

STORIES

F R O M T H E

LOCAL CONTEXT



The power of gathering: a church rooted in mission

Gathering as an intentional space for encounter with God and with one another – and a church that gathers is a church that goes. By Henry C Ohakah

At Mountsorrel Baptist Church (MBC) in Leicestershire, gathering is not just something we do, it is central to who we are. It is where faith is nurtured, relationships are strengthened, and the mission of God's kingdom is lived out. Worship and fellowship do more than sustain believers; they shape them, sending them out to live as disciples of Christ. Here we believe that coming together is not a routine or tradition, it is renewal. It is where Christ meets us, transforms lives, and builds

communities, and not only within the church but far beyond its walls.

My personal journey has shown me the depth of this truth. Born and bred in Nigeria, and being someone with a strong awareness of reverse mission, I have seen firsthand how gathering is dynamic and participatory. Many churches across the Global South live out their faith in ways that are deeply communal, marked by vibrant worship, prayer and shared meals

that make faith an integral part of daily life. This experience has shaped my ministry here in the UK, where I've led churches and encouraged them towards moving away from attendance-driven models and rediscovering gathering as an intentional space for encounter with God and with one another.

One Sunday, while preaching, I paused and asked the congregation a simple but important question: "Why do you come to church? Why do

we gather?" As people shared their thoughts, I listened carefully. But later, as I reflected, a deeper question stirred in my heart - what does it truly mean to be a gathered people? That conviction led me to organise what I called Vision Sunday, a time to share ministry ideas and invite the church into something more than just attendance. I challenged us to move beyond *consumer Christianity* and step into a way of gathering that was active, relational and deeply transformative. One vision that stood out was Breakfast Fellowship, a simple yet meaningful way to connect over hospitality, prayer, and relational evangelism.

The idea was embraced immediately and, together, we planned our first breakfast event. On the day, something remarkable happened. A visitor, not yet a Christian, felt so moved by the warmth and presence of the community that he asked for prayer for his sick father. By the time the morning ended, people didn't just appreciate the vision, they were eager to make Breakfast Fellowship a regular gathering.

A few months later, we held our second Breakfast Fellowship, and the atmosphere was electric. Everyone played a part, from preparing food, praying, serving

and ensuring that no one was left out. The following morning, a member said to me, "Henry, you did not give us enough time to pray through the topics!"

Another person quickly responded, "Henry, if people are asking for more time to pray, that is a good sign!" And during our deacons' meeting the next month, this question resurfaced, prompting one deacon to joke, "It's always good when people ask for more prayer rather than more food!" Moments like these reaffirm what true gathering is. It is a Spirit-led and participatory community where faith is not simply observed but actively lived out.

Gathering is not just an idea for us at MBC. It is something we live out, shaping who we are as a community. Recently, we had the joy of welcoming a couple into membership and celebrating the dedication of their newborn child. The sense of belonging was so real that another visiting couple, attending for only the second time, felt moved to request membership that very morning. They are now beginning their journey of discipleship, growing in faith and stepping fully into the life of the church.

Likewise, not long ago, a man came forward seeking baptism,

embracing a new chapter in his walk with Christ. His baptism is planned for the coming months, but his journey has already begun through prayer, teaching, and meaningful fellowship with others. Moments like these remind us that gathering is never passive. It is an opportunity for transformation, a space where faith grows, lives are shaped, and people step more fully into their calling.

So, what happens after baptism? Gathering is where believers are nurtured, challenged and sent out in mission. The early Church in Acts 2:42-47 did not grow through individual devotion alone but through a shared commitment to prayer, teaching and fellowship. A church that gathers is a church that goes. We do not come together simply to receive but to be equipped for the work of Christ in the world. At a time when church attendance is increasing, we must ensure our gatherings remain mission-focused and are shaping believers into active disciples, transforming hearts, and preparing God's people for service. Gathering should never be passive. It is an intentional act of renewal, strengthening our commitment to both local and global mission.

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