from the tendency of the Home Group just to downscale from the congregation and deliver the mini-sermon style bible study with some discussion. Typical of most European Home Groups, treatment of the Bible is to gain more insight and understanding of the bible. In radical contrast, cell principles say that the unique role that only the small group can play is to **apply** the truth of the bible to life. So the bible becomes the “action manual” and the question is not “what does this mean?” but “how do I need to change to live this?” Add accountability to this approach to the

bible and cell church claims this is why their model is the only way to produce Christians with significantly different lifestyles from prevailing culture and social norms. To live counter culture involves costly sacrifice and only living alongside others in this way can it be achieved. Many Cells may take the application points of Sunday's sermon and share how it challenges them and pray for one another.

Witness: If small groups are to be evangelistic then time must be given to this priority at meetings. This will range from i) planning how the Christians intend to get out of their "ghetto" and make non-Christian friends – at the badminton club, pub, weight watchers, neighbourhood association, etc to ii) praying for one another's non-Christian friends and contacts, to iii) planning and holding periodic social events to invite them to. Don't misunderstand, non-Christians are not invited to all cell meetings and on the occasion when they do come they may find they know half the group!

Alongside these four W's some have applied a fifth... "Wind!"... referring to the need to be open to the Holy Spirit throughout the time together.

Small Group Quality: Small is Best?

Traditionally Home Groups have tended to follow our culture and equate larger groups with success. It can seem more encouraging to have 15 to 20 crammed into a home than fewer numbers. However, from around the insight comes that for quality, go smaller.

Some Home Groups console themselves when fewer folk show up for the meeting that despite lower numbers, they had a specially good quality time! Maybe that's the key!

This approach says that 8-12 gives best quality and that in preparation for multiplication you can grow from 12 to 16. But during this period you should sub-divide during the meeting (giving 2 groups of 6-8) in order to maintain quality and get used to multiplying.

Why should quality come with smaller groups? The answer lies in the number of interactions within a group. As the size of the group grows the number of interaction goes up disproportionately. Inevitably some then are "passengers" and little involved and the power of multi-directional inter-change is reduced.

Let's illustrate this by giving the maths. The number of interactions is $(n-1)n$, where n is the people present.

We illustrate with just 5 group members only because it gets too complicated with more! Fig 4 shows the interactions when a leader leads a prepared bible study or bible meditation on a one-way, teaching style. There are just 4 interaction relationships.

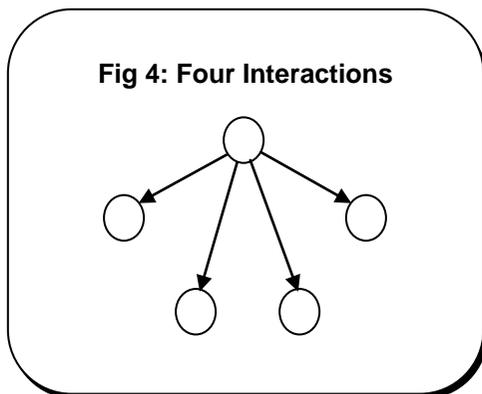
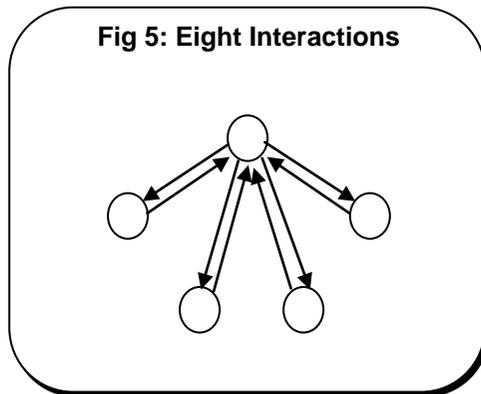
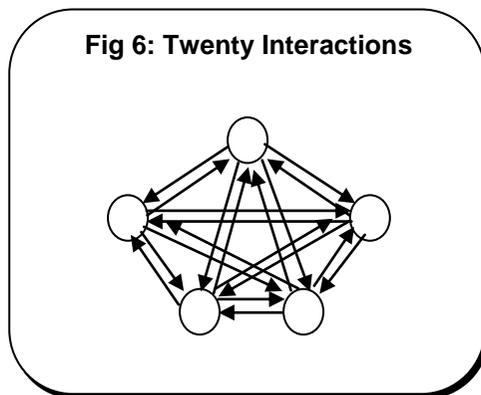


Fig 5 we move to the teacher posing questions on the passage, opening up response to him – from all the participants if he draws out everyone. Now we have doubled the interactions to 8.



However, in Fig 6 we release everyone to address and respond to everyone else... the leader being a facilitator of multi-directional discussion. Now we have jumped to 20 relationships $(5 - 1)5$.



This is a picture of a powerful “catalytic community”. It’s impossible over 12... just work it out $(12 - 1)12$ is 132 interactions!

This principle doesn’t only apply to the group working with the Bible. It can work with any activity of mutual discipleship and fellowship.

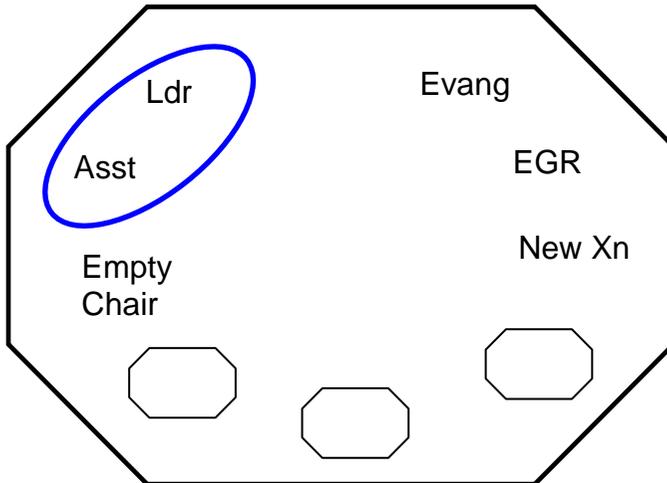
So when our primary values are relational quality and growth to multiplication, we need to consider these sized groups. Other values may conflict and over-ride these. For example, one cluster found that their values of running programmes from the small groups made them prefer larger groups to avoid the stress all falling on a few. However, note there are other ways to resolve these values. Like two small groups co-operating to run a programme, or maintaining the larger group but sub-dividing for much of the meeting.

How to Multiply Small Groups

Here are 10 tips to work with to aid multiplication:

1. Value Growth... get a vision for multiplication.
2. Have goals for multiplication.
3. Have smaller groups of 8 to 12... multiply from 12-16.
4. Prepare the group by sub-dividing meetings.
5. Have clear plans for gathering new folk.
 - develop evangelistic outs with prayer
 - “fishing” in the large celebration meetings

- identify your evangelist(s) and encourage to encourage you all
- have an “empty chair” to focus faith



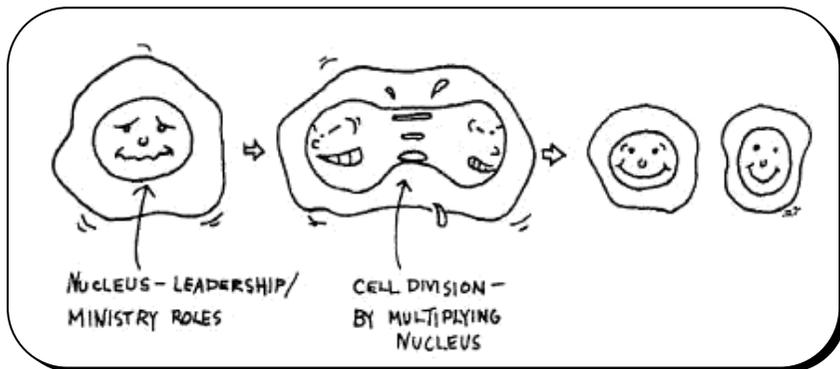
6. Pray for it – celebrate it, meeting up again after.

7. Have assistant leaders to train up for the next group.

8. Be aware of gifts and roles in the group. The mixer who creates community, the evangelistic, those with imaginative ideas for worship, etc.

