

# Equipping churches create structures to sustain this ministry

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/the-equipping-church>

Equipping people is a complex business. Structures can help to facilitate or hinder ministry. What is a help for the first generation often becomes a hindrance for the next, because energy ends up serving and resourcing the structure, but not necessarily serving the originally intended function. Form should always follow function and not the other way around. The dream that births any structure needs revisiting regularly to see if it is still being pursued or if that vision has been lost or distorted.

At the same time, any successful attempt at ministry or mission also needs structures to maintain and facilitate its sustainability. Perhaps the most elaborate example of this in terms of churches involved in workplace ministry is the structure that Katherine Leary Alsdorf and her team (now led by David Kim) have developed at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York. Their Faith and Work Centre includes a team of staff members who each head up different areas of ministry such as their Arts Ministry, Entrepreneurship Initiative, and Gotham Fellowship intern programme. The staff also co-ordinates the leadership of eighteen different Vocational Groups, each of which also includes a number of sub groups. A number of other churches also have staff who specialise in resourcing and supporting those who are unemployed or looking for work.

The challenge for churches just beginning on this journey is deciding which structural elements are important to start with. The Imagine Church Project suggests beginning with the formation of a core team. This helps provide continuity and maintain adequate funding and other resources. But it can slowly diminish the vitality and vision of the church's workplace programs if it becomes too bureaucratic. The challenge is to create an institutionalized centre while maintaining the flexibility to engage a younger generation to build their own ministries.

## A MEGACHURCH APPROACH

Saddleback Community Church provides resources every week for small groups that serve some 4000 Christians who meet regularly to discuss biblical perspectives on faith and work issues. These are in addition to Saddleback's hundreds of regular home groups. One church member is contracted part-time to prepare studies for these groups. They also run a website and send out weekly Workplace Wisdom emails for encouragement and to stimulate reflection.[33]