

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
DIOCESE OF  
WORCESTER



## A Guide to New Worshipping Communities in The Diocese of Worcester

# Contents

Foreword by Bishop John Inge and Bishop Martin Gorick .....	3
Introduction.....	4
Safeguarding in NWCs.....	5
Definitions .....	5
Is it Biblical, is it Anglican?.....	6
Is this only for one part of the church tradition?.....	7
Theology and Ecclesiology.....	8
Ordering worship in a NWC.....	9
Leading well .....	12
Developing spirituality in a community group.....	13
Discipleship in NWCs .....	14
Oversight, support and leadership.....	15
Giving and Finance .....	16
Getting Started.....	17
Registration form .....	19



## Foreword

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Gospels tell us that Jesus was an itinerant preacher who went out to meet people where they were. That simple fact is a challenge and an opportunity for the followers of Jesus today.

Sadly, in this country many people today have little or no contact with church, no understanding of what goes on in worship, no sense of community with those who might share their beliefs. That is the challenge. At the same time, millions of people say they believe in God, or have spiritual experiences – there are even avowed atheists who admit to praying in moments of crisis. So, as Jesus himself said, ‘The fields are ripe for harvest.’ That is the opportunity.

In a diverse society such as ours, that harvest will be richly varied and will need a range of approaches - which is where the New Worshipping Communities come in. We have set a target of creating 100 such communities by 2030, and it is entirely possible that no two will be the same! We have the resources, people and buildings, to invite others who, may share an interest in bread making or international politics – the possibilities are endless – to build community and come to know Jesus, to share the abundant life which is his gift. We are delighted that Kim Brown has joined the Transformation Team to lead in this enterprise: she brings such a wealth of experience and wisdom, and she is eager to meet you to explore your ideas for setting up a New Worshipping Community to extend the range of ways you reach out in God’s love.

We commend this Guide to you as a starting point for exploration of the new adventures on which we hope the Holy Spirit will lead us here in the Diocese of Worcester, as we reach out in the love of Christ to our communities in new and creative ways.

*John + Martin*

Bishop John Inge and Bishop Martin Gorick  
September 2024



**Kingdom People**  
love · compassion · justice · freedom  
New Worshipping Communities



## Introduction and Background

Thank you for your interest in new worshipping communities. At their heart, they are a way for the church to reach out beyond our existing congregations to people who might not access our Sunday services, for all kinds of reasons, and share the good news of Jesus with them.

Here in the Diocese of Worcester, research showed that compared to the national average, our Diocese had:

- ▶ fewer children and young people
- ▶ an older age profile among worshippers
- ▶ more small churches
- ▶ less diversity

Following an extensive listening and consultation process in response to this, throughout the Diocese, A Transformations Strategy was agreed at Diocesan Synod, committing to the following priorities:

- Double the number of children and young people worshipping in our churches.
- Create 100 new worshipping communities offering a range of ways for people to come to faith and worship God. (e.g. Forest Church / Café Church / Walking Church).
- Invest in the renewal of around a dozen churches to ensure that each major area of population has at least one church with 150 people attending weekly, enabling them to support other local churches.
- Underpin these by investing in our clergy and lay leaders, providing training and development opportunities to enable them to feel supported and equipped for mission.

This work is now underway, and this guide focuses on the priority of establishing 100 new worshipping communities.



## Safeguarding in New Worshipping Communities

It is essential that good, robust safeguarding processes and practices are established from the very start when creating a new worshipping community. We want people who come to join the church to be safe, and we need to take active steps to ensure that this is the case from the beginning of our planning.

As soon as you are thinking about how to reach out to new people, it is essential to talk to your Vicar and Parish Safeguarding Officer. They will help you think about where the activity takes place, who could volunteer to help you, how you will be covered by insurance for your activities etc. All these steps will ensure the new church is well placed from the start to reach out in a caring and Christian way to new people with the love of Christ.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer will register the new activity on the parish's Safeguarding

Dashboard, and they will guide and support you through a checklist to make sure everything is in place for things to get off to a good and safe start. Your PCC will need to agree the start of any NWC; please fill in the registration form in this Guide on page 19 and when it is signed by PCC and PSO (or other safeguarding officer in your parish), please return it to the Transformations Team so we can support you in your work.

