

Missional Communities

Chapter 1: Preparing



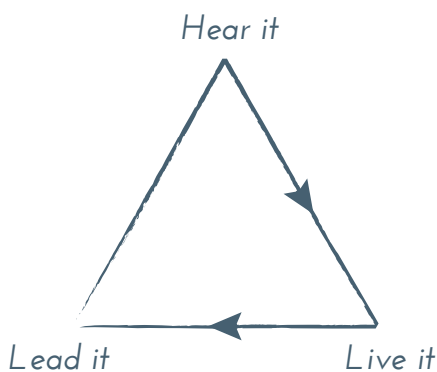
Chapter 1: Preparing

Introduction

Missional Communities (MCs) are extended families of disciples on a mission to be good news in the context that God has placed them. For this reason, missional vision needs to be at the birthplace of every MC. This resource is designed to help guide you through this first stage of identifying, developing and sharing missional vision with others. We hope you find it useful as you begin the exciting adventure of growing passionate communities of Jesus follower and commissioning them to go and make disciples.

Part 1: What are Missional Communities?

This section is designed to get leaders thinking about the key values and ingredients of an MC and how these are reflected in their own local expression of an MC. It serves as an introduction for those new to MCs, but also as an opportunity for existing MC leaders to refine and develop these core values in their current communities.



Part 2: Identifying Missional Vision

This section gives a clear definition of what Missional Vision actually is and provides a clear process for leaders to follow, in order to connect them with God's heart and gain Missional Vision for themselves. This process is reinforced by the Learning Circle and trains leaders to approach Missional Vision as a disciple; simply asking the questions:

What is God saying?

What am I going to do about it?

Part 3: The Passion Audit

The Passion Audit is a simple tool for helping others to develop and refine their missional vision. It is designed to give space for God to speak to people in different ways and provide connection points for a variety of personality types. The resource includes a guide for how to introduce The Passion Audit into a huddle or small group environment.

The Passion Audit



Part 4: Casting Vision

As we've trained local leaders we've realised that having a clear idea of God-given vision is one thing, but how to share it with others can be a different thing entirely!

For this reason, we have given some thoughts and suggestions from our experience on how to share vision effectively and become strategic in calling people to follow you as you seek to live it out.

What are Missional Communities?

What are Missional Communities?

Missional Communities stem from the belief that real community is an essential building block of the church and mission is the call of the church. MCs are a place where we can love God and love our neighbour and engage with the call to go and make disciples. In this way, we grow in our faith together and seek to be good news as we engage with our local neighbourhood or relational network. MCs are a place where we can be known, supported and challenged to go deeper in our relationship with each other and grow as disciples of Jesus.

MCs can be the backbone of all mission and discipleship activity which goes on in a church. They are mid-sized communities, made up of people who find they have a similar missional heart, focus or calling in life. Crucially, they provide a real opportunity for people to live out and discover a God-given calling and to engage in mission, seeking to grow through new disciples of Jesus. MCs are a great way to deepen discipleship, release missional lay leaders, raise participation and release the body of Christ into God's adventure - missional living through personal faith & committed community!

Five Key Marks of a Missional Community

- *Missional Vision*
- *3 Dimensions - UP, IN & OUT*
- *Orbits around a centre*
- *Social Space*
- *Led by accountable lay leaders*



Missional Vision

An MC has a specific missional focus - it is this that defines their identity and purpose as an MC. Missional Vision is a call that God places on our hearts to bring the Good News into a situation. This vision will usually either engage a neighbourhood (the place where they are) or a network (the people around them).



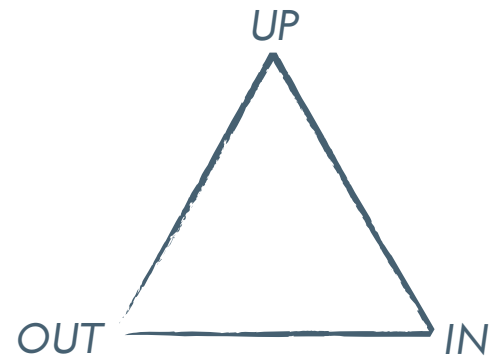
Question

Do you have a clear Missional Vision that you can easily express?

Space for your vision

3 Dimensions

A Missional Community operates around three dimensions – the three key relationships we see in Jesus' life. Jesus spent time upward with the Father, inward with his disciples and outward reaching out to the world around him. In the same way, a balanced Missional Community will incorporate all three dimensions into their community's rhythm and life.



Questions to consider

Does your Missional Community's rhythm reflect the three dimensions of UP, IN and Out?

How often do you...

- worship and pray together?
- eat together?
- invite 'people of peace' into relationship?

Space for your thoughts



Orbit around a centre

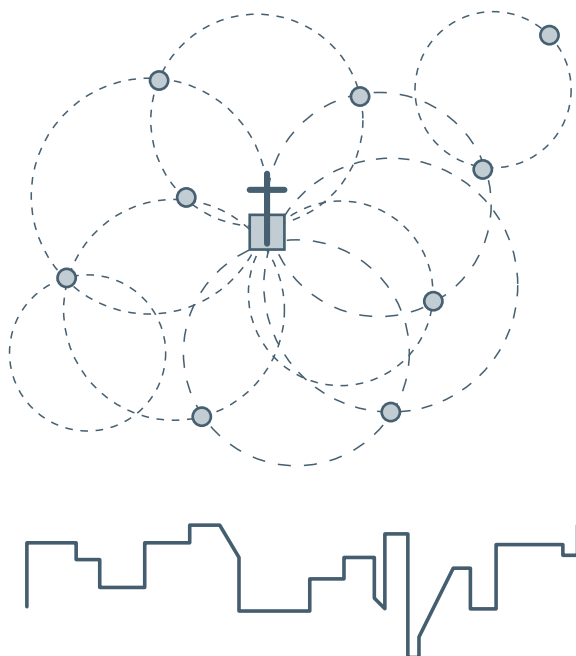
Missional Communities and Sunday celebration services are both important and should work together. Over the years, many have chosen one of the models and missed out the other. Missional Communities should have a rhythm of connection to the centre and Sunday gatherings.

Without orbiting a gathered service, Missional Communities can feel disconnected because of a lack of relationship with each other and to the wider church family. The strength of a gathered Sunday service is that it can be a place of teaching, training, worship, prayer and ministry that equips people to live as missional disciples in extended families.

Question

Does your Missional Community have an established rhythm of connection with the gathered centre?

Space for your thoughts



Social Space

According to sociologists, there are four spaces of interaction that we all look to function in.

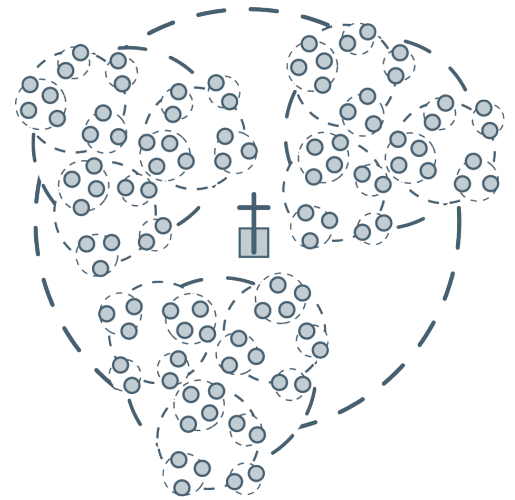
- Intimate Space: 2-4 people
- Personal Space: 6-12 people
- Social Space: 15-40 people
- Public Space: 75+ people

A Missional Community exists in the Social Space – the space that has often been least developed by churches. For example, most people traditionally function in the Intimate Space with their spouse or a close friend, have a family and attend a small group that is positioned in the Personal Space, and gather for a Public Space service on a Sunday, but have no Social Space interaction. The 'extended family'-style Missional Community satisfies the desire for Social Space.

Question

*Does your community operate like an extended family?
How could it improve?*

Space for your thoughts



Led by accountable lay leaders

Missional Communities work brilliantly because plans, implementation and ownership belong to lay leaders and their leadership teams. Missional Communities are not church plants with paid leaders. They are led by members of the church body who have responded to the questions "what is God saying?" and "what am I going to do about it?" Church leaders simply hold them accountable to leading out the vision they have developed and the way in which they take responsibility for the community.

Space for your thoughts

Questions to consider

Are you in a huddle?

How connected and accountable are you to the leadership of your church?

What steps could you take to grow and develop an accountable relationship as you lead your MC?



Frequently Asked Questions

What's the difference between a small group and a Missional Community?

A small group is a family-sized group of about 6-12, whereas a missional community is an extended-family-sized group of 15-40. When functioning well, both should have a healthy balance of UP-IN-OUT relationships.

Small groups can have deeper relationships together but a missional community adds the sense of 'shared adventure' to those relationships. Missional communities are a great size for still being able to grow in relationship and care for each other, but also big enough to make a difference and impact in mission.

Why should I join a Missional Community?

Church is not just about attending a service every Sunday, but about living out a genuine faith amongst ordinary people both inside and outside the church. Missional Communities are a great way for individuals to get to know people within the church and are the best forum for ongoing discipleship and personal growth. They also provide a real opportunity to live out or discover your God-given calling and to engage in mission in your context. If you want to be someone who is part of a real-life, everyday community of people with similar passions to you and who is seeing God doing amazing things in and through you, then join a Missional Community.



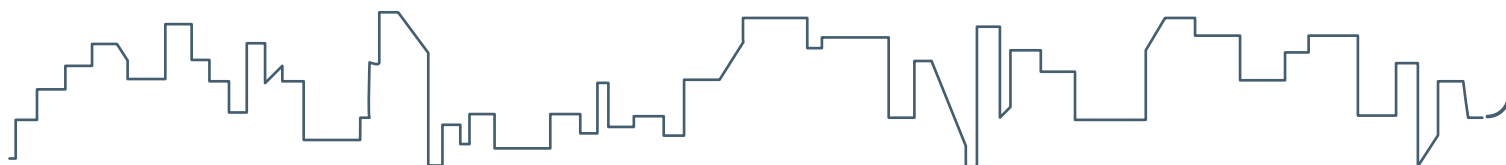
What do they do when they meet?

Missional Communities have some expression of UP/IN/OUT every time they meet. The balance of this can depend on the type of gathering they want to have. For this reason, we expect Missional Communities to have a rhythm and pattern for meeting throughout the month. Some gatherings may focus more on UP and IN whereas others may focus more on IN and OUT - but they will always contain elements of all three dimensions. It is important to note that what Missional Communities do when they gather, as well as where and when they gather, is referenced to their missional context. They are not trying to recreate a church service or "Christian ghetto" within their mission field.



What does worship look like in a Missional Community?

Think outside the Sunday service box and allow people to be creative! Worship in a Missional Community could look like anything from a CD, to guided meditation, to a creative activity or a reading reflection. The emphasis is to make sure that when Missional Communities gather together they help people to express praise and thanksgiving.





Do MCs work for all ages?

Yes! Rather than using a prescribed formula which only works in a few situations, MCs apply transferrable principles to any context or mission field, which allows them to work in a variety of settings. There have been MCs for kids, youth, students, young adults, families (mixing kids and adults), business people, vulnerable people, the elderly... pretty much every type of person you could imagine! The outworking of the principles will look

different in different MCs depending on the missional vision of the community, but the principles themselves remain the same.

I'm a small group leader - should I stop my small group and do a MC?

No! Instead, spend some time thinking about what your missional vision is, or the missional vision of the group you lead is. Once you are clear on this, invite others to join with your group and meet regularly. Perhaps look for other small groups that share your missional vision and start to explore whether you could join forces as multiple small groups forming one emerging MC.

How can I start a Missional Community?

Any journey into MCs begins with people choosing to live first as a missional disciple. It is important to spend time discerning the missional vision that God has given you - what is God saying to you? What is your heart's desire? Where are the places/people of peace that God has given you?

Once you are clear on some of these questions, you can start to call others on the adventure too. This is the start of growing an MC and is all done in the context of dialogue with your church leader.

Talk to the leader in your church setting who is responsible for overseeing the Missional Communities.

Notes

Identifying Missional Vision

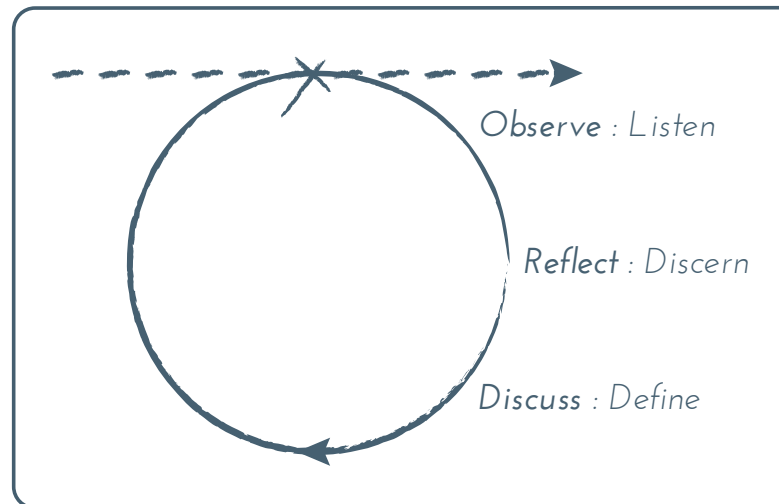
Missional Vision: What is a vision?

