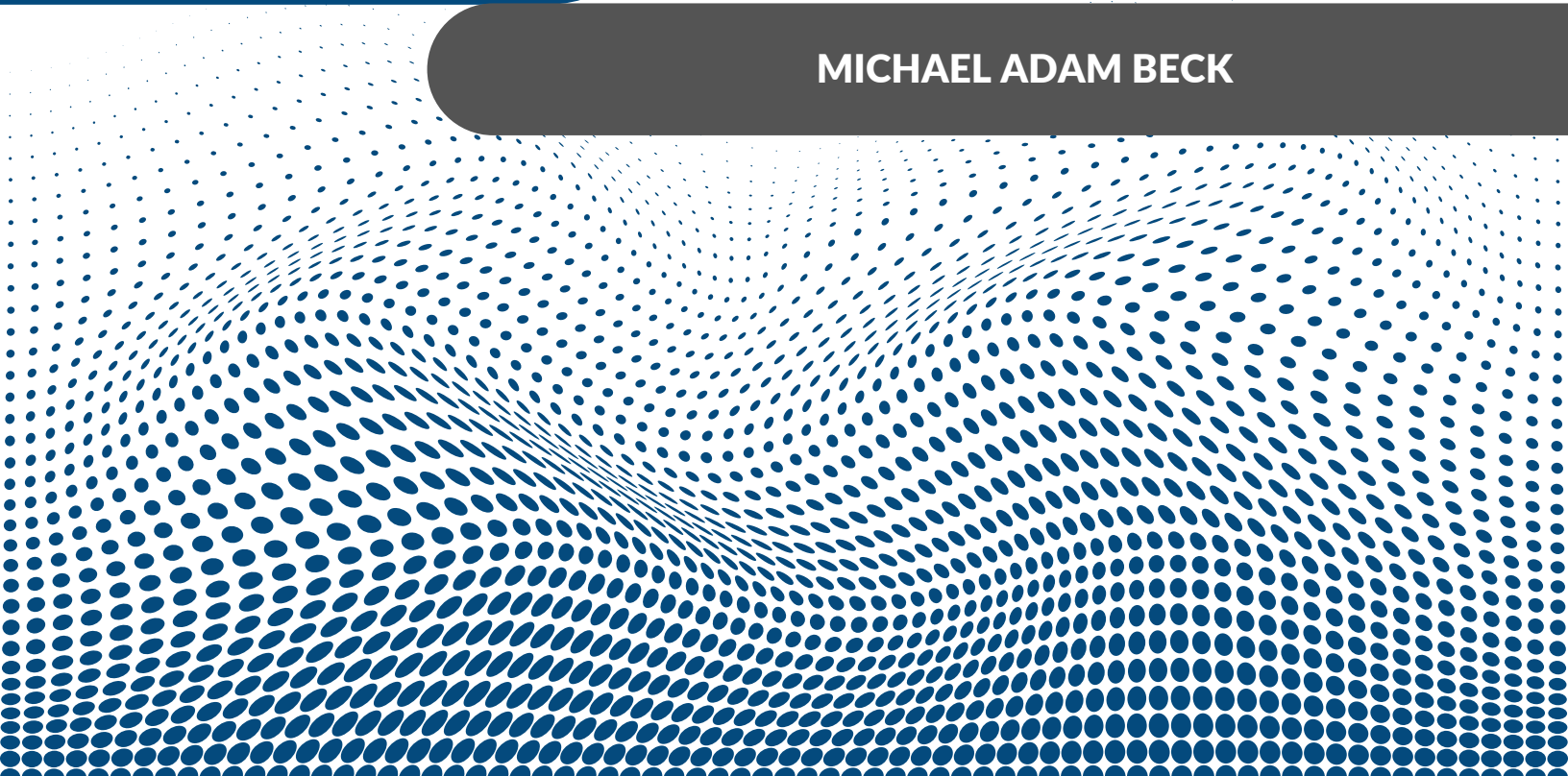


HOW TO START A TEAM FOR FRESH EXPRESSIONS

GUIDEBOOK

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PRAYER

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way...

