

STARTING A CHURCH THAT KEEPS ON GROWING

One of the most intriguing tests of coordination known to man is the art of juggling. Probably everyone has tried it at least once. However, most people abandon the pursuit quickly in order to avoid marring that prized human possession called “self-image.” There are only a few rare individuals who risk humiliation long enough to master the art. They are the ones who grasp the “simplicity” of catching the right ball with the appropriate hand at the right time and throwing it up in the right place at the right time to catch it again.

How to Use this Handbook

The first part of this handbook contains a very brief overview of ten principles for a growing and reproducing church. A checklist is included for you to use in periodically evaluating your church to ensure that you are capitalizing on the principles (pages 2-3).

The essence of the handbook contains descriptions of the major phases of new church development with appropriate checklists to help you deal with the right issues at the right time (pages 4-15).

A progress chart is included at the end to enable you to evaluate and monitor your progress (page 16).

For additional details and assistance, the developmental phases are cross-referenced in the Church Planter's Toolkit, published by Church Smart Resources (800-253-4276 USA) and may be ordered through The International Centre for Leadership Development and Evangelism, 1-800-804-0777 Canada, www.GrowingLeadership.com.

By appropriately using this handbook in conjunction with the Church Planter's Toolkit you can greatly enhance the growth potential of your new church. You can also maintain a healthy self-image by leaving the juggling act to someone else.

A Growing and Reproducing Church is Characterized by ...

1. **Visionizing Faith and Prayer.** Successful church planters live out a faith characterized by big dreams, bold actions, and fervent prayer. They consistently seek vision and blessing from God, expecting him to do great things.
2. **Effective Pastoral Leadership.** Leaders must set goals according to the will of God, cultivate within the people a sense of unity and commitment to the goals, and equip the people to work together in accomplishing the goals.
3. **Clear Philosophy of Ministry.** The leaders must *clearly* and *explicitly* define the *specific* purpose, priorities, and style of ministry for their church in their locals.
4. **Celebrative Worship.** True worship is the *celebration* and adoration of God's character and activities. This kind of worship is contemporary and culturally relevant to the audience, well-planned, response-oriented, and bathed in a climate of love and obedience to God and each other.
5. **Expanding network of Cell Groups.** Effective pastoral care, evangelism, assimilation, and spiritual development occur through the growth and multiplication of different kinds of small groups.
6. **Mobilization According to Spiritual Gifts.** Healthy and growing churches help believers discover, develop, and use their God-given gifts in fulfilling and meaningful service.
7. **Effective Outreach.** Evangelism is persuading people to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to serve him in the fellowship of His church. Leaders cultivate the process of evangelism by mobilizing believers to reach their network of relationships for Christ and to assimilate newcomers into the church.
8. **Leadership Development.** Since the church cannot grow without an expanding supply of effective leaders, people must be constantly recruited, trained, and mobilized to provide leadership for the church ministry.
9. **Multiplication of Churches.** Healthy churches, like healthy organisms, reproduce. To reproduce churches, the leaders must cultivate a strategic vision to make disciples by starting churches that start other churches.
10. **Great Commission Orientation.** Healthy churches are aware of the tremendous opportunities for reaching people. The growing and reproducing church has Great Commission "eyes" for the world which sees the fields of unchurched people ripe for the harvest and focuses resources to obey Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations."

PRINCIPLES FOR GROWTH AND REPRODUCTION

Church Evaluation Sheet

This evaluation sheet is designed to help you see how well your church is implementing the essential principles for a growing, reproducing church. For each principle listed, circle the number on the right which most accurately describes how well your church is implementing that principle. When you have completed the 10 principles, add the numbers to derive your total score.

