

## In, Up and Out by Glenn Lucas

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In, up and out. That's the process Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Anthem, Arizona, uses to move people to a greater level of maturity in the faith. The goal is first to get people into a relationship with the faith community at Cross of Christ. Once people are **in**, the goal then is to grow them **up** in the faith as disciples of Jesus. Leaders at Cross of Christ anticipate that maturing believers in Christ will then move **out** into ministry. It is an intentionally simple process but it is not simplistic.

The ministry team at Cross of Christ designs its ministry around this process of moving people in, up and out. Each program or ministry must fit into one of the areas of movement. The beauty of such a process is that it focuses the ministry and it forces the ministry to clarify what Andy Stanley calls "The Win" in his book *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*. The process is also measurable all along the way. Leaders can measure how successful the ministry is in getting people "in" and then moving them "up" and then "out." If they discover that they are successful in getting people "in" and "up" but not "out," they can evaluate the ministries designed to move people "out" and make adjustments as needed. The process allows for flexibility, while maintaining the overall focus on making mature disciples.

The process Cross of Christ uses is consistent with processes Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger describe in their book *Simple Church*. Rainer and Geiger studied more than 400 evangelical churches to see what made some successful in reaching and maturing people in the faith, while others struggled and saw little or no growth. They discovered that the more successful churches had developed simple processes to make disciples. The struggling churches had no process, or had complicated processes, to make disciples.

Rainer and Geiger provide an expanded definition of a simple church:

*A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).*

Note the four elements in this definition: clarity, movement, alignment and focus. All four are necessary in a simple church and they have a simple flow.

Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus

Too many churches have too many programs cluttering up their ministry. They lack clarity, movement, alignment and focus. The sought-after outcomes are unclear, so no adequate measure can be applied to their success or failure. The result is often a frenetic and competitive ministry team defining success solely on the basis of how much of the church's budget they have procured for their ministry area or how many bodies they get through the door in their ministry area. In a simple church, there is no clutter of programming. Each ministry area clearly fits into a process that moves people along a logical series of steps. Each step builds on the previous step and leads to the next. As the definition says, anything that does not fit into the process is abandoned.

We live in a complex society and people long for things that are simple. The church that is able to embrace and execute a simple process, in which the Holy Spirit can work through the means of grace, to make mature disciples of Jesus will experience health and vibrancy in its ministry.