

Growing Large Regional Congregations

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Kennon presented 12 possibilities that need to be considered when forming growing or creating large regional congregations. These notes were made by Ross Neville during that seminar. For more specific details people should refer to his books. The BOM have a limited supply of editions ordered many years ago when his 12 principles were adopted by the Synod as a preferred planning strategy. Regional churches are being revisited as strategies for many areas and so in 2005 BOM invited Kennon to Australia and these notes are provided to stimulate some of the ideas possibilities and experience that were shared on those days.

Seminar Notes

For anything to happen, grow and be sustainable in any congregation the following criteria need to be present:

- People are passionate about what they are doing!
- The strengths gifts and competencies of the people are matched with the congregational size.
- Any function or activity is pleasant to be part of.

Each size congregation has their own problems. Congregations can be small, middle, large, regional, mega. It is easier by default to be small and strong or large and strong but it is most difficult to be middle and strong or mega and strong.

These forms of church are all distinctive in the way they operate as God's family and they operate in very different ways as a church.

There is no one way to be 'Large and Regional' and Kennon presents 12 possibilities of ways large regional churches can develop.

1. Target your church program and activities for the people in our society Sprinters or Marathon Runners

Today's culture encourages sprinters. We can encourage and build a church based on sprinter ministry. We have sloggers and sprinters in almost all of life's activities. Packing for holidays, doing homework, preaching prep... the number of children with ADD is a sign of the prevalence. It is possible to learn both types of behaviour.

Our history has been dominated by marathon runners: Nomads – marathon
Agrarian revolution - marathon
Industrial revolution - marathon
Technological revolution - sprinters

The pace of sprinting is changing and today's culture and workplaces are dominated by sprinters. Weekly bible studies have been designed and targeted for marathon runners.

'Companions in Christ' has been designed for and by Marathon runners.

To offer ministry to sprinters: worship must be short
worship or contact may be one time only

Congregations that have done this have excellent results, develop more leaders, more volunteers and have more participants.

Planning to offer:

- one time events (8 times a year) Seasonal short term events (6 times a year)
- Short term program (4 times a year)
- Long term program (4 weeks) 6 times a year
- Weekly, monthly, yearly events once a year

Dying congregations emphasise long term programs because this gives the message that you are not a good Christian unless you are a marathon runner.

List all your church activities and see to whom they are pitched for.

Plan some programs for one time, seasonal or short term event activities: regional projects, fellowship events, mission events, common interest events, bible study gathering, prayer gatherings, task force teams, recreational activities.

2. Motivational Matches.

Our services and church activities must meet motivational needs

Every person has the following motivational traits:

Compassion
Community
Hope
Challenge
Reasonability
Commitment

Build any church activity based on any 2 of the first three.

The non-churched looked for the first three motivational traits they see them as:

Help
Home
Hope

If our preaching, teaching, shepherding or giving programs don't address 2 out of the first three traits, motivational gaps are created.

The foundation of leadership is love which is based on the 4 L's:

Living; Listening; Learning; Leading

Giving is motivated by compassion.

Stewardship and discipleship is motivated by compassion.

Commitment is a motivation learned by long term Christians.

Church notices, bulletins and the closing hymn of every service should emphasise compassion hope and community with personal stories or needs.

3. Nine out of twelve 12 traits of an effective church

There are twelve characteristics of a church that every congregation should represent. The aim is to have nine of those traits well done. The size or number in a congregation is not a good measure of a congregations' strength. Strength depends on the context and district that each congregation lives in.

The traits are:	Mission	Program	Visitation
	Access	Worship	Visibility
	Groupings	Parking	Leadership
	Facilities	Participation	Giving

These 12 keys are the essential characteristics Callahan develops in his book 12 keys to an Effective Church 1983.

A church must claim its strengths and build on them the other traits will be dragged along and improve. A church's strengths are usually a good indication of God's gifts. People are drawn to a congregation that demonstrates a degree of excellence in just a few things not everything. 9/12 is good.

4. Amalgamating to grow – think 3 not 2

It is a common mistake to amalgamate two group or two congregations to form one larger group or congregation. Experience indicates it won't work. Two small weak congregations will not become a strong large regional. You actually combine two small fighting congregations that will eventually decline. They operate on the theology of:

- Play to win
- Play to survive
- Play to lose

- when they are combined.

Two womens' fellowships who wanted to combine and form one group working in the kitchen ended up with 4 fragmented groups. Old old timers; old timers; new comers; new new comers.

One large congregation deciding when to split up into two services will achieve more if they split up into three with each one having common interests.

Combining two people who are on a flower roster will not work but will work if they combine with others with a common interest in flowers in other fields. Such a combination resulted in the offering of garden seminars, visitation programs, extended participation in gardening and flower arranging.

5. Think in Regional ways

Investigate regional trip times for the area.

How far do people travel for work?

How far do people travel for major social events?

How far do people travel for recreational activity?

Thinking regionally is not congregational stealing. The target audience are the 85% of the people who do not attend church.

Do not target church shoppers or other denominational persons. They are part of a dying culture and will not change or commit.

6. Think Regional Mission

Our planning generally does not include the non church people around us.