My church is characterized by:		low			high	
1.	Visionizing faith and prayer	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Effective pastoral leadership	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Clear Philosophy of ministry	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Celebrative worship	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Expanding network of cell groups	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Mobilization according to gifts	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Effective outreach	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Leadership development	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Multiplication of churches	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Great Commission orientation	1	2	3	4	5

Total score = _____

A score of 30 indicates that your church cannot expect much growth and there is plenty of room for improvement. A score of less than 30 indicates a negative growth potential and needs immediate attention. Your goal should be to achieve a score of 40-50.

My top priorities for development: _____

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A CHURCH

The local church is a living organism – it is the Body of Christ. As a living organism, it closely parallels the life cycle of human beings. Therefore, for the sake of the analogy, let's examine a church's development through the five major stages of physical growth.

Conception

Just as a person's life cannot begin without conception, so too, the life of a church does not begin without its own conception. The critical elements of human conception are the union of sperm and egg with the resultant combination of chromosomes. The critical elements in the conception of a new church include the vision for the new church, the development of the initial leadership team, and the definition of a clear philosophy of ministry or game plan for fulfilling the dream.

Prenatal Development

Before a child can be born to live a healthy life he or she must develop a certain degree of structure and strength. Many different functions need to develop prior to birth in order to assure a healthy baby. Likewise, a new church must develop a certain degree of complexity and vitality before it can survive its birth in a healthy, successful manner. For the church, birth represents the first public worship.

Several critical elements must be operative if the first public worship service of a church is to be followed by sturdy and healthy growth. These include a strong focus on outreach to the unchurched; training and mobilizing of cell group leaders; formulation of preliminary plans for, and initial progress in gift-based ministry, group life, leadership development, worship, evangelism, assimilation, and shepherding.

Birth

Just as a baby enters the world at birth, so the new church "goes public" at its first worship service. Unless proper development occurs in the conception and pre-natal stages, a healthy church cannot be born. Launching public worship services too early can result in a miscarriage or premature baby requiring intensive care. Likewise, delaying too long could cause serious complications to occur.

Timing and location of the first worship service is crucial for a healthy birth of a new church. The style of worship also needs to be contemporary and culturally relevant. The other ingredient accompanying the birth is programming for young children.

Growth to Maturity

Although this stage of development can last anywhere from 15-25 years in human life, the duration is (or should be) much, much shorter in the life of a church. Granted, this stage is just as important in the life of a new church as it is in the life of a child.

This stage duplicates, in many ways, the pre-natal development stage. In a human, the same organs that initially developed in the pre-natal stage further grow and strengthen. Now, however, the child is developing largely on his own and is much less dependent upon the mother. A church also develops many of the same elements as were being developed in prenatal growth, but is now doing so with more autonomy and less dependence upon the mother church and/or denomination.

Those elements which are either starting or developing further in this stage include leadership development, gift-based ministry, group life, worship, evangelism, assimilation, youth ministry, administrative support, and other specialized ministries.

Reproduction

The rule of the created order is that when an organism reaches maturity, it will reproduce. Certain factors can provide exceptions to this rule but, nevertheless, the rule is reproduction. The same holds true for the local church. If a church is healthy, it will reproduce as soon as it reaches a certain degree of maturity.

When does a healthy church reach reproductive maturity? This is difficult to say. Some churches have reproduced within a few months of launching their first public worship service. Most churches *can and certainly should* reproduce within 2-3 years of their first public worship service.

The critical elements which help to ensure the reproduction of churches include a *focused* and *functioning* philosophy of ministry which contains a vision for fulfilling the Great Commission through the multiplication of churches.

PHASE ONE = CONCEPTION

The conception of a human being and the conception of a church are acts or phases which are both natural and supernatural. Both should occur with regularity and in a way that is not terribly surprising. But at the same time, neither conception would really occur or result in anything apart from the work of God. Take God out of the picture in either case and conception would never occur.

Since the major elements of human conception are nearly common knowledge and have little bearing on the conception of a church, let's confine this analysis only to the elements of church conception.

