

High Sundays

One of the key growth strategies that we have employed at Kings is something we call a '**High Sunday**'. It is a growth engine aimed at creating momentum.

Our strategy is simply to build to a Sunday where we will pray and invite as many people to attend and trust that God will meet with them – that they will experience God and then we provide them with a next step to connect with us.

We have run this system or strategy for the last 10 – 11 years and when I first arrived at Kings we would probably only do a few of these Sundays a year, or more likely, one or two a term. I remember when Terry Virgo came to speak, which was an encouragement to gather the whole church – certainly the core – and visitors, 205 attended. Historically, September has seen our highest Sundays. Last September, we had our highest ever Sunday attendance (apart from our Christmas services) when we had over 1100 in three meetings. This was a **Very High Sunday** for us! Following it, we had **70 people** to follow up who had all connected with God or had provided us with an opportunity to follow up and link them to a next step.

Simply put – **examples of High Sundays** are Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday, a dedication of parents, a baptism, a guest speaker, a themed issue or a healing service. Actually, what would happen now is that we would be running – probably every other week – something which we would describe as a High Sunday. It is an event which will **attract more people**.

We have also learned to **integrate our High Sunday strategy** with our **overall programming** in the life of the church. Our analysis shows that **there are more visitors and people looking to join Kings in January and in September each year**. Therefore, now we normally have FOUR high Sundays in a row in those months – Vision Sunday, baptisms, an invited guest speaker and dedications – all these would lead to and be integrated into our mid-week programme which would include a next step into Alpha, so we integrate our Sunday programme with our midweek programme.

We would always put up a **strong worship and preaching team** in the key growth moments on such Sundays and I try to ensure that I am in attendance at all these meetings.

We found that as the church gets larger it's very important to **publicise well in advance with high quality literature** and we have realised, for the first time, that we need to publicise both **internally** within the church and now **externally** too.

We have done this most recently by having an **integrated advertising campaign**. Billy Graham used to say to his team that whenever he came into a city, if he did not see his picture often enough as he drove in from the airport, then he would be concerned! So, we've taken this principle and for the first time invested extra money in such a campaign, which involved high quality billboards, 10,000 leaflets, radio adverts and bus stop ads. We actually put this in place all around the launch of our third meeting and the visit of a guest speaker (Lex Loizides).

Integration – a lesson well-learned

Seven years ago I visited **Willow Creek** and it was there I met **Marge Anderson**. Her responsibility was for the *integration of new people into a church which then had 20000 attending*. It was fantastic to find someone so committed to helping new people connect with the local church.

We learnt much from that visit which has helped us to connect new people to Kings. We have discovered that people fall into a number of different categories. Unbelievers we direct to **Alpha**; Christians who are generally looking for help, in other words, they are hurting and need **pastoral care**; people looking to connect through **servicing**, and lastly those looking to connect relationally through a **small group**, or **community life**.

We can spend hours of time and thousand of pounds on mission activities or just pulling off a great Sunday and not have a way of pastoring the new person into the church.

The model we discovered at Willow Creek was that **a phone call and some tracking of the new person increased our connection rate by 100%**. Before we started to provide a way of connecting people we would keep about **25%** of the new people who showed interest in Kings, since we started phoning and following up more intentionally **this has increased to about 50%**.

For more useful information on this topic go to:

<http://www.billtennybrittian.com/CHATTER/THE-TOP-FIVE-REASONS-CHURCHES-DON'T-GROW>

Like to Know More about future trends?

One of the greatest leadership challenges is to **predict the future**, and the best way to predict the future is to **look at past trends**. If your church hasn't grown in the last 5 years, it is unlikely to double in the next five. *At King's we have always planned for and prayed for an annual increase of 10% - net!* Your church will double in 7 years if you achieve this goal. On the basis of this principle King's will have 2000 attending in 7 years time.

Over the years we have worked out that the **leading indicator of growth** is the **number of 'Like to Know More' forms which are handed in at our Welcome Desk on a Sunday**. I pray for 5 a week - we have 3 meetings. ***If we get 5 a week I now know we are going to have 100 more people in a year's time. This is incredibly helpful information.*** From this we can then forward project numerical growth which shapes all our forward financial planning. We have a 5 year budget forward projection which helps to shape our staffing needs and our building requirements. *All from new connection forms.*

In this last year we have had 321 forms, at a retention of 50% - that represents 160 people. Of course some people leave, sometimes that's a weekly event as well, mostly for good reasons - *but from this analysis I am confident that we are continuing to grow* and that we will have **over 100 more people attending in a year's time.**

When I leave King's at the end of each Sunday, I am given a report containing the numbers in attendance as compared to last year, and the number of 'Like To Know More' forms. From this information I can continue to tell King's is growing – and how fast.

I believe that the High Sunday strategy is a transferable strategy that will benefit a church of any size – in any location.

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www.kingscentre.org.uk
<http://stibbertleadership.blogspot.com/>