Growing a Church

'God made it grow!'

I am often asked by church leaders how to make a church grow. On the basis of my experience and from the best of my knowledge I attempt to provide them with advice that will encourage them in the noble task of leading God's church. So, it is important to state at the outset of this important topic that only God makes things grow! Although there might be times when we can hinder growth, Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 3:6, '*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow*'.

Once this has been stated and acknowledged we need to take seriously another fact - that God has chosen *us* to partner with *Him* in the great task of building His church! I firmly believe that God desires His church to grow, both in spiritual depth and also numerically. I live in a big city and, as I look at the communities around our part of London, I am convinced that we need some churches that can reach thousands of people. This does not mean that I think that God loves a larger church over a small one, that's not the character of the God I love and serve.

My own observation is that many churches do not reach their potential in God because there is a serious underestimation of the importance of leadership and structural change to facilitate God-desired growth. Recently I heard Dave Smith who leads Kingsgate Peterborough say, rather provocatively, that the difference between a church of four hundred and one of a thousand is the word 'management'. That the term management still gets so much bad press in Christian circles continues to amaze me!

Leading in a different way

If we want to reach more people for Christ we will need to learn how to lead in a different way than we have to date. Exodus 18 recounts that Moses discovered this, following advice from the first management consultant in the Bible (just joking…!). He follows Jethro's advice and re-engineers the leadership structure of God's people in order to be able to care for the ever-growing number.

I am going to outline some key themes and factors which we have found worked well at King's Church, here in the great city of London. As I say in my book *Good to Grow,*

> *King's... reflects my style and flavour of leadership, and the biblical values which are precious to us.... This is not the* ***only*** *way to lead a growing church.* (p191)

Having said that, I hope that some of the lessons we have learnt along the way will be of help to you! We will look at topics such as church size matters, growth engines, Sundays, integration, community, leadership, team, raising money and the importance of vision.

Lastly, I want to say that a growing church is normally a healthy one. At King's this health is reflected in the church's prayer life, the generosity of His people, our amazing mercy ministries and includes embracing the challenges of building a church that is diverse in culture and age. It's not *all* about numbers - but it is good to grow!

We've got to reach people…

Luke 19:10 says "For the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost". Church life should have at its very heart this sense of 'we've got to reach people' - that's the heart of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. My own conviction is that as pastors, we have historically tended to lean towards building the church, caring for the saints and teaching them - and rather less towards reaching people.

Some of us would say that pastoring is our primary gift - that's extremely valid but if we're going to make the church an effective outreach family, my conviction is that we have to intentionally lean towards outreach because churches have a tendency to turn in on themselves. If as a leader you've got a teaching or pastoring bias in your own gifting, that combination is likely to mean that the gradient of your church will be towards excellent care and going deeper and deeper in the Word and we'll know more and we'll be well equipped and well taught but - are we seeking and saving the lost? For some of you this will raise questions about your primary gifting and make you examine how you shape your whole leadership structure.

Our own story is that I arrived at King's in 1995. The church had been in some decline over the previous 10 years, it had gone from 300 to about 150 and the building was falling down. I arrived and during that first 15 months the church didn't grow. Everyone that joined was matched by someone who left because they didn't like my leadership style… then after about 15 months we began to grow and that growth has continued. We've grown from, on average, 200 in attendance to about 1400 on a Sunday morning.

During that time we sent 30 of our members to plant into South Central London and then a further 10 went to support Stuart Gibb at the Greenwich church plant. We believed it was right to do that and we did this even while we were looking for a 10% average increase at King's. We balance these two elements - build the church and reach the lost.

Reach the lost, build the church…

…Build the church, reach the lost. You have to have these two things in balance because if you first reach the lost and you're not building the church, then you won't contain the growth. The issues around this point would be those of leadership capacity and facility size - issues that generally come with growth. Leaders! At this point you need an ability to multiply yourself, work through others, build team - and of course you need to have the gift to realise hundreds of thousands of pounds as well. That is the leadership challenge!

I think many leaders build and hope to reach. Our philosophy at King's has been to turn that upside down and say, 'let's reach and then we'll build'. I even think that's how the book of Acts is written! It is missionary at its heart - with the apostles running around after gospel breakthrough trying to 'fill in' behind it, ensuring converts are baptized in the Holy Spirit and teaching them. Paul committed himself, in one context, to teach in one place for 2 years. To me, it's what apostolic ministry is about. We are an apostolic movement committed to reaching out beyond the gathered community and then bringing all the spiritual gifts to bear behind that.