This is not in any way designed to stifle innovation but is the bedrock of our Diocesan commitment to be a people of love, compassion, justice and freedom. The Diocesan Safeguarding team and your Parish Safeguarding Officer are committed to supporting every group who wants to start something new, to make sure it is the best it can possibly be for the people who will be coming.

## Definitions: what is a new worshipping community?

We are using the definition that the national Church uses to express what this means:

One of our priorities, as part of our vision to grow as kingdom people, is to create 100 New Worshipping Communities by 2030. To aid us with understanding what counts towards this target, we have an official definition:

**New** - The aim of a newly created worshipping community is to reach people who are currently not attending church (in the previous 2 years) and to make new Christian disciples.

**Worshipping** – The purpose of the community is the worship of Jesus Christ and to help people grow in their faith. Its practices will involve initially two or more of the following: prayer, scripture, praise, sacrament, and acts of service.

**Community** – Meets together in person or online regularly (i.e. at least once a month) and is connected to the wider Church via parish church, deanery or diocese.

It may be that a group forms community first and begins to get to know and trust one another before the idea of worship is introduced – after all, it is hard to worship if you don't know God at all yet! So, the group that has begun to grow together will have to work out how to begin a spiritual journey together. Perhaps a new 'exploring faith' group could begin. Whichever way the journey starts, it's important to think about how we help people grow into, explore, and deepen faith through different stages of questioning and learning; this is called a 'discipleship pathway' (addressed below) and the leaders of a NWC will need to think about how best to help people navigate that journey over time.

*(If you already lead a group that has built community - around the arts, sport or music, a bereavement group or toddler group - there are ways that this can grow into a new worshipping community if that seems appropriate – see below for more information in the Worship section.)*

## Is this Biblical?

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he told them in Matthew 28:19-20:

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

There are many passages about mission and the church being outwardly focused on the Gospels. Our work is to follow Christ – to imitate him, to go to the places and people he showed us were important in the Kingdom of God; those who are unseen or ignored, those who are vulnerable or suffering injustice. In Matthew 25 Jesus commends those who have visited the sick and those in prison, and feeds those who are hungry. He says, ‘In as much as you did it to one of these, you did it to me.’ Of course, we must do some thinking together to interpret how to do this today, but in Ephesians 2:17, the writer sums this up by saying:

And he [Christ] came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near.

We are hoping to reach those who were far off, as Jesus did. We also see Jesus and Paul in the New Testament using local language, experiences and metaphors to reach people with the good news of God’s love through their ministries, in a way that people could understand – the message may have been the same for everyone, but the method of communication was varied according to what would help people best grasp it.

This is known as *contextualising*, making something understandable to local people in each place, and it is what new worshipping communities are all about. For all kinds of reasons, not everyone can access or grasp our traditional liturgical services today, and so it is right to help people come via other routes and ways.

## Are the NWCs replacing our liturgical services? **No!**

We hope churches will explore additional ways to help people access faith – using different styles, in different places, or at different times of the week – for example, worship that is less formal or uses fewer words for those who don’t find reading easy, or perhaps with less sitting down and standing up for those whose bodies can’t do that so well, or using crafts and bible stories to help families with small children grow in faith.



## Is this Anglican? The recent history of new forms of church in the Church of England

In 1985, the Church of England produced a report called **Faith in the City** which looked at the reasons why fewer people were connecting with our churches. It addressed how society had changed in the preceding decade and how the church had not adapted to where many people now found themselves: <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/books/9780715143261/faith-in-the-city>

In 2004, the **Mission Shaped Church** report was published, encouraging churches and church members to turn outwards. It asked the question:

**'Who will we never reach, if we keep doing church as we are doing it now?'**

It encouraged the church to explore more contextual approaches to help new people access faith in Christ. These were known then as fresh expressions of church:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/153633920/Mission-Shaped-Church>

