

How to grow our church

Principles of Growing Churches for All

No. 2: Committed to Prayer

A car only moves forward when the power is applied. It is clear when we read Acts that prayer was the power behind the growth of the early church. There is a strong relationship between prayer and the growth of the church.



Before Pentecost 'they all joined together constantly in prayer' (1:14), and 3000 were added to the church that day (2:41). Subsequently at key moments they prayed and saw significant moves forward for the church e.g. before selecting and appointing leaders (chs. 1,6,13); during persecution and for the progress of the gospel (chs. 4,12), as well as for the sick (ch. 4).

Prayer expresses our dependence on God, for we cannot grow churches in our own strength. We might develop organisations and institutions, but only God can grow His church. To neglect prayer is to neglect the power source behind all church health and growth.

George Barna, in a study of growing churches (User Friendly Churches, Regal, 1991), found that these churches emphasised prayer in four key areas:

- * Church members were consistently taught through sermons and groups about the importance of prayer in the Christian life.
- * Church leadership, beginning with the leader, demonstrated authentic prayer lives, and were prepared to devote significant amounts of time to prayer despite busy schedules.
- * The churches recognised that praise for answered prayer was an integral part of prayer itself, and used every opportunity to share answers to prayer.
- * They encouraged accountability for prayer, regularly emphasising the importance of prayer at all levels of church life.

To what extent are these factors significant in the life of our church? God is committed to a healthy, growing church. Are we prepared to pray for this ourselves?

*From a new series, 'Principles of Growing Churches for All',
Written by the Rev Paul Hardingham, a vicar in Ipswich.*

**The name of Jesus is not so much written
as ploughed into the history of the world.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson