

Leading your Church into Growth *local*



By David Banbury, Robin Gamble and Bob Jackson



Exploring growth in the local church
Leaders' Guide

Text copyright © 2014 Leading your Church into Growth (LYCIG)

First edition 2014

All rights reserved. The material in this book is copyright and may not be photocopied without permission from LYCIG. However, the pages for the members' booklet may be copied for use within the purchaser's own church.

Published by

LYCIG
34 Wesley Avenue
Low Moor
Bradford
BD12 0NR

www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk
www.movingoncourse.org.uk
www.startcourse.org.uk

Written by David Banbury, Robin Gamble and Bob Jackson

DVD Produced by Purpix Media and Photography
Directed by Rob Purbrick

Design by Verité CM Ltd

Illustrations by Simon Smith

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotation taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. First published in Great Britain 1979.

Leading your Church into Growth: Registered Charity No 1104285



Leading
your **Church**
into
Growth *local*

By David Banbury, Robin Gamble and Bob Jackson

LEADERS' GUIDE

Contents

Course Introduction	3
Leading your Church into Growth	7
Our Focus – Committing ourselves to growth	12
Our Plan – Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!	18
Our Culture – Developing a community of invitation, welcome and hospitality	22
Leading your Church into Growth – initial review	27
Our Calling – Telling our story and helping people meet Jesus	31
Our Journey – Growing and going deeper as followers of Jesus.....	35
Our Heart – Developing worship that helps the church to grow.....	38
Leading your Church into Growth – final course review	42

Course Introduction

Just like children, plants and wisdom, churches are meant to grow (1 Corinthians 3:6). Right from Jesus' parable of the growing seeds, the purpose of the church has been to reach out to other people and to grow. Growth is hard-wired into the DNA of the church – it's what we're supposed to be doing. Yet for many of us, growing our churches is easier said than done.

Welcome to Leading your Church into Growth *local* (LYCiG *local*). Leading your Church into Growth has been running as a residential course for clergy and lay leaders for over 25 years. Many churches have found LYCiG conferences to be an inspiration and a springboard for putting the desire for growth right at the heart of everything they do. This course is designed to build on these conferences and expand that vision, including not only the church leadership, but the rest of the church too putting the LYCiG journey into the bloodstream of the local church. LYCiG *local* is designed to stimulate, teach, equip and motivate thousands of church members to play their part in leading their church into growth.

This is a course where the local church:

- **learns** key biblical teachings on growth
- **discusses**, ask questions and applies these teachings to their own situation
- **becomes** inspired and motivated
- **makes** decisions, implements plans and discovers new ways of working
- **sticks** with these plans, reviewing and adapting them as they go along.

The course should be taught by the clergy, experienced lay leaders or local consultants or guides who have been on the LYCiG national leaders' course. (If no one in your church has attended LYCiG perhaps you could borrow such a leader from a neighbouring church.) It involves a careful balance between meetings for the local church's leadership (including PCC, elders, etc.) and sessions for church members.

LYCiG *local* consists of six sessions, broken into two sets of three with a period that can be anything from 1 to 3 months between them. There are three other sessions, scattered through the process, just for your church's leadership team (the ministers, plus the wider leadership group: PCC members, committee members or church elders, for example). These help to make sure that everybody gets the most out of the open meetings.

Altogether, then, there are nine meetings – three for leaders, six for members – plus a concluding celebration event for the whole church, making ten gatherings in all. If you ran these on a weekly basis it would take two and a half months to complete the course. If you met once every month, it would take a year. You are best placed to judge what would suit your church, but we recommend somewhere between the two: if you meet once a fortnight with the odd break, it will take about five months.

In church life you never get everyone to participate, but the more people taking part, the more impact the course can have on your ministry. If you can involve a quarter or a third of your people (or even more), you'll be amazed at the way it energises your church as a whole. In the weeks leading up to the start of the members' meetings, make promoting the course a top priority. Be enthusiastic, and watch the enthusiasm spread. If at all possible, include every part of the church, including your young people. The vitality of your teenagers can help to energise the rest of the church, and they will benefit enormously from getting to know older Christians and working alongside them in this process.

How the course works:

Step 1: Initial meeting

(Leadership group)

An initial vision-sharing meeting for your key leaders. This will include clergy, PCC (or equivalent – such as elders – in non-Anglican churches), plus other key individuals such as house group leaders. Anyone who is likely to be involved in leading the sessions for the whole church should be part of this step. As this group catches the vision, use them to promote the course before step 2. Their collective enthusiasm will be far more persuasive than yours alone.

Step 2: Within a month

(Church members)

Church members meet for three teaching sessions. These are probably best held on a fortnightly basis in separate house groups or in one large single gathering that breaks down into groups. Alternatively, you can meet weekly, monthly or do the whole course over a weekend.

These three sessions are:

- Our Focus: Committing ourselves to growth
- Our Plan: Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!
- Our Culture: Developing a community of invitation, welcome and hospitality

Step 3: Within 1-2 months of the third teaching session

(Leadership group)

Meeting to discuss feedback and comments from the first three congregational gatherings. These then need to be developed into action points which can be put into practice over the next few months.

Allow some time for actions to be implemented and things to begin to happen. This will help to prepare the ground for developing a Plan for Growth (P4G) or refining an existing plan. The whole process needs to be carefully watched over.

Some churches are working to a system called Mission Action Planning, or MAP. If you are one of these then you can see this as a revision of your existing MAP or as the creation of a brand-new one.

Step 4: 1-6 months after the second leaders' meeting

(Church members)

A further three teaching, discussing and decision-making sessions:

- Our Calling: Telling our story and helping people meet Jesus
- Our Journey: Growing and going deeper as followers of Jesus
- Our Heart: Developing worship that helps the church to grow

Step 5: As soon as possible after step 4

(Leadership group)

This meeting allows the leaders to review and reflect on the process so far, identifying priorities and establishing a sense of vision. A P4G should be drawn up or refined, ready to be communicated to the whole church.

Step 6: As soon as the P4G is ready to be shared

(Whole congregation)

A celebration event for the whole church – not just those who have taken part in steps 1 to 5 – sharing the P4G and committing the church to bring that vision to life. This event could take the form of a Communion service or Eucharist, but should certainly be part of your regular pattern of Sunday services, preferably the one where you get the largest regular attendance. It is also important to share these with your mid-week congregations.

Session outline

Each of the sessions in steps 2 and 4 should follow something like this pattern:

- Introduction - 2 minutes
- Getting Started activity - 5 minutes
- Bible passage - 10 minutes
- DVD - 8 minutes
- Exercise and group work - 20 minutes
- DVD - 5 minutes
- Exercises - 20 minutes
- Response/reflection feedback - 10 minutes
- Bible passage for further reflection - 10 minutes

Each session provides enough material for a 90 minute programme. You will probably want to tailor each session to suit your particular group, perhaps leaving out some activities or spending longer on others, and that's fine. Make sure to preserve the careful balance between instructing and teaching your members and leaving room for their creativity and insight. Both are vital ingredients for shaping your church's unique P4G. Also, make sure that the time for reflection at the end of each session doesn't get squeezed out.

Handout materials

Each person coming to the meetings, including the leader, will need copies of the handout materials, which you can find in the resources book. There are handouts for all the sessions, leaders' sessions and members' sessions. They are also available as PDF files on the DVD. Just put the disc into your PC or laptop and go through your computer's file manager system. We suggest that you print / photocopy these pages on single sides in order that the response / feedback form can be collected in at the end of the session. Leaders should participate in all of the activities along with the members. As well as showing that you are all learning together, this will also enable you to share your experience in a gentle and appropriate way, while still listening to and valuing what others in the group have to say.

Questions and discussion

Discussion is an essential part of any LYCiG *local* group. Do your best to use it well.

- Ask open questions rather than ones with a yes or no answer. Generally avoid questions which look for a particular 'right' answer; make that point yourself, then invite comments.
- Listen to every contribution. Show acceptance of people and their ideas, thanking them for what they have said. Don't always have the last word.
- Allow disagreement. The group must be a place where people can put forward opposite views and have them listened to.
- Ask follow-up questions to explore views more fully (e.g. 'Can you give us an example of what you mean?') and to draw others in (e.g. 'Has anyone else felt like that?')
- Use questions that engage with thoughts and with feelings.
- Don't be afraid of silence after you have asked a question. People may need more time to think. Communicate that you are happy with this and others will be too.
- Talk about your point of view too. The DVD will put across much of the content for you. This should free you up to share more personally as part of the discussion.
- Even if you are the world's expert on the issue, resist the temptation to say something just because you know it. Only say it if it's going to be helpful to the group.
- If one person is dominating, deal with it positively by drawing others in rather than squashing the talkative group member. If necessary, break things up by giving some discussions more structure (e.g. going round the group with each person having the chance to say something).
- Deal with obvious red herrings quickly and with good humour.

Final thoughts

After each session, make a note of your own thoughts about how it went, as well as any significant comments from others in the group. Remind yourself of these observations when you come to plan subsequent sessions. Remember to include your youth and children's work in your planning as well as your plans to grow the church among adults.

Most importantly, don't forget to prepare carefully and prayerfully. Church growth is God's work, so don't try to do it without him. Prepare your material and follow up your invitations as if it all depends on what you do, and pray as if it all depends on him.

