



## 5 Marks of Growing – Children and Young People



### Session 4 – Growing in Numbers

#### Introduction: (J, I, S)

ASK: *I wonder why you go to church? Would you invite people you know to come?*

ASK: *I wonder what your church would be like if more people went? I wonder what would be better? I wonder if anything would be worse?*

We are not here to get more people to go to church. Our mission is for more people to know God. BUT they might be more likely to get to know God if they come to church.

#### Bible readings:

Matt 28:16-20

Luke 14: 15-24 - *I wonder who you think are the 'right' people to come to church?*

Acts 2: 37-42 - *I wonder how you would feel if this happened in your church? I wonder how God would feel?*

#### Activity: Fishing (J, I)

Upscale the age old game of magnetic fishing from a bucket. It's a lot harder with a 6ft cane and a heavy magnet on the end of the string. Make two fishing rods and you can have races between two teams to 'catch' the most fish in a given time scale, vary it according to space and time and numbers available.

Discuss fishing with the group - there may be some experts among them! *Where do you need to go? What kind of things do you need? What bait, what equipment?*

Mark 1: 17 *"Jesus said, 'Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men'"*

ASK: *I wonder what Jesus meant when he said this to his first disciples?*

Some other 'catching' games:

**KINGY:** Another age old game, under many different names - basically ball tig. Try variations, especially in how one is allowed to defend themselves, or what happens when 'caught' (eg stand still, cannot move, but can help get people out).

**BULLDOG:** Variation - when caught players have to hold hands with the bulldog to catch others, until there is one long line of 'Bulldogs'.



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'Catching' others for Christ is not about bullying people into church, but about building relationships, inviting people along and sharing your faith. Sometimes we can be scared of what others might think of us, but a simple invitation along to your youth group (or to a special event such as a pizza evening) is all that it takes.

We can't make other become Christians, but we can invite them to Church where they might be more likely to.

### **Activity: The ideal church (J, I, S)**

*ASK: I wonder what you think Church is supposed to be like? I wonder what is supposed to happen?*

*What would God like to see happening?*

*ASK: I wonder who church is for? Who is supposed to be there?*

*Who would God like to see there?*

Either as a whole group (on one large piece of paper), or in small groups or individually, draw a picture of your ideal church. Use whatever materials you can provide (pens, paint, collage etc) and encourage people to be as creative as they want.

As you do your picture, you might think about these questions:

*What would my ideal church look like?*

*Who would be there?*

*What would people be doing?*

When everyone has finished their pictures, you can ask a final question for them to think about:

*I wonder where God would be in your picture?*

### **Activity: Video Discussion (S)**

Some ideas on how to grow your church: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtygJntC1b0>

and how not to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ndkz7HTjc8&list=PLE1C50F318759F042> (NOTE: this contains some moderately bad language which may not be appropriate for your group)

*What things make people feel welcome in a church – or not?*



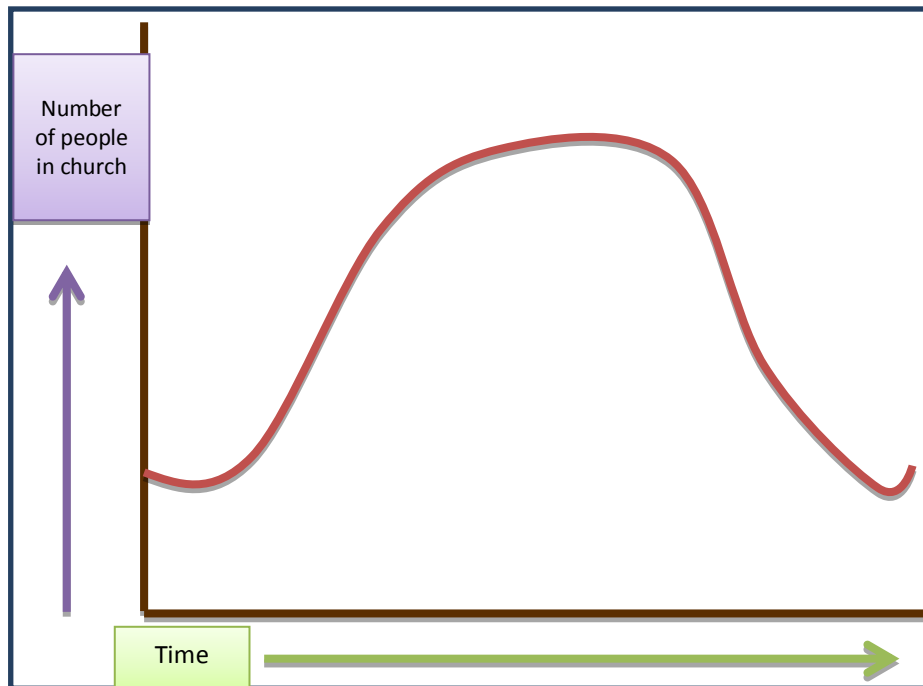
**Activity: Is this church growing or dying? (S)**

What does a growing church look like? How can you tell? What are the signs?