Momentum moments

John Maxwell says that the power of momentum makes an average leader look good and that the lack of momentum makes a good leader look average. Such is

the power of momentum - leaders will know what I'm talking about. If you can get some momentum it makes things much easier for you in fuelling change management within the church. An example…

A few years ago we needed to further extend our Catford site – we were looking at raising £100,000. We had gone to two meetings on Sunday morning and were talking about bringing in a third meeting. Despite the fact that we had already gone to two meetings, we had space issues for our children's work. We needed the extension to accommodate the kids - everyone recognised that and said, 'Fine!' We had to raise another offering and momentum made it easy to lead in that situation. So, as a leader I crave and pray for momentum moments.

When we started out at King's we could provide a momentum moment maybe once a term - there was so much to do in the church here. At first there were no elders, when it rained the water came in, I was new and didn't know much, had young children and was exhausted and we could just about muster a momentum moment about once a term. As you gain momentum and resources increase you can get such a moment perhaps twice a term. Now it feels like sometimes every Sunday is such a moment.

Behind every 1, another 10

We have at King's a good friend in Steve Nicholson, a leader in the Vineyard movement in the US. Years ago he said to me, "Behind every 1 person there are another 10" and that would be our testimony. Time and time again we find that one person comes through and gets saved, one person comes in and gets restored in God and recommits to Christ, one person moves into the area, one person is worshipping God in another part of London and then starts coming here instead. Behind each of them are another 10 people – family, friends, work colleagues.

Each Sunday we look for new people to step towards us – that's what I pray for every Sunday morning. At the end of each Sunday I know how many 'Like to Know More' forms have been given in that day and I know that my church will grow by 10% in a year if I have five people step towards us in this way every week - because we've done it so long now we know that's the trend. That in turn becomes 250 people through the year. Nine forms given in – a very good Sunday, so if the following week there are only two, it's OK because there were nine last week.

We have a process behind the 'Like to Know More' forms because of the current size of our church. In a smaller church you can spot any new people there. In that situation I would strongly encourage you – engage with them as soon as you can! Talk to them before the beginning of the meeting!

At King's we have a break in the middle of our meeting so we can talk to new people and then at the end of the meeting we talk to new people again. I never talk to established attenders in the church on Sundays. In fact, after about 10 minutes normally I feel a bit lonely and lost because the church is so well educated not to talk to me because they know I don't want to talk to them – I'm looking for the new people. Most of you are pastors, so your tendency can be to be immersed in the existing people and talk to them. Fight that tendency!

Size matters

So, if you want your church to grow, you've got to work and build to momentum moments - these can be a whole range of things. How do you create this? I

believe local church-based evangelism is the way.

A few years back I got into trouble for an article I wrote about para-church organizations. The heart of the article was that we should build missionary churches. If we are building missionary churches and doing what I believe God has called us to do, then para-church organisations will be less influential. Fewer resources (money and people) would go to them because we are fulfilling what God has called His church to do. Because I believe in the local church the article was actually more of a challenge to the church than a comment on para-church organisations. It is evident to me that the church is the best way to reach people, to disciple them and see them come through and integrated into the body of Christ.

A comment on church size here. If you don't factor in an awareness of the impact and influence of your church's size then you can attend conferences on church growth and either go away really disappointed at the end of it or you can misapply to your situation the exhortations you have heard. So, the size of your church will determine the best way for it to grow and be effective. You may have heard an exhortation to preach the gospel on Sundays. You may build it into a guest service programme - but then the exhortation comes to do so *every* week. Added to which you hear someone like me tell you that we see people respond practically every week when we preach the gospel.

The difference is often the size of the church. Some of you know the name of every single person in your meeting and you will know as you preach that there is no unbeliever in the room - or perhaps there's just one person. How you implement such an exhortation will depend on your church size and on your understanding of the impact that will have.

Your own front door – a door to growth?

If your church size is under 150 the primary way it will grow is through relationship with the senior leadership, particularly the pastor. The best way for you to reach people, and for your church to grow in that situation, is for you – the leader – to have people round to your house. Guys - that is the best outreach strategy you can follow! Now, you will also need to run Alpha and provide other things - but the thing that will really make your church grow is you opening your home. Your front door could be the door to growth! Running discipleship groups, gathering young men - these are the ways to grow your church. Become involved with unbelievers, people making recommitments, new Christians – these are the people I'm talking about. When I first came to King's I ran the Alpha course as I wanted to be among those unbelievers.

When you get to a size of around 150 and above then the way you will grow is likely to be through multiplying ministries. You reach a critical mass where you run a kids' club or toddler group or something like debt-counselling. You have all those different avenues which get you into pools of different people. That's what you have to do at that phase of growth.

