

## 1 DNA 2 Growing Together (Vision)

Every born again believer starts life as a baby - a babe in Christ and needs to grow and mature. God uses the church as a safe place for Christians to grow and mature. What does it mean to grow together? Ephesians 4:11-16 emphasises that we are to mature as a body that is always growing - building each other in love.

### 1.1 Growing together into the head that is Christ

- speaking the truth in love we grow up into him that is the head

**How do we grow into the head** that is Christ John 15:4-5 Abide in me and I in you- the branch can't bear fruit -can't bear fruit apart from Jesus. Close intimate relationship between ourselves - likens to a vine and its branches. Branches need to be connected to the vine - if detached it will die. When we love someone we feel connected to them - we want to get to know them - every detail is important. We are not going through the motions - we are fully engaged - Ephesians 4 Paul is speaking about this high level of intimacy.

**We the body of Christ are to be like Jesus in every way** - and to grow up into him. What thing should we in the body be doing in order to be connected to Christ ?

**The body grows gradually** – its' slow in adulthood – but in children it is more noticeable. A young Christian will demonstrate recognisable changes in a short space of time. For more mature Christians our rate is slower but there should still be signs of growth . Have we grown in the last year are we more like Jesus this year then I was last year? Paul also focuses on the idea of corporate growth

**Corporately growing together means we hold onto the truth** and we grow in love for one another. By all things - yes every way - in every area of our corporate lives we should be growing up into him - worship, prayer, preaching, actions, behaviour, welcoming strangers. How we treat one another in all things. How do we achieve this ? - only achievable through the Holy Spirit within us. Our old nature is there - battling against this - we need to live by the spirit so that Christ

**Can be evident in us - this can be fruits of the spirit in our corporate life** – fruits of the spirit evident in us as a community ( list them). Is Christ the Head of all things in our corporate life ? Are we as a church displaying the fruits of the spirit as a community. How can we be sure this happening? -Paul says God gave the prophets, evangelist's , teachers, pastors to equip the saints for the ministry to build them up - God in his wisdom has given us appointed leaders to build us up together - we are all to be there for one another. Even though we have good leaders in the form of small groups leaders, pastors, and teachers and our leadership team it is not all down to these leader.

**For the body does not consist of one member but of many.** We are all different and at different stages of life - some are more vulnerable than others - we are all one family but diverse - but we all have the same DNA as Jesus. Each one of us receives our life and power from Jesus who is our head.

Through meeting on Sunday's , in small group or in one to one discipleship - **we are all working arm in arm encouraging one another in our growth** - looking out for one another – nurturing and ripening each other. Fully developed, fully aligned in Christ Jesus as we grow together.

### 1.2 Growing together into the body that is the church

Ephesians 14-15 - **Speaking the truth in love - we are to grow up as a whole body** - when each part is working properly the body grows in love.

The scripture says when each part is working properly - **are you working properly** ? - is it your desire to see the church grow together in the grace of God? Don't measure growth just by outside - but inner growth - how obedient are we? How are we using our gifts to bless the body ? How much am I willing to serve the lord in serving my brothers and sister ?

**How much am I prepared to sacrifice my resources?** - internal quality not quantity. Is this part of our DNA ?- We are dependent on the head. Human body - brain connected to the nervous system - brain is centre of our thoughts - the origin of control – the smallest nerve in tip of finger can be traced back to the brain - our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made. Our joints work together and fit together wonderfully.

**It all fits together** - there is communication throughout our bodies - all connected and works well - unless there is damage, or detachment. This is also true in the church – the body of Christ is also fearfully and wonderfully made - we are connected to the head by the Holy Spirit nervous system. DNA flows through the whole body. Is the big toe more important than the eye - all benefit because the eye is clear - we are all needed - we all need one another We are reliant on one another so much that if there is a disturbance in on area of the body the pain is felt everywhere. When one of our Deacon's tore his tendon it effected greatly what he could do. How do we react to injury to the body ?

**John Stott said the church is not like a bus** - with one driver and lots of passengers. What should the church be likened to ? A rowing boat - used in the Oxford Cambridge boat race: the cox is steering and motivating – but the boat is going no-where unless all the rowers get stuck in and get rowing - all must be in sync. The power must be consistent for the boat to go straight. Are we all rowing for Jesus in Whitstable Community Church? We don't all have the same role. We all need to be filling our functions and roles in the body.

**If one member not fulfilling gifts or roles then the body will be weak and incomplete.** We need to look for those who are struggling and not moving in their gifting. We need to encourage them to get beside them and help them to be restored back into fellowship.

**We need to go after the one that is struggling and lovingly restore those who might be lonely, forgotten, run down, and worn out** - we will all fall into this at some point in our Christian life - we may feel weak tired and strained. We will all need care at some point - the body is designed to self heal - with mutual care. 1 Thess 12 :36 When one member suffers the whole body suffers. We have responsibility to look out and grow together. Are we growing tother into the head that is Christ? Are we growing into a community or have we stopped developing our ability to love within the church? Christians can stop growing - we can lose our desire to grow - it can be stunted through lack of desire or sin. Sin separates us from the head - if this is multiplied through the church then the whole church is affected. Are we looking out for those who are struggling ?

**We want to build one another up into love - what an amazing privilege** it is to be part of the church - a beacon of light and hope - to the glory of the name of Jesus. What an honour to be part of the loving, growing caring body of God here in the church.