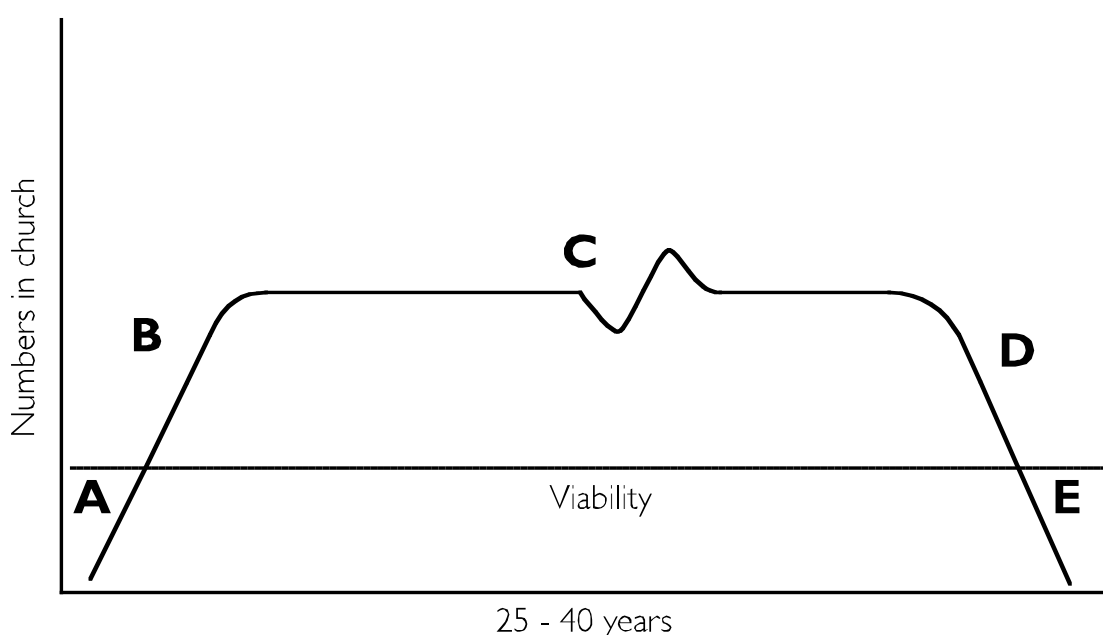


Growing Churches Session 2

Helen and I decided some time ago that we would always need help with villages but there's no way in which we would ever stay a night in an English village. Well, every reference to an English village we see is about murders: Midsomer Murders, and all that kind of thing. Villages are very dangerous places, and especially associated with the local church because it's nearly always the choirmaster or the vicar or the vicar's wife or somebody who is doing it. I mean if you moved into a village and found that Miss Marple lived next door, would you stay? She doesn't get murdered but everybody else she ever knows seems to and English villages... English ladies with church connections are very dangerous ladies, especially when they live in villages, so I am glad that you have a particularly stupid Australian working with you.



Let us return to our under-resourced but growing churches. Well it's the character of the church that's above B. It will always need resources – why? It's above viability. Why will it always need resources? Because it always has plans for other things to do that it can't do at the moment. And so as soon as anybody gives it any resource it immediately spends it because they have got 10 different schemes, all lined up ready to go but don't have the resources for them. So you can see a very, very large church and you say, 'Well they have loads of resources maybe they can share some with us'. But when you approach them they will nearly always say, 'no, we haven't got enough'. Because you are a little A church and you've got hardly any resources and you look at the big B church and say, "Look, they've got all those Sunday school leaders and all those youth fellowship leaders, all that money, all that... surely they could just send us some money because they've got so much." But if it's a growing church they haven't got enough. No matter how much they've got, it'll never be enough because they are always utilising all the resources they've got, plus plans for other resources if they only had them. They are always out trying to get more resources and although their budget might be a million pounds, they will have spent £1.1 million in the last year.

The budget for an E church might be £10, 000, but you only spent £9,000 of it. Churches over on the D and E side of the graph tend to put money into the bank for a

rainy day, not realising that it's pouring already. Growing A and B churches never put money aside but are always straining and stretching. We're going to look at this B church as it moves to C – the church that's above viability, what is it like? Well, first thing is: it's **under-resourced**. That's its first characteristic and it will always be. I used to think when I get above viability, we'll have the money too. In the years I was at St Matthias, on every year, we finished having lost money. We never made money in any one year. We moved from the smallest church in the diocese to the largest in Australia, but in the process we never once wound up with a surplus at the end of a year's trading. The characteristic of a B church is **pain**. It's always pain. It is never easy to be the B church. That's one of the characteristics of it. It always hurts because you've always got more schemes than you've got money but the characteristic of the B church is **risk-taking**. So while I haven't got the money for my scheme I'm going to do it anyway, which is why I don't have enough money at the end of the year.

If you are in a B church, you must not have an accountant as your treasurer, especially if it's an auditor and in particular, if they are an auditor or accountant for the civil service because they are risk-averse people. What you need is a businessman. See, accountants tell you how much money there was after the event. Auditors, a long time after the event, tell you what wasn't there. Civil servants cannot make decisions about how to expand or stretch anything. Their whole career and training is about control of the finances. Control of the finances is not what you need in a treasurer. What you need in a treasurer is a businessman, someone who's not afraid to make money and there's only one way to make money and that's to spend money, which means taking risks. Risks mean being in pain.

So B churches are always in pain. They are always short of money. They are always short of all resources. They don't have enough Sunday school teachers because the Sunday School's growing faster than they've got teachers. They don't have enough musicians because they put on a new service and the musicians have to double up. They just don't have enough – that's their way of living: they just don't have enough. For one year in all our years at St Matthias, we decided not to expand and that year was the only year in which our income dropped. Every other occasion the income increased, year after year, and this year's increase in income paid for the deficit last year but then of course we created a deficit in that year and so we pushed on again. It was always stressful. It's really hard when you're not making ends meet and we made all kinds of painful decisions. Entertainment allowances or travelling allowances were cancelled for the staff for 2 or 3 months. The staff members who had private means would be paid late because they had money in the bank. We'd pay the ones who had no money first and sometimes some of us were paid up to 3 or 4 months late in the year because the money just wasn't in the church accounts to pay us. I mean in one sense you could say we were formally trading in bankruptcy but we were a family not a business at that level. We knew the money would come eventually so we were willing to forego our salaries for a period of time in order to make it possible. That was how we grew a church: pain and risk.

You can start to see why C looms, can't you, because who wants to keep doing this, year after year after year? The church committee doesn't want to do it because they hate not being able to pay the staff. The staff don't want to do it because most of them are married. No one wants to do it. The congregation is appalled to think that they are going to have to give more money because they are already giving as much as they think they can give already. They never are of course, but they always think they are. So it's always pain and risk and being under-resourced. That's the character of a B church. It's also always unsatisfying. It keeps changing all the time and the congregation don't like it because there are always new people coming and

new programmes happening. Now there are certain people who thrive on novelty and they love it, but most people at church would like just to come and be served, just to come and be looked after and pastored to. As long as you have that mindset the church will stop growing. You see, the characteristic of a growing church is it puts the mission before people.

Mission before people

That's very naughty, isn't it, because we all know that people are really the important factor. A growing church will put mission before people, for it is more concerned with the spread of the gospel and reaching more people than looking after the people that they already have. This is terrible heresy I am mentioning here, isn't it? It goes right against the heart. Of course, the mission we are involved in is caring for people, but when you put the people in front of that mission, what you end up with is that the mission becomes, and our activity becomes, caring for me. And so I come as a consumer to church to be cared for and the ministry is there to look after my needs. When the minister is there to look after my needs and your needs and everybody else's needs and we're here to have our needs looked after, then the real needs of the community around about us that's going to hell are ignored for our sake who are already secure in our eternal life. And the ministry turns more and more into navel investigation and less and less into the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of mankind.

Mission before people then is a characteristic of A and B churches – of this whole section of growth. It is why according to the sociologists we are a sect or cult. Growing churches are always purists and fanatics. It's true in everything. That is, when you start a new business and the little business grows, it starts and grows by a hobbyist who has a fanaticism about the business. It's the hobbyist that starts the business and they are purists, they are fanatics, they are really, really interested in the business. Well that's evangelicals, isn't it? We're really, really interested in preaching the gospel. We really throw ourselves into it and therefore we don't mind the pain, we don't mind the risk because we are really committed to the cause. The more mainstream you move, the more you become part of society, the more in fact you move towards d or E and the decline of your business. So the sociologists call this declining part of the graph 'church'. It's a wrong term because we've got a doctrine of 'church' which is quite different. But in the sociology world 'cult' is what grows and 'church' is what dies. 'Church' is mainstream, acceptable, reflecting the values of society. As long as you're reflecting the values of society, you're no longer evangelising society. You can't do that, you see. So the temptation all the time is to move from sect to church but that is a temptation to move from birth to death. That's the direction of it.

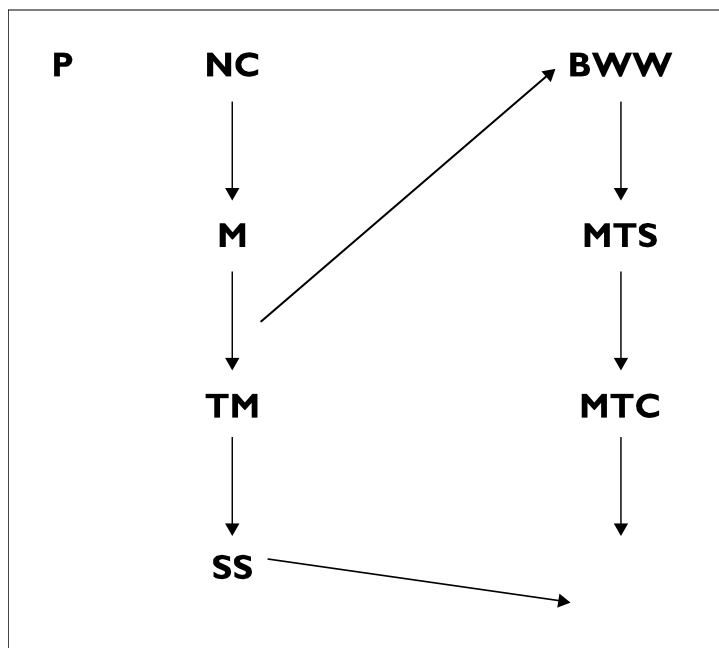
The churches that have the highest demands upon people are the churches that will grow most definitely. The churches with the lowest demands are the ones that decline. Have you ever seen a liberal church grow? Liberals can't grow churches because liberals are saying: come and be as English as I am and of course you say: I may as well stay in bed and be English. Why do I have to get out of bed on a Sunday morning to go down and be English with you? I am English. I can stay in bed and read the paper, watch the television. I don't have to go to church to be English, do I? And so the more English I am, the less Christian; and so churches like that will never grow. The church that says: come here and be different is the church that will grow. It's the principle of the bar. Raise the bar and you will reduce the number of people coming in the first place but increase the number of people coming in the long run. Lower the bar, you increase the number of people coming in the first place, but you lower the number of people coming in the long run.

So you say, “Look, if we cut our services down from an hour or an hour and 15 minutes down to 45 minutes or 30 minutes, more people will come.” Absolutely true: you’ll get more people. Which of the people will come? Well, the people who don’t really want to go to church but feel obliged to. They’re going to build an empire, that mob, aren’t they? So immediately people say: I like that new 9 o’clock service you’ve got – it’s so punchy. By which they mean, so short and undemanding. And so initially it will grow, but over a period of time no one will come to it because it’s a nothing. Whereas if you turn your 1 hour service into a 1.5 hr or 3 hr service, if you say, “Look if you’re going to come to church here, come at 9 o’clock in the morning and we’ll have lunch together afterwards, we’ll spend the day with each other as Christians”, you won’t get many people, will you? But 10, 15, 20 years down the track, there is a possibility that you’ll have thousands turning up because those who do come will be so impacted by the experience that they’ll sell it to all their friends.

Raising the bar is the way of long-term growth. Lowering the bar is the way of short-term growth. That’s the character of it. So the ‘church’ from the sociologist’s point of view is the mainstream part of society, acceptable-Christmas-and-Easter-crowd. You don’t grow that. The growing churches, A and B, continue to be seen as the fundamentalist, extremist, hard-line, narrow-minded bigoted group. Again, you can see the temptation if you are on B and you’re growing is to move out of the bigot character, isn’t it? To move away from hard-line anything, to start accepting the kinds of values of society, to become more acceptable, mainstream, part of the established order of life. That’s the temptation that keeps on taking you on to C. You’ve got to keep an evangelistic edge to stay growing on B. So it’s pain and it’s risk and it’s never enough resources. That’s the character of the life that you are in there – placing the mission ahead of people, never settled.

Now, how can you grow? Let me give you a simple pattern of growth. This leaves aside individual growth. This is something you can do in any church basically.

PRAYERFUL PREACHING OF WORD



Inside the context of prayerful preaching of the gospel, the **pastor (P)** meets **newcomers (NC)**. When we were in university ministry, we used to stand outside the gate in the first week and just meet newcomers. In another ministry, we went up

and down the road knocking on doors. With the Cathedral we simply open the doors. It's just the nature of the building right in the middle of Sydney that people just walk in the door. We have 50 visitors attend every Sunday. However you get a newcomer, which can be different in every context, the aim of the pastor is to get the newcomer into membership (M), and that's what I used to work at, fairly feverishly, to get newcomers to become **members (M)**. By members we meant people who came every week, came to one of the small groups where they were looked after, and came to one of our conferences each year – that was a member. We used to get them to sign up in membership. You see we are much more like the Free Church than the national church at this point, aren't we? We aim to get people into membership. The Church of England needs to have a membership principle other than being English. So that was our aim. I poured a lot of effort into doing that and because I poured a lot of effort into it, I became the blockage to growth because how many newcomers can I keep on integrating into membership? It just becomes harder and harder. One a week? That's 50 in a year if I succeeded with every one of them. You only succeed with a percentage of them and so you become the blockage.

A friend of mine helped me to see that we really didn't want members. What we wanted were **partners**, partners in the gospel, not members. So he taught me about the importance of training in ministry (**TM**). What we did was to start drawing up training programmes. We wrote "Two Ways to Live", a little evangelistic catechism. We wrote "Just For Starters" as 7 basic Bible studies. That was our basic training programme for all members. So everybody knew how to read the Bible one to one with somebody, especially a new Christian, and how to share their gospel with somebody as well. Everyone was supposed to go through that. Of course, we didn't succeed, but that was the aim. But we also then tried to train people in their own particular ministries, be they Sunday school teachers or youth fellowship leaders or home group leaders, and we would have training programmes for the particular ministry that they had. The aim all the time was not to leave people training in ministry. The aim all the time was to move them on to being **self-starters (SS)**.

But how do you train people in ministry? Well it is an active training that is involved; it's not classroom. You train people in ministry by getting them to minister. How do you train someone to cut timber? I can give you a lecture on it, but you still wouldn't know how to do it. You've got to have a piece of timber and a saw and have a go. As you're having a go, I'll say to you, "Keep breathing, if you stop breathing, you run out of steam. You have to keep breathing as you do it." That's how you train people to do an activity. So how do you train people in ministry? The way we trained people in ministry was to get them to do the newcomer work. I would stop doing this newcomer work, or I would do a little bit of it, and spend time training people in ministry. Since we had lots of people training in ministry, lo and behold, we had more newcomers, and the more people we trained in ministry, the more newcomers we had to deal with. Then I discovered an incredible counter-intuitive truth. That is, if you train first, you'll find ministry opportunities second. So you don't say, "Oh we've got a lot of children, let's go and train some Sunday school teachers." You start off by training Sunday school teachers when you don't have any children and when children come, you've got a Sunday school up and running that can actually operate. You've got to train first for ministry second. It's counterintuitive but it works. Every time we trained home group leaders, we always needed every one of them the next year. We never had leftover trained home group leaders and indeed the size of our church depended on the size of our home groups and the size of our home groups was almost totally dependent upon the number of leaders we trained. And so you start training even when there is no job.

When we went to the Cathedral there was no Sunday School. In fact Helen and I were the youngest people there. We are in the grandparent country. So we went along for a little while a couple of weeks before I became the Dean and that Sunday we looked around, there were no children anywhere, no Sunday school anywhere. So first Sunday we were there, Helen started the Sunday School. It's a tricky thing to do when you don't have any children but she's a very impressive woman. We had recruited a staff member, he had 3 children, that was our Sunday School. Helen took the three little boys down, and that was Sunday School. I stood at the front and said. "We've started the Sunday school and if you've got children, you might like to take them out after the end of the first hymn through that back door, down the stairs and you'll find the Sunday School and crèche is available for you there." Well you could see the congregation all looking around and saying - what children? However, we just started Sunday school. Now, 3 years later, there are 35 there every Sunday, there are 45 on the roll, and we've even had it up to 50 on occasions. There have always been children coming and children available to come, but there have never been any teachers ready to meet them. If there aren't any teachers ready to meet them, then what happens? They go somewhere else that Sunday, don't they? But if they arrive and there are teachers ready to meet them, and teach them, they stay. So what are you going to get first? Teachers. Train the teachers even when you haven't got any children to teach. Lo and behold when the children come, you are ready to teach. You say, "What happens if no children come?" If you've trained the teachers properly, they'll go out and find some. Once you've got teachers and no children, you think about starting a children's club after school and talk to the local school. We start doing things then because we've got the resources. So the growing church is always training people in ministry and training in ministry grows the church. It's the 'multiplier effect' if you are an economist. But our aim is to make self-starters.

Self-starters are people who, and here's a definition, when they leave us will continue as Christians, will join another church, and will start ministry without being asked. So the ideal St Matthias person who would come to England and join up with you, you won't even know they are in the church before you see that they are actually leading Bible studies with the person sitting next to them in the pew, and they have led somebody else to Christ, and they have picked up the books around the place and they are doing the washing up, because they have ministry genes. You know, it's just written into their DNA. Now how do you get people to be self-starters like that? Don't just say, "Oh can you send some our way?" No - how do YOU get them to be trained like that? Well, I learnt it from the doctors. The doctors watch one, do one, teach one. When you watch it, you understand what's done. When you do it, you can do it but you'll soon forget. When you start teaching it, you will always know how to do it. The teaching step is the important step in making it just part and parcel of your existence. So when people see us use two ways to live, they say: that's interesting. When you teach them how to use two ways to live, then for a little while they do it, but 6 months later they've forgotten. But when you get them to teach courses on two ways to live, they will always use two ways to live. So how do you get them to do it? You do it by getting them to do the training in ministry. Of course, the more training in ministry they do, they've got to train people on newcomers, haven't they? So again, the more newcomers we're looking after. The training in ministry bit is the multiplier for the whole system. But you've got to get people training self-starters.