The last phase is if you get over 500-600. The bigger you get, then your Sunday meeting (or meetings!) becomes THE growth engine. People join your church through that front door. Of course you will need all these other things going on that I have already mentioned – toddler groups, Alpha etc. At every stage you need to be aware that the impact of church size is massive.

Just do it!

I believe in local church-based evangelism. I also believe that mission has to become central to the life of the church - if you want your church to grow and see evangelistic breakthrough, then mission has to be the primary focus of your church. The priority of mission in the life of the church affects issues as basic as the church diary and prioritising what happens on a Sunday.

When I first came to King's the church programme was shaped by my diary and my availability, not around the purpose of mission. For example, 'I can't be here on that Sunday as I'm on holiday so we won't do the mission event there…' We soon worked out was that was the wrong way of building! We decided - *mission comes first*. I think in everything we do now, right through the philosophy of the church, mission is primary and then we build in behind that priority - the church programme must reflect this philosophy.

Mission at the heart of church life particularly affects our Sundays - our Vision Sundays which we do twice a year, one in September and one in January, (and which I always do as the team leader) always includes an aspect of growth presented within it. It will always include an appeal for new people to step in. It will always include telling some of the King's story. Mission will be explicit in our goals and what we are reaching for over the next 5 years - that will be very high profile. I've got this evangelistic thing in me (although I am not an evangelist – I realised that when I met one!) which makes me instinctively think that's the way to grow. So in our prayer meeting, if I'm leading, we will pray for other areas including pastoral care but I would probably always lead us into vision and into praying about growth. I just do that.

Keep telling the story…

If I'm preaching elsewhere on a Sunday I will receive a text message from a staff member at Kings at the end of the day which gives me the numbers of people who attended and the number of responses – all this comes in as I drive back to Catford. I'm motivated that way. Some of my team members think that at my funeral people will say, 'Well… Steve would have been pleased, you know, because we've done the count. There were 415 at the funeral …'

I believe if we're going to impact a nation we have to be intentional about mission. I live in a big city with 250,000 people in the borough of Lewisham alone, so King's needs to reach thousands of people. I don't know many pastors who say 'I want my church to be smaller' - in the end it's about having a heart for people - you must prioritise growth and mission right up front and this will impact your Sunday programme.

We know that historically our church grows most in September and January - we have also had times when we've grown very fast over a period of months and the usual trend has gone out of the window. We build what we're doing on Sundays around that knowledge. We plan quite far ahead and we aim to be Spirit-led too! So in September we have a Vision Sunday and prior to that date a personal letter goes out from me to everyone in the church and also to everyone who's visited the church in the last 12 months, inviting them to come along for the Vision Sunday. I used to sign a lot of invitation letters in the run-up to those particular Sundays and am now grateful that more people can be emailed!

I find there is a need to repeat our vision to the church - time and time again - this is very important because people often just don't get it first time – or the second… So I keep telling the story and explain why we do what we do, keeping the vision before the people - constantly.

Secret of success - Keep It Simple

When it comes to bringing vision to the church, at King's we try to present it in a creative way and engage people to step in. This might be at a meeting with lots of people being baptised or one of our regular 'ministry fairs' on a Sunday, as serving is a very real way in which people can engage with the vision. On that Sunday all the ministry teams set up a stall and there will be a high level of ownership as they look to recruit more volunteers to help within their sphere. I've noticed that cakes seem to feature strongly on some stalls…! So, with Vision Sunday, a baptism and a ministry fair, the fourth Sunday of that particular month might feature a guest speaker.

One January we went through a highly recommended series – based on the book *Just Walk Across the Room* by Bill Hybels. We took four Sundays to cover it and I began the series on our Vision Sunday talking about one of our goals - to reach people. We integrated our mid-week group programme during that month with the topic – preaching through the series, followed by discussion in our mid-week groups, supplemented by having the book for individuals to read – these three approaches really saturated the church culture.

Some people ask me, 'What have you done that's different to other churches?' or even questions like, 'What's the secret of your success?' The strange thing is that we haven't really come up with a new idea because I'm not that creative. I've met pastors who are very creative but don't do what's really simple and what works. They have to reinvent the wheel and as a result make it hard for themselves; that creative element can really complicate their lives! I like to keep things really simple and so practically all the things we've done have been taken from the tried and tested experience of other leaders and churches - and we're very happy for others to take them from us as well if it helps!

Watch your language!

We really are happy to work with ideas from others! The next idea came from Rick Warren's book, *Purpose Driven Church* - if you look at our Vision Statement you will see that it's exactly the same as his - apart from the fact that he had a few more noughts on the number of members in his vision… He's done it and we're on our way! So I feel fortunate in this - I will just take things that I see others doing that God is owning and blessing and integrate them into our philosophy and strategy. We have found this approach to be really very helpful.