God-given vision is a clear perspective of how things would look if God's kingdom was fully expressed in a particular situation or community. Vision should not be a 'hard-to-grasp' or elusive concept, but rather something which can be very practical and tangible. Vision is...

1. Birthed in prayer – coming before God and recognising that He is the source. When we recognise that our vision comes from God, then it is Him we can hold on to when things get tough.
2. Inspired by the Spirit – listening to the voice, promptings and stirrings of the Spirit – making sure it is not just your good idea, but it is God's as well!
3. Confirmed by the Word – finding scripture that confirms vision and rings true to descriptions of God's Kingdom found in the Bible. Asking the question; 'is it what God's people are commanded/encouraged to do?'

Learning Circle: Part 1

Do not wait for a 'vision' to appear – there are practical and prayerful steps to take in seeking God for vision. There are useful things we can do at each phase of the Learning Circle in order to fully define, own and live out the vision God gives us. The first half of the Learning Circle takes you to the point where you can define the vision God gives you.



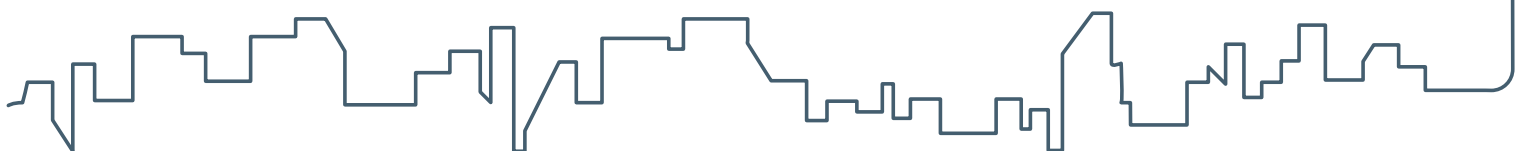
Listen

The first stage of the Learning Circle involves listening, observing and praying. It is here that you listen to God and discover His heart. Allow Him to break your heart for what breaks His. You will begin to develop general passions and ideas. Passion for a place or people leads to purpose and action as a response to what God has impacted your heart with.

Questions

What do you think that God is saying to you?

What are your heart's desires? Use **The Passion Audit** to help you answer this question.



Discern

Once you have spent time listening to God, take the general passions and ideas and focus them down into something quite specific that can be articulated in a vision statement. This part of the process is more practical and starts you thinking about the specifics of how to be Good News to people. Think creatively and allow the Holy Spirit to inspire you to think outside the box. You can use the Passion Audit again to help you stimulate these ideas which could be anything from prayer-walks to community surveys to gathering prophetic words for your neighborhood.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern what the 'main thing' you should focus on is. For example, your general stirrings might be for a particular geographical area but the discernment process can help you to focus down on a particular school, type of people or situation.

Always return to scripture – read through and reflect back on it as this will help to inform vision and set goals based on biblical principles.

Questions to consider

Where are the opportunities around you to love and serve?

Where are the people and places of peace?

Who are the people to invite and connect with?

Where can your community be good news to people?

What does this good news look like to people?

Space for your thoughts

Define

Being able to articulate vision is vital – for ourselves and for those we lead. This stage of the process helps define what our vision is. It should involve discussion with church leaders and submission to them. Inviting others into this process to help is really useful. Other people can encourage you and help spot omissions.

When articulating vision, it is better to use language that is simple, easy to remember and easy to pass on: having a clear picture of the future hope (the 'what could be') helps people to fully understand and therefore commit to it.

Your vision will also be shaped through discussion with others, so get other people to help you!



Questions

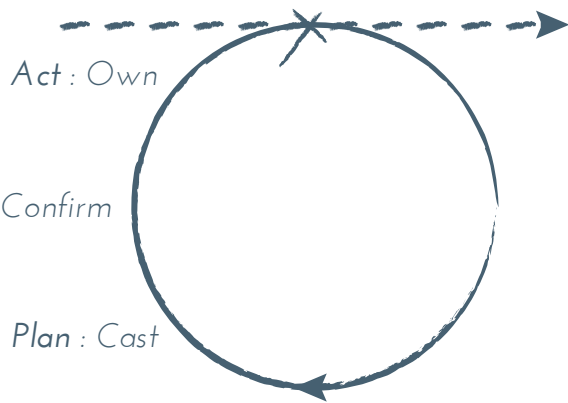
Can you define your vision?