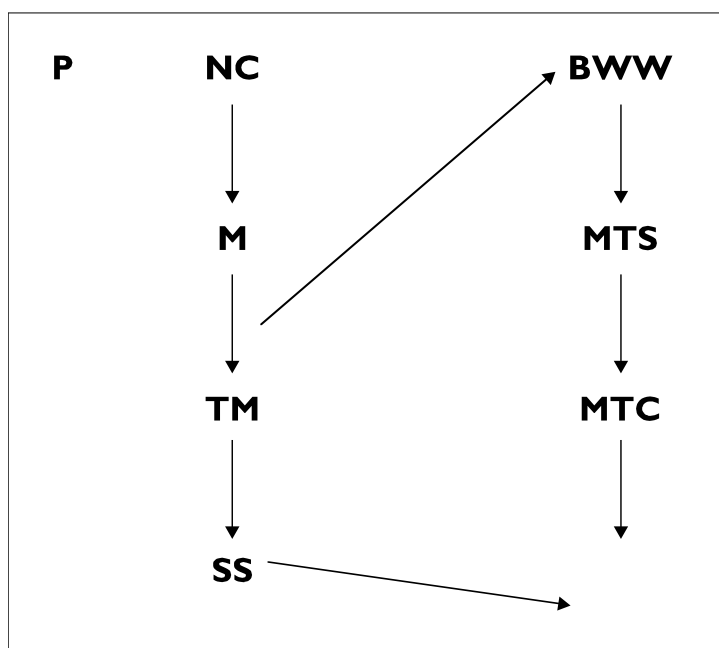
Now there is our lay growth program and that's, I think, fairly transferable to any church anywhere. That's not a distinctive "you can only do that in this context." We do that in all kinds of different congregations, as a pattern. But you've got to have this ministry training mindset to develop it, and it removes it from the mono-ministry. He (pastor in diagram) becomes less and less significant in this activity and can spend more and more time on the square, that is, the prayerful proclamation of the Word,

which is what the whole thing is about. Without that square outside, this is a description of how to grow a girl guides' group or a boy scouts group or the local conservative party or anything else. It's the same in any organisation. It's just sheer basic "how to grow a voluntary organisation" system. But inside the square, it's how you grow a church, which believes in the prayerful proclamation of the gospel.

In that process a key element happens because in training in ministry, you discover the **blokes worth watching** (BWW). Sometimes known as bloke-esses too! How do you know if a person has an ability to teach the Bible? How do you know if a person has the ability to preach? How do you know if a person has the ability to sing? You think William Taylor can sing? Well, there's only one way we can find out, isn't there? And that is we get him up here and we say: have a sing. And then we say - don't give up your day job! How about Liam? Can we know he can sing? Get him up here, get the bagpipes going, and then... It's only by the doing that you can see whether the person has the gifting. Well, if you are not training people in ministry, how do you ever see what they do? People keep on asking me, "Oh, is he a good preacher?" I don't know, every time I go to his church, I am preaching. I can say the preaching in his church is brilliant every time I've heard it! But I can't tell you whether he's any good or not, that's a different issue, isn't it? I can only know if I actually get to hear him.

So it's in the training in ministry we discover the blokes worth watching. With them, we put them into our two year training programme called **MTS** which is the same as your apprenticeships. It's for two years, full time, learning how to minister. Our commitment is to them. What I heard earlier from Andy (Gemmill) was about how they put their apprentices on to train them. Our commitment is them. They are not cheap labour. They are people that we want to put into the world as gospel ministers and so we give them as much experience as is necessary to help them, before we put them into **Moore College (MTC)** i.e. before they go into the professional ministry of the gospel.

PRAYERFUL PREACHING OF WORD



So the left side of the diagram is the lay growth, the right side is the professional growth. The left side of the diagram is the home church growing; the right side is

going into all the world. These people we lose from our church growth. But the gospel grows, the church of God grows through these people and so you've got to have the generosity to take the step of approaching the blokes worth watching and asking them to be apprentices. That's gospel generosity. You need to have it. God will never fail the generous. He always gives to the cheerful giver. If you're generous he can trust you with more resources and so the aim is always to be giving away people.

Part of the reason I am really excited about Gospel Partnerships is I am hearing two things happening: one, church planting, church growing and two, apprenticeship schemes setting up. Because if we plant more churches and grow more churches we're going to need more ministers of the gospel, so if we're not now setting aside and training more ministers of the gospel, then we're going to get stymied down the track, aren't we? So the two things need to go hand in hand and they are happening hand in hand. We need more people to go on Cornhill training and the rest, because we will need to have more in the future. We need more colleges like Oak Hill to really equip us so that we can have the professionals. Our aim of course in the end is to get these self-starter people to link up with the trained gospel ministers in our church planting. That often does happen because they knew each other back when they were training in ministry. The training in ministry is the key over what training is happening in your church. I am not talking about just casual or occasional training. I am talking about intentional, purposeful in-your-program training of the people in the ministry of the gospel.