A congregation with all ages present and a cradle to the grave ministry may not be the ideal.

Best to focus on:

- One major mission consistently for a number of years. Better than the shotgun approach to target a group of people.
Include in this several minor missions; some electives for additional groups.
- Choose where your congregational passion is: For which group and where.

Choose a life stage ; young Mum's Retirees

A human condition; hurt disadvantaged

A community interest: AA's, Art

A group: friends, family.

Note - people today resist formal groupings.

7. Form/train groups of Shepherds within the church

Train them in shepherding: making 'listening' friendships and contacts.

Encourage them to grow, identify their competencies and strengths, encourage them to visit people by making a list and undertaking to visit them at least 10 times during the year: Start with a list of 3-5 people.

Contact these people by:

inviting them home; inviting them to a coffee/meeting place; visiting them at work; phoning them up and talking to them; dropping a note to them; sending them emails
choose people at work; newcomers to worship; occasional worshippers; shut ins, hospital, nursing home people; community people; people in specific vocational areas.

Train the congregation to be shepherds at worship. This is the place where informal natural groupings can occur. Form worship shepherd teams; Sprinter visiting teams; Administration shepherd teams; worship leading shepherding teams.

This will only work if the shepherding is compassion driven. Jesus is known for his compassion driven shepherding. Worship and administration can preoccupy and take away the motivational drive of compassion that should be in all church tasks.

Avoid targeting inactive ex church people they are the most difficult. Gather family group leaders annually to thank, encourage and bless them in their ministry

8. Create a new Worship service

Option 1

- Start at the end of Summer. Allow at least 6 months to build interest
- Start with 5 people (2 already coming to worship, 3 occasional, new or community persons)
- Challenge the 5 to find three households each that they have some link or interest with.

Ask them to meet with these three households over a two month period.

Have the meeting discuss and come up with a list:

What do your household enjoy doing? What makes a good time or fun for your household? What are some good ideas for a church service that would help your household enjoy the time?

- Ask these 9 households to each find another 3 households each and compile and add to the list of ideas
- Repeat the exercise asking the 27 households to meet with 3 new households
- Form 3 teams of leaders to put together a worship event using the ideas gathered.
- Do not allow anyone from an existing church music team to play a part in the worship events.
- Music makes up generally 40% of a service
- Music and preaching /teaching must be in balance. The balance is between:

Simple	Complex
Stirring	Profound
Inspiring	Thoughtful
Emotional	Intellectual
- The first 3 minutes and the last 3 minutes are critical. To instil a new idea , new emotion that people will take home

Option 2

Targeting Sprinters

One off service events:

- Focus on Christmas and Easter
- 2 or 3 or up to 8 major community events: life stages; human hurt or grief; community hope events; community interest events; football season; sowing or harvest

Process: plan a publicity campaign a week before. Publicity to include:

personal notes, direct mail (3 or 4 people to target 10 each)

Phone or email (4 persons to target 10 each)

Personal visits (2 persons to target 5 each)

The service must emphasise the grace of God

Option 3

Start a new service to reach or provide ministry for a new group of people.

9. Groupings for building relationships

People join a church family not an organisation.
People join a movement not an institution.
People long for groups. New groups are less than 5 years old.
Large regional churches start 3-5-8 new groups every year

10. Large regional congregations need a special style of leadership

Humility leadership focuses on mission, compassion, team building and shepherding. They will develop lasting movements. Celebrity leaders focus on autocracy and top down leadership. They will develop short term organisations and they may have a passion for mission but do not handle competing visions. Visionary leadership focus on challenge and commitment but do not handle competing visions from the grass roots where most long term visions come from.

A leader who keeps his own calendar for meetings and activities are indicating they are only able lead a small strong congregation and not a large regional. As a church grows they have to let go of activities and become streamlined.
20% of church growth and activity deliver 80% of the results. A large regional congregational leaders has to focus on the 20%
Traditionally time has been spent on administration /supervision/planning but these tasks can generally be better handled by a lay person. They are all business skills that business people are trained for better than most clergy.
The most growth occurs when the leader focuses on Mission, Worship and Shepherding.
Experience indicates after a ministry agent or leader goes a transition occurs.
It takes 2 years to get a congregation to back to normal.
Effective ministry begins after 5 years of ministry leadership. It takes 5 years to learn from your mistakes.
Full ministry effectiveness only occurs after 7 years

11. Location of a regional church

Stay in the old church or move to a new location and build?
A hard decision to make. A serious evaluation needs to be made.
What is the annual value of the land in the existing location?
What are the parking space possibilities?
What is the annual value to you of the current land? Total parking divided by total giving = the annual value of the church land to you.

12. Giving needs to be based on:

Members + Constituents + friends elsewhere + persons to whom you are in mission to not just on one group the focus has to be targeted to each group.

Marathon runners will give annually, weekly, direct debit
Sprinter giving can easily outdo marathon giving. Sprinter giving focuses on:
specific short term projects.
spontaneous projects
major Sunday activities

special planned offerings
major projects

This is noticeable with NSW Synod giving; 2008 UCA people are giving more money per year to appeals than they are giving to the church
