

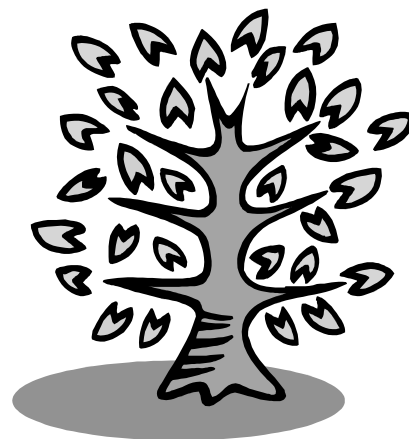
How to grow our church

Principles of Growing Churches for All

No. 6: Building Christian Community

John Wimber used to say that people join churches for a number of reasons, but leave because of one: lack of friendship!

Building Christian community involves structuring around people, since the church is not a club or organisation, but a family, the body of Christ. Newcomers need to be welcomed and incorporated, and those within the church need to be encouraged and motivated in ministry, as well as being pastored and ministered to.



How well is our church doing in this area?

Practically, this involves structuring around small groups. The cell church movement has shown the importance of small groups for the life and growth of the church. Bill Beckham speaks of the church as a two winged bird, the wings being its congregational and small group life. His point is obvious: a one-winged bird will never get off the ground, let alone fly! It is only in the small group that we can genuinely exercise 'one-another' ministries with each other, alongside the other aspects of the church's life (see Acts 2: 42-7).

How do we encourage people to be a part of a small group?

Working with others is an excellent way of getting to know them, and so we also need to be structuring around teams. Such ministry teams will range from being pastoral (e.g. visiting) to practical (e.g. making coffee). Remember Nehemiah organised the people in teams when they were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

List all the teams that operate within your church. How effective are we at helping people to be part of such a team?

Unless people belong to a small group or team, they will probably never move from talking about your church to my church!

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

Before Pentecost the disciples found it hard to do easy things; after Pentecost they found it easy to do hard things.
A Gordon