Attempt to write down your vision in less than thirty words.

Are there some simple words that will help articulate this in a clear way to other people?

Space for your vision

Learning Circle: Part 2



The second half of the Learning Circle is all about stepping out in faith and starting to move forward. In terms of vision, this gives the opportunity to put in place practical steps for gathering people around you who share a similar heart to the vision God has given you. Jesus calls us to walk out vision in community. We cannot do this alone.

The second half of the Learning Circle is about making steps to see your vision become reality: casting vision with others, confirming and refining the vision and then beginning to walk it out and own it in community.

Cast

After defining your vision through dialogue with church leaders, the next step is to share your vision with other people and invite others that share a similar heart. Be prepared to share vision as often as you can: take any opportunity to cast vision with others, sharing it widely so that as many people as possible hear the heart God has given you and have the opportunity to join in.

In the "Parable of the Sower" in Matthew 13, the farmer scatters his seed in a variety of locations, always looking for good soil. In the same way, you should cast your seed of vision widely, looking for the people who are ready to respond. Do not just talk to your close friends, but be open and ready to offer invitation to the variety of different personalities who could respond to what God has put on your heart.



Question

Who are the people around you that you could cast vision to?

Space for your thoughts

Confirm

Once people have started to respond to your vision, a significant part of the process is confirming the vision. You can gather those interested in your vision to give space for people to pray and listen together. It is important that the vision is tested, weighed and refined. This should be done with those you hope to serve, those who have shown interest in following your vision and again with those church leaders in authority. Be open to feedback and to further promptings from the Holy Spirit.

Questions

How are other people inputting into your vision?

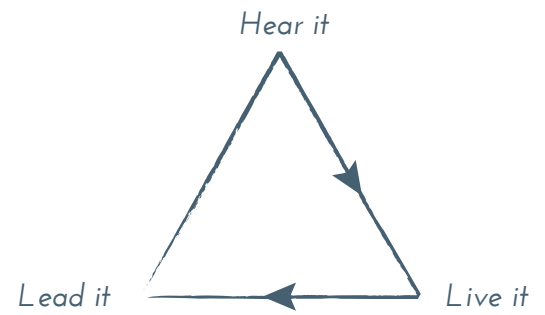
Who are you remaining accountable to? e.g leaders/accountability partners.



Space for your thoughts

Own

To see vision become a reality, you must begin to live it out. Invite those who have responded to the vision to come and live it out alongside you. People do not move from hearing vision to then leading other people in that vision. They must first live the vision alongside you and imitate what you do.



It is important to remember that you do not get everything right on the first attempt. Instead, create a culture where it is OK to get things wrong. Take risks as you live out your vision, learn from mistakes and try again! Going wrong does not necessarily mean that the vision is wrong. Instead, keep returning to God and discuss with others as to where you need to persevere and where you need to refine your vision in some way and move on.

Questions to consider

Who has responded to your vision?

Are you living your vision and leading by example? Who is imitating your life?

Have you clearly communicated missional vision to co-leaders and your community or are you more "a group of friends along for the ride"?

What is the level of ownership of the vision:

- a) in your leadership team?*
- b) in the whole community?*
- c) What steps could you take to increase ownership?*

Space for your
thoughts

Names

Notes

The Passion Audit: *developing missional vision*

Introduction

The 3dm UK Passion Audit is a simple tool that has been developed from years of coaching local leaders in how to discover and grow missional vision. For many people, the concept of vision often feels somewhat nebulous and intangible, which means that they struggle to grow their confidence in the vision that God has given them.

The Passion Audit helps leaders to go on a simple journey of recognising what God has placed on their heart and clarifying the context in which this can be expressed. It is designed to provide a balanced framework for both hearing the Lord intuitively and seeing Him at work in our immediate surroundings. This allows leaders to tune into what God is speaking to them about internally, but also where they are stirred by what is going on around them in their external environment.

