

# Growing Your Church from the Inside Out

## *Becoming an Outward Focused Church*

By Church of God GoFinish Team

### Welcome and Introduction

#### Opening Slide-Growing Your Church from the Inside Out

Welcome! It is a pleasure to join you as a facilitator for this ministry training session. Our goal is to provide **information** with **inspiration**!

#### Slide – graphic on “people focused church”

Our **goal** is to become a “**people focused church!**” The concept is simple: **Get out of the church and serve somebody!** As believers **serve others**, their focus will change as compassion fills their hearts. The greatest way to be people focused is for **believers** to **think of themselves as missionaries**.



#### Slide – Scripture: Acts

2:46-47

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Open with prayer!*

#### Slide – What it said then and what it means now

“With one accord” – **unity**.

“In the temple” – **inside the church ministering to each other**.

“Breaking bread from house to house” – **outside the church ministering to unchurched community**.

“With gladness” – **joy in ministry**.

“Having favor” – **people responding to kindness**.

“The Lord added to the church” – **outreach produces growth**.

#### Slide – Turn the inside outside

**Reorganize the inside.**

**Focus on the outside.**

**Act now.**

## Slide – The trap of being inward focused

### Introduction The trap of being an “inside focused” church

**Inward focus** is like a subtle bear trap.

- What **makes it subtle** is that it is **hidden**.
- It's **not obvious**—it **just** sort of happens.
- But **when you realize you are caught in one**, you then know **you're in big trouble**.
  - Many **churches are caught** in the “**inside focused trap**.”

**No church starts out with just an inward focus.**

- A church **turns inward from a good thing gone bad**.
- Every church needs an inward focus such as **fellowship, congregational worship, family, love for each other, care and concern for members, and discipleship**. These are **all great things** and part of the healthy and functioning body of Christ. The danger is that they can **become the sole focus of the church**.
- The church must **establish a balance** between the *inside* ministry and the *outside* ministry.
- It is so easy for a local congregation to **lose their outside focus** and **become preoccupied** with the **apparent needs and desires of the members**.

**Museum mentality**—*where we came from or where we are going*.

- **Human nature tends to avoid those who are different**. It establishes insiders (*they are one of us*) and outsiders (*they are not like us*).
  - It's what **Jesus fought against**. **Luke 15:1-2** tells us that the *tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him*.
  - But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “*This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.*”
- The reason our churches begin a **downward spiral** is because over time **the church tends to turn inward**—to focus on pleasing those on the inside. They stop reaching out to the lost and marginalized. As a result, the **church becomes a comfortable museum of what God once did** rather than an example of what God still does.
- The **indicators of an inward-looking church are easy to spot**. The **budget** shows that most of the money spent is for the church facility or the membership; the church becomes “**program driven**,” **lack of evangelistic fervor**; and a **lack of concern** about the surrounding **community**.
- **God's nature is the opposite**. God's nature **leads him to open the door to all people** (John 3:16). The result is **always positive**. **It's why we have hope**.

## The result of being inward focused.

- **Evangelism** diminishes.
- **Programming** becomes all about *what the Christians want for themselves*.
- The **worship service** begins to **cater only to those in the body of Christ**.
- **Jesus is demoted**.
  - A **church** can become so **busy** with **people, processes, programs, problems**, etc. that **Jesus is no longer the recognized head of the body** and the established supremacy.
  - Jesus **must always be lifted up!**
  - **His great commission** must always be the **church's number one priority**.
    - It takes an **intentional effort** to keep an **outward focus** on those who are far from **God** while at the same time **ministering to the members and attenders**.

## Slide-why don't churches grow?

### Why don't churches grow?

- The **2020 Faith Communities Today (FACT)** study of more than **15,000 U.S. religious congregations** revealed that **7 out of 10 U.S. churches have 100 or fewer attendees in weekly worship services**. The average church size in the USA is around 200 people. **Further, only 65 people attend the median size church each week**.
  - In the **Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)** there are **6850 churches**; **4,300 will have less than 100** on Sunday morning.
- Carl George in his book titled *How to Break Growth Barriers* says that **85% of all Protestant churches in North America never break the 200-attendance mark**.
  - Please understand, there's **nothing wrong with being a small church**.
  - ***But it is a fact that most every small church leader expresses a desire for his or her church to grow.***
- So **why is it that most churches never break the 200-attendance mark?** Why do they remain small and inward focused?
- It's not:
  - **Desire**. *Most leaders we know want their church to reach more people.*
  - **A lack of prayer**. *Many small church leaders are incredibly faithful in prayer.*
  - **Love**. *People in smaller churches love people in a very real way.*
  - **Facility**. *Growth can start in the most unlikely places.*
- The reason is **not spiritual**, it is **organizational**.