— Luke 10:1-2 —

Jesus orients the disciples to their surroundings. He teaches them to see the harvest that is plentiful, and that the laborers are few. He instructs them to pray, “ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers” (Luke 10:2).

The disciples then become the answer to their own prayers. They must put sneakers on their prayers and then go! Jesus sends out the disciples in teams of two.

Perhaps there is a blueprint here to begin the team formation process. Begin with an intentional conversation with God. Here’s a couple prayer prompts:

- God who are you calling me to partner with? Who is/are my teammate(s)?
- God what people group are you calling us to reach?
- What place are you sending us to?

Jesus’s own life was a rhythm of advance and retreat, slow and fast, still and sent, contemplation and action. Most church teams get stuck in the still form of prayer. Do you have at least one friend who will be your two-by-two partner? Are there people in your congregation, your family, friends, or a co-worker, who will commit to join you in this work? What do you already do every week? What places do you already spend time (gym, park, favorite restaurant, classroom, theater, coffee shop, library, online hangout)? Who do you connect with in those spaces?

Perhaps you need to prayerfully spend time out in the community. Prayer walk. Who do you see? What do you notice? Remember these three guides:

- Pray: actively pray over your harvest field, see the people and places.
- Observe: what do you notice about the people, places, and practices.
- Encounter: if someone engages with you, have a conversation, ask questions, learn their name and story.

After a time of mobile, active prayer. Spend some time contemplating. What is God showing you. Who is God showing you.

PURPOSE

THE GREATER GOOD

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

– Luke 9:1-2 –

Jesus sends out the disciples in teams with a mission, “proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick” (Luke 9:2).

Every great team is grounded in purpose. That purpose must be focused on the greater good. The kingdom of God refers to the will of God being done. It’s about the love and peace of God being made real on earth. This always involves healing in some form.

The healthiest teams I know form around a common mission. Fresh Expressions are forms of church for people who are not currently connected to any church. Amid an epidemic of loneliness and isolation, communal life in Jesus can provide safe relationships where we can find authentic connection and healing.

What is the purpose of your team? Here’s some guiding questions:

- What are the assets and opportunities in our community?
- What are the broken places and needs in our community?
- Who is God calling us particularly to form relationships with?
- What are the intrinsic motivations of our team?

These questions can help your team find its purpose.

For example, at Fresh Expressions Florida we seek to empower clergy and lay leaders as they cultivate missional communities in ordinary places. Our purpose is to reach new people, in new places, and in new ways. We believe that Gospel is good news for all and has the power to transform the lives of individuals and communities all over the state of Florida. Our focus is the common good.

Teams become dysfunctional when they start to exist only for themselves and to merely sustain their own existence. Unhealthy church teams often get crossed up around purpose. They take an any means necessary approach, often to demonstrate success in the prevailing metrics. This can sometimes begin to prioritize “the mission” over relationships, and the mission is often to “grow the church.”

In the Fresh Expressions movement, *relationships are the mission*. Our purpose is not to grow organizations, but to authentically listen to and love our neighbors.

CULTIVATING THE HABITAT

VALUES

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

— John 13:34-35 —

A team is a communal environment that nurtures a set of relationships. Some refer to this as a team “culture.” Jesus teaches the disciples the kind of relational environment he wants them to be, “Love each other the way I have loved you” (John 13:34). He is teaching them to be a community that embodies as certain value... love. It’s actually through creating this environment of shared love that outsiders will come to know Jesus.

I like to think of a team as a habitat of God’s love that forms in everyday life. A team is an environment shaped around the shared values of a group of people. Values are not just ideals—they are the embodiment of these ideals. If I want to run a marathon but never get off my coach, it’s an aspiration but not a value. If I’m serious I will exercise, eat well, and train my mind and body for the race.

