

Practical Tips For Growing A Small Church

Remember Your ABCs!

1. **Advertise** – Stop being Secret Service Agents for the Lord and having the attitude “If we build it, they will come...”! Use websites (kept updated and fresh!), Facebook (with frequent and exciting posts), newsletters, postcards, newspaper feature articles, have a float in local parades, send personal letters of invitation to special events etc.
2. **Be A Student** - Learn from others. Pay attention to churches that are growing and reaching the lost and churches that have the demographic you are needing or trying to reach. Sit down with their leaders to seek advice and input. Read books on the subject. Search The Word for answers on how to meet the needs around you and reach the lost. Have a phone conversation with someone who has been successful in doing what you want to do to get ideas and suggestions to keep the creative juices flowing. Ask those who attend, those who don't, and those who have visited: “What would make our church more meaningful and impacting for you? What could we do as a church to minister to you and be a place where you feel loved, valued, appreciated and ministered to?”
3. **Connect In New Ways** - Look for new ways to connect with people. If the local kids won't come to Sunday School, get some inflatables and invite them to Summer Fun Days. If people won't come to Wednesday Night Bible Study, find a time and location that works with their schedule to get together and Disciple, Share and Pray. If the community won't come to church in your building, take the church out of the building to them with Worship In The Park. If teens won't come to 9:45 Sunday School, schedule Teen Time for a time and place that is good for them.
Stop trying to get the lost to adapt to your comfort zone, your schedule and your traditions. Find ways to reach them where they are.
4. **Disciple, Disciple, Disciple** – Actively mentor, train, disciple and get involved in the lives of new converts and baby Christians. Don't leave all of their spiritual growth and development up to them. Intentionally get involved with the goal of seeing them become healthy, vibrant Christians.
5. **Events Really Work** - Events get people in church where they can mingle with God's people and they are more likely to hear from God, than in their normal busy and habitual lives. God speaks in many times and in many places, but few hear him. Being in a service puts people in an environment where they are more likely to listen. Think of creative ways to get people to church. Pray much that the events will be successful as God counts success.
Examples:
 - VBS Programs, Sportsman's Banquets etc.
 - Sunday before Election Day have a special service for prayer for our country. Invite local officials.
 - Grandparents Day with Family Photos
 - Thanksgiving service with donations brought in for a local food ministry.
 - Concerts with something extra – provide a free meal or goodie bag.
 - Fourth Of July – Host a Cookout, provide sparklers, celebrate being an American
 - Somerset's Family Funday Sunday
 - Make baptisms, baby dedications, job promotions, graduations, and retirements a big deal!

6. **Follow Up** - Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up! Follow up on visitors, family members that drop in, new attendees, those who drift away, those who leave for some reason. Follow up in unique and loving ways that set you apart. This shows you care and they are valued.
7. **Give It Away** – Host events where you actively are giving away to others. Sponsor a 5K run with proceeds going to Hephzibah or a local ministry. On back to school Sunday give away a free bike to the kid that has the most guests present. Give \$10 bills to kids that come 12 out of 13 weeks.
8. **Honor Others** – Have several times built into your church’s yearly calendar where you honor those who are worthy of honor and respect. Personally invite people associated with the position or person to attend to help you honor and show appreciation: Mother/Father Of The Year, Adoptive Parents, Veterans, Police – Firemen – EMTs, Anniversaries, Long-time Members of the Church, Retirees etc. Follow up on guests and visitors that attended.
9. **Identify Your Current Strengths & Blessings** - Identify the strengths, gifts and talents your church already has and think of new ways to utilize them to reach the lost.
Examples:
 - If your **pastor** is a gifted communicator, find ways to get his messages out in public (radio station broadcasts, live streaming, CD/DVD ministry etc.)
 - If you already have **kids and youth** that attend but their parents aren’t active in the church, think of ways to get the kids and teens involved that would cause the parents to want to attend. (Have the kids play their school instrument or sing for a service, let the youth lead the service, put on plays or other special services)
 - If you have an awesome **facility or location**, look for ways to allow that to be used by the community. (Exercise classes, kids sports events, local clubs or associations etc.) Get the community on site regularly and have someone from your church on hand to help, get to know etc.
 - If you have amazing **laity**, host events where those amazing laity have the opportunity to interact with new ones or those you are trying to reach.
 - If you have mainly **Senior Citizens**, think of ways to pair them with needy kids or families for mentoring, teaching (Read to Succeed) and love.
10. **Jesus Is The Example** - Learn from Jesus – start hanging out with sinners! Get to know lost people around you, actively seek the lost, aggressively go after back sliders and the apathetic!
11. **Kindness Counts** – Always be looking for opportunities to do good to all. Scour newspapers for needs and opportunities to make a difference (homes burn, thefts, losses, job loss etc.), join organizations that meet needs. Let your church be known as the church that truly shows kindness to the “least of these”.
12. **Look For Where God Is Already At Work**- Look for areas where God is already working, moving and opening doors. (Examples: Older attendees start bringing grandkids, new housing development in the neighborhood, family member of a regular attendee showing signs of hunger, death/illness of current church attendee provides open doors to interact with and follow up on extended family, neighbors and friends etc.)