## Slide-reasons why churches are not growing

### Reasons why churches are not growing.

### Small churches are organized to stay small.

- They **organize, behave, lead, and manage** like a *small organization*.
  - **Think about it!** There's a **world of difference** between how you organize a corner store and how you organize a larger supermarket.
- Do you remember the **little corner convenience stores** that were in nearly every neighborhood in our communities?

- In these corner markets **one or two people ran everything**. Want to talk to the CEO? It was it **was the same one stocking shelves**. Want to see the Director of Marketing? It was the **cashier**—they were at the **cash register**.
- We call stores like this “**Mom and Pop**” stores and **usually a handful of people do everything**, and **they organize their business to stay small**. Which is fine if you’re **content with “smallness”** and don’t want to grow.
- But you **can’t run a supermarket that way**.
  - You **organize differently**.
  - You **manage differently**.
    - There’s a **produce manager, deli manager, beverage manager** and **people who only stock shelves**. There’s a **floor manager, shift manager, general manager** and so much more.
- A **bigger vision** requires a **new organizational plan**. A **growing church** requires a **big vision and an organizational plan to go with it**.
  - Simply put, **you need to restructure bigger to grow bigger**.

### The pastor does everything.

- The **expectations** that small churches put on the pastor are significant.
  - He or she is supposed to **prepare a message, lead the Bible study, show up early to set up chairs, organize the next event, make hospital visits, recruit volunteers, AND** make sure to **care for themselves well enough that they don’t burn out**.
- Here’s why **this will not work in a church that is growing**:
  - **First, it doesn’t multiply**.
    - If everything that gets done **depends on just a few people**, the **church won’t grow beyond the ability of these people**.
    - A church **organized like this will have about the 65 people** we saw in the statistics mentioned above.
  - **Second, if the pastor does everything**, it’s a complete **reversal of how God designed the church to work**.
    - It is **backward** from the church’s God-given design.
    - **God gifts his people**, not just the pastor, **for works of ministry**.
    - The church should be **structured around this principle**.
  - **Third, there is just too much work** to be done by a few people.
    - They just **can’t get it all done**.
    - Many pastors are **already maxed out** and at the **point of burn out** because the **task is just too great and overwhelming**.

## The pastor is the primary caregiver.

- **Pastoral care involves more people** than just the **pastor**.
  - When the pastor must **visit every sick person**, do every wedding, every funeral and make **regular house calls**, he or she becomes **incapable of doing other things**.
- **If you're good at pastoral care, you'll grow the church to about 100 people** and then **disappoint people** when you can't get to every event anymore.
  - Or **you'll just burn out**. One person (or just a few at the top) creates **false expectations** and many **people get their feelings hurt** in the process.
- **Pastoral care is having someone who cares. It doesn't have to be the pastor.**

## The lack of leadership issue.

- This is the **number one problem** we hear in church revitalization: *where do I find leaders?*
- Good leaders don't **randomly assemble**.
  - They are **attracted by clear and compelling missions** like the **mission** and **vision** of the **church**.
  - They are **challenged, nurtured, and inspired** by **skillful pastors** who have devoted their **lives to a cause greater than themselves**.
  - **Growing churches don't buy great leaders, they build them.**
  - When **churches release the laity for ministry** the leaders will emerge.

## Micromanagement.

- If you need **permission every time you need to buy paper towels or repaint an office**, you have a control issue.
  - Many boards and committees who **micromanage** do so **because that's where most people simply default**.
  - A **leadership team** is needed that will **protect the mission and vision** and **empower other team members to accomplish it** and then **get out of the way**.
  - It is **not always easy to let go**:
- **Committees tend to weaken the vision—forming ministry teams is the answer.**
  - **Someone said, “For God so loved the world that he didn't send a committee!”**
  - The **answer is small groups and teams acting with empowerment and authority**.
  - An **empowered team** has the **authority to make decisions and choose options**. One pastor we know of says that the **two most empowering words for ministry teams are “you choose.”**
- **Individuals are almost always more courageous** than groups.
  - When **everyone wants to have a say**, very **little gets done**.
  - **Control by a few individuals is a silent killer** for most churches trying to grow.