We believe that 'doing church' is not just about the *members*. Within Newfrontiers, with our restoration foundation, we automatically think about church members. At Kings, we believe it isn't as simple as that – you also have a *community* around you which you are there to reach. How many people live in your community? Around King's we have 250,000 people and we see it as our responsibility to get around to thinking how they will find their place with God.

There is a *crowd* of people that live near your church and around mine who are not yet members - but they're coming on Sundays. Some of you have got two such people, some might have twenty. Then you have the *congregation* - that might well be your membership. We do have a membership at King's and think it is very important as a commitment to a local church - but it doesn't stop there because you know within your members' list that there are some people that are even more *committed* than others in terms of turning up and serving! It's not just members and then the rest - it's more complex than that. Members need to be encouraged into greater maturity. And you've then also got some people that are your '*core*' people.

Community, crowd, congregation, committed, core - I found this analysis very helpful in understanding my church - it affects me every time I get up on the platform on a Sunday morning because I'm aware that I'm speaking to a very broad group of people with different levels of involvement and commitment. That realization should affect how you present your message. If you're 'new people aware', it will influence how you organise church life and how you explain church events, including the notices. Please listen to what is said from a visitor's point of view. Delete church jargon, 'in jokes' and those easy terms and acronyms familiar to you – but not to new people. *Watch your language!*

Strategic thinking

At King's we would be able to say on any given Sunday, or at any given major event that we do, exactly why we're doing it and at what point on the Rick Warren circles (community, crowd, committed, core) we find our 'target audience'. So when some years ago we did our *Freedom* event, which was to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade - in our context a massive, massive issue as we are in very multicultural context - our team discussed together and said 'this is how we're pitching it.' We identified our target audience.

The result was three Sunday meetings and 1400 people through the doors. That was a big Sunday for us. The mayor of Lewisham and Steven Timms MP came along to add to the moment, but really we were trying to connect into our community. So our presentation and the content were full of the gospel but we weren't overtly evangelistic. It was very much a time of sowing and giving our church greater credibility in the community. I think we achieved that goal.

So in that sense our lesson has been - be strategic and be really clear on what you're doing and why you're doing it. My experience of working with churches is that doesn't always happen; the attitude can be more one of 'we do it this way, we just preach the Bible'. At King's we have learned to integrate our approach and package things in a way that links what we're doing on Sunday with our midweek activities. We want our vision to be grounded in the whole life of the church and we have found it pays to be strategic.

Philosophy of ministry

So how do you ground your vision in the life of your church? Answer - agree an upfront philosophy of ministry!

A philosophy of ministry is more important than we realise as leaders. I think this is often very much amiss in church leadership teams. Who believes that we should be involved in outreach? We all believe that. Who believes that we should witness? Your philosophy of ministry - that is, how you take those biblical values and apply them in church life, can take you in differing directions. So your philosophy could be, 'well we're going to do door-to-door work…' - that's one outworking of outreach. Others will say, 'We don't do it that way' - that's actually a philosophy. Another philosophy is to say - we believe in relationship and process evangelism, and so we use the Alpha course. Many of us would be there. At King's we believe in outreach and witness; we do Alpha and our philosophy of implementation is centred on Thursday night when a large team of dedicated people run the Alpha course here. We've done it for over 10 years and seen great fruit – fantastic! It's an approach to review from time to time.

Your Sunday meeting is also in your philosophy. Do you see it as being for believers and for teaching the saints? Even if you haven't articulated it, Sunday

preparation can be done as though that is what they are for. At King's we haven't gone to the point of running 'seeker services' which is what Bill Hybels did at Willow Creek, where they said 'Sundays are for unbelievers and midweek meetings are for believers.' That's not where we are - but we would have numbers of Sundays which are designed for the needs of unbelievers, not for Christians and in this way our philosophy impacts how we do Sundays. I'm sure many churches do this - we just seem to do it a bit more than some.

Changing your church culture

If you're going to change the culture of your church, that change has to come first through the teaching given. As a result I have taught a great deal about being a missionary church. Dave Devenish was very helpful to me and to the church on this. When looking at being a missionary church rather than just a pastoral church, he argued that good pastoral care is actually there to care for people who are getting saved and to equip them to reach the next group of people, so you need to teach it that way. For example, a great way to begin to change the culture of your church would be to equip people to witness. I'm talking about a huge cultural shift here.

It's foundational that you begin to look at everything in church life through a different filter - and you also have to model it yourself as a leader. This is personally demanding; one year I invited 18 people to our Christmas Carol Service. I invited 18. I think in the end 10 of them came and one went on the Alpha course.