What's the future of a growing church? Well, the future really lies in the law of diminishing returns. Here's the bad news. Whatever growth dynamic pushed you up, it will in time plateau off. There's a growth dynamic with a built in law of diminishing returns. But there's any number of things that will lead to this change. Over time, as the numbers grow, the growing church starts to put more emphasis on the people and less on the mission. Once you start doing that, you will decline. For other churches it is simply that growth above a certain size means people have less contact with the minister who had recruited most of them into the church originally. For another church it may be that their home groups have been meeting in the same home groups for 20 years. The difficulty is when you suggest scrapping all the home groups and starting them completely fresh, some people say, "We have been meeting in the same home group for 20 years. We've raised our kids together, we've prayed through their teenage years together, these are our closest friends, this is what has kept us Christian all this time." But if you want the church to grow, they'll need to go into a different group, because there's no way a newcomer coming into that group can break in to that relationship and the relationship of the group. It's got too many in jokes, it's got too much history, it's got too much... it's a closed cell and when you've got a church that's made up of closed cells, how do you grow? You don't. Any newcomer comes in, they just bounce off the closed cells. If you don't get into the home groups in that church, you are not in. Of course such home groups are constantly losing members because they would die and so the church is coming off C. But the thing that grew them, these wonderful home groups started years ago, their very growth dynamic, you see, can actually kill them over time. Now there are other reasons why churches will plateau like this. Some of them are internal barriers. Some of them are external barriers.

Internal barriers

Of course the key one on C is **comfort**. You get sick of the risk, you get sick of the pain, you get sick of always begging for more money. You get tired and so you go for comfort. Another one is **age**. The group of young people who kicked it off 15 years ago are now in their fifties and they can't keep it up anymore. Sometimes **careerism**

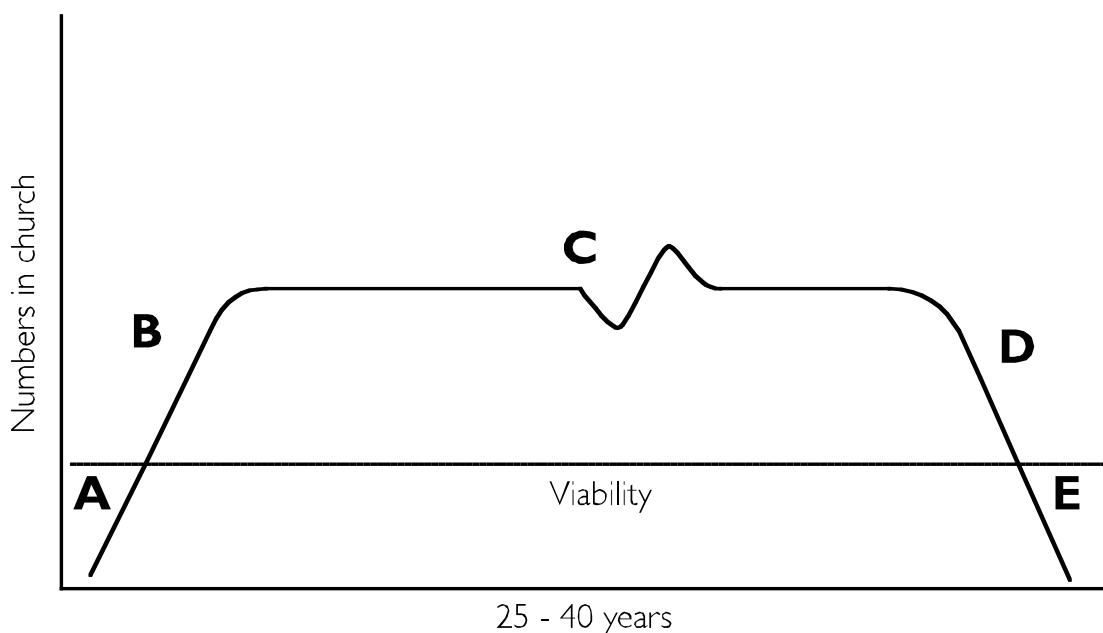
and materialism are also internal barriers. “When we were young we had time to teach Sunday school but now with my career..... I’ve got to be in Leningrad tomorrow and I am going down to be in Portugal the day after, I haven’t got time to run Sunday school anymore.” And so the very emphasis and energy that we had is actually dissipated in other things of this world.