**Slide-graphic on restructuring****The Process of Reorganizing****Slide-change the church culture****Change the church culture.**

**A church's culture is the *atmosphere* in which the church functions.**

The best way to understand culture is the statement: ***"This is how we do things here."***  
It is possible to talk about **grace** and still be a **legalist**. It's possible to talk about **Jesus** and still be **self-centered**. It's possible to talk about **guests** and still be **unwelcoming**.

**Words** tend to **frame** the **culture** of a church. Every word you speak has **benefits** and **baggage**. The **language you choose defines your church's culture** in the minds of the **people you lead** and the **people you serve**.

**Thoughts on culture**

**"Say I'm new to a church. Should I be able to pick up on its culture sitting in the pew?"**

*Yes. You can go to a new church and, in short order "sniff" culture! Have you ever been to a new place and said to yourself (or others!), "Something's not right here." Without knowing what it is, you just recognized culture. Think about the different cultures in different restaurants, schools, churches and even homes.*

**"Is there such a thing as a healthy culture and an unhealthy culture, or is culture just something you have for good or bad?"**

*It is difficult to differentiate between good or bad culture, because culture is about groups of people. But it can be recognized as healthy or unhealthy.*

**"What are a few elements of an unhealthy culture?"**

*Lack of communication. Turf. Fear. Super controlled. No freedom. Lack of leadership development. Silos. Suspicion. Slow decision making leading to denial by delay.*

**"How important is the personality of the pastor to a healthy culture?"**

*Extremely important. Culture is created from the top and sustained at other levels of the church.*

## Slide – Adopt new cultural principles

### Adopt new cultural principles.

#### Four cultural principles statements:

**Principle one:** “The goal of our church is to be the best we can be, reach our potential, serve people better and glorify God. To do this, we must be intentional and perpetual.”

- This involves taking time out to **implement a system for constant quality analysis and improvement.**
  - Embrace two new declarations:
    - *Everything matters.*
    - *Everything is an experiment.*

**Principle two:** “We will make our church a safe, secure environment to share ideas.”

- The word “secure” means “**without fear.**”
  - Our **leaders must feel secure enough** to let anyone **share an idea** without taking it **personally.**
  - They must **make sure that new ideas** and the **people who bring them up** feel **accepted and affirmed.**

**Principle three:** “We will build a ‘one-team’ mindset to avoid departmental barriers.”

- The goal is first to **get the church to realize that there is only one team.** As a church grows, it becomes **departmentalized.**
  - The **youth ministry** does its thing.
  - The **worship team** does its thing.
  - The **children’s ministry** does its thing.
- The **more we think of our own little ministry domains,** the **less prone** we are to **see the big picture and help each other.**
- We must **act like a single team** instead of many little teams.
  - We will use **many sub-teams,** but we function as only one team in unity.

**Principle four:** “We will eliminate slogans, short-term and numeral goals.”

- We must **think strategically—in the long term** because **quality improvement is a long-term and on-going process.**
  - The **idea here is to avoid the typical short-term things that only give temporary motivation.**
- We must **refuse to play the numbers game.** Numbers are important but **they are not the main goal.**

## Slide – Change the church attitudes

### Change the church attitudes!

A church’s attitude determines its direction. It is a proven fact that when a person is being interviewed for a job, **attitude counts for 85%** and **knowledge 15%.**

- How you **act** is more important than what you **know!**

## Attitude change resolutions for a people focused church:

### “We Can vs. We Can’t.”

- **Growing churches believe they can. Declining churches believe they can’t.** They’re **both right**.
- **Growing churches make a way when there’s no way**, which seems to be what **God specializes in**.
  - Does your **leadership team** come up with **20 ways to make it happen**, or **20 reasons why it won’t work**?
- **Growing churches believe they can.** It’s that simple.

### “Them vs. Us.”

- **Declining churches focus on themselves.**
- **Growing churches focus on the people they’re trying to reach.**
  - If your **leadership conversations** are all about the needs and wants of your members, it’s a **sign that your church is insider focused**.

