

REFOCUSSED

IF A CHURCH IS NOT A TRAINING CHURCH, IT IS A DYING CHURCH. IF WE DO NOT EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION TO CONTINUE IN GOSPEL MINISTRY, THEN THE MESSAGE DIES WITH US.

An Artizo apprentice receives training and mentorship from Artizo Trainers as well as from the rector of the training church. In this article, Rev. Ben Roberts, Rev. Sean Love and Artizo Chair Lesley Bentley speak about six different aspects of a training church.

BEN ROBERTS

If a church is not a training church, it is a dying church. If we do not empower the next generation to continue in gospel ministry, then the message dies with us. This is why the New Testament calls all churches to equip and train people with the gospel who can, in turn, equip and train others. 2 Timothy 2:2 puts it like this, “so that we might guard the good deposit of the gospel, and entrust it to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.” Notice that this call goes beyond teaching the gospel, to entrusting the gospel to others who can do the same. In doing so, the church faithfully proclaims and preserves the gospel, generation to generation, until the coming of Christ.

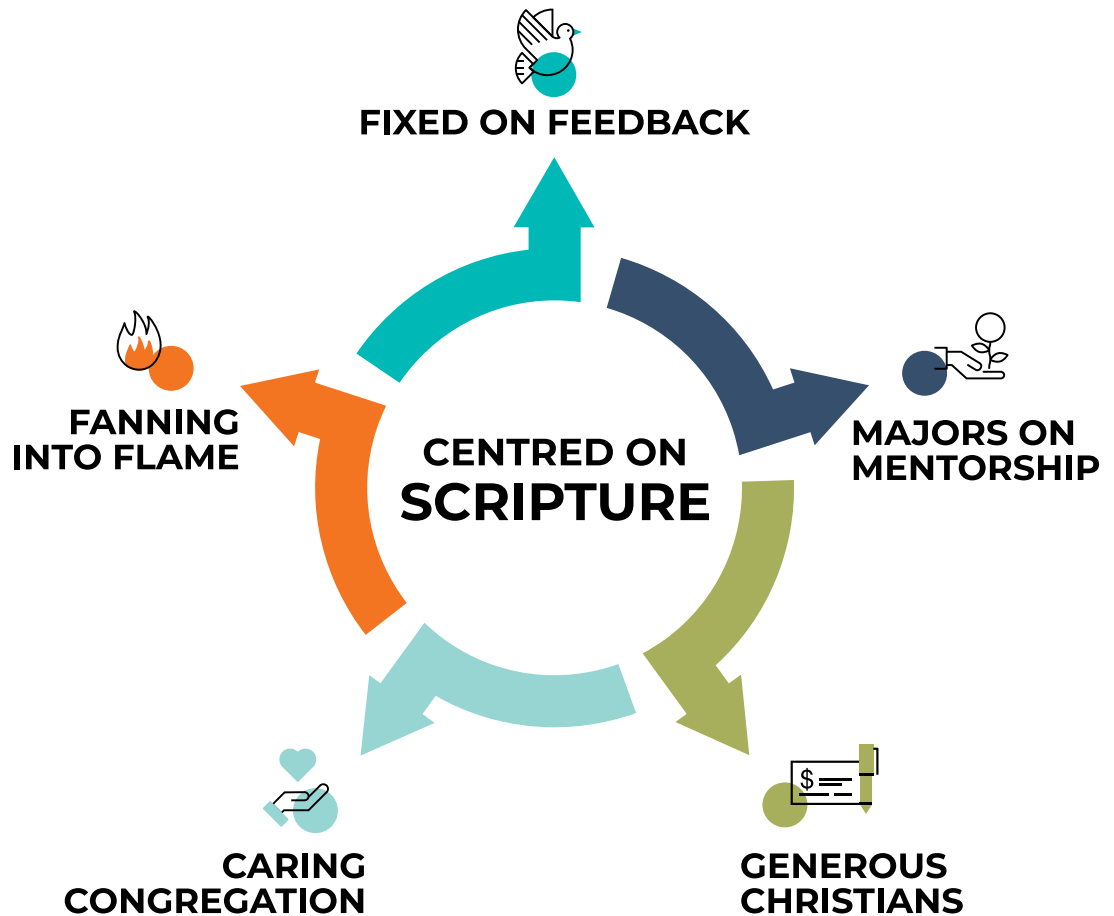
Where do we start? We’ve all heard of training hospitals, where medical students learn to be doctors. So what does it mean to be a training

church, where apprentices are made into ministers of the gospel?

