



Leading your Church
into Growth

Local

Exploring Growth in the Local Church



This is Leading your Church into Growth: Local.

It is a resource to help those who have attended a Leading your Church into Growth conference, either in person or online, to introduce the same practical encouragement, inspiration and equipping that they have received, to their local church, parish, benefice or deanery.

You will be familiar with this material having attended a Leading your Church into Growth residential course. Remember that as you prepare to lead the sessions you may find it helpful to refer to the main conference manual and the notes you made there.

The course is seven sessions long, just like the seven steps of the conference material. Each session will take somewhere between sixty to ninety minutes. We think that it works best when run once a month or once every two months, and so is completed in about a year or less.

At each section heading you will find two numbers, one in brackets. The first number is the number of minutes we think you could spend on this section (following our guidance here means the whole session will take 60 minutes. This might feel like you are rushing, so, of course, take more time if you wish). The number in brackets is the cumulative total of minutes. If you have a bit more time, then do spend longer on the exercises.

There are also seven, five-minute video clips available to use with this resource. They are presented by members of the LyCiG team and introduce the theme of each session. It may be that those attending your LyCiG Local course would find this scene setting and introduction helpful, however, the video clips are not essential, and the course can be run without them. You can find the clips at our website; www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk

Contents

Session One: Creating a prayerful culture of growth	Page 4
Session Two: Implementing an Annual Rhythm of Growth	Page 9
Session Three: Practice Fruitful Evangelism	Page 17
Session Four: Develop Engaging Worship	Page 23
Session Five: Become an Inviting and Welcoming Church	Page 30
Session Six: Making a Pathway for Seekers to become Disciples	Page 38
Session Seven: Begin a Planned Journey of Growth	Page 45

Session 1

Creating a prayerful culture of growth

2(2) Welcome and introductions

1(3) **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

**God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give,
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

2(5) A culture of Growth

Every church has its own culture.

A culture has been defined as 'this is what we talk about the most'. Therefore, a church PCC or committee which spends most of its time talking about buildings, money problems and shortage of volunteers will have an anxiety filled, negative culture. However, a church that talks about vision, growth and developing children's work will tend to have a much more positive culture.

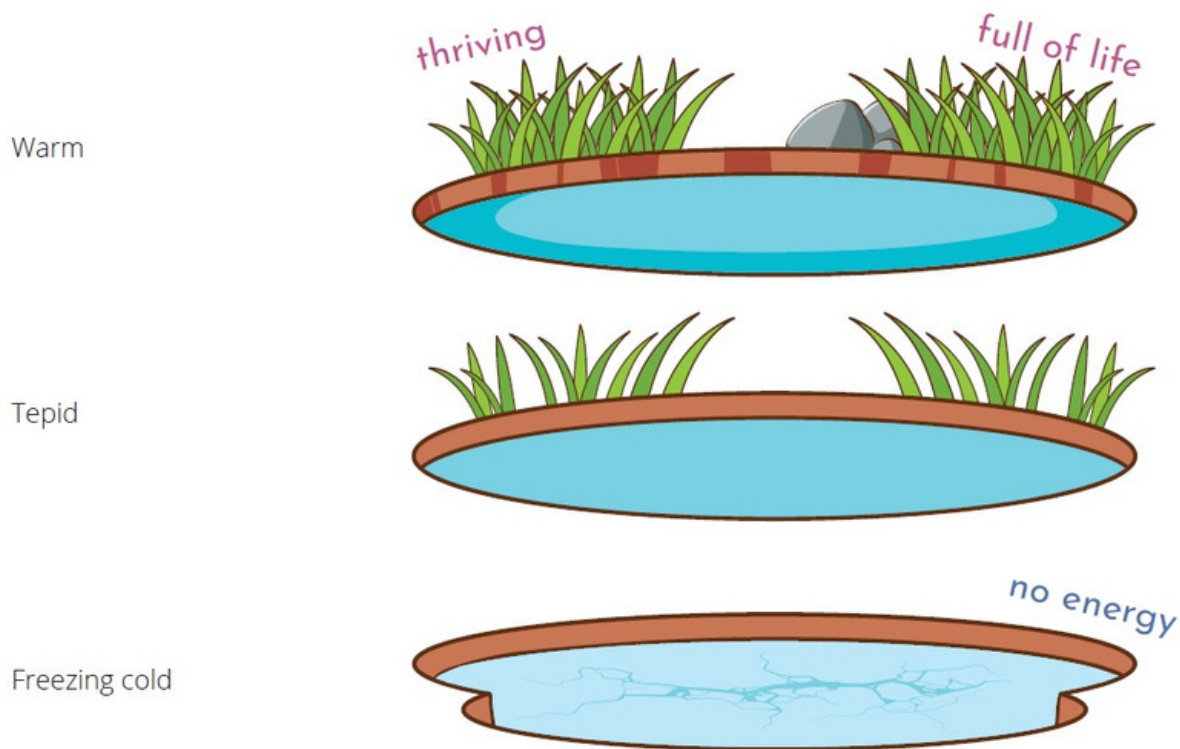
When our culture is empowered and guided by our prayers, then something positive begins to happen.

5(10) **Group Discussion: have you got a positive or negative culture?**

A positive culture can be established by:

- Positive leaders
- Positive prayer and discussion
- Positive preaching and teaching
- Doing this course in a positive and believing way.

When it comes to church culture it can be useful to consider the metaphor of a pond. Church culture can be lively and thriving, or it can be cold and frigid, or somewhere in between. Which pond best represents the culture of your church?



10(20) The Three-Year Graph



- Guess the average Sunday attendance at your main morning service and mark it on the graph.
- The course leader will tell the group (if they know!) what the average attendance was 3 years ago
- As a whole group, or in smaller groups, discuss together and estimate where it might be in 3 years' time

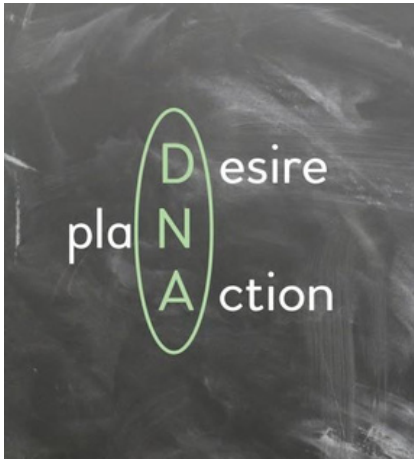
7(27) Group Discussion

Do they want to grow?

Explain that growing church attendance by even one person is growth. All growth takes time, effort, prayer and commitment. What are you realistically prepared for?

We need to work hard to welcome those we have made contact with online, through contacts with the fringe, and as a result of our community caring and social action.

4(31) DNA of Church Growth



The image illustrates the DNA of Church Growth. We see this worked out in the ministry of Nehemiah.

Desire: Churches only grow when the leaders and members have a desire to grow.

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven.

- Nehemiah 1.4

Plan: Rather than doing lots of disconnected activities there needs to be a clear plan in place.

The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favour in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

- Nehemiah 2.4

(Clearly, Nehemiah already had his plan in mind)

Action: Churches need to act in order to grow. For the church to grow, this 'DNA' needs to run through all the clergy, the leaders, volunteers, and all activities of the church.

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.'