### “Principles vs. Preferences.”

- **Declining churches focus on their member’s preferences.**
  - *Old Sister Susie doesn’t like the music.*
  - *Mr. Phillips thinks we’re not deep enough.*
  - *Young Bill wants to start a new program.*
    - The end result is that the leaders respond, trying to please everybody.
- In reality, **declining churches bend to the preferences of its members.**
- Growing churches **don’t focus on preferences**—they focus on principle.
  - Principles that will **help them reach new people**.

### “Proactive vs. Reactive.”

- **Growing churches are proactive.** They **choose their agenda** and **immediately get on issues that can impact their future**.
- **Declining churches are reactive**, letting **members determine the agenda** and reacting to problems as they arise.
- The **leaders in a growing church** simply refuse to yield to the agenda of others that would take them off mission.

## Slide – Change the leadership model

### Change the leadership model.

- **Give people ownership.**
  - Give them **true empowerment** not just verbal permission.
  - Help to unleash their **influence** and **resources**.
- **Organize a Church Action Team** (more about this in the next section!)
- Develop **small groups and teams**.
  - Put the **right people in the right place**.
- Jim Collins in his famous book, *Good to Great* said, **“Get the right people on the bus and get the right people in the right seats.”**



- He goes on to say, *“When confronted with any problem or opportunity, shift the decision from a “what” question (“what should we do?”) into a “who” decision (“who would be the right person to take responsibility for this?”).*
  - Collins’ mantra is: *First who then what!*
- It is interesting to note that **the Bible has very little to say about particular church leadership structure models**. The New Testament **talks more about the roles of people** – specifically, elders and deacons. There is an understanding that **character matters more than gifts** when you review the qualifications.

## Slide – ministry improvement areas

### Ministry improvement areas.

- **Guest services / hospitality.**
  - **This is a visitor’s first impression.** The church has to excel here. People judge the church in large part based on the first impression given to them.
    - For example, you could **have an outstanding sermon**, but if your **people weren’t friendly**, then a visitor likely **won’t be back**.
  - Do you give an **over-the-top welcome**? Do you welcome people as soon as they arrive on the property?
  - Start by **evaluating places where the guest may not receive** an over-the-top experience and **begin working to improve those areas**.
- **Children’s ministry**
  - Many people **looking for a church home will base their decision simply on the children’s ministry**.
  - With access to all the latest gadgets and videos, children now look to **those things for their source of entertainment**.
    - Which means **churches must look for ways to use the latest technology** to reach and connect with kids at church.
- **Order of service**
  - **Pay attendance** to the tempo, flow, or “**cadence**” of the service. The “pacing of the service is critical to a meaningful worship experience. The “what comes next” elements are essential.
  - If announcements are **longer than 3 minutes, you’re probably geared toward insiders**.
  - The purpose of a **welcome is to welcome people**, not give detailed announcements.
- **Church website**
  - Your church website is the **very first impression** many people have of your church before they even come to your facility. In fact, **many people will base their decision as to whether or not they’ll come to your church simply by looking at your website**.
  - The key is **someone** needs to be looking at it.
  - Your website is not something that, **once created, sits on the shelf and is never updated**.
  - It’s your **digital location and must receive care and attention just like the “hands-on” ministries receive**.
- **Assimilation / connections / guest follow-up**
  - People **want to feel like they belong**. They want to **connect**.
  - So many people **walk right out the back door of churches** because someone (somewhere along the process) **dropped the ball**.
  - **Careful attention** to your processes and systems for follow-up, ministry participation, and volunteerism **has to happen all the time**.

- **Facility appearance**

- The **appearance** of your facility **influences people's thoughts about your church**. When it's **neat and tidy**, people feel like you have your act together. **If it's a little sloppy or cluttered**, people might **view the church less positively**.
- You need to **identify the person in your church that has perfectionist traits**. Have **that person do an inventory** of your entire facility, inside and out.

You may read this and say, “**Where do I begin?**” The key is simply to ***start somewhere***. You **can't knock it all out in one shot**. **It will take time**. Start with the **easiest area** for an “easy win.”

