

How to grow our church

Principles of Growing Churches for All

No.10: Becoming a Church for Others

It is God's will for his church to grow: 'the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow' (Col 2:19). This is not just about Sunday attendance, but involves taking seriously Jesus' commission to 'go and make disciples' (Matt 28:19-20). Of course, fulfilling this command will vary with different churches, depending on their individual mission and context.



A recent Church of England report, *Mission-shaped Church*, suggests five values that we might adopt if we want to be a church committed to growth. These include:

- A missionary church is focused on God the Trinity: Worshipping and serving a missionary God, and sharing in the divine mission; all its life and activity is rooted in prayer.
- A missionary church is incarnational: Shaping itself in relation to the culture to which it is located, being responsive to the activity of the Spirit in the community.
- A missionary church is transformational: Existing for the transformation the community that it serves, through the power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit, operating as a servant and sign of God's kingdom.
- A missionary church makes disciples: Calling people to faith in Jesus Christ, consistent Christian lifestyle, and encouraging the gifting and ministry of all God's people. While engaging with culture, it will also present a counter-cultural challenge by its life together.
- A missionary church is relational: Forming a community of faith, characterised by welcome and hospitality, open to change when new people join, and effective at establishing interdependent relationships between members.

Now consider these questions:

Which of these values most characterise or most challenge our church?

What are the practical implications for our church?

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