

WHAT ARE WE? STRUCTURAL IDENTITY & TERMINOLOGY – Summary 12 & 21 June 2022

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Conversations have been anonymised and categorised for conciseness.

Summary of key points:

- Our mission comes out of our values; structural identity needs to be in accord with them
- A body has different parts, functions as one, look different, different purposes – one body, in each of our different sites, doing things differently
- Our current structural identity is ambiguous – we are a hybrid
- 3 analogies related to description of what NHBC structure should be
 - body
 - strawberry plant
 - family
- Terminology – question a number of words we use
- Role titles should more accurately reflect abilities, gifting – especially “Senior Pastor”, “Pastor”, “Elder”

Introduction: Roger’s video:

We need to understand terminology, structural ID and relationships of new churches. What do we want to look like into the future? What type of leadership is needed? Once growth starts, we need to have structures in place.

STRUCTURAL IDENTITY

If it is true that “structure must serve mission”, what is our mission?

Mission is the doing part, not the visionary part. Structures are to facilitate what people are doing. Our mission, “disciples of Jesus making disciples”, comes out of our values – structural identity needs to be in accord with them.

“One heart, many locations” – looks different at each campus... share same heart & mission...

Comment was made that given the diverse ways that we meet, it is interesting that we consider ourselves as “one church”. After discussing similarities and differences between the different sites, we’re more like “one church, different expressions”.

Where are we at now? What are we now? Are we a multi-site, or a movement/network, or stand-alone under a collective or other?

After much discussion, general opinion was that at present we do not wholly fit into one of these classifications, but rather a combination: possibly a multi-site, community-based, small churches planted; a movement/network; semi-decentralised.

What happens in church on a Sunday looks different at different locations but many aspects of Church life (eg various ministries, finances) are similar and intertwined.

Three Analogies:

A **body** has different parts, functions as one, look different, different purposes – one body, in each of our different sites, doing things differently. Communities of believers that share a common function/mission but have some collaborative form/operations.

A **strawberry plant** sends out runners to multiply, on long tether until it puts down roots. It functions on its own, but shares DNA with parent plant. We have groups at different stages of growth, end goal is to bear fruit; we want them to start another group.

In a **family**, when young, do as told; get married – independent but still linked; it's a relationship. Child to functioning adult – that's good; if not, parents step in – but should they? The parent is always there for the adult child to access, rather than impose their ideas. Children grow up, branch out – some children stay dependent a lot longer than others. We are more like a family of churches – children adopt parents' values early in life but may not maintain them later on. Each church has distinctive flavour, at different stages of development. Aim to become independent, multiplying. If disciplined well enough, become mature enough, able to replicate. We should be different but have same DNA – expression needs to be different.

Does our current structure serve our mission?

In terms of churches starting and growing, we currently have a senior pastor who oversees, serves multiple congregations. Is that working? Fitting with what we're seeing? In a general sense, yes... but not necessarily for longer term.

Current structure wouldn't be able to handle explosive growth. If you want to increase to lots of churches, it becomes necessary to protect their integrity (that they continue to hold the same core beliefs as the original NHBC). NHBC has a loose structure at the moment to be agile. There needs to be a **balance** of agility and organisation.

Family analogy: kept family name – be instantly recognised – independent – DNA is the same, but still of that family; hold the values of that family but independent of the family. We would like to think that NH churches would be recognised as having the same values. Do we continue to carry the family name? Yes now, but maybe not in the future?

How much control is needed from the mother church? What it looks like today might be very different in 10 years' time. Mother church? Mentor/Sponsor church – much better term. Any church could be a mentor to another. Question about which is the "mother" church as that makes a difference to governance.

How does our mission statement work? Where do we tend to make disciples? What is the best way to build relationship? In a small group is easier than Sunday morning but it's important to come together as a group. Church is where there are Christians gathering, teaching, prayer, worship, this constitutes church. Location is not important. Style is different but it is consistent/intentional.

Observations/experiences from the group suggest that a more 'relational' form of church would work better in today's society. It is seen that traditional church services do not make disciples, but small groups do (e.g. life/home/cell groups).

Church (Sunday mornings) are public 'events', but LG are more private and are richer discipleship times. But each serves a specific but different purpose towards a common goal. Both are equally important.

What is our preferred structural identity in light of our projected vision to multiply churches?

- What are we aiming to multiply/reproduce?

We haven't intentionally said "this" is what we're reproducing – we have 5 different churches but they're following the DNA, disciples making disciples. Church plants should replicate what Rochedale has done for them - we send out a core group of mature disciples to draw others, young Christians, non-Christians; they then reproduce themselves. We need to be smart about how we do it. The Logan Start UP group has been mentored so they can fit that organic group into a structure for it to work with a larger/growing congregation.

Structural analogy of concentric circles (representing perpetuating church plant generations) – flat, growing out, central circle connected, third doesn't necessarily touch centre (i.e. have strong/formal connections to), but still working together.

We need a structure but how can we plan for such large growth? Through prayer and listening to what is God wanting. Therefore, our structure must remain agile to keep up with the **Spirit-led organic growth**. **Structure must be as lean as possible** (agile and easily to replicate) but connectedness, loose autonomy, and accountability still required.

Where do we want to be in 5-10 years? What do we want to be defined as?

Making disciples so new churches will have same DNA, recognisable family, where each member feels valued but has own identity.

Keep the inter-"campus" connections as that's enriching to all parties, but not controlling – rather, supporting each other.