“The Passion Audit is a useful tool to help us listen and discern together as we are discovering and developing Missional Vision”



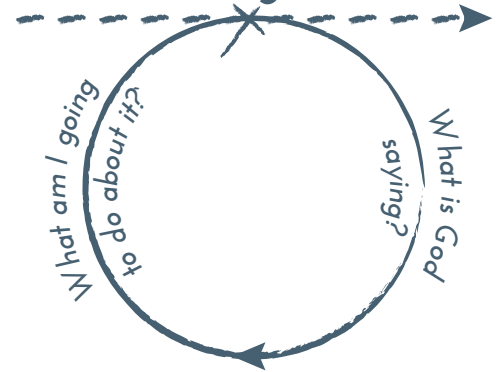
How this could be used

The following is an example of how you could use this resource in a huddle or small group setting. Open by explaining what the Passion Audit is and why it is helpful. E.g. “The Passion Audit is a useful tool to help us listen and discern together as we are identifying and developing Missional Vision...” Essentially it’s about taking people around the Learning Circle in regard to identifying and developing vision

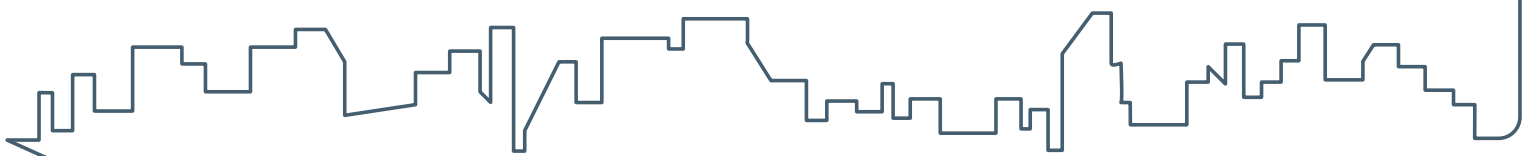
What is God saying?

Invite the members of the group to begin reflecting on the questions – before they write anything down, ask them to stop, pray and think internally about these questions for a few minutes. It may help some members of the group to play some worship music quietly in the background. Remind the group that they will find some of the questions easier to answer and some of the questions will prove more difficult.

The Learning Circle



After the group has had long enough to process the questions, instruct them to write down all the thoughts that came to mind in the corresponding boxes. Afterwards, invite the group to split into pairs and discuss the thoughts that they have had. Externally processing initial ideas will allow some people to develop more coherent thoughts. Allow the group to continue to write down any subsequent ideas. Remind the group that they are not expected to have a complete Missional Vision statement, but that the Passion Audit begins to identify what God has been speaking to them about and what subsequent opportunities there might be.



Invite the group to share with the rest of the group the initial thoughts that they have written down. Allow them to talk about which questions they found easier and which questions were more challenging. It may be helpful for you to ask members of the group if they can identify why those questions were easier or harder.

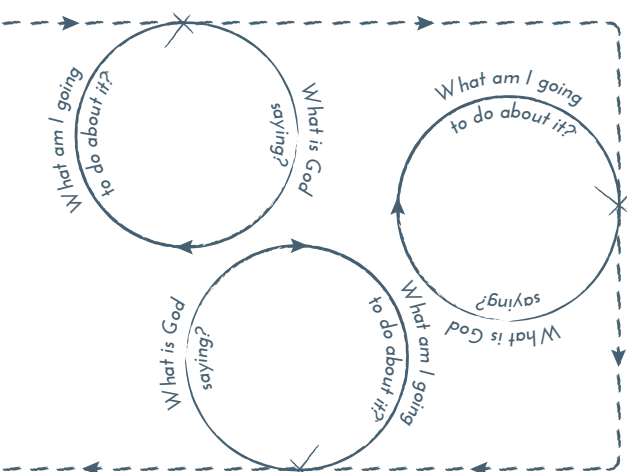
What am I going to do about it?

Using the answers that the group have written down in the centre on "what is God saying?", challenge the group to think about the second question "what am I going to do about it?" (for example, if a member does not know the needs of the community, they might decide to go and spend more time in a particular area where people gather). It may be useful to split back into pairs to initially discuss this. Share these thoughts with the rest of the group so that they can stay accountable.

Be Accountable!

Agree what each person will do to continue the process (e.g. pray, talk, visit a certain place in the community).

Finish by spending some time committing the plans and next steps to God in prayer. You could do this as a whole group. Alternatively, members of the group that have written down similar things could pray together.



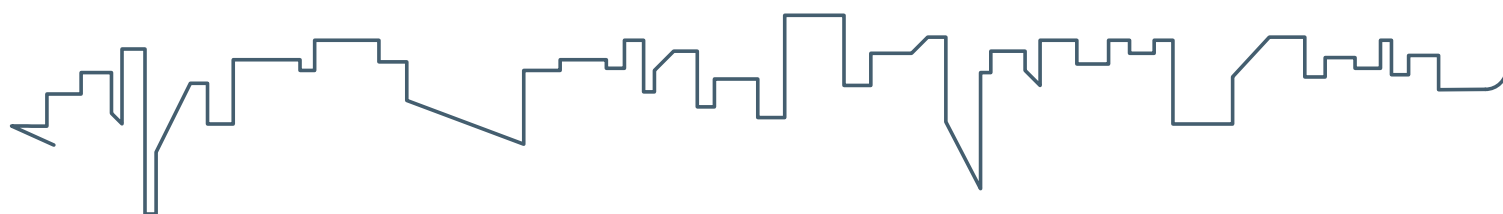
It's a process!

Arrange a time (the next group or another appropriate time) to follow up the discussion and to move towards a clearer vision and plan. This may take weeks not days! (It may be that you need to arrange time to talk to some or all members of the group individually about what they write to help them move forward around the Learning Circle

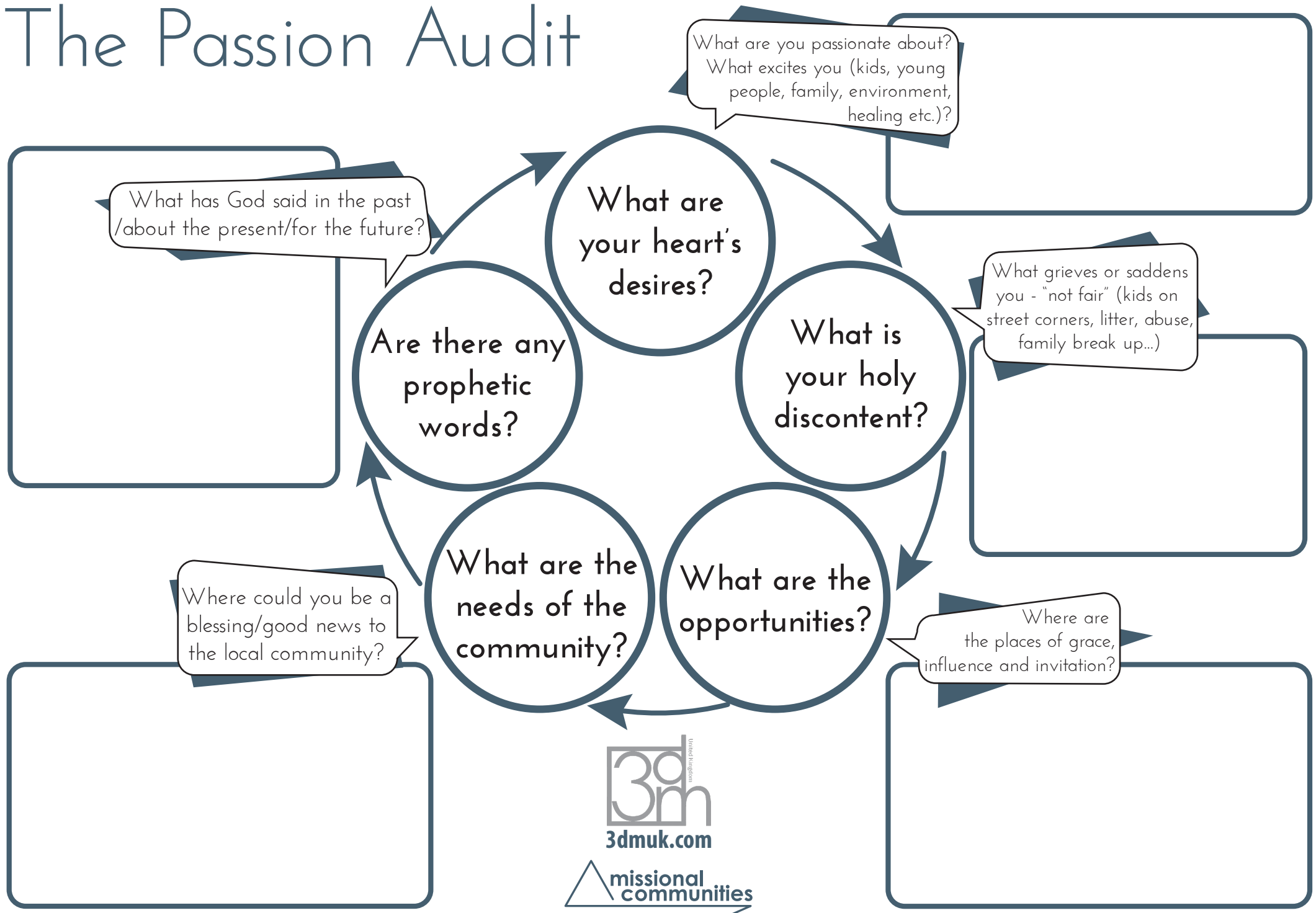
Testimony

"The Passion Audit was great in our community where we used it to help individuals think about their vision. We also used it to help us refine our community's vision of reaching neighbourhoods and it really helped us to start working together as a community. It set those who didn't have a clear personal vision on a journey - some of whom have since begun to find ways of inviting their neighbours into their homes. It got men thinking about what it was that brought them life instead of doing what they 'ought' to do and generally seemed to free people up to do what they loved doing with people outside of the church"