To create a healthy habitat, we need values to be a compass for the kind of community we are trying to create. In Fresh Expressions our values are:

- Inclusive: a manifestation of God’s outreaching love, a place of healing not harm, an environment of grace, a belonging before believing space where all are welcome and where the “good news” is good for all and made available to all (Luke 4:18–19).
- Accessible: meaning close, culturally appropriate, and speaking the common language(s) of the context (John 1:14).
- Transfiguring: where we acknowledge the innate “very goodness” in every person and understand how each of us are on a journey of renewal (Genesis 1:27). This empowers us for works of mercy and justice in our communities.
- Connectional: fresh expressions are church in themselves and exist in a relationship with each other and the wider church (Acts 15).

As a team, you should decide together what your core values will be. How will we embody those values in our shared life? How will we respond if those values are broken by team members?

A team is less an organization and more a living organism. But organisms need organization. I like to think of this as *organized love*. The “loving first journey” provides the organizational framework for the team, or a map for our journey together.

LOVING FIRST JOURNEY

MAP

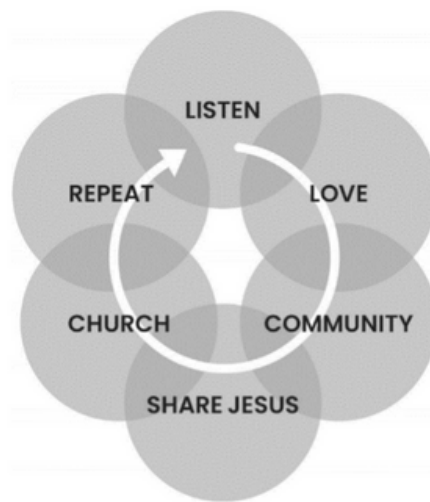
Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you.

— Luke 10:5-6 —

The movements of the loving first journey are as follows:

- Find a friend (or more than one) in a corner of your life.
- Prayerfully discover a simple way to love the people around you.
- Deepen relationships with them over time.
- Share your feelings about Jesus when opportunities arise.
- Encourage those coming to faith to form a small Christian community where they are and connect them to the wider church.

This is a kind of map for forming new Christian communities that we also call the “listening first journey.” It begins with listening, loving and serving, forming community, sharing Jesus, church, and repeat.



The journey describes how “organized love” usually works. Perhaps its most helpful to think of these moves as an adventure filled with unexpected twists, turns, and even setbacks. As we keep moving, following the Spirit, we explore new horizons of possibility. Each movement overlaps with the ones that precede and follow it. We never stop “listening” and “loving,” or “building relationships,” as we journey towards church. It’s also important to note that each movement of the journey is inherently good in itself. They are not a means to an end, rather each dimension is an end in itself.

Jesus sending out the disciples to locate a “person of peace” looks a lot like this journey (Luke 10:5).

START WITH WHO YOU HAVE

WIDENING CIRCLES

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”

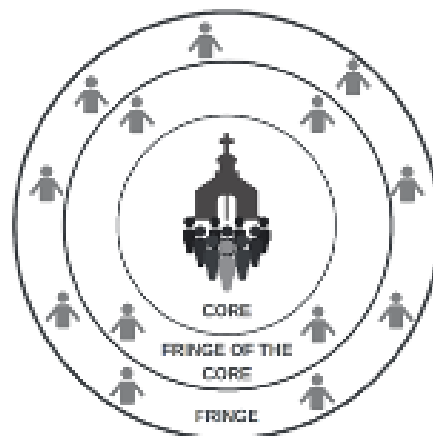
— Matthew 4: 18-19 —

Many teams are so busy dreaming about the ideal team members, they miss the people that are often right in front of them.

The best leaders I know are discoverers of unseen people. They have a knack for noticing people that are often undervalued or “unqualified.” They see people and believe in them until those people believe in themselves.

