

SABBATH SCHOOL MAXIMISER

Creating Healthy Churches That Reach the Lost



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I N T R O D U C T I O N

This book is about creating healthy churches that reach the lost.

Today in Christian circles you will hear plenty of talk about the need for the church to be more caring as a community and more relational in how it reaches the unchurched. We know from many church growth studies that the quality of relationships in a church has a direct correlation with a church's ability to attract and hold newcomers. Scripture tells us that Jesus' greatest desire for His followers was that their unity and love for each other would be a witness to the world (see John 17:23). Paul expresses a similar sentiment when he says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit...." (Ephesians 4:3) Unfortunately, many churches struggle to achieve a high level of care and support. This is partly due to the fact that most churches have no intentional plan by which to build community and to welcome newcomers to it.

A church builds community when it creates regular sharing times for its members. This may occur in activities such as Bible study, prayer time or even a ministry task. It can also occur through the structuring of group social activity. When we live in community, we feel supported, encouraged and experience a higher level of accountability. The challenge for most churches is how to facilitate regular sharing amongst their members and make it a priority.

The simplest and most effective way for most Adventist churches to build community is by **maximising** the existing group structure that we call Sabbath School. This involves modifying and adding to what currently exists in order to realise the full potential of Sabbath School.

This book will outline a tried and tested nine step method by which to transition your Sabbath School classes into genuine small group communities that multiply. It has been my experience that every class can achieve some of these steps and therefore improve their health. Many classes will do so to the point of multiplying new groups.

Multiplying only one class will have a significant affect on the health of your church. For every class that multiplies a new leader is born and a new community is created. Every new class-group also creates a new ministry. The more group classes that a church has the more

opportunity there are for newcomers to find their place and the more bridges are created to the outside world.

An effective method for using this material is for the pastor to invite the elders and class/group leaders to a training day (3-5 hrs). At the training day chapters 1, 2, 5 and 7 are covered (more if time allows). This may be conducted by the pastor or an external trainer who may provide ongoing coach support to the pastor. Following the training day the leadership team will meet weekly for two months and review each chapter. The leaders will also participate in a short group devotional and sharing time (30 minutes). This will give them both a theoretical and experiential understanding of group life.

God created humans to be in community. He calls us to build churches that welcome newcomers into God's earthly community.

Rob Steed

Power Points for each chapter and additional resources are available from: <http://www.maximiser.org>

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CHAPTER 1

There Is More To Sabbath School

"Spiritual workers are needed not only to labor in the pulpit but to do personal work among the people. Too much time is devoted to the churches in preaching. This is not attended with the best results. The work of the Lord's ambassadors is to organize companies of workers to hunt for the souls who need help." Ellen White¹

Have you ever belonged to a Sabbath School class that has the purpose to win people to Jesus? Most of us think of Sabbath School as a forty five minute period on Sabbath morning when we study the lesson quarterly. The original purpose of Sabbath School was quite different from today. Ellen White saw this ministry as, "... one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ."² The purpose of Sabbath School was not so much about learning, but about winning lost people.

For Sabbath School to regain a soul winning focus it is obvious that a number of changes must occur. The class must have a life beyond Sabbath morning. It will have to find ways to connect with unchurched people and former attendees. Classes will need to become teams that have clear purpose. The class will need to be a place that helps members exercise their spiritual gifts in ministry. The class will need to develop more leaders in order to expand its' ministry.

How are such changes possible? Such a change is possible by modifying and adding to what already exists. It will require a period of transition where a little more effort is required by leaders in bringing about the necessary changes. The *Sabbath School Maximiser* will explore the principles and sequential steps (see chapter 7) necessary to bring about this change.

Two Key Changes

There are two key areas of change required. First and most importantly, each class must increase its overall group health. This will involve making some additions and modifications to the current function of the class. Each class must become more holistic in its ministry. It is only when the classes become

holistic that they will be soul winning units that grow. As the number of class members increase classes are divided and new ones are created.

The second key change that occurs is in the way classes relate to the church as a whole. The classes become the foundational organisational ministry structure of the church that 'powers' all other ministries. This repositioning of the class as the foundational organisational unit is crucial. Without this happening classes will continue to be seen as an optional extra to the worship service and other church activities.

With this repositioning of class life there are a number of new priorities for the church. The leaders of the church now lead the class-groups because they are the key organisational units of the church. All the other ministries of the church become interconnected to class life. As the church functions on a class-group basis the groups will flourish. The church moves from a church that has some class-groups to being a church built on class-groups.

Holistic Class-groups

There are many groups within a church. Some groups focus on outreach, delivering DVD's to homes and conducting bible studies etc. Others exist for the purpose of personal development and spiritual growth of members. Some groups are about training members for ministry. The most common group, that some of us like to avoid, are committees.



Holistic Class-group adapted from William Beckham

So what sort of group are these class-groups? A class-group unlike these other groups are holistic. The class-group covers the full spectrum of church activity (see the diagram above). Within the class-group members grow in faith, dig in the word for guidance, receive encouragement, establish real

friendships, participate in ministry, share their faith, disciple (mentor) others and are held accountable to their calling. A holistic class-group is like a spiritual family: a “mini church” that cares for every aspect of the believer’s life. When a group is holistic it will grow.

Holistic class-groups bring power to a church. This power comes as members enter into the presence of God through Christ in group meetings. It comes from the study and application of the Word. It comes as group members share their stories and prayer life with each other. The group releases the power of the individual as members are encouraged to develop and exercise their spiritual gifts within and outside of the group. This is where the power of group life comes from.

The Facts about Small Groups

This focus on growing class-groups that are holistic ensures a healthy and vital membership. The class-groups become the powerhouse of the church. They are the spiritual families, the mini-churches that make up the corporate church. If they are healthy and multiplying, then the church will be healthy and growing.

According to the National Church Life Survey of Australia the factor that is “...most strongly related to (church) vitality is the involvement of attenders in small groups.”³ The study also found that members who participate in group life are more “...comfortable about discussing their faith or inviting others to church.” The Australian study was confirmed by the world study conducted by Christian Schwarz who identified eight characteristics of healthy growing churches. Of the eight characteristics he says, “If we were to identify any one principle as the most important, then without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups.”⁴

Five Components

A holistic class-group has five key components that produce health and growth. It is these five areas that become the ongoing agenda for the church leaders to focus on. They are:

1. *Class-Group Connection:* In a group based church all ministry works out from the class-groups and back to the class-groups. The groups are foundational to the ministry of the church. They support the other departments and are fed by them. Example - Church outreach always done in a way that utilizes and builds the groups.

2. *Equipping*: The class-group prepares newcomers for ministry by encouraging them to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts. The class-group is a discipler of newcomers.
3. *Accountability*: The class-group provides support and accountability for each group member. The more accountability they achieved the greater the faithfulness of members.
4. *Leadership*: New leaders are being apprenticed within the class-group in preparation for group multiplication. The church will provide both on the job learning and specific training for new leaders.
5. *Evangelism*: The class-group encourages and teaches group members how to find the lost. Creating opportunities for friendship making and ways to meet the needs of contacts is a key corporate activity that supports the groups.

Discussion Questions

1. Rate out of ten the overall health of your classes.
2. Review each class and determine which of the *five components of holistic class-group* need developing.
 - a. Connection to church
 - b. Equipping
 - c. Accountability
 - d. Leadership
 - e. Evangelism
3. Discuss, "How ready for transition is your church?"

CHAPTER 2

Church Building Blocks

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to us by the One who cannot err... let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, and gain courage and strength from the assistance of the others”. Ellen White⁵

When a church has healthy holistic group life it benefits in a number of ways. Worship will be more inspiring because there is an increase in sharing between members as to how God is working in each others lives. There is a dramatic increase in the amount of prayer for each other. A commitment to multiplying groups will see an increase in the number of new leaders. Members will have more contacts to bring to outreach programs. There will be an increase in the churches ability to hold its' members. Group life will lead to a higher level of involvement by members in ministry. Group life will provide an intentional assimilation track for newcomers. Members will enjoy stronger relationships.

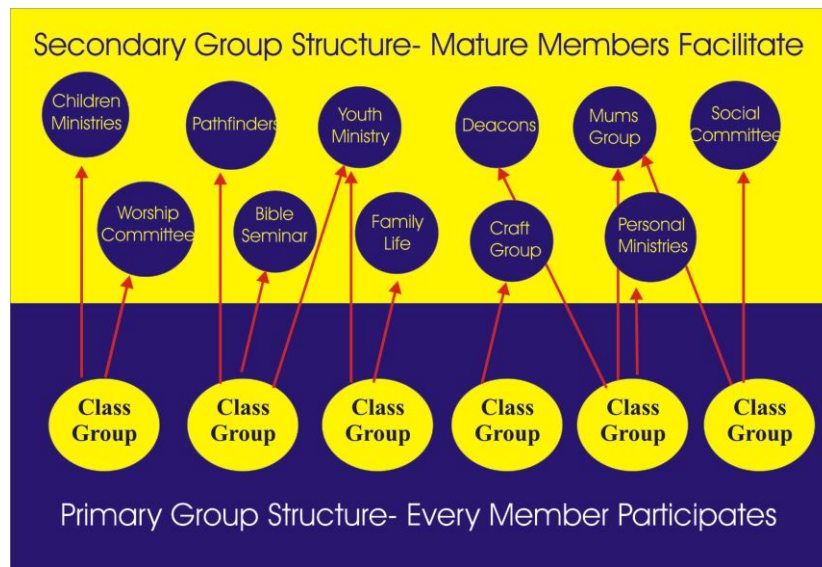
In a group structured church, the holistic class-groups are given the highest priority because the leadership recognise the importance of maintaining spiritual vibrancy in its membership. Every member is encouraged to participate in a holistic class-group. The more spiritually vibrant members are the greater the success will its' ministries enjoy.

To achieve such a priority class-groups must be seen as the primary organisational structure of the church. Other programs and ministries must not compete with group life but compliment its' ministry. The class-group life is protected because it is seen as the foundation of spiritual health and faith sharing for the church. Other departments of the church are supported by the class-groups. Their success is some what dependent on the class-groups remaining healthy.

There is a law in "system theory" called synergy which says: "The interaction of two or more agents or forces ... combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects."⁶ Another translation could be: When people work

together they can achieve more than working on their own. Paul uses the human body to describe this principle that operates in church. He wrote, "It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Ephesians 4:11-13) When church members harmoniously work together they can achieve much more for God.

What Does A Group Structured Church Look ?



Churches with class-group structure have a much clearer priority for growing groups. The leadership team's first responsibility is to ensure that class-groups are healthy and set up to multiply. This is the agenda that the leadership team are constantly focussed on. They will be looking at not only the health of each class-group but how they are integrating (the synergy) with the ministries of the corporate church.

The other traditional ministries (departments) of the church e.g. children's ministry, worship, outreach seminars etc. - are secondary. This is not an issue of importance but order. In traditional churches there is a cart-before-the-horse approach where programs, not spiritual vitality are given priority. The result being that many of the programs and outreach activities do not reach their full potential. In a group-structured church the programs have more success because the spiritual vitality of members raises their commitment, increases their risk taking and willingness to invite

newcomers. We see this principle at work in public evangelism. All public evangelist will tell you that their success is very dependent on members bringing friends to their program.

A group structured church will often have less committees than a traditional church because of the class-group priority. The more a church reduces the number of committees the easier it is for members to attend group meetings and for leaders to grow their groups. A reduction in committee time also frees up time for leaders and members to be connected with their un-churched contacts.

In a class-group structured church some departments are run by only two or three persons who work with the class-groups in providing specialist ministries. In my home church which is a large congregation there are two adult Sabbath School coordinators who work with the class leaders in organising the Sabbath School non-class program. In another church I have consulted with, the pastor uses a different small group each week to host the worship service. The configuration varies according to the size of the church and its' ministry priorities. The general principle is that the smaller the church the less number of ministry departments are required. Some departments may not exist or are cared for by a coordinator and an assistant.

There is often a church energy saving made when traditional department ministries are run through class-groups. Class-groups typically are more efficient in planning than committees. Unlike committees class-groups members have chosen to be together, they are friends who know each others strengths. The class group has a higher level of accountability than a traditional committee. The class group can carry out its planning at the end of its weekly meeting unlike a committee that hold a special meeting once a month at best.

Some additional examples of department ministries working through class-groups:

Video Followup: Working under the supervision of the Personal Ministries department or Coordinator the Class-groups delivers Media Centre DVD requests. The class-group provides both prayer support for the deliverer and contact as well as assimilations activities if required.

Pastoral Care: Pastoral care is provided by the class members themselves. The class leader (elder) and selected class group

members will coordinate visitations etc. The elder and pastor will tend to care for the more critical visits.

Corporate Social Events: Conducting friendship making events are an important activity for all churches. Corporate socials help create a welcoming and inclusive culture for a church. Socials that are organised around existing class-groups will have a greater capacity to involve people. People are more likely to turn out for an event if their class-group has been asked to care for an aspect of the event.

Discipleship Track: The offering of Bible studies to seekers and the youth of the church are done most effectively through the groups. Seekers are not only in need of instruction in Bible truth but also support socially as they make changes to their lifestyle.

Seminar Follow-up: Most Adventist churches conduct throughout the year a number of seminars. Often these seminars will be more effective if they are assisted by the class-groups. A good example of using class-groups with a seminar would be cooking schools. As part of the follow-up or a segment of the seminar one could offer seminar participants home based instruction. This instruction would occur with a few ladies from one of the churches class-groups. Another example would be to conduct a Revelation Seminar in a group format were two or three members of a class-group host the seminar group. These strategies are all about creating opportunities for seminar participants to connect socially with class-group members.

Youth Support: Youth ministry is a critical part of a churches future and attractiveness for newcomers. Often this work depends on a small number of adults who struggle to maintain their commitment. An intergenerational approach were adult class-groups are rostered to provide support eg. catering, will strengthen the ministry and create opportunities for some intergenerational mentoring.

In many ways the class-groups can be viewed as teams. The class-group structure provides a means by which to organise the congregation into team activity.

The creating of a group structure will not only increase the synergy of the various departments and ministries of the church but also increase the level of accountability in the congregation. Most of us suffer from "gunatism" (going to do). When members are regular attenders in group life there is an increase in follow through in their discipleship. More gets done because we have a system that increases our accountability.

Principles of a Class-group Structured Church

The following principles are basic to the operation of a class-group-structured church.

1. *Follow a 12 to 15 people formula- any more becomes a crowd and intimacy is lost.* Once a group reaches this number, particular at home meetings, the group should plan to multiply.
2. *Class-groups need to be outward focussed.* This occurs as individual members build friendship and share faith with un-churched people and invite them to group socials etc.
3. *A group should naturally grow and intentionally multiply.* Healthy groups grow naturally but leaders must intentionally facilitate multiplication. There is a natural resistance in groups to multiplying. Leaders have to prepare the group.
4. *Groups should multiply in a 12 month period.* Groups that don't multiply need help. They need to make sure they are holistic in function and spiritual gifts.
5. *Each group has a vision inside the parameters of the larger vision.* Groups are spiritual families, teams, that work together as a corporate church. Some teams join together for specific outreach activities or to support particular department ministry.
6. *Groups should be supervised and guided on a ration of 1 to 5.* The single most important factor for success with groups is leader support.
7. *An apprentice leader should be assigned to every role of leadership.* The apprentice supports the leader and gets ready for multiplication.
8. *Meet twice per week.* Spiritual families like to be together often. For the class-group they meet mid week and Sabbath morning during class time.
9. *Move house to house each week.* Smart groups share the responsibility and opportunity to witness by moving around.
10. *Break into sub groups during the class-group meeting as the group increases in number.* Growing groups have to work harder at preserving intimacy and accountability. Sub groups preserve intimacy and prepare the group for division.
11. *Delegate jobs.* Growing groups includes sharing responsibilities.⁷

Discussion Questions

1. Determine what percentage of your attending congregation participate in class-group life. Discuss ways to increase attendance.
2. Identify any ministries that currently compete with members ability to attend class-group life. Discuss how you can re-organise these ministries so they will be complementary of class-group life.
3. Review the various ministries of your church and discuss which ones have the potential of being worked through the class-groups.

CHAPTER 3

More Workers

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." Ralph Nadar

Most churches are being run by pastors and lay leaders who are suffering some level of burnout. A recent study by the National Church Life Survey organisation (NCLS) found that, "Nearly a quarter (23%) of leaders are experiencing some burnout symptoms and another 55% are borderline to burnout. Burnout affects leaders in both paid and voluntary positions."⁸ This reality is obvious to pastors each time a church enters its nominating committee process.

Generally, churches in Australia expect too much from their key leaders and do not find it easy to care for them. Involving more members in ministry and growing new leaders is vital for a healthy growing church. It was Moody who said, "It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people. But it is harder."

The reasons many members don't get involved in ministry and particularly leadership ranges from over commitment at work, lack of confidence, to being burnt out. It was Jesus himself who identified the greatest challenge the church has today is finding ways to encourage church members to be involved in ministry. He said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:37-38)

Organising the church into small groups gives us the best possible chance of involving more members in ministry. Unlike nominating committees groups are good at encouraging members into ministry. You can not sit in a small group for long without being drawn into ministry.

Groups are very good at identifying and testing member's gifts. Group members get to know each others abilities through experience. The feedback and guidance a group gives is more acceptable to the individual than a nominating committee. Groups have the ability to get along side their

members, to encourage, cajole, nudge, even challenge group members to get involved.

The involving of groups members in ministry is a core function of the class-group leader. As new members join the group the leader looks for opportunities to involve them in ministry. It is the leaders responsibility to assist newcomers in discovering and developing their spiritual gifts.

Class-groups grow members gifts in three ways:

- 1. Involving the newcomer in a variety of group tasks:* Newcomers are given opportunities in group life to explore possible areas of interest. The group is a safe place for them to experiment.
- 2. Using the group's feed back for gift identification:* As newcomers become known they can use the group to give them feedback on where they think their spiritual gifts may be best suited. This can be done at a midweek meeting during the house keeping time.
- 3. Formally conducting a gift profile assessment:* The group leader will encourage new members to access formal training. The church should provide either a seminar or one-on-one written assessment to help newcomers identify their gifts. The class-group leader along with a group member acts as a spiritual mentor coaching the newcomers in their development.

Discipling Newcomers

Welcoming and assimilating newcomers into the church community is core business for the class-group. The church exists not only to convince people of the "good news" of salvation but to invite them to respond by becoming disciples of Jesus. Jesus said to his followers, "Go into all the world and make disciples...". (see Matt. 28:18-20 & 2 Timothy 2:2) Unfortunately, most churches traditionally have been focussed on making believers, but not disciples. Hence, there are many church members who have not developed their own personal ministry nor learnt how to disciple someone else.

The class-group provides the new believer with a mentor, who guides them on their journey of growth from infancy to adult hood. By the end of this relationship the new disciple has learnt how to disciple another newcomer.

This discipling relationship needs to exist for at least twelve to eighteen months. During this time the newcomer will receive one-on-one Bible study from their mentor and attend a number of special training events provided by the church, district churches or Conference.

The training events should cover the following areas in sequence:

1. *Spiritual formation*: It is preferable for newcomers to attend this learning event first. At this event newcomers will learn about Christian living: - Developing a relationship with Christ - Preparing for Baptism - Living according to God's word - Being God's Steward - Participating in the family of God.
2. *Christian World View*: This learning explores the Adventist Christian world view. This can be based on the 28 Fundamentals and/or a Bible seminar that explore the Adventist distinctives.
3. *How to Share Your Faith*: Here new believers learn how to share their faith and connect with different types of people.
4. *Developing Your Gifts*: This may be a seminar or a group learning event put on by your church. The participants will undergo a gift assessment and develop a ministry plan.

Growing New Leaders

The single most limiting factor for church growth is the lack of leaders. Groups are not only the most effective way to involve members and newcomers in ministry, but are also a very effective way to grow new leaders. Every time a group multiplies a new leader is created. Every time a new group is formed an apprentice leader is being trained. The group structure is constantly growing new leaders.

The apprentice leader's position in the group acts as a constant reminder to group members that the class-group goal is to grow. As the apprentice develops and takes on greater leadership responsibility the expectation grows that they will take on full leadership. Having an apprentice that is trained and anticipating group leadership helps keep the leader focussed on growth.

The Apprentice Leader

The question for most leaders is not “Should I develop an apprentice leader?” but “How do I develop an apprentice leader?” A lack of apprentice leaders can put a “lid” on the growth of your group and church.

David Limiero has developed a simple acrostic based on the word “lids” to help small group leaders develop apprentices.⁹

LIDS

Step 1: **L**OOK for rising leaders.

Step 2: **I**NVITE apprentice to share leadership tasks.

Step 3: **D**ISCIPLINE apprentice until they can replace you.

Step 4: **S**END new leader into ministry.

This four-step process is easy to remember and provides an intentional way of recognising, developing, and empowering rising leaders God has already placed in your class-group.

LOOK for Rising Leaders

In order to look for a rising leader, you have to know what they look like. Rising leaders share three characteristics:

1. Faithfulness: Do they take assignments seriously? The issue of faithfulness goes beyond a person’s belief in Jesus. It is an issue of stewardship: When you invite someone to take on an assignment (step two), are they faithful to complete it?

2. Availability: How many hats are they wearing? The “2 ½ Hats” rule is a good one. Encourage people not to overextend themselves, but to limit their ministry involvement to serving as a leader in only one ministry, a regular participant in another, and on an infrequent or

project basis in a third. Ideally, leading a small group should be someone's only leadership role.

3. Relationship: Could you be part of a group without this person? While you might be in the same group with your assistant leaders for some time, you and your apprentice should be planning for the day when you lead separate groups.

Your spouse or your best friend might be good assistants, but they should not be your apprentice.

As you look for rising leaders, remember to pray! Jesus asks us to pray specifically for more workers for the harvest. Look for the key characteristics of rising leaders and bring these people before God in prayer. After you have identified some rising leaders, invite them to share your leadership tasks.

This discipling process can take several months, as the rising leaders get a chance to practice leadership activities both during and between meetings. Throughout the process, you will need to provide ongoing coaching and encouragement. It's important to meet with your rising leaders outside the normal group meeting for these coaching sessions. You can often accomplish this in an extra 15 minutes before or after the normal group meeting.

At the end of this process your apprentice should have a wealth of experience in all aspects of leading a small group. You should have a solid mentoring relationship with this apprentice because of your shared times together. All of the process so far has been leading to the final step: releasing your apprentice to lead a group of their own.

Elder As Leader

The prerequisites to undergoing a transition to a Church built on class-groups is that there must be a re-prioritising of the pastor and leading elder's attention to that of coaching, training, and supporting elders in the work of class-group leadership. The elders must take on the role of being the leaders of the class-groups of the church.

In placing elders in leadership of classes a clear message is sent to the congregation as to the importance and priority of class-groups in the church. If class-groups are not being lead by the key leaders of the church it will be

very difficult for transition to occur. The changes required will not occur if the key stakeholders of the church are not involved.

In most traditional churches the elders play a pastoral care role and assist the pastor in administration. Most elders do not play a true leadership role. They are called leaders but most often have no personal responsibility in leadership. It has been our experience that inviting elders to take on a genuine leadership role unleashes much untapped energy and new ministry.

Caring For Leaders:

Most new group leaders are excited initially about their role. However, over time the newness wanes and sometimes the leader struggles to maintain their enthusiasm. An essential part of effective group ministry is the support provided to group leaders by a leader supervisor/coach. This support person often is the difference between a new leader's success or failure.

The group leader supervisor/coach has regular contact with each class-group leader. This one-on-one time is an important opportunity for the leader to debrief with the coach as to how their group is developing. These sessions provide opportunities for brain storm ideas, affirming the leader and keeping the leader accountable.

The group leader coach will meet with all the leaders on a regular basis (at least monthly). During these meetings leaders can share their stories, brainstorming ideas for their groups and deal with corporate issues that may be affecting the groups.

Ensure Leaders Succeed

Role of leading a class-group is demanding. Leaders Need to be supported in the following ways:¹⁰

1. *Have regular huddles:* Getting leaders together on a regular basis is vital. During this time celebrate each other's successes, share resources, problem solve and pray. Getting leaders together can be a challenge. Be creative as to when you have leader meetings, share a meal and have reasons why leaders will want to attend.
2. *Develop an accountability system in the class-group:* Class-groups will grow if group members grow. Assign a mentor to every new Christian. This will share the equipping load, increase friendship

and involve group members in ministry. Pair the remaining group members into accountability partner relationships.

3. *Teach the class-group leader the art of delegation:* Group leaders need to share the group's tasks - worship leader, social leader, prayer journalist, child link etc.

4. *Support the leader with a supervisor/coach.* A supervisor/coach who has been there before will be able to encourage and work through problems with the leader. The coach will provide an outside perspective and quality control.

5. *Provide meeting resources each week:* Group leaders need to be resourced. Have the pastor or group supervisor supply meeting materials. This will allow the leader to focus their attention on the group members rather than planning meetings.

6. *Give the Leader a vacation:* Apprentices leaders and other group members can conduct the Bible study. Adopting a more shared leadership approach as the group matures will prevent leader burnout.

Discussion Questions

1. How clear are your group leaders in understand their spiritual gifts and how to discover someone else's? Do you need to run your leaders through a training session?
2. What discipleship learning events are available for newcomers from your conference? What learning events do you need to organise yourself or with a neighbouring church?
3. Which elders will lead your class-groups? How will they assume this role?
4. Who will take on the group leader coaching role?

CHAPTER 4

"Hanging Out" A Spiritual Discipline

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25)

A couple years back I had the pleasure of going to the New Guinea Highlands to speak. From a speakers perspective I had not had such an experience before where you talk for an hour or two then as you go to sit down they ask you to talk more. I had never been with such an appreciative audience. Nor had I ever been with a group of people who could sit still for such long periods of time. One afternoon we drove into some of the outer areas through a number of villages – along the way small groups of people were sitting on the side of the road talking. Four hours later as we returned they were still there, in the same place. Hanging out with others is obviously an important cultural norm in PNG.

Scripture teaches that “hanging out” with others is a vital practice for the Christian. The apostle Paul challenges the Christian not to neglect spending time together. Unfortunately, in many churches participation in Sabbath School has fallen away resulting in little interaction between members. In this chapter we explore the reason why "hanging out" with others is an important Christian value and some strategies by which to increase members participation in class-group life.

A Spiritual Discipline

Scripture teaches that "hanging out" together must not be neglected. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). This verse is one of the most misused verses in Scripture. Most people interpret it as saying, ‘You must not miss going to church – worship’ This verse is not talking about going to church but rather the need the Christian has to “hang out” with other Christians, to interact. Scripture says, “Don’t forsake” - Don’t stop, keep practising hanging out.

Then verse 19 of chapter 10 begins with “Therefore” which tells us that the writer is about to draw some conclusions based on his foregoing remarks. He then lists three conclusions all of which begin with “let us”. The first in verse 22 says “let us draw near with a true heart ...”; the second beginning with verse 23 states: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope...”; and the third, beginning with verse 24, says “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much as you see the day approaching.”

Ellen White expresses a similar understanding when she posed the question,

“What is the object of assembling together? We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our aspirations, our hopes, and gathering strength and light and courage from one another...”¹¹

Church members need to understand that their spiritual well being is somewhat dependent on the encouragement, insights and accountability provide by other Christian friends. There is no place in Scripture for a "solo" approach to Christian living. All of us need to be "stirred up" on a regular basis by our Christian friends.

Increasing Edification

It is interesting to note how closely Ellen White's description of the church parallels a standard definition of what a group is. Johnson says, "An (effective) group is two or more individuals in face-to-face interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of the positive interdependence as they strive to achieve a mutual goal."¹² It is just not possible for church members to receive the sort of edification that Ellen White describes by just attending a worship service.

The challenge for class-group leaders is to facilitate meaningful interaction between group members during group meetings. As Ellen White says, this happens as group members share their thoughts and feelings. The sharing of feelings is the most effective way of moving group discussion from a cognitive level to a practical and personal level. It is at this level that the group provides a quality of edification that bring positive change in people's

lives. It is when we share at a personal level that friendships grow and group members feel supported.

Finding Jesus In The Mundane

In recent years I have sensed in many Christians a dissatisfaction concerning their relationship with God. Many seem to suffer an overwhelming sense of mediocrity when it comes to their faith. They want a closer and more vibrant relationship with Jesus. Some seek this in more expressive worship, others in a more challenging prayer life or other more extreme activities. I suspect that many are looking in the wrong place.

In the passage concerning the judgement where Jesus talks about the characteristics of the true disciple he outlines a very 'surprising' concept. . "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'(Matthew 25:40) When we care for another person, particularly a stranger, we are caring for Jesus. That within this stranger we may capture a glimpse of Jesus.

Christ is found more in the mundane, the simple things of life. We find Jesus when we support a friend in need, when we pray for the sick, when we socialise with the socially isolated, when we sit in a home with a small group of Christian friends and share aspects of our lives. Christians need to learn to see God in the mundane things of life. For most of us much of our life is full of the mundane - work - house work - bills etc. But when you add God to your life and look for him in the mundane, things take on a new perspective.

A Commitment To Sharing

One of the great benefits of participating in a small group is the privilege of sharing in the lives of other group members. When you meet with a group of people over a number of weeks you share your story. You share in the prayer life of each other.

Small groups are an essential part of the Christian walk. Your church members need to understand the importance of participating in a small group - a spiritual family. Over the years I have heard some interesting reasons from people as to why they won't participate in a small group - "I don't like sitting around gossiping" - "I am too shy." - "I can't find the time." - "I am studying." "I do an art lesson on that night."

My Answer is, "You can't afford not to participate – all Christians need the encouragement, wisdom and the motivation that comes from other Christians." Just as new humans grow best in a small group called family, so too new Christians grow best in a spiritual family we call group." A small group is the best place to take some risks in your personal development. If you are shy this is a fantastic opportunity to learn how to become more expressive. If you are too talkative this is a great place to learn some control.

Building a Commitment

Increasing the participation of members in class-group life is not easy. It requires some well thought out strategies. Each church has to develop its own strategies dependent on their situation. However, there are some principles that should be considered when developing your strategies:

1. *Leaders need to model a commitment:* What is important to the leaders of the church will become important to the congregation. Leaders must model the importance of attending class-group life. Leaders need to be highly involved in group life.
2. *Educate your leaders:* Some leaders may need educating on the importance of group participation. Conduct a training day or send your leaders to a Conference program. Share this book with your leaders.
3. *Create opportunities for mutual edification:* It is possible to involve non-participating members in some "mutual edification" experiences. This may encourage them to participate further. Some examples - Have the preacher during his sermon break the congregation into threes to discuss a question. Conduct a church camp where you have a number of group experiences.
4. *Share testimonials:* Invite class-group participants to share their group experience during the church service. Interview a whole class or some of the class-group leaders.
5. *Preach about it:* Address the subject in your sermons. Explore the New Testament concept of church and the early Adventist's approach.

6. *Conduct a Bible seminar using group format:* Whatever seminars you conduct use a group format where possible. Involve seminar participants in some group discussion. Members will witness the power of group sharing as they work for newcomers.

Discussion Questions

1. What level of mutual edification (sharing) occurs in your current class-groups? For those groups that are low how could you raise the level?
2. How can you develop more meaningful prayer time in your class time and home meetings?
3. What things can you as leaders do to increase members commitment to hanging out, particularly in group life?

CHAPTER 5

Ice-cream Evangelism

“It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world.” Ellen White¹³

What has ice-cream got to do with evangelism? The answer is simple. Most people when invited to church or to your class-group don't front. In fact to ask may embarrass them and discourage you. However, most unchurched people when asked out to eat "ice-cream" (a metaphor for socialising) will. Asking unchurched friends to eat ice-cream with you is a much better evangelistic strategy than asking them to attend your class-group. It is through social interaction that opportunities develop to share faith in appropriate ways.

Most churches and even many group leaders underestimated the importance of their social life. In many ways the group's social life is more significant as far as the group's numerical growth than the Bible study. It is through our social interactions that the unchurch experience Christian community. The social activities of groups are not only important for building group cohesion but provide vital assimilation steps for newcomers into the group and eventually into the church community.

Often new enthusiastic group members invite friends to their small group only to be disappointed when they don't come. The problem is that most people are aware that to attend a Bible study group involves making a commitment. Inviting people out for 'ice-cream' doesn't. By eating ice cream we create opportunities to grow friendships as well as non-threatening opportunities for potential members to check out the group.

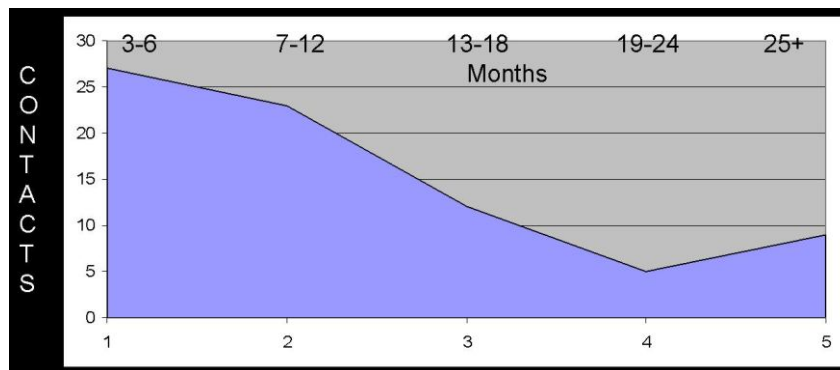
Both the early church and the early Adventist movement were highly committed to a relational approach to evangelism. The importance of being social is well expressed in this statement by Ellen White:

“Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishment, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By

being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse.”¹⁴

Hospitality Wins People

In the year 2005 I had the privilege of seeing how intentional systematic friendship making activity with seeker type people will reap a rich harvest for God's kingdom. *Homes of Hope* was a strategy designed by the Australian Union to encourage churches to get intentional and systematic about putting the welcome mat out more often. Churches appointed hosts who were supported by a class or home group. The host's role was to on a weekly basis connect socially with “seeker” type people and if appropriate introduce them to their group and eventually to their church family. This strategy was bolstered by providing an expense budget of a thousand dollars a year to each host. What was amazing about this strategy was the quick success achieved by those churches who were involved. Thirty hosts who had been working the strategy for twelve months reported one hundred and eight newcomers in church. This represents about ten per cent of the Australian total baptisms for a year.



“How long was it from your initial contact that they made a commitment?”

That is an amazing result! But what is even more amazing is how quickly many of these new people made a commitment. When hosts were asked - “How long was it from your initial contact that they made a commitment?” Have a look at the results: It was not expected that the largest number of contacts would make a commitment within 3-6 months of a host connecting with them. Today's wisdom says that people take longer in making a commitment. Well that probably is true using traditional forms of

evangelism, but not so when your focus is on the harvest. Harvest people are people who are ready to be brought in.

The social life of the class-group is as important as the Bible study and the prayer life when it comes to growing the group and reaching seekers. No wonder the writer of Hebrews encourage the Christians to. "... not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrew 13:2)

Highest Priority of God's Kingdom

Jesus stated that how we treat the stranger is indicative of our standing in His kingdom. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in", (Matthew 25:35) are all statements about welcoming strangers into our lives - into God's community. Paul taught, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself who gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). Reconciling someone is not just an intellectual, cognitive message. It is a physical bringing in of a lost person back into a relationship with Christ and his body.

Hospitality is more than offering refreshment after church or at its best 'lunch at my place'. Hospitality is a very spiritual discipline. When we practice hospitality our understanding of Christ and connection to Him increases.

At my home church there is a group who have built into their life the discipline of "hanging out". Each morning except Sabbath they meet at the local lake for a morning walk. Following their walk they head to McDonald's fast food outlet for breakfast. Many of them have been doing this for years. Some are new members of the group. In fact some are not even church members but enjoy the company and activity. And surprise, surprise, some of these non-members have begun turning up to church. I wonder what would happen if we placed a class-group in every McDonalds in Australia. I wonder?

Working with Seekers

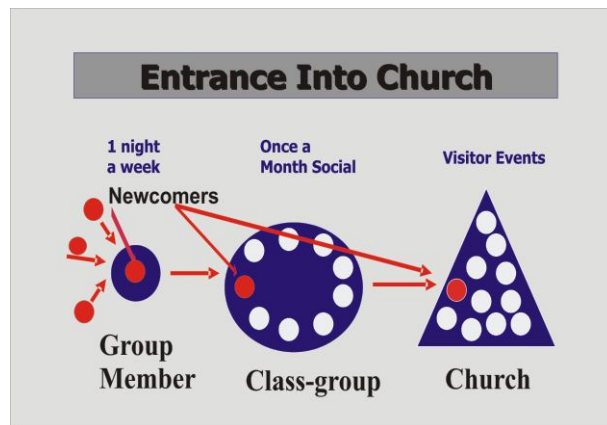
The greatest challenge in fulfilling Christ's command to welcome strangers is in making it part of our life style individually and corporately. Inviting people socially into your life is not 'rocket science' we do it all the time.

However, it does require a level of intentionality and systematic action if you are going to lead people to Christ.

Assimilating a seeker into a church community occurs as you over a period of time build friendship with the seeker and slowly with your church friends involve them in the church community. It requires finding time to socialise in ways that are conducive to relationship building. Ultimately it is about welcoming strangers into your life and into God's Kingdom.

Churches that are group structured have a much better capacity to assimilate newcomers into the church community. The following diagram illustrates how the group encourages members to connect with newcomers in their own life and then supports their friendship building by conducting monthly group socials. The building of friendships is a key group meeting agenda that is discussed on a weekly basis. Those group members with the gift of hospitality are encourage to take lead the group in build friendships with seekers on a weekly basis.

This approach to church is based on the fact that people today are more likely to want to experience church before hearing what it teaches. As one writer put, " Christianity is more caught than taught!" The group provides a non-threatening environment for the seeker to experience what it means to be part of a Christian community.



"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."¹⁵

Research by John Finney in UK indicate that “most people experience their faith through relationships, that they encounter the gospel through a community of faith, that becoming a Christian involves a process that takes time.” In his later book, *Recovering the Past*, Finney summarises their chief finding in four words. For most people, “belonging comes before believing.”¹⁶

Designing Group Socials

Conducting welcoming and seeker friendly social activity requires some well thought out planning. Here are some principles to keep in mind when designing group social activities (see appendix 3 for ideas):

1. Mix up your activities from ‘everybody comes’ to 2 & 3s. It is best to introduce your non-church friends to your group one or two at a time. It is then much easier for them to attend a full group activity without feeling threatened.
2. Plan for a group activity once a month, even though some months it may not happen.
3. Plan three ‘special’, ‘major’, ‘don’t want to miss’, activities each year. Give group members and contacts plenty of notice. For example - weekend away, concert, Xmas dinner.
4. Identify the interests of those you are working for and plan appropriate activities.
5. Invite newcomers to assist in planning activities.
6. Go for activities that will work with any number.

Who Are The Seekers

Who are most likely to respond to the invitation to "hang out" with you and your class-group? Who are looking for meaningful community that has worthy values etc.

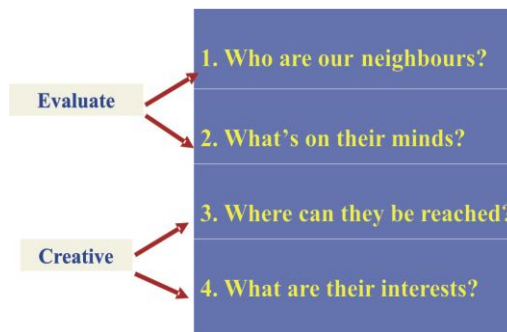
Ellen White uses the metaphor of berry picking to illustrate the principle of receptivity. She says,

"Just within their reach were bushes bearing large quantities of beautiful whortleberries; but they did not look close enough to see them. The ripe fruit was so mingled with the green that we could

pick only one or two berries from a cluster. I commenced to gather the fruit very carefully for fear of picking the green berries..." ...“You see that the fruit which I have gathered is large, and nice, and ripe, and after we have gone over the bushes once, other berries will soon ripen, and we can go over them again.”¹⁷

The berry field illustrates the importance of targeting our evangelism. Not everyone is ready to hear the gospel. In fact Ellen White suggests it may be damaging to try and pick green fruit. She suggest that one has to carefully identify the ripe persons. It is as we socially connect with unchurched people that we can ascertain their receptiveness.

Who are these seekers who will be receptive? We define seekers as people who are experiencing change or crisis in their life. During such times people tend to re-evaluate their lives. They give some thought to the meaning of life and what they want from it. Often these people are willing to explore some new alternatives. It is during such times that humans allow themselves to be more open to the Holy Spirit.



4 Questions For Finding Seekers

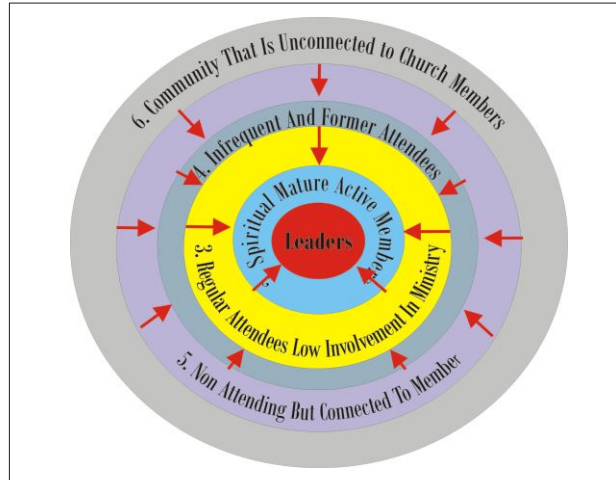
The following situations are examples of changes and events that create an openness to new ways of living and spiritual receptivity:

- Unemployment
- Shifting House
- Sickness
- Death of a loved one
- Receiving an award
- Birth of 1st child
- Last child attending school
- Last child leaving home
- Divorce
- Marriage
- Retirement
- Christmas Season
- Immigration
- Family Crisis
- New Job

Where Do We Find Seekers?

Often when we think about evangelism we think about the saved and lost. There are those who know God and are part of His body and there are those who don't know Him and are outside of His body. Unfortunately, this view of evangelism is not only inaccurate, but leads us into ineffective strategies for reaching lost people.

Evangelism needs to be seen as an assimilation continuum. In the follow diagram you will see how that within any church community there are people at different stages of church involvement and spiritual maturity. Some people are regular attenders but not involved in any serious ministry. Others attend



Different Zones Of A Church Community

infrequently or are former attenders. Then there are those who do not attend church but are connected in some way. They may have family or friends that attend. Or they may access a service provided by the church e.g. School, seminar, sporting group etc. It is within these last two (4&5) zones that we find seekers who are already in relationship with the church. Hence these are very fruitful zones for harvest.

Often in our evangelism programs we focus on people (zone 6) whom we have no relationship with and no knowledge of their life circumstances. The most productive evangelism occurs with those that we are already in some relationship with. In fact the research tells us that these people have greater stick ability when they have a pre-existing relationship with a church member. Joseph Aldrich says,

"More than 80% of those who trust Christ and remain members are led to the Lord by a friend. They have had over 5.9 exposures to the gospel before conversion.

More than 70% of those who trust in Christ and drop out are led to the Lord by a stranger. These converts average 2.16 exposures to the gospel before conversion."¹⁸

The challenge for leaders is to train and encourage class-group members how to identify a "seeker" and how to connect with them. This requires both evaluation and creativity.

Discussion Questions

1. Who are the people in your church who have the gift of hospitality? Discuss how you can free them up to focus more of this ministry within their group.
2. Who are the seekers God has place in your life? Develop a list of possible seekers and begin praying for them as you build your friendship.
3. What social activities could your class-groups do? Brain storm a list of activities. (review the appendix: Class Group Social Ideas)

CHAPTER 6

Multiplying Class-groups

"It is through creating, not possessing, that life is revealed." Vida D. Scudder

Once upon a time there was a professional evangelist and a disciple maker. Both wanted to start a new church in the same area. In the first year of operation the evangelist brought in ten people. He felt very pleased with his results. The disciple maker only managed to win two people. The next year the evangelist again won ten people and doubled his church. The disciple maker's disciples managed to each bring another person to the Lord. So now they had six. In year three the evangelist again made a big effort and added another ten people to his church which now totaled thirty. The evangelist felt satisfied, but exhausted. The disciple maker continued training his members and they brought a person each into the church. The disciple maker's church now totaled twelve. And so the two churches continued to grow. Have a look at their story in the table after ten years.

Jesus instructed his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples not believers. There is a huge difference between the two. A disciple is a

Multiplying Principle V Traditional Approach				
Professional Evangelist			Disciple Maker	
Year	New Mem	Total	New Mem	Total
1	10	10	2	2
2	10	20	4	6
3	10	30	6	12
4	10	40	12	24
5	10	50	24	48
6	10	60	48	96
7	10	70	96	192
8	10	80	192	384
9	10	90	384	768
10	10	<u>100</u>	768	<u>1536</u>

person who is committed to mentor other disciples. A believer can simply adopt an intellectual position that does not affect their life style too much.

Unfortunately, the church has focussed more on making believers rather than disciples. The central theme of this book is that churches that are structured on small groups have the greatest potential for growing disciples who will be faithful to their calling.

The Power of Multiplying

The largest church in the world, Yoido Full Gospel Church of South Korea, has over seven hundred thousand members and is built on the principle of multiplying groups. Cell churches on average are more healthy than other churches. Christopher Schalk said, "Comparing the NCD scores of cell churches and non-cell churches showed that cell churches overall scored significantly higher in all areas than non-cell churches." (NCD International 2002)

One of Adventism's fastest growing Division has a strong multiplying small group emphasis. Melchor Ferreyra, president of the Adventist Church in Peru says, "Thinking small has paid off in a big way for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Peru. By using small groups of church members who reach out to neighbours, the church is doubling the number of new members joining annually, and doing a better job of keeping them in the community." Pastor Salomon Arana, president of the church in the Northeast region of Peru says, "What's happening in Peru wasn't so easy. Just four years ago they depended on the pastor very much. Really, the pastor was central to every evangelistic program. If the pastor did not get involved, if the pastor did nothing, there was nothing," says Arana. Large-scale public evangelism did not allow the entire church to participate because it was a program "for specialists only," according to Ferreyra. Only those who knew how to do public evangelism got involved. "[Members] applauded but did not participate," he adds.¹⁹

A Commitment To Multiply

Cultivating a multiplying church which includes the multiplying of members, leaders, groups, and ministries requires a determined commitment by leaders. It is so easy for leaders to allow themselves to become side tracked on other good activities. The multiplying of

class-groups doesn't happen by accident. It is an intentional act that leaders carry out.

Often groups grow and enjoy their experience and don't want to multiply. Group participants build close friendships which for some members may be a new experience, and they don't want to end. When resistance to multiplication occurs. It is the responsibility of the group supervisor/coach to assist the group leader in preparing the group for multiplication.

How to Encourage Multiplication

The following "how to's" will assist you in preparing class-groups for multiplication and building a multiplying culture in your church:²⁰

1. *Speak the Vision:* Preach it from the pulpit. Constantly talk about it with your leaders and in committees.
2. *Use the analogy of a family:* Encourage groups to see themselves as spiritual families that give birth to new Christians and new Christian families.
3. *Be open to creative models of group multiplication:* Use a variety of methods by which to divide the class-group. See the next section (Four ways to multiply a class) for details.
4. *Have as many assistant cell leaders as possible:* Assistant leaders will keep multiplication on the agenda of the group.
5. *Pour your time into future leaders:* Spend time finding and encouraging members into leadership.
6. *Have apprentice leaders receive regular training:* Provide training opportunities for apprentice leaders.
7. *When the time is right start a new class-group:* Don't wait to long before dividing the group.
8. *Share the vision with the group:* Class-group leaders need to talk about the vision to multiply and lay plans with the group.
9. *Have a commissioning service:* Celebrate the beginning of groups during the church service.

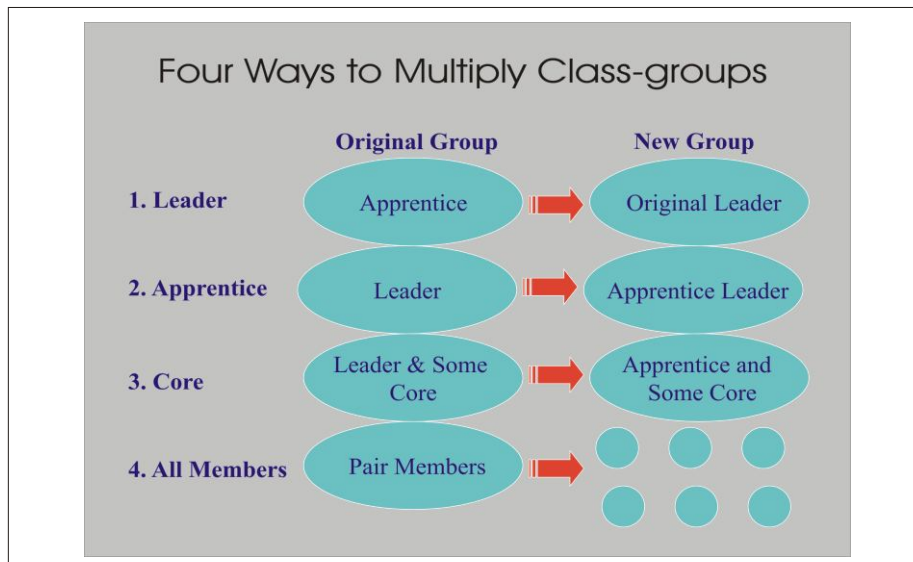
Four Ways to Multiply A Class

There are four basic approaches by which to multiply a class-group (See the diagram following). Which approach is used will depend on the group's maturity and the level of experience of the leaders.

It is preferable, when dividing, that core members are distributed evenly. This ensures that both groups have participants who are experienced and committed to the vision. It is also important for both groups, particularly those remaining with the initial leader, to increase the amount of social activity. This will ensure that the relationship bonds are quickly reestablished. (See appendix 6 for a guide on how to multiply class-groups)

Sometimes it is not possible or appropriate to divide the group. Instead the leader or apprentice leaders takes a few members and starts a new group. This approach is often needed when there is resistance to dividing.

The most radical approach to multiplying a group is to pair up group members and have each pair go off and start their own group. This approach is particularly useful when planting a new church or transitioning a church to a group structure. There is a higher risk that some groups may fail. However, if the group members are chosen carefully this can "hot house" group multiplication quickly in a church.



What if Class-groups Don't Multiply

There are two basic reasons cells don't multiply. First, they have difficulty attracting newcomers and therefore don't grow. Second, they increase in number but refuse to multiply. Either way their future is at risk. A group that fails to attract new comers will become inward looking and lack the excitement of 'birthing' new Christians. A group that has grown but refuses to divide will lose its intimacy and accountability.

The following suggestions can help deal with the failure to multiply:

- *Expect that not all class-groups will multiply:* The reality is that some groups just don't grow to the point of multiplying for numerous reasons. Some reasons are beyond the leaders control e.g. sickness, transfers, change of job etc. Leaders should not feel bad when such circumstances arise.
- *Check to see how holistic they are?:* The leader's coach should spend time observing the group and discussing with the leaders the group's program and the gift mix of the group. Groups can sometimes be imbalanced in the gifts that members have.
- *Make additions if necessary:* If there is imbalance in the spiritual gift mix of members then add some additional persons to achieve balance.
- *Divide them without telling, using subgroups:* If a group is resistant to dividing it is sometimes wiser to avoid confrontation. During group meetings divide the group into two for some of the discussion. This will help group members to prepare for dividing.
- *Ask a Charismatic leader to form a new group:* Choosing a person who is influential to lead or support one of the leaders in forming a new group can be effective.
- *Find a specialised need and form a new group.* In resistant situations it can often be useful to offer a specialised class based around a interest topic that runs for a number of weeks. At the end of the series the offer can be made for the group to continue.
- *Build the expectation throughout the life of the group:* Prepare the group for multiplication by giving them plenty of notice. Invite the pastor to affirm their experience and challenge them to grow.
- *Having a trained apprentice will help build momentum for multiplication.*

- *Meet with the leader and apprentice and negotiate a suitable date for multiplying.*

Discussion Questions

1. Which class-groups are closest to multiplying?
2. Develop some strategies that will encourage these class-groups to multiply.
3. Rate out of 10 how holistic each class-group is. Discuss how you can support them in increasing their holism.

CHAPTER 7

9 Steps For Transition

"Courage is an accumulation of small steps." George Konrad

The revitalising of your church through the multiplying of Sabbath School class-groups will take 3-5 years. Jesus took three years to get his team of twelve ready to establish the Christian church. It is important that this change is seen as a long term plan. Nothing worth while can be done quickly.

The first and most crucial factor for achieving successful transition is to develop a commitment from the key leaders of the church. The key leaders are typically the elders and other influential members. If you can't convince the elders of the need for change you will struggle to convince the congregation. Getting leaders committed and visioned is the most challenging task and needs to be your first and highest priority.

Here are some suggestions on how to build leadership commitment:

1. *Talk to key open minded influential individual leaders:* Pray to God that he will lead you to talk with the right people. Share with them what is on your mind and share this material with them. Talk to a few key people and avoid creating unnecessary resistance at this time.
2. *Plan a specific session to discuss transition with your elder team:* This is best done over a weekend at an elders retreat or over a number of weeks. Inviting an outside person, maybe from the Conference or else where, to support you would be helpful. Outsiders add weight to the seriousness of the change.
3. *Commit as a leader team to function as a group for 2-3 months on a weekly basis:* This will be both a training and experiencing group life time. Spend half your meeting time being a group the other half reflecting on the principles of this book.
4. *Begin to implement the 9 Steps For Transition.*

Step By Step

The following steps outline the key strategies for transition. Even though there is a sequence to these 9 steps some steps may occur simultaneously. By focussing on these steps you will move every class to a higher level of group health. Some classes will go further than others.

1. *Distribute Elders into existing classes and if possible create new ones.* Class leaders will over time become elders. Their role is to provide leadership to the class, to facilitate and delegate persons for the various ministries of the class. Leaders will be required to attend regular leader meetings.
2. *Begin to build the “familyness” of the class by conducting monthly social activities.*
3. *Assign non-attending members to classes based on existing friendships.*
4. *Select persons in each class to facilitate pastoral care of members.* Their role will be to oversee the spiritual needs of class members as well as those members assigned to them who do not attend. They will organise class members into accountability partnerships and find sponsors for new Christian members.
5. *Choose a future leader to act in a co-leader/apprenticing role.* They will learn and prepare for future leadership by sharing in the task of leadership. Part of the training requirement for apprentice leaders is to attend a leadership training event. This training will be provided by the small group supervisor/coach.
6. *Appoint hospitality hosts to facilitate weekly friendship-building with seekers.* These hospitality hosts will work closely with those responsible for planning the class-group monthly socials
7. *Conduct mid-week Bible study seeker-friendly meetings.* This is a time of sharing, prayer, Bible study and planning. This is the most vital meeting of the class-group. It is at this meeting that strategies are developed for reaching seekers and ministering to needy members.
8. *Divide the class within 12 months.*
9. *Church Structural Change.* Identify church structural changes that will enhance group ministry and schedule their implementation. These may occur at any time in the transition. However, they will tend to happen gradually over a 2-3 year period. See page 13 for examples.

Consolidating The Transition

It is important that during the first year of a transition that the church avoids being involved in any other major initiatives that could distract leaders and members from the goal of transition. During this time more is demanded of the leaders and members. It is so easy for mid week class-group meetings to be overwhelmed by other programs. When this occurs group participation as a lifestyle comes under threat. Remaining focussed on the transition and committed to a group priority is required for success.

This book has been talking about change. Usually the best changes for churches or any organisation occur over a lengthy period of time. Quick changes are always at risk of being easily overturned or minimised. This book attempts to outline to you a long term change strategy that will bring the church and members more in align with God's calling.

What we have shared with you involves adding to and modifying what already exists. It is not radical change but very intentional and achievable change that can produce significant results for God's kingdom. The organisation guru Peter Senge says that often "...the best results come not from large-scale efforts but from small well-focussed actions."²¹ I believe that the "9 Steps For Transition" are small and well focussed strategies that can maximise the health and mission of any church. However, to implement them it does require leaders to have a long term focus and a dogged commitment.

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- 12 David Johnson & Frank Johnson 2nd Edition, 1982 Joining
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- 14 Ellen White Gospel Workers, Review & Herald page 193
- 15 Ellen White Ministry of Healing, Review & Herald page. 143.
- 16 John Finney, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*
- 17 Ellen White, The Need of Earnest, Intelligent Workers
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- 18 Joseph C. Aldrich, Gentle Persuasion Marshal Pickering 1988
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- 19 Small Groups in Peru Bring Large Gains~and Pains August 5,
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- 20 William Beckham Cell Church Training 1997 Sydney Aust
- 21 Peter Senge The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The
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APPENDIX : I

Dealing With Pews and Finding More Floor Space



A church that is committed to multiply class-groups will often need to find more floor space. This may require some creative movement of the pews.

In creating more class-group places it is essential that class-groups members are

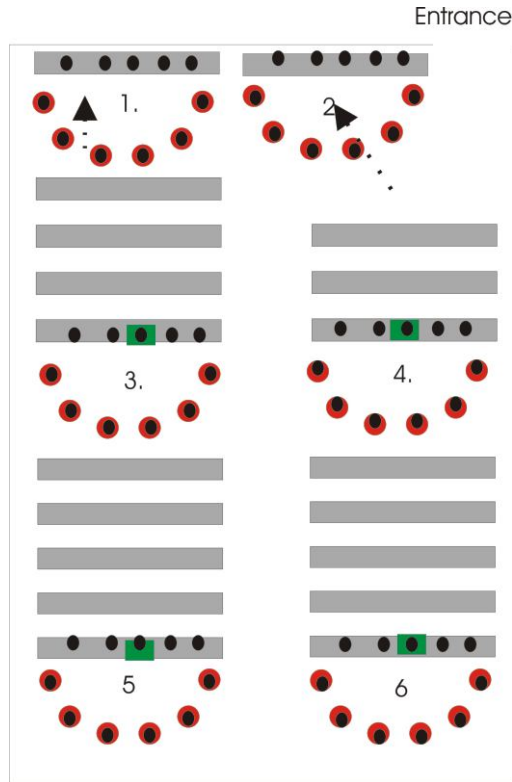
seated in a circle. The circle promotes discussion, encourages deeper sharing, increases relationship building and results in a more dynamic discussion.

What are we to do with the pews? I have seen many creative approaches to dealing with pews. I have seen pews that have been cut in half and hinged. These pews are located at the front or rear of the sanctuary and are formed into a circle (Square) each Sabbath. Another option is



to pick up the pews and move them into a square. You can also have a flat topped circle where you form a half circle around the front of the pew (see figure). Teachers need to sit on the pew looking at the circle to encourage people to sit in the circle and not fill up the pews behind. Another variation of this is located at the back of the church. You move, maybe permanently, the back pew in the church against the back wall and place single chairs in its place that are turned in front of it for class time. Sometimes it is necessary to

remove pews from the centre of the worship area and replace them with single chairs (see the diagram below)



Spacing chairs to allow enough personal space is important, particularly for visitors. Teachers need to educate the class to fill the seats that are less secure, i.e. The one next to the teacher and at the entrance of the circle. Visitors should be made welcome and seated in a comfortable position.

Seating is not primarily an issue of aesthetics but functionality. What seating can we arrange to help facilitate the effective study and relationship building of this church? This is a

basic question that Church leaders need to pay attention to. It is as fundamental as whether the toilet works or the power is switched on.

APPENDIX : 2

Class-groups Social Ideas

Here are some ideas for monthly class socials which are suitable to invite non-church attenders to.

Picnic: Food and friends are an excellent combination. This might be done after church on a special visitor's day.

Barbecue: A barbecue in the park or at home can be a relaxed way to get together. Have a back yard treasure hunt for the kids.

Camping: A class camping weekend is an excellent place to invite non-church goers who are starting to show interest. Camping creates plenty of opportunity for people to sit around and chat.

“Tupperware” Type Events: Use “party ware” sale evenings as class events where you invite your non-church friends.

Competitions: Why not enter your class into a competition where you can invite other friends to participate.

Fun Run: Organise a low key fun run or walk to raise money for a cause.

Quiz Night: Organise a quiz night with your work and church friends for a special cause.

River Cruise: Tourist attractions like river cruises can be a low key activity for the class.

Beach Outing: A class outing to the beach is a very casual activity to invite non-attenders to. The beach is very conducive to sitting around chatting.

Go-Karting: An exciting activity for the “big boys”. Don't embarrass anyone with the cost.

Water Skiing: A fun activity that can include the kids.

Poetry Night: Have people bring their favourite poem to share include some snacks.

Bowling: This was a popular game that still can be a very social event. Hire out the whole place and have a party.

Couple's Weekend Away: Spoil yourselves and go away for the weekend to a guest house without the kids.

Mystery Restaurant night: Most people enjoy eating. Research a selection of good quality and value restaurants. Announce the location one hour before arrival time.

Progressive tea (on a small scale): A great way to have newcomers get to know the group quickly.

Mothers or fathers day event for the group: This really goes down well for single parents who you are trying to reach.

Karaoke Night: Can be a lot of fun, more suited to extroverts.

Cricket Match: Organise a cricket match between two class-groups and include some seeker friends.

Round-Robin Games Night: Great for classes to compete against each other with invited guests. Particularly great for single parent seeker families.

Car Boot Sale: Conduct a Car Boot sale in a local public area or park.

Breakfast at the Church on Sabbath: Good for inviting irregular class attenders.

Picnic lunch/tea in local park: Again, great for inviting infrequent class members and seeker friends.

A World Cup Rugby Match Social: Major sporting events are a great excuse to get together with your class and seeker .

Late Summer Evening Beach Walk: Easy to organise.

APPENDIX : 3

How To Lead A Class-group Bible Study

The conducting of the bible study during Sabbath School and in the home during the week is an important part of group life. The group discussion in the home tends to be less formal than at church.

The following guidelines will lead to an effective discussion:

1. *Discovery method of teaching:* Allow class members to discover the excitement of scripture for themselves. Avoid pre-packaged answers that stifle discussion.
2. *Avoid leaning on too much information from outside the class:* Encourage members to recognise that together with the Holy Spirit they will be given understanding.
3. *Physically include everyone in a circle:* Make sure all members feel welcomed. Include them physically in the group.
4. *Ask questions: Don't lecture:* Use mostly high-order questions, that is ones that require a person to express their own opinion not someone else's.
5. *Give people time to answer questions:* Don't fear silence. Most people need time to think through an answer.
6. *Never answer your own questions:* Reword if unclear. Don't accept the first answer; ask for other views.
7. *Don't struggle to get the correct (your) answer:* Show appreciation to all answers even poor ones.
8. *Try to include everyone in the discussion:* Everyone has opinions, some people are just more bold or quicker at expressing theirs.

9. *Don't allow individuals to dominate the discussion:* Set group rules that encourage all to participate. Remind the more dominant of the agreed rules.

10. *Share personally:* Avoid quoting others. Speak from your own experience. Avoid intellectualising.

11. *Pace the discussion:* Spend most of the time on the important points.

12. *Summarise:* Apply what has been discussed. Look for both individual application as well as a group response.

A P P E N D I X 4

Member's Seeker Network

Have each class-group member list those people in their life who are "seekers". A seeker is a person who is undergoing major life change or experiencing crisis (see page 41 for more detail). Identify each person's need and list a class-group response.

Seekers Name	Seekers Need	Our Response
<i>John Smith</i>	<i>Wife is seriously ill</i>	<i>Organise a class roster for helping with house work</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

APPENDIX 5

Check List For Multiplying Class-groups

Prepare the Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk regularly about multiplying the group.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have apprentice in place and working.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Take a holiday and allow the apprentice to lead on their own every so often.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify interests for the new groups.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set the date for multiplication with the leaders (leader, apprentice and coach)
Sell the Multiplication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Announce to the group of the plan to multiply the group in about 3 months time.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leaders to divide the core members and recruit them into the new groups.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Select an apprentice leader for both groups. (If possible)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Announce the starting date for the two new groups.
New Groups Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Begin each group with a commissioning in the church service.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invite the pastor and/or head elder to the first mid week meeting.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commit to function as a class on Sabbath with a minimum of four. Join the two groups together when numbers are less than four.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct 6-8 formal and informal social activities in the first 3 months.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Open the groups up to newcomers after 1 month of operation.

APPENDIX 6

Evaluating Class-group Life

Use the following questions to evaluate the health and progress of your class-group.

Rate out of 5 the following items. 1 Excellent 2 Good 3 Average 4 Fair 5 Poor

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Sense of belonging | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Social activity | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Leadership | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Ability to connect with newcomers | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Home group Bible study | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Class time Bible study | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Personal support | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Outreach to seekers | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Meaningful group prayer life | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Sharing in group ministry tasks | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. Clear group goals | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Personal Growth | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Our group could be improved by

My group is important to me because ...

APPENDIX 7

Leader's Job Description

The following description outlines the various responsibilities of a class-group leader.

1. *Facilitate leadership of the class-group:* The class-group leader is responsible for the overall operation of the group and accountable to the church leadership.
2. *Produce more leaders:* The leader is directly responsible for selecting and training the apprentice leader(s). The selection is done in consultation with the group supervisor/coach and pastor.
3. *Oversee the discipling of newcomers:* The assigning of group members as mentors to newcomers is the responsibility of the leader. The leader will usually approach the newcomer to set up the mentor relationship.
4. *The development of class-group members gifts:* The leader needs to encourage each group member to develop their gifts in some form of ministry. This may involve the completion of a spiritual gifts assessment and a group feedback session(asking the group for their feedback).
5. *Pastoral care of group members:* The leader is responsible for ensuring that adequate pastoral support is being given to each member. Even though the leader may assign this role to a specific person they will still be involved, particularly in crisis times.
6. *Class-group multiplication:* One of the more challenging aspects of class-group leadership is when it comes to multiplying. Leaders typically have to work hard in challenging the group to divide. This is done in consultation with the group supervisor/coach.

APPENDIX 8

Transitioning Church Structure

A 2-3 year process

The transitioning of church structure so that it will complement class-group life is an important process that takes time to carry out. The following outline is designed to help leaders identify the changes and modifications needed to realign the church program and establish class-group priority.

1. *Potential Clashes*: List current ministries and activities of the church that could clash with class-group life. Look for competing meeting times, human resource conflict, facility needs, programming clashes etc. Here are some possible areas to explore: (cross those that are an issue)

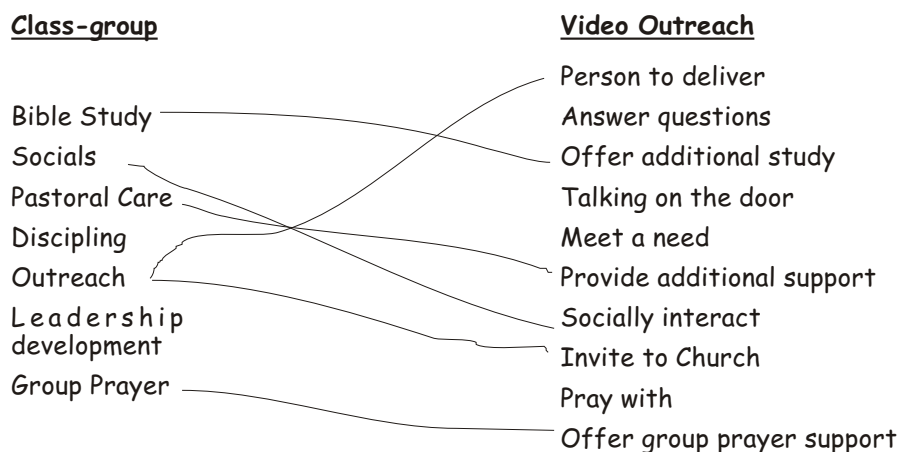
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pathfinder meeting time | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship preparation on Sabbath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Competing responsibilities on Sabbath - childrens S.S., Greeting, PA etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Floor space at church | <input type="checkbox"/> Child care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Committee meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> External programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach programs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other mid week meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge building or interest groups | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seminars | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive multi tasking of leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> |

From your list prioritise the areas that need addressing and develop an action plan for each.

Clash	Action
<i>1. Music practice</i>	<i>Move to Thursday night</i>
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

2. *Potential Synergies*: Identify existing ministries within the church where collaboration with class-groups could achieve greater results (see pages 18,19). Here is an example using the morphological analysis technique (list all the components of group life and video outreach then identify potential links):

Example: Video Outreach



Go through this process for each of the key ministries of your church.

For example:

Worship	Pathfinders	Youth Ministry
Health Outreach	Deacons Deaconesses	Youth Sabbath School
Bible Seminars	Music Ministry	Childrens Ministry
Sabbath School Prelims	Womens Ministry	Hospitality Team
Greeters	Singles Club	Prayer Ministry
Social Program	Adventurers	

List in order of priority the potential synergies. Develop an action plan for each ministry area.

Ministry/department	Class-group Action Plan
<p>1. <i>Example Video Outreach</i></p>	<p><i>Distribute names to class-groups to deliver DVD</i></p> <p><i>Offer group prayer support to recipient</i></p> <p><i>Provide group pastoral care</i></p> <p><i>Invite to group social</i></p> <p><i>Invite to group Bible study</i></p>
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3</p>	
<p>4.</p>	

5.
6.
7.
8.

3. *Potential Energy Savings:* A class-group structured church is able to reduce the number of meeting and size of some committees. Review your "synergy" action plan and identify which ministries can be reduced in personnel and/or meeting frequency.

List Committee Changes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Change Process: Record **What** action will be taken, **How** will it be implemented, **Who** is responsible and **When** will happen.

It is important to pace out your changes and to negotiate changes with the key stakeholders.

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