

Step 2 – Vision, Team, and a Name

Vision

What is the vision for the Missional Group? Can you summarise what you want to achieve in a couple of sentences?

It could be that you want to reach a neighbourhood, or a network of people. For example, you might have a vision to reach the people in your street/village/town – a vision for the ‘neighbourhood’. Or it may be that you have a particular interest (such as a sport or hobby) and a vision for reaching other like-minded people

Openness is a key principle for Missional Groups. They need to be open for people to join who share the vision, or who genuinely fit into the network – it shouldn’t just be for a group of friends who want to form a clique, however holy their vocabulary or intentions!

Leadership

Who will lead the Group? Will it have just one or two leaders, or will it be led by a team? If the Group is to be led by a team, you will need to clarify what responsibilities come with team membership.

Name

It would be good to come up with a creative name for your Missional Group. The name might reflect the network or neighbourhood you are seeking to reach, it will give an identity to the Group in the early stages, and it will help with communications to the wider church.

NB The Group doesn’t have to be just for and with St Thomas’s people!

Step 3 – Five Core Values: ABCDE

How will the Group set out to embody the 5 Core Values of St Thomas’s Church?

- **All Involved**

Missional Groups provide a place for the members to recognise and exercise their God given gifts whatever their age. There will be lots of tasks that need doing for the Group to function effectively and so it is important that everyone has a role and that these roles are valued, however insignificant they may seem. There will need to be some discernment about appropriately matching individuals to tasks depending on their skills and spiritual maturity but the idea that there should be no passengers is an important one to hold onto.

- **Becoming Disciples**

The desire is to see every member of a Missional Group maturing in their relationship with God regardless of their starting point. The opportunity to worship together in culturally appropriate ways, engaging with Scripture and the opportunity to exercise their God-given gifts will enable this to happen within the Groups.

- **Creating Community**

Missional Groups are an easy way to welcome people into the life of a Christian community and offer a place of belonging. Whether the focus of the Missional Group is a neighbourhood or network, it offers those who are connected to it a community of people who are concerned about, care for and help each other grow in maturity in Christ. Missional Groups should be welcoming, relaxed, open and fun.

- **Doing Evangelism**

There is a deliberate emphasis in Missional Groups on being outward looking and having a readiness to share the Christian faith and encourage a response to it. This could be expressed in both word and action, as the Group seeks to be salt and light so that others may come to know and follow Christ for themselves. A Group may organise specific events to enable this to happen, but

the context of a Missional Group should provide a safe place for its members to respond to the challenge of bringing another person to Christ by 2020.

- **Encountering God**

The worshipping life of Missional Groups will be an important feature. This will be marked by its emphasis on Word and Spirit including elements of prophecy and prayer; confession and intercession; waiting and watching; receiving and serving; blessing and sacrifice; joy and sorrow; openness and expectancy. Careful thought will need to be given to how to do this in culturally relevant and appropriately sensitive ways: i.e. It may not be appropriate for a newly established Group made up of mainly non-Christians to spend time singing together, but it may be appropriate to share a thought from scripture and invite prayer requests for a leader to pray through.

It’s worth saying that not all of the values will be evident in every gathering of the Missional Groups but every Group should aspire to embody all five values in the overall life of their Group. It would be good to view the values less like a check list of things to get through at each gathering and more like an individual and corporate lifestyle to embody.

It is likely that the values will feature to varying degrees at different stages of the life of the Group as it grows and evolves. A mature Missional Group will be comfortable in embodying all five core values within its gatherings, and will be mindful of when to have a greater emphasis on certain values at particular times.

Step 4 – Strategy

How are you going to turn the vision into concrete reality? A possible strategy to consider in reaching out to a network or neighbourhood is to use the principle of 4 B's:

- **Blessing**

Being salt and light in order to make life better for those you are seeking to reach. The list of possibilities is long but might include – doing some practical jobs that others are reluctant to do; making cakes for neighbours/colleagues/friends; hosting a BBQ or party; making yourself available for people.

- **Belonging**

Inviting your friends to something that you are proud to belong to and making them feel welcome in your Group. This is a great way of expressing one of our 5 Core Values, Creating Community.

- **Believing**

Create space in your gatherings for the appropriate sharing of something of the Christian faith. This might be a discussion on a particular topic to which you bring your own opinion informed by faith; it might be a short prayer at the beginning and/or end of a gathering; it may be an in-depth bible study. How the Christian faith is communicated will depend on many factors such as how long the Group has been meeting, and the spiritual maturity of the members.

- **Becoming**

As people are *blessed* by the Group, come to *belong* as part of the community of the Group, and begin to *believe* in Christ, our prayer is that they will *become* life-long, whole-hearted disciples of Christ. A mature Missional Group will support and encourage its members to become more and more like Christ.

Step 5 – Support

From a church leadership perspective, we want to create an ethos of 'Low control, high accountability' so the process of starting a Missional Group will look something like this:

- Meet with the clergy to share your vision, talk about strategy, and get the 'go ahead' to launch as a St Thomas's Missional Group.
- Register the Missional Group with the PCC in order that the PCC can carry out its responsibilities for the oversight of church life.
- Leaders join the Missional Groups 'nursery' for approx 12 months – meeting monthly with the clergy and other leaders of new Missional Groups to discuss issues and hone the strategy and evaluate the effectiveness of the Group.
- After 'graduating' from the nursery, the leaders will be invited to attend the termly 'M +M's' meeting – Ministries and Missional Groups. This will provide some oversight, and opportunities to get alongside other leaders, share stories and good practice, and offer mutual support.

If your Group is made up of individuals from St. Thomas's and other churches, it would be good to think about what will be the relationship with St. Thomas's and/or the other churches represented. We certainly don't want to be exclusive in our membership, just provide the appropriate level of accountability and support.

Step 6 – Launch

Communicate to the church, ask for prayer, recruit members who share your vision, and get started!



ST THOMAS
CHURCH LANCASTER
SHARING GOD'S LOVE FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY

How to start a Missional Group

In St Thomas's 2020 Vision document, we committed as a church to reaching out to this generation for Christ, demonstrating God's love in action by serving our community, and developing new and diverse mission-shaped forms of church. Each member is also challenged to seek to bring another person to Christ by 2020. We also learned from the Church Next questionnaire that most people at St Ts have strong relationships with neighbours, work-mates and people with the same interests, but we do not seem to be supporting one another in reaching these people for Christ. We need to become intentionally missional, in order to reach out to more people in Lancaster with the love of Christ.

As part of realising this part of the vision, we want to encourage the establishment and growth of Missional Groups. We want to make it as easy as possible to establish a Missional Group while also offering some commonality and guiding principles for the Groups. While these Groups will be diverse in their activity and membership, this document outlines the key steps towards setting up a Missional Group and points out what things they may have in common.

Step 1 – Pray!

What is God saying to you? Is there a group of people with whom God is calling you to share his love?