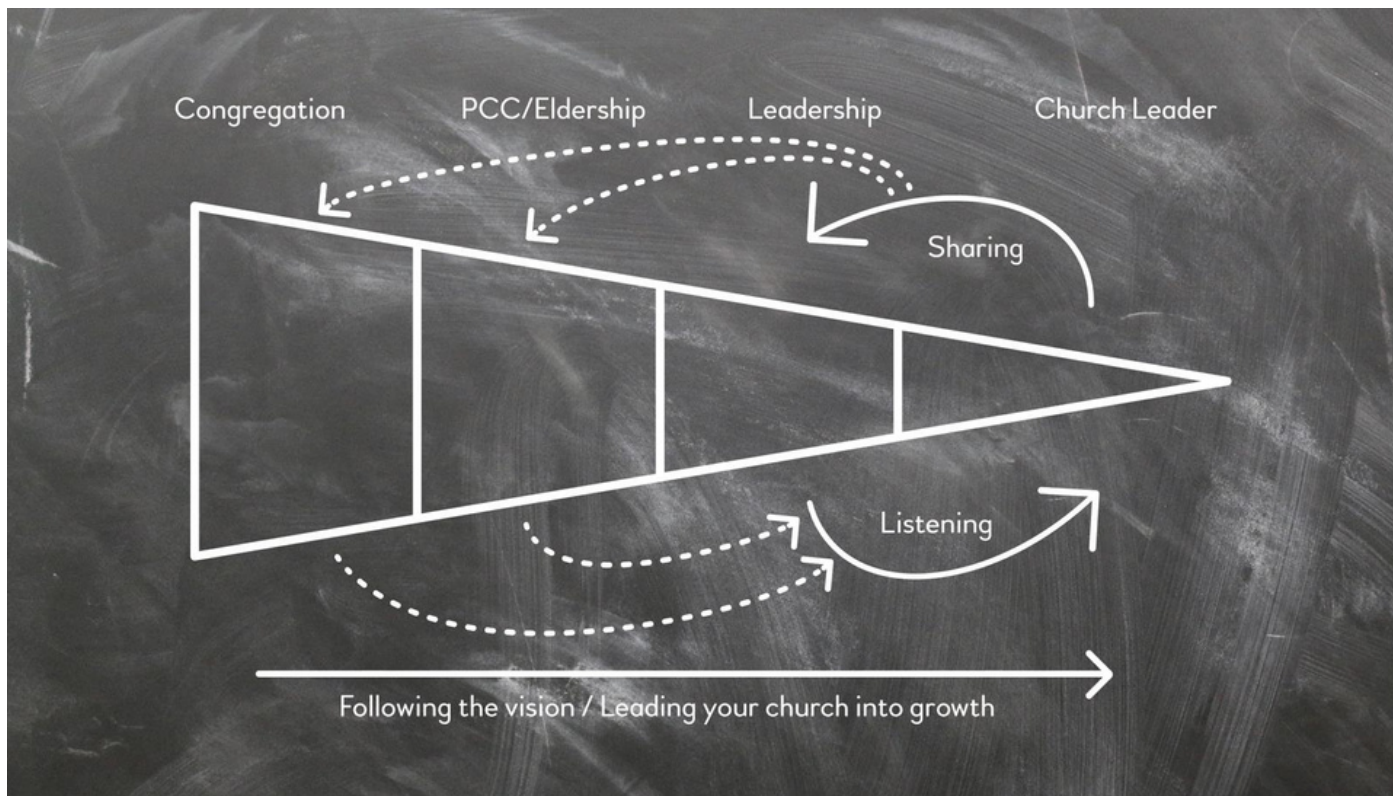
- Nehemiah 2:17-18

(All the leaders need to buy in if the plan is going to work.)

5(36) How hungry are you?

In groups of 3 discuss how hungry you are for growth.

8(44) A picture of shared leadership



Draw the diagram on a flipchart or project onto a screen so that you can point at the different parts.

The overall leader works with the key leaders, the PCC and the congregation to lead the church into growth. They all need to work together to shape and form the church's vision. This will involve lots of sharing of the developing plan and listening to ideas.

The bigger the issue, the more consultation over a longer period of time is required.

Here is a model of church and its leadership which is called, 'The Cockpit Crew'. (Draw the diagram.)

The model provides strong leadership along with collaborative working and genuine consultation. The Cockpit Crew meet more often than the PCC. They discuss issues in readiness to be decided at the PCC.

10(54) Exercise

- How would you go about setting up your team?
- Who would you have in it?
- Is it better to involve chosen individuals or office holders?

1(55) Response

Explain that this last exercise is personal.

2(57) What should you be doing as an individual?

- 1.
- 2.
3. Come to church more regularly
4. Praying for growth
5. Bring one friend: "I'm going it's going to be good, would you like to come with me?"

What should you be doing as a church?

- 1.
- 2.
3. Be more intentional about growth
4. Spend more time as a PCC thinking about growth rather than finance and buildings (you may want to acknowledge that these are important)
5. Be even more welcoming to newcomers

1(58) Leader input

Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

1(60) Pray together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

**God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give,
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Session 2

Implementing an Annual Rhythm of Growth

2 (2) Welcome and introductions

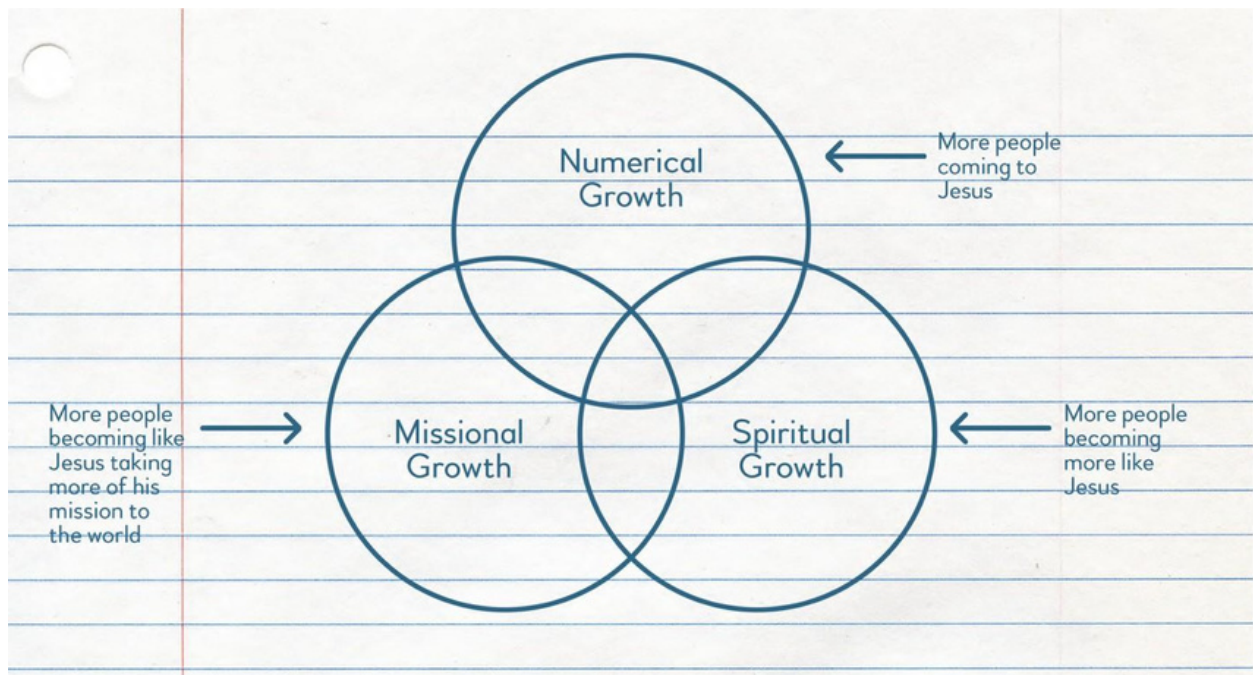
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4 (7) Missional, spiritual and numerical growth

Leading your Church into Growth is a course with a strong emphasis on numerical growth but which also addresses the challenge of spiritual growth (us growing closer to Christ), and missional growth (our churches growing in service to their communities). In fact, all of these three different areas of church growth are linked: growth in one area typically results in growth in the other areas.

All of us are different, and each of us will have one of these areas to which we feel most drawn. A healthy church is one that keeps a good balance of all three.



6(13) Exercise: 3 Circles

Of these three areas, which is the key one for your church to work on for the next twelve months?

You could have a discussion about this with those around you and put a tick in the circle that you think your church ought to focus on as a priority over the next year.

The 4Ps of an effective strategy

3(16) Prayer for Growth

The Leading your Church into Growth Prayer:

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Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Most of us are at least quite good at praying. However, as you create an effective strategy, ensure to pray for growth.

Prayer is the beginning, middle and end of growth.

'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.'

- 1 Cor 3.16

We might be a praying church... but are you praying for growth?

We need to pray for growth at every level of Church life: PCC meetings, small groups, church services, prayer triplets.

One church wrote a prayer for themselves, asking God to send them new people and promising to welcome them properly when they came. They printed it on a bookmark and asked every church member to pray the prayer daily. They used it every week in the public intercessions. So many people started turning up to church services, and staying, that they decided to stop praying the prayer for a while because they were overwhelmed.

5(21) In groups

Use the box to write down a number of examples of how your church might pray for growth, either those that have been mentioned, or events that you think would work in your context (we have given you some suggestions to get you started).

- 1.
- 2.
3. Use the Leading your Church into Growth prayer for growth. Have it printed on postcards or similar and distributed to members of the church.
4. Run an intercession training evening for those on the rota and encourage them in the training to pray for the growth of the church, giving them examples of how they might do this.