Leading your Church into Growth

Main aim



For the church leaders to discover a common vision for the growth of their church

The purpose of this meeting is for the leaders to come to a point where they have a shared vision to see their church grow. Growth can be defined in different ways: numerical growth sees more people getting involved; spiritual growth sees people becoming more like Jesus; and servanthood growth sees the church together having an increased impact in the *local* community. A common misconception about growth is that it has to be fast, big and spectacular. But modest, gradual and on-going growth is just as important and is probably closer to the experience of most churches. Church growth is not about a bigger church for its own sake, but rather about more of God's lost children being found and His world being transformed.

Equipment

Leaders' Session Materials 1:1-4 (Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Welcome to the course



Your group for this meeting is likely to include a mixture of experienced leaders and those who are very new to the role, some of whom may not even think of themselves as leaders at all. Start by putting everyone at ease. Welcome them to the meeting and thank them for coming. Emphasise that there will be lots of time for discussion and for friendly disagreement. Point out that none of them is there by mistake and nobody is present just to make up the numbers. Everybody's input will be valuable in discovering God's vision for growing your church.

You might like to start the meeting – and other subsequent meetings – by encouraging everyone to join together saying the following opening prayer, which could also be used in your Sunday and midweek worship. The prayer can be found on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-1, which you should now turn to:

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

Getting started

Ask the group to think of a leader from any field who inspires them. What is it about that leader that they admire? Either get two or three people to offer feedback, or put people into pairs and invite them to tell one another about their chosen leader.

Bible



Direct people to the Bible passage on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-1 and ask a member of the group to read the passage.

⁸ *The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.*

⁹ *Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands."*

¹⁰ *So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.*

Exodus 17:8-13 (NIV)

Break into groups of three or four to discuss these questions.

- What causes us to feel attacked or defeated?
- What gives us hope?
- How can we 'raise our arms' so we see God at work?
- Who or what would give support to us?

DVD LS1.1 (8 minutes)



Introduce the DVD, explaining how you are going to use it. You have a choice here. You can either watch the DVD straight through before doing the two exercises, or you can pause the DVD at 3 minutes 37 seconds while you do the Three circles exercise. If you pause the DVD, continue playing after discussing that exercise and then do the 'Positive and negative leaders' exercise.

DVD content:

- Welcome to the course
- Working as a PCC or leadership group
- Intro to growth – God gives the growth but works with people
- Numerical growth, spiritual depth, growing in service
- Exercise: Three circles (3m 37s)
- Intro to leadership
- Exercise: Positive and negative leaders (4m 55s)
- The leadership arrowhead
- Where is the Holy Spirit at work?

Group discussion at the end of the DVD

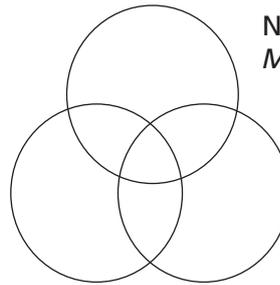
Invite comments from the group about the programme they have just watched. Was there anything that surprised or challenged them? Which points struck them as particularly helpful or important?

Exercise: Three circles

Turn to Leaders' Session Materials LSM:1-2, which includes this diagram.



Servanthood
*More capacity to serve
God in the world and
local community*



Numerical Growth
More people coming

Spiritual Depth
*More people
becoming more
like Jesus*

Ask everyone to tick the circle that they think should be the top priority for your church. Once everyone has done this, encourage people to share their thoughts. What influenced their choice? What do they think the church should be doing in the other two circles? Count up the ticks to see if there is a consensus among the group. Ask whether they think the Holy Spirit may be guiding the church through the range of responses to this exercise.

LYCiG *local* is a course with a strong emphasis on numerical growth, but which also addresses the challenge of spiritual growth and growth in service.

Exercise: Positive and negative leaders



Ask each of the group to put a cross on the line (also on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-2) to show what kind of leader they see themselves as being.

Negative

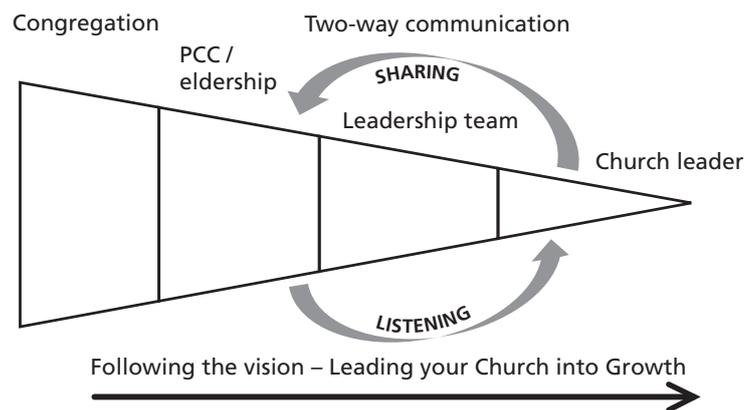
Positive

Ask the group to discuss their responses in pairs.

Exercise: Leadership diagram



Explain that one helpful model for a positive leadership team is shown in this diagram (which is on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-2):



The church leader works with key lay leaders to form a united leadership, to lead the church into growth. Everyone attending this course should be involved in determining the vision that they all follow. For this diagram to represent a healthy church, it's vital that there is lots of communication between the different sections. For a church to move forward together, everyone needs to be committed to the process and willing to communicate, to listen and to respond. It's worth pointing out that the difficulties often come at the joins between the various sections.

Ask the group to discuss the diagram. Do they think that this is an accurate picture of how leadership works in your church? Do they have a sense of the church moving forward? Where do they feel that God wants to lead you as a church, or to lead them as an individual within the church leadership team?

DVD LS1.2 (5 minutes)



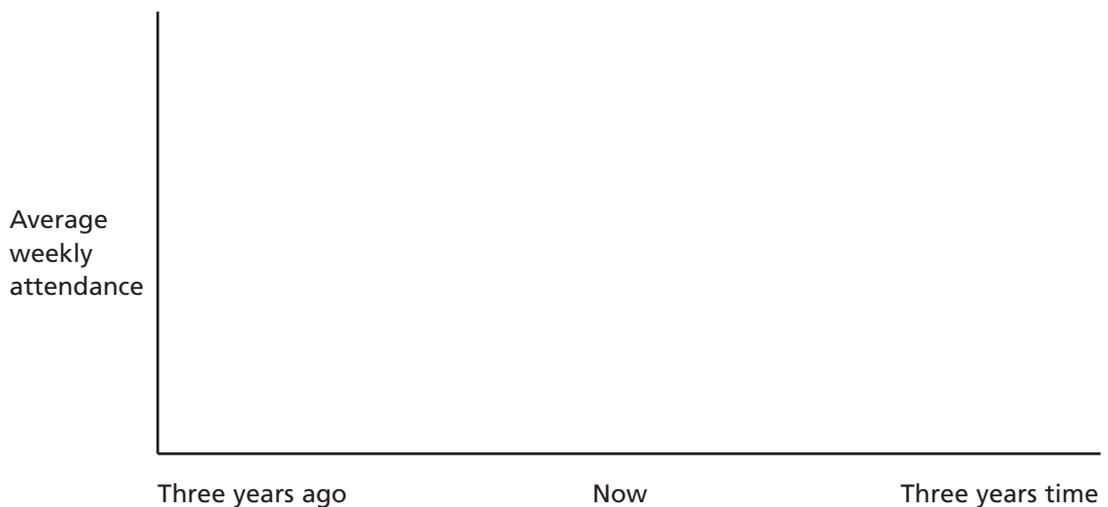
As with the previous DVD, you can either watch this in one sitting or pause to do each of the exercises. There are three exercises in this section.

DVD content

- Leadership of the church into growth
- The importance of vision
- Exercise: The three years graph (2m:37s)
- Leaders and vision see/share/shape
- Hunger and desire for church growth

Exercise: The three year graph

Turn to Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-3. Ask each person to estimate your current weekly attendance at church and mark it on the graph. Next, ask them to think back and estimate the average weekly attendance three years ago. Was it higher, lower or the same as now? Have them mark that figure on the graph too. Finally, ask them to indicate on the graph what they think your church attendance might be in three years, and to join the three points they have plotted.



Take feedback from the group and work together to agree a single set of attendance figures for the graph. In small groups (4 or 5 people per group), ask participants to discuss their reaction to the graph. Were they surprised? Are they encouraged, concerned, or a mixture of the two? What factors might influence the direction of the graph in the next three years? How should the church respond to this?

Please note: A copy of this completed graph will be needed at the first members' session of this course. Please make sure that you produce and distribute the graph.

Input: Leaders see, share and shape the vision

Make the following points:

- Leaders **see** and receive the initial vision by listening to God and looking at the reality of their church and community
- They **share** their perception of the vision with others, listen to the response, improve and adapt the vision until they have got it right
- **Shape** a plan of action based on the vision and the people's response.

Exercise: See, share and shape



Divide into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss the following questions:

- What do you think is God's vision for your church?
- How well has that vision been shared and communicated?
- How has the vision been shaped and moulded by the membership of the church?

After a few minutes of discussion, bring everyone back together as one group and invite feedback from the small group discussions.

Exercise: How much do you want it?



Ask the group to each draw a meal on the dinner plate (which is on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-4), as a response to the session showing how hungry they are for your church to grow.

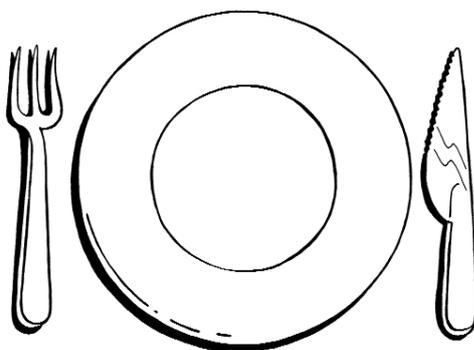
Explain that The LYCiG *local* course continues with six sessions, exploring the following themes.