Strategic Vision

The conception of a new church begins first and foremost with a vision or dream or idea for a new church. Someone or some group of people must develop a conviction that a certain church must be planted in a certain location or among a certain people group. If two or more people have this vision, they must be in agreement about it. Any disunity regarding the vision will not allow conception to occur properly. Writing down the vision helps to clarify the overall objectives to be accomplished. It is absolutely crucial to clarify the *specific target audience* or *community* to be reached.

Strategic Planning

In addition to vision, the conception of a new church requires the definition of a clear philosophy of ministry or game plan that describes broadly how the vision will be implemented. An important step in this process is analyzing the target group or community. The philosophy of ministry will expand and clarify the vision, describing such things as priorities, style of worship, and style of ministries. It will state how the church will uniquely reach its target community and why people would even want to become involved.

Team Development

The final ingredient to be addressed in the conception phase is the formation of appropriate support systems to help the church planter in his or her ministry. Developing a church planting team can speed up the process of starting a new congregation. Financial support often needs to be arranged. Sometimes additional training is required prior to launching a new church project. A prayer team and a supportive family are absolutely essential.

CONCEPTION CHECKLIST

During the conception phase, the church planter should periodically review this checklist to determine the critical agenda items which need to be addressed before moving on to the prenatal phase. Unless every item is fully completed, complications may develop during the pregnancy and/or birth!

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. I have developed a clear vision for this new church	()	()
2. The initial target audience has been specifically defined.	()	()
3. I have surveyed my target audience and understand their felt needs.	()	()
4. I have formulated a focused philosophy of ministry which describes the new church's:		
-purpose	()	()
-priorities	()	()
-style of worship	()	()
-style of ministries	()	()
-kinds of ministries	()	()
5. My vision is spelled out in explicit goals and action plans.	()	()
6. I have mobilized my support team and obtained agreement regarding the new church project.	()	()
7. I have received permission to begin the new church project (if needed).	()	()

My top priorities for development: _____

PHASE TWO = PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT

It is misleading that a person's age is determined from the point of his or her birth date rather than date of conception. The truth of the matter is that life starts not at birth, but at conception with a lot of life packed into those nine months of prenatal development. Cells divide and differentiate into organs which grow in mass and strength. Increasingly the child grows into higher levels of consciousness and can respond to sound, touch, and other stimuli.

For the church, too, life begins at conception and not at birth. In order for a church to embark upon a healthy and effective life, it too must accomplish a great deal during the "prenatal" stage.

If a church rushes into its first public worship service without having developed properly, it can suffer the same fate of a miscarried or aborted child. On the other hand, if a church spends too much time in prenatal development it will lose life-giving momentum and vision as a child loses life-giving blood and nutrients with the breakdown of the placenta.

The key for successful prenatal development of a church is to know what needs to be accomplished prior to the launching of worship services. If the essential functions are developed during pregnancy, then a healthy baby can be expected.

Outreach and Evangelism

Church planting is not an effort to reshuffle the family of God, but to add to it. Evangelism must be consistent, natural, relevant and effective. The church planter's leadership style in reaching and winning others to Christ is very important!

Group Multiplication

Leaders must be trained and mobilized to lead cell groups within the new church. These groups are essential to effective evangelism and assimilation, providing a healthy and growing environment for new people.

Ministry Foundations

Preliminary plans must be formulated for every major ministry the church will develop within the next 1-3 years. Also, the initial implementation of many ministries should be in process *before* moving to the next phase. Otherwise, you may find yourself with too much to do immediately after launching worship services, losing momentum and/or people.

PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
1. Unbelievers are coming to faith in Christ.	()	()
2. New leaders are being trained to start cell groups.	()	()
3. At least two or three groups are in operation now.	()	()
4. New people are being assimilated into the church through these groups.	()	()
5. Major ministries which will start within the next 1-3 years have been identified.	()	()
6. Initial plans have been formulated for each of the ministries.	()	()
7. List below five of your essential ministries which you desire to have operating well within the next 6-12 months and indicate which of these ministries you have already begun to implement.		
_____	()	
_____	()	
_____	()	
_____	()	
_____	()	

My top priorities for development: _____

PHASE THREE = BIRTH

The birth of a new church is just as exciting as the birth of a baby. After months of anticipation, preparation and critical development that big day arrives when the new church holds its first public worship service. The new church has developed enough of its own strength and maturity that it can safely and gladly announce to the general public, “We’re here and have we ever got something to offer to you!”

