

## How local churches might grow depending their culture, and the culture around it...

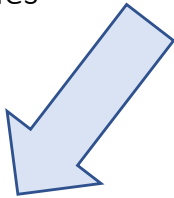
Description of how the church grows (and who it is reaching):	How/why do people connect with a local church...	What the church family needs to do or provide in order to grow:	What makes this hard?
<p><b>Christendom</b> i.e. when the prevailing culture is a Churched culture</p> <p>Most people in the church and in the surrounding culture identify as Christians or at least have a church background.</p> <p>Many expect to go to a church, their question is which church.</p> <p><b>Church members think:</b> "I'm a Christian. Surely everyone is a Christian."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church is just "what people do."</li> <li>New joiners come when people move house or marry. <i>(or another church experiences difficulties).</i></li> <li>Potential for lifelong Christians to settle into "their way of doing things" and to have pretty fixed expectations that newcomers need to fit in with.</li> <li>(Church members might have little experience of people becoming Christians as adults – particularly from other faith backgrounds).</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have lots of babies!</li> <li>Keep delivering what people are already familiar with and expect. <i>(i.e. a particular style or tradition, perhaps by contrast to other local churches).</i></li> <li>Avoid relational strife <i>(so people don't have a reason to leave).</i></li> <li>"Churchy-ness" is not an obstacle when people are familiar with it and like it.</li> <li></li> </ul>	<p><b>This is not the culture we live in!</b></p> <p>As culture changes church life can become inward or backward looking.</p> <p>May struggle to see the need to know or evangelise non-Christians.</p> <p>Changing out of this can be hard...</p>
<p><b>'Back to church' Growth</b> A church reaching 'churched' people in a "semi-Churched" culture</p> <p>Some local people familiar with church/Christianity from early life (e.g. 'Christened' as children, attended a church school,...).</p> <p>People being reached already feel comfortable in church building. Might even feel (not always correctly) that they know what it means to 'be a Christian'.</p> <p><b>Church members think:</b> "Lots of people grew up with church. Some will come back."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in life stage/setting raises questions &amp; causes people to 'come back to church'. <i>(e.g. Who am I now that I'm retired? How will I raise my kid to have 'good values'? How can I live with this disappointment/diagnosis?).</i></li> <li>People come looking for nostalgia and/or practical answers to presenting challenges.</li> <li>Some come looking for friendship and peers as they enter a new age/stage of life (e.g. new parents, recently divorced, empty nesters,...)</li> <li>Sometimes 'cold Contacts' with no prior relationship with church family <i>('cos culturally entering a church building isn't that hard).</i></li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver some nostalgia or comforting familiarity.</li> <li>Address the felt needs people come with <i>(e.g. kids groups, opportunities to serve and be involved)</i></li> <li>Address the questions people come with <i>(e.g. apologetic or lifestyle questions,...)</i></li> <li>Provide friendships/community of neighbours and/or peers.</li> <li>Some Christians need to have relational capacity to welcome well and beyond the church building.</li> <li>Disciples need to expect to help non-Christians 'realise' they aren't Christians, and be equipped to do that graciously.</li> </ul>	<p><b>This is a declining number of people in the culture we live in!</b></p> <p>The expectations 'churched non-Christians' have of church/Christianity and the felt needs they come with can be v. different to the Bible's expectations &amp; priorities.</p>

Description of how the church grows (and who it is reaching):	How/why do people connect with a local church...	What the church family needs to do or provide in order to grow:	What makes this hard?
<p><b>‘Christians moving’ Growth</b>  <b>A church reaching Christians who’ve moved.</b></p> <p>In a post-Christian culture, a church can still grow by attracting Christians who move to the area <i>(or who move from other local churches)</i>.</p> <p><b>Church members might think (but would never say out loud):</b>  <b>“Let’s do faithful church that we like and that other Christians like and they will join us.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People who join already identify as Christians, &amp; had likely already decided to join “<u>a</u> church” Their question is “<u>which</u> church”.</li> <li>▪ First contact is often ‘cold contact’ on a Sunday as Christians proactively visit to “church shop”.</li> <li>▪ “Churchy-ness” not necessarily an obstacle, depending on the kind of churchy-ness. <i>(i.e. walking into a church building/meeting is likely a comfortable thing for these joiners to do. There may be some traditions or patterns they are actively looking for.)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ‘Advertise’ so people know we are here.</li> <li>▪ Deliver enough of what these Christians value or look for in a church so that they choose that church <i>(e.g. a service they enjoy, Kids’ ministry, Bible teaching, discipling activity, support to evangelise friends/family, a place to serve...)</i>.</li> <li>▪ New joiners need to establish strong Christian friendships in the church family, <u>either</u> (a) some Christians need relational capacity to connect deeply and invest in relationships (including beyond the church building), <u>and/or</u> (b) new joiners need to be helped to get to know one another well.</li> </ul>	<p><b>It’s hardly the Bible’s pattern of a faithful Great Commission church growing God’s Kingdom!</b></p> <p>It can lead to competitiveness between churches (“If you grow, I shrink”) and consumerism among Christians (“What will this church give me?”).</p>
<p><b>Evangelistic Growth</b>  <b>from people becoming Christians</b></p> <p>A church that is reaching people who may have all kinds of beliefs and lifestyles that don’t ‘fit’ with life as a disciple. The church family eats with “tax collectors and sinners” who, over time become Christians.</p> <p><b>Church members think:</b>  <b>“Let’s do church life so that unchurched people get to know us &amp; we can help them know Jesus.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First contact is almost certainly not a church service. People connect first with Christians socially ‘out in the world’ or with ministries run by the church that meet their needs before they connect with ‘church on a Sunday’.</li> <li>▪ Before joining a Sunday gathering there is likely to be lengthy connection and relationships with Christians built up over months or years.</li> <li>▪ Non-Christians from different backgrounds hear enough of the gospel and see Christians’ distinctive living to become interested.</li> <li>▪ Some might come to the church building as a last resort in extreme need (e.g. bereavement, cancer diagnosis,...).</li> <li>▪ Avoiding church-y ‘weirdness’ really matters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Church family are on mission together.</li> <li>▪ Ways to connect with Christians &amp; taste Christian community outside of services.</li> <li>▪ Church members who are <u>excited</u> to move towards &amp; serve people, and <u>equipped</u> to say something about Jesus.</li> <li>▪ Church members who can arrange their diaries/relationships so that – over time – they are introducing non-Christians to Christians in the church family &amp; to Christ.</li> <li>▪ Church gatherings (of all kinds) assume non-Christians will be there, and church family remember how alien church culture is to unchurched people.</li> </ul>	<p>It doesn’t work to say “This is how we do things here”.</p> <p>This church needs to be clear on principles <i>(why and what we do)</i> &amp; flexible in its practices <i>(how we do it)</i> for others’ sakes.</p> <p>New joiners are more comfortable than old-timers. Expects more than Sunday attendance.</p>