3(24) Presence

So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the market-place day by day with those who happened to be there.

- Acts 17:17

Paul goes to Athens. He walks around, he takes it all in, he rubs shoulders with people, he gets to know the place and begins conversations. This is Christian Presence.

Most churches are good at Christian presence. We get 5/10 without even trying: large building on a prominent site; baptisms; weddings and funerals; the vicar walking around with their clerical collar on and talking to lots of people; congregational members being involved in voluntary organisations in the community. Parent and Toddler groups, uniformed organisations, luncheon clubs, drop-ins and Spring Fairs etc. all give us great presence and help us to build lots of relationships.

The question is how can we improve our Christian presence?

- The visual appearance of the outside of the church building
- Website/A Church Near You
- Turn up the heating
- Improve the welcome: quality tea and coffee with no saucer for donations!
- Organise good quality Presence (social) events to which you can invite non-church members.
- Set up a weekly drop in café.

5(29) In groups

Write in the box below write down a number of examples of 'Presence' events, either those that have been mentioned, or events that you think would work in your context.

- 1.
2. Parent and Toddler group
3. A good school ministry (use resources like 'Open the Book' etc. and provide training
4. where applicable)
5. 'Open Church' – a coffee morning in the church where those who might feel socially isolated can come for a hot drink and either meet others or just read the paper (provided) in a welcoming environment.

3(32) Proclamation

When Paul goes to Athens, he is not content to stop at Prayer and Presence, he proclaims the Good News.

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.'

- Acts 17.22-23

There are lots of different ways of organising Proclamation events or special services.

Pray for your leaders to include proclamation in occasional offices, Christmas, Easter, Harvest, special services.

- Festivals
- Guest service on a Sunday
- Messy Church or Family Services
- Men's and women's events
- Schools events
- A gathering in a pub, restaurant or coffee shop
- Back to Church Sunday

Every proclamation service or event should feature a clear and attractive proclamation which touches the heart and offers the opportunity to respond.

The key to an effective evangelistic event is effective invitation.

Produce good quality invitation cards and train the congregation to invite:

I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come with me?

5(37) In groups

Write in the box a number of examples of Proclamation events, either those that have been mentioned, or events that you think would work in your context.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. Themed outreach evening (chocolate, sports, quiz, curry, etc.)
5. Mission weekend around a festival (Harvest Thanksgiving for example), plan a Messy Church session, assembly at school, a fun social event on the Saturday night, and a really good guest service on Sunday morning.

3(40) Persuasion

Notice what happens when Paul has finished speaking.

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

- Acts 17.32

It is often like that: you proclaim the Gospel...some are not interested...but some are. How do you help those who are interested and want to know more? That's 'Persuasion'. Many churches find it helpful to offer an enquirers course.

- Make a list of those with whom you already have good 'presence' relationships and all the ones who have recently attended a festival or proclamation event.
- Best time of year is late September, then late January

5(45) In groups

Write in the box a number of examples of Persuasion activities, either those that have been mentioned or events that you think would work in your context.

- 1.
- 2.
3. 'If you could ask God one question - what would it be?' Apologetics evening
4. Plan a Confirmation (followed, of course, by a Confirmation service) or membership course
5. Prepare a Lent course that can plan to continue beyond Lent as a Bible study group to help
6. people deepen their faith. Carefully pick 'Bible study guides' that are accessible to those new to faith as well as an encouragement to others to deepen their faith.

1(46) Summary

Here is a very brief summary of how the 4 P's strategy works:

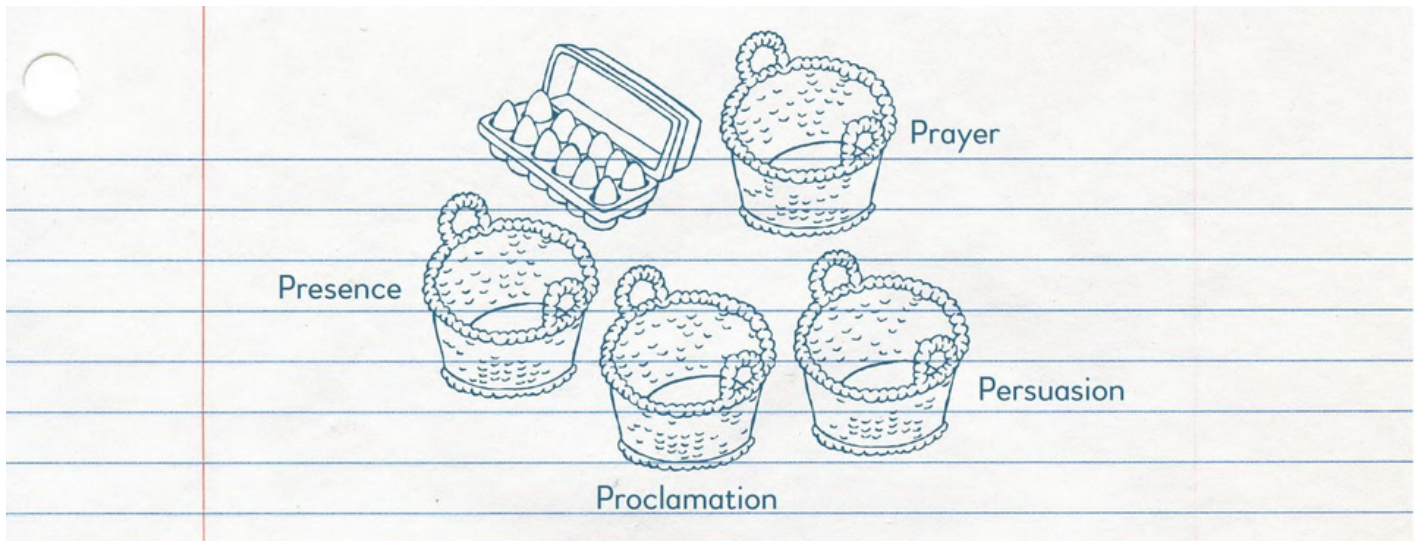
Step 1 We pray specifically for growth and effective evangelism.

Step 2 We establish 'Presence', build friendships and make our presence felt in a positive way both in the local community and amongst all our members 'human networks'.

Step 3 We invite our 'presence people' to come and hear a 'Proclamation' of the Good News . That might be an evening of sharing and witness in a coffee shop or a major festival.

Step 4 We invite those interested by our proclamation to join a small 'Persuasion' or enquirers group or to take part in a follow-up one to one journey into faith, e.g., Start, Alpha, Christianity Explored, Pilgrim Course, etc.

3(49) Exercise: Eggs in Baskets



3(52) Complete the following exercise in groups.

You have twelve eggs and four baskets representing prayer for growth, presence, proclamation and persuasion. Divide the eggs into the baskets according to how your church devotes its time, energy and resources. You can't have 'half an egg' and, for the sake of this exercise: no omelettes please!

3(55) Call out your scores and add them up.

Ask the group to comment on their findings.

Usually: 'Presence' is high; 'Prayer' (for growth – we are normally good at praying, but not specifically for growth) and 'Proclamation' are low; 'Persuasion' is often non-existent

3(58) Response

Explain that this last exercise is personal.

On your own answer the following two questions. We have given you some examples to get you started.

What should you be doing as an individual?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. Praying for growth
5. Bring one friend: "I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come with me?"

What should you be doing as a church?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. Be more intentional about praying for growth
5. Making your presence even warmer
6. Looking to include proclamation into your key services and events
7. Planning an annual enquirers course.

Has anything else struck you?

1(59) **Leader input**

Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

1(60) together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

Pray

**God of Mission,
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Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
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Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Session 3

Practice fruitful evangelism

2(2) Welcome and introductions

Evangelism is

1. The proclaiming of the message of Good News
2. Helping people to respond.

Of these two, which is your church best at doing?

1(3) together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

Pray

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3(6) Telling your story

Explain the value of being able to tell your story, briefly and clearly when required. Give personal examples.

3(9) As a leader, tell your story in 3 minutes, using the framework:

Before: life before knowing Jesus. If you've always gone to church, you might prefer to describe your early years of attending church and what it meant to you.

During: the story of how Jesus became real to you and how you chose to follow him. Alternatively, you might like to record a significant point in your life when your faith became deeper and more committed.

After: what it means to you now to be a follower of Jesus. Alternatively, reflect on how your faith has changed and grown.

8(20) Invite participants to do the same for their own faith journey.

6(26) Now in pairs take three minutes to share your story. (You may need to think carefully about who you put together in pairs.)

