

Faith And Society Files: Re:focus - Main Meetings

Re:focus is an updated, more flexible version of the BUGB Mission Consultancy scheme developed in 2003. It has been developed in modules to make it suitable for a wide variety of churches. User-friendly, it assumes two external facilitators will work with each church on the re:focus journey that may take 6 to 12 months. This resource contains the modules for the main re:focus meetings.





celebrating who you are and
developing your **crossing**places

Module 5: Main re:focus Meeting for Church Leaders

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
- develop new and existing *crossingplaces*
- share the Christian message in actions and words.

Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
- be guided by experienced external facilitators



Main re:focus Meeting for Church Leaders

To reflect on the history and present life of the church and explore its hopes for the future.

Introduction:

The church leaders, or the leadership, is a shorthand way to describe the group of people appointed to lead and serve the church, often made up of the minister(s) with elders or deacons, but nowadays given a variety of names. The facilitators will have arranged a mutually convenient time for this meeting with the church leaders, and a later one with the whole congregation. Experience has found that it is often better for there to be a gap between these two events of, say, two weeks. This gives you and the facilitators time to reflect on the first meeting.

If you decide to include the children and youth of the church in the **re:focus** journey (and it is strongly recommended that you do) this gap also gives the opportunity for work to be undertaken outside of the congregation day but with these groups.

This meeting with the facilitators aims to:

- provide you with information and answers to your questions about the **re:focus** journey
- give you an opportunity to share your insights and hopes with the facilitators.

Outcomes

The desired outcomes are:

- Enthusiasm about the **re:focus** journey.
- Understanding of the process and commitment to it.
- Confidence that the facilitators have correctly interpreted the information provided and appreciation of the significance of **re:focus** for the life of your church.
- A start in identifying mission issues and opportunities.
- An agreed timetable for return visits.

What to expect at the re:focus meeting for church leaders

You will have completed Module 3 (a Questionnaire) prior to this meeting with the facilitators. This will form the core of **re:focus**, along with the outcomes of other exercises. In some cases, facilitators may also make an additional visit in order to see an innovative piece of work or project, for example.

- The time which the leaders spend with the facilitator will begin with prayer asking God to help you discover what the Spirit is saying.
- The facilitators will come to the meeting with the congregation results from Module 4 and with some of their own findings, including demographic information about the locality.
- You will review the questionnaires and community information with the facilitators.
- The facilitators' role is to listen, advise, prompt, reflect, ask questions and note things down.
- The facilitators may provide one or more additional exercises for the leaders to do. This will help them find out more about your church prior to the main **re:focus** meeting with the congregation.
- Although the facilitators will make suggestions, including resources, your church will have the responsibility for ensuring that any decisions made and actions outlined as a result of the **re:focus** journey are followed through.



celebrating who you are and
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Module 6: Main re:focus Meeting for Congregation

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
- develop new and existing *crossingplaces*
- share the Christian message in actions and words.

Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
- be guided by experienced external facilitators



Main re:focus Meeting for Congregation

To go through a process together to discern the local mission issues and opportunities.

The main **re:focus** meeting is for the Sunday congregations and those regularly involved in activities in the week. The groups (adults, youth and children) that have been meeting for five weeks, using Module 2, in preparation for this part of **re:focus** have already been thinking about some of the issues. It is important that groups which cannot be present on this day, perhaps the young people and children, have their views shared.

During the time together the whole congregation will be guided through a process by the facilitators to identify:

- The mission issues that will help to form the backbone of an Action Plan for community engagement. (These issues will include those things that are hindering the church from engagement.)
- The mission opportunities, listed on a separate sheet alongside the issues.

It is intended that by the end of the day, with all the information gathered and collated, there will be sense of beginning to highlight the short, medium and long-term opportunities that the church should consider as they plan for the future.

The time spent together will add to the work that has already been done by the children, youth, small groups and leaders, in addition to the answers provided by the questionnaires. By the end of the day the intention is that summaries of all this information will have been presented to everyone present. The facilitators will also have as full a picture as possible of the church and the community in which it exists.

The time and effort invested in **re:focus** will enable the facilitators to go away and formulate a proposed Action Plan that the church can then consider. Having identified and made public the mission issues and opportunities by the end of this day, there should not be anything in the Action Plan that comes as a surprise to anyone.

It may be that, as the facilitators review the findings of the various exercises and identified mission issues, they discover a 'blind spot' or hole either in their or the church's understanding and knowledge of their situation. This may precipitate the addition at a later date of another exercise or two.

This meeting with the congregation is key to the **re:focus** journey and it is important that as many people as possible connected with the church attend.
Pray for this meeting in the weeks leading up to it.



Recommended Exercises:

All the possible exercises may be found in the Modules 7 and 8. A range has been given so that the **re:focus** sessions can be developed in as individual a way as possible. It recognises that each church is different and faces different challenges. God's mission plan for your church is unique.

In the day, the facilitators will use as wide a range of exercises as possible. They are arranged broadly in four categories:

- Community
- Children and Youth
- Church
- Individual

To gain the most benefit from the process, usually at least one exercise from each category is used.

The exercises are also identified with an F for 'factual' exercises and an I for 'intuitive'. Much of the information to be discovered will be of a factual nature. However it is recognised that there are other things to discover that cannot be identified factually because they are more about feelings. The intuitive exercises help tease out this sort of information. People may say things like, "I don't know why I know - I just do!" or "I know it doesn't make sense but I just feel it is the case".

Certain exercises are core to **re:focus** and one of those in this main meeting will be about developing our individual *crossingplaces* (Module 7) as part of our personal discipleship. Other exercises will explore our collective church responses to various mission issues and opportunities.

The Options for the Day:

It is possible to make this an evening and a separate half day, say a Friday night and a Saturday morning. Whilst this option may save time it can also limit the effectiveness of the **re:focus** process. Experience shows that it is far more effective if an evening and a whole day are spent on **re:focus**. The time to be together and the conversations around the breaks and lunch are as important as the more formal part of the time spent together.

It may be that the church could use this meeting as the content of a church weekend either at home or away and, depending on the training/ qualities of the facilitators, invite them to do some preaching/ teaching through the time together.

Should the church and facilitators decide to run the main **re:focus** over an evening and a half day, other exercises that would have been undertaken in the extended period may need to be arranged in some other way.

Here are outline programmes for each of these options. The facilitators may adapt them to suit your particular situation.





Evening and Half a Day

Friday Evening:

19:30 Welcome and Introduction

- The facilitators are introduced and outline what will take place over the time together, clearly explaining the purpose of the process and what outcomes are intended.

20:00 Session 1:

- Responses from the Leadership are shared as a starting point.
 - o The 'Mission Issues' and 'Mission Opportunities' lists are introduced and stuck up for additions, subtractions and modifications through the time together.
 - o Discussion around these is begun.
- *crossingplaces* exercise is started
 - o Individual *crossingplaces* are explored at this point (Module 7) looking at how the church might support these.

21:00 End

Saturday Morning:

09:30 Welcome and Introduction

- Spend a brief period either in prayer or worship as you gather together. The aim of the day is to hear from one another and, through the many voices, hear the voice of God.

10:00 Session 2:

The *crossingplaces* Exercise (Corporate)

- The *crossingplaces* chart for church activities, completed previously by the leaders, is presented to everyone. The effectiveness of these activities as *crossingplaces* is discussed, along with suggestions for developing them. New *crossingplaces* may be suggested. At the end of this and every session an opportunity to report back will take place and identified mission issues and opportunities added to the two lists.

10:45 Coffee

11:10 Session 3:

Causes of Decline and Signs of Growth Report Back

(Plus additional possible exercise)

- This exercise could be done at this point. It will usually have been done as part of the questionnaire (Module 4), in which case the findings will have been collated and are reported on in this session.
- Discussion of the findings will then take place and the issues identified added to the list.
- If the information from this exercise is already included in the mission issues list, then the facilitator will introduce an additional exercise.

12:10 Mini-Break

12:15 Session 4:

Report from Children and Youth

- The Children's and Youth Leaders together with some of the students present the findings from the exercises that they have undertaken as part of the preparation for the day.
- These are then discussed and the findings added to the mission issues or opportunities lists.

13:00 Session 5:

Final Comments and Close

- In this final session the facilitators draw proceedings to a close and use a final Prioritising Exercise (Module 8) or similar, to prioritise the mission issues and opportunities.

13:30 End or Lunch together





Evening and Whole Day

Friday Evening:

19:30 Welcome and Introduction

- The facilitators are introduced and outline what will take place over the time together, clearly explaining the purpose of the process and what outcomes are intended.