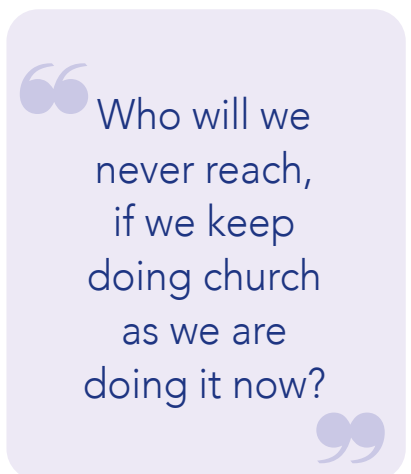
Many new churches were started and by 2014, the **Anecdote to Evidence Report** showed that they were so successful in reaching new people, that an equivalent of a whole new Diocese of people had been added to the Church of England. It also found that the majority of these were being led by 'lay lay women,' a term used in the report to refer to women who were not authorised or licensed by their Diocese at all but who had a passion to reach out and lead new communities. It concluded that many people found it easier to access and begin a faith journey via regular lay people.

<https://www.fromevidencetoaction.org.uk>

More recently, the Church of England's national **Vision & Strategy** priorities are for the church across the nation to become younger and more diverse, to be a church of mixed ecology (i.e. where our parish churches and the new ways of reaching people work together and this becomes the norm), and that we would become a church of missionary disciples.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-strategy/our-priorities>

All these reports have led us to where we are today, as a Diocese in the Church of England among many, who are trying to reach out and re-connect with people who may have stopped coming to church, or who have simply never ever been to church before.



## Is this only for one part of the church's tradition? No!

Sometimes it is alleged that new worshipping communities only replicate the evangelical part of the Church of England. This is completely untrue! In the Diocese of Worcester we love all our churches in their diversity and are encouraging every part of the tradition to think about how they might reach out to new people in ways that are authentic to their expression of spirituality.

For example, we have seen 'Singing Angels' and 'Tunes and Chips' start in churches that value choral expression; one of our many inclusive churches in the Diocese is working to start an Open Table service that will serve the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. All parts of the church are needed to make the whole, and all are valued and can reach out and grow in ways that are contextually and theologically appropriate for them.



# What is the theology and ecclesiology underpinning the idea of new worshipping communities?

The bible is full of injunctions to go out and baptise, to share the good news of the Gospel, and to love God and our neighbours as ourselves. Archbishop William Temple once said: *“The Church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of its’ non-members.”* Missiology is the theological study of mission – how we reach out beyond ourselves, to help others be drawn into the love of God, and it always based on God’s love, brought to us through Jesus Christ, and that we are asked by him to share with others – new worshipping communities draw on this stream of theology and are an expression of practical theology, living out and outworking our faith in our practices.

In the Church of England, we ponder, discuss and make decisions together in Synods - nationally at General Synod and in each Diocese through Diocesan Synods. As a church we are Episcopally led by our Bishops, and Synodically governed – we make decisions together after thought, study, prayer and dialogue, and we agree to uphold these together.

Nationally, the Church agreed some Vision and Strategy priorities - to reach out boldly into our communities, hoping to increase the number of young people and establish new worshipping communities where new people could come to know the love of God.

Here in the Diocese of Worcester, as we discussed earlier, we undertook a large-scale listening process with many people from inside and outside of our churches, about our future and what kind of church we hoped to be for our communities. All the information gathered from this process was distilled, prayed and thought about before the strategy was proposed. So the development of the strategy has been a deeply Anglican and deeply theological process, which we hope is a missional and hopeful response to where we are now.

This is not a ‘managerial’ or business minded model or strategy, but one that is rooted in and emerges from the incarnate love of Jesus, who left his home in heaven to come to earth to demonstrate and share God’s love, fully entering into the messiness of earth, living and working alongside humans with all the constraints and complexities we all experience today. The life of the church is imperfect and complex, and yet

Jesus calls it his body – a body that suffered, that experienced limitation and exhaustion, and that reached out to touch others with love and kindness.

In terms of ecclesiology – the theology of how we are church – perhaps the best model we have is from St. Paul who helps us see ourselves as a body – a body of believers and people who work together with all our distinct parts to live out the love of God, to worship and bring glory to him by our actions. We are a body that is to acknowledge and love all the parts in their difference, knowing that together we can be more than each part can manage on its own, and that each part brings its own special gift:

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour.

... But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

I Corinthians 12:21-27 NIV

It is important that we don’t denigrate or discriminate against our inherited, established congregations, or our new worshipping communities – all are needed, and all bring blessing to the whole. Whether meeting in a village hall, an ancient church building, a school, or a cathedral – all are vital and valued parts of the body that is Christ’s here in the Diocese of Worcester. All are needed!

This matters, so that we ensure new parts are welcomed and loved, made to feel an equal part of the body, even if they don’t have a tradition of choral music or many people who can read the liturgy. And it matters so that we don’t make our traditional churches feel that the way they worship is no longer relevant or important, and that it can be swiped away from them. If each part is honoured, every part rejoices with it!



## Ordering worship in a new worshipping community: Common Prayer

With the creation of new worshipping communities comes the possibility of diverse congregations springing up, with potentially greater freedom in shaping worship. Is this a weakening of our collective commitment to common prayer, which is the idea that we all say the same things in our worship services, and which represents our doctrinal and ecclesial unity?

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) (1662) is hugely important, not only to Anglican worship but also to Anglican identity. Liturgy is a key place where we shape and express the doctrine and theology which we share together. The author of the BCP, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, was keen for the people to understand and take more responsibility for their own Christian faith, and the reading of Scripture was important for this. Cranmer developed the lectionary and a book of homilies, and these gave preaching the word a central place in the service: 'Cranmer's chief reason for implementing standard liturgies was to provide a venue [for] the Bible' (Jacobs, 2013, pp. 26–7).

It is hard now to imagine the huge impact of the introduction of the Prayer Book, which put prayers, psalms and liturgy into the mouths of parishioners, in their own language, for the first time. The notion of 'Common Prayer' has been one of the strongest aspects of Anglican worship ever since and is perhaps increasingly important today when 'a degree of commonality in liturgy is needed to maintain and enhance the unity of the Church' (*The Hospitality of God* Gray-Reeves and Perham, 2011, p.12).

### A family resemblance?

All these points of history are not reasons why new things cannot be tried or introduced, but they may explain why at times a warning klaxon seems to sound when we try to discuss or introduce changes to practices around worship. When we start new worshipping communities, it helps to understand the sensitive issues from history and to become familiar with the themes and rhythms found in the liturgy, drawing on them when creating prayers or material that may be simpler for new people, but maintains a 'family resemblance' to the original.

In 2005, Steven Croft (now Bishop of Oxford) suggested that Anglican unity had already moved from definition 'by common worship texts, to unity defined by common worship shapes'. He proposed a definition of Anglican unity on the basis 'of the common values which lie at the core of our corporate life and ... heritage' instead (Earey M, *Beyond Common Worship* 2013, p. 87).

Mark Earey similarly suggests a core set of values or principles that relate to Anglican identity in worship, asking if we can move away from a liturgical 'policing' strategy to a commitment to our shared history and an 'eye to the needs of our particular context.' (Earey, *ibid* 2013, p. 68). These proposals can give us confidence to shape worship that is appropriate for our people and connects us with our shared history and identity as Anglicans.



The notion of  
Common Prayer  
has been one  
of the strongest  
aspects of  
Anglican worship.



## Holy Communion in NWCs: when and how?

A service of Holy Communion must always be led by an ordained minister who is authorised by the Bishop.

- ▶ We must use bread & wine for the elements. We use a shared or common cup - no individual cups are allowed according to Church of England rules; wafers or bread rolls / loaves may be used.
- ▶ One of the authorised Eucharistic prayers must be used (prayer H may be most suitable for these kinds of occasions).
- ▶ Regularly include the Lord's prayer so people become familiar with it and can pray it privately themselves.
- ▶ Use the headings in Common Worship / A Service of the Word with Holy Communion to structure the service, so it has an Anglican family resemblance and leads people through a coherent journey, but shorter prayers and language can be framed for the local context where Common Worship does not have anything suitable.
- ▶ Baptism, with some preparation about the meaning of both sacraments, is the normal pathway by which someone can begin to receive Holy Communion. This can be followed by confirmation when appropriate.

In many NWCs, services may take place in less formal settings, where there will not be the same surroundings or understanding for a full liturgical service to be appropriate - you may be using a fold-up table for the altar for example, so a degree of flexibility and improvisation may be necessary, but this can still be done reverently.

Participating in holy communion – helping to distribute the elements or join in the service leading, can hugely open a door in the hearts and minds of new people to grasp its significance, and be a stepping stone to faith developing. Belonging – being a part of the community, involved at the heart of its' sacred meal – is a big deal for many new people exploring the Christian faith and really helps them on their way.

This book chapter about a new worshipping community's journey with holy communion explains further if interested: <https://bit.ly/4heuH03>



## How do we create orthodox and contextual worship?

Listening to where people are, to what experience or understanding they have had if any, and then involving them is the best way to help people learn and grow and will also help us to understand where they are coming from.

Although our liturgy for our regular services is specified in the book of Common Prayer and Common Worship, authorised by General Synod, there is provision for material to be written, adapted or borrowed to make worship appropriate for the people we are trying to support on their journey into Christ.

Canon B5 is where provision is made for this flexibility, and it comes in two forms:

**Variation of existing material:** The minister may use their discretion to 'make and use variations which are not of substantial importance in any form of [authorized] service according to particular circumstances.' Note that this requires some discernment about what counts as a change of 'substantial importance', but it gives good scope for adjusting the vocabulary and style of liturgical material to make it more accessible.

**Use of new or borrowed material:** For situations or occasions for which 'no provision is made in The Book of Common Prayer or by the General Synod', the minister can 'use forms of service considered suitable for those occasions...'. Note that this only covers things that are not provided for in existing services (so it would not apply to Holy Communion, for instance), but it gives lots of scope for new forms of service to be shaped to the needs of the NWC.

## Sermon slot?

A sermon isn't actually required outside of a Sunday principal service or major saints' day! However, it is important to share and explore the scriptures together with new people. Instead of a sermon or talk, using an exploratory form of pondering the scriptures can help people begin to develop the same ownership and familiarity with the Bible that connects us to Cranmer's desire, expressed in the Prayer Book, to get the Bible into people's hearts and minds through regular exposure to it.

Our Diocesan website has a range of **sermon podcasts** with short messages that can be shared in a service, or the notes used to adapt a message for your group, found here: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/sermon-podcasts](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/sermon-podcasts)

**Lectio Divina** is an ancient method that many new churches use:

<https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>

Using the **Lectionary** to choose the passage to be read is a good guide and keeps us connected to the wider church each time we gather. Prioritising the gospel passages that focus on the ministry of Jesus, and his interactions with the people of his day who were excluded or maligned, shows who Jesus was, and is now, to people who are 'far off' from church and can enable a powerful realisation and connection.

Another way to explore what the scripture reading means for us today is to try:

**Godly Play**, a method developed for children originally but used subsequently in estates ministry, where we put ourselves in the place of one of the characters in the gospel story and ask open, wondering, questions to explore the passage: <https://www.godlyplay.uk/>

**Messy Church** have developed a range of resources using craft and play to structure services and help children and adults to undertake a faith journey: <https://www.messychurch.brf.org.uk/>

## Leading well

Having space to **explore together**, to express responses and questions to the Bible passage, and think about what this could mean for our lives today is very important for people in the early stages of a journey into faith.

This may bring a different dynamic than is found in a usual Sunday service in a parish church, where many of the congregation may have had a long history of faith and be very able to listen to a traditional sermon, without space being needed for dialogue and question / clarification / exploration, (although this may be valued as part a discipleship pathway that helps people deepen their long term faith.)

For some clergy or licensed lay ministers, this may be a very different approach to leading and preaching. Creating safe space for new people to explore, question and reflect is what really helps people move on in their faith journey and so consideration must be given to how best to do this. (If you have people from a regular congregation joining in too, making sure they don't dominate the conversation and begin to 'teach' new people what to think is an important factor too.)

“Creating safe space for new people to explore, question and reflect really helps people move on in their faith journey.”

### Who leads?

In our inherited churches, services will usually be led by someone who has been trained specifically to do this – an ordained or lay person who is authorised by the Diocese. This may not be the case in NWCs; they can be led wholly by a team of lay people from the congregation, with oversight from the minister or church leader. It is good to join a learning community (Myriad/Greenhouse), if you are a group of lay people starting something new, as it will help guide you through important areas to think about, and will help you consider how leading as a team in an NWC is different than the leadership models we may be familiar with in our churches.

Leaders of NWCs must talk to their Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and may need to complete some safeguarding training so they can ensure everyone is well cared for. They can join a learning community (Myriad or Greenhouse) or attend a short course to become authorised in their church for this leadership role.

It's important that the Vicar / Priest in Charge has oversight of the new church or group, as we are all one body with different parts that belong together and are welcomed into the life of the parish together with others who worship in a variety of settings.



## Developing spirituality in a community group

Groups that are established with a focus on deepening spirituality using the riches of the Christian tradition (for example, prayer and Lectio Divina, meditation and contemplation, the purpose of silence and stillness in our lives, wellbeing, fasting from things we may be dependent on), can help people explore discipleship and how to build a good healthy life. Time together can include opportunity to use the practices together. Groups like this can easily develop into new worshipping communities, as people come to know one another, feel safe and held, understand the benefit of the Christian practices, learn and grow together.

Some research shows young people coming to faith very naturally from joining in with this kind of group that shares spiritual practices together: <https://lynnnetaylor.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Our-doing-becomes-us-accepted-manuscript.pdf>

### Is it possible for a group that didn't begin around spirituality to develop a spiritual element and grow into being a new worshipping community?

Yes, it is, and this can be done with integrity so that people don't feel faith is being shoehorned in or forced upon them without consultation.

A good way to do this is to offer a space for spirituality (a 'soul space') before the group starts or after it finishes, so that it is a definite choice people are making to join in. The Church of England now has resources for this, called Soul Space (link below), which includes a short talk or thought for the day, a bible reading and some music. It can be downloaded and used by anyone who wants to offer a time of gentle spirituality – it is not a hard sell!

Resources for developing a spirituality slot in a group: <https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/how-to-introduce-worship-into-an-outreach-or-social-action-group/>



We will offer workshops for leaders and clergy to explore how to shape worship that is appropriate and orthodox for different contexts and people.

## Developing Discipleship Pathways

What is a discipleship pathway? It is a written plan that makes provision for the kinds of people who attend / you are hoping to reach, via your church, NWC, youth group or church school – to help them to move from their current place regarding faith on to a deeper journey or next stage.

It isn't generic but is written to fit the context you are working in – for example, you could engage with families at a toddler group who are not from a faith background, so they would be starting at the beginning and need familiarisation and introduction with faith – this might take the form of some Bible stories, simple prayers and hymns and this stage might last for 0-9 months.

After that, they may be ready to consider God in the role of One who loves them and wishes to be in relationship with them – services could help them reflect on their life and where God might have been at work in it already – can they look back and see if He may have been journeying with them through testing times or answering prayers? This can be done through dialogue and opening up reflective conversation, beginning to share honest prayers for those times in our lives when all doesn't go so well, and giving thanks when these times are resolved.

Some input on the tools we have at our disposal to draw closer to God might come next – what is the church, support from our church family / what is prayer all about and how can we begin to do it regularly / what about the learning & support we find in scripture? Is there a booklet of daily readings or encouraging Bible passages people can take home with them to use / how do we pray for our children and loved ones each day? What is the Lord's Prayer and how is it a support to us? Are there prayer boards or church prayer chains we can consider using when things are difficult? Can we encourage people to come into church and light a candle? What apps can people use? Does singing hymns give us a lift and help us learn who God is? What about living a life of faith in our daily life, helping others?

Exploring faith more fully – is it time to host an enquirers course of some kind, and what is appropriate for your people? Some people will respond to the Alpha course, for others it may be a very poor fit for the way they learn and live. An array of discipleship courses is described and links to them found here:

[www.blackburn.anglican.org/enquirers-courses](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/enquirers-courses)

Offering baptism – many people these days have not been baptised as infants and may be open to making a joining commitment after a period of journeying with you. Discuss what it means and the promises we make, the invitation Jesus offers us to make a new start with him where all our mistakes are washed away and He raises us up to newness of life with Him, why people might choose to do it, how it can be done and where (NB it doesn't have to be in a church building in a main Sunday service, if this is not helpful for the candidates.)

A discipleship pathway can cover all the ways in which a church helps people of different ages and stages to grow in faith, and could be written under age or category headings: New parents, via baptism visits / Pre school children and families / primary school age children via engagement with schools, and their families via isingpop / youth groups / young adults / mature and retired adults etc. For example, a church of mainly mature believers might establish a book club that reads a classic on spirituality each month and meets to discuss it, or a church might plan a pilgrimage, a retreat or an away weekend when people can come together for an extended time to study or hear speakers on a subject, or they might plan a mission or outreach project to bless the neighbourhood or help new people access faith in their community.

Or it could express how support will be offered to a specific group: refugees / adults with additional learning needs, or families with a child who has additional learning needs. Writing it down will allow you to see your context clearly, where you might need to do some more research or ask people what would help them to grow in faith?

More information about discipleship planning can be read here: <https://bit.ly/3YdtGNo>

# Oversight, support and leadership

If you are thinking of starting a NWC, who will support you on this journey?

**1** Your Vicar will act as the **oversight minister** and leaders of a NWC should share their hopes with them at the start of your journey. They will ensure it is starting well, with practicalities such as input on safeguarding, insurance cover etc, but also will pray for the team, and the community beginning to build. They will help think about when is the right time to introduce Holy Communion, and hopefully be willing to undertake this service in the NWC.

(There is support for oversight ministers to carry out this support well, via the Myriad pathway: contact the NWC Enabler, or Janet Fox via the Dept of Mission and Ministry).

The leader of the NWC should meet regularly with the oversight minister, to keep them up to date with how things are going, discuss any tricky issues that arise, share ideas of anything the two church communities can do together etc.

**2** You can join a **learning community** and journey together with others who are in the process of starting something new too. We currently offer a **Myriad** learning community that started in January 2024, and we will start several **Greenhouse** learning communities in 2025, in the north & south of the Diocese – these are essentially different ‘brands’ for a similar journey and process. More information here: [www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions/what-greenhouse](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions/what-greenhouse)

These learning communities will include regular gatherings when small teams from churches who want to explore this will commit to get together in person, to listen to one another, share experiences, pray for one another and reflect together with some input about the process of starting and sustaining a NWC. Contact Clare below for more information.

**3** **New Worshipping Communities Enabler** Kim Brown can support you as you get underway, listen, offer resources, help if you hit any bumps in the road [kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk) Tel 01905 730739

**4** The **Kingdom People** section of the Diocesan website has stories and resources it might help you to explore [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/growing-kingdom-people](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/growing-kingdom-people)

**5** If you have a **mission accompanier**, they will be able to help you look outwards to your context and assess where might be a good starting point for a NWC.

## Giving and Finances

### How does giving work in a NWC?

Each community will need to work out how and when to introduce this issue with people who may be journeying towards faith. The issue of giving forms part of our Christian discipleship – should it be introduced right away, or wait until people have reached a more committed place in their journey? There are a few things to consider in this, also giving thought to how this issue may impact relationships between the existing church community and the new one.

It is important that there is teaching about giving in the NWCs, as part of the journey of discipleship – as followers of Jesus, we share what we have together. We would also hope that a root of resentment wouldn't build up from the 'established' congregation towards the new one, that they don't feel new people are 'taking from them' (although there are discipleship issues here to address in established congregations about sharing and blessing others if this issue does arise.) This means it is an issue that could be discussed and planned together with the oversight minister.

On a practical note, many people don't carry cash anymore, so some kind of electronic 'giving box' or QR code that people can access with their phone is helpful. Having a set juncture in the service where we give is a good way of doing it, so people know it's coming and it is repeatable each time.

However, it's important that we don't turn new people coming along into consumers - 'I give money to you and you provide these services to me in return'. We live in a very capitalist society where people are used to a transactional way of life; in contrast, Jesus offers a completely free gift of grace, and freely gives his love and salvation to us. But we do have to keep the roof over our heads, and we hope to share our gifts between one another like family. The messaging is a little tricky and will need prayer and careful planning, but it is good to establish it as early as you can so it becomes normal. Having an open conversation with the people who come along, perhaps as part of a service about being a part of God's family together, might be a good way to explore this together.