By that time, a network, equal to equal – community based clusters in a network (Logan cluster, Balmoral cluster).

See more community engagement, helping the community (those who are struggling) – more organic discipleship opportunities.

How does the structure deal with "breaking the tether"? We haven't experienced it yet, so don't know what it will look like ... celebrate!

Would think the new church would approach the mother church when they think they're ready; family model – letting go when all checks & balances are in place – family rules, ethos, culture, trained to be financially independent. Letting go isn't severing!

Would like a reunion, conference, annual celebration – all together, worship, preach, reiterate mission, vision, DNA, this is what God called us to do. This is our DNA, this is who we are.

However, don't think it's healthy to say we're going to plant 5 new churches every year – can be dangerous if thinking only in terms of numbers. A healthy church has a balance of internal growth and external mission – our auditorium isn't full. Maybe we need to reinvigorate growth in Rochedale – need a critical mass before you can get a group to start a new group.

TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

Examine the terminology and language we use to define how we operate and arrange ourselves

- Church/Congregation/Community vs Campus (for instance)

Are there preferred ways to describe who we are and what we want to achieve that should be reflected in a constitution?

Dislike “campus” - community is a better word. Community of believers.

The world knows the word “**church**” – wouldn’t like to lose church as the word has a message attached ... Christian Church, not a mosque or a temple - which is why Church is being put on our notice boards. We want to describe location, who we serve, what we stand for ...

Discussion re names: New Heart Baptist Church <location>; or New Heart <location> Community Church.

Discussion re Logan being a city vs others are suburbs. Importance of keeping **Baptist** as it gives people an idea of what you stand for. Do we need one term for all?

Role titles should more accurately reflect abilities and gifting:

“Senior Pastor” – does it reflect the role? Not CEO (although that’s a more accurate description). Business terminology - like Managers, CEO - should not be in church. It was felt that perhaps “Lead Pastor” is better? Do we need Senior/Associate Pastor titles? Uniting church, if there is more than 1 minister, just delegate responsibility but none of them have a more distinguished title. Legally there has to be a ‘point’ person.

“Pastor” – our pastors are more teachers

“Elder” – not a reflection of what our elders do – more management. Some churches have pastoral elders and a board of management. Why don’t we have deacons? Do the elders have oversight over all?

“CL” and “Congregation Leader” not liked. The role is not well understood.

“Mother Church” – conveys an idea; maybe Founding Church is better.

“Disciple” – prefer follower / follower of Jesus.

“VIP team” – was not liked

However, after much discussion it was agreed that terminology depends on who you are talking to – whether you are talking to people inside or outside the church. These two demographics are very different. Whatever terminology is used **inside** the church must be Biblically based, e.g. church, disciple, etc.

We should fit with Jesus who said build my *church*, not build my community. Struggle with changing the word of church in the constitution. *Church* and *disciple* are in the Bible, I don’t think we can replace them.

If it is in the constitution, we must use Biblical terms. Website can be different.

Like any ‘hobby’ once you become more familiar with and participate in it you begin to pick up and understand the unique terminology used.

Points of concern and questions raised:

- A constitution is needed for Australian Governmental purposes. It is important to have the roles in the constitution, but the document itself should be brief. A **supporting document** with detailed descriptions of internal workings would be more easily changed and updated. A plan for how we make disciples should be in a separate document.
- We cannot clone a church, and even if we could we do **not** want to – comes back to what God wants to do.
- People **do not feel connected** to other ‘campuses’; we don’t actively organise any corporate events.
- What are we working towards? It hasn’t been broken down – it would be good to have annual goals. Recommunicating vision, mission, stories of how people are growing. People are looking to everyone else – feeling that **enthusiasm and passion missing** – yes, we’re seeing churches planted but there’s a handful of passionate people, the rest... People don’t know where they fit. If people don’t own the idea then it won’t work.
- We learn from others – need more **opportunity to exchange ideas** e.g. if LG leaders got together; maybe need times set aside to discuss issues, outside of formal meetings – quarterly, where we can feed in ideas, not just ratify; have nominated people from each congregation to feed in ideas to leaders.
- Can we have a pastor from each community, elder from each community, that could **feed up to leadership team**?
- There is a lot of talk about church planting, but are we **looking after our already established communities**? Is continual growth at all stages healthy? There’s a need to build the sense of community within establish NHBC congregations, for people to feel loved & valued. Relationships are key. A suburb is not a community until they build relationships. We used to meet together in our suburbs – we have to be intentional to build community.
- Is there training for disciplers/disciples throughout the year, making sure everyone is on track? Who are the leaders? When do they meet? Where do Congregation Leaders fit? Is there a list of home groups? There’s a need for **intentional discipleship training** – for current & upcoming leaders.
- **What happens to our disciples?** Where are they going? How do we know? What’s happening to new Christians? Are there materials available to help people disciple others? Is there a spread sheet showing disciples – life is busy, people can fall in cracks – accountability, what happened to that person?
- Personal experience: a local church gives one Sunday each month to helping in the community, providing assistance, **helping people who are overwhelmed**. Community is so grateful. That sort of relationship-building can be followed up - connecting and meeting people where they are at.
- What about a **vision across the city** - not NHBC spreading across the city - but the body of Christ across the city (with other churches) - Ministers Fraternal in smaller towns, an association. If focus is serving the community, we have to look at how local churches/life groups serve. Maybe that starts with NHBC pastors contacting other churches?