1. Our Focus: Committing ourselves to growth
2. Our Plan: Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!
3. Our Culture: Developing a community of invitation, welcome and hospitality

There is another gathering for leaders after session 3, followed by three more sessions for the church members:

4. Our Calling: Telling our story and helping people meet Jesus
5. Our Journey: Growing deeper as followers of Jesus
6. Our Heart: Developing worship that helps the church to grow

Ask people to consider which of these six topics they think is the most important and to write their answer in the box on Leaders' Session Materials LSM1-4.



For reflection



Ask the group to reflect on where they feel the Holy Spirit is leading your church. What kind of growth do they believe that the Holy Spirit wants to lead your church towards? How does this make them feel? Invite a few responses and lead a short time of open prayer. You might want to make use of 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 at this time.

⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (NIV)

Our Focus

Committing ourselves to growth

Main aim



Members to explore the difference between maintenance and mission in the local church

Equipment

Members' Session Material MSM:1-7 (Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

A copy of the average weekly attendance graph drawn up in the leadership group introductory meeting

Feedback sheets: You will need to collect responses back from group members to feedback to the church leadership team

Welcome to the course – local leader



Welcome the group and try to put people at their ease. You could ask a few people to share their hopes and fears for the course (try to encourage the hopes and offer reassurance for the fears!). Explain that the purpose of the course is to explore principles in church growth and to develop a plan to lead your local church into growth. Give an overview of the whole course – six members' meetings, interspersed with meetings for the leadership of the church. Reassure the group that nobody expects everybody to have all the answers right now. The course is a process, a journey that you are all taking together. By the end of it, your hope is that the church will have been transformed, so that the desire for growth becomes a natural part of what we do collectively and as individuals.

Explain that the title of this session is *Our Focus: Committing ourselves to growth*. The aim of the meeting is to help us explore the difference between maintenance and mission in the life of the *local* church. Open the meeting with a prayer for God to lead you as you think and work through the different exercises, showing you all his will for your church.

You might also like to pray this 'Leading your Church into Growth' prayer (which is in section MSM1-1) together at the start of each session. You could also use the prayer in your Sunday and midweek worship.

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

Getting started

Ask the group to divide into pairs and to share what attracted them onto the course. What do they want to get out of the course? After a few minutes, invite people to share their responses with the whole group.

Bible



Read Matthew 13:31-32 together. Members can find it in section MSM1-1.

³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32 (NIV)

Point out that biology teaches us that all living things grow. Plant growth, generally speaking, requires sunlight, water and good soil. What do the group think helps churches to grow? Take a few answers, commenting as appropriate, then ask what they think hinders church growth?

Remind the group that when humans are growing, we sometimes experience 'growing pains'. What might be some of the growing pains in the life of a church?

DVD MS1.1 (8 minutes)



Play the first of the extracts from the DVD. Here is a list of the content of this section:

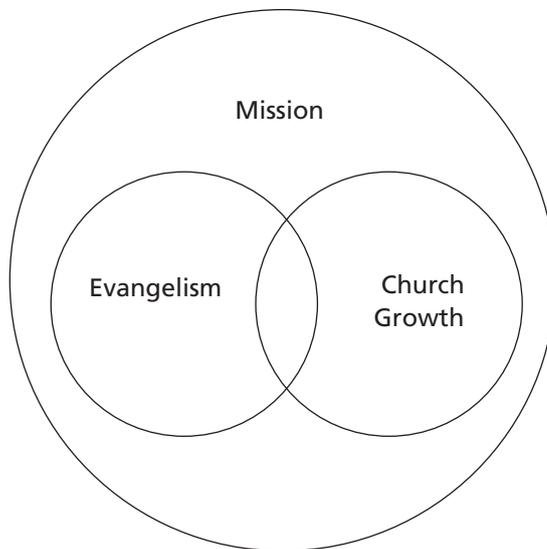
- Robin Gamble introduces Leading your Church into Growth *local*
- Planning for growth
- Evangelism
- Creating a welcoming church community
- Discipleship
- Worship
- Defining terms – mission, evangelism and church growth
- Flocks, vines, bodies, churches – all grow and flourish when they are healthy
- Three aspects of church growth – numerical growth, spiritual depth, servanthood
- Focus on your local church growing
- It's God's Church and his work

Defining our terms

Draw people's attention to the diagram on MSM1-1. Talk them through the diagram, explaining that mission is the big overall concept, the whole of what the church is supposed to be doing in God's name. It includes social and community projects, such as food banks or drop-in centres (if your church already has active social and community projects, use those examples rather than generic ones), environmental and poverty issues, such as eco congregations, world development and Fairtrade, as well as general outreach to the surrounding community.

Evangelism is a key part of mission. Evangelism means sharing the good news of Jesus, helping people to discover Jesus for themselves and to become Christians, and encouraging Christians to be involved in evangelism.

Church growth happens as a result of the church's mission and evangelism. It's a sign of God's kingdom. We see growth in a number of ways: through growth in numbers attending our events; through spiritual growth of individuals in the church (both newcomers and long-established members – we should never stop growing), and through growth in the service of others – how we collectively serve God, one another and our communities.



Defining the terms

Mission – the big overall vision

- Social and community projects
- Environmental and poverty issues
- Outreach generally

Evangelism – a key part of mission

- Sharing the Good News
- Helping people to become Christians
- Encouraging Christians to do evangelism

Church growth – seeing signs of the Kingdom

- Spiritual growth
- Numerical growth
- Growth in service

Exercise: Growing healthy churches



Turn to section MSM1-2. Ask everyone to look at the picture of the garden and to pick out the plants that best represent the health of your church in each of three categories: mission, evangelism and church growth.

Once everyone has marked their chosen plants, invite responses and allow a few minutes to discuss the different answers people have given. Were there any responses which surprised people? Were there any signs of growth that some people had previously not known about? Were there any negative perspectives which were a surprise to them?



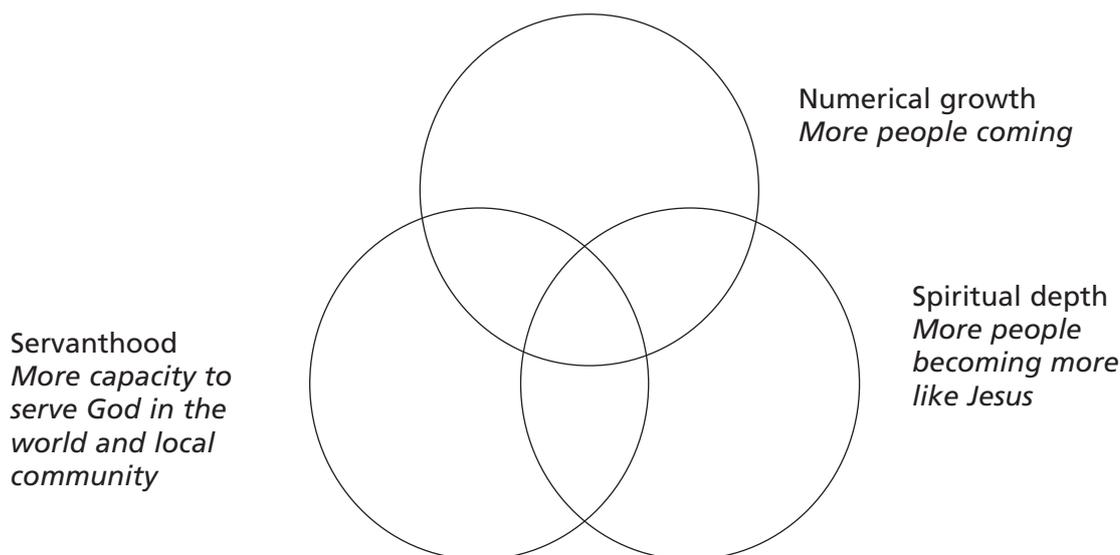
Exercise: Three circles



Turn to section MSM1-3. Ask the group to think about what you could do as a church, and what they could do as individuals, to improve the health of your church in these three areas? You could write some ideas in each of the circles in the section.

After they have completed the exercise, ask a few people to feed their answers back to the whole group. Once a few have shared their answers, ask everyone which circle they think is the key one for your church over the next twelve months?

Point out that LYCiG *local* has a strong emphasis on numerical growth, but it also addresses the challenge of spiritual growth and growth in service.



DVD MS1.2 (12 minutes)



Play the second extract from the course DVD. Here is the content of the extract:

- The life of local churches
- Vision for growth
- Maintenance to mission
- Using a church consultant
- Understand your context
- Mission field – locality/network – church audit
- Importance of relationships
- DNA of church growth: Desire, plaN and Action
- Summary

Exercise: The three year graph

Turn to section MSM1-4 and direct people to the three year graph. Ask them to plot three points on the graph: one each to indicate what they think the average weekly attendance at church is now, what it was three years ago, and what they would expect it to be like in three years if you all carry on as things are.

Once everyone has had the chance to complete the graph for themselves, give out copies of the graph that was produced during the first leaders' meeting on this course. Then ask everyone to get into groups of four or five people to discuss the graphs. How do they react to the graphs (their own, and the leaders')? In the light of the graph, how do you feel about your church's future over the next few years?