8(34) **Exercise**

Lead a discussion about this. Explain that the more you do this the easier it becomes. A good thing to do is to practice with a friend.

4(38) **Our Special People**

Evangelism is all about relationships. Our upward looking relationship with God and our outward looking relationship with friends, neighbours and family.

Can you identify 5 people you know who might be interested in God, you and your faith, your church life?

Write down their names.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3(40) Encourage everyone to keep these names in their Bible or at the side of their bed and to commit to pray for them regularly.

There are three good ways of sharing your faith with them

1. There may be an opportunity for you to share your story
2. There will certainly be opportunities to invite them to a special event or gathering.
3. At the right moment you will see an opportunity to simply ask them what they think about God.

A key phrase to use for inviting people is:

‘I’m going...it’s going to be really good...would you like to come with me?’

Encourage the group to repeat this several times.

The Value of Questions

As well as telling our story, there is a great value in listening to others. Of course, the best way to do this is to ask questions and then listen! There are three simple questions that can help with this:

1. **Who are you?** Tell me about yourself: life, family, work, hobbies, etc.
2. **Where are you (with God)?** Do you believe in God? Have you ever prayed? Have you ever sensed that there is more to life than meets the eye?
3. **Why don’t you...?** Have you heard about the special service in church, or the course we are running? Why don’t you come along...?

5(46) The Engel Scale



For each of your 5 people mark a cross on the staircase to show where you think they are. What one thing could you do for each person to help them take their next step?

For example:

- Invite them for a coffee or meal
- Invite them to a social event.
- Invite them to a Church service.
- Talk to them about the next Enquirers Course.

4(50) As leader talk about your 5 names and what you plan to do.

In a one to one relationship even more significant than sharing your story or inviting your friend to something is to ask them the question, 'What do you think about God?' More than anything else you do this will open up a conversation.

1(51) **Response**

Explain that this last exercise is personal.

What should you be doing as an individual?

1

.

2

.

3

.

What should you be doing as a church?

1

.

2

.

Has anything else struck you?

1(55) Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

Reflection and Prayer

4(59) Read Luke 19.1-10.

If you have time you could encourage a couple of people to pray once you have finished reading the passage.

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

1(60) **Pray** the Leading your Church into Growth Prayer for Growth together.

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Session 4

Develop engaging worship

2(2) Welcome and introductions

1(3) **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

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4(7) Worship

Engaging Worship is all about relationships. It engages with God and engages with people.

- Fundamental and central to the whole of church life
- Our main 'shop window' and an entry point for searchers
- If you are going to do one thing to make your church grow, then this is it.
- It has the influential power to turn people on or off!
- It is the 'Holy Tent'

When Sunday worship is interesting, attractive, enjoyable and central:

- The 'passing through' become the 'occasional'
- The 'occasional' become 'regular'
- The 'regular' become more committed and involved in the life of the church

5(12) Sacred and Social

Worship can be pictured as a molecule combining two elements either - Humanity and Divinity or Social and Sacred.

The Social

Warm welcome
Sitting people together
Sharing the peace
Staying for coffee
Sharing family news

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

- Matthew 9: 10

The Sacred

Times of silence
Deep prayer
Listening to the Bible
Kneeling to receive
Joyful praise

'Do not come any closer,' God said 'Take off your sandals, for the ground where you are standing is holy ground.'

- Exodus 3:5

10(22) Exercise

Draw the group's attention to the Sacred and Social diagram.

In Groups ask them to write what elements of their worship are sacred, and what are social? (Sacred: singing, praying, HC, preaching, Bible reading, liturgy, silence. Social: chat, notices, The Peace, praying for people, human touch in sermons, refreshments, interviews)

Teaching: Two principles of worship that help the Church to grow

4(26) User-friendly worship

User friendly worship begins when we stop and think very carefully, not so much about our tradition, service book or preferred music, but rather about our people. The ones who come regularly and those who come occasionally. In particular, we need to think about those who live in the local community, those who are on the fringe of church, those with whom we have already built a relationship.

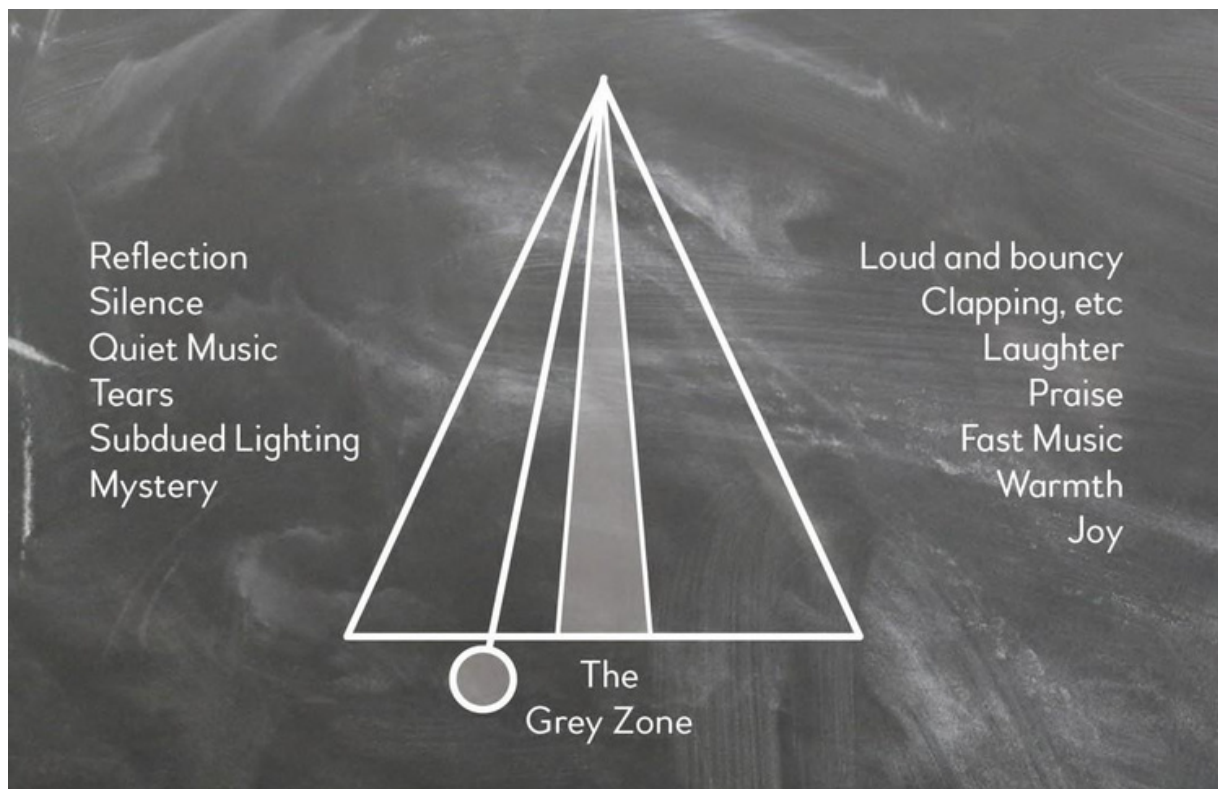
How 'user friendly' is your worship to ordinary people?

4(30) Worship enrichment

Our meek acceptance of mediocrity has to be replaced by a pursuit of excellence and quality control. When a research group asked people to describe church worship as a colour the two most common answers were grey and beige!

Key worship words that appear in the Scriptures:

- Solemnity appears in the Old Testament 36 times
- Mystery appears in the New Testament 27 times
- Joy appears in the Old Testament 120 appears in the New Testament 65 times
- Awe appears in the Old Testament 3 times



Worship enrichment:

- Covers every mood and insight of the God-desiring soul from deepest abasement to adoring delight.
- Adds something to our traditional formality and obsession with words and solemnity.
- Develops a realm of experience where place, vision, smell, sound, relationship, mood and feel are all alive.

‘In relation to worship, successful growing churches adopt a ‘let’s give it a go’ mentality. These churches try different initiatives as experiments – if they work they invest in them, if they don’t they drop them.’

— From Anecdote to Evidence

6(36) Exercise

Imagine someone has come to your church for the first time, with little or no previous experience of worship. How would they find the experience? In groups answer the following questions

- What might make them happy?
- What might make them sad?
- What might confuse them?
- What might make them angry?
- What might bore them?
- What might interest them?

8(44) Exercise: Children, young people and worship

Children and young people are not a 'bolt on' or a 'section' in our worship, they are an an integral part of it.