# Imagine what it's like being part of each of these churches...

PCC+ Day  
July 2023

What enables  
change?



'Christendom' Church	
What are individual disciples expecting & equipped to do...	
...as part of Sunday gatherings	...beyond Sunday gatherings

What enables  
change?



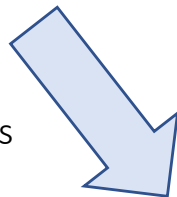
## 'Back to Church' Growth (reaching 'churched' people)

What are individual disciples expecting & equipped to do...	
...as part of Sunday gatherings	...beyond Sunday gatherings

## Transfer Growth (reaching Christians who have moved)

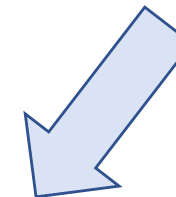
What are individual disciples expecting & equipped to do...	
...as part of Sunday gatherings	...beyond Sunday gatherings

What enables  
change?



Evangelistic Growth reaching people with little or no Christian background	
What are individual disciples expecting & equipped to do...	
...as part of Sunday gatherings	...beyond Sunday gatherings

What enables  
change?





# Christendom

"Everyone's a Christian  
aren't they?"

Community

"Come back to church"  
( 'churched' people )

Transfer

"Come to our church"  
( Christian people ).

Evangelistic

"Come to Jesus  
through us"

Rising  
Expectation  
of  
disciples

More & more  
building  
away from  
meeting



ours  
ve again;  
found.

# Three Caricatures of Christian experience and expectations...

*If it's harder thinking about churches in the abstract, how about thinking about these caricatures of church membership in each church culture.*

*(You could try imagining what living as a Christian in our church and in North London would feel like for the following caricature people. **What would be hard for them? How would they strengthen the church? What blindspots might they have?**)*

## 'Christendom Christine'

Growing up, Christine remembers when almost everyone went to church; almost everyone described themselves as a Christian.

Back then, it was hard for someone to say they weren't a Christian.

*(Sometimes that made it hard to say if someone was a Christian!).*

There was a strong overlap between the local community and the church community because most people went to church on a Sunday.

In those 'good old days' there was little open conflict between the Bible's values and the culture's values. *(That's not to say people always lived by them! But the culture agreed that the Bible's values were good. Church culture made it easier to be a 'pharisee' than a 'tax collector').*

Discipling of people was largely done outside of the home – in church, Sunday school, or church schools – and was considered largely 'complete' by the time people were adults.

Today, Christine is sad that lots of people don't come to church – including her children and grandchildren. She struggles to understand why they don't come. Sometimes, she finds it hard to speak with her grandchildren because many of their values and ways of seeing the world are so different to what she has grown up with.

Christine likes the familiar language of the traditional communion service. She feels at home in a traditional forward-facing church service, but less comfortable sitting around tables. She doesn't enjoy or expect to speak about her faith (which she considers personal and private) or to pray out loud with others.

## ‘Community-minded Colin’

Community-minded Colin remembers the ‘good old days’ when the local community marked the seasons of the year in church (*harvest, Christmas, Easter,...*); life events were celebrated with the church (*births with baptism, marriage in church,...*).

Colin longs to recover that kind of connection with the local community and to see people back in the building.

He loves seeing glimpses of that at Christmas and ‘Sunday Fundays’. He wrestles with why guests don’t want to connect with normal church life. He laments that the 5-a-side football pitches are full on Sunday mornings but the church isn’t.

Colin wants to make it as easy as possible for people to come back. He isn’t quite sure what that would involve, but is happy to sacrifice traditional elements of church for the sake of getting the younger generation into the building.

## ‘Transfer Tina’

Tina’s formative Christian experiences were at an annual Christian festival and summer youth camps. Her expectations of church have been shaped by a large church she attended in her 20s. For Tina, those were the ‘good old days’.

Tina has a clear idea of what healthy church life looks like based on those experiences, and is keen that her local church embody them. She has been encouraged to see a trickle of like-minded Christians joining her church over the years, and is enjoying recapturing some experiences from her youth.

Tina is keen that the church offer disciple-making programmes that would appeal to ‘church shoppers’. She wants to reach local people, but is wary of compromising ways of doing church that she values.