And we have set 'smart' goals for our growth. When I first started at King's I made yearly goals because what was needed was to gain trust from a church that had struggled. I set such goals so that we could have measurable amounts of progress that everyone could see and recognise. Initially I set goals at such an attainable level that we had almost achieved them by the time the ink dried on the paper - even though I was giving us a year to reach them!

Building trust, setting goals

I would stress that a key component in leadership is trust. If you don't have the trust of your fellow leaders and of the people you lead then you'll know about it because every time you initiate something, you will recognise there's an underlying issue with resistance and lack of trust. To gain trust also involves giving people confidence in your leadership and the decisions that you make, so I present our vision goals to them in faith. 'We're going to see 10 people saved this year' - and we saw 3 saved in the following week. I've seen too many leaders present faith goals which are against the past trend of their achievement and everyone in the church who hears them says 'yeah, yeah, yeah' publicly but in their hearts they say 'no, no, no'.

So we set yearly goals and then as we gained some momentum we then began to set 5 year goals to give us a longer framework within which to work. Our set of 5 year goals set in January 2007 included reaching people - to grow from an average of 750 to 1,100 attending at King's on Sunday and we are currently seeing around 1400 now (2012). Children are included in our attendance figures because their numbers impact us every week. In order to make space for the adults in the auditorium we provide kids' work for the entire duration of our meetings. With multiple meetings this has an on-going impact on our room space elsewhere in the building – it's essential to provide facilities for our kids' work. It would be true to say that currently our huge facility problem is faced predominantly by our children so I count the children in to keep their needs in

high profile - that's been one of our big issues. One of the other areas impacted would be adequate office space for our staff and volunteers.

So we set goals - goals built from trends that we have seen, that are measurable, not just taken out of hope – goals based on past evidence. If your church hasn't grown for 10 years you need to create some momentum moments to encourage growth. So don't say, 'Steve Tibbert says set goals!' and then set goals that are so far 'out there' that in a year's time you realise that you're going to have to really move on them because you're already 30 behind. You're setting yourself up for failure and failure is never an encouraging thing!

Appealing to people

We tell lots of stories at King's. Honestly, I would say that if you see someone saved tomorrow, tell everyone two or three times. People, particularly British people, always look on and say little! If you see someone come to faith here and there, you grow a bit and your people need to hear such stories. We tell the success stories; we're not unreal, we don't make them up, but we do tell the stories when they happen - I do that regularly. 'We had 25 people at Alpha and on Holy Spirit day 5 people responded and became Christians'...

We want to stir faith in our people and of course we pray a lot as a church about people becoming Christians. So growth is on our agenda. Even more precisely - salvation growth is on our agenda. So we teach it, we model it as leaders; we set goals, tell success stories and pray about it in our prayer meetings.

I want to make some comments on gospel appeals and how we do them at King's. At the end of a Sunday meeting quite regularly I would do a two minute gospel appeal. I might not be leading the meeting or preaching but at the end of the worship or if we've broken bread together, we might just feel it is right to go for a gospel appeal - literally a two minute thing. It is 'God is here. God loves you. We've just celebrated His death and resurrection. We don't know if you're a Christian. We just want to give you an opportunity to respond to Christ here and now. So why don't we all close our eyes. Is there anyone here that wants to become a Christian? Could you put your hand up now…?'

Sometimes when we do it that way we get no response but you'd be surprised how many times someone in our context will respond. If there is no response in the first meeting, there are always the subsequent meetings. That's all we do. You don't need to include the whole doctrine of salvation in there, with the creation and the fall and things like that! In that sense you don't lose the whole meeting to the gospel moment because there are other things to include such as teaching for the church and worship. We would say to our preaching team 'you need to present Christ every time you preach and everything you bring should go through the Cross or reflect the Cross somehow as you preach'. If you just preach and Jesus doesn't appear in the material then we are 'off message'.

How to effectively use an evangelist

At King's we don't do a gospel appeal every week - perhaps on average 1 in 4 Sundays there will be a gospel application and we would make an appeal. On occasions we might invite an evangelist to speak; churches that can't afford to employ a full-time evangelist (and not many of us can afford that luxury!) can bring one in from elsewhere for a particular day. Many of us on the King's team have a little bit of the evangelist in our make-up, but we don't have an evangelist like we have an Ephesians 4 teacher. Such gifts are great but they don't carry the church on a day-to-day basis.