This activity is called a 'Living Graph' because it is using a graph to look at some of the everyday things that might be happening in any church across the land. But...are they signs of a growing church or a dying one?

**WHAT TO DO**

- Draw the graph below on a large sheet of paper (flip chart paper or wallpaper):



- If you have a large group you may need to split them up into smaller groups of 6-8 people. You will need to provide a graph for each group.
- Print off enough sets of the cards on the next page so that each group can have a set.
- Ask the groups to read the cards one by one and decide whether what is described on the card is a sign that the church is growing or declining. When they have decided, they can put that card on the place they think most closely matches their decision on the curve. There are no 'right/wrong' answers, only opinions that can be explored and explained.
- **NOTE :** the place where the church is at its largest is the highest point on the curve. However, notice there are TWO places where numbers are low – the beginning and the end. Does that mean these two points are the same...or different? What might it mean when the curve is nearly flat at the top?
- This activity will take some time and may not be straightforward – that's ok as it is the discussion that matters most.

- When the groups have had a go, get them to stand back and look at what they have done. If there is more than one group, they can go and look at each others graphs. Are they the same? If not, why not?
- Try to decide together what might be the signs of a growing or a declining church? Why do the numbers of people in church make a difference?



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<p>Our church is so beautiful – the stained glass windows are a real achievement and as for the wood carvings...we are trying to get a grant from English Heritage but there are so few of us..."</p>	<p>John decided that it was time for him to move on – he had given so much of his time and energy he was beginning to show signs of stress and burn-out.</p>	<p>Liz felt a bit uncomfortable when she came into the service. There were lots of friendly people and lots going on but she got a few strange looks as she sat down, maybe it was the stud in her nose and her tattoo.</p>	<p>Jack put the magazine back on the shelf where it always went. He was sick and tired of people coming in trying to change things. "Church is about stability and looking after what's important."</p>	<p>"The last fund-raising project to raise money for the sheltered housing scheme was so successful we are thinking of running it again for a youth drop-in centre."</p>
<p>Shirley couldn't remember the last time she had talked to anyone about God, in fact she wondered if she ever had.</p>	<p>"It's a pity we don't seem to have any young people coming any more. Never mind though, as long as I can sit there in peace during the service and catch up with the latest news over coffee."</p>	<p>The flower ladies wanted to have a flower festival but were worried about what Margery would think – she could get very tetchy and needed careful handling.</p>	<p>"Our church is really special because we all know each other and get on really well. If there's a problem, we go round to each other's houses and sort it out."</p>	<p>"This is so exciting, John, our vicar, is doing a brilliant job and we've got so many ideas about how to get new people. It's difficult to know where to start !"</p>
<p>The small congregation welcomes all who wish to come and join them. They have some programmes started but aren't too bothered if they fall through.</p>	<p>The prayer meeting was full – people had finally realised that something desperately needed to happen and they needed to come to God.</p>	<p>Peter could see that there were high levels of energy and enthusiasm but not enough people to do everything.</p>	<p>"There are so many of us now it is difficult to know who is a regular and who is a newcomer!"</p>	<p>Jenny realised that she had some church activity going on almost every night of the week.</p>
<p>The youth group had a sponsored sleepover to raise money for Children in Need.</p>	<p>"We have visitors coming regularly to our church to see how we do things."</p>	<p>"We've just started doing a Messy Church regularly with the local Methodist Church. It's going well"</p>	<p>"This is the third year in a row that we haven't had enough money to pay our share to the diocese."</p>	<p>There is no one in the service this morning under the age of 50.</p>



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### Final reflection: (J, I, S)

ASK: *I wonder if you would want more people to come to your church?*

ASK: *I wonder what you could do so that more people might come to your church?*

You can pray now for people you know to come to church – or more importantly to get to know God:

- They might be people who come to church for a special service like a wedding or baptism - you could pray for them to come back again.
- They might be people who used to go to church but have just stopped for some reason. You could pray for them to be interested again.
- They might be people who are looking for God but who think church is 'not really for me'. You could pray that they will see God through all the 'boring stuff' that might go on.