Just as the delivery process requires a balance of skill and timing, so the initial “entrance” of a new church into the world must be carefully planned and implemented.

Public Worship Services

Your first worship service makes a very important statement about your church. Consequently, you should put a great deal of thought into it. Make worship preparation a special event so that people will truly celebrate God. Establishing a weekly rehearsal from the start will allow the worship leaders to be ready to guide people into the presence of God.

The critical size needed for effective worship will vary depending on your philosophy of ministry. You’ll want to start having services when you have enough people for your style of worship. Your worship facilities should be easy to locate and provide for plenty of parking and education space for the nursery and children’s ministries.

Also, you must have clearly defined your worship style so that it is culturally relevant to your target group. This is particularly important if you plan to attract and assimilate unchurched people into your congregation.

Children’s Programming

A major question many parents ask when they consider a new church is: “What does this church have to offer for my children?” That question is especially important for those with younger children. So, before you start your first worship service, you should train people to lead an effective ministry for children.

Parents look for at least three things: 1) a safe, happy, learning environment; 2) evidence that their children were cared for and enjoyed themselves; 3) proof that they learned Bible truths. Providing consistent pastoral care for children and their families greatly increases a new church’s potential for growth.

BIRTH CHECKLIST

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. We have adapted our style of worship so that it will be appropriate for people in the target group.	()	()
2. We have secured an easy-to-find location with the proper balance between worship, parking and education space.	()	()
3. Our church has enough people to conduct our style of worship.	()	()
4. We have a weekly rehearsal so that our worship is a celebration.	()	()
5. We have trained leaders for our children's ministry.	()	()
6. We provide excellent nursery care that pleases the parents.	()	()
7. Our children's program is effective in reaching and assimilating new children and their families	()	()
8. More leaders are being trained to provide more children's classes as the new church grows.	()	()

My top priorities for development: _____

Action Plan

What	by when	by whom
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PHASE FOUR = GROWTH TO MATURITY

Independence and self-sufficiency are key words for this stage of growth. As an infant grows to childhood, then to adolescence and into adulthood, his maturity levels are marked by increasing independence and self-sufficiency. He or she learns how to live and begins to have an impact on the surrounding world.

Likewise, as a church grows to maturity it becomes stronger and increasingly self-sufficient. It depends less and less on the mother church and/or denomination for its well-being and effectiveness. Essentially, all the growth which occurs in this phase is an amplification of the growth which took place in prenatal development. The key elements of growth in this phase include the following.

Leadership Development

In order for the church to experience continued growth, more leaders must be constantly recruited, trained, and mobilized into ministries for which God has gifted them. Effective churches create a dynamic ministry environment that continually develops new leaders and strengthens current leaders.

Ministry Development

The church leadership team must guide the process of evaluating, planning and implementing ministries that accomplish church goals. If a church is going to continue growth, then believers need systematic training in order to discover, develop and use their God given gifts in ministry.

Evangelism and Assimilation

Making disciples is a primary mandate for all churches and must always receive high emphasis in time, creativity, money and programming. The best evangelism occurs through natural and existing relationships. These “redemptive relationships” must be constantly cultivated with the harvest effectively assimilated into the life of the church. New groups must be started to incorporate new people.

Dynamic Worship

The worship of God stems from the greatest command given to us (Mk 12:29-30). Constant attention to high quality, creative worship is imperative.