Try and imagine you are a child or young person at your worship service (better yet, ask them when you get back to your church!), and consider the following questions:

- What faces do children/young people see at your church, smiling faces of those glad to see them, or scowling faces of those who want them to be 'seen but not heard'?
- Are children/young people given an active role in the worship?
- Are children/young people likely to understand and engage with most if not all of the worship service?
- Will children/young people be engaged and interested and want to come again next week?
- Even if there are only one or two children/young people who come to your services is there still something for them to engage with?

5(49) Exercise: Worship checklist

Ask each person to go down the checklist and mark each item as 'Must', 'Should' or 'Could'. Then ask them to identify their top 5 priorities.

Gathering and Welcome	Must	Should	Could	Done
Establish provision for children allowing them to learn and draw closer to Jesus Christ.				
Consider the length of your service				
Think about the time your service begins				
Find and commission church welcomers				
Encourage people to sit closer together				

Serve decent refreshments				
Building	Must	Should	Could	Done
Bring the 'action' closer to the people				
Tackle worship issues: ramps, hearing loops, etc.				
Tidy up the church building				
Provide decent, clean toilets				
Use better lighting				
Make the space more comfortable				
Sung worship				
Regularly review and develop your music	Must	Should	Could	Done
Do some intensive work with church musicians				
Improve the sound system				
Have a means by which to play recorded music				
Encourage your congregation's participation				
Consider what online presence you offer for worship				
Make sure children are engaged and have an active role				
Preaching and leading	Must	Should	Could	Done
Dress appropriately				
Develop the use of visuals				
Smile and vary the tone of your voice				
Use fewer and better words				
Improve the quality of your sermon				
Make receiving Holy Communion more meaningful				
Be creative with Bible readings and consider the number and length of readings				
Use times of silence				

5(54) As a whole group get each person to call out their top 5, mark them on a similar list on your flip chart and work out your top 5.

4(58) Response

Explain that this last exercise is personal.

What should you be doing as an individual to improve your worship?

1

.

2

.

3

.

What should you be doing as a church to improve your worship?

1

.

2

Has anything else struck you?

1(59) Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

Reflection and Prayer

1(60) Read 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever.'

1(60) **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

**God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give,
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship,
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Session 5

Become an inviting and welcoming church

2(2) Welcome and introductions

1(3) Pray together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

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4(7) Teaching: Community today

Today's local community is usually not a community.

- Different ethnic groups in an urban area are often far apart with not many bridge builders.
- Life on an estate can be threatening and intimidating.
- We have lots of acquaintances but fewer friends.
- Traditional gathering places, such as pubs and clubs, are in steep decline.
- The poor and elderly are increasingly marginalised
- One in five children have 'major relationship building difficulties'.
- Loneliness is increasingly described as a plague.
- In many villages and other communities people live behind electric gates.
- Many people desire distance, privacy and exclusivity.
- The main meeting place is the school gates.
- The gap between rich and poor is widening.
- 'Food banks' are normal.

As other community groups fade, the local church – often attached to a community project or church school – is increasingly the key 'gathering place'.

Analysts of 'the human condition' seem to be increasingly drawn to the conclusion that, once basic material needs are met, the key element in human happiness seems to be a set of healthy personal relationships.

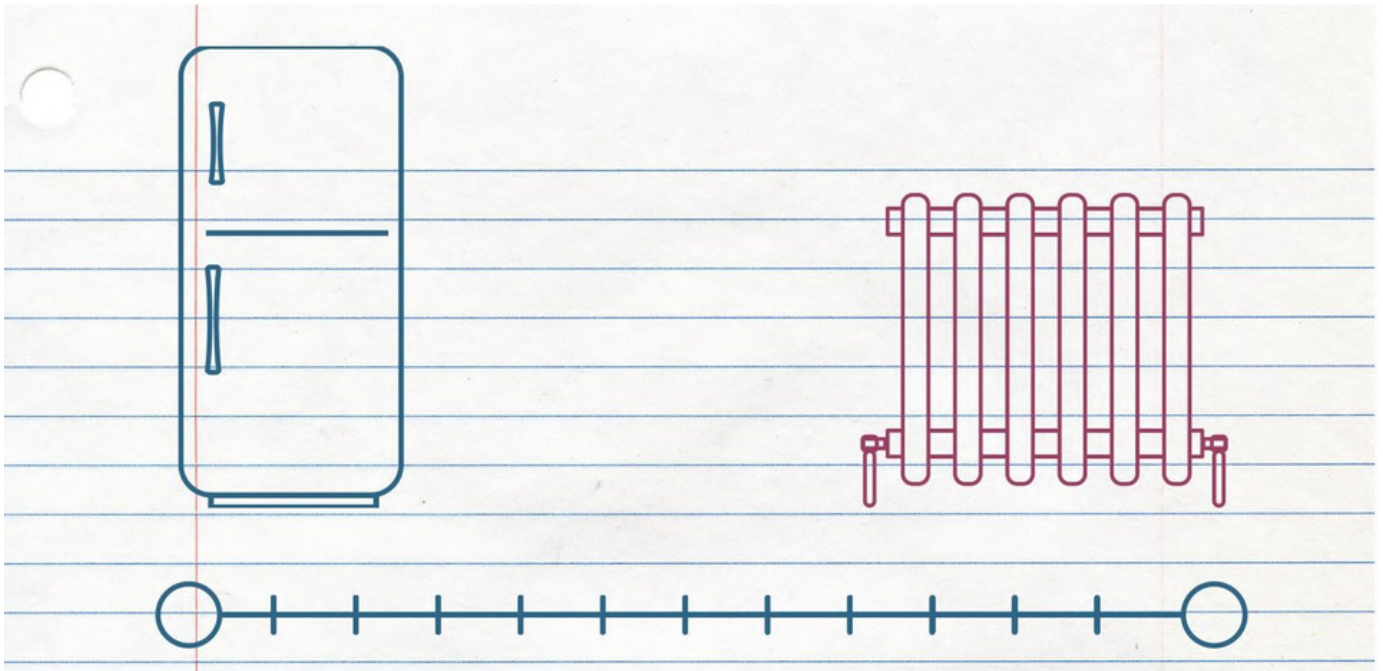
Today people have a desperate need for community, relationship, forgiveness, encouragement and...
ACCEPTANCE.

Being a good church family means focussing at some time on various issues that will help with this. Why not come up with some areas you might focus on:

-
-
-
-
-

Here we want to focus on developing a culture of Invitation and Welcome.

4(11) Exercise



How warm is our family?
Refer to the fridge and radiator diagram above
How warm is your church family for you personally?
How warm is your church family for new people?
Are you a fridge or a radiator?

A culture of invitation

Luke 14: 16 – 23

Jesus replied: ‘A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, “Come, for everything is now ready.”

‘But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, “I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.”

‘Another said, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.”

‘Still another said, “I have just got married, so I can’t come.”

‘The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.”

“‘Sir,” the servant said, “what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.”

‘Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.”

Like the great banquet, good churches are good at inviting and welcoming people. Smaller churches seem to have an inbuilt advantage or greater motivation when it comes to inviting and welcoming.

It can be a good idea to think about the 'villages' that might make up the Galilee that is your parish or benefice. These will not be literal villages, but they will be gatherings of people that you might want to reach with the good news.