My observation would be that too many leaders bring in a specialist for their second or third staff appointment and do that too early. If you're a smaller church then you really want a generalist as your second appointment because the main thing that needs to happen is to release the senior leader into other areas. I've seen this happen time and time again - an evangelist is taken on and when the pastor wants the evangelist to carry some further areas of responsibility the evangelist says, 'No. I just want to preach the gospel and speak to unbelievers...'

However, each church could get an evangelist in on occasions. Our observation of gifted evangelists that have come to our church is they spend more time on the appeal than most of us do because the rest of us are generally teachers and are less comfortable with dwelling on the appeal. Lex Loizides has shown us a way to do this…

The pressure of waiting

Lex Loizides has shown us a way to do gospel appeals at the end of a meeting and I stick to his model most of the time. After the preaching we sing a song and we have often used the song he uses "*Lord I come to You…*" Then while people are still standing we ask for those who want to respond to raise their hand.

At this point I am praying, 'Lord please be with me,' because I feel under pressure - wanting people to respond. I will then probably say something encouraging like 'That's fantastic', and I'd count them as they put their hands up. 'That's one. Thank you. Two...' Sometimes it's great and there are four, five… seven. I tell them that God's here - at that point expressing the love, mercy and compassion of God is important.

We sing the song through once, the band might just carry on playing and I would come back in and say 'I'm now going to give an opportunity for anyone here to respond to Jesus… '. I find it emotionally demanding to do this. I can do all the other stuff in church leadership, lead the meeting, handle the occasional dodgy prophecy and things like that - but there's a spiritual battle when you stand up and invite a response to the gospel. You have to stand there and you have to make that appeal to people. I've found that at times I've had to make myself stay there!

We must remember the battle going on in your own heart, and a huge battle going on in the hearts and minds of those who are thinking about responding. I remember the day I got saved, I spent about 20 minutes having a discussion with myself and God whether I was going to count the cost of doing this and make my response. Do you remember that moment? We don't doubt the battle for souls.

I've watched evangelists. They dwell in the moment. They don't lose courage. They press on. I'm a pastor at heart - I'm concerned that there isn't some manipulation and emotional pressure here. You know that can happen. Have you ever been in meetings like that? Evangelists don't seem to worry about it; they're interested in the lost and their eternal destinies at that moment. I've seen Lex wait for a long time and then watched as someone in the church I know responds, their parents weeping in their places - all because he waited. So wait. It's a faith moment.

Looking after responders

The next thing we would do is to invite those who are responding to first of all raise their hand and then to come forward. Then I would say 'We're going to sing

the song through once more and if there is anyone else that would like to respond, would you come forward and join those already at the front.'

At that point we've got a 'follow up' team in place. This would primarily be our Alpha team who are used to leading people to Christ. They come forward and talk with those who have responded - we generally take the responders out of the meeting because we find it is difficult to talk to them properly once the post-meeting hubbub begins. Ideally we have a room set aside where people can talk quietly and be prayed for. Your facility and the rooms available will shape how you do that, as will the numbers involved.

I've also seen Lex do the following, and I've done this once or twice - when people have come forward he will keep them at the front of the auditorium for a few minutes and he will invite yet more people to respond. He goes again - it's fantastic. What I love about it is that he is very personal, very pastoral. He looks at each person and gets the church to clap them as they come forward; he speaks to them as if no one else is there. Then he often leads them all in a prayer, he's very warm and he says 'Is there anyone else that would like to come and join these people?' and do you know, nearly every time he does that there are others that come to faith because they come forward as well and everyone claps again!

It's amazing to see that gift of the evangelist operate - when Lex first came to King's we saw a lot of response from people. The second time he came we saw a good number respond but I believe that one of the reasons we didn't see so many is because in the meantime he had equipped us at King's to do this ourselves. We had learned from him and grew in confidence and experience. It will be the same for you!

Useful information on integrating new people

Evangelism is a journey. It's a journey of sowing and reaping. When it comes to outreach, John 4:36 and 37 records Jesus saying:

> *Thus the saying one sows and another reaps is true. I sent you to reap for what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.*

At King's evangelism is a journey and at the same time we would be highly *invitational*. We encourage our people to invite friends, family and work colleagues along to church. We put on events and programmes to invite people to and would take an integrated approach. You may be familiar with the Engel Scale which refers to the process of evangelism – it has four sections – *Sowing 1*, *Sowing 2*, *Reaping* and *Keeping*.

We are not only invitational, we are very *intentional* about evangelism - we don't do anything just for the fun of it! There's always a purpose in what we're trying to do. So the first section (*Sowing 1*) on the Engel Scale can be summarised - *Christians are OK and God is good*. At the extreme point people have no awareness of God and they have a negative attitude towards the church. It's unlikely you're going to get those people into your church building.