Nikki Williams - Missional Community leader, Sheffield



The Passion Audit



Casting Vision

Casting Vision: A More Detailed Look

After defining your vision through dialogue with church leaders, it is important to cast your vision to other people so that you can gather others that share a similar heart. Be prepared to share your vision as often as you can. Take any opportunity you can to cast vision with others. Opportunities will fall on this continuum of 'structured' and 'spontaneous':



Sharing vision is vulnerable. It involves communicating something that is personal to us. It involves a future picture that others may not yet see. It involves sharing our heart and life and inviting people into a closer walk with us. When someone dismisses what we share we can feel discouraged or frustrated. We can start to question whether we have got it right or heard the Lord correctly. It's important to remember that someone not following our vision is not a personal rejection of who we are – it is about what you are called to live out!

Do not be disheartened if not everyone responds with excitement to your vision! It would be easy at this point to 'water down' your vision so that lots of people join your Missional Community. However, it is essential to remember you are communicating what God has put on your heart, not getting people to like you. Be confident in what you are sharing with other people and remember that not everyone responds to vision in the same way.

Questions to consider

What structured opportunities are there for casting your vision with people?

Are you able to cast your vision with the people around you?

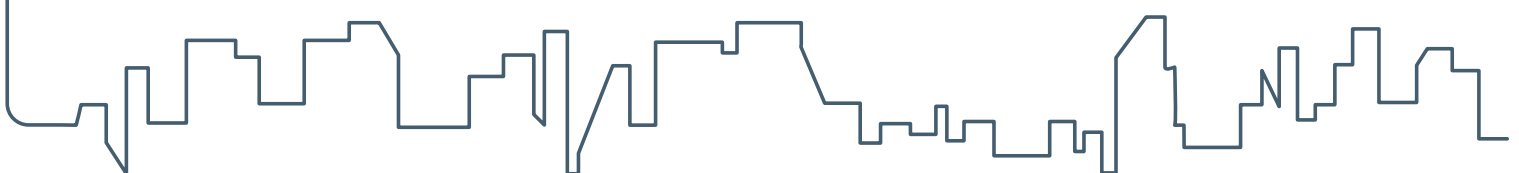
Who have you shared your vision with?

Space for your thoughts

Who will respond? Why doesn't everyone respond at once?

Different people are at different stages of openness to change and new ideas. Those you are initially attracting are what we might call the early adopters. These types of people typically make up only a very small percentage of a congregation.

Early adopters enjoy new ideas and new ways of thinking. They are attracted to something that is not yet proven, but worth exploring. Often, early adopters will happily sign up to a vision or concept – something that sounds exciting/interesting but doesn't exist yet. In addition, there may be some who are instantly passionate about your vision for a particular people or place. Casting vision often involves a future picture that others may just not yet see.



The early adopters will begin to see this picture with you and want to be a part of making it real.

Most people, however, do not operate in this way and will need a tangible expression of this picture before they will come and join in. They need to see something real – and see some results – before they will invest their time and energy in your vision. It's important to be accepting of this rather than becoming frustrated by a lack of response from certain people that you are casting your vision to.

Questions to consider

*Can you identify any "early adopters"?
How are you inviting them into deeper relationship with you?*

Space for your thoughts

Practical Tips for Casting Vision

- Share vision widely, often, and with many different people. Don't stick just to those you would hope to respond and therefore set yourself up to be disappointed.
- Communicate the vision clearly. Build up a simple language that reflects your vision and keep using these key words to help you refine it.
- Practice speaking the vision out or writing it down.
- Share how God has led you to the vision.
- Share testimony of what God has done already.
- Take opportunities to share "from the front" and in conversation. As your vision becomes part of your life, so it naturally flows out in all that you do. Keep on talking about it to other people!
- Invite others to pray and discern if they could be part of the vision – make sure you offer people the chance to be part of it!
- All the time be watching and waiting for where the seed of vision looks to have fallen on good soil. Encourage hearers to seek God themselves.
- Work with the group who respond first – slowly and surely the rest will follow.

Early Adopters

Notes