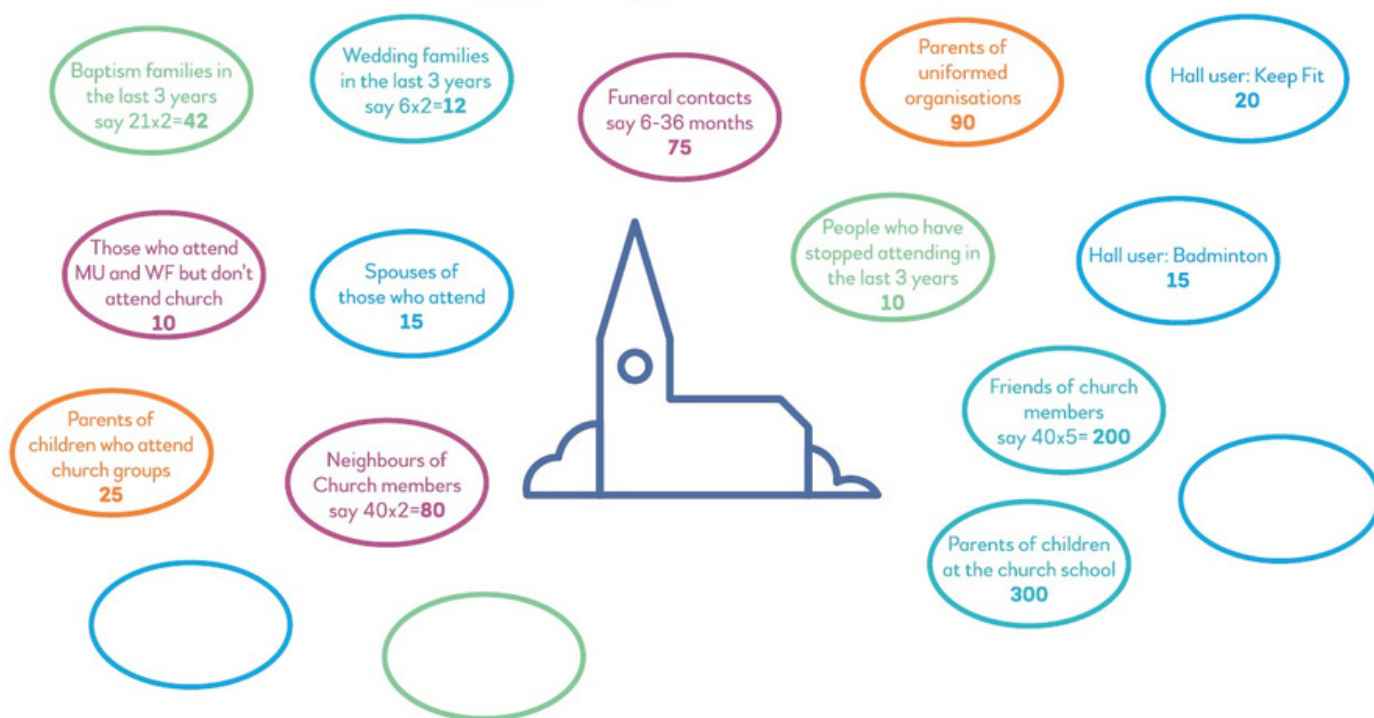
For example, uniformed organisations could be one of your Galilean villages; a parent and toddler group could be another; church school; local coffee shop; old people's home; those groups who use our church halls; etc.

20(32) Exercise

Work all together to produce your Galilee Map. Think of the groups that use your church premises or that you have contact with. Then think of some rough numbers that go with them – not too exacting, just a guide number, and insert them onto your map.

Here is an example of an example of a 'Galilee Map' filled in for a church of 40 members

Mapping our Galilee



Once you have done this, add up these 'guestimate' numbers to find the total population of your Galilee. The 'villages' in this Galilee exercise represent the 'fringe' of the church – people who don't regularly and frequently attend worship, but who have connections to church.

These are the first people to invite to your banquet. You may be surprised at how many people there are in your Galilee.

6(38) Inviting people

In groups ask people to make a list of what helps new people to feel welcome and then part of the family.

Write up on a flip chart. Examples might be:

In Church: sidespeople welcoming; people sitting with them; congregation sitting together; laughter in service; inclusive sermons; good singing; peace and quiet; refreshments; etc.

During the week: social activities; parish weekend away and day trips; small groups such as Bible study, MU; personal invitations: coffee mornings; welcome party; meal out; cinema trip; etc. .

One church found that if they invited fifty people about twenty came. Of these twenty about five or six gradually became part of the church.

Don't be discouraged, when Jesus spoke to the large crowd at Jericho, only 1 (Zacchaeus) followed him. We build the church one person at a time.

3(41) Inviting in

If inviting people is a new and intimidating thought then 'join the club'. Here are a few simple tips:

- Begin by inviting contacts to a purely social / presence event.
- The more local the event, the easier it is to get them there.
- Use printed invitation cards for the congregation to give to their contacts. Work on the basis of individual personal invitation rather than mass leafleting.
- It is all about relationships.

Remember the useful rule that for a more general invite to your wider community, try and invite people seven times in four different ways, for example: personal invite; printed materials; social media post; a banner outside church; a notice on your church website; making use of your 'A Church Near You' page; WhatsApp messages; etc.

Remind people of the Key phrase:

I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come with me?

Encourage the group to repeat this several times.

3(44) Intentional Prayer

Back in session 3 you were encouraged to identify 5 people who you thought might be open and interested. They could have been family, friends, neighbours or work colleagues.

What has happened to these five people? Can you remember their names and write them down.

Name Meeting up Invitation

1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____

Step 1: Have you remembered to pray for them? A good thing to do is to write your list on a piece of paper and place in your Bible.

Step 2: For each of your 5 people what one thing could you do to deepen your relationship with them?
e.g.

- Invite them for a coffee
- Go out for a meal
- Go for a walk
- Go to a sports event together
- Call in on them.

Step 3: If they are searching what is the best next step for them?
e.g.

- Invite them to the next church social
- Invite them to the next special service at church
- Invite them to attend the next enquirers' course. Offer to go with them.

3(47) As leader talk about your 5 names and what you plan to do. 3(50) Encourage each person to fill in their list of 5.

3(53) In 2s encourage members to share what they have planned.

1(54) Response

Explain that this last exercise is personal.

What should you be doing as an individual?

1
2
3

What should you be doing as a church?

1
2
3

Has anything else struck you?

1(58) Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

Reflection and Prayer

1(59) Read Mark 4:30-32:

Again he said, ‘What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.’

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And power to our witness.
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Session 6

Making a pathway for seekers to become disciples.

2(2) Welcome and introductions

1(3) **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

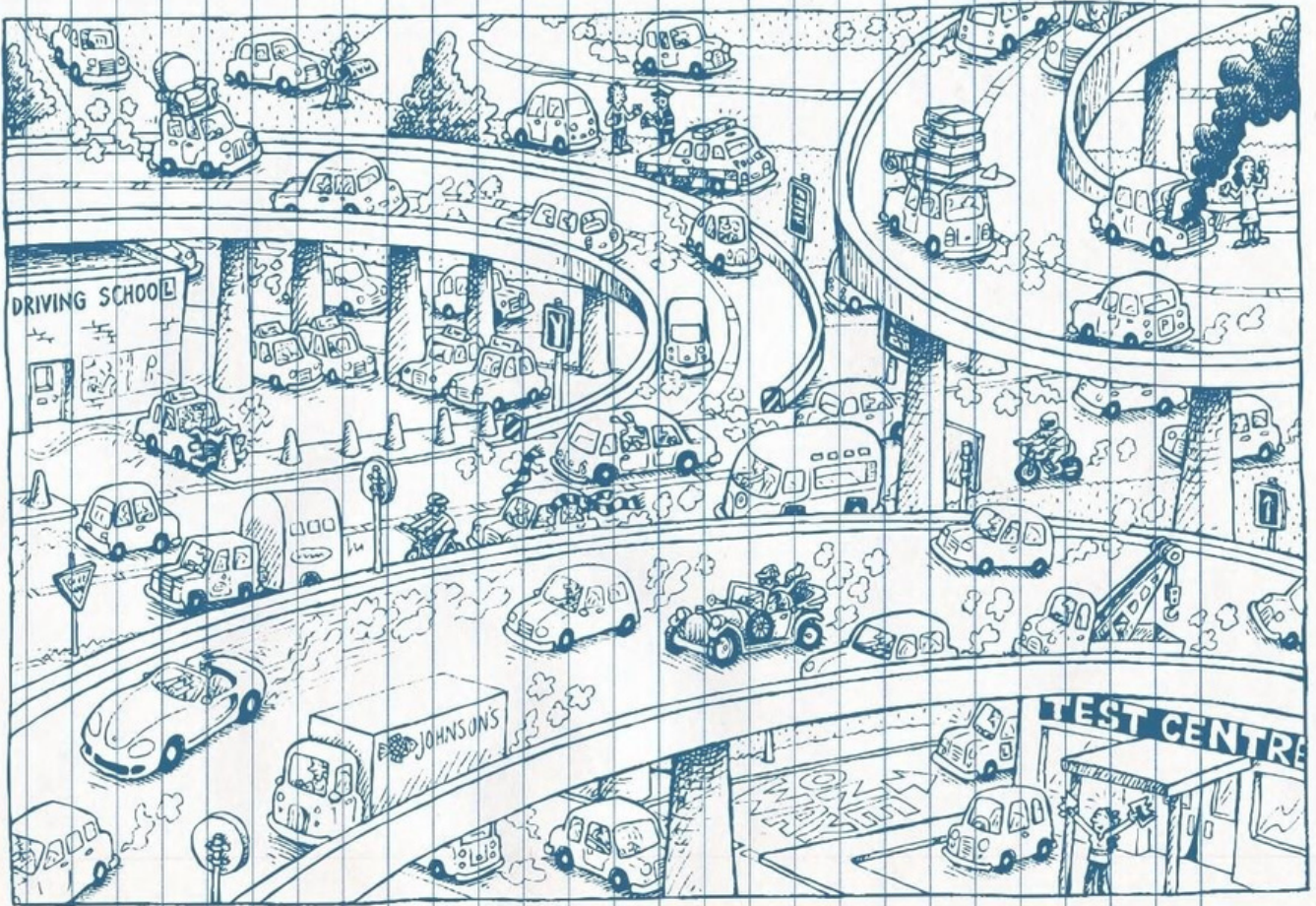
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1(4) Teaching: Making Disciples

Jesus was not concerned about increasing the number of church attenders – he wanted to make disciples.