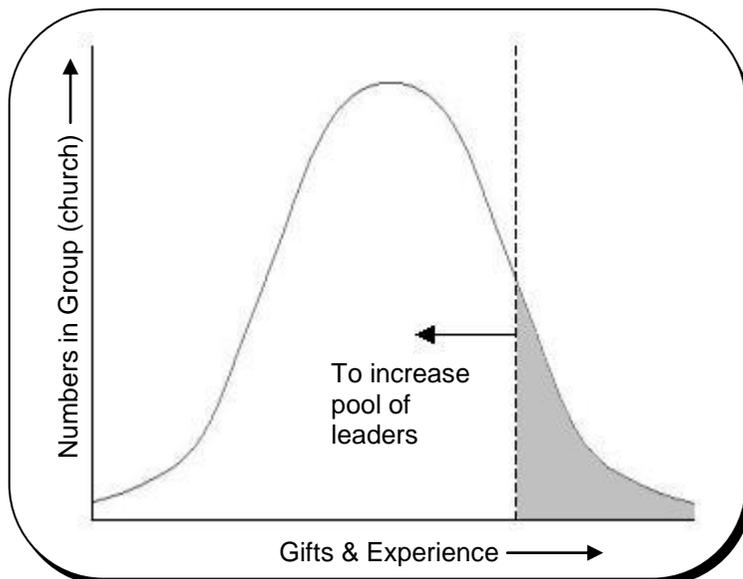
9. Have a strategy for multiplication – including leader and assistants both identifying their new assistants as they take half the group each.

10. Preserve Key Relationships in the New Group – i.e. one-to-one discipleship couplets/accountability relationships and the pairings of those who have brought new people to the group.



How to Multiply Small Group Leaders

General Principle: Steve Nicholson of the Vineyard brought to us a key foundational principle to extend the pool of potential leaders. The graph shows that within any group/church, there will be a “bell curve” spread of people with increasing gifts and experience. What we normally do is pick only the most gifted/experienced to lead and this confines it to a very small slice at the higher end of the bell curve.



The secret to extend the pool of leaders is to shift the line left and begin to draw on the majority rather than a tiny minority. The following are tips to encourage this:

1. Have a “light-weight” model of leadership with smaller groups.
2. Have a “light-weight” model with reduced “span of pastoral care”
 - have more than one focus of pastoral care per group
 - encourage one another/care for many things
3. Don’t require bible experts
 - use a model where leader facilitates interaction
 - approach to Bible is more application than academic
 - work with last week’s sermon main points
4. Develop assistant leaders at all levels
 - The more experienced help develop the newer leaders
5. Give developing leaders part responsibility
 - To lead part/one element of the meeting
 - Sub-divide the group for part of the meeting
6. Give leaders and assistants more ongoing support and training.
7. Honour the “average” not the “exceptional” by giving prominence. This releases others to feel “I could have a go too.”

Small Group Key Role to Create Multiplication Growth

We have already said in a previous section that cells/small groups are one of the most effective places for growth through mission and evangelism.

Most traditional Home Groups lack this element and may even tend to resent visitors/non-Christians as inhibiting deep bible-study or deep sharing. Purely on the basis of physics, the smaller the circle, the higher the proportion of its surface is in contact with the area around – so it is argued that small groups can better develop links and penetrate social settings.

Again it may be true that when evangelism is only implemented at the congregation level it will a) always tend to degenerate into event centred “missions” and b) involve only a few – the evangelists and the keenly evangelistic. Cell based evangelism claims that mission and outreach naturally become a continuous way of life when it is part of cell identity and activity. It also involves everyone in evangelism. John Finney’s research not only showed that relationship with a Christian friend was the most effective aid to people’s journey of faith – it emphasised that even more effective was a group of Christian friends. Hence the evangelistic power of an open small group.

Yet another benefit of the cell as the place for evangelism, is that it enables evangelism to flow into nurture without the convert having to move into an unfamiliar group. If more arguments were needed, the effectiveness of Alpha confirms the place of the small group in evangelism and a cell-based church addresses the occasional problem of fall-out post-Alpha.

Now if small groups are to grow through evangelism we need to honestly review the “outs” of St Thomas’ groups. A significant number have “fellowship” listed as their “out”, which sounds like an “in”, unless they mean friendship evangelism! From the current lists, there appear to be 4 categories of “out” as shown here. Now some “outs” that currently minister to the wider church like marriage or parenting could easily be offered to non-church folk with powerful evangelistic potential. So we could see 3 sorts of “outs” for groups grasping the vision to grow and multiply. These are shown in the second table.