External barriers

But the external barriers are things like: the **building is full**. Once the building’s full, then what are we going to do? In fact we know from America and it’s true in Australia, I think it’s less true in England but it’s still true, that once the building’s 80% full, it is full. It stops growing at 80% full, because when people come in, if they can’t find a seat, they don’t come back next Sunday. And it’s not just literally a seat, they can’t find where they are going to fit into this congregation. But when a building is 80% full it’s very hard to see where you can fit in, so they don’t come back. We had a church sitting 80% full for a couple of years, we didn’t know what to do, we had no idea, and one of our missionaries from Argentina came back and gave us an idea as how to get rid of 50 or so people into a new church plant down the road which I’ll talk about and it was interesting – within a few weeks, the 50 seats were filled; within only a few weeks. That’s because for the last few years people had been coming in the back door and back out the side door because there was no where to fit in. But take out 50 or so people and then it would grow immediately. An extraordinary thing to happen? Not really, it happens all the time.

There are other barriers to growth. It can be the **car park**, it can be the famous 200 **pastoral spare capacity**, i.e. given the way in which we minister, generally speaking, most ministers can’t look after more than 200 people. Now you can minister in a different way and then you can look after a different number. But our kind of way is that most of our congregation members want to be known by name by their pastor, they want to have visited the pastor’s home and they want to have the pastor visit their home and so they are known that well that they can feel like they got access to home both ways. Now most ministers can’t look after more than 200 in that level of intensity. So when a church reaches 200, it starts to plateau. Now that’s an easy plateau to solve; you put on an extra staff member. The next staff member won’t be able to look after an additional 200 because there has to be overlap otherwise you have two congregations. So he’ll look after say 150 and then it will plateau again at 350 and so you say well let’s put another staff member on. Well the next one will only look after 100, so that moves you to 450 and the next one will only look after 50 and the next one... eventually when you put on more staff you have got to hire 5 administrators to look after the whole staff and you eventually start to go backwards. There is a law of diminishing returns even into the solution for the law of diminishing returns. So plateau-ing is the direction the whole movement is happening. You think that by nature we will always grow – that’s not true. You, by nature, will always plateau. That’s the natural direction in which it always moves. To not plateau requires sticking against the trend. It actually requires pain and risk and pushing against the natural tendency to plateau. There is the activity of it. Hobbyists, in terms of the business world, start businesses, get it up and running and put them into bankruptcy. There comes a point when the hobbyist actually has to bring in the accountants and business people to help him turn his hobby into a productive organisation. Business people, accountants, by and large never start businesses. It’s the hobbyist who starts it. So you’ve got to keep the hobbyist in control. You can’t just hand over completely to the businessman but you need the businessman to help you keep on going and not feel the natural tendency on to C. There is the growing church.

Well I should now talk about the comforting church but that's not where I think you need to go. You need to understand what life is about, so we need to look now at D and E and I'll come back to C. What are D and E like?



The character of the dying church D is first of all **denial**. This is where we need the auditors, for the auditor shows you the truth of where you are. Auditors are no good over in A and B churches showing you how to go forward; they're really good at showing you where you've been and where you now are, and breaking through the denial barrier to show you the truth that you are actually going out of business. That's an unpleasant job – who wants to be an auditor – but that's where we need them; very valuable people at this point. D churches have a gradual loss of resources but are **over-resourced**. So people generally think D churches are good churches. The general perception people have is there's lots of money sloshing around, there's lots of people sloshing around, there are Sunday school teachers to spare, and they are over-resourced actually. They've got nice buildings. These are the churches of great reputations that are actually hollow and empty and they are dying very fast but they don't recognise it. They have a conservative mindset generally. They **don't take risks** – they have well and truly gone past that. They are conserving what they have and what they built in the previous generation. They certainly make sure that they always meet budget and they have a little bit put aside each year. That is part of what is in the budget, that you have a thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, in the bank at the end of the day. If it ever looks like they won't have money over they'll put staff off. So what D churches do is they **manage decline**.

How do you do it? Imagine you have a senior minister, assistant minister, youth worker, children's worker and secretary. And this year, our finances weren't quite as good as last year. (That really should be irrelevant friends. Do not judge your finances year to year; judge your finances decade to decade. That's what you need to look at. From year to year it's neither here nor there. It's: where were you 5 years ago, where were you 10 years ago, where were you 15 years ago, because this whole schema (on graph) is a 25-40 year schema. And although it's a straight line, it's not a straight line – it's up and down all the way, it's just little variations, and so when you compare the year to year, all you are doing is comparing little variations.) However the last few years we haven't had as much money in. Do we really need a youth worker *and* a children's worker? Why don't we put the children's worker off, get

the youth worker to do the children's work as well – I mean, they are connected. Children do become youth, don't they? They could do the whole work and, with the money, we could do the landscaping. We've always wanted to fix the garden out the front, haven't we? Then we could still have a little bit of money left over.