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...’

- Matthew 28:19



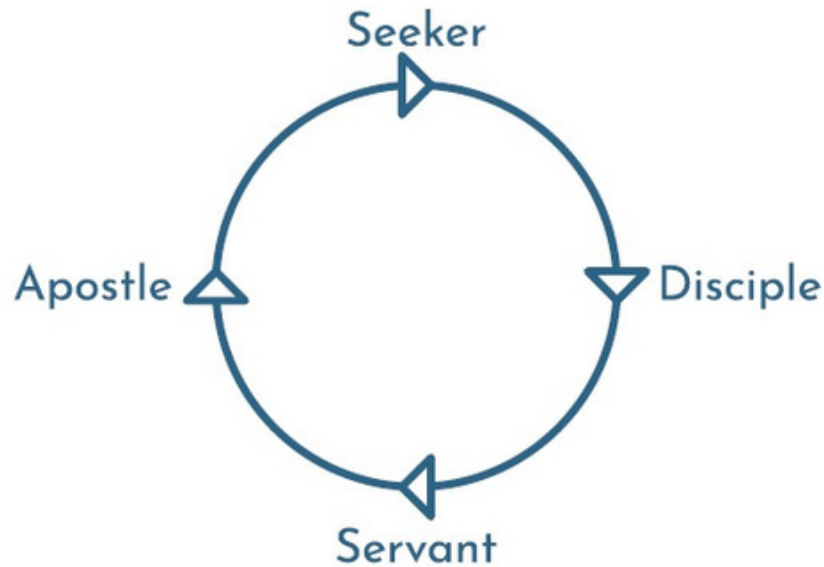
5(9) Exercise

Looking at the picture, which vehicle best represents where you are on your discipleship journey? Talk about how your journey was from being a searcher to becoming a servant or apostle. Were there key people who helped you? Did it take a long time, or did everything move very quickly?

)

8(17) Teaching: Moving on – seekers, disciples, servants, apostles.

To help us understand the journey we are dividing it up into four phases or stepping-stones:



1. 'Sir, we would like to see Jesus' – **Seekers**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

- John 12:20-22

- What have you been doing to make contact with seekers?
- Are you inviting people to the right things?
- Have you got an enquirers' course?
- Do you need to put a stepping stone in place?

2. 'Follow me' – **Disciples**

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

- Matthew 4:18-20

'Disciples make disciples'

- Who are the ones in your church that are helping to make disciples?
- How effectively do you gather people into church membership or confirmation groups?
- Have you got a good discipleship course?
- Why not introduce your new disciples to older Christians who can serve as prayer supporters or mentors.
- Do you need to put a new stepping stone in place?

'3. Be a servant' – Servants

So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

- Mark 10:42-45

As well as teaching the disciples in a conventional teacher pupil relationship, Jesus also treated them like apprentices, 'learning whilst doing'.

- Introducing your disciples to tasks of ministry
- Doing – both in the church and in the local community
- Do you need a servanthood stepping stone?

4. 'Go out into all the world' – Apostles

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

- Matthew 28:16-20

Help your servant disciples to identify their own mission field. Encourage and equip them to tell their own story. Remember to listen rather than talk and ask the three questions:

- Who are you?
- Where are you?
- Why don't you?

5(22) Exercise

Discuss with the person next to you where you are on the journey.

Has your church got all four stepping stones? In the right order? Not too far apart and not too wobbly?

5(27) Exercise: Other stepping stones

There are lots of different stepping stones which a church can have in place to help new members in their journey of faith. Ask the group to call out examples and decide whether it is for Seekers, Disciples, Servants, Apostles.

For example:

— Youth work	Seeker/Disciple
— Parent and toddler group	Seeker
— Welcome evenings	Seeker
— 'Bring a friend to church Sunday'	Seeker
— Women's nights	Seeker
— Men's suppers	Seeker
— Special events around the festivals	Seeker
— Messy Church	Seeker/Disciple
— Bible Studies	Disciple
— Prayer meeting	Disciple
— Stewardship campaign	Disciple
— Supporting the local school with governors, PTFA members, readers	Servant
— Encouraging new members onto church rotas	Servant
— Organising a neighbourhood litter pick	Servant
— Volunteering in the local park	Servant
— Church maintenance/cleaning group	Servant
— Flower arranging group	Servant
— Running an evangelism course.	Apostle
— Encouraging members to be involved in ministry outside the church	Apostle

10(37) A pathway for children and youth

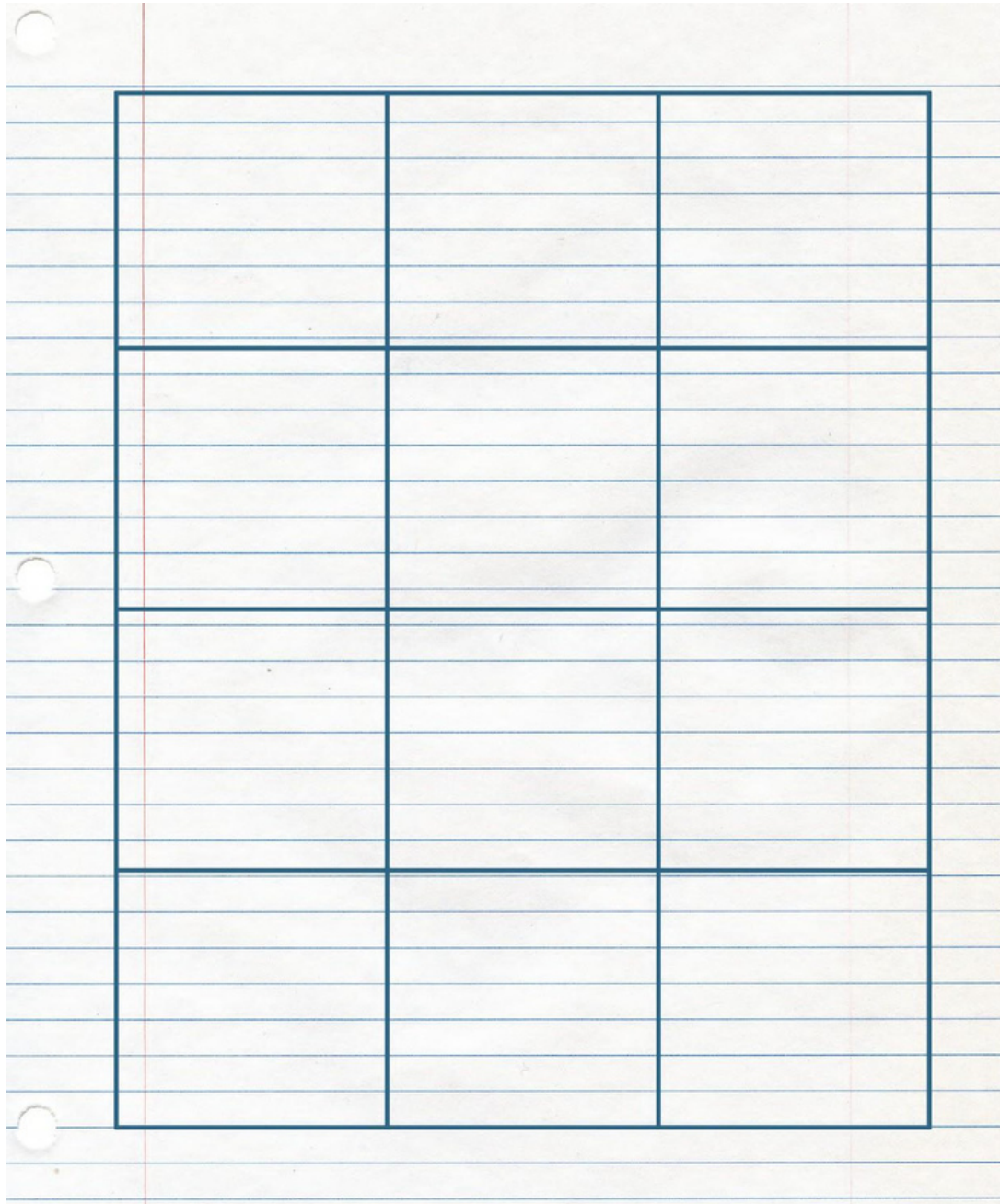
Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

- Matthew 19:14

It is as important, perhaps more important, to think about the journey of faith and the stepping stones required in relation to the children and youth in your church.