Exercise: Maintenance and mission



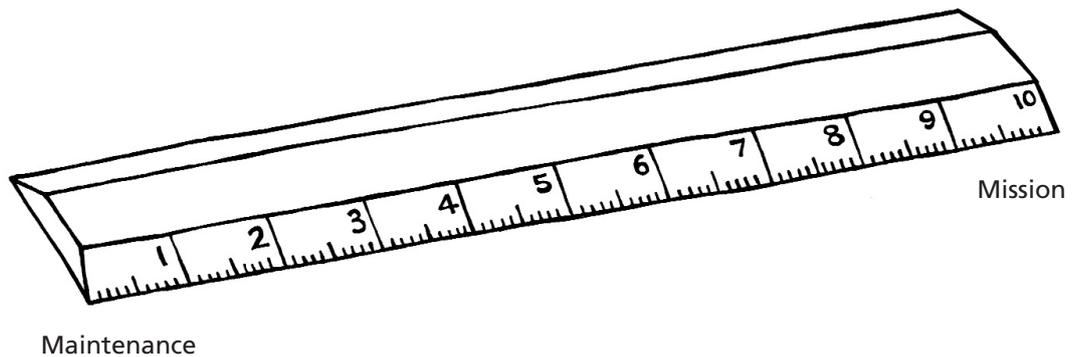
Talk through the notes on MSM:1-4 and explain the difference between a church focussed on maintenance and one focused on mission.

A maintenance church is one whose main focus is on pastoral issues. The worship is based on a tradition of what existing members like or what the church has always done. It is a church life based on what has been done in the past, one whose key question is 'how do we keep going?' It is an institution, and one which is in danger of disappearing.

By contrast, a mission church focuses on pastoral *and* mission activities. The worship is based on a user-friendly tradition of helping the congregation and visitors to experience and to encounter God. It is a church life based on what needs to be done next, once whose key question is 'How do we keep growing?' It is a movement, and one which is appearing.

There are a good number of churches that do lots of maintenance, but who recognise that the purpose of this is to serve continuing mission. There also many churches who seem only to do maintenance and who never seem to include mission as part of their thinking.

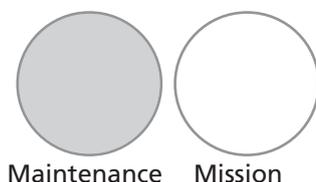
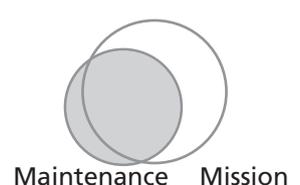
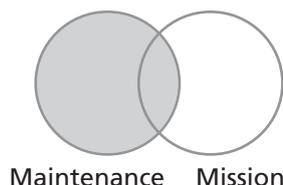
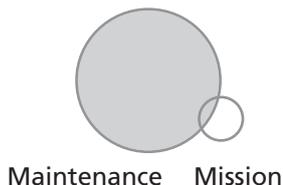
Ask everyone to place a mark on the ruler diagram on MSM1-4 to indicate the degree to which they think yours is a maintenance or a mission church.



Alternative exercise: Maintenance and mission



You might like to use the alternative exercise on MSM1-5 instead of the ruler diagram. This provides a different way of allowing people to respond to the question of what type of church they think you are. If you decide to use it, turn to MSM:1-5 and ask everyone to decide which picture best illustrates the balance of maintenance and mission in your church.



Exercise: DNA of church growth



Turn to section MSM1-6 and ask everyone to look at the DNA diagram at the top of the page. Explain that the image illustrates the DNA of church growth. Churches need to act in order to grow. Rather than just doing lots of things, it is good to have a clear plan. Before acting on the plan it's important to have the desire to grow the church. Without 'desire', DNA of church growth becomes NA (slang for 'No') or N/A (Not Applicable).

Ask how much desire for church growth each of the members has. How hungry are you (for growth)? Ask them to use the pictures on MSM1-6 to express that hunger.

The pictures on MSM1-6 of the lettuce leaf and the roast dinner indicate two quite different appetites. Ask the members to use the dinner plate on MSM1-6, to draw a meal that shows how hungry they are for your church to grow. The size and type of meal can help to illustrate your 'appetite' or desire for growth.

Exercise: Your mission field



As a whole group use a flipchart or large sheet of paper to make a list of all the groups and organisations that your church/churches are in contact with. Include occasional attenders, festival attenders and baptisms, weddings and funerals. Work together to estimate the number for each entry on the list, and try to arrive at a figure for the number of people your church(es) are in contact with. Ask the members to tell you their reaction to this exercise. Were there any entries on the list that they were unaware of? Was the total number of people that the church is in contact with bigger than, smaller than, or roughly what they expected?

Response boxes

Turn to section MSM:1-7 and ask everyone to fill in the response boxes anonymously. Explain that you will collect them at the end of the session so that the church leadership can benefit from everyone's feedback.

Reflection and prayer



Quieten the group and tell them that you are going to finish the meeting by praying together and reflecting on what God may be saying to you. Read Matthew 16:15-19 and invite prayerful responses from the group.

¹⁵ *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"*

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷ *Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.*

¹⁸ *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

Matthew 16:15-19 (NIV)

Once you have drawn the prayer to a close, thank everyone for coming and make sure that they know the date, time and place of the next session. Encourage them to keep thinking about the things you have been learning together, and invite anyone who thinks of anything that they didn't put on their response sheet to pass those comments on to the leadership at any time.

Our Plan

Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!

Main aim



Members to grasp the importance of the four Ps – prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion

Equipment

Members' Session Materials: MSM2:1-4
(Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Feedback sheets

Welcome – local leader



Welcome everybody back, making sure to mention any who have joined the group since the previous session. Thank everyone for coming and assure them that they are in for a thought-provoking and stimulating time. Recap on the previous session, reminding members of the difference between maintenance and mission, and the importance of growth to the life and health of the *local* church.

Tell everyone that tonight's session is called 'Our Plan: Developing a strategy for growth and doing it!' The aim of the meeting is to help you all to develop an understanding of the four Ps of church growth: prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion.

Invite the group to join you in praying the LYCiG prayer (which members can find in section MSM2-1) together:

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

Getting started

Ask a question about how people behave when they go shopping for food. Do you prepare a careful list and methodically go up and down the aisles, or do you just wander around the shop and see what catches your eye?

Point out that the way we shop gives us clues about our gifts and personality. If you are a careful list person, this probably shows you to be a planner and strategist. If you are a wanderer, then you are probably a more intuitive 'let's do this now' type of person.

Bible



Ask everyone to look at the Bible passage on MSM2-1, and read it together:

⁶ Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

Point out that Paul the Apostle shows us how to combine both approaches. He carefully planned a church planting strategy. Then when God stepped in to guide, he had the intuitive sensitivity to respond.

Ask whether anyone can think of a time when they, as an individual, have sensed God's leading? Split up into small groups to share experiences.

DVD MS2.1 (3 minutes)



Play the first extract from the DVD. Here is a summary of the material covered in this extract:

- Developing a plan for growth
- Growth is three things: numerical, spiritual, capacity to serve
- Seeing what God's already doing – an intuitive approach
- Introduction to the idea of developing a strategic plan

Exercise: Seeing God at work



Working in groups of three, ask people to identify ways in which God is at work in your church(es) and community. After a few minutes, invite people to share their observations with the whole group and then pray and give thanks for what God is doing.

Point out that what you have just done is an example of listening to or discerning the work of the Spirit in your church.

DVD MS2.2 (10 minutes)



Introduce the second extract from the DVD. This extract covers the following material:

- Introduction to a strategic plan: the 4Ps
 - Prayer
 - Presence
 - Proclamation
 - Persuasion
- Session summary

You might want refer to MSM2-2 before playing the DVD, so people can have the summary of the 4 Ps in front of them as they watch. Here is a very brief summary of how the 4 Ps strategy works.

- Step 1** We *pray* specifically for growth and effective evangelism.
- Step 2** We establish *presence*, build friendships and make our presence felt in a positive way both in the local community and amongst all our members' 'human networks'.
- Step 3** We invite our 'presence people' to come and hear a *proclamation* of the Good News. That might be a men's pub night or a major festival. Proclamation isn't about 'Bible bashing' but rather presenting the Christian message in an attractive, interesting and appropriate way.
- Step 4** We invite those interested by our proclamation to join a small '*persuasion*' or inquirers' group or to take part in a follow-up one-to-one journey into faith.

This process can be used for all of the different age groups within the church. Don't just think of the adults, use the 4 Ps to help you plan inquirers' groups and proclamation events for children and young people too.

Exercise: Eggs in baskets



Draw people's attention to the eggs and baskets illustration on MSM2-2. Ask them to work on their own to divide the eggs between the four baskets. Their distribution of eggs should be based on how they think the church currently divides its time, energy and resources between prayers for growth, presence, proclamation and persuasion.

As an alternative to this exercise, you could use four baskets and twelve actual eggs and let them do it for real!

When everyone has had a chance to complete the exercise, collect the scores from the whole group on a flipchart and add up the overall scores for each basket. Invite discussion: what conclusions can be drawn from the totals? Are there some areas of church life which the church should be devoting more time, energy and resources to?

Exercise: The annual plan



Turn to section MSM2-3 and MSM2-4. Working in small groups, ask each group to prepare an annual plan from January to December (or from September to August if it is more helpful to work around the school/academic year), slotting in two or three good presence and proclamation events and at least one persuasion (enquirers') course on the calendar on MSM2-3. Members will find some suggestions for different types of events on MSM2-4. Point out that this list isn't an exhaustive one, and that any new ideas of their own are well worth including in their calendar.

Once everyone has completed their calendar, ask a few people to share what they came up with. Pay particular attention to any suggestions which seem to strike a chord among the group, or which seem particularly suited to your *local* circumstances. Take in all of the calendars for reference in your future planning.

Response boxes

Turn to section MSM2-5. Ask everyone to fill in the response boxes as a way of feeding back their observations on the session. As before, explain that this feedback will be anonymous (unless they choose to identify themselves) and will be read by the church leadership as it makes plans in the light of LYCiG – *local*.

Reflection and prayer



Draw the meeting to a close with a final Bible reading:

²² *Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.*

²³ *For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.*

²⁴ *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.*

²⁵ *And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.*

²⁶ *From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

²⁹ *"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."*

³² *When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."*

³³ *At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*

Acts 17:22-34 (NIV)

Point out that Paul broke with his usual pattern of outreach, and (in verse 28) used the culture of the Athenians to help tell them about Jesus. The response to this was mixed: some sneered, while others were eager to hear more. We should be similarly creative in our attempts to share the gospel with others, and we shouldn't be surprised to find a wide range of different responses to what we have to share. Invite a few people to pray for the group, for the church, and for the people that you hope to reach with the good news of Jesus.

After praying, thank everyone again for coming. Say that you hope they are enjoying the course and finding it a worthwhile use of their time. Remind them of the date, time and location of the next meeting.

Our Culture

Developing a community of invitation, welcome and hospitality

Main aim



For the members to become committed to establishing a warm, loving and welcoming church community

Equipment

Members' Session Materials: MSM3:1-6
(Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Feedback sheets

Welcome – local leader



As always, welcome people to the group, particularly any who have joined since the last session. Remind everyone of what you learned last time: the four Ps of church growth: prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion.

Tell the group that in this session you will be looking at developing a church family (or community) of invitation, hospitality and welcome. We should be able to invite our friends with confidence that what they find will make them likely to want to come again. Please note that for some people 'family' is a word with negative as well as positive associations. You may need to be sensitive when using it to describe the church.

Lead the group in the course prayer, which they can find in section MSM3-1.

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

Bible



Ask someone to read Ephesians 3:14-19, which members can also find on MSM3:1.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (NIV)

Ask everyone to underline three things in Paul's prayer that they would like to see experienced in the life of their church. Once everyone has chosen their three things, divide them into groups of three to discuss their choices. Once everyone has finished you could invite a few people to feed back to the group as a whole.

Getting started

Turn to section MSM3:2. Ask people to get into pairs and work together to list three qualities of family life that they find attractive. Once everyone has come up with three qualities, bring them all back together and ask people to share their thoughts with the rest of the group.

DVD MS3.1 (3 minutes)



Introduce the first DVD extract for this session. Here is a summary of what this extract covers:

- Concept of church as family and community
- Including comment about the sensitive nature of the word family
- The attraction of the idea of family and community
- How warm are you as a 'church family'?

Invite comment from the group about what they have just seen and heard. Do they prefer to think of the church as a family, a community or as something else? What are the reasons behind their preference? Did anything they heard make them think of the church in a new way?

Exercise: Warm or cold?



Ask people to think about the way that relationships in your church feel. Would they describe your church as feeling 'warm', 'cold' or 'medium'? Ask them to put a cross on the line to represent the relational temperature in your church and to write an answer to the question underneath the diagram.

Take feedback from the group. Ask people where on the line they put their crosses, and what they thought about the impression that a visitor to your church would have.

Exercise: Mood faces



Turn to MSM3-3. Ask which facial expressions best represent the relationships in your church. Members can pick a maximum of three, including the ones that have been left blank for them to draw their own expression. Once everyone has finished, invite them to share their thoughts with a partner.

DVD MS3.2 (12 minutes)



Now introduce the second extract from the DVD. This extract features the following content:

- Developing a culture of invitation
- The importance of welcoming people: what you do after you've said hello
- Pastoral care and going deeper with people
- Retaining people
- Summary

Ask what points from the DVD struck people as being particularly important or challenging. What do they think that everybody in the church can do to make the church a more welcoming place for newcomers? How welcoming is your church to young people and children? Are there any steps that you should take specifically for that age group?

Exercise: First time at church...



Turn to section MSM3-4. Divide your group into threes and ask them to discuss the questions on the sheet. Here are the questions.

- Who first invited you to church?
- What did it feel like?
- Have you ever thought of inviting someone to church?
- If you have invited someone, was it easy or difficult?
- Would an annual invitation target of 50 personal invites (for a smaller church) up to 250 (for a larger church) be realistic for your church?
- How do you react to the suggested target?

Exercise: Grand National



Read the following text to the group. A summarised version is on MSM3-4:

At the Grand National at Aintree Racecourse, many horses will fall at one or other of the hurdles, with only a few making it to the finishing line. While recognising that some people wonder if the Grand National is too challenging as a race, and that injuries to horses and riders are unacceptable, it does provide an analogy with the challenges faced by people who may consider joining their local church.

Suppose there are 100 runners and riders lining up interested in joining your church. If you are an average church only 10-15 will make it to the finishing line of fully belonging and contributing to the church community. The others will fall at one of these hurdles:

- 1. Discovering you are there:** some churches have prominent buildings and a programme of activities that puts them at the heart of local life – everyone knows about them. Others have backstreet buildings which are kept locked during the week and make little contribution to local life – nobody knows they are there. Some have an excellent website, some no website at all. How many people fall at your first hurdle because it is difficult to find out much about your church?
- 2. Meeting church members:** some churches contain people who are at the heart of local life and are happy to talk about their church and faith. In some churches most of the members live elsewhere and keep church in a separate compartment in their lives. Or perhaps their social and friendship lives are already filled up with other Christians. When you have a well-attended special service like a memorial service or crib service, do the regulars come in order to meet and welcome the visitors or do they stay away? In your church, do many people fall at the second hurdle because they can't properly get to meet church members?

3. **Attending an initial service or event:** some church buildings are attractive and inviting with nice glass doors so you can see inside. Others seem rather forbidding with a massive graveyard to walk through and solid wooden doors that look locked with no indication of how to get in. Some churches have lots of social and other events which are easy to come along to, others have none. Some have a range of 'low threshold' services through the year that members of the local community will feel relatively comfortable attending. Others simply have services aimed at 'insiders' with little compromise. How high is your church's 'initial attendance' hurdle?
4. **Early welcome and friendliness:** some churches will make a newcomer feel welcomed and accepted straight away; in others a stranger attending a church service or social event might find that nobody talks to them at all. Some churches may be superficially friendly but struggle to relate to newcomers beyond saying hello. In your church, how big a hurdle is getting a friendly welcome so that you start to relate to others by name?
5. **Making new friends:** if somebody quickly makes two or three new friends in a church they will stay, if not they probably won't. Making friends is difficult in some churches because they are not really 'friendship communities' to start with. In others it is difficult because the existing members have enough friends in the church already. How big a hurdle for your newcomers is getting beyond the 'friendliness' stage into genuine 'friendship'?
6. **Small groups and belonging:** in some churches the home groups and the specialist groups (such as the music group or the bell ringers) can seem like closed clubs to newcomers. In others there is a good culture of invitation into small and specialist church groups and it is easy to progress. How high is this hurdle in your church?
7. **Making a contribution, full identity:** you have fully arrived in a church community when you feel like a host not a guest at an event or service. For many people this key switch happens when they take on a role and start making a contribution. If people attend for several years without being invited to do anything, from being put on a tea rota to reading the lesson or prayers, then the church has a problem. In some churches the core members hang on to all the jobs, in others you are likely to get invited to do something fairly quickly. How big a hurdle is this at your church?

One of the most intimidating hurdles in the Grand National is Becher's Brook.

Having considered all the hurdles facing someone trying to join your church community, the question is:

Which is your Becher's Brook?

There are two ways you can continue from this point. Option 1 is to turn to the racecourse diagram on MSM3-5 and ask people to discuss in groups of four which fence they think is the Becher's Brook for your church? Which stage of welcoming people in is the one that most people find impossible to overcome?

Alternatively, you could lay out the room with seven separate stations, each labelled to represent one of the 'fences' in the reading. Ask the Becher's Brook question again, asking people to stand at the station they think is most problematic for your church. Give people the option of standing apart from all seven if they think there is another hurdle that you haven't mentioned and which is a bigger problem. Count how many are at each hurdle and invite one or two from each group to say why they chose as they did.

Response boxes

Turn to section MSM3-6 and ask people to fill in the response boxes based on what you have explored in this session. Explain that, as in previous sessions, the responses can be anonymous and will be read by the leadership team as an aid to further planning.

Reflection and prayer



Read the following passage and invite a few people to pray a response to what you have been learning in this session.

³¹ *Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.* ³² *A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."*

³³ *"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.*

³⁴ *Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"* ³⁵ *Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

Mark 3:31-35 (NIV)

After closing the prayer, thank everyone for coming. Explain that this concludes phase two of the course. The next stage is for the church leadership to meet again and to process the feedback from the last three meetings. After that, there will be a further three general meetings. If you have already fixed the date of the first of these, give out the details now. If not, advise people of how they will find out about it.

Leading your Church into Growth

initial review

Main aim



To reflect on previous sessions, produce a clear vision statement for your church and begin to produce a plan for growth.

Equipment

Leaders' Session Materials: LSM2:1-3 (Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

Group member feedback sheets from Sessions 1-3

Welcome



Welcome everyone to the session and thank them for coming. Explain that today you are going to be reviewing some of the comments from the members' sessions, using that feedback to help you create your own vision or mission statement for the church and beginning to make concrete plans to put that vision into action. Be enthusiastic about the meetings that have taken place already.

