



GENEVA PUSH

[GENEVAPUSH.COM/PLANTINGAUSTRALIA](http://GENEVAPUSH.COM/PLANTINGAUSTRALIA)

# ECOSYSTEMS AND PATHWAYS



The context we plant in shapes the kind of “plumbing” we build. It shapes the length and style of talks, the bible translation, the outreach events, the style of studies, size of groups, how we train leaders, and how all these things relate to each other. The context shapes the culture and constructs of our church. So, as we “design” this church from the ground up, we must consider each of these parts not independently, but together. That is, as an ecosystem.

**The word ecosystem evokes an image around the interconnectedness of church life.** Ecosystems are communities of living organisms, interacting as a system in their physical environment. Every part of an ecosystem is essential, interconnected, and interdependent. Each part feeds on every other part, so any one part impacts the whole ecosystem. The lack of health in one part results in a reduction of health in the whole, even if other parts are healthy in and of themselves. Ecosystems are complex, interconnected and interdependent.

For example; when most church plants start, there's a dynamic and an excitement that means new people are integrated quickly and easily. They can visit church on Sunday and join a small group on Monday. However, as groups grow close over time, fatigue might set in if someone new joins the group every second week. It's not that the group doesn't want to grow and welcome new people. It's that sharing your life with the group, while not knowing who will be in it that week, can be daunting. So, while quick integration happens at one stage of a church's life, it won't always work. At every stage of church life, one part of the ecosystem (welcoming/integration) needs to be considered in light of the impact on other parts (small groups). This is not a question of structural efficiency. Ecosystem thinking is about discipleship and relationships.

**Thinking of church life as an ecosystem pushes us to consider how each part interacts with each other to mature the saints, and reach the lost.**

It also pushes us to consider the impact of one structure or decision on another, and change as necessary for the health of the whole community. In a church plant we get to plan this from the ground up.

At all stages of church life we need to keep monitoring whether our church (as a whole ecosystem) is effectively engaging in God's mission, and our local vision.

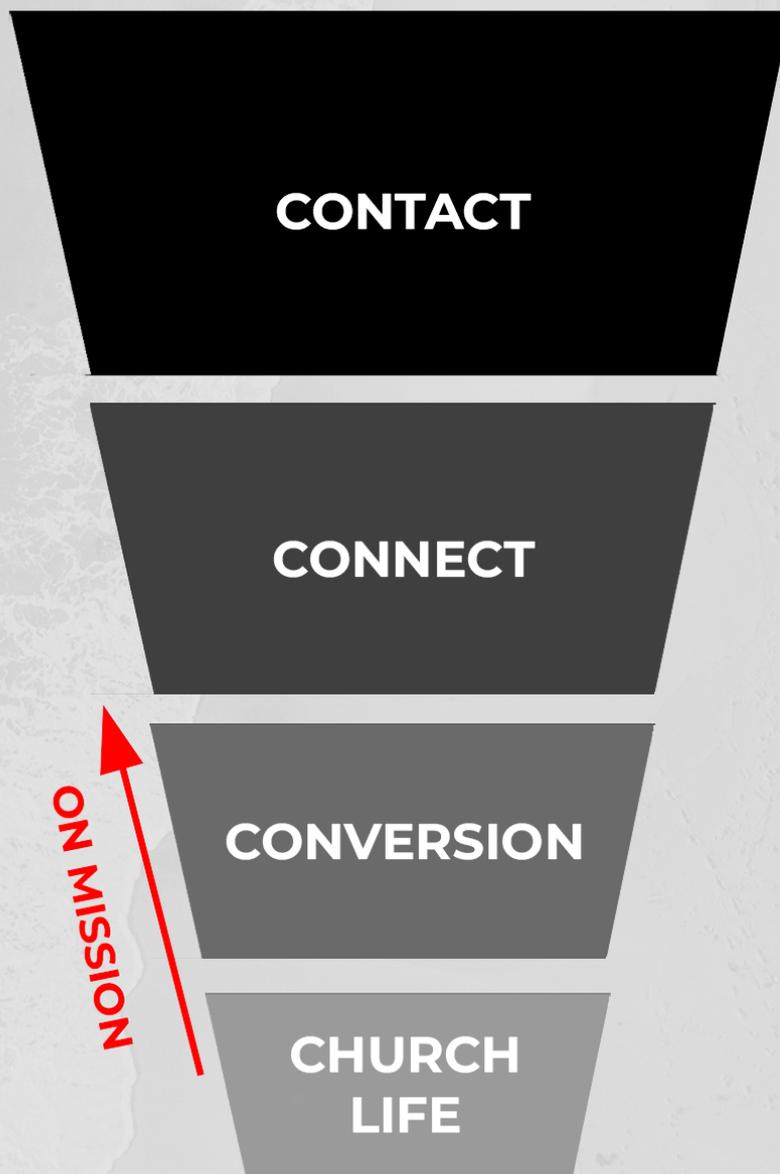


Consider this quote from Thom Rainer in Simple Church:

*'Churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the kingdom...conversely, churches without a process, or with a complicated process, for making disciples are floundering.'*

The plumbing we use to mature and mobilise people for mission is two things at once - a discipleship pathway and a mission funnel. We see this in the diagram below.

So, are you thinking about your plumbing in terms of an ecosystem? Are you providing pathways for your whole church to be matured together as they engage in mission?



[GENEVAPUSH.COM/PLANTINGAUSTRALIA](https://GENEVAPUSH.COM/PLANTINGAUSTRALIA)

© 2022 Geneva Push®

44 Margaret St, Sydney.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version® 2011.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of Geneva Push®.