Jesus started with the leftovers on the pick-up basketball court. The ones who weren’t picked first on any one’s team. His team consisted mostly of the throwaways of society and those who were invisible to the religious establishment. As he encountered them in the midst of ordinary life, he invited them to follow him (Matthew 4:18-19). Each relationship expanded into more relationships. Consider that Jesus went to Peter’s house to heal his sick mother-in-law. Word got out that in Jesus was even the power to heal in-laws! Suddenly, the whole town showed up on Peter’s doorstep (Mark 1:29-34).

While it may not start in this way, your team should grow to include people in each of these three spheres:



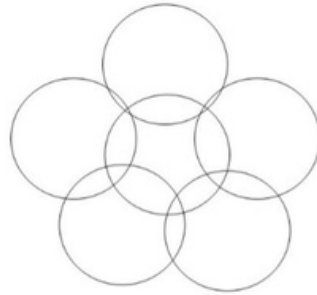
Core: solid followers of Jesus, may already be part of your church.

Fringe of the Core: these are people either new to the life of the church, or maybe not in your church. These folks have relationships in the community and know the landscape of practices there.

Fringe: these are people outside the life of your church but will be your “persons of peace” from Luke 10:1-9. They may not be Christian, but they open the door to the potential relational networks in your community.

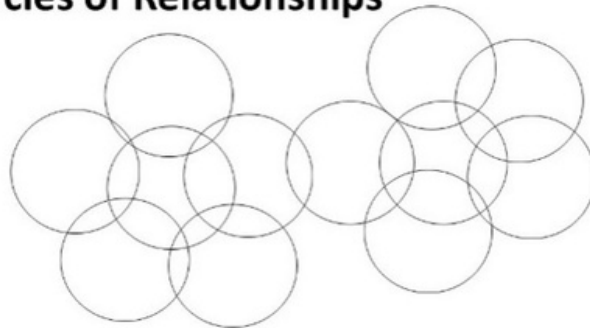
Every relationship opens more relationships. Consider if your team starts with a couple of friends you know:

Circles of Relationships



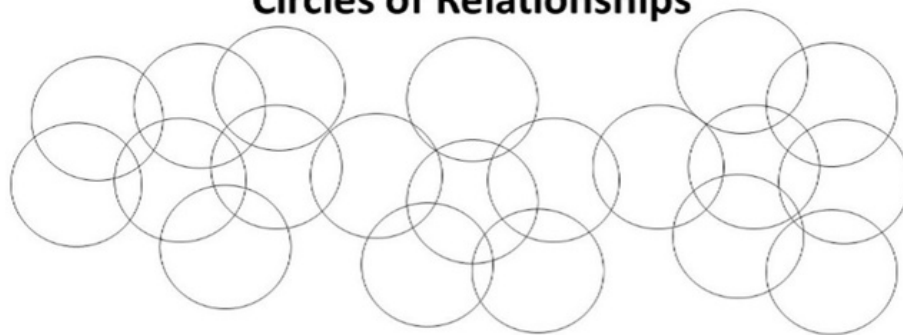
Now consider that each person on your team also belongs to a circle of relationships. One person can open a circle of an entirely new group of people:

Circles of Relationships



Each person who you build relationships with as a team opens up more possible relationships:

Circles of Relationships



Every circle represents a person of sacred worth and great value. You can begin to see how just a small team can actually have relational connection and capital with an ever-expanding circle of inclusion.

“You have not because you ask not” is really true when it comes to building teams. Start with who you have. Once you establish a clear purpose, explain to people what you are trying to accomplish and invite them to join you!

DIVERSITY

ROLES AND GIFTS

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
— Ephesians 4:11-13 —

Resilient teams include a diversity of roles and gifts.

Roles

In Fresh Expressions we believe there are several essential roles needed in every team dynamic:

Adventurers: The Church of England defines Pioneers as: people called by God who are the first to see and creatively respond to the Holy Spirit's initiatives with those outside the church; gathering others around them as they seek to establish a new contextual Christian community. In Fresh Expressions UM we call pioneers... adventurers.

