

# A CHURCH THAT IS GROWING, NURTURING AND SERVING

*Our vision is to be a worshipping, growing and transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community*

We want to be a Church which is:

**Growing** – new disciples in missionary church communities which are younger, more diverse, active and spiritually engaged.

**Nurturing** – nurturing new and existing disciples

**Serving** – present for all, speaking and acting prophetically for justice, supporting pastorally especially the vulnerable, deprived and excluded.

Focusing on these three priority areas will help our churches and mission communities thrive in changing times.



Here are some ideas under each mission goal to get you started.

# CHURCH GROWTH: IDEAS FOR MISSION COMMUNITIES

## Helpful Principles:

**Focus outwards**, on non-members. Foster a culture of invitation and **pray** intentionally for growth: individually, as a church and as a mission community.

**Confidence to share faith.** The most effective way to grow is for church members to share their own faith with friends and family. But many people don't know where to start.

Focus on **children and young families.** This also brings in more adults.

**Try something new.** A phrase such as 'trial period' can help. If running a group, make this short-term too. People are nervous of signing up for life!



## Ideas and Resources:

### 1) Stepping Stones for Growth.



Manchester Diocese's resource for growing a local church. Can be used by parish groups and groups from across a mission community. Popular across church traditions.

Six short videos with downloadable handbook. Focus is on our existing contacts, and 'stepping stones' to help people explore further. Final session on building confidence to share faith.

[Stepping Stones for Growth](#)

## 2) Children.

It is hard to overstate the value of prioritising children and families in church growth.

Do we have activities for children? *Messy Church* is a simple idea, with lots of local experience to draw on. Is there time of the week that might work better than Sunday morning for a short children's service: e.g. Sunday afternoon, Wednesday after school?



Do we have links with a local primary school? Toddler group? Can we start/develop links?

Helpful advice available in the Diocese: from Schools, Children's and Youth departments, and our Children Changing Places initiative.

## 3) Courses, Inquiry Groups, Community Activities.



Be intentional about offering groups and other spaces where people on the fringe can discuss faith. The shift to mission communities means a range of activities and groups can be offered, across a wider area.

**Life Events.** Are we making the most of baptisms: inviting families to get to know church members, staying in touch and

inviting to special services, Messy Church, etc?

**Activities to engage fringe** and build trust/friendship. Singing group; reading group; walking group; curry night; annual pet service; grandparenting group (ideal for older congregations), 'Pints of View' pub discussion group; community action project (environmental project, painting a shed, gardening).

**Basics courses** such as Alpha, Being With, Christianity Explored. **Lent** is a good time to run a six-week course, and it helps that it is clearly time-limited. *Note: don't expect a course to be a magical solution to growth! It is more important to build a culture of welcome, faith sharing and stepping stones to faith in a local church and across a mission community.*

### Here to help:

Mike Starkey (Head of Church Growth)

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# NURTURE: IDEAS FOR MISSION COMMUNITIES

## Helpful Principles:

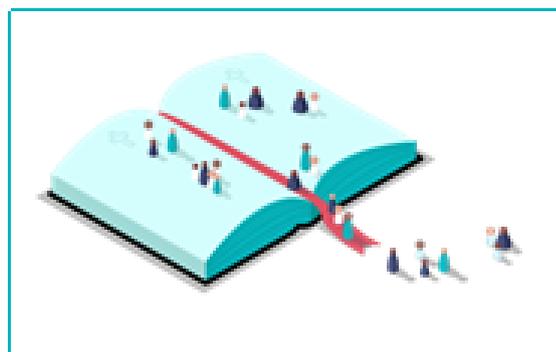
**Small Groups.** Confidence in talking about faith in the world grows from talking about faith in a church small group context.

**Relationships are crucial.** Developing the right atmosphere is essential in helping people feel at ease. A non-judgemental culture is required if people are going to open up and be willing to explore life and faith issues.

**Timings.** Some groups can become key points in people's life experience and can be really helpful in lifelong learning and discipleship. However, to begin with a short term commitment is more realistic and less challenging.

**Venues are important.** The church building may be positive for some but too formal for others. Homes can be welcoming but hard for some people to make the first step. It all depends upon local culture.

**Leadership is crucial.** Continuity is important, plus skills in helping everyone to take part. Clergy are not always the best people to lead, especially if there is a culture of deference.



## Ideas and Resources:

1) *#MoreThanSunday* is Manchester Diocese's own version of the national initiative known as Everyday Faith (previously Setting God's People Free). We are cascading a learning journey model for gently helping lay people to gain confidence in the value of their vocation and ministry outside of church and Sunday, whilst also seeking partnership between laity and clergy in our church ministries. Every parish will be invited in due course to join a learning journey through its mission community over the next three years.

2) A new page on our Diocesan website will soon be offering information about discipleship/nurture courses. This will include basic information about courses and the name of a Diocesan champion for each of them who can advise about running the course and signposting training.

Until that page is up and running, here is some helpful overall information:



There are many discipleship courses being used in British churches today, plus many from beyond our country and many on the internet. Discipleship Kit from CPAS is a website that offers a very wide list of resources that are available so that any church can explore what is available:

[www.disciplekit.org](http://www.disciplekit.org)

### Here to help:

Simon Bessant (Head of Discipleship):

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# SERVING: IDEAS FOR MISSION COMMUNITIES

## Helpful Principles:

**Start with listening.** Ask churches and communities about the strengths, resources, and issues in their area. Let the answers help you to discern creative responses.

**Keep it simple.** Providing tea, toast and a listening ear once a week can make a real difference to lonely and isolated people.

Organising neighbourhood litter picks can have positive impact and build relationships within the community.

**Work with others wherever you can.** Take advantage of the resources in your mission community to build cross-church teams. Identify local partners, for example a local environment group, to help you to develop your ideas and make them reality.

**Root whatever you do in faith.** This can be as simple as praying regularly for project volunteers and guests, or providing quiet spaces for rest and contemplation.



## Ideas and Resources:

### 1) Social and community action



Greater Together Manchester, a joint venture between the Diocese and the Church Urban Fund, is your go-to place for advice and support. Staff can, for example, help you to set up a Place of Welcome to address loneliness and isolation. They also have experience in helping churches to address homelessness, mental health, food insecurity and supporting displaced people.

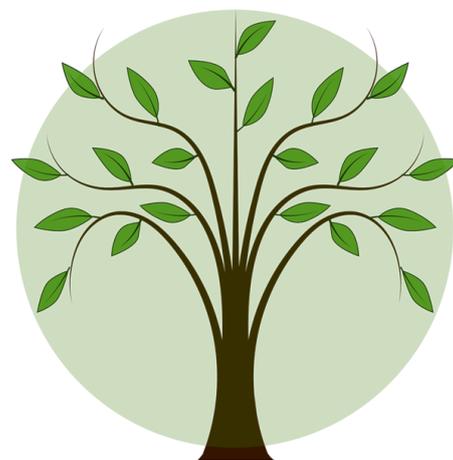
[Greater Together Manchester](#)

## 2. Environment

The ecumenical Eco Church programme run by the Christian environmental charity, A Rocha UK, supports churches to work across five areas: worship and teaching, buildings, land, community and global engagement, and lifestyle. Ideas and resources for each area are available on the website:

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

Contacts and resources to support Eco Church and other environmental activities and projects are also available on the [diocesan website](#).



## 3. Faith Connections

Videos 3 (Contacts) and 4 (Stepping Stones) in *Stepping Stones for Growth* are excellent starting points. The former will help you to identify the relationships you already have, and the latter to explore different ways of enabling faith journeys.



If you wish to go further, the Church Urban Fund has launched a free, six part course, *Growing Good*, exploring connections between social action, discipleship and growth.

<https://growing-good.org.uk/>

### Here to help:

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