Pray with the group as you start. Invite them to join with you in praying the LYCiG prayer, which they can find on Leaders' Session Materials LSM:2-1. The prayer should be familiar to people by now if you have been using it in your Sunday and midweek worship meetings.

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

Getting started

Ask the leaders what they think have been the greatest encouragements in the life of the church over the last few months. Take a few minutes to talk around this question and to (hopefully) create a positive mood for the rest of the session.

Bible



Read Acts 6:1-7 with the group. They can find the passage reproduced on LSM2-1.

¹ *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.* ² *So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.* ³ *Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them* ⁴ *and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."*

⁵ *This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.*

⁶ *They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

⁷ *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*

Acts 6:1-7 (NIV)

Explain that as the early church experienced growth it encountered a problem with the distribution of food. In response to this, the leaders of the church took the following steps:

- Consideration (v1). They considered the problem that was brought to them.
- Communication (v2-4). They communicated with the wider church group, letting them know what was being done and why.
- Consultation (v5). They consulted about a proposed solution.
- Choice (v5). They chose people to carry out vital roles in the new vision.
- Commissioning (v6). The chosen individuals were publically commissioned, affirming them in their new ministry before the whole church.
- Change (v7). God blessed the new vision and used it to help grow the church.

Divide into groups of four people and discuss the six steps above.

- Why did the church in Acts respond in this way?
- Are these six steps part of your church's preparation for growth?
- Can you see how this story from Acts fits in with your LYCiG journey?
- How do you feel about being the people called to lead your journey into growth?

Take brief feedback from the groups before moving on.

Vision/mission statements

In the passage from Acts 6 the apostles were able to identify a problem by comparing their current activity against a clear sense of vision or mission.

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables."

Acts 6:2 (NIV)

The apostles knew that their purpose or calling was 'the ministry of the word of God' and that their current activity was getting in the way of that ministry.

Some churches find it helpful to devise their own vision or mission statement. A pithy, easy to remember phrase which encapsulates their hopes for growth, such as 'Growing in numbers, depth and impact', 'Growing in God', 'God's local garden', 'Growing up, growing in, growing out', 'Bigger and better'.

Either spend some time on this in the meeting, or ask a smaller group to work on possible vision statements at a later date. Either way, don't let this sidetrack you: your aim in this session is to build the mission plan, not the mission statement.

Exercise: Group feedback



Spend some time together reviewing the feedback response sheets given to you by the group leaders from the three previous sessions. Give some sheets out to everybody and encourage them to read through the responses.

Draw your group back together to discuss what they have read. What are their reactions to the feedback? Was there anything there that surprised them? Can they identify any common themes, concerns or opportunities?

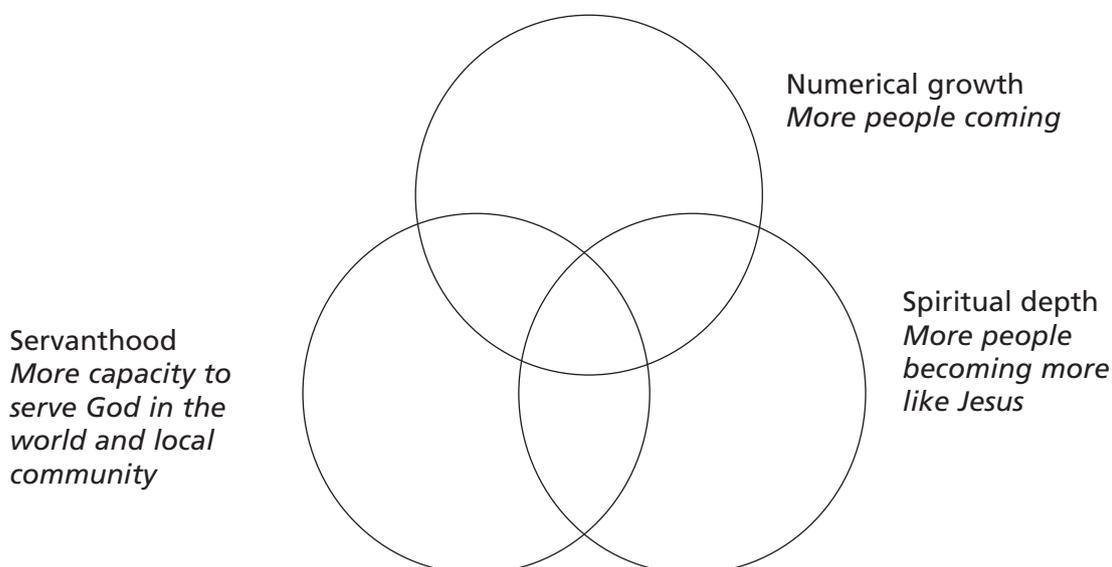
In groups of four or five, ask people to work together to identify some initial priorities for your church. There is space on LSM2-2 for their notes. When they feed back their findings, make sure to write their findings on the flipchart paper as well.

Use this feedback as the basis for agreeing possible priorities that could form part of your new or revised Mission Action Plan. Identify any decisions or actions which could be acted on quickly, and plan out a programme to act on these short-term priorities over the next 3 to 6 months. Why not produce a printed card listing your top five priorities and give it out to all your members?

It could also be helpful to put the congregational suggestions into the overlapping circles diagram from the previous leaders' session (which is reproduced again in section LSM2-3). This can either be done all together or in smaller groups.

If you work together, put a large copy of the diagram on flipchart paper. Place the members' suggestions into the place where they best fit, whether that be in a single circle or in an area where two or more circles overlap. Do the suggestions spread evenly around the diagram, or does one area dominate? Are there any significant patterns emerging from this exercise?

If any particular themes are coming up repeatedly on the response forms, it may be appropriate to arrange some particular teaching that speaks to those issues in the coming weeks and months. For example: developing vision, communication, invitation, sharing the Christian faith with others.



Where next?

If you have not already planned the second series of gatherings you need to do so now. Discuss with the leadership team whether to start as soon as possible, or to allow the course to pause for a few weeks or months. Will you meet weekly, fortnightly or monthly? Once you have decided when to hold the next members' meeting, make sure that it is publicised to the church well in advance. Make sure that everyone who attended the previous sessions is personally invited back to the next set of meetings.

Reflection and prayer



Lead the group in prayer, using 1 Corinthians 3:5-11 as an aid to your devotions. Give thanks for the leading that God has already shown you in the course so far, and ask for him to continue to lead you by his Spirit to discover the plans that he has to grow his Kingdom through the work of your church.

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:5-11 (NIV)

Thank everyone for coming and remind them of the importance of leaders sharing their excitement about the rest of the course. Make sure that they all know the details of subsequent meetings and that they are ready to enthuse others and encourage them to keep taking part.

Our Calling

Telling our story and helping people meet Jesus

Main aim



To help people find their place in the ministry of evangelism

Equipment

Members' Session Materials: MSM4:1-5
(Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Feedback sheets

Welcome – local leader



Welcome everyone to the session, thanking them for coming. If you have taken a break of a few weeks since the previous session, reassure people that they will soon pick up where they left off. Try to convey your excitement about the work the leadership team was able to do as a result of the feedback from the previous three members' sessions (you are excited about that, right?).

Remind everyone that in your last session together you looked at the importance of the church being a welcoming community that actively seeks to invite others in. Explain that today you will be aiming to help one another with how we tell our own faith stories, sharing how we met Jesus and what he means to us in our lives.

Open the meeting with a prayer and invite everyone to join with the LYCiG *local* prayer which you used in previous sessions and which is printed in section MSM4-1. Don't forget to keep using this prayer at your regular Sunday and midweek services:

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

Getting started

Ask the group to split into pairs and discuss the following questions (which are also on MSM4-1):

- What is the best thing about being a Christian?
- How do you feel about your friends discovering this too?

After a couple of minutes, bring the group back together and invite a few people to share their answers to the questions.

Bible



Read through the Bible passage with the group, making sure that everybody has a pen. They can find the passage printed on MSM4-1. As you read it, ask people to underline any parts of the text that particularly stand out for them. Once you finish reading, give everyone another minute to finish marking up the text then ask them to get back into pairs and discuss why they underlined their chosen sections, and to answer the other question in the sections. Allow some time for feedback as a whole group afterwards.

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV)

DVD MS4.1 (4 minutes)



Introduce the first of today's DVD extracts. This extract covers the following ground:

- Summary of the course so far
- Evangelism – a dirty word?
- Evangelism isn't...
- Evangelism is...
 - Sharing 'Good News'
 - What we are called to do
 - About people/individuals encountering God

Exercise: Evangelism is...



Turn to MSM4-2 and ask everyone to pick three speech bubbles that describe how they feel about evangelism. Some speech bubbles have been left blank to give people the option of expressing an idea that isn't already on the sheet.

Allow time for people to share which speech bubbles they chose. Try to identify which bubbles were the most popular, and discuss why this might be the case. Make a point of asking if anyone filled in a blank bubble, and give them the opportunity to tell everyone what they put in it.

Exercise: My story, God's Story



Turn to MSM4-3. Ask everyone to take a few minutes to make some notes about their own faith journey. Ask them to write a few words or phrases or, if they prefer, to draw some simple pictures that illustrate their decision to follow Jesus. If you are aware of people in the group who might find writing things down difficult then also offer the option of people thinking about the exercise for a few moments and then simply to talk through the 'before, during and after' stages of their story with a partner.

The section is split into three stages (before, during, after) to help people to organise their thoughts. Make sure that you complete this exercise too. It's important that everyone sees that everybody in the church – leaders and members alike – are involved in the task of sharing what Jesus means to them.