## Slide-graphic “an outward focused church”

### Focus on the Outside

#### Slide-introduction

#### Introduction

- An **outward focused church** ultimately **creates healthy insiders**.
- Many **factors contribute to the creation of a healthy church**, but **outward focus** is ***non-negotiable***.
  - In an **outsider-focused church**, **insiders sacrifice** for the **sake of outsiders**.
    - They **give up their seats**, they **greet them at the door**, they **help them find their classes**, they **help them with seating**, they **offer their service**—***they really care!***
  - They **realize that when they give, others live**.
    - They know that **church isn't about them**—it is about **others outside the church**.
- **Externally focused churches** realize that **sacrifice for the sake of others is a pathway to joy**.
  - Here's the truth of it all: ***when you die to yourself, something greater rises***.

#### Slide – practices of outward focused churches

### Practices of outward focused churches

#### Good deeds and good are handmaidens and work together.

- Just as it takes two wings to lift an airplane off the ground, externally focused churches couple **good news with good deeds** to make an impact on their communities.
- **Motto**: “Real churches are engaged in the life of the community through ministry and service to others.”

#### The “Ministry of Presence” is vital to the health and well-being of community.

- Believe that their communities cannot be truly healthy without the church's involvement.
- Recognize that God has placed them in their communities (whether they feel wanted or not) to be salt, light, and leaven.
  - It is only when the church is mixed into the very life and conversation of the city that it can be an effective force for change.
- Seek to build bridges instead of walls—assets of our communities, not one of the liabilities.
- They value impact and influence in the community more than attendance.

## Discipleship happens inside and outside the four walls of this church.

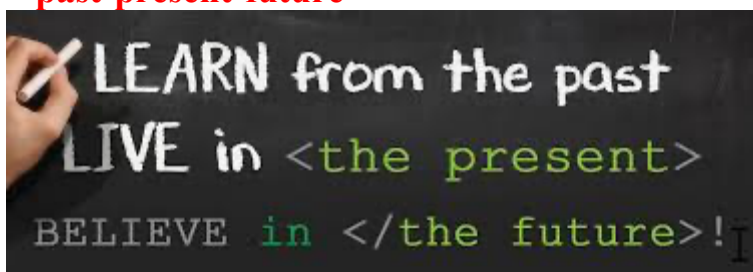
- We begin to grow when we take **healthy responsibility** for the **growth** of another person.
- Christians **grow best when they are serving and giving** to others.
  - Because service and ministry are **part of growth model** for the church and the **spiritual formation** of its people, **it is not unusual** for huge percentages of their congregations to serve and minister outside the walls of the church.

## The way to inwardly build a church is through outward service.

- Congregations with **direct participation in community outreach ministries** are growing.
- **Outside focused churches have the advantage of deploying people into the community** where they can be church to people through their love and service.
  - **Their light shines!** One believer we know says, *"I shine so that others can see the light of Christ!"*
- *If you go after the people nobody wants, you'll end up with the people everybody wants.*

## Where do we begin?

### Slide —past-present-future



**The past is a place of  
reference not a place of  
residence!  
We can't live there!**



### Slide – leaders are change agents

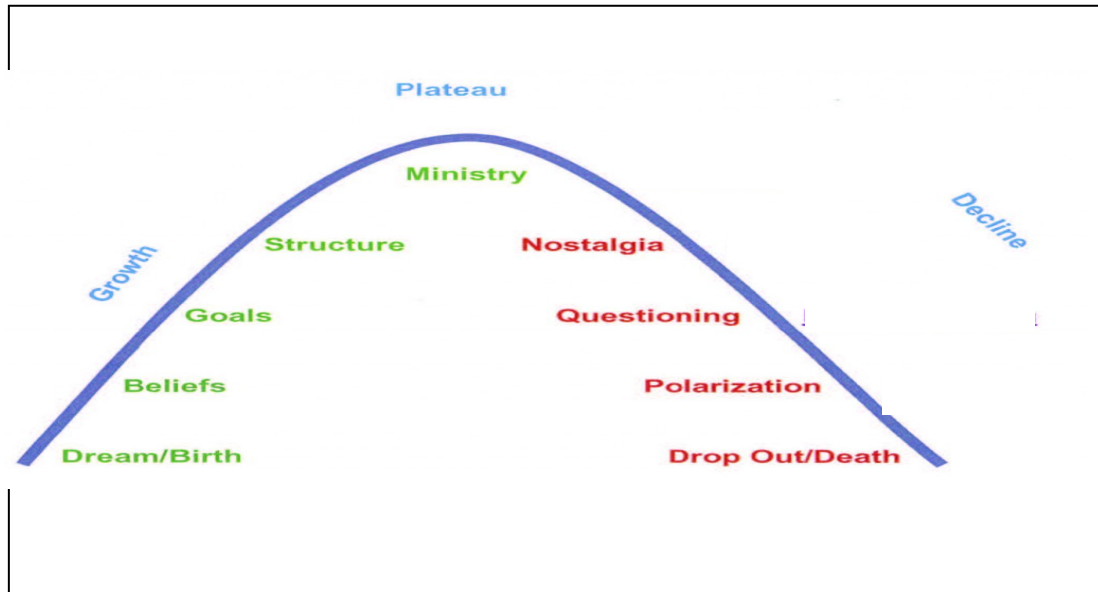
#### Leaders are change agents.

