

thriving youth ministry in smaller churches

By Rick Chromey and Stephanie Caro

Reviewed by Ruth Hassall

'In 21st century culture small is the new tall. Miniature is the new giant.'

So declares the author of this book. And not only that but small is actually the norm in most churches across the UK and the US. However, we only tend to hear the stories of the great mega youth ministries.

Having grown up in a small village church, and then served as a volunteer in the youth ministry of that church I came to this book with interest. Whilst not offering anything particularly ground-breakingly new, Chromey does give fresh insight in the role of the youth minister struggling with a small youth group.

Throughout the book Chromey focuses on the positive aspects of having a smaller group and offers a new perspective on how to measure the success of a ministry.

'Too many times we misunderstand "success" in life and ministry. Too often we focus on the splash (size, noise, immediate impact) that we make when in reality we should reflect on the reach of the ripples.'

His premise is that the smaller church is the perfect place to develop disciples, deepen learning, create change and unleash leaders. The fact is that although you may only have a few young people in your group, you have a phenomenal opportunity to invest in them and disciple them well. Often those that have that level of investment go on to become influential leaders, and those willing to invest in the lives of others – the ripples go out far and wide.

Chromey also suggests that the smaller you are, the more possibility you possess to navigate the obstacles and the changes that impact our current culture. Decisions and changes are able to happen quickly so we can respond in time to the things going on around us.

Despite his positive outlook on smaller youth ministries, Chromey isn't naive about some of the challenges of working in that context. Throughout the book he offers creative and practical ideas on how to deal with the perceived limitations and challenges that a small ministry creates.

He also gives realistic advice on how to recruit and enthuse volunteers from a small pool of people who are often already overstretched.

I think this is a really useful book, demonstrating real insight into what life is like in smaller churches, and the reflections and comments written by Stephanie Caro ground the advice and suggestions given.

If you find yourself leading in a smaller church, why not get hold of this book and read it with those that you lead with, and be encouraged in the unique opportunities that you have?