Once everyone has had time to make some notes, split them into pairs and give each person four minutes to share the story of their faith journey with their partner. After four minutes, stop the pairs and tell them to swap over so that everyone gets the chance to tell their story. Once everyone has had their turn, come back together as a whole group. Ask people how they found the experience. Was it easier or harder than they expected? How many people were telling their story for the first time? Was the 'before/during/after' format a useful framework for sharing what God had done in their lives and what he means to them?

DVD MS4.2 (10 minutes)

Introduce the second extract from today's DVD. This video covers the following:



- Negative reactions to evangelism
- The way Jesus shared Good News
 - Make time for people
 - Prayer and evangelism
 - Being where people are
 - The transforming power of Jesus
- Evangelism – The work of the whole church
 - Leaders and church members working together
 - Sensitive and bold
 - Get involved
- The 'good shop assistant' and searching for the searcher
- Summary

Ask for immediate responses to the video. Was there anything that people found particularly exciting? Anything that was particularly challenging? Were there any new concepts that made people see the subject in a way they hadn't previously thought about it?

Exercise: Targeted prayer



Turn to MSM4-4. Ask everyone to think about three people they know who may be searching. It could be family members, friends, neighbours or work colleagues. Ask everyone to write down three names and to commit to praying regularly for those people. Challenge them to ask God for opportunities to share their faith story with them.

Exercise: Stairway to heaven



Ask everyone to look at the staircase illustration on MSM4-4. Where on the staircase would they place the three people whose names they wrote down? Where do they think these people are on their spiritual journey? Invite members to draw stick people at appropriate places and write their name or initials to represent them. Challenge members to consider what might help their friends to make the next step on their faith journey, whatever that next step may be. What questions would help their thinking?

Response box

Turn to MSM4-5 and ask everyone to complete the feedback forms, as they did with previous sessions. As before, remind them that their responses can be anonymous and that all of the forms will be read by the church leadership. Stress how important it is that everybody's thoughts help to shape the church's strategy for reaching out to people for Jesus.

Reflection and prayer



Read Luke 19:1-10 (which is printed on MSM4-5) and encourage a few people to pray once you have finished reading the passage.

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)

As ever, thank everyone for coming and remind them of the date, place and time of your next meeting. Make sure to collect in the response sheets before people leave.

Our Journey

Growing and going deeper as followers of Jesus

Main aim



Developing a heart for on-going Christian discipleship

Equipment

Members' Session Material: MSM5:1-8
(Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Feedback sheets

Welcome – local leader



Welcome everyone to the meeting and thank them for coming. Remind them that last time we thought about how people move from one stage of the faith journey to another, and we all identified people we knew who we would pray for. Today's session focuses on how we ourselves grow as Jesus' followers and how we help others to do the same.

Start the meeting with a prayer, and invite everyone to join with you in saying the course prayer, which is on MSM5-1.

God of Mission

Who alone brings growth to your Church,

Send your Holy Spirit to give

Vision to our planning,

Wisdom to our actions,

And power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers,

In spiritual commitment to you,

And in service to our local community,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Getting Started

Turn to MSM5-2. Ask everyone to look at the picture and to decide which vehicle best represents how they see themselves on their own faith journey. Once everyone has had time to choose a vehicle, ask them to share their choice with another person.

Bible: The progression of Christian discipleship



Turn to MSM5-3. Explain that the verses on the sheet illustrate a journey of Christian discipleship, from seeker to disciple (follower) to servant to apostle. Working in pairs, ask people to talk about their own faith journey. Which of the four categories do they feel best describes them at the moment? Were there key people who helped them on their journey? Did it take a long time or did everything move very quickly?

DVD MS5.1 (4 minutes)



Introduce the first of this session's DVD extracts. This extract covers the following subject matter:

- Concept of journey
- Searcher to disciple to servant

Exercise: Stepping stones Searcher to disciple to servant and apostle for the local church



- What stepping stones helped you to get to where you are now?
- What stepping stones were particularly difficult?
- Reflect on the steps that helped you go deeper into faith.
- What should the church do to help others on a similar journey?

Turn to MSM5-4 and MSM5-5. Ask the group to imagine their journey of faith as being a series of stepping stones across a river. In pairs, ask them to discuss which particular 'stepping stones' have helped them to become a follower of Jesus. How significant were different groups that you belonged to, or particular individuals? Was there a single breakthrough moment, perhaps a particular sermon, or was it a gradual process?

Join with another pair to make a group of four. Having identified the stepping stones that helped you to get to where you are now, discuss how you might help others who might be making a similar journey. Discuss the questions on MSM5-5.

Optional exercise: Stepping stones revisited...

Share together as a whole group your reactions and responses to the stepping stones exercise.

DVD MS5.2 (11 minutes)



Introduce the second DVD extract for this session. This video includes:

- Mission is 'Finding out what God is doing and joining in!'
- Helping people move forward in their faith journey
- The importance of Christian basics/inquirers' courses
 - Size doesn't matter
 - The importance of personal invitation
- Lifelong learning and ongoing discipleship
 - Study groups
 - Confirmation and membership courses
- Opportunities to serve
 - In the church
 - In the community
- Summary

Exercise: Searcher to disciple to servant to apostle



Turn to section MSM5-6. Ask everyone to think about how far along each of the paths on the sheet they have progressed? Ask them to draw a stick person on each line to represent the progress they have made. Once everyone has done the exercise for themselves, ask them to do it again, this time thinking about the progress of the church community as a whole.

Exercise: Movement and motivation



Point out that there are many reasons for making a journey, as well as many reasons and excuses for avoiding travelling. Ask the group the following questions:

- What reasons might people have for going further in following and serving Jesus?
- What reasons might they have for deciding not to follow?
- What reasons might people have for only going so far on the journey?

Turn to MSM5-7. Ask the group to think of some people they know well. What reasons might they give to explain their choices about following (or not following) Jesus? You might want to use one or more of the empty speech bubbles to add ideas of your own.

Once everyone has chosen their speech bubbles, ask them to get into groups of four and discuss the following question: what can you do as an individual and as a church to encourage people to keep moving on in their faith journey?

Response box

Turn to MSM5-8 and ask everyone to fill in the anonymous response sheet. These will, as ever, be passed on to the church leadership for use in their strategic planning.

Reflection and prayer



Read Philippians 3:10-14 with the group. They can find it reproduced on MSM5-8. Lead from the Bible passage into a time of prayer, thanking God for what you have been learning in this session and the rest of the course, and asking him to make your church more effective in sharing the good news of Jesus. Pray that the outcome of this course will astonish you all and that he will do far more than any of you could imagine through your church.

¹⁰ I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:10-14 (NIV)

At the end of the session, thank everyone again for coming. Tell them the date, place and time of the next meeting and encourage them not to wait for the end of the course before they start sharing the good news of Jesus with the people around them.

Our Heart

Developing worship that helps the church to grow

Main aim



Members to understand the importance of worship and how it can either help or hinder the church to grow

Equipment

Members' Session Material: MSM6:1-6 (Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

DVD player and TV or equivalent

Feedback sheets

Welcome – local leader



Welcome everyone to the final members' session of the course. Congratulate those who have been with you from the beginning and make some observations about how far you have all come together. Ask if anyone can sum up what you learned last time. If necessary, give a brief recap yourself, reminding them that you were thinking about the importance of moving on in our own faith journey and growing in our own discipleship with God.

Tell the group that in this final session together you are going to be looking at the subject of worship, and discovering the part it has to play in our growth and in helping the church to grow. Encourage them to think about being inclusive of young people and children in worship, as well as older church members and newcomers.

Pray for the meeting, asking God to open your eyes to his word and to his will, and to help you to see more clearly his way forward for your church.

Lead everyone in the LYCiG *local* prayer, which they can find on MSM6-1.

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

Getting started

Read out this statement from the Westminster Catechism, which is printed for the members on MSM6-1:

‘Man’s (sic) chief end is to worship and glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.’

Invite the group to discuss in groups of three or four. Do they agree or disagree that this is the ‘chief end’ (or put another way, the main purpose) of humans? Does the statement surprise them? Do they give worship such a high priority in their own lives?

Give them a few minutes to discuss, then bring everyone back together. Invite a few people to share any interesting discussions from their small groups.

At the end of the discussion make the following observations:

- Worship should help us grow individually
- Worship should help the church grow

Bible



Ask members to stay in their small groups from the previous exercise and to read the Bible passage on MSM6-1, then to discuss the question on the sheets. For your reference, here are the passages and the discussion question:

¹ *Praise the Lord.*

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty heavens.

² *Praise him for his acts of power;*

praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³ *Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,*

praise him with the harp and lyre,

⁴ *praise him with timbrel and dancing,*

praise him with the strings and pipe,

⁵ *praise him with the clash of cymbals,*

praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶ *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*

Praise the Lord.

Psalm 150 (NIV)

The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Habakkuk 2:20 (NIV)

Where is the mystery and where is the joy in your weekly worship?

DVD MS6.1 (4 minutes)



Introduce the first of this session’s DVD extracts. This video covers the following:

- Worship as the heartbeat of the local church
- The importance of developing our worship services
- For many people a worship service is their first point of contact
- Worship: sacred and social

At the end of the DVD turn to MSM6-2 and ask the group to carry out the ‘Sacred and social’ exercise from the DVD.

Exercise: Sacred and social



Ask everyone to take a few minutes to think about different aspects of your worship. In what ways is your worship a sacred activity, and in what ways is it a social one? Ask them to write their ideas onto the diagram on MSM6-2, then break into small groups to discuss their thoughts.

Take feedback once the groups have had time to discuss, offering the opportunity for people to share their thoughts with the whole group.