Advocates: People who are passionate about supporting and releasing adventurers. These are people who see connection points and encourage those connections to form. The advocate is essential in the growth as they listen to the context, keep the adventurer on track, and seek new ways of flourishing. The advocate is someone grounding the fresh expressions in deep ongoing prayer.

Authorizers: People who use their role to foster the release of adventurers and to influence the system to be more willing to experiment. Usually, authorizers hold some form of authority within the system. These are the storytellers and the promoters who gather support and share the stories of the adventurers.

Persons of Peace: A “person of peace” is a concept drawn from Luke 10:6. Jesus sends the disciples out in teams of no less than two people to find people who exchange welcome and peace. We join them and do life at their table, eating what is set before us. This puts us in the position of guest—not host. We are dependent on the hospitality of the host, not vice versa. This may be someone who lets us meet in their home, office, shop, or restaurant. It may be a native of the practice we are forming community around: yoga, dog walking, fitness, farming, social justice, art, tattooing, or eating burritos.

Gifts

Ephesians 4:7-13 describes five distinct gift sets (or personality types) Jesus gives for the maturing of the body of Christ. Alan Hirsch, a prominent Australian missiologist, author, and thought leader in the missional church movement describes this as an APEST typology, (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher). He believes there are actually five archetypes, already evident long before the earthly ministry of Jesus. The fivefold typology is in some way a category universal to all humankind. When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit breathes on these preexisting personality traits, imbuing them with new life for the service of the kingdom. I find these five personality giftings to be the Biblical expression of what personality psychologists call the Big Five Personality Traits.

A robust team will grow to include all five giftsets:

1. *Apostle*: the “sent one” and “healer” innovating, moving to the edge, connecting outsiders, and expecting the supernatural are primary giftings. Openness is a primary personality trait of the apostle.
2. *Prophet*: the “activist” and “truth teller” proclamation, outreach, and justice ministries are primary giftings. The personality of a prophet is understood as a spectrum of neuroticism. Think about Jesus as a healthy prophet, emotive, sensitive, but calm and grounded.
3. *Evangelist*: the “recruiter” and “promoter” proclamation, networking, and connector of people are primary giftings. The primary personality trait of the evangelist is extroversion.
4. *Pastor*: the “nurturer” and shepherd” creating fellowship, caregiving, and cultivating others are primary giftings. The primary personality trait of the pastor is agreeableness.
5. *Teacher*: “the preacher” and “educator” proclamation and teaching are primary giftings. The primary personality trait of the teacher is conscientiousness.

Here are some guiding questions to help with team formation and development:

- Which of the primary roles is each person on your team (Adventurer, Advocate, Authorizer)?
- Do you know a “person of peace” who might open a new circle of relationships, space, or practice for your team?
- Which of the primary giftsets does each team member bring (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher)?
- Who is missing from your team? Who do personally know that embodies these roles and gifts? Might they have a conversation with you about joining the team?

FERTILIZER

TIME

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

— John 15:5 —

Here is the secret ingredient of every great team—time.

Good teams spend time together. Nurturing deep relationships is not an overnight affair. It requires consistent and repeated patterns of being together.

Remember... relationships are the mission. The Fresh Expressions way requires more than just task teams, or people teaming up to try and accomplish a goal. They are also different than teams in the business world who work together ultimately to earn a paycheck.

