Since the 1960s Australia has experienced a significant demographic shift as large numbers of people have moved from rural areas and large cities to take up residence in small coastal towns. The resulting populations have a number of distinctive features which make them both a challenge and an opportunity for the Church as it seeks to minister effectively. The underlying proposition of this thesis is that since there are distinctive demographic features of these towns, and since the church is called to minister effectively, there may well be approaches or ministry philosophies which enable the church to be more effective in these populations. Distinctive Populations Using data from the 2001 census a comparison between the Australian national figures and those of coastal towns between Newcastle and Tweed Heads showed that overall the population of the coastal towns was older, less formally educated, had lower income levels, more mobile, more likely to be Australian citizens, more likely to be married or divorced, more likely to describe themselves as Christian and members of the Anglican Church than the Australian average. The Survey With the assistance of the National Church Life Survey, thirty churches in coastal towns between Newcastle and Kingsclife were contacted. These churches (Anglican and Protestant) were those which had had the highest number of ‘newcomers’ in the 2001 National Church Life Survey. NCLS wrote to these churches on my behalf and invited them to contact me if they were prepared to participate in my study. In the end I interviewed ordained and lay leaders as well as members of six churches. There were a number of features common to these churches including: the ordained leaders had what might be called orthodox theological views; the ordained and lay leaders were clear about the vision and direction of the church; the ordained and lay leaders were in agreement as to the role of the ordained leader - that role was clearly leadership; the welcoming nature of the congregation is vital; and the use of contemporary music and worship style. The Mission of the Church Whilst the mission of the church has been seen in different ways over the past two thousand years, it is clear that the central theme of the teaching and practice of Jesus Christ was the Kingdom or Reign of God. By his teaching and very powerfully through his actions Jesus demonstrated the reality of the new in-breaking reality. The early church was clear that it saw itself as being sent by Jesus to continue his mission of proclaiming the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit. Effective Church Given that the mission of the church is to focus on the Kingdom or Reign of God, it is important that this be done in an effective a way as possible. One of the challenges in this is to determine what 'effective' means for the church. For some, being effective means numerical growth in church attenders. For others, being effective means being a ‘healthy’ church. My conclusion is that being effective, whilst not dismissing church growth or church health, means an attitude, and that is, being focused on proclaiming the reality of the Kingdom of God. As the church is more focussed on this task, it is effective. Being Effective in Rapidly Growing Coastal Towns There seem to be a number of challenges facing the church in rapidly growing coastal towns as the church seeks to focus on the Kingdom of God. If the kingdom is good news for the poor, the question then is: who are the poor of coastal towns? An immediate need in coastal towns is community for those who are newly arrived, or poor, or otherwise on the margins of the society. The church needs to be a welcoming and inclusive place for those in need, and a place which actually helps people with their physical poverty. The church also needs to confront its own operating model in order to be effective. Too often the church is focused on its own survival and not on the kingdom. The church in its local mode seems like a religious small business. Focus on the ‘growth of the business’ may well lead to a loss of focus on the kingdom. For the church to be effective in rapidly growing coastal towns the church must take seriously the culture of those towns and seek to express its focus on the kingdom in ways that bring good news to the reality of those communities.