20:00 Session 1:

- Responses from the Leadership are shared as a starting point.
 - The 'Mission Issues' and 'Mission Opportunities' lists are introduced and stuck up for additions, subtractions and modification throughout the time together.
 - Discussion around these is begun.
- The *crossingplaces* Exercise is started.
 - Individual *crossingplaces* are explored at this point (Module 7) looking at how the church might support these.

21:00 End

Saturday Morning:

09:30 Welcome and Introduction

- Spend a brief period either in prayer or worship as you gather together. The aim of the day is to hear from one another and through the many voices hear the voice of God.

10:00 Session 2:

The *crossingplaces* Exercise (Corporate)

- The chart for church *crossingplaces* activities is presented to everyone. The chart has been completed by the leaders (Module 3) and should be either copied to hand out or put on a PowerPoint presentation. Someone involved in each *crossingplace* activity or event should briefly share about it (eg a toddler group leader). The effectiveness of these activities as *crossingplaces* is discussed, along with suggestions for developing them. New *crossingplaces* may be suggested. At the end of this, and every session, an opportunity to report back will take place and identified mission issues and opportunities added to the two lists.

10:45 Coffee

11:10 Session 3:

Causes of Decline and Signs of Growth Report Back

(Plus additional possible exercise)

- This exercise could be done at this point. It will usually have been done as part of the questionnaire (Module 4), in which case the findings will have been collated and are reported on in this session.
- Discussion of the findings will then take place and the issues identified added to the list.
- If the information from this exercise is already included in the mission issues list, then the facilitator will introduce an additional exercise from Module 8.



12:10 Mini-Break

12:15 Session 4:
Telling Stories/ Dreaming Dreams
Exercise or Merlin Exercise from Module 8

13:00 Lunch

13:45 Session 5:
Mountains and Valleys Exercise or Fast
Fit Exercise (from Module 8)

14:30 Mini-Break

- If the Leaders and facilitators felt it was helpful, this would be the point where the children would join the group. The next exercise would then be multigenerational. It is important to make these exercises as fun as possible.

14:45 Session 6:
Metaphor Exercise or Cartoon Exercise
(from Module 8)

15:30 Tea Break

15:45 Session 7:
Report from Children and Youth

- The Children's and Youth Leaders, together with some of the students, present the findings from the exercises that they have undertaken as part of the preparation for the day.
- These are then discussed and the findings added to the mission issues and opportunities lists.

16:45 Session 8:
Final Comments and Close

- In this final session the facilitators will draw proceedings to a close and may use a final Prioritising Exercise (Module 8) to prioritise the mission issues and opportunities.

17:00 End or family tea





Church Weekend

In this option the children and youth could have separate strands where they do their exercises and activities and bring them together on the Sunday. These exercises may be selected from those already done in the groups in Module 2 or from the selection offered in Module 8 pages 15-17.

Friday Evening:

18:30 Tea

19:30 Welcome and Introduction

- The facilitators are introduced and outline what will take place over the time together, clearly explaining the purpose of the process and what outcomes are intended.
- Worship, Prayer and a Brief Message

20:30 Session 1:

- Responses from the Leadership are shared as a starting point.
 - o The 'Mission Issues' and 'Mission Opportunities' lists are introduced and stuck up for additions, subtractions and modification throughout the time together.
 - o Discussion around these is begun.
- The *crossingplaces* exercise is started.
 - o Individuals' *crossingplaces* are explored at this point (Module 7) looking at how the church might support these.

21:30 End

Saturday:

09:30 Welcome and Introduction

- Spend a brief period either in prayer or worship as you gather together. The aim of the day is to hear from one another and, through the many voices, hear the voice of God.

10:00 Session 2:

crossingplaces Exercise (Corporate)

- Have copies of the chart completed by the leaders (Module 3) either copied to hand out or on a PowerPoint. Someone involved in each *crossingplace* activity or event should briefly share about it (eg a toddler group leader). The effectiveness of these activities as *crossingplaces* is discussed in small groups, along with suggestions for developing them. New *crossingplaces* may be suggested.
- At the end of this and every session an opportunity to report back will take place and identified mission issues and opportunities added to the two lists.

10:45 Coffee

11:10 Session 3:

Causes of Decline and Signs of Growth Report Back

(Or alternative exercise)

- This exercise could be done at this point. It will usually have been done as part of the questionnaire (Module 4), in which case the findings will have been collated and are reported on in this session.
- Discussion of the findings will then take place and the issues identified added to the list.
- If the information from this exercise is already included in the mission issues list, then the facilitator will introduce an additional exercise from Module 8.



- 12:10 Mini-Break**
- 12:15 Session 4:**
Mountains and Valleys Exercise or Fast Fit Exercise (from Module 8)
- 13:00 Lunch**
- 13:45 Free Time**
- 16:00 Tea Break**
- 16:30 Session 5:**
Telling Stories/ Dreaming Dreams Exercise or Merlin Exercise from Module 8
- The aim is to get people talking and sharing their reflections and dreams for the future.
- 17:30 Tea**
- 19:00 Session 6:**
Imagine your Church; Imagine Your Witness (Module 8)
- 20:00 Break**
- 20:15 Social**

Sunday:

- 9:30 Session 7:**
Metaphor Exercise or Cartoon Exercise (Module 8)
- If the Leaders and facilitators felt it was helpful, this exercise could be multigenerational, with all ages taking part. It is important to make these exercises as fun as possible.
- 10:30 Coffee**
- 11:00 Session 8:**
Worship Together
- It would be helpful to have everyone together for this worship time
 - One of the facilitators could give a brief message
 - Communion could also be included.
- 12:00 Session 9:**
Report from Children and Youth
- The Children's and Youth Leaders together with some of the students present the findings from the exercises that they have undertaken in their previous five group sessions (Module 2) and any further related discussion over the weekend.
 - These are then discussed and the findings added to the mission issues and opportunities lists.
- 12:45 Session 10:**
Final Comments and Close
- In this final session the facilitators will draw proceedings to a close and may use a final Prioritising Exercise (Module 8) to seek to prioritise the mission issues and opportunities.
- 13:00 Lunch then End**

Suggested books:

Resourcing Mission by Helen Cameron

Published by scm press ISBN 978 0 334 04146 7





celebrating who you are and
developing your **crossing**places

Module 7: *crossingplaces*

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
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Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
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crossingplaces

To help develop people's *crossingplaces* and to discover how the church might support them.

As individuals and as churches, we all have people we meet regularly, daily, weekly or monthly who have not yet discovered the joy of being a Christian for themselves. These people may be antagonistic towards hearing the good news of the gospel, but it is more likely that they are spiritually open and somewhere on a journey of faith. The regular encounters we have with such people are what we are describing as our *crossingplaces*. This module is to help identify the opportunities we have throughout the week in helping others along their faith journeys. It is also to see how we can effectively support those *crossingplaces* encounters through our church life together.

***crossingplaces* are those occasions when individual Christians and/or the church together intersect with the community and make a difference. In *crossingplaces* we create opportunities to show and share the Gospel.**

By modelling ourselves on Jesus Christ in our *crossingplaces*, and by praying and asking others to pray for our *crossingplaces*, we expect to make a difference. We will play a part in helping another person come to the point of having Jesus at the centre of their lives.

The whole church together and groups from the church may also have *crossingplaces*. Leaders will have filled in a chart like the one at the end of this module in completing Module 3. Talking through these *crossingplaces* and how they function as part of the overall mission strategy of the church will also be useful.





The people in your *crossingplaces* will be at different stages on their Christian journey. Depending on their age and experience, this could range from having no knowledge about church and Christianity to being on the brink of coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

This is indicated in a diagrammatic way by the floors on the lift in the diagram. The ground floor represents someone who has had no connection with church and very little opportunity to find out anything about the Christian faith. Floor 3 is perhaps where people have got to know Christians and built a good relationship with them. Then maybe through deeper conversations or attending a regular event at the church like a Toddler Group

or a Book Club or a Seniors Lunch they may be going up to floor 5 or 6 where they are grasping some Christian understanding. Perhaps by using some of the evangelistic material indicated in Module 14 either one-to-one or in a group, and attending services, people move closer and closer to the time when the Holy Spirit brings them to invite Jesus Christ to be central in their lives – floor 10! Of course, this is not the end of the story - there is still much more growing to do as followers of Jesus.

As we join anyone at any floor of the lift and accompany them reaching a higher floor in their journey of faith, then we have been fruitful evangelists in sharing the message of Jesus on actions and speaking. It is rare to travel the whole way from the ground to floor 10 with any one person, but we can rejoice in the part God calls us play – it makes a difference!