13. **Mobilize The Entire Church**– Find ways to Mobilize the entire church to attain the goal of seeing the church grow. Urge kids to invite their friends (have contests); make youth group so awesome and appealing that teens want to bring new ones; have fellowship times specifically for the congregation to bring unchurched friends – make the goal relationship building, not sermon preaching (Super Bowl Parties, UK, U of L or Vols Games etc.); have outings, game nights and events especially for seniors that they can invite friends to; give prayer lists to your shut-ins listing specific needs and individuals the church is trying to minister to and reach.
14. **Needs Need To Be Met** - Find ways to minister and meet needs so people sense the church is wanting to give something **TO** them, not get something **FROM** them.
Examples:
 - Before you ever go door to door passing out tracts and inviting to Revival, go door to door soliciting prayer requests or sharing baked goods and best wishes....without that just being an excuse to try to get them to church.
 - Do acts of service for those in need. Look for opportunities to be a blessing, with no strings attached.
15. **Open Your Eyes, Your Heart, Your Mouth, Your Mind** – Open your eyes to see the needy; Open your heart to being part of the solution – meeting those needs and healing their hurts; Open your mouth as a witness – tell your story, share your testimony, express what God has done for you; Open your mind to new ideas and “out of the box” thinking about reaching the lost.
16. **Prayer Is The Key** – Often we spend more time praying to keep Saints out of Heaven than we spend praying to get Sinners saved and into Heaven. Make church growth a matter of prayer. Seek God’s advice, listen for His voice and follow His leading. Ask God to give you such a passion and burden for the lost that doing nothing is no longer an option. Pray much for God to bless your efforts. If you have 3 planning meetings before VBS to cover logistics and programming, make sure you have at least 3 prayer sessions as well. Use your senior saints and others to join with you in this effort. Fast for the lost, have a list of targeted individuals you are praying together for their salvation this year.
17. **Quality Really Matters** - Let everything you do be done with quality. Your meals, your worship, your sermon, your grounds should reflect quality. These things should reflect that you care about your church, your presentation and their experience. Put some thought in what you are doing. Plan ahead and be prepared. Plan your Sunday service carefully – don’t just show up and let it fly. Plan responsive readings, special music, a fitting hymn or chorus to close out the service or a unique and meaningful time for response.
18. **Relevance Is Essential** – Find ways for your church to be culturally relevant. If homosexuality is the hot topic of the day, prepare and advertise a sermon series on what the Bible really says about homosexuality and sexual identity. If there is a well-publicized natural disaster somewhere in the world, set up a relief fund and advertise that your church is responding to the needs. Host prayer vigils during times of grief and tragedy. Host a small group that compares the differences between Islam and Christianity. If immigration is a hot topic, find ways to minister to immigrants around you. Whatever is the cultural buzz of the day, find ways to show that your church and the Bible are relevant in today’s culture. Offer classes on financial management, parenting, or what a Christian marriage looks like.