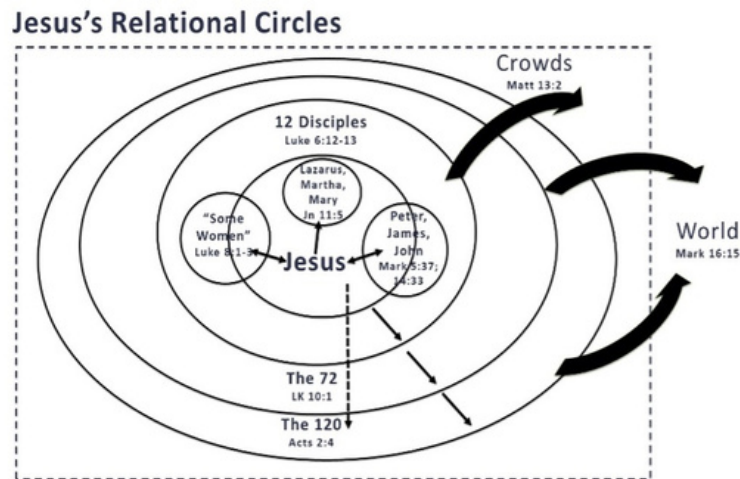
Jesus gave us an image for the community of disciples. In John 15, Jesus describes himself as the true vine. He is the central life-giving relationship of the entire organism. A branch disconnected from the vine cannot bear fruit, it withers and dies (John 15:5). Another important aspect of the vine imagery is the “vinegrower.” Jesus refers to God the father as the vine dresser, who cuts, prunes, and does the work of helping branches bear fruit (John 15:2).

No one in the community is called to do that work. It belongs to God alone. We do not decide who gets cut off the vine. We dwell together, abiding in the vine, bearing fruit, which glorifies the father (John 15:8). Fruit bearing is less about action and more about abiding. We don’t actually do anything in this image. God is doing all the work. God the Son is the embodiment of the life-giving vine. God the father is the cultivator. God the Spirit is the life force that flows through the vine into us. Our only responsibility in this equation is to “abide” in Christ (John 15:4). Abiding in Christ, abiding in one another... takes time.

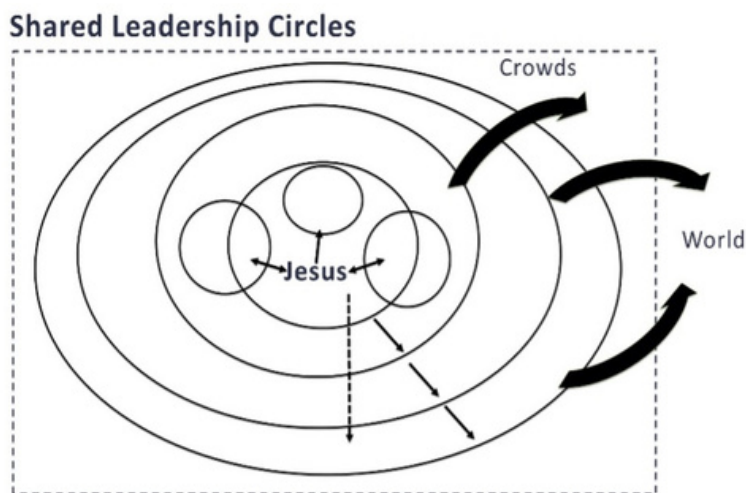
We are a vine of many branches. Abiding in this sense is about living with, dwelling in, and inhabiting a living relationship with Christ together. There are many ways to go about this abiding: prayer, meditation, studying Scripture, worship, to name a few. At the heart of each one is the intentionality of growing in our relationship with Jesus as a community. Spending time with Jesus. Listening to Jesus. Hearing from Jesus. Communing with the Triune God. Good teams abide together in this way.

You may have already realized one leader can only nurture so many people. So, let’s consider the relational circles and shared leadership way of Jesus himself. It seems that

Jesus had people who lived in greater degrees of intimacy and followership. Some like the female disciples who traveled along with him providing out of their own means (Lk 8:1-3), Lazarus, Martha, and Mary in Bethany (Jn 11:5), Peter, James, and John who were present for significant healings and the transfiguration (Mark 5:37, 14:33). Yet there were also the 12 core disciples (Lk 6:12-13), the 72 sent on mission (Lk 10:1), and the 120 who gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). As he impacted these disciples deeply, they in turn interacted with the crowds and ultimately the entire world:



Now using the diagram below, imagine your team as a series of overlapping circles. Who seems to be in closest proximity alongside you as you abide in Jesus? How are you spending time with your core team? Are you sharing leadership with them? How will you empower your team to spend time with those in the more distant circles?



