



How to ...

Start a 'Fresh Expression'

Starting a Fresh Expression is about a 21st century way of following Jesus

Begin simply by asking God to help you:

- find a friend in your passion, network, neighbourhood, workplace or where you spend much of your time;
- discover a simple way to love people round you;
- deepen friendships with them;
- share your faith;
- start a new Christian community where you are.

Once you have found one or more people to travel with you, this guide describes four pieces of kit to help you on your journey:

- a compass to point you in the right direction
- a map to help plan your route
- food for the journey
- the address of the destination

I. Kit One: A compass

A compass will steer you in the right direction. When initiating a Fresh Expression, it comprises four values:

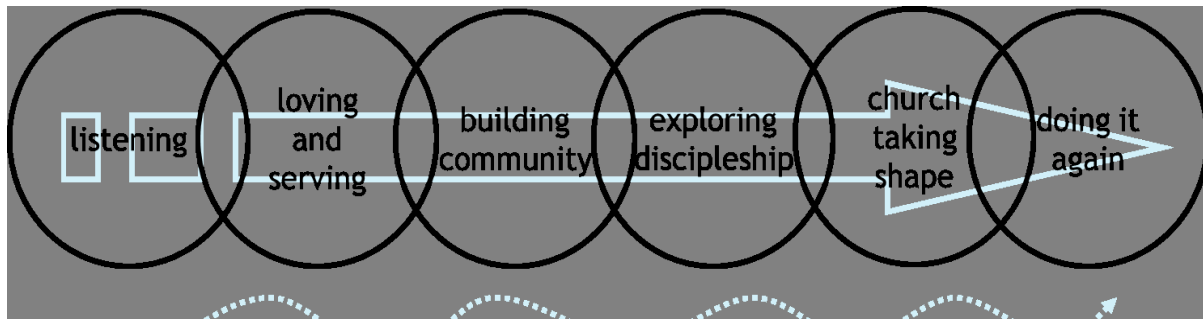
- engage with people **outside the church**. Be *missional*.
- love them in a way that fits the context and share Jesus in a manner they can understand. Be *contextual*.
- encourage people to be open to Christ and allow him to form them in his likeness. Be *formational*.
- as people come to faith, where you are learn together how to follow Jesus, to worship and to connect with the wider church. You could become a new congregation, community or group within a local church, or sometimes a new church in your own right. Be *ecclesial*.

'Sorted' is a Fresh Expression that emerged among teenagers in Bradford, England. It was:

- *Missional*. The teenagers didn't go to church;
- *Contextual*. Activities, worship etc were shaped by what the teenagers were into;
- *Formational*. Teenagers were formed in the Christian faith;
- *Ecclesial*. They didn't start going to an existing church. They formed a new Christian community, with links to the wider church.

These four values will keep you heading in the right direction.

2. Kit Two: A map



The *loving first journey* is like a map. It helps you plan your journey, recognise how far you've travelled, and decide where to go next.

Like any map, you can choose a wide variety of routes. But they have these features in common:

- You *listen* lovingly to God and to people round you.
- Through listening, you prayerfully discover a simple way to *love and serve* these people.
- You *build community* with them in the process.
- As trust deepens, you create natural opportunities to *explore following Jesus* together.
- A new Christian community *takes shape* among those coming to faith, where they are.
- New believers repeat the journey – *do it again* – in their own way.

Of course, life is messier than a diagram! So the circles may overlap, pile on top of each other, or sometimes be taken in a different order.

The main thing is that love comes first and remains the motivation for the whole journey.

Joe Pinneer in Luton, *listened* to men who were into football by hanging out with them on Sunday nights, when they were at a loose end.
He *loved and served* them by bringing everyone together.
They are *exploring discipleship* as they sit round in their football gear before the match, talking about Scripture and God's role in their lives.
This is laying the foundation for *church taking shape* – for a new worshipping community, connected to the Christian family.

3. Kit Three: Food

Without nourishment, you'll fall by the wayside.

A group of Christians advertised free canoeing on Sunday mornings. They paid for the canoe hire, and families enjoyed canoeing together.

Sometimes over a picnic, the sessions finished with an all-age activity and reflection based on a bible story or theme.

Tim then invited anyone interested to 'food and bible story' on Tuesday evenings.

'Bible story' included asking these four *Discovery Bible Study* questions:

- If this story happened today, what would it look like?
- What is the story showing or telling me?
- Could it make a difference to my life? How?
- Did it make a difference? How?

Try using these questions in your core team as you discuss stories about Jesus and ones he told. Immerse yourselves in each story over several sessions.

Trying these questions, perhaps one per meeting, will give you the experience to help enquirers.

4. Kit Four: The address of your destination

You need to know where you are going! The address is: 'New Christian community, growing in four overlapping sets of relationships, which lie at the heart of church.'

These relationships are:

- With God directly in prayer, worship and study.
- With the world.
- With the wider church.
- And within the new community itself.

Deepening these relationships will make your community an authentic part of the Christian family. It will become more 'ecclesial', to use the word employed earlier.

5. These are four vital pieces of kit for your journey

The compass shows you the direction, the map helps you plan your route, food nourishes you and those who join you, and the address helps you to know when you have reached your destination.

Don't use the kit slavishly. Improvise, and you'll follow Jesus in a 21st century way.

6. Anyone can do it!

You don't need

- a degree in theology;
- special training;
- an evangelism course;
- lots of Christian experience. In fact, you can do this if you have only just become a Christian - or even if you are not yet a Christian and want to give Jesus a try!

But you do need the Spirit's help! So pray!

Of course, not everyone is called to do this. But if the time is not right now, God may call you later – and it may be for just a season.

Once called, find at least one friend to journey with. Then, with the compass, the map, food for the journey and the destination, you'll be ready to go!

7. Bible study

Read Matthew 28. 16-20. The Great Commission.

Re-read it, keeping in mind the 'Basics' you have just explored. Then, using the 'Discovery Bible Study' questions, discuss:

- If this story happened today, what would it look like?
- What is the story showing or telling us?
- Could it make a difference to our lives? How?

Before you next meet, spend time pondering the story and the discussion. Then, instead of asking 'Did the story make a difference?' ask: 'what thoughts has God prompted since we last met?'

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