19. **Stop Already!** - Stop doing the same old things that haven't been working. If something is working to encourage and challenge the church and bring new ones in and see them saved and disciplined, keep it. If it isn't working, start looking for other things you could try that might have a better effect. Don't keep doing something simply because you always have done it this way.
20. **Technology Is Not The Enemy** - Use Technology For Good!
Examples:
- Connect with people via texting and email. Let them know you are praying for them, thinking about them etc. (Keep track of important dates, follow up after court hearings, minor surgeries, doctor's visits, work interviews, important tests at school or college etc.)
 - Consider a once a week email blast (Glasgow's Monday Morning Musings) sharing highlights, blessings and prayer requests.
 - Keep people updated with what's going on at church with automated prayer requests and phone reminders.
 - Show video clips or photos that illustrate your point. A well planned and powerful video clip illustrating a point at the end of the service can keep that sermon in people's minds for weeks.
 - Consider using media presentations in your services. Whether we like it or not, people are connected to media – it is a major part of life today. Tap into that expectation.
 - Subscribe to a service that shares updates on new families moving into town.
21. **Use Those Around You** - Find ways to use people God places around you– those who drop in, unchurched neighbors and friends, family members of regular attendees, those in your community etc. If the church has a neighbor that is an avid gardener, seek their help, advice and counsel on how to dress up the church flower beds. If the unsaved husband of someone in your church is an avid sportsman, invite him to a men's gathering to share some of his stories. If someone visits and mentions they bake cakes, get their info and have them bake for your next potluck. If someone likes painting, ask if they'll come visit your SS Class and show the kids how to paint. If someone likes arranging flowers, give them a little cash and ask them to make some new arrangements for the front of the church. The ideas are endless.
22. **Value The Ones You Have** - Value those you already have in the congregation and work hard to shepherd, encourage and feed them. Well-fed, healthy sheep tend to reproduce and give birth to healthy newborns. Church attendees that feel loved and valued, who are growing spiritually, who are encouraged about their church and excited what God is doing in and through them, will tend to invite, give good publicity, and get involved helping move ministry forward.
23. **Wait Patiently** - Don't get discouraged if you don't see immediate results. The church didn't get this way overnight – it may take time for lasting change to be achieved. Be willing to patiently keep doing what you should be doing and wait for God to bless, move, and fill with His presence.
24. **examine Your Progress** - Periodically examine if you are getting the job done. If you are, rejoice and celebrate. If you aren't, look for things you can tweak to make it become a reality. If you aren't, fast and pray for God to provide answers, resources, and His Spirit to make it happen!
25. **You Lead The Way** - Whether you are the pastor, a board member, Sunday School teacher, or Janitor – you find ways to lead the way in seeing your church impact the community and reach the lost for Christ. Don't wait for someone else to catch the vision – YOU catch the vision – YOU lead the way!

26. **Zeal Is Desperately Needed and Definitely Rewarded** – Ask God to ignite within you a zeal (great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or objective. Passion, ardor, fervor, devotion, enthusiasm, eagerness, keenness, gusto, vigor, energy and intensity). Work for the night is coming – people around you are slipping into eternity at an alarming rate, it is not His will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance! Zealously do God’s work and He will bless and reward your efforts.

Closing Thoughts

1. No Excuses For Doing Nothing – There are ideas here that Small Churches, Strapped Churches, Senior Churches and Sedate Churches CAN Do!
2. Prayerfully Choose At Least One Idea & Watch How God Works Through You.
3. Doing Just A Few New Things Can Really Get Momentum Started.
4. We Must Have A Mind Change...
From What difference can I make? To What difference **CAN** I make?
The end result will be: What a difference **I CAN** make!
5. Keep The Right Perspective. Change your attitude from....”Only 6 showed up ☹️” to “Thank God, 6 showed up 😊!”

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