The bulk of the population will be closer to the lower end of the scale, although there will be differences in this across the generations. Generally younger adult generations will be lower down the scale due to the reduced number of them that have attended church groups as children and young people. Also changes in the teaching of Religious Education and in school assemblies will have made a difference. Baby Boomers (born 1946-64) however and older people will start with some grasp of what the Christian faith is because they were more likely to have been sent to Sunday School and have attended church in the past. However, openness to the gospel goes across the generations, particularly at significant times of life change, eg the birth of a child, or retirement. A negative factor for many people is a previous bad experience of church and this may have occurred at any age.

In sharing with anyone in a *crossingplace* it is important to subtly discover where they are spiritually. This calls for a variety of approaches from us as individuals.



1 Our individual *crossingplaces*

We are going to identify and consider personal *crossingplaces* first. We are looking for regular occasions when there are encounters with those who are not-yet Christians. This exercise will take time to individually complete a chart. Typically only a few spaces will be need to be written in, but the information should be as comprehensive as possible – write small!

Copies of page 7 are required for each person.

Instructions for each person:

- 1 Think through a typical week, or reflect on how a month is generally spent.
- 2 The diary on page 7 covers the days of one typical week, divided into broad categories to help enable some collective analysis later.
- 3 Write in the spaces that best fit your *crossingplaces* with non-Christians, putting detail of venue or other relevant information as appropriate.
- 4 Indicate the frequency by writing W for weekly and M for monthly by each entry.

After the diary has been completed:

- 1 Quietly reflect on these *crossingplaces*.
- 2 Since Jesus calls us to be witnesses wherever we are (Acts 1:8), pray silently about which of these *crossingplaces* situations God wants us to focus on at this time.
- 3 Circle this entry.

In small groups:

- 1 Share generally about the diaries.
- 2 Tell any good stories related to an entry and also talk about any difficulties in sharing the good news of Jesus in any of these situations.
- 3 Discuss ways in which the church could support you in your individual *crossingplaces*.

Feedback:

- 1 Take feedback from the discussion groups using the chart on page 9 for the leadership to consider later. (Pray in small groups about the individual situations now or later.)
- 2 To get the overall picture of the where the *crossingplaces* of people in the church are generally located, the collective diary can be completed now or later in the day (perhaps during a break).



The collective diary (page 8)

The completed collective diary (the summary of all the individual *crossingplaces* diaries) will give useful information about where the main *crossingplaces* for the people in this church are located, eg at work, with the family, at a particular leisure centre or coffee shop, as school governors etc. This may help in equipping people for those *crossingplaces*, in supporting them prayerfully through the life of the church, and may even shape the church's mission strategy.

Collecting the information together may be done in several ways, depending on the number of people involved. In each case, individuals need to transfer their own information to the collective diary by:

- 1 passing round three copies or more of the collective diary sheet on a clipboard, or
- 2 writing on two or more enlarged collective diary charts on the wall

The facilitators will collate the information later.

The results can be displayed on bar charts, and will be shared at a follow-up meeting.

Instructions to the Participants for Completing the Collective Diary:

- 1 First the calculations! We are going to put together a church diary of these individual *crossingplaces* for a typical month. For each day that you have noted an encounter, count how many times this occurs in one month. Put that number in the appropriate category (page 8). These will be added up by the facilitators later to give a numerical total and thus get a picture of the types of *crossingplaces* where people in this church are currently engaged.
- 2 If you circled a situation on your own *crossingplaces* diary because God is particularly speaking to you about it at this time, put a tick (✓) in the appropriate category. These will also be added up later as an indicator of what God is speaking into hearts today.

The local church supporting the individual *crossingplaces* of the congregation



This diagram is a useful tool in thinking about how people's individual *crossingplaces* are brought into the gathered life of the church, in worship, in small groups and in the mission of the church. A regular Sunday morning slot, asking a couple of people what they will be doing at 'this time tomorrow', can bring information about the workplace or home-life into the worship of the church. The prayer life of the church could look at each area in turn. Home groups can focus on these different areas in the lives of the group members week by week, and support each other in prayer and practical ways.

Integrating the personal *crossingplaces* of the members of the congregation into the life of the church offers many creative opportunities, and may offer a new perspective on the mission strategy of the church.



2 Church *crossingplaces*

Copies of the completed church *crossingplaces* diary need to be made available from Module 3)

Your church as a whole will hold gatherings that are primarily for disciples, or primarily for those who are not yet believers, and some that are intentionally a mix of both groups.

When the leaders completed Module 3 of **re: focus**, a timetable of the gatherings, events, and actions (like external links and communications) that are *crossingplaces* was made. Some of these involved most of the church, whilst others are carried out by a group encouraged by the whole church. Church *crossingplaces* may be daily or weekly, others monthly or annually, and some one-offs.

Some people present may not be aware of these church *crossingplaces*. For example, some people will not know about the Toddler Group or the Rocky club. Others will not know that a group goes into the local school regularly or out on a Saturday night as Street Pastors or that a bereavement group is run by the church. Others will not realise that a team takes out the church magazine to various public places. Allow someone involved in each item listed on the diary to speak about that *crossingplace*.

Afterwards, discuss in small groups:

- 1 Is this an effective *crossingplace*?
- 2 How does the church encourage this *crossingplace* and support it?
- 3 What else happens in the life of the church that helps people meet in this *crossingplace* to move on in their faith?

Feedback key points from the discussion to the facilitators, who will note them for follow-up as necessary.

Including the church *crossingplaces* as part of the whole mission strategy of the church can be followed through further in Module 10: *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*.

Suggested books:

Church Without Walls - Mike Lowe, Grove Books (1995)
Just Walk across the Room - Bill Hybels, Zondervan (2006)
Mission-Shaped Church - Paul Bayes, Grove Books (2004)
More Ready than you Realize - Brian McLaren, Zondervan (2002)
Sharing Faith the Jesus Way - Jim Currin, BRF (2011)
Sowing, Reaping, Keeping - Laurence Singlehurst, IVP (2006 - 2nd edition)

Other resources:

Module 10: *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*

We are updating these boxes regularly and welcome suggestions for additional useful resources related to this module. Please email information to: faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk



Individual *crossingplaces* diary

(Remember that in a *crossingplace* you must be in touch with people who are not yet Christians)

(Write information into the appropriate box, eg type and place activity. Write W against weekly recurrences and M against monthly recurrences)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Working/ Volunteering (non- church)/ Studying							
With family/ neighbours/ friends							
At leisure/ sport/ hobbies							
Serving community eg, in politics, school governor etc							
Serving community organised by your church(es) or cell							
Serving the life of the church							
Other							

Collective *crossingplaces* diary for a month (summarising individual diaries)

	Each person write in number of days EACH MONTH	Total LEAVE BLANK	Put one '✓' if you circled something in this category	Total '✓'s LEAVE BLANK
Working/ Volunteering (non- church)/ Studying				
With family/ neighbours/ friends				
At leisure/ sport/ hobbies				
Serving community eg, in politics, school governor etc				
Serving community organised by your church(es) or cell				
Serving the life of the church				
Other				

Chart for Facilitators to Note Responses when Offered

	How does the church encourage people in this?	Is there anything more that would help?
Working/ Volunteering (non- church)/ Studying		
With family/ neighbours/ friends		
At leisure/ sport/ hobbies		
Serving community eg, in politics, school governor etc		
Serving community organised by your church(es) or cell		
Serving the life of the church		
Other		

Church *crossingplaces* diary

(Remember that in a *crossingplace* you must be in touch with people who are not yet Christians)

	<i>crossingplaces</i> event or activity	Focused on ...	Any 'stepping stones' for follow on in developing faith
Daily			
Weekly			
Monthly			
Occasional			



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Module 8: Additional Exercises for the Main re:focus Meetings

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
- develop new and existing *crossingplaces*
- share the Christian message in actions and words.

Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
- be guided by experienced external facilitators

Additional Exercises for the Main re:focus Meetings



To provide a variety of exercises, in classified groups, from which the facilitators can select for the main **re:focus** meetings with the leaders and with the congregation. These exercise are in addition to Module 7 and further guidance for selection is given in the **re:focus** 'Guidelines for Facilitators'.

It is recommended that either prior to the **re:focus** process, during the meeting with the church leaders, on the main **re:focus** day with the congregation or post-process, at least one exercise is used from each category.

The categories are designed to enable your church to do some research and discover some findings from your leadership, community and congregation as a whole. The exercises have therefore been placed in the matrix below to make sure that you can 'pick and mix' but also cover all the bases.

Each exercise has also been identified as either being factual (F) or intuitive (I). This means that some exercises seek to identify cold hard facts whereas others seek to enable people to express those intangibles that are often difficult to measure, but have considerable influence on a church's or individual's ability to move forward in mission.

Of course, including one exercise from each section should be regarded as a minimum in order to gain coverage. As **re:focus** progresses you are likely to want to go deeper in your explorations in order to fine tune your findings.

Community Encounter

- Local Community Interviews (F)
- Community Exercise (F)

Community Analysis

- Mapping Exercise (F)
- Cartoons Exercise (I)
- Area Timeline Exercise (F)

Individual Analysis

- Extended Family Exercise (F)
- Interests Exercise (I)
- Telling our Stories/Dreaming our Dreams Exercise (I)
- Imagine Your Witness (I)
- Gifts Exercise (I)

Community
pages 3-8

Children and
Youth
pages 15-17

Individual
pages 9-14

Church
pages 18-27

Youth Analysis

- Children and Teen's Module (F)
- Teens' Open Space

Church Analysis

- Merlin Exercise (I)
- Fast Fit, Slow Fit Exercise (F)
- Metaphor Exercise (I)
- Mountains and Valleys Exercise (I)
- Gap Exercise (F)
- Imagine our Church (I)
- Improve your Buildings (F)
- Church Structure (F)
- Creative Exercise (I)

Additional Group Tools

- 1 Prioritising Exercise
- 2 Real Triangles (I)



Local Community Interviews - Suggested Questions (F)



To formulate a survey or questionnaire that can be used within the community – with neighbours, friends, work colleagues, on the street, and also with local public figures.

The questions offered here are by way of suggestion. It is best to formulate your own questions tailored to what you are seeking to learn.

Warnings:

It is important in formulating a survey to remember:

- To keep the number of questions relatively small. People particularly on the street are reluctant to answer huge, long surveys.
- The questions need to be kept open ended, or give alternative suggestions. A tick box survey for example is easy to complete but maybe limited in its usefulness if you do not know the reason why people are giving the same answer, for example.
- It is important not to lead those you are surveying to agree with you. It is very easy to stack the bases with surveys and get the answers you think you want. This is true on the way you both formulate the questions and ask them.
- It is also important not to assume you know the answers. Let people state their preferences and opinions in as neutral a way as possible. If later the findings confirm your thoughts - that's great, however it could be that they throw up some surprises.
- You will also need to recognise that surveys are a bit of a 'blunt instrument'. The responses are likely to be quite confirming but also lacking in imagination. To be able to dig deeper may require you to interview people in a different way using different questions in order to get them to think more deeply and offer more weighed responses.

- It is also important to order the questions according to the things that you most want to know.
- If the survey is genuinely about finding out what people think, do not give it an evangelistic twist. People may feel that you have stopped them under false pretences if the last question sounds anything like: 'If you could know God personally would you be interested?' There is a time and a place for such surveys but this is not it.

Sample Questions:

- What do you think are the three main problems facing people living in this community?
 - o What do you think are the causes of these problems?
- What do you think could be done to improve this community?
 - o Who do you think should do them?
 - The community itself
 - The authorities
 - Charities
 - Church
- What are the three greatest strengths of this community?
- Do you find this community to be - safe, attractive, friendly, troubled, prosperous, other?
- What three things do you think the church could do to improve life in this community for all its residents?



Community Exercise (F)



To help your church to find out as much as you can about your local community.
(We can sometimes assume that we know everything about our area because we live there. This can prove to be a false assumption.)

This exercise is best done in preparation for the main **re:focus** meeting with the congregation, to amplify the information gained in the demographic survey.

The advantage of this exercise is that in doing it your church will already be building connections and engaging in the beginnings of mission within your local community and have taken the first step out of your church building.



It is simply this....

Discover all you can regarding your community from those who work/live in it who are outside the church.

You can do this...

- Visiting the local Council offices. (They often hold strategic/long-term plans for your area.)
- Speak to your Councillor or MP, MLA (in Ireland), SMP (in Scotland) or MWA (in Wales) – visit them in their clinics.

- Speak to notable/influential people in your community – doctors, chiropractors, community police officers, head of the Police Association, etc. It is also worth talking to those who have more everyday contact with the community – postman, newsagent, shopping centre manager, publican, etc.
- Survey neighbours and people in a local community 'hot spot', such as a supermarket car park. You can ask... (Suggestions)
 - What's good about living in this area?
 - What are the needs in this community?
 - What do you think the church could/should be doing to meet these needs?
 - Are they aware of the services the church already provides?
 - What would it take for them to consider attending a church?

The questions don't have to be complicated - in fact the simpler, more open and direct, the better.

NB: It is important to identify who's going to approach whom? Where relationships are already formed, access and information will be easier.

As community leaders (the pastor, youthworker, or church officers) this is an ideal opportunity to initiate deepening relationships with other community leaders. These can prove incredibly useful as you seek to engage with the community.

It is always better to go, initially at least, and ask for advice, help and input. Sometimes we need to apologise for being late to the party. We also need to ensure that we don't promise what we cannot deliver, or compromise our values or convictions. There is a fine dividing line between standing firm and seeming bigoted and arrogant.



Mapping Exercise (F)



To explore your area and capture information regarding:

- The boundaries of your 'parish'.
- Where the members of your congregation live.
- Where social provision is located.

Create a detailed map of your area. You may have to print this in pieces from Google Maps and stick them together. You can then take it to be laminated at a local print shop.

Then using permanent overhead pens, as a leadership draw on the map the boundary of what you regard as your 'parish'.

Using large clear poly-sheets (which you can get from 'Paperchase') overlay on the map:

- Sheet One – Where your congregation live.
- Sheet Two – Where local schools, doctors' surgeries, children's centres, debt advice centre, etc are located.
- Sheet Three – Where other churches are located (of all types).
- Sheet Four – Parish, electoral and police boundaries and any other information particular to your area, that is of interest.

This exercise enables you to see the gaps and overlaps in provision. It also enables you to plan the best place for, say, small groups to be located where people live in proximity. This will also enable you to begin to think of these as centres of mission.

It also allows you to plan how you can have the maximum impact in your area.

You may want to reconsider whether this is a valuable exercise to explore, if you have already undertaken a community audit (such as that in Module 11).



Cartoons Exercise (I)



To get the church to consider where it fits in the context of its community. It is based on a series of pictures that are PowerPoint based and available to download from www.baptist.org.uk

The advantage of doing this exercise as a group is that it gives insight into how your church sees its past mission endeavours. It also gives a feel for the spread of views as to where your church is and where individual members of the congregation fit in their understanding of mission.

For each cartoon in turn, ask the group what it says to them.

Commentary on the cartoons

These four cartoons represent different relationships between the church and the community. The church and the community are shown as buildings but it is the people who corporately make up 'church' and 'community'. The boundaries, and where they overlap, are the real focus. The purpose of the Cartoon exercise is threefold:

- 1 to suggest what attitudes and actions create and maintain the boundaries and areas of overlap;
- 2 to consider the perceptions the church and community have of themselves and of each other.
- 3 to look at the images of Christ they portray and to look for parallels in the participants' own situations.

The following comments offer a few questions which could be asked.

Cartoon one



This church is depicted as completely isolated from the community by the fence which surrounds it. There is no way in or out. How and why was the fence created? How is it maintained? Is it by the church or the community or both?

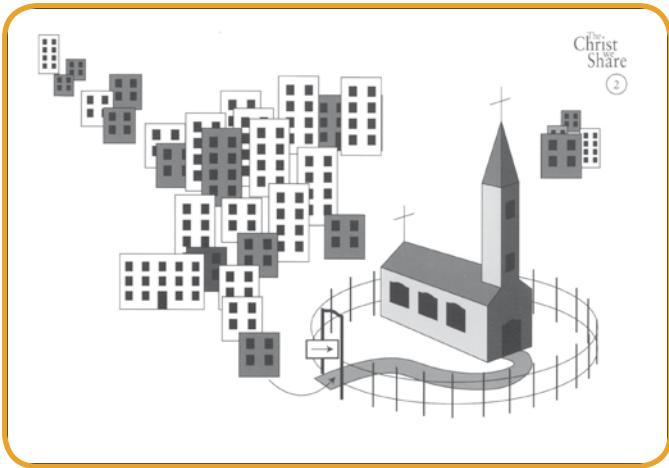
The church seems small and insignificant next to the high-rise blocks. Does this represent merely numerical smallness or a sense of weakness, threat, dismissal by the community?

Is there a sense of being the faithful remnant? Does the fence create a sense of security or purity?... or is the fence representing rejection by the community and if so why?

Does the community even notice the church? Does the church notice the community? Is it possible to have a church which is completely cut off from the community or is the cartoon portraying a cutting off of spiritual life from the rest of life?



Cartoon two



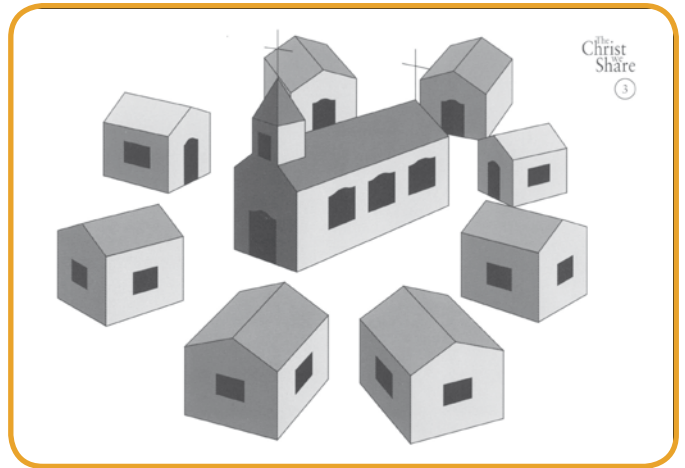
This church is depicted as being isolated from the community by a fence, but there is a signposted way in and a clear path inside the fence leading to the door. Who created this fence and why? Who maintains it? What could the path represent?

This church is large and tall in relation to the buildings in the community. What could its size and height represent? What is the church's self image? How does the church view the community?

It appears that some of the community is coming towards the gate. How does the community view the church? What does it feel like to be the section of the community at the rear which sees the fence and the building but not the way in? Who chooses where the different sections of the community are placed?

Taken from: *The Christ we Share*, copyright The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Church Mission Society and The Methodist Church (Copies available from Tel: 01733 325002 or www.mph.org.uk)

Cartoon three



This church is clearly visible at the centre of the community with no barriers between the two so that movement between church and community is easy. What in real life would this represent? How can an open relationship between church and community be developed and maintained. How do the church and community view themselves and each other? Where does church stop and community begin?

Cartoon four



In this cartoon the separate buildings in the community are shown as small churches. No part of the community is outside the church. The central church is fading. What could this represent?

- What different images of Christ are perceived by the four churches?
- Is the image of Christ perceived by each church the one it portrays?
- What images are being received?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the situations these cartoons have evoked?

Area Timeline Exercise (F)



To help your church in understanding more fully the reasons why your identified geographical community is as it is. It asks those who have lived in the community for a long time to tell their stories and identify the key issues that have impacted the area.

This exercise could be undertaken within the church but is best used with seniors particularly in the community. It is best used in an informal setting such as an elderly day care centre.

If you are looking to fill in greater detail to give a better picture, then you can also use this exercise in a tighter, more defined, way and mark the significant events to do with your subject on the timeline. The sort of issues may be the extent and progress of development; commercial expansion or contraction; the impact of local or central government policy; or the changing demographics of the area in terms of age or ethnicity.

As key issues are identified it is useful to mark them on a timeline.



Developed from The Shaftesbury Society –
Getting to know your neighbours project, p75



Extended Family Exercise (F)



To help individuals to identify the extent of their relational networks (and collate these responses to gain a bigger picture for the whole church).

In order to do this, first you have to identify your networks of relationships. You also need to recognise that often those that you have least connection with, or who seem as though they are unlikely to be interested in faith things, could be your best prospects.

The idea of being intentional and strategic in these relationships might feel a little uncomfortable. After all we don't want to treat people like projects or the gospel like a product. That said, if we knew someone had an illness and we had the cure, it would be selfish not to share it. Or if we have received good news and do not share it, that would also seem strange.

Often we assume we are 'pushing' what people don't need or want; but how do we know if we never ask? And how do we know that what they are rejecting is what we are actually offering, unless we talk with them about it and show them the benefit of it?

Exercise: Extended Family

Around the diagram below list all the people you know, who are not yet Christian, under the different headings and in the different settings of your life. Then categorise them according to the depth of the relationship by attaching to their name

- C = Close
- D = Distant
- A = Acquaintance
- O = One-Off

This exercise helps the church to identify its warmest contacts. It will also identify how many in the church have lost touch with the unchurched.

Where social media is concerned, the likelihood is that there will be far too many contacts for you to list all of them, so simply insert the number of 'friends' under each social media setting you belong to (Facebook, MSN, Twitter, etc).

Don't forget to write your name in the centre.

Then give some thought to:

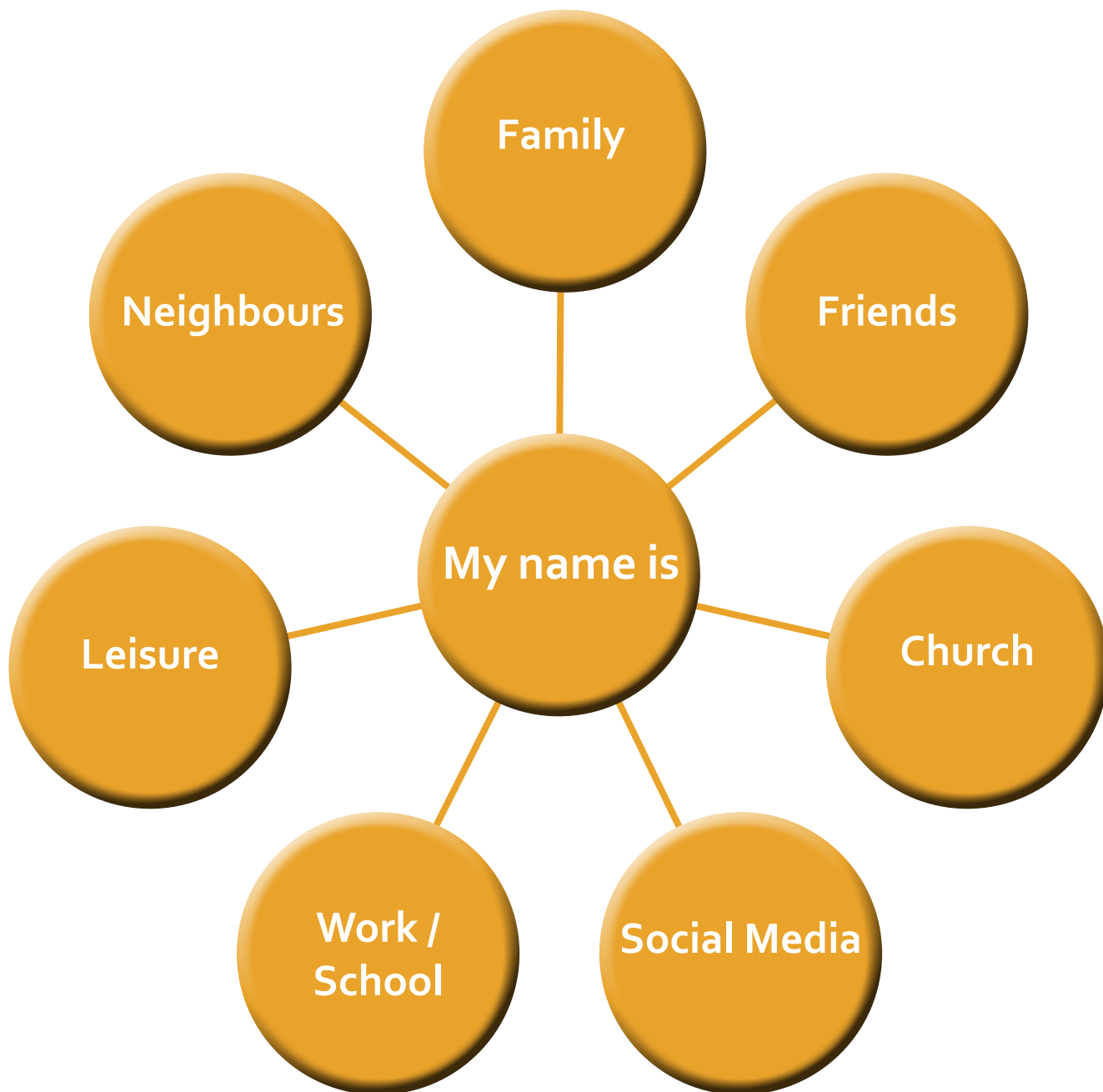
- Where they are presently on their spiritual journey.
- How you can help them take further steps.
- How you can get further involved in commonly-held interests.
- How you can credibly communicate the gospel to them.
- Can the church provide resources or events that will help and be acceptable to those you are seeking to reach?

Begin to formulate a strategy for the three warmest contacts.

It is always helpful to commit collectively to pray for, and reach out to, these individuals over the next year. Share with someone the names of those for whom you are praying, so that they can pray with you and hold you to account to keep on developing the relationship and opportunity. Have a regular church slot, either in a morning service, small group or church meeting, for people to share how their efforts are progressing. This can both encourage and hold to account.

It is essential that individual members of the church are mobilised to mission otherwise the church will fail to fulfil its true potential in the area of mission.





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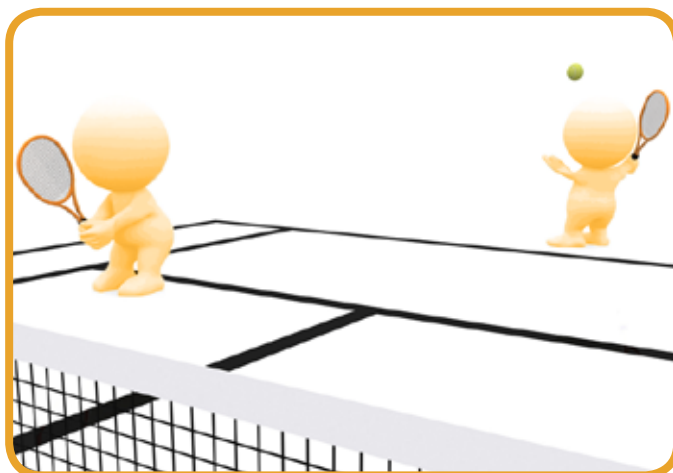
Interests Exercise (I)



To get the congregation to think through how they might engage more fully with those they know, with a view to leading them to consider issues of faith.

Identify three of your unchurched friends. As you think about them, seek to answer the following questions:

- 1 What are the things you have in common with them that make them your friends?
- 2 What are their hobbies, interests and leisure activities?
 - a Which of these do you share with them?
 - i Do you participate in them already with your friends?
 - ii If not how could you begin to do so?
- 3 What things would they be interested in doing that they do not do now?
- 4 When was the last time you spoke to them about your faith?
- 5 What are the things that prevent them from being interested in issues of faith?
 - a What could you do to remove these 'blockages' and make it easier for them to explore issues of faith if they so wished?
- 6 What events, courses or projects could your church do that they might be interested in being involved in?



Telling our Stories / Dreaming our Dreams Exercise (I)



To enable people to reflect upon their own experiences of your church and discover any key features.

This exercise builds a sense of understanding amongst your church members and fosters a greater sense of unity and empathy; as such it begins to promote some of the very values that **re:focus** is designed to uphold.

Time: This will take about 30/45 minutes, the time split into two halves. It is a good exercise to do at the beginning (Telling our Stories) and end of the Saturday (Dreaming our Dreams).

Dreaming our Dreams

- What kind of church do you believe in?
- How would you express your vision for the future mission and ministry of our church?
- What are your deepest hopes and longings for the Church and for our church in particular?
- What values do you believe should serve as the foundation for life at our church?
- What is God calling our church to do?
- How is God calling our church to live?

Telling our Stories

- What does our church mean to you?
- What do you believe have been the most significant events in the life of our church over recent years?
- What do you value most about our church?
- What have you found most difficult or frustrating?
- What have been some of the high and low points over the past five years at our church?
- How has our church shaped and influenced your spiritual journey?

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The 'Imagine your Witness' Exercise (I)



To encourage you to reflect on your church's witness.

Each participant is encouraged to relax, close their eyes and listen as each statement is read out. After a brief pause between each statement for them to reflect, they are encouraged to write down their thoughts before you move on to the next statement, the next pause and the next opportunity to write down their thoughts. It is a good exercise to do before you have tackled any other exercise, and suggested areas and issues.

"Imagine...
What might happen if we rediscovered our resources in Christ and learned to be channels of lavish blessing to our fellow citizens, wherever we meet them?"

Pause and Reflect

Write

"Imagine...
What might happen if we created Christian communities where people were safe to be who they are, and encouraged to become all that they can be?"

Pause and Reflect

Write

"Imagine...
All this in a country where the overwhelming majority has rejected the Church, disregarded Christianity and doesn't even know why Easter is a public holiday."

Pause and Reflect

Write

"Imagine that."

"Imagine...
What might happen if we really believed in God's power to transform people's lives?"

Pause and Reflect

Write

"Imagine...
What might happen if we were gripped with joy and gratitude by the difference Christ's love has made in our lives?"

Pause and Reflect

Write

"Imagine...
What might happen if we looked around at the people we spend our days with and asked God: How do you want me to be good news to these people?"

Pause and Reflect

Write

Developed from the Introduction of Mark Greene's booklet - *Imagine: How we can reach the UK*. (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media 1998)



The Gifts Exercise (I)



To indicate whether the members of the congregation know, and are being released to pursue, their God-given callings and gifting in meaningful places of service. It also helps the leaders identify how effective the church is in utilising members' abilities.

Without thinking too deeply about your answers, write your responses to the following questions. What we are looking for is the first thought that comes to mind.

- 1 If you could do anything for God, and time, money and circumstance were no obstacle, what would it be?
- 2 List your top three spiritual gifts?
 - a
 - b
 - c
- 3 What issues would you like to do something about, if it were possible?
 - a In the church?
 - b In your community?
 - c In the world?
- 4 If there were the opportunity, what experiences have you had (both good and bad) that you could/would like to use (with training if necessary) to come alongside others and help them?
- 5 What talents or skills do you possess?

- 6 What outside interests (outside the church that is!) do you pursue?
- 7 If you had time what interests would you like to pursue?
- 8 Do you feel there is the opportunity and encouragement in your church for you to express and pursue the calling God has placed on your life?
- 9 What personality type would you say you possess?
 - a On the line between extreme Extrovert (E) and extreme Introvert (I), where would you place yourself?
 - b On the line between extreme Optimist (O) and extreme Pessimist (P), where would you place yourself?

E _____ I

O _____ P

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Suggested resources:

Discovering the Gifts of Church Members - available from the Baptist online shop (see www.baptist.org.uk/Shop/Products/495664/Discovering_the_Gifts.aspx)

Network produced by Willow Creek (see www.willowcreek.org.uk/resource.php?r=10)

Shape Course produced by Saddleback Community Church (see www.purposedriven.co.uk/resources/item.aspx?productId=272)



Children and Teens' Module (F)



To gain a greater understanding of our church and community from a young person's perspective.

Aspiration: Our aspiration in **re:focus** is to encourage an intergenerational approach. We hope that, as much as is possible, all ages, but particularly the children and teens, will be included in every gathering as the church considers together its effectiveness in mission and ministry and plans for the future. It is essential that every section of the church 'hears' the story, views, hopes and dreams of every other group, both by age and outlook.

It is with this in mind that we would encourage teens to be included in the planning, preparation and process of **re:focus**. We have tried to identify in the general exercises those that we feel will be most suitable for teen and child involvement.

We also recognise however that not every child, teen or adult, or for that matter church, is the same. Some of the exercises suggested for teens therefore may be wholly appropriate and helpful to the whole church and vice versa. Some of the exercises recommended for adults may work equally well for children. Our aim is not to be overly prescriptive but flexible.

We want this experience to bring maximum benefit to each and every church. It needs to recognise that which is common and that which is unique about every community, both of God's people and the geographical and networked communities into which each Christian and church is placed.

It is therefore essential that the church and facilitators arrive at a place where you gain the maximum benefit for, and from, the greatest number of people, irrespective of age, in the journey that is **re:focus**.

We also however recognise that it can be intimidating for some teens to be in a larger group of adults and that they can feel that their voice and views go unheard. As a consequence it may be felt appropriate for them to do some more specific and tailored work, either on the Saturday that the church gather or in the course of their usual gatherings.

The following exercises could be completed by the young people. These are not intended to replace their involvement with the wider fellowship, but rather to supplement it.

Preparatory Studies

We would also recommend that the preparatory studies are adapted and used with the youth in small groups, or that the youth are encouraged, for the sake of this exercise, to join an intergenerational group.

Suggested Exercises:

These exercises are designed to help you:

- 1 Hear the views of your teens.
- 2 See the church and the world through their eyes.
- 3 Hear the views of those unchurched teens in your community.



Video Diary Exercise:

You can create a video diary room, a little like Big Brother, where they can individually go and answer the following questions: (These are examples and not intended to be prescriptive.)

- What's good about our church?
- What could be improved upon?
- What events if any would you feel comfortable inviting your unchurched friends along to? If your answer is none, why?
- How do you think we could engage with other teens in this community?

(The questions could be fed into the room via a speaker and microphone or tape.)

On Street Filmed Interviewing/ Questionnaire Exercise:

Develop a brief questionnaire, or use the one being developed for use by the rest of the church. Go out one Saturday and ask teens their views. Come up with three key questions, get them in front of a camera and ask them.

Photo Gallery

Get a bunch of disposable cameras and send the youth out to take pictures that reflect what's good and bad about the community from their perspective. Get the best ones developed, enlarged and exhibited.

Do the same in church.



Teens' Open Space Exercise



To create the space for people to discuss the issues and areas that are of concern to them and then stand back.

This exercise has three basic principles:

- 1 Whoever shows up are the right people to show up.
- 2 You only join a discussion for as long as you feel you have something to contribute and then you move to another group discussion that interests you and you can contribute to.
- 3 The outcomes are the only outcomes that could have come out.

The exercise helps you to encourage people to share their thoughts and ideas around a specific issue. So, for example, you could raise a question like:

- How could the church effectively engage the community in mission?
or
- What are the areas and issues that are holding us back from growing as a church?

You then give every participant a piece of paper and ask them to write one area or issue that they would like to talk about. Each person then shares what they have written. Together you group the areas and issues so that repeated issues are put together.

If you end up with say ten issues or areas and you have 50 people, you can either choose to do two sessions and look at five at a time, or all ten at the same time. You allocate space or rooms, and each issue gets a large piece of paper. You then allocate time for discussion, reminding the group of the basic principles and the question we are seeking to answer. Then you set them off.

At the end of the time, gather the sheets together and put them up. Allow people to see what others have been doing and add their comments on the paper.

Look together for common trends and let people make observations.

Once you have highlighted the major issues you can then use the Prioritising Exercises (page 28) to prioritise them.



Merlin Exercise (I)



Aim

To help your congregation/leadership to begin to think about the future of your mission and work out how you are going to accomplish it.

Instructions:

The exercise requires a fair degree of imagination. The congregation/leadership is asked to imagine that, as if by magic, they have been transported to some future date, say, five years into the future. They are then asked to describe what the church is like, as though then is now. You should do this in broad categories: the church's worship, witness, fellowship, growth etc.

Having done this, people share their thoughts with the rest of the group.

Then the congregation/leadership gathers into small groups and are given 20 minutes to brainstorm their answers.

Having written them down, a further period of time is given to discuss and write down, from what they know of your church:

- how they got to that point
- what changes needed to be made
- how hard it was to make them
- how long the changes took.

The groups are then asked to report back.

What is the church like now?	How did we get there?



Fast Fit / Slow Fit Exercise (F)



To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the church.

Fast Fit: Using no more than eight words in total, answer each question, that's two words for each question folks! Your time is limited to 20 minutes.

Slow Fit: This is the same exercise but with no word limit and more time.

What's working?	What's stuck?
What's surprising?	Where's the opportunity?



Metaphor Exercise (I)



To help your church members to talk about how they see themselves as a church, through the use of a metaphor.

This exercise gives the congregation permission to say things that otherwise they might be reluctant to say, and describe your church in terms that they would not otherwise have identified. It is something of a left-brain way of thinking and as a consequence can prove to be quite intuitive; it will work with some better than others.

Time: This exercise can take 10 - 20 minutes.

Alternatively ...

Give groups of people a range of magazines full of pictures and get them to make a collage that best represents the life of our church.

Give individuals access to clay and ask them to sculpt a shape that represents the life of our church for them.

Time: This should take about half an hour.

Then let the groups or individuals present their creations to the rest of the church membership. (These could then be displayed in church the following Sunday. Some may be so good that they become part of the art of your church.)

Developed in the light of: Wheatley M, *Leadership and the New Science* (US: Berrett Koehler, 1999) p143

The Exercise

Simply ask the congregation to think individually... "If our church were a < * > of some kind what would it be? Say why you chose this description. Draw a picture to illustrate your ideas.

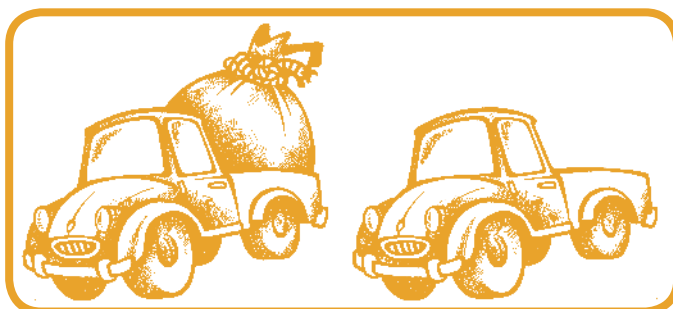
* Slot in the word from the list that seems most appropriate to your church:

- Vehicle
- Building
- Character in a Play
- Film or Story
- Animal or other Living Thing

As an example, in one church, when asked what sort of car the church was, someone said 'a Volvo ~ safe, middle-class and boring'.

This exercise is simple, quick to do, and acts as a little light relief that can still divulge valuable information.

It was gleaned from: Battram A, *Navigating Complexity* (The Industrial Society: London, 1999), p80



Mountains and Valleys Exercise (I)



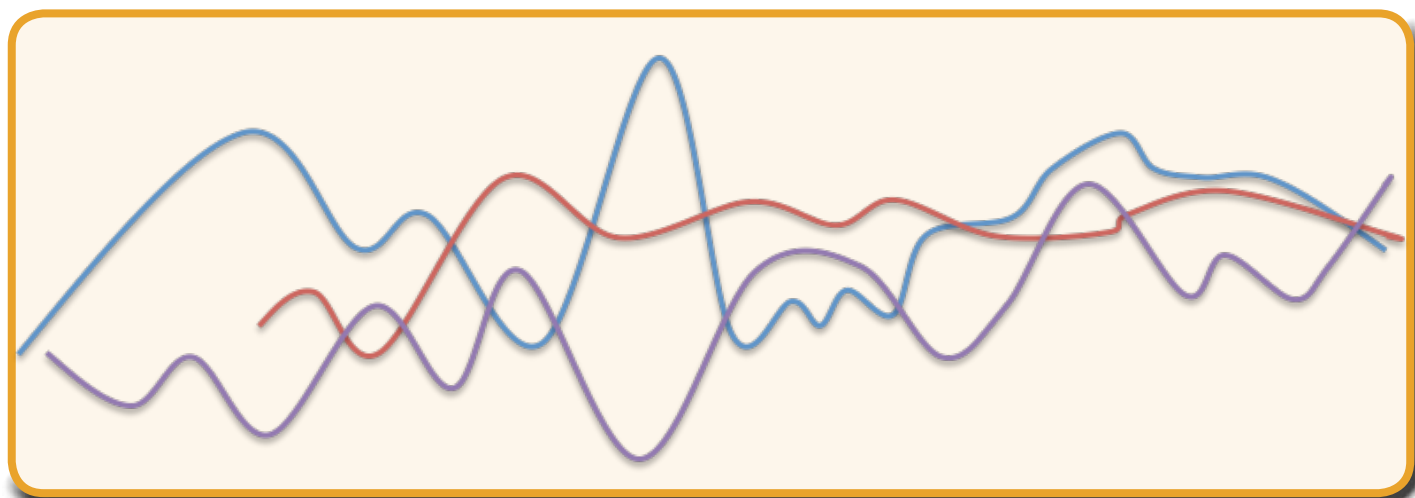
To discover who we are today by exploring the history of the church.

If you were to develop a landscape to represent the last five years, with mountain peaks to illustrate the highpoints in the life of your church and valleys to illustrate the low points, what would your skyline look like? Remember every church has both high and low points and yours will be no exception. It may be that at a high point there was also a low point. Where this is the case, draw two lines or move one in front of each other.

For example:

Having drawn the mountains and valleys, label them and list what was good about both the peaks and the troughs. (Just because something was a high point doesn't mean it didn't have both positive and negative dimensions and the same is true of the troughs.) Some of the greatest lessons a church learns can often be at their lowest moments.

Then list what was learnt - particularly where mission and ministry are concerned. What would you do differently? How did these incidences hinder or encourage community engagement?



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Gaps Exercise (F)



To help you identify gaps in your provision/programme.

Sometimes the gaps in your provision are obvious, for example if you have no children in the church then it is a fair bet that you will not have any children's work. However it can also be far more subtle, for example:

Make a list of all the groups in your church and identify the age group to which they are targeted. Put them in the table under the right category, to help identify any weighting.

Age / Groups	Children	Youth	Young Adults	Middle Aged	Baby Boomers (born 1946-64)	Seniors
Parent and Toddlers	√					
Lunch Club						√
Homegroups			√	√	√	√

- Are your provision/programmes heavily weighted towards those inside the church, or a specific age group?
- Does this reflect the composition of your community or just the church?
- Where are the gaps?
- If you could do anything to fill those gaps - time, money and circumstance being no barrier - what would they be?

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Imagine our Church Exercise (I)



To get you thinking about your church in its community setting and the nature of its mission. It is forward looking and designed to get you to be visionary.

Time: This exercise can take as long as you want, but from experience takes at least 20 minutes.

Exercise...

As you go through the exercise, after each PAUSE stop to write down your impressions.

Close your eyes for a moment:

- **Imagine what our church** would be like if its entire life were consumed by finding ways to mirror God's love, as taught and modelled by Jesus, in our neighbourhood. Imagine how that might begin to alter our current congregational activities and priorities.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** filled with God's Spirit, being of one mind and one body as it brings its life into line with God's great dream of restoring our neighbourhood, and setting things right with the world.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** – and every one of its members, without exception – fully committed to seeing God's dream become a reality.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** having one central objective for every activity, small group gathering and committee meeting it sponsored: to equip its members for living and sharing more effectively God's love in the world.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** joyfully recognising and putting to full use the particular gifts and capacities God has given us. And imagine yourself desiring nothing more in life than to develop those gifts for the purpose of offering them back to God in passionate, life-long witness and service to others.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** being so welcoming of sinners, so filled with compassion for the lost, the last and the least, that word of our love and care spread across the street, throughout our neighbourhood and even around the world.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** designing and conducting worship experiences that celebrate what God is doing in our neighbourhood and around the world, and that regularly invite each member to explore and expand their participation in these God-inspired initiatives.

PAUSE

- **Imagine our church** being committed to daily intercessory prayer for our neighbours, classmates, colleagues and friends.

PAUSE



- **Imagine our church** seriously searching the scriptures in a vibrant, new way, recognising them as a blueprint for creative engagement with the seductive forces and influences of the surrounding culture and society.

PAUSE

- **Imagine going to lunch** with the person in our church you dislike the most. And over lunch God's reconciliation allows the two of you to become friends. And others in church are inspired to follow your lead. And the reconciliation and wholeness our church experiences spill out of the front doors, across the street and into our entire neighbourhood. And our church becomes known throughout the community as a place for restoration and wholeness.

PAUSE

- Finally imagine our community without our church?
- What difference would it make?
- What difference should it make?

Now...open your eyes. You're back in the real world. Back wishing, perhaps, you were 'there', not 'here'. Back wondering what practical next steps our church could take toward becoming a more missionary people – a people reconciled to God and, in turn, invited by God to demonstrate and proclaim that reconciliation to others (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

As you think back on the imagining exercise you've just completed, what words and phrases jump out at you? List them...

Taken from *Mission Insight No 17: The Mennonite Mission Network Elkhart: USA* 2001 p5-8





Improve your Buildings Exercises (F)

To help you look at your church premises in new ways to ensure that the buildings are welcoming to all, and the most effective tool possible to aid the mission of the church.

Exercise 1:

In small groups, dream together. What might it be possible to do with your church premises if you were suddenly given £1million? Which of these ideas would benefit the local community and which would benefit the gathered church community?

Exercise 2:

Create a short questionnaire designed to gather the passer-by's opinion about your church premises inside and outside. Ask a wide group of people to gather a variety of opinions.

Exercise 3:

Complete a building survey to assess its appropriateness for the disabled. The charity, Through The Roof has an excellent resource available from their website for this exercise called 'Come In'¹. For a much more comprehensive audit, see the Diocese of London's, 'Disabled Access Audit Form'².

Exercise 4:

In pairs or small groups, try making your way around the church premises and role-play the regular activities of church life with restricted sight, restricted hearing or restricted mobility.

Exercise 5:

In small groups, walk around your local community and note which buildings are most attractive and which are most unattractive. Why? Discuss your church premises together in the light of these factors.

Exercise 6:

Check how family-friendly your premises are by taking various groups around and asking them to comment on the appearance, the seating, the floors, the toilets and other facilities. Do this with

- a family with a baby and young children
- a family with older children and
- teenagers

Exercise 7:

Repeat exercise 6 with retired people, including some who have limited mobility.

1 www.throughtheroof.org/shop/product_info.php?products_id=34

2 www.london.anglican.org/resources/Blocks/8209/DDA%20Audit.pdf



Church Structure Exercises (F)



To explore the flexibility of your church's organisational structures, and willingness to adapt to meet the challenges of contemporary mission.

- 1 Describe briefly the church's organisational structure.
- 2 How often has the church reviewed / altered that structure?
- 3 By what criteria has the church, or would the church, judge a reorganisation of its structure to be necessary?
- 4 Has the church ever considered...
 - A team ministry
 - Leaders by function
 - Elders and Deacons
 - Women in key leadership roles (Pastor, Elder, Deacon)
- 5 In what direction would you say the organisation of the church is facing ...
 - Upward in worship
 - Outward in mission
 - Inward in maintenance

Which takes priority?

- 6 Which set of words best describes the life of the church at the present time?
 - Open, Flexible, Reflective, Experimental, Dynamic and Energetic.
 - Conservative, Exclusive, Orthodox, Static, Careful and Scrupulous.



This exercise was developed on behalf of the Baptist Union by Richard Hardy, Director of The Entheos Trust© www.theentheostrust.org and used with permission.



Creative Exercise (I)



To give church members who wish to do so the opportunity to draw, or make of clay, visual representations of:

- The current mission condition of the church or community.
- The church's mission potential.

This exercise is intended for visual, creative and kinaesthetic learners.

The only 'rule' is that whatever you produce must communicate to others how you see mission either now or in the future.

Participants are given a time limit and the space and resources to create. Not everyone will want to do such an exercise. You could introduce it and if people get bored with some of the factual exercises you could give them permission to peel off and do this instead.



Prioritising Exercises



To prioritise the mission issues and mission opportunities.

Once you have a list of mission issues, this exercise will help you discover which are the most important, and to categorise them as 'most important', 'important', or 'not important'.

Dots:

Give everyone five (or more) sticky dots. Individuals can use their sticky dots to highlight which issues are of most importance. They can use one, two, three, four or five of their dots on the issues to stress how important the issue is.

Ask why people think that is the priority. Let people discuss the findings with a view to gaining consensus.

Cards:

Give everyone a pile of blank A5 cards, one for each area under discussion. They then write down what they think the main issue is within that area of church or community life.

When everyone has done so, the cards are put down on the floor in a line, with people placing their card on top of another person's where they agree that this is the most important issue. The pile with the most cards is the priority. Ask why people think that is the priority. Let people discuss the findings with a view to gaining consensus.



Real Triangles Exercise (I)



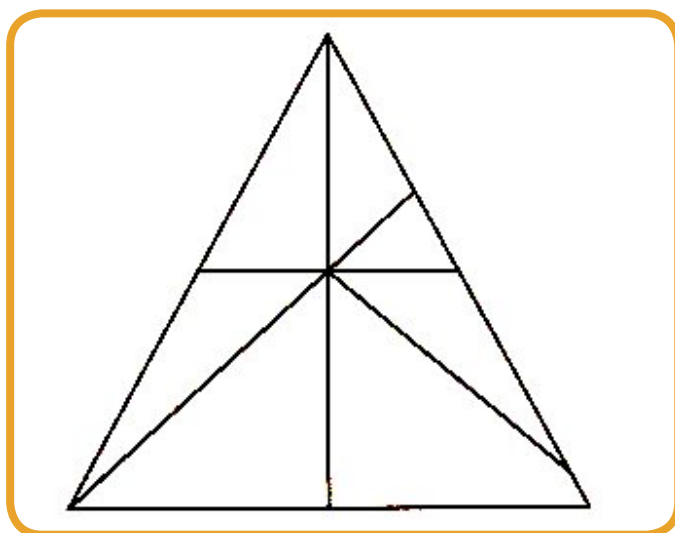
To act as an 'ice-breaker' or to introduce the **re:focus** findings.

Time: This should take no more than 15 minutes.

Instructions: People are each handed a copy of the triangle opposite and simply instructed to count the number of real triangles they see, with no help from their neighbour. The participants are asked to write the number on a piece of paper. Despite group members' pleas to define a real triangle, no other instructions are given.

People are then asked to share their number.

The number of triangles counted by people in groups doing this exercise usually ranges from 1 to 21. It is not uncommon to have someone count only 1 real triangle, because their definition of a triangle is equilateral, or count only 2 real triangles because their definition of a triangle is a right-angle triangle. It is not uncommon for participants to count more than 17 or 18 because they continuously look for anything close to a triangle and include it. Other participants will have counts in the middle because they have been discerning about counting only actual triangles (see bottom right corner of the large triangle). Variations in numbers are also due to the seriousness with which people take the task and the method they use to count triangles (and avoid double counting).



Who with? It is the perfect exercise to do with the church leaders on the Friday night of the weekend as an ice breaker and to get them to see that there are many perspectives on truth and as a consequence where the findings of the weekend are concerned. Or it could be used as an opener to the report presentation meeting for the same reasons.

Purpose: The point of the exercise is to help people see that if data truly provides answers, then everyone in the group would arrive at the same number of triangles on the paper. There are few situations in life that involve such straightforward answers as the number of triangles on a piece of paper. But data - even the simplest information - is contextual and is interpreted differently by all of us because of our experience and definitions of what should be. It is only the conversation that comes from looking at and working with data that produces helpful information.

This was sourced from *Holy Conversations - Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* p73, Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, Alban Institute, 2001, but is found elsewhere also.



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