Leaders who want to bear “fruit that will last” are those who grow fruit on other people’s trees. They nurture others to the fullness of their potential. Fresh Expressions is not about big numbers and mega gatherings. It’s a one person, one small, beautiful community at a time way of being church.

ADAPTABILITY

FAILING FORWARD

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not get bent out of shape

-An unrecorded beatitude of Jesus

This last chapter has to do with how your team should get started. The key is... to start. Start ugly.

Unlike the prevailing institutional church wisdom, failure is not only an option—failure is expected. Fail fast. Fail frequently. Fail forward. But learn from your failures. A failure to learn from your failures is the real failure.

A Fresh Expression team does not typically operate like a more conventional church committee. Inherited church committees often function in causal logic systems. Causal rationality starts with a pre-determined goal and seeks to develop strategic steps toward meeting that goal. We create a vision statement, then figure out benchmarks and a timeline to accomplish the vision.

Fresh Expressions teams often employ the effectual reasoning typical of entrepreneurs. The word “effectual” is the inverse of “causal.” Effectual reasoning does not start with a specific goal. Rather, it begins with a given reality and allows goals to emerge contingently over time in response to the environment. Each person on the team is noticing and imagining possibilities as the circle of relationships expands. A single conversation with a newfound “person of peace” can send the team in a totally new direction.

While causal reasoning focuses on expected return, effectual reasoning emphasizes affordable loss. We know some of our experiments won’t work, but we sustain a posture of just-in-time learning as we iterate our way forward.

Causal reasoning depends upon competitive analyses, effectual reasoning is built upon strategic partnerships. Each new relationship opens new possibilities. Causal reasoning urges the exploitation of pre-existing knowledge and prediction, effectual reasoning stresses the leveraging of contingencies.

Thus, by taking the “effects” and starting with who and what our teams already have, we begin to create something new from the pieces. Through a series of relational interactions, as opportunities and strategic partnerships arise, multiple outcomes are possible. My wife, Rev Jill Beck famously refers to this as “throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks.”

Bad teams live in a posture of competition, they are focused on efficiency, production,

results, and surety. Good teams live in a posture of collaboration, they are focused on relationships, wellbeing, experimentation, and wonder.

This is why the key trait of fresh expressions teams is adaptability. It requires us to develop a different set of competencies, like paying attention, being present, aware in the moment, improvising, and adapting as things emerge.

So, a team should be less prepared to deliver a preconceived monologue and more prepared to facilitate dialogues. We don't need to have all the answers. We need to learn how to ask better questions.

Perhaps the most helpful guiding wisdom here is the forgotten beatitude of Jesus... "blessed are the flexible, for they shall not get bent out of shape." We know he said this somewhere, but none of his disciples thought to write it down.

We these eight guides you will be well on your way to forming an amazing team. Remember to enjoy the adventure!

STARTING A TEAM

CHECKLIST

1. God, who are you calling me to partner with? Who is/are my teammate(s)?
2. God, what people group are you calling us to reach?
3. What place are you sending us to?
4. Who do you have? And what are some of the intrinsic motivations of the group?
5. What are you trying to accomplish? What's the purpose?
6. What are the roles and gifts of the people on your team?
7. What do you already do every week, where, and how frequently?
8. Decide a rhythm of being together, how frequently, when.
9. Decide how you will communicate in between, how frequently, what medium? (group text, FaceTime, Zoom, a weekly meal).
10. How do we include others as we go along?
11. What are the assets and opportunities in our community?
12. What are the broken places and needs in our community?
13. Who is God calling us particularly to form relationships with?
14. Which of the primary roles is each person on your team (Adventurer, Advocate, Authorizer)?
15. Do you know a “person of peace” who might open a new circle of relationships, space, or practice for your team?
16. Which of the primary giftsets does each team member bring (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher)?
17. Who is missing from your team? Who do personally know that embodies these roles and gifts? Might they have a conversation with you about joining the team?