You can also contact Chris Boden or Robyn Rooney at the DBF for support with stewardship and giving: [cboden@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:cboden@cofe-worcester.org.uk) [rrooney@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:rrooney@cofe-worcester.org.uk)

More useful information can be found here: [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/enabling-giving/](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/enabling-giving/)

### Grants Available

The Diocese of Worcester has some funds available to support NWCs, in buying equipment or resources for start-up. The Kingdom People fund covers grants up to £1000, and the Healthier Churches Fund is for bigger projects up to £10,000. Link to the application forms for these here:

[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/kingdom-people-fund](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/kingdom-people-fund)

[www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/healthier-churches-fund/](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/healthier-churches-fund/)



## Where do we start?

There are important questions to work your way through at the outset to planning something new. We always start with questions and listening / observing.

**1** Is there a group you already reach and have built trust with through outreach / community service, that you could **extend**? For example, one church in our Diocese ran a very successful toddler group, the leaders developing close and trusting relationships with families over 4 years. When the children were due to leave the group to start attending school, the parents asked the leaders if they would be willing to start something they could attend with their children at the weekend, as they would miss the group so much: a monthly family based NWC was started, that then became fortnightly because the families loved it so much.

**2** If **starting something from scratch**, ask yourself who you are hoping to reach and why – is there a group of people who live or work in your context but are missing from our usual Sunday congregation?

It's important that we think about the needs of the people you hope to serve with this new idea, as this will determine how you shape your plans: can you find out when is best for them to come? What needs do they have and how can you meet them: for example, do they have access needs which will determine the building or space to meet, or might they have been impacted hard by the cost of living crisis and you could offer a meal. If many people can't read well, a long printed service booklet will not be helpful for them etc. Will they have young children with them and so a family friendly, less formal service may meet their needs?

If considering **Gather**, an after school expression of church that meets at the local parish church nearest to school, there are specific questions to ask such as 'does the school run an after school club each evening and how many children attend? If the majority of parents are working full time and their children are at after school clubs or wrap around child care, there will not be much of a constituency to attend a Gather group after school. Also check term dates before publishing the dates for Gather, as people will not be coming to collect children from school in the holidays.

**3** Look back to the section on discipleship pathways and think about how the planning of services can help people start from where they are, and support them to move along a journey towards faith.

**4** Who will lead this and who can be on the team – it takes some prayer, work and time to begin a new thing and sustain it well. What skills do you need? Who is warm and welcoming, who has good skills with children. What about safeguarding? Talk to your Vicar or oversight minister early on.

**5** What resources will you need? Crafts, tables that can be moved, music resources? You can apply for a grant from the Kingdom People fund, see earlier in this guide, to buy resources.

**6** Join one of our learning communities, to journey with others who are starting new things, for space to explore and plan and pray.

**7** Contact the team so we can support you, pray and share resources.

**8** Once you have thought through your plans with others, **please complete the registration form on p19** and once it has been signed off by your PCC and Parish safeguarding officer, **return it to [kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk)** so the Transformations team can support you on this exciting journey.

## Conclusion

I hope this guide has given you a flavour of NWCs and their purpose, and that you will prayerfully consider whether your church can go on this adventure of helping new people find their way to faith in God.

Please do contact us if we can support you in any way.

[kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk)

Kim Brown, September 2024



# Registration Form for a New Worshipping Community Diocese of Worcester 2025

Please complete the form below and ensure it is signed off by your PCC and Parish safeguarding officer. Please return it by email to [kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk)

Name of Church/Parish it will take place within: .....

Name of NWC .....

Name of leader and contact details: .....

.....

Email: .....

Telephone/Mobile number: .....

Is there a specific group of people are you hoping to reach:

.....

.....

.....

Where will you meet and how frequently? .....

.....

Consent of Vicar / Oversight Minister and PCC representative: *(Please print names, sign & date)*

Name: ..... Signed: **X** ..... Date: .....

Name: ..... Signed: **X** ..... Date: .....

Name: ..... Signed: **X** ..... Date: .....

PSO Signature / Person responsible for Safeguarding in the parish:

**X** .....

I agree to complete the safeguarding checklist actions with my team:

Signed: **X** .....

Leader: **X** ..... Date: **X** .....