After a few years, they say, "You know we don't have as many children and young people anymore do we?" (Surprise, surprise! You put the children's worker off, what did you think was going to happen.) "The assistant minister is a young man – why don't we get him to look after the whole youth/children's programme, get the rector to do a little bit more work, he could do more of the funerals because he's an old codger and then we can actually fix the chairs, couldn't we? We've always wanted to have more comfortable chairs, and we'd have a little bit left over and we wouldn't be in the red." Then after a while of course, we don't really need an assistant minister because there aren't those children and young people any more that we used to have around. Things aren't as big but we're still getting the money in. Why don't we get, rather than having an assistant minister, why don't we get 2 or 3 theological students or somebody like that who could come and do a bit of Sunday work for us and help the vicar out with the preaching and so on. So you just step by step manage decline but you always have money in the bank. You always make profit, you are always putting aside a little bit for the rainy day, even though it's pouring buckets outside. In a couple of years, when you cross the viability line (V on graph), it won't be so much pouring buckets as you'll be with Noah. Well, not with Noah; outside, swimming. But they don't see that because they are in denial and in unreality with this conservative mindset, always wishing for the grand days when things were growing but not noticing that things are actually declining.

Now D churches are the worst churches in the land, almost. They really are. They are very hard to fix, they are very hard to alter, because there are so much resources there, they don't want to change. If I were to change C church onto growth, I would need to move it something like 30 degrees. The same growth over here at D church, I need to move 90 degrees. Getting this D church back into growth requires major change. Indeed, what it needs, really, is to be **reinvented**. Over here at A and B churches all you need to do is to **resource** but over here, if you are in a D/E church, you need to reinvent. They have got to find a new growth dynamic. The old one is no longer of any use to them. They've got to find a completely new one. That's very painful. D churches generally won't do it, because they are in denial that they are declining, because they are in denial that they need such a radical change, and because they've still got sufficient resources to stop anybody coming and changing them because there's enough money in the bank, there's enough powerful people in the committee; they don't change, they won't change.

When you move below viability, then it becomes really sad. The E churches, they need reinvention. They are more able and open and willing to be reinvented because they are more bankrupt. They have got fewer resources, fewer people that can stand up against it. Whereas the people in D are in their 50s and 60s, the people in E are in their 70s and 80s. They just can't stand against that new pastor who wants to change things any more. And so they lay down their arms and stop the church fight. Most of the church fights happen in D churches. They are the hard ones. The E churches, well the more they move towards that bottom line, the more open they are to change. Classic E churches have very few people of whom only a handful are in receipt of a salary, all the others are pensioners. How do they survive below viability? Well, in the first 10 years of retirement, they fix everything on the property voluntarily; that's how they do it. But of course 10 years on, they are 75 then, they couldn't climb up the ladder and change the light bulbs any more, they couldn't go out and paint the walls any more. So the building is now falling down around them and there is nothing they

could do. They couldn't write any cheques to get things fixed because they couldn't afford the minister either, and so they had reached the bottom of E. But those last 10 years are painful in the extreme. They don't have any energy to go out and reach the suburb around about them with the gospel; they use every bit of energy/money resource they had just keeping the doors open. Although you can say they didn't reach bankruptcy until they reached the bottom of the line, once you go below viability, you should stop trading. You can't trade as you are. You've got to stop.

How many churches are there in this land that are at E? They really can't afford any more, and they are just patching their way through. The buildings are usually the sign. You go in and you see no maintenance has been done here for the last 15 years. It's only a matter of time and the minister won't be being paid either and who in the community is going to come in and join up with a church like this? The answer is nobody. Usually they are in that conservative mindset that thinks people should be here, it's the Lord's Day, they should be here, and it's their fault that they are not here. It's not, friends. You need to close business and start again in a new fashion. So these churches need re-invention. That's very painful, it's very difficult, but it's quite doable.

These are the churches into which church planting can happen most easily in one sense. But they've got to be open to it. Sometimes the ministry that you need to conduct in E is the ministry of the undertaker. You've got to help them die and be buried appropriately. You may not be the person who can actually re-invent. Re-inventors are a certain kind of person that I am going to talk about in a little while. You may not be one of them. But you are there now and so we've got to look out for the elderly saints, you've got to look after them – they are God's people. You need to give E churches a burial that is right and appropriate. Imagine a church where the minister is reaching the end of his paid ministry. The church is little, run down and is under the shadow of a big growing church which they don't really like because they blamed them for taking all the young people, etc (of course it's never true but they are always blamed). The minister persuades his small congregation to accept that the neighbouring next door big church could plant an evening church for them in their parish, on the understanding that when he retired, the pastor of that evening church would take over the parish and become the next rector. Now that is a decent burial. 10 years or so later, that church may well have planted several other congregations. The old congregation couldn't even keep itself going. The new church plant, the reinvention, has got all these congregations going everywhere; it has filled the building over and over again. The hero would be the undertaker, because he persuaded that little group of tired saints to give up their building and their premises to a work that could happen. He is the hero. The greatest thing he did was: bury a congregation. That was the big thing he did. That was really worthwhile.