

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

A church which goes to others



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What examples have you seen of church communities going to others, rather than hoping they might come to us?



Understanding the information (25 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

At the heart of good mission is a fundamental attitude in which we want the mission to shape the church, rather than our shape of church to dictate the mission.



This means putting the needs of others before our own in order to bless them. In the way that Christ left His place of power to become human and come to us, Paul gave up his rights, becoming a “slave to everyone”, and said, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23).

While potentially risky and uncomfortable, Andrew Roberts tells a wonderful story of a church that was willing to abandon its comfort zone to go to others:

“A group of Muslims bought a piece of land next to Heartsong Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, to build a mosque and community centre. The church thought hard about how to react. They put up a big notice outside telling them as their neighbours that they were welcome. The Muslims were so surprised and pleased they went to talk to the minister, who asked what his church could do to help them. They asked if they could rent a little room as temporary accommodation- he let them have the biggest room they had.

When they had a church barbecue, they bought halal meat so they could invite the Muslims. They began to work together on neighbourhood projects to help the poor. The story was covered on TV in a 90 second video. A few days later the minister had a phone call from Kashmir.

The caller said that he and his friends had been sitting in a cafe watching CNN when the story about the Muslims and the Christians came on. They were speechless when they saw it because they had been told that all Americans hated Muslims. They did not think Christians could get on with Muslims.

They talked about what they could do in response to what they had seen and decided that they should take care of the little Christian Church in their community. They went and cleaned the church inside and out, washing off the offensive graffiti which had been daubed there. They made the minister a promise that, for the rest of their lives, they would take care of the Christians in their community as the people at Heartsong had taken care of their Muslim neighbours.”

Over the last couple of decades there have been many church initiatives which have at their heart the vision that, rather than expecting people to come to us, we bless them by being prepared to shape the way we do things as much as possible around going to them.

The report “Mission-Shaped Church” (2004) tracked this shift, noting that a majority of people in the UK now have no prior church background. It asked the question, “What makes a church?” and argued that much like the life of discipleship, church happens wherever people are OF something bigger than themselves, look UP to God in worship and look IN by being in relationship.

Crucially as well, church happens when we are sent on the journey OUT – the meaning of being an apostolic (sent) church.

Across the country, there is a growth of “new Christian communities”, which start with a desire to be a blessing, asking questions such as, “Where is God at work and how can we join in?” and “How might our life be shaped around the needs of others?”

While they all share this common vision to start with going out to others in blessing, the way new Christian communities can be shaped is very different. A few terms have emerged to describe what this might look like.

Churches begin congregations in new areas, largely based on an existing church’s way of operating, and still in relationship to that church. This is **church planting**.

Churches start a new form of church that emerges from activities or ways of life in our culture and engage primarily with those who do not go to church – for example, church based on crafts, sports, the outdoors, café environments. These are called **fresh expressions**.

Groups within churches start to gather, regularly, with a balance between up, in and out. They will start by identifying an area or network they want to bless, and then organize activities and time together, which includes worship and fellowship. They might be part of a larger congregation. These are known as **missional communities**.

Along the same lines as missional communities, churches may give opportunities for people in very small numbers (from 2-10) the opportunity to be a blessing to a group of people or area. They will gradually build Christian community around that activity. It is small, flexible, informal in style, and has the intention to expand its blessing by establishing new groups around an area of blessing others when possible. This is called **micro-planting**.

Other initiatives are **resourcing churches**, which simply means churches that plant other churches; **revitalisations**, in which a small congregation will welcome people from another church to help build up its life again, and new congregations in which an existing church begins a new worshipping service over and above any existing worshipping service – this could be on the same premises or within the parish.

While some of these new Christian community definitions overlap, what is clear is that whereas the days when people “come to us” might be largely gone, where church communities start to look outwards and think of how to go to others, there is often significant growth.

Discuss: Which of these models might work where you are?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23 in which Paul describes the attitude of mission.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about people?
How does this passage call me to obey God?
What might I do in response to this this week?

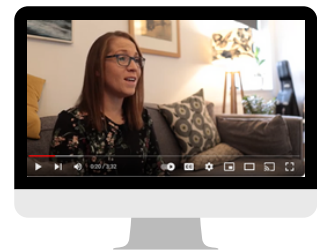


Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/zL2RH4t-3AM>

What struck you as important in the video?



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, “What might God be showing me and how might I respond?” They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, “Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?”



Group prayer (5 minutes)

You call us to leave all things,
you who had nothing.
You call us to be servants,
you who came to serve.
You call us to share the load,
you who carried our sin.
You call us to speak your word,
you who lived it daily.
You call us to be followers,
and in your strength, we will.
Amen.

From

[https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_mission_service.htm#gsc.ta
b=0](https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_mission_service.htm#gsc.tab=0)





A church which goes to others

At the heart of good mission is a fundamental attitude in which we want the mission to shape the church, rather than our shape of church to dictate the mission.

This means putting the needs of others before our own in order to bless them. In the way that Christ left His place of power to become human and come to us, Paul gave up his rights, becoming a “slave to everyone”, and said, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23).

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MOVING FROM “COME TO US” TO “GO TO OTHERS”:

DIFFERENT FORMS OF MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH



What shapes a church?

Much like the life of discipleship, church happens wherever people are OF something bigger than themselves, look UP to God in worship and look IN by being in relationship.

Crucially as well, church happens when we are sent on the journey OUT – the meaning of being an apostolic (sent) church.

New Christian communities start with a desire to be a blessing, asking questions such as, “Where is God at work and how can we join in?” and “How might our life be shaped around the needs of others?”

The way new Christian communities can be shaped can be very different, according to context and situation.

Church Plants

are congregations in new areas, largely based on an existing church’s way of operating, and still in relationship to that church.

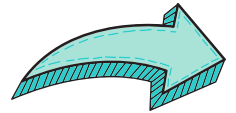


Fresh Expressions

are new forms of church that emerges from activities or ways of life in our culture and engage primarily with those who do not go to church – for example, church based on crafts, sports, the outdoors, café environments.

Missional Communities

are groups within churches who gather with a balance between up, in and out. They start by identifying an area or network they want to bless, and then organize activities and time together, which includes worship and fellowship. They might be part of a larger congregation.



Micro-plants

are along the same lines as missional communities. Small numbers (from 2-10) are resourced to be a blessing to a group of people or area. They will gradually build Christian community around that activity or group. They are small, flexible, informal in style, and have the intention to expand by establishing new groups around an area of blessing others when possible.

Resource churches are churches that plant other churches.

Revitalisations are small congregations who welcome people (and leadership) from another church to help build up their life again.

New congregations are new worshipping services over and above any existing worshipping service within a church – this could be on the same premises or within the parish.



While some of these new Christian community definitions overlap, what is clear is that whereas the days when people “come to us” might be largely gone, where church communities start to look outwards and think of how to go to others, there is often significant growth.