GROWTH TO MATURITY CHECKLIST

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Our church is effective in outreach.	()	()
2. Newcomers are being assimilated.	()	()
3. There are at least 6-7 cell groups for every 100 people attending.	()	()
4. New leaders are regularly recruited, trained, and mobilized into new and existing ministries.	()	()
5. Our people are mobilized to use their spiritual gifts in ministry.	()	()
6. There are at least 60 roles or tasks for every 100 people attending.	()	()
7. Ministries are developed according to our philosophy and priorities in order to meet community/church needs.	()	()
8. Evaluation of all ministries occurs regularly; ineffective ones are modified or replaced.	()	()
9. The quality of Christian character and commitment in our church is increasing.	()	()
10. Our church has a 3-5 year plan that is updated annually.	()	()
11. Our people clearly understand and are committed to the goals of our church.	()	()
12. Our worship services are meaningful celebrations and help people respond to God.	()	()

My top priorities for development: _____

PHASE FIVE = REPRODUCTION

Few things in life are more exciting or challenging than becoming a parent. However, becoming a grandparent is also wonderful. Wouldn't life be pretty drab without the grandparent-grandchild relationship? Actually, humanity would cease to exist within one or two short generations were it not for the grandparent-grandchild relationship. The reason is simple. We were created to reproduce. Reproduction from one generation to the next is part of our natural job description as humans and for all living creatures in general.

Likewise, the church is born to reproduce. Not only is it a part of the natural job description of the church as a living organism (the body of Christ), reproduction is also part of a church's divine job description. If a church does not reproduce, it becomes a dead-end link in the global expansion of the church in general. If a church does not reproduce, there is something wrong since it fails to do what is supposed to occur by its very nature. Also, if a church does not reproduce, its failure could be an act of disobedience to the Lord of the Harvest.

The church is born to reproduce and will do so if it is healthy. To ensure reproductive health in the church, the following critical elements need to be in operation.

Great Commission "Eyes"

A church can reproduce if it looks out upon the fields of humanity and sees them as ripe for the harvest. This kind of church is committed to reaching the unreached and unchurched peoples of the world with a view to making them responsible, obedient disciples. This kind of church is one which is also actively involved in making disciples in its own community and sending church planters to establish new congregations in obedience to Christ.

The philosophy of ministry of a healthy, reproducing church explicitly states that the church will multiply itself. If that statement is not present, then the church has not adequately grasped the nature of the church nor the mandate to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20).

Planning and Implementation (see Mt. 9:35-38 & 28:18-20)

Leadership is needed for new churches. Praying for workers in the best means to recruit church planters. God loves to answer this prayer! As you mobilize people for new church projects, use this workbook as a guide to the process of making disciples of all people groups through the multiplication of churches.

REPRODUCTION CHECKLIST

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Our church is effectively making disciples in its own community.	()	()
2. Our church has completed a demographic study to determine people groups that need to be reached.	()	()
3. Our people are aware of the fields of the world ready to be harvested.	()	()
4. As a church, we are committed to reproduce other churches in order to make disciples of all peoples.	()	()
5. Our philosophy of ministry <i>explicitly</i> states our commitment to reproduce other churches.	()	()
6. The church budget demonstrates our commitment to start new congregations locally and around the world.	()	()
7. Our church has a specific plan to reproduce other churches.	()	()
8. We are implementing our plan to multiply new congregations.	()	()

My top priorities for development: _____

Action Plan

what	by when	by whom
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PROGRESS CHART

	Date start	Checkup points (dates)			Date finish
CONCEPTION					
Strategic vision					
Strategic planning					
Team development					
PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT					
Outreach/evangelism					
Group multiplication					
Ministry foundations					
BIRTH					
Public worship services					
Children's programming					
GROWTH TO MATURITY					
Leadership development					
Ministry development					
Evangelism/assimilation					
Dynamic worship					
REPRODUCTION					
Great Commission "eyes"					
Planning/implementation					

CHURCH EVALUATION SCHEDULE (page 3)

Date:
Date:
Date:

Date:
Date:
Date:

Date:
Date:
Date: