

freshexpressions

changing church for  
a changing world



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**MEMBER'S HANDOUT**  
introduction to the course



# 1



## introduction to the course

### LEARNING OUTCOMES



**By the end of this session, we hope you will understand:**

- The place of learning, training and formation within Christian life and ministry
- An action-reflection model of learning
- The overall shape and aims of the course
- The practical arrangements for the course
- The role of group work, accompaniment and learning networks in the course
- The different learning resources available to you
- How the course links with a regional and national training strategy

**We will encourage you to reflect after the session upon:**

- Your own learning and formation through the course
- Your best learning style



## THE ORIGINS AND SHAPE OF THE COURSE



Our culture is changing. There is a widening gap between much of the population and much of the traditional church.

Many Christians in Britain are sensing God's call to go to where people are, to begin by listening and serving and seek to see fresh expressions of church develop in a range of different ways.

The Methodist Church, the Church of England, and many other denominations have affirmed this movement and call.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has called for the Church of England to become increasingly a mixed economy church: fresh expressions alongside traditional congregations in every part of the country.

The Fresh Expressions one year course has been developed to equip teams of people from local churches for this ministry in a mission shaped church.

The course has its origins in material developed over many years by Bob and Mary Hopkins of Anglican Church Planting Initiatives and has been taught in many different formats.

This material was taken up and developed by the Ground Level network of new churches in Lincolnshire, supported by the Anglican and Methodist Churches to form the Mission Shaped Leadership Course which has been running for five years.

The material and model has been further developed by Fresh Expressions through partnership with a number of national agencies and many different individuals and is now being offered in local centres like this one across the country.

A number of national agencies are contributing to the ongoing national development of the course including: the Ground Level Network; Anglican Church Planting Initiatives; the Congregational Federation and CMS.

The course is offered in different centres in the country by local partnerships of churches, dioceses, districts and training institutions.

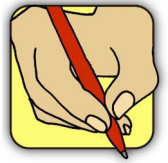
Our hope is that the course will be open and accessible to people from different church backgrounds and that, by the grace of God, we will equip one another in this ministry.

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## introduction to the course

### EXERCISE: INTRODUCTIONS, HOPES AND FEARS



**Find two other people – if possible choose people you don't already know.**

Spend a few minutes introducing yourself. Say a bit about your church background and why you have signed up for this course.

Then talk for a few minutes about your hopes and fears for the next year. What do you hope to learn? How do you hope to be equipped? Is there anything you are anxious about?



## Five Key Values

### *Value 1 - We are all disciples of Jesus Christ*

Our discipleship begins with and is symbolised by our baptism.

***Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must be born again of water and the Spirit, and he has given us baptism as the sign and seal of this new birth. Here we are washed by the Holy Spirit and made clean. Here we are clothed with Christ, dying to sin that we may live his risen life. As children of God we have a new dignity and God calls us to fullness of life***  
*Common Worship Baptism Service, p.81*

Baptism is the sign and seal of all that God has done in our lives through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: we are washed and made clean; we die to sin to live a risen life; we are being remade in God's image; we offer our lives lived to God's glory and in response to God's gracious gift. We are part of Christ's body, the Church and we are brothers and sisters together – part of God's family.

Our discipleship is the living out of our baptism in the whole of our lives. What does this discipleship involve?

In Mark's gospel, in one of the earliest descriptions of discipleship, Jesus calls his disciples "to be with him and to be sent out" (3.13-14).

In every generation, Jesus calls disciples to abundant life in this rhythm: being with Jesus and one another in worship and community and being sent out in mission.

This rhythm underlies every Christian community.

That rhythm is captured in communion: we come together to worship and receive from God in scripture, in fellowship and in communion. We are sent out to live our lives to the full and to God's glory.

Every Christian is loved by God and called to this abundant life. Every Christian is called to offer themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12.1).

We have been given different gifts and called to different ministries.

Every part of learning for ministry and sharing in God's mission is an extension of our discipleship: following Jesus Christ.



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Discipleship (and therefore ministry) is about who we are as people and the integrity and wholeness of our lives first and foremost before it is about acquiring knowledge or a particular set of skills.

When Jesus begins his teaching about discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount, he begins with a vision of Christian character and with humility. (Matthew 5.3-12).

The saints who have gone before us bear witness to this truth again and again.

***"At the Day of Judgement, we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; not how eloquently we have spoken, but how holily we have lived"***

*Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, 3*

Our vision for this course is that each member will grow in his or her Christian discipleship - that Christ will be formed in us more and more completely (Galatians 4.19). Only in that way can we bear a faithful witness to Christ.

This course is planned to take place over a year to give time and depth for this growth and development of character. Sometimes we grow more as people through periods of stretch and difficulty than through easy and comfortable times.

**Further reading:** Chapter 6 of *Learning for Ministry, Understanding Formation and* Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering your Private World*



Alongside formation of character, learning for ministry involves acquiring knowledge or wisdom (through education) and growing new skills (through training).

Therefore when we meet we will pray together and worship together. We will commit to support one another in our lives and discipleship. We will try and model something of Christ and Christian community to one another. We will respect each other as made in the image of God and as brothers and sisters in Christ. All of us, whether course leaders or course members are disciples of Jesus Christ. We will encourage one another as we seek to be bearers of Christ in the world.



**Value 2 - We are adults with different gifts and different ways of learning**

All of us will have had an experience as learners as children in school. For some, that will have been a positive experience. We were good at essays and exams. For others, that may have been very difficult.

That means we bring different hopes and anxieties into this experience of learning and this course.



We are all different. We bring a range of different life experiences and experiences of Christian ministry. We very much want to affirm and recognise those experiences as part of this learning process.

Learning as adults is not about the course members being empty vessels ready to be filled with the wisdom of the visiting speakers.

Learning happens as you and I reflect and think together - as we discuss and interact, read, worship and think about our experiences.

We all learn in different ways. Those who work with adult learners inside and outside the churches have found that there are four different learning styles:

David Kolb identifies four learning styles:

**ACTIVISTS** throw themselves enthusiastically into any new activity. They like the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and long-term consolidation. Their watchword is 'Try anything once.'! They learn best when they are in the thick of things.

**REFLECTORS** like to stand back and ponder experiences, observing them from different perspectives. They collect and analyse data before coming to conclusions. They don't like to be put on the spot or asked for immediate answers. Their motto is "look before you leap". They learn best when they have time to reflect, prepare and think about experience.

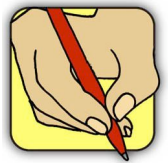
**THEORISTS** like to analyse and synthesise facts and observations into coherent theories. They think through problems in a logical way and prefer the rational and objective to the subjective. A central question for them is 'is this idea coherent and does it stand up to interrogation'. They learn best when they can see the whole picture and how it holds together.

**PRAGMATISTS** are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They are practical problem-solvers and want to know 'does it work?' They learn best when they can see that their learning will have an impact on what they do and are often motivated to learn by the practical payoff they see at the end.



### How do you learn?

How would you describe your own preferred learning style? Write down the category you think best describes your preferred style of learning. What in your past experience of learning suggests this to you?



Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, British educationalists, developed this idea further by designing a test to identify one's preferred learning style. The Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Test, enables people to discover their own and others' preferred learning style. The answers that individuals give to a questionnaire indicate to what degree those answering fit each categories. Whilst we all have some aspects of each style within our personalities and there are times and contexts when one style will be more evident, nevertheless, we generally have a learning style preference and this can be discerned from the questionnaire answers. (If you wanted to do a form of the test for yourself, you can use the short version of it found in Yvonne Craig's book recommended in the Going Further section)



We will try to use a variety of learning styles through the course. Not everyone will be helped by everything - that's just normal!

There are also a variety of resources you can access inside and outside the session:

- The Bible
- Material from the Christian tradition
- Each other
- Material from other disciplines
- The course handouts
- The original handouts accessible on the course website ([www.freshexpressions.info](http://www.freshexpressions.info))
- The on-line guide to fresh expressions.
- Books and articles
- Learning and action guides

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### *Value 3 - God calls us to work together*

Rublev's icon is an ancient Christian painting in the Eastern orthodox tradition.

It describes the moment in Genesis when Abraham is visited by God in a place called Mamre (Genesis 18). As Christians reflected on this story, they came to see it as an early witness in the Old Testament to the idea of God as Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit - an open and inviting community.

Christians are called to reflect the nature of God not by ourselves but with others.

As we seek to grow fresh expressions of church and new communities, we do that first by reflecting God's nature in the ways that we relate together, worship together and work together.



This working together (collaboration) is the pattern for Christian ministry in God's own nature, in the pattern of Jesus and the apostles and in the church down the ages.

We will follow this in the course by sharing together, by the example of course leaders and the way things are taught; by presenting a model of ministry in which people work together and through beginning to work out the application of principles together. Teams in mission and ministry are at the heart of fresh expressions.

Pioneer ministry is not a solitary calling but a calling to live and work with others.

We want to build in this course a community of people who pray together, share their lives for a short period of time (hence the residential) and are committed to supporting one another and learning together after the course ends.



***Value 4 - We learn by reflecting on our past and presence experience***

No-one can teach you in advance all you need to know about how to begin and lead a fresh expression of church.

Every single situation is different. We are seeking to discover what God is doing in every place and to join in.

Ministry and mission is also very much about learning responses and actions and developing habits, instincts and imagination. All these things are best learnt in practical involvement in the mission experience.

Many traditional models of learning for ministry follow this shape:

**High initial training – low ongoing support**

This high initial training is often appropriate for a ministry which centres around sustaining an existing Christian community.

The pattern for pioneer ministries needs to be the opposite:

**Low initial training – high ongoing support**

We don't believe that there is a great deal you need to learn in advance. Many people here have already started working towards a fresh expression of church or new initiatives in mission. But people pushing out in mission-shaped church and engaging in fresh expressions of church do need to interact and be supported in learning about that ministry.

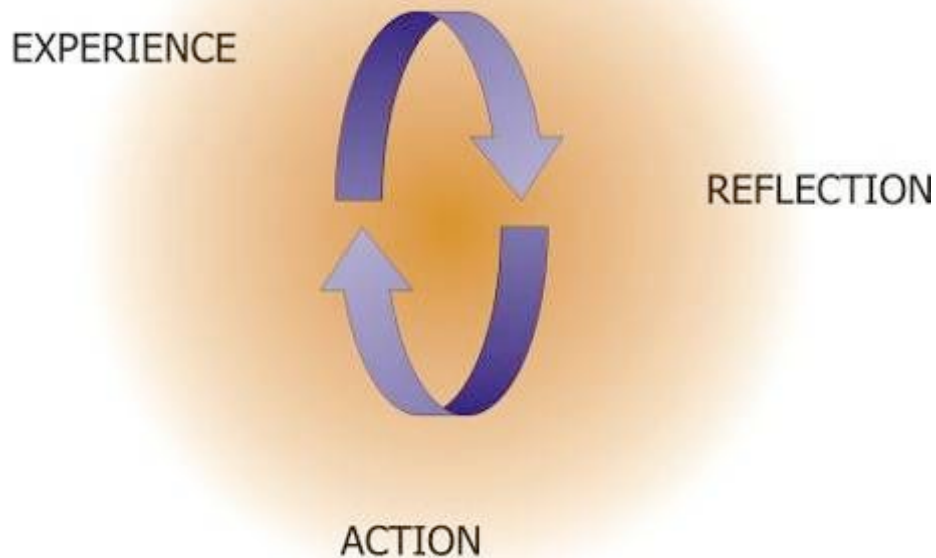
To support this reflection:

- The course is shaped over a year
- We will do a lot of reflection and thinking in groups.
- We aim to facilitate constant interaction between your developing practical ministry and our learning together. That's why each session will have time to plan application in your context.
- We encourage everyone to have someone who accompanies the journey who can help you to reflect and think about what is happening.

You may also be helped by keeping a journal or writing regularly to yourself about what you are experiencing and learning.

The real place of learning for ministry is as you begin your fresh expression. The course offers a chance to think and reflect and to go back with new wisdom and ideas.

The basic model for learning here is in this simple shape, sometimes called the pastoral cycle.



Experience leads to reflection which leads in turn to a different set of actions.

Forming the connection between what we experience and the resources of our faith is a vital part of the learning. This is often called "theological reflection".

We experience certain things in ministry. Sometimes things go well. Sometimes they are difficult. Sometimes they go as we expect. Sometimes the unexpected happens.

This is the model of Jesus and the disciples as he sends out the twelve and the seventy (according to Luke) and reflects with them on the experience.

Each event and period in the life of a fresh expression or mission-shaped endeavour is rich material for reflection and learning. But that learning doesn't happen by accident. It happens as we take time away from the situation, as we reflect, as we have some input from others and talk together.

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### **Value 5 - We believe in life-long learning**

The foundational attitude for the Christian disciple and the Christian minister are the same. Jesus said:

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Matt 5.3.***

***"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you: but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave" Matt 20.25-26***



St. Augustine of Hippo (an African Bishop and theologian in the 4th century) said in one of his sermons:

***"Construct no other way for yourself of grasping and holding the truth than the way constructed by Him who, as God, saw how faltering were our steps. This way is first, humility, second, humility, third humility. And however often you should ask me, I would say the same, not because there are no other precepts to be explained, but if humility does not precede and accompany and follow every good work we do, and if it is not set before us to look upon, and beside us to lean upon, and behind us to fence us in, pride will wrest from our hand any good we do while we are in the very act of taking pleasure in it" Augustine Sermon 61.4***

The aim of this course is not to produce missionary experts but to develop missionary learners who will go on learning for the whole of their lives.

Our world will go on changing and our understanding of God's mission will keep on growing.

The foundation for this kind of learning is the quality of humility: knowing there is a huge amount that we do not yet know or understand. Teachability is a vital part of this humility.

There are many different ways to go on learning.

We hope that as many people as possible will go on from the course to form learning networks who keep in touch by email and meet up from time to time to continue your exploration. Those networks will begin to form during the course itself.

We hope the course will give you a greater appetite for bible study and point you to things you want to follow up and explore in the years to come.

We will introduce you to more books than you will have time to read and you can return to these in the coming months.

There are other ways of formal training for these and others ministries: by the end of the year everyone will have a sense of there being so much more still to learn.



## GROUNDRULES AND PRACTICAL ADMINISTRATION

### Respect for one another

Part of the richness of learning together in an ecumenical group is that we will meet Christians who think differently and who have a range of perspectives on faith. That is a gift. But each person who comes needs to know that we will treat each other with respect.



### Confidentiality

Much of the work we do will be in small groups and table top discussions. We want people to share themselves - both strengths and weaknesses. That can only be done with appropriate confidentiality. The personal information which is shared in these meetings must not be shared elsewhere.

### Responsibility

You are responsible for your own learning. It's up to you to get the most from the course and to make time for the reading, reflection and exercises in between the sessions. We are realistic that all of our lives are unpredictable and sometimes very busy – but to be fair to yourself and the group as a whole please make sure you normally have time for this reading and reflection.

### Christian conduct

We are assuming that everyone here is a Christian disciple and that normal Christian standards of courtesy, charity, kindness and service will be the way that we relate to one another.

### Attendance and punctuality

DVD and stories of Fresh Expressions

**If these are shared in the session – consider in groups these questions:**

1. What principles of mission practice have struck you from the stories?
2. What has inspired you for your situation?
3. Do you observe any potential weaknesses?



Otherwise get the DVD and use it in a group – reflecting afterwards on these questions.

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### APPLICATION

On your own first...

- Think of how you will practically apply something from what you have learnt in this session - e.g. start a course journal, research one of the stories that's inspired you, read further, begin to share what you are doing and learning outside the course. Write down a note of your plan of action.

Then with one other person...

- Each share what you have decided
- Pray for one another's plans

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### FURTHER REFLECTION

In this section of the notes for each session we will suggest a number of different ideas for reflection to help you go further and deeper in the material covered in the session. No-one is expected to do all of them. We hope that you will have a go at two or three over the coming weeks and return to some of the others as the course moves on.

Some of the categories are similar each time (there will always be journal suggestions and a bible study). Some are different each time.

### 1 - Begin a Course Journal

Decide whether you want to use a notebook and pen or a Word document. Try to answer the following questions:

Why are you doing the Expressions Course  
What are your own hopes and fears for the course?

### 2 - Begin a Learning Partnership

Pray and consider whether you should start to team up with one or two others on the course (or in your church/mission team at home) to review your learning & implementation of the course.



### 3 - Bible Study: Acts 20.17-38

Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus is a very important text in Christian reflection on what it means to be a minister. Take time to read it and get to know it well in the coming months.

- What does the passage teach you about character and formation in Christian ministry?
- What does the passage teach you about knowledge and wisdom in Christian ministry?
- What does the passage teach you about skills and training in Christian ministry?

### 4 - Practical Exercise

Think more about your preferred learning style through one or both of these exercises:

(a) Think back to the last time you went on a course or to some learning event (back in your school days or at work or through church). Where did you learn the most:

- Through the lectures and formal input
- Through interaction with other course members
- Through reading and writing essays
- Through practical work

(b) Explore learning styles in more depth through Yvonne Craig's book, Learning for Life. There is a simple questionnaire in the back to help you identify your own learning style.



## 5 - Course Resolutions

What four or five things do you need to put in place to gain the most from this course? Write them down and share them with someone (a friend, a fellow student, a Christian minister).

## 6 - Further Reading



Steven Croft and Roger Walton, *Learning for Ministry: Making the most of study and training especially Chapters 1, 5, 13 and 15*

Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action*, SPCK, 1996

Yvonne Craig, *Learning for Life: A Handbook of Religious Education*

Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering your Private World*, Highland, 1984 (an excellent introduction to character at the centre of Christian ministry)