

Doing Church Better series

Proclaimers Church...not an experiment

by Pastor Tom Rawls

I became the pastor of Proclaimers Church in July 2003. In December 2007 Proclaimers Church looks very different now than it did back then. The church was founded by Bob Gordon in the early 1990's; Bob was one of the U K's greatest teachers.

Proclaimers Church moved from being an ailing church to becoming a vibrant, healthy and passionate church connecting with people today.

What happened? Let me explain a few things first:

Dealing with existing leadership failed:

The first year was an attempt to get existing leadership aboard with the patterns of a New Testament church. The church was floundering because of a lack of leadership, vision and clear direction. Existing leadership structures were old fashioned, authoritarian and overbearing. To my shock the church was a "board run church". I really only found this out after about 6 – 9 months of dealing with them.

The church had over time become internally focused on innuendo, gossip and traditions. They had stopped reaching out to the world and instead had become focused on blessing, prophecies and "words" from God with accompanying "pictures". Needless to say the process to bring change failed miserably as the existing "trustees" were just too entrenched with supposed power and presumed authority. Their pride was their down fall.

The church moves to a new location sans a few members:

The church made a bold move in December 2004 moving from its home of 10 years to a hotel conference room about 3 miles away and closer to the city and public transport. They moved away from the restrictions imposed by unreasonable men, they moved away from an internally focused group of people and instead moved towards their future in God – looking back now as hard as it was, it was the salvation of Proclaimers Church! As a principle, when Christian leaders do what is right no matter how hard it appears God will move in with great blessing – God is looking for courageous leaders.

Leadership structures changed radically to reflect a more pastor/vision/culture driven leadership style. Gone was the "board of trustees" running the show and calling the shots. What rose up in its place was Ephesians 4, God anointed leadership from Denise and myself. We boldly took the reins of leadership bringing our church into the 21st Century and to its great success.

As the leaders we did what the title presumes and began to lead. The following is some of the leadership ingredients that have led us thus far in creating a truly 21st Century Church in a desperately needed part of the UK.

Our leadership was deliberate, intentional and was not an experiment.

Read on ...

1. The first thing we did was to make our documentation simple and easy to understand. We got our vision clear, the salvation of our city. We got our mission clear, to reach people, influence culture and build future

Our mission flowed into a very simple process for making disciples – Sunday is the BIG day for salvations, the milk of the word, worship and getting together. Connect Groups are the place where people do life together and develop great relationships. They are where people connect with church, the culture and the people of Proclaimers, and where our pastoral care takes place. It flows on then to servanthood – or service in the church, and is where people are disciple by serving in teams.

On our website www.proclaimerschurch.com is our values statement, our statement of faith and a simple statement called “The church I see ...”. This articulates our values and culture. All of this has brought clarity and has simplified our process – everyone knows where we’re heading. It was the first steps in creating the culture of our church. We were literally all on the same page.

2. We became strategically aligned with one of the UK greatest churches; Hillsong London. We don’t carry the name nor do we presume to speak for them – but I traveled a lot to their services and renewed friendships and relationships from years gone by. I saw the kind of church I wanted to lead and began to recreate it in Norwich. I believe everything flows from relationship and I opened up those lines of communication to build relationships: I read, I visited, I saw firsthand, and I went to every conference; I began the bold and confident step of deliberately bringing the change needed in my church. My concept was, “Why reinvent the wheel?” Originality is over rated and Hillsong Church is one of the most potent models of church anywhere in the world. I love Hillsong Church in London and Sydney – I have some great friends there – I assimilate their style and culture – aligning with them is now in my heart – I follow their lead and at Proclaimers we make Hillsong Conference in London “Our conference”.

3. One our greatest intentional act was to become a “Cultural Architect”. We began to deliberately design and create culture. It was a simple list of ingredients we believed was reflective of Heavens culture – they were all biblical so no one could complain ... or so we thought!

Our list was clear and simple:

a) We wanted to be a church motivated by the cause of Christ – our primary reason for being was to fulfill Jesus’ mission to “seek and save those who are lost” – our desire was to be an externally focused church – seeing the needs of a world in desperate need of Jesus love.

b) We wanted to be a generous church understanding that the world of the generous grows larger and larger – that generosity was a lifestyle, not an amount.

c) We wanted to be a church where people flowed together in teams and honored each other recognizing that everything flows from relationships. We wanted to be a church that understood loyalty, honour and submitting one to the other in love and respect for Christ. This would be a church where team work was functioning and fun.

d) We wanted to be a church that pursued excellence in all we did. We realized excellence was a journey not a destination – it was excellence not perfection. We wanted to do the best we could with the available resources at hand.

e) We want to be a church dedicated to servanthood – recognizing that servanthood is the road to greatness.

Stay tuned for next time I publish my leadership news.

Galatians 6:9, “Let us not become weary in doing good.”