DVD MS6.2 (10 minutes)



Introduce the second DVD extract of the session. This film includes the following:

- The variety of church traditions
- 'Your next visit is our success'
- Doing worship as well as possible
- 'Say the Mass as if it is your first, last, only'
- A varied diet of worship on Sundays and at other times
- Worship representing both the human and divine
- User-friendly worship
- Worship enrichment
- Summary

Invite responses to the DVD extract. Were there any ideas which surprised people, or which struck them as particularly helpful? Has it helped them to think of worship in a new light?

Exercise: My favourite things...



Ask people to think about which aspects of your worship services they value the most, and which aspects they find more difficult. Using the box on MS6-2, ask them to write down their thoughts, then to discuss their answers in small groups. Again, once people have finished discussing, allow a little time for sharing of thoughts with the whole group.

Exercise: 'User-friendly worship'



Turn to section MSM6-3. Ask the group to imagine someone who is coming to one of your church's services for the first time, with little or no previous experience of any kind of church. How would they find the experience? Ask everyone to write down answers to each of the questions on the sheet, then to get into groups of four or five people to discuss their answers.

Once the groups have finished discussing, bring them all back together and ask which answers people felt were the most significant. In the light of that exercise, which aspects of your church's worship are particularly helpful for newcomers? Are there any aspects that could be made more newcomer-friendly?

Exercise: The painter's palette



Turn to section MSM6-4 and MSM6-5. Point out that when a research group asked people to describe church worship as a colour, the two most common answers were grey and beige – hardly the most vibrant of colours! Ask what colour people think best describes the worship at their church. What would they add or take away to improve things? Ask them to write their suggestions onto the picture of an artist's palette. They might find the check list of ideas on MSM6-5 (which are part of a later exercise) helpful for this.

Take feedback once everyone has had enough time to think about the question and write their responses. Look out for whether there is a strong sense of agreement around any of the ideas.

Exercise: Worship checklist



Use the list on MSM6-5 to identify some aspects of your church's worship that must, should or could be improved. Ask everyone to work through the list and decide whether each change is essential (it must be done), important (it should be done), or minor (it could be done, but it could stay as it is). Ask them to put a tick in the appropriate box, or to leave the boxes blank if they think a particular suggestion to be unnecessary, or even counterproductive. Once they have worked through the entire sheet, ask them to identify the five changes that they think should be the top priorities.

Take feedback on everyone's top five priorities, and make sure to write them down as they are fed back (for future reference). Try to establish any consensus that is emerging about changes that should be made. How easy would it be to put those changes into effect? What problems might make it hard to achieve, and how could you seek to get around those problems? Allow some time for discussion around what your worship could become, encouraging people to be enthusiastic about future possibilities.

Response box

Turn to the response sheet (MSM6-6) and, as before, remind people to hand it in at the end of the session so that the church leadership can benefit from everyone's thinking.

Reflection and prayer



Lead a time of prayer, incorporating 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, which is also on MSM6-6. If time permits, make this a longer time than in previous sessions, possibly incorporating some singing as well as prayers from individual members.

¹When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. ²The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. ³When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying,

"He is good; his love endures forever."

2 Chronicles 7:1-3 (NIV)

When you finish your time of prayer, thank everyone for coming, not just tonight but over the whole of the course. Say that you hope that they have been challenged and encouraged, and that they are excited at the prospect of how God is going to grow your church in the coming weeks and months. Assure them that the church leadership is now going to work hard to turn their thoughts and observations into a coherent strategy, which will be shared with the church as a whole at a celebration service. If you have already set a date for that celebration, let everyone know. If not, make sure they know how and when they are likely to find out about it.

Leading your Church into Growth

final course review

Main aim



For your church to identify some growth priorities and to consider creating or revising its own ongoing plan for growth.

Equipment



Leaders' Session Materials LSM3:1-3 and feedback sheets
(Hand them all out at the start of the session)

Pens

Flipchart

Welcome

Welcome everyone to the meeting, remarking on the journey that your church has taken so far with LYCiG *local*. Remind everyone that although this is the final meeting of the course, it's far from being the end of the story. LYCiG *local* isn't about a series of meetings, it's about what happens next. Explain that in this session you are going to be creating a simple leaflet stating your vision, priorities, suggestions and plans. You may like to go beyond this and produce a fully developed Plan for Growth (P4G). Your church may already have a P4G, or something similar such as a Mission Action Plan. If you already have something in place, take this opportunity to revise and develop your existing plan. In any case, you may find it helpful to talk to someone in your denomination or stream who can provide help and guidance. Depending on your tradition, they might have a job title such as Diocesan Missioner, Circuit Mission Enabler, or Church Development Officer.

Open your meeting with prayer. Invite everyone to join with you in saying the course prayer, which (if people don't know it by now) can be found on the Leaders' Session Materials LSM3-1.

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

Getting started

Ask everyone to think of somewhere they would love to go – it could be a holiday destination, a sporting venue, someone's home or anywhere else. Ask them to think about why they want to go to that place. What is its appeal for them?

Ask them to pair up with someone and tell each other where they want to go and why. Invite a few people to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Teaching input

Point out that when planning a car journey there are four important steps.

- Identify where you are starting from
- Decide where you want to go to
- Work out the best route to get there
- Start driving

Creating a plan

Creating a Plan for Growth involves four similar steps.

- Where are we as church?
 - Reviewing church life to understand where we are
- Where do we want to go?
 - What vision do we have, where is God leading us?
- Work out the route to get to where God wants us to be
 - Identifying the priorities that need to be worked on
- Start working and praying on the priorities that have been identified
 - Turning the priorities into a number of action points, identifying the resources that are needed and praying through the whole process

The journey through the LYCiG *local* course will have helped you consider these four steps, to identify priorities and set out clearly your key action points.

Reviewing responses

Spend some time as a leadership team going over the feedback from the other sessions in the course. The following set of actions may take some time, but it's worth doing thoroughly and prayerfully.

Review the response sheets from the three previous sessions, looking for any recurring comments that might suggest a growing consensus in the congregation, or any strikingly original and inspired ideas. Look again at the response sheets from the first three sessions on the course in case there was anything there that has been forgotten or which seems more important in the light of the later responses.

Group the different responses into a limited number of themes. Try to keep this down to four or five categories. You might like to use the following topics as a way of organising the ideas (but remember these are a guide not a straightjacket – if something doesn't fit any of these don't feel that it has to be ignored).

- Mission and outreach
- Invitation and welcome
- Pastoral care
- Discipleship
- Worship

Add any other thoughts and ideas that you have had as a leadership team, putting them in the appropriate category.

Identify priorities

Now you need to identify the priorities from your array of categorised ideas. Look at the feedback sheets together and see if there are any ideas which are mentioned by several different people. Are there any ideas which aren't mentioned by many people, but which seem particularly helpful for your situation. Agree together the three most important priorities to help lead your church into growth.

Once you have settled on your top three, start to identify some action points for each one. Turn to LSM3-2. You could either work together as a single group, or you could divide into three groups each focusing on a single priority. If you do sub-divide, give a degree of choice as to who goes in which group, so that anyone with a particular vision for one of the priorities is able to pursue that vision. If you separate, allow plenty of time for the groups to thoroughly feed back their ideas afterwards.

Please note that some of your action points are likely to be short-term objectives (to be done in the next few months), some will be medium term (6-18 months) and others long term (18 months or more). By combining these different action points, you should be able to create a Mission Action Plan that covers the next 1-3 years.

Sharing and implementing the vision

Your P4G will be useless unless it is widely known and understood, and acted upon. Use your teaching and preaching programme in the coming months to support what you want to do. You should also plan a special service or launch event where you can share the vision with the whole church and the wider community. Services like this can be a powerful way of helping the congregation to commit to the plan. You might like to offer the plan and vision priorities on the Holy Table, or invite individuals to show their commitment to the plan by lighting a candle or some other symbolic act. You can find outlines for celebration services or launch events on the LYCiG website: www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk

After six months, a small group should meet to review progress. Have the short-term action points been achieved? Do any of the action points need revising? Do new ones need adding? It's important that this group reports back to the rest of the church, sharing the encouragement of things that have gone well and sharing the responsibility to pray and work on the things that haven't.

Exercise: My place in God's plan



It is good to make plans for the whole church to follow, but it's vital that individuals feel a sense of personal commitment to those plans. The leadership of the church – that means the people at this meeting – have a vital role to play if the P4G is going to have any impact in the wider church.

Turn to section LSM3-3 and ask everyone to look at the comments in the boxes on the sheet. Ask everyone to consider whether any of them are particularly relevant to them. What steps could they take to make these ideas an important part of their life? Is there anything they need to write in the blank box?

Allow a few minutes for people to privately respond to the sheet, then move on to your time of closing reflection.

For reflection



Read Acts 1:7-9 (which is on LSM3-3).

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Acts 1:7-9 (NIV)

Point out that growing a church is not primarily about having a better church, but about reaching, loving and transforming the lives of people and the world. As Acts 1 reminds us, that needs to happen within the authority and guidance of God, and every step of the way needs to be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit.

Lead a short time of prayer, thanking God for his leading through the course and for his plans for the future in your church. Pray that the command to make disciples will be obeyed in your *local* area and that he will amaze you with the growth that can come from faithfully obeying him.

Thank your leaders, not just for coming to this meeting but for all their support throughout the course. Remind them of what you said at the beginning of the meeting, that this isn't an end, just the beginning of an exciting new chapter in the life of your church.

Close the meeting by repeating the prayer from the start of this session.

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