Table 1: St Thomas’ Small Group “Outs”

1. Ministry Out – marriage, worship, etc
2. Mission Out – Justice, Homeless
3. Evangelism Out
4. Fellowship – No Out!

Table 2: Small Group Outs for Growth & Multiplication

1. Evangelism Outs – especially networking your contacts.
2. Pursuing a “fishing license”
3. Add outreach dimension to an existing ministry – ie. marriage

Friendship evangelism has been referred to under the 4 “W’s” of witness. Identifying, praying for and networking with contacts such as friends, neighbours, colleagues, relatives. If every group member focuses on three, that

gives 30 non-Christian contacts prayed for and networked by a group of ten. Small groups may also play a part in evangelism and conversion growth if they catch a vision for “fishing” for non-Christians in the celebration events (provided we see more non-churched folk drawn to these events).

Friendship evangelism should open up the possibility of witness to every group member. It’s back to the Bell Curve we looked at earlier – but substituting evangelistic involvement for leadership gift/experience. The aim now is to shift the line from just involving the keen evangelistically, to all of us. We just need to be able to socially network our friends and contacts and use the small group to encourage us in this ad to provide the focus for lots of social events for invites.

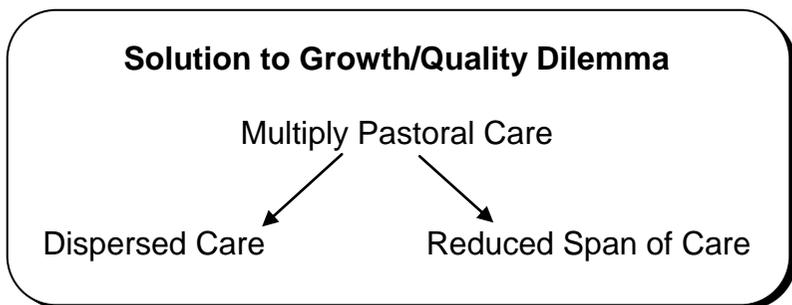
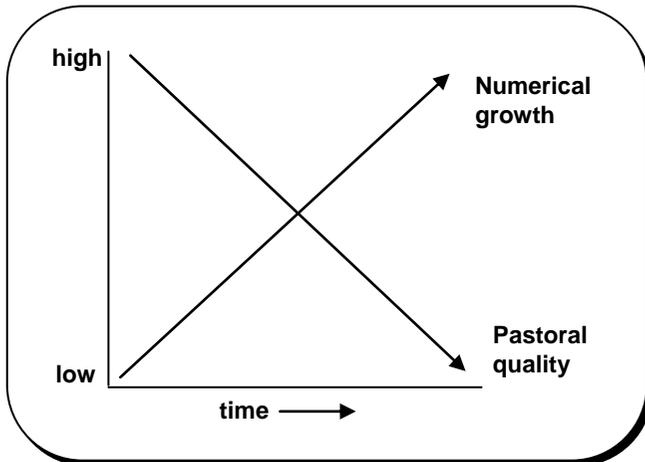
Small Group Key Role to Support Growth

Steve Croft has identified a crucial dilemma for the traditional church. Namely that achieving its goal to grow, produces an inevitable reduction in quality of pastoral care.

Just imagine our church fulfilling a vision to double in size... how would pastoral care cope if it’s dependent on the staff and a central pastoral team. Either the staff and pastoral team burn out, or the quality goes down.

However, Steve Croft identifies two solutions to the dilemma. Firstly, we need dispersed pastoral care with the small groups becoming the first line of care and one-another support. Secondly we have to limit the span of care. This means that no-one is responsible for care for more than a very limited number. With the Cell Church

idea of leaders plus assistant leaders and beginning to sub-divide at 12 to 16 – no-one should care for more than 6 or so.



THE CHALLENGES OF 4 CATEGORIES OF NUMERICAL GROWTH

“So here’s another set of 4!”

Accepting that growth needs to happen in four dimensions – UP, IN, OUT and MORE, there are 4 ways that more can be added.

Biological: Transfer: Conversion: Bridging

First there is **Biological** growth. Christian parents have children who are disciplined within the community of faith. This is one way “to be fruitful and multiply!” And it is one way to extend the church down through the generations.

Secondly, growth in numbers in one church can arise through Christian **Transfer** from another church. This is often viewed negatively on the grounds that there is no growth overall and one local church is growing at the expense of another.

However, in today’s mobile society people often move home at regular intervals. Relocation is a time when people often drift away from church. So it’s really positive if we pick up and welcome those who move. There may be no gain overall, but it’s very significant to stem the haemorrhage.

There are particularly two key times of loss:

- a. Adolescence, when young teens change outlook and their relationships widen to trans-local. It's key to pick up this emerging generation.
- b. Young adulthood is often a time to leave home and physically relocate with college, new jobs, etc. The church has been losing enormous numbers at this stage just when, if drawn back they can be disciplined as emerging leaders.

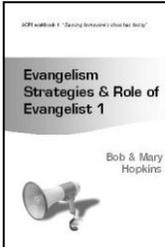
Thirdly there is **Conversion** growth, which extends the church with a net increase in the proportion of the population churched. This is real advance for the Kingdom of God and we need to “plant, and water that God might give this increase.” Without it the numerical aspect of church growth is standing still. Furthermore, conversion growth releases further potential for the first two sorts.

Conversion growth is hard at the congregation/cluster level... it tends to be limited to special programmes that are very resource hungry, and only happen periodically – evangelism as a way of life can best be developed from the cells/small groups and from celebration. Ideally, this sort of small group will be by nature, outward looking, praying for non-Christian friends and developing friendship evangelism or a mission “out” as part of their lifestyle. Also, if we get the celebration focused right and members invite friends, non-churched folk can be drawn in.

Fourth and last is **Bridging** growth. This is when the church bridges into a new culture or social group. Such cross-cultural mission and evangelism takes the previous category of conversion growth into new contexts and adds another aspect to the advance of the Kingdom. For

this we need mission eyes and cultural sensitivity. Again small groups may play a key role in incorporating the fruit of numerical church growth in socially/culturally appropriate forms.

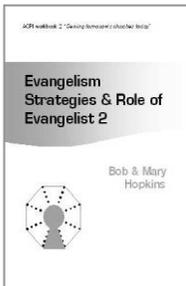
OTHER RESOURCES FROM ACPI



Workbook 1: Evangelism Strategies & Role of Evangelist 1

Written by Bob & Mary Hopkins

The first in this two-part workbook series exploring strategies that will open up evangelism for all. This work book in particular focuses on the biblical bases for evangelism, especially Jesus' principles and how they can apply to the many opportunities for evangelism open to the church today.



Workbook 2: Evangelism Strategies & Role of Evangelist 2

Written by Bob & Mary Hopkins

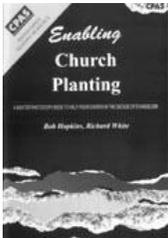
Part two of the Strategies for Evangelism workbook series. This booklet particularly focuses on exploring an eight-sided shape to help us understand and implement evangelism in our lives.



Listening for Mission

Written by Steven Croft, Freddy Hedley & Bob Hopkins

Keen to start a fresh expression? Before leaping into action this booklet encourages churches to develop the tools to 'listen for mission'. This involves developing an attitude where you learn to 'multi-listen' to God, to society, to your community, to your church - so that you can find out what God is doing and know how best to join in. This short and accessible guide can be used with church councils, deanery synods, circuit meetings and house groups.



Enabling Church Planting

Written by Bob Hopkins & Richard White

A training and resource book to aid those thinking of or embarking on planting a new church. The work book can be photocopied for use with your team and includes many exercises. Each of the five sections is split up and includes some of the following elements: Introduction page, briefing paper, discussion paper, collection of ideas and illustrations. This book is not a source of ready-made answers. Instead it offers practical, experience-based guidance for the whole of the church planting process.



Cell Stories as Signs of Mission Edited by Bob Hopkins

4 fascinating and very different stories of Cell life in Anglican churches sandwiched between pithy comments from Bob.

More resources, articles and stories are available from www.acpi.org.uk