- Are you making contact with children and young people in your community?
 - Do you need to remember and make fresh contact with children and teenagers that you have lost contact with?
- Are you inviting them to something that is relevant for them: their own 'God Space'?
- How do you help them learn and grow as disciples?
- Do children and young people have opportunities to serve in your church?

The Annual Plan



10(47) Draw an annual plan from January to December or from September to August.

Encourage members to call out key annual events (socials and services) and write up in a calendar on the flip chart. (It is a good idea to have already prepared one, but don't show). If you have several churches you will need to sit them in church groups and give them time to do this for their church.

7(54) Explain that it is best to have a Presence event leading into a Proclamation event leading into a Persuasion (enquirer's) course.

If you were to run one enquirers course in a year, when would it start and what would it follow? If you were to hold two enquirers courses when would they start and what would they follow.

Think about where discipleship, servanthood and apostolic stimulation, learning and doing fits in.

Have a plenary time to discuss.

Response

1(55) Explain that this last exercise is personal.

What should you be doing as an individual?

1
2
3

What should you be doing as a church?

1
2
3

Has anything else struck you?

1(59) Remind members that if they want to talk about any of the issues raised to get in touch with you.

1(60). **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

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Session 7

A Planned journey for Growth

2(2) Welcome and introductions

10(12) Worship

A major part of today's session is making a plan, and it would be good to do this, more than in the other sessions, in a context of worship. Plan ten minutes of worship on the theme of planning, growth, mission, etc.

1(13). **Pray** together the Leading your Church into Growth prayer.

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2(15) Testimony and sharing

Make a list of good decisions and changes you have made during the first six sessions of the course.

2(17) A plan for growth

'Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,[a] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. -

Acts 2: 22-24.

When we look at the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels, and of the early church in Acts, it looks as if there was a plan.

Leading your Church into Growth isn't about having a great conference or course, or even making changes in the first year but rather having an ongoing plan for growth.

Those churches that have a plan that focuses on growth, are more likely to grow than those churches that either have no plan at all, or a plan that doesn't focus on growth.

It could be that you have a 'parish plan', a 'Mission Action Plan', or something similar. It doesn't matter too much on the format. What, however, we have experienced is:

- It ought to focus on growth
- It should reflect the '4Ps'
- It shouldn't be for too long a period of time or too cumbersome: 12-24 months is, in most cases, plenty
- It should be reviewed regularly and discussed at every leadership/PCC meeting
- It should have a few priorities – you can't do everything at once.

'If you have more than three priorities, you have no priorities.'

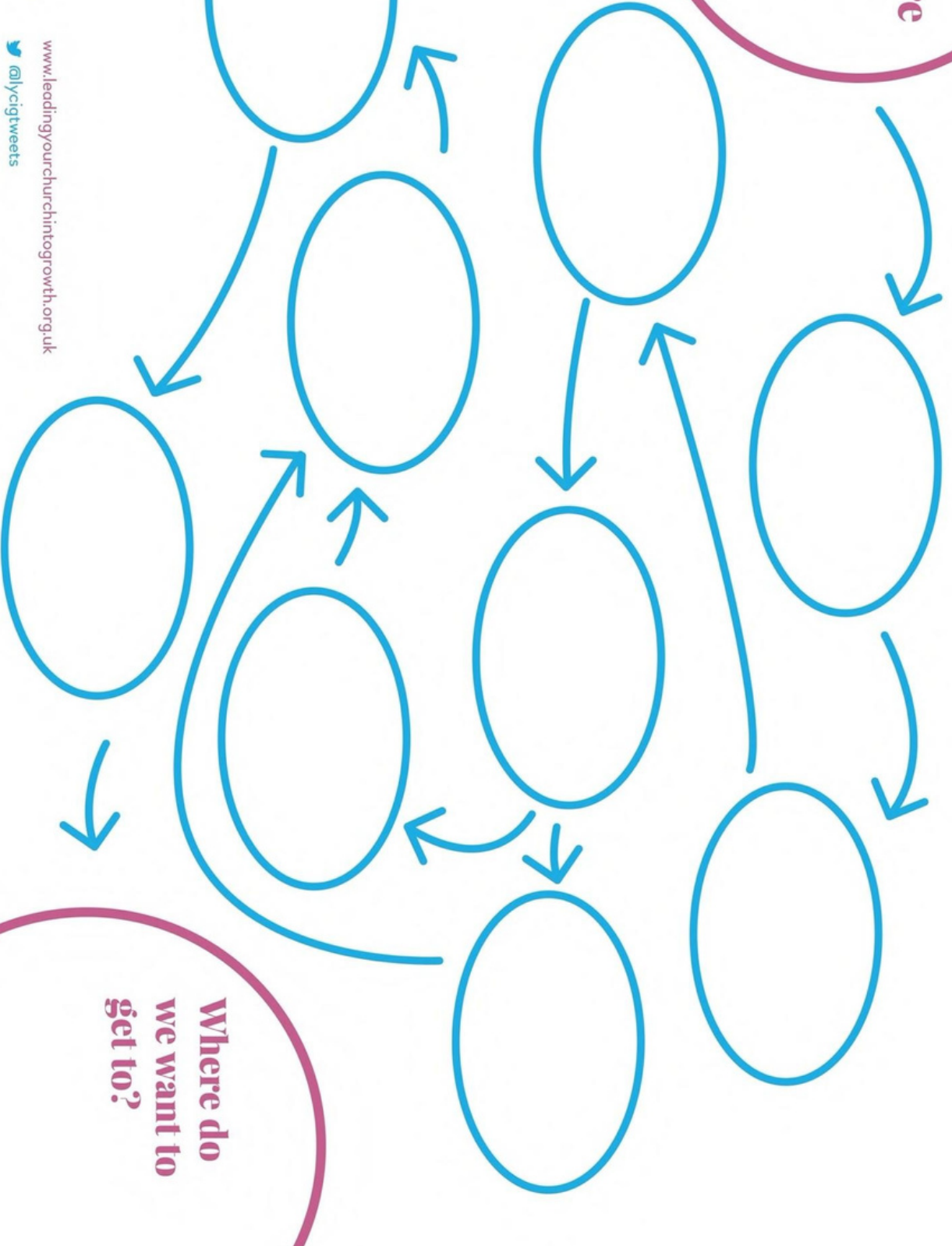
- Brene Brown

28(45) Exercise

Your church may already have a plan. If so this is a good time to review it. If you don't have a plan, you won't be able to come up with one in thirty minutes – but you will be able to take the first few steps! Those first steps are often the most tricky, and here and now is the best time to begin to take them.

The diagram below is a good way to begin to plan. Ask yourselves where you are, where you want to get to, and what steps you will need to take. Try and come up with a rough idea of a deadline for each step – you are more likely to take the step if you have a deadline to work toward.

**Where are
we now?**



**Where do
we want to
get to?**

Sharing with the church

A plan is more likely to work if a greater number of people know about it. How will you share the plan with more people than those who have been on this course? How might it become a regular item on your PCC agenda? How will you let the church know how the plan is going?

Spend some time discussing and planning how to share the plan and how to review it regularly.

10(55) For reflection and prayer

Between the ghosts of the past and the unlikely fantasies of the future there is a middle way. This is the way of carefully planned gradual and on-going church growth. This is the way that combines courage and vision, without at the same time eschewing down-to-earth realism. To follow this way, we need to pray the prayer of a person, who knows his weakness, but who has placed his faith in a great God. We need to follow a good plan; a sound strategy that we believe will bear fruit. We need to make the commitment, along with others, to a sacrificial living out of the cross. We need to place trust in the God whose will and purpose it is to produce growth in the middle of the wilderness.

- Robin Gamble, *The Irrelevant Church*

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’

- Matthew 16:13-19

In groups pray for one another.

www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk

