

Session Four : the implementation of revitalisation

A process of implementation of a project implies that changes will take place. This is true in any organisation which wishes to remain in good health according to its objectives . In industry and business, change management has become an important field of research and bosses call on experts to lead their company through the necessary changes as they adapt to changes in society. Their aim is to remain profitable. In a church the objective is quite different : the aim is to help the members to glorify God as they live their daily lives and as they reach out with the gospel to people around them. The aims are not the same as in the business world, but the principles are very similar because we are dealing with human beings in a fallen world. Christians have a solid foundation in the Scriptures and the assistance of God through prayer. However we are still living in this world, and the words of Jesus remind of this in an astonishing way : “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”

The main steps in the process, as they can be lived out in a church revitalisation programme, are as follows :

- A) Awareness of the need
- B) A revitalisation team
- C) Evaluation of the state of the church and clarification of its values
- D) Own the vision of a healthy church
 - ❖ the gathered and scattered church model
 - ❖ the spiritual, social and societal aspects of revitalisation
- E) Defining the process (the implementation)
- F) Communicating this process in such a way as to get people on board

Stages C, D and E are at the core of revitalisation. These three aspects – assessment, vision and a strategy for change - go together because they all involve seeing or vision. The dictionary definition of the word vision involves two time-scales

- what we can see with our eyes (the act or faculty of seeing)
- imaginative insight (or foresight) concerning a future state of affairs.

These two meanings are amply illustrated by the prophets of the Old Testament. According to 1 Samuel 9:9, “Formerly in Israel, if a man went to enquire of God, he would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer’, because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.” The prophets were able to see. They first saw the present reality of the people of Israel – a great deal of prophetic proclamation describes the sinful behaviour of God’s people. Then the prophets saw the projected outcome depending on whether the people repented of their sins or not.

In the same way, the revitalisation team will seek to get an accurate picture of present reality, in other words to be lucid, clear-sighted and realistic about their church and its context (the surrounding society). And they will own the vision of what a healthy church is and endeavour to identify the means (the strategy) to get there.

Just as we did with the vision, it's helpful to have a visual reminder of the strategy involved in change management. You will find below the "flow chart" which illustrates what is involved at each stage of revitalisation. It's title is "Revitalisation : bringing about change in order to work towards being a healthy church".

I recommend that you print this diagram so that you can refer to it as we go through the next sessions of this course. The infographic on the healthy church and the flow chart of the implementation are two vital documents. The first one can be given to every church member so that he or she will know what is the outcome of revitalisation, and see where the various concrete proposals of the strategic plan fit into this. The second document is for the leaders of the church, and in particular for the revitalisation team.

There are four main phases in this diagram.

- Getting started. This is the point we have reached in this on-line course
- Develop an appropriate strategy for change based on the vision of a healthy church. You should note that each of the three aspects to be worked on – the spiritual, the social and the societal – each have an objective beginning "Improving ...", followed by a number of practical suggestions.
- Starting the movement, beginning with communicating the strategy in a way which brings people to adopt the strategy wholeheartedly and then proceeding to get them involved practically.
- Working towards lasting change. Revitalisation is not a "one-shot" event but a continual process as the church leaders continually evaluate whether members are being helped to grow spiritually and to reach out with the gospel.

Take the time to study this flow chart.

Can you identify the logical progression of the process? Can you embrace this process?

Is there any aspect of this flow chart which would need particular attention in your church?

Does the discipleship programme in your church (if you indeed have a programme) include what is indicated on this flow chart? If not, what sort of things could you do to cover these very practical things? (We shall be looking at some of these things later in the course but it would be good to start thinking about this).

Revitalisation : bringing about change in order to work towards being a healthy church

Getting started
Create a sense of urgency
Assemble the team to lead the process (where appropriate, seek coaching from outside the church)
Understand change management



Developing an appropriate strategy for change based on the vision of a healthy church
Assess together the state of the church, and set out and clarify its values
Own the realistic, exciting, biblical vision of a healthy church and work towards a strategy for change



Spiritual	Social	Societal
Improving the spiritual health of the church	Improving relationships within the church and with unbelievers	Improving the contextualisation of the church
The centrality of the Gospel. Worshipping God with a sense of wonder, reverence and creativity in a way which is also accessible to non-Christians. Earnest prayer.	Face to face relationships Mutual support and encouragement Prayer for each other Hospitality	Living in today's culture and responding to the needs in the community around the church
Discipleship in order to build a relationship with God Learning to trust and obey 24/7 Knowledge of the Scriptures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by teaching • by dialogue (Adults learn by talking to each other)	Discipleship in order to live well as the scattered church "Sent" by Jesus into the world to build relationships, to do good, and to share the Gospel in four relational networks : family, work / education, community, leisure time.	Discipleship in order to have a relevant witness Understanding today's society and helping Christians to speak into the issues.



Starting the movement
Communicate so that people understand and adhere to the vision and the strategy for change
Involve as many people as possible
Produce short-term gains
Persevere



Working towards lasting change
Structural
Improving the quality of leadership within the church
Encourage the concept of a church which is both gathered and scattered
Put in place good leadership and decisional systems
Strategic
Creating a new culture of on-going change
Avoid falling back into routine by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continually evaluating whether members are being helped to grow spiritually and to reach out with the gospel • discerning what can be done intentionally and what can just be committed to God in prayer