The way you reach those who view Christians and the church in this way is by equipping your church members to be personal witnesses because they will work alongside people with those views. Those who are negative towards the church - unless there is a sovereign move of God - will be moved on in their lives by witness that causes them to rethink what they believe about God and what they

think about Christians. So equipping your church, your people, to be able to interact with people at this point is important. The Carol Service won't do that because they don't come. Into the *Sowing 1* category we place personal witness and people inviting other people.

One example of what we do…

The summer months are often considered a 'down time' in church life. At King's we increasingly use those weeks for preparation to make sure that we have a strong start to the church year in September and what comes beyond. While the rest of us are in summer holiday mode there is a certain group at King's who already have Christmas in mind!

Christmas, and more particularly our Christmas Carol Services, provides a mega opportunity to reach out to our local communities! Planning, preparing and rehearsing for the seven Carol Services we currently put on over that weekend in December goes on throughout the autumn, even while we are seeking to build momentum with the start of the church year in September. Last year we saw 2800 people come through our doors over that single weekend, many of them visitors.

Thousands of Christmas Carol Service flyers will be printed – this is our predominant way of advertising the Carol Services. They are given out to all our small groups who will deliver them in their localities and we have them available on Sundays when people will take them to give to friends and family. There will also be a big poster on the front of the building and we will deliver flyers to homes in the area – that covers our advertising.

One of our former elders was a School Governor at a local primary school - it provided an arena in which to reach out to others. Every year, as Chair of Governors, he sent all the governors an invitation to our Carol Services. These went with a card saying 'thanks for all your support this year and here's an invitation to the Carol Service'. At that level it's sowing. It's surprising just how many people who are now involved in the life of King's made their first visit to King's to a Carol Service.

Because we get an increasing number attending our multiple Carol Services we plan them carefully. There is a carefully thought out theme and although we will do one or two other songs, it's predominantly traditional carols. We'll have a drama and Bible readings and I will speak. At this event we're not asking for responses - we're just presenting Jesus; we're just presenting the Christmas story and there would be an invitation to attend the next Alpha course programmed to take place just after the New Year. The Carol Service is not a revolutionary event in terms of presentation, it's the traditional approach people like – singing 'Hark the herald…' is what they expect - and that's what we do. We also aim to put on a high quality event with great music so we will have an orchestra as well as our usual band and a choir of brightly-dressed, smiling King's people!

Sowing…

Looking at *Sowing 2* on the Engel Scale (link) - the Alpha Course would be in that category. Our introductory Alpha meal will bring people along who are often not yet interested in investigating Jesus but they are interested in an event!

So one year at our Alpha meal we had Gavin Peacock, the football pundit and ex-professional footballer, to speak. There were 200 people in the room - the

biggest Alpha meal we had done to date. A number of people came who weren't going to come to anything else; they were just there because of Gavin but they heard him give his testimony and talk for 20 minutes about Jesus and they heard about the Alpha course. They were not planning to come back so the 'drop off' rate for the following week was quite high but this was a way to begin to sow something of the gospel. You have permission at that moment to say something.

We run an Alpha course every term and also within the category of *Sowing 2* we would place our Sunday morning meetings - a place to which people can come who are still trying to find out about God. Then there are guest services - we make a big thing about things like baptisms. All the people that are to be baptised are encouraged to invite friends and family. We go as far as saying, 'and we will save you some seats - just phone the office and tell us how many people are coming and we will make sure seats are reserved.' That makes them think – 'they're expecting me to bring people'. So on average, each person who gets baptised here probably brings about 5-8 guests.

We would also do other guest services. Baby thanksgivings/dedication services have become a way of inviting people – we arrange them so that there are quite a number of families bringing their babies at the same time – there can be up to 30 guests for one family at these events and it's not unusual for us to have six to ten new babies brought! We've discovered that dedications as part of your Sunday meeting mean that people will always bring family and friends - again people come along not because they're interested in church but because they're friends of those taking part.

Reaping…

When the Engel scale moves on to *Reaping* (becoming a Christian) you need to look at where in your programme you are giving people the opportunity to respond to the gospel. Where is that point?

At King's it used to be the Alpha Saturday and at baptisms. Alpha Saturday still remains for us a major event in this respect but now we would provide that opportunity more frequently – it could be at almost any Sunday meeting. The statistics go something like this. Before Lex Loizides started to come to King's 2% of the people who were saved at King's were saved through our preaching on a Sunday. After Lex came and equipped us that became 20%. Suddenly we had the ability and the confidence to make an appeal more often and see people respond to the gospel. On other occasions we would get a guest evangelist to come along.