If we look again to 2 Timothy, Paul explains how a training church functions. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 he reiterates and expands his message of guarding and entrusting the gospel: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

This passage has one of the most important occurrences of the Greek word Artizo, our namesake. In fact, it’s there twice – both the words “complete” and “equipped” have Artizo behind them. The sense here is full readiness, lacking for nothing needed in the task. Like a carpenter with all the necessary tools at hand to build the house, or a teacher with their education degree, teaching ability and content to deliver. The man of God is fully ready for the ministry of the word of God. **But how are they made ready in a training church?**

DIAGRAM_ SIX ASPECTS OF A TRAINING CHURCH



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1. Centred on Scripture

The first and central thing to notice is that Scripture is at the centre of the New Testament's training strategy. The training church knows that Scripture is God breathed – a word that captures the idea that God has spoken it. 'Scripture' means the words God spoke have been written down. So 'scripture' is not just the past revelation of God in writing, but the way God continues to speak and save us today. Scripture, therefore, must be at the centre of our training strategy, and its teaching and explaining must be our goal. This means that the man of God is not fully equipped by their understanding of business strategy, leadership technique, or even their public speaking prowess. There are all kinds of things we might want Artizo to teach us, and they might make us wise, but it wouldn't be salvation. If we want to be a training church, we must be a Bible church, a gospel entrusting church. This means that our primary aim is helping our ministry apprentices receive the good deposit, and pass it on to others – perhaps sacrificing our love for rhetoric or charisma for a love of clarity. **The training church measures success by faithfulness in understanding and communicating God's word.**

2. Fixed on feedback

In a training church, God's word isn't merely the goal and measure of our faithfulness, it is also the means of formation – put to use in the work of giving feedback. The word of God does the work of ministry as it is deployed into our community. It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. Yes, the word must not just be known or valued, but applied. In order for that to happen, we must be a community that embraces challenge and growth. Reproof and correction are expected and necessary in this work. The training church is not scandalized by failure or baby-steps but ready to step alongside and empower. We need to provide people opportunity to stretch and grow, by giving them the opportunities to practice real ministry. We must also have the courage to give real critique. In a training church, we must know how to gently and helpfully say "Brother, sister, I don't think that was quite right – and here's why. Here's what the word of God says about it." **We must be a community willing to hear such critique, that models humble and charitable engagement.** We often use the word feedback to capture this idea. It's a readiness to put ourselves under the rule of God's word together, and to encourage each other as we grow – a mark of all

Christians, but especially those being trained and equipped.

3. Majors on mentorship

A training church is also marked by sustained mentorship. 2 Timothy 3:14 says “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it”. In 2 Timothy, training and entrusting happens within the context of deep relationship.

Timothy doesn't listen to Paul's sermons online, he is mentored by him in person. He knows him to the degree that Paul can say to him: “you've seen my life, my example, my suffering – now imitate me.” There is no way to fast-forward this sort of formation. It's relational work: modelling, encouraging, and correcting, as well as listening, praying, and walking together with someone. Pastors help to form pastors, iron sharpens iron. This concept of modelling also extends to the whole community of faith. Timothy learned from Paul, yet before that his mother and grandmother were his spiritual mentors. Our faith is inculcated by example, and taught over long years by many people, in the context of intentional relationship – primarily from older men to younger men, and older women to younger women. Artizo has a long history of working to foster these kinds of relationships, and without them, training is impossible. **A training church is a place where the whole body knows that we succeed when those who we are equipping receive and replicate the ministry of the word.**

We've come to realize at Artizo that we don't exist only to train ministry apprentices. As important as that is, we also exist to train churches, because it requires the whole church to carry out the New Testament imperative to teach and train others. In what ways might you and your church join in the work of training?

SEAN LOVE

How does a training pastor work with an apprentice? And second, how can a congregation help train apprentices?

4. Fanning into flame

At St. John's Richmond we have been privileged to train five Artizo apprentices over ten years. As a training pastor, my joyful task is to remind apprentices to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you....” Apprentices come into a training church possessing many God-given gifts, often surpassing those of the pastor! But reminding an apprentice to fan into flame the gift of God means helping them hone raw gifts (both natural and spiritual) into the sound pattern of the ministry

of God's word. The training pastor is a mentor and modeller but also cultivates opportunities in large group, small group, and one-to-one settings where apprentices can exercise gifts, and build healthy dependence on God and his word. As the apprentice learns to rightly handle the word of truth in diverse contexts, they will fan into flame the gifts they have been given.


The training pastor is a servant of the apprentice. There can be no room to fan gifts into flame if the training pastor is stingy with training opportunities, feedback, and communication. Regular meetings are essential, where the Bible is opened, planning and debriefing happens, and prayer is shared together. Over a typical two year training period, I seek to challenge an apprentice in two ways: from the familiar to the novel, and from basics to broad. So, first, we encourage gifts to grow by placing the apprentice in ministry situations that may be new to them, so that the learning curve will continue. Second, while the basics of the ministry of the word are never left behind, over time we also want to help the apprentice develop a training mindset, and to think strategically about gospel ministry.

A big part of being a training pastor is transparency. This is essential to mentorship, but there are many ways to withdraw: professionalism, pain, envy, and busyness are reasons why a training pastor will find it hard to be vulnerable with an apprentice. I've learned to be aware of these dangers. I've learned that too much communication is better than not enough. As a training pastor, I need to be transparent about my weaknesses and my struggles, but also my joys and the things God is teaching me. As the Apostle Paul did with Timothy (and over a hundred other named co-labourers in the New Testament), I seek to share with my apprentice the cost of suffering for the gospel, the unpopularity of guarding it, the hard work of rightly handling the word of truth, and the inevitable joy of witnessing the power of God. The apprentice and the training pastor become partners in the gospel, working as a ministry team. As the apprentice is mentored, the training pastor is encouraged!


5. A caring congregation

How can a congregation help train apprentices? The question makes an assumption: it's not just the training pastor that trains – the congregation is an integral part of raising up the next generation. A training congregation cannot take a consumer approach to training or mentoring. The apprentice isn't there to be cheap labour, or to be given the tasks no one else wants to do. Rather, the training church serves the apprentice, and commits to intentionally training them. We are clear about why we work with Artizo, and the environment we must cultivate so apprentices can flourish. Each of our

THE AUTHORS

 Ben Roberts went to Wheaton College for his undergraduate degree in Theology. After graduation, Ben worked as the youth minister in an Episcopal Church. He received Artizo training while working on his MDiv at Regent College. Ben became a curate at St. John's Richmond in 2011 and was ordained in the Anglican Communion on February 5th, 2012. He worked at St. John's Richmond under the mentorship of Rev. Sean Love for seven years. Ben is the Director of Training at The Artizo Institute and a member of The Artizo's Board of Directors.

 Rev. Sean Love, since starting the St. John's Richmond church plant, has fulfilled the role of the training Rector to five Artizo apprentices. Sean was an Artizo trainer before starting St. John's Richmond. Sean is also a member of The Artizo's Board of Directors.

 Lesley Bentley is the Chair of The Artizo Institute Board of Directors.



Artizo apprentices was with us at least two years, spending at least 100 Sundays with the training church, so it's natural they will get to know, and be known by, the congregation quite well.

Over the years we have adopted a 'training posture' at St. John's Richmond. The congregation actually becomes the church home for our apprentices. In this way the training experience is realistic: we are training Christ's under-shepherds of his flock, and the flock and the shepherd know one another. Nothing is gained when a congregation is unconcerned or neglects an apprentice; so we spend time in our fellowship to embrace them and celebrate what God is doing in their life. We are honest with them and give feedback in many different ways so that their gifts can be sharpened. The apprentice is part of the staff and leadership teams so they are included in most of what is going on in the church. It helps that the congregation has a non-anxious posture so that if the apprentice does something sub-optimal, there is much grace and patience. We expect that apprentices will be "unfinished", and so we must be patient, accepting, loving, and praying for them.

The bitter-sweet part about Artizo is that apprentices eventually move on. Part of St. John's Richmond's mindset is that we are investing in this person and then releasing them into further kingdom work. We try to keep a kingdom mindset, rather than obsess only about what we think is best for us. For example, our latest "release" was sending Ben Roberts with his family to be the new Director of Training at Artizo. It was not easy to see them leave after they had been with us for so long! But we see the divine poetry in Ben's new role in Artizo, and although we grieve a little we are very grateful for the part we were able to play in Ben's own training. One thing we know from the Apostle Paul is that he never completely lets go of his 'beloved children' in the faith. He continues to write to them, and is always ready for a visit.

The training church's role will stop formally, but we continue to follow every apprentice's progress, be grateful for the gift they have been to us and their continued service to Christ.

LESLEY BENTLEY

Last but not least, the congregation of a training church needs to understand that donating to Artizo is what enables the New Testament imperative to move forward.

6. Generous Christians

Besides encouraging, accepting and praying for Artizo apprentices, a faithful congregation regularly donates to The Artizo Institute to ensure that the proclamation of the gospel will continue. We want to see more and more ANiC congregations engaged in raising up the next generation of leaders by attending the Artizo fund-raising events and donate to Artizo themselves.

Canon David Short said in his recent talk at an Artizo event: "We are in a new situation. Within the Anglican Network we now have 70 new churches in Canada. We want to fill Canada with the teaching of God's word. St. John's has attached itself to Artizo by adopting Rev. Ben Roberts to our staff because our strategy is to refocus and renew the approach to training. To be a training church is not just a good idea. Nor is it just the initial vision which impelled Artizo. It is a death-defying mission."

Thanks to a small community of donors, The Artizo Institute, since its inception in 1998, has trained 99 apprentices, and 81 of the graduates are in paid ministry. But the need is great. We have churches lined up to start working with Artizo and take on apprentices. To grow Artizo's donor base means that we will remain faithful to the New Testament imperative of entrusting the gospel to faithful men "who will be able to teach others also". **END**

Artizo aims to renew the culture of churches in Canada to effect the New Testament imperative to proclaim the gospel and entrust it to future generations.

Artizo provides an intensive hands-on 2-year apprenticeship program. The comprehensive curriculum focuses on mentoring and equipping future ministers and leaders to faithfully proclaim the gospel and in turn entrust it to others.

Artizo is solely funded by donations.

www.artizo.org