- Church life isn't the same as it was **100 years ago**. As **times change**, so do churches.
- The **most difficult part of church revitalization** is **dealing with the relationships** that are **affected by change**.
  - Even the **slightest change** can upset some of the members. For instance, taking your **church online** isn't always going to be well-received by **older members of your church family** that may not even have a **computer or smartphone**.

- Along with the pastor, lay leadership in the church is crucial for effectively guiding the congregation through the changes that will be necessary for the church to turn their focus outward. Leaders become the “change agents!”

### Slide – life cycle of a church

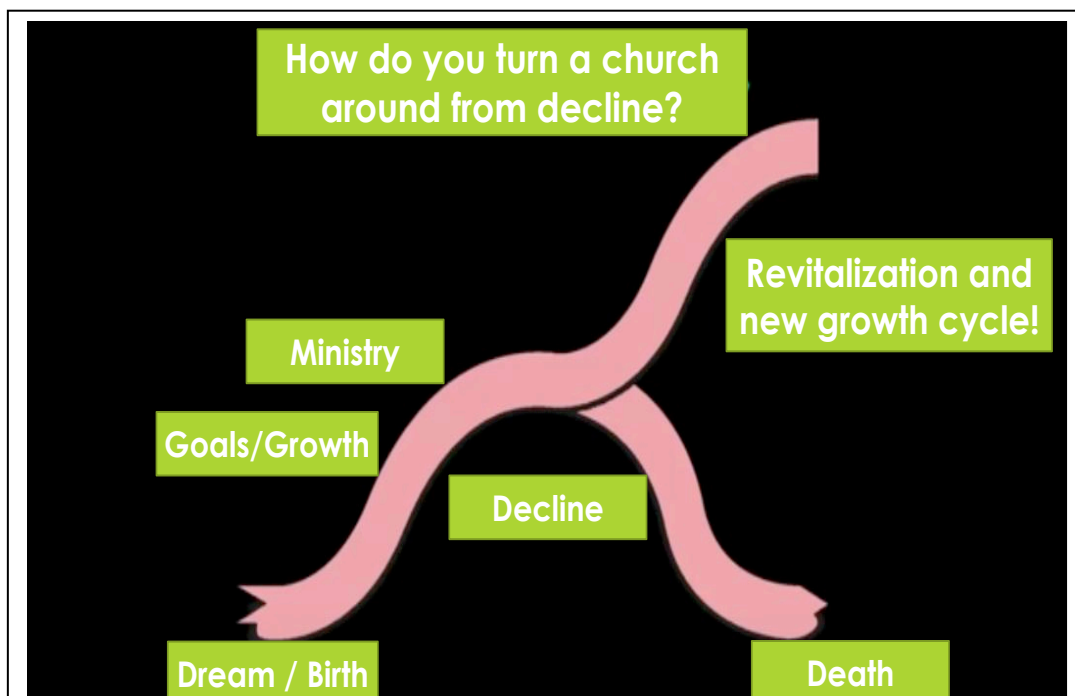
A deeper look into the life cycle of a church:



### Slide – Stagnation or growth graphic

A local church cannot stay long in a “plateau” state. The church will either stagnate or grow!

### Slide – new life cycle for the church



### Three central questions:

Where are we as a church?

Where do we **want to go**?

How do we get there?

### Slide – Graphic for action plan

Needed: a strategic (long term) action plan

### Slide – A new way of thinking – part one

<u>AREA</u>	<u>OLD</u>	<u>NEW</u>
Leaders	delegation	
Pastor	preacher	
People	spectators	
Groups	fellowship	
Teams	acceptable	

### Slide – A new way of thinking – part two

<u>AREA</u>	<u>OLD</u>	<u>NEW</u>
Leaders	delegation	multiplication
Pastor	preacher	equipper
People	spectators	participants
Groups	fellowship	ministry
Teams	acceptable	necessary

Go EPIC! Empowering People / Inspiring Change.

### Slide - Our ultimate goal

Ultimate goal: a healthy church

Church health is a work of God. Here are the indicators:

Biblical **teaching** and preaching  
 Steadfast **prayer**  
 Trained **leaders**  
 An **outward** focus  
 Continuing **evangelism**  
**Discipleship** training

Inspiring **worship**  
 Wise **administration**  
 Empowered **laity**  
 Team and small **group** ministry  
 Ministry in the **community** and **marketplace**  
 Generosity in **giving** and use of gifts

## Slide – graphic for the formation of church action team

### Slide – empowered action team

#### The Church Action Team (CAT)

This **empowered team** functions to lead the church through the growth process.

- The **lead pastor is always the team leader**.
  - The **pastor** can also **select an assistant team leader** if needed. This could be a **talented lay leader**, or a **staff person**.
- The team should **reflect the dynamics** of the **congregation** with respect to **age, gender, vocation** and they should be **spiritually mature and gifted**.
- Prospective **members** include any **staff (paid or volunteer)**, **departmental leaders**, **church council members**, **small group leaders** (men's and/or women's ministry) and **influential lay leaders**. You are looking for those who exert influence over the church (the **patriarch, matriarch**, or others).
- These are the leaders who will **generate congregational buy-in or trust** in the process. Also, **forming a strategic (long-term) team** shows **unity** within the leadership.
- It tells the congregation that **revitalization** and necessary **changes** are **not just the pastors idea**.
- The **size of the team** is in direct **proportion to the size of the church**. We suggest **five to seven** for a **small church** and up to **fifteen to twenty** for **larger congregations**.

## Slide – big idea

### Big Idea of the Church Action Team.

- CONNECT – CARE – GIVE.
- Help the church become a “**people focused**” congregation.

## Slide –tasks of the Church Action Team

### Tasks of the Church Action Team

Refine / restate **vision** and **mission**.

Determine **target groups** (people we want to reach)

Review and refine the church's work with **visitors**.

Conduct **facilities inspection**—check everything.

Organize **new outreach ministries** to the community (outreach goal: **10% of immediate community**).

## Slide – Sample outreach ideas of the Church Action Team

### Sample outreach ideas:

Hold a family movie night in a public place.

Honor first responders in a church service.

Sponsor a breakfast/lunch for public school teachers.

Provide a free community lunch.

Host a big rummage sale but make it “free to all.”

Hundreds more! Google “sample church outreach ideas.”

## Slide-Act now graphic

Don't **talk**, just **act**.  
 Don't **say**, just **show**.  
 Don't **promise**, just **prove**.

### Thoughts on graphic:

- **Growing churches** with an outward focus **act**—and they **act now**.
- **Declining churches** don't say they won't act, **they'll just say they'll get to it 'eventually',** or "someday," or "**when the time is right**"—all of which means **never**.
  - **Great churches** that are growing **banish** the word "someday" and other **words like it from their vocabulary**.
- Someone said, "**action produces traction**."

## Slide – dictionary definition of implementation with graphic

**"The process of putting a decision or plan into effect"**  
*Ideas are **useless** unless **used**.*  
*The **proof of their value** is in their **implementation**. Until then, they are in **limbo**.*

## Slide-quote by Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin said, "***Well done is better than well said.***"

***Special note:** This material is written and prepared to be taught in a weekend three to four hour session; or as a series in midweek classes. Further, there is enough information for this lecture to be used in a Christian education format such as Sunday School or a church teaching institute.*

*Also, don't forget to download the companion **PowerPoint® Slide Presentation** and the **Student's Handout** that are available.*