We run a New Christians group on a Sunday. It's not unusual for people who have done Alpha are not yet Christians to then join our New Christians group - but then they become Christians at the New Christians group! We are sometimes aware that people have not yet made a commitment but we let them go into that group and as a result we've seen a number of people that have come to faith there! The important thing is to provide opportunities for reaping the harvest.

Keeping…

When it comes to *Keeping*, we run a New Christians group for those who have come to faith, as well as membership groups, mid-week groups and serving groups - all these are ways into a deeper commitment in church life.

Our integration process is an important element in this. Once you have reached people and they have come in to the church the process does not end there. For

us outreach is not just for reaching the unbeliever and seeing them through to faith, but it's also reaching the new person, the visitor. So we would be very, very intentional about reaching new people who come along to our church even if they've been Christians for 20 years. The fact is, people don't join the church by osmosis - they don't just 'join' and they often need help to know how the process actually works.

To help we have put together a booklet called 'Helping New People Join the Church' - again we took all this material and adapted it from somewhere else, on this occasion - Willow Creek, Bill Hybel's church.

A new person comes on a Sunday and we trust that they meet welcoming people right from the start! They will be encouraged to fill out a 'Like to Know More Form' which is always talked about in the welcome in the middle of the meeting. In the meeting the very first notice is to welcome new people and to ask them to complete the form. At the end of the meeting they are encouraged to take it to the Welcome Desk - they may think they're just handing in a form, they are told 'it helps us to help you get connected'. That's true. 'If you just want to find out more information, hand in this form'. If they do so then we see it as being handed a relay baton - the hard work begins at that point!

Connecting…

Once somebody has stepped towards us by giving in a 'Like to Know More' form, we will put real effort into trying to help them connect to church life. The next day - on the Monday - their details will go onto our database. It's where we record our 'crowd', our new people list, and at this point they will be sent a standard letter that thanks them for coming to King's. On the Tuesday evening our integration team meets at the church office – usually four church members and the team leader. We phone every new person who gave in a form - they will get a phone call asking them, 'How can we help you further to connect with the church? What would you like to do? Would you like to get involved in Alpha? How about a mid-week group?' The integration team will have information about all such groups and all the particular ministries.

Our integration team members are selected because they are friendly and can deal with people easily. They will have up-to-date, relevant information ready to pass on to the new person each week. This process has been going on for some years now and before we started doing it this way we would see perhaps 25% of our new people connecting here and continuing to attend. After we started doing it, that rate increased to 50% at times and has generally stayed at around 40% of the new people who fill out the form and step towards us in that way. Many others choose to stay in the crowd.

On the journey…

At King's there are people who have come along and are very happy to just stay in our 'crowd' and not become members – from time to time we will challenge them to take a further step in. We have a booklet we give to new people which tells them about our philosophy and includes a diagram which shows the sort of process that people go through. So if someone's not a Christian or they're 'backslidden', we will encourage them to go to Alpha.

There are mid-week groups to join. They can become involved with a particular ministry and begin to serve quite quickly or they can join a 'life skills course' which could be the Marriage Course or a Parenting Course or our finance seminar – all of which happen on an annual basis. We also run *Freedom in Christ* which

has a more pastoral approach and is for those dealing with life issues and the consequences of the past. Each of these provides the opportunity for further involvement in church life.

This means that at any given point it should be possible to tell you where every new person is in their journey – all from the data gathered from each 'Like to Know More' form that has been completed and given in and our follow-up of those individuals. It could say this person is involved in Alpha. That person is on Freedom in Christ. This person has joined a mid-week group - and it would be possible to go through our list in this way. This person's left. This person's going to another church. I can tell you that because we follow them up regularly - it's not just a 'one off' phone call. We actually stick with that person until we consider they are 'in' and connected and they're established in a mid-week group or they're part of a ministry.

Growing a church: It's all about those who are not in the room!

To conclude and summarise:

In the end the philosophy is this: encourage your church to be invitational. Invite people to a moment. Get them in the building. Trust God - there has to be a God moment. We do the best we can and we trust that those who come along, who are invited by their Christian friends, neighbours and family, will encounter God. At King's it is our aim to provide the next step for them to take on the journey and then follow up each person through our integration team.

Each time we have a gospel appeal I know we will see people respond. We will have a follow-up team in place and I also know that by the end of Tuesday evening those individuals will all have had a phone call. As a result, I feel we have been pastorally responsible and for those people there will be a number of next steps they can take – including joining our next Alpha course. We integrate our whole church programme with such outreach moments.

It's all about those who are not yet in the room! All our prayer and planning should ensure that when they come – having been invited by our people – they find a place where they hear the message of God's love and mercy. Good News!

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