

New Places for New People

Starting new Christian
communities:
A practical guide

Chapter 1

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New Places for New People (NPNP) are projects focused on forming new Christian communities for those not yet part of an existing church. NPNPs are the most effective means of connecting new people, new people groups, and new residents to Christian exploration and community. In addition, NPNPs bring learning from experimental 'research and development', identify and strengthen emerging leaders, and help the whole Church reflect on and examine its calling.

NPNPs can be started anywhere, in diverse contexts. The Methodist Church has suggested the following contexts and people groups as priorities for NPNPs in the next five years:

- new towns or new housing developments
- student/young adult/university
- families with children
- replanting in an existing place or second site of a growing church
- Church at the Margins.

NPNP theological foundations

Beginning and ending with God: NPNPs are God's work. We are joining in with God's invitation to reconnect people to the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ: enabling us to live in right relationship to God, ourselves, others, and the whole of creation.

Incarnation is key: NPNPs involve being with and alongside others – discovering God together by sharing the reality of human life with its pain, struggles, and joys. Incarnational ministry is key to the work of NPNP. As in Jesus, God takes human flesh and enters our world, so we are called to be alongside, not distant, from the people and places we minister in.

Developing new Christian communities: We believe God is at work in God's world and is not dependent on the actions of the Church or individual Christians. An NPNP discovers and joins God's work in listening for, speaking of and living out the good news, beyond the existing boundaries of the Church. These new communities of people sharing good news will gather together to worship, learn, serve God, and be connected to the wider Methodist Connexion.

Nurturing new Christians: An NPNP project is for new people in new places, is rooted in our response to God's love, and aims for all people to know and experience the love of God. The gospel is for every time, every place, and every person. God's people are called for a purpose: "to love and praise God so that the world may believe." (*Methodist Conference Report, Ministry in the Methodist Church*, para 2.3, p.375)

Open to transformation: At the heart of NPNP is an invitation into a transforming relationship with God and a willingness to be shaped, challenged, and transformed in our encounters with others. The mission of God revealed in Jesus offers us love, forgiveness and new life – all of which will be transformational.



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NPNP core values

Be pioneering: NPNP projects affirm and enable people from diverse backgrounds and ages who are called by God to see new opportunities and respond to God's Spirit at work outside of the existing Church. Furthermore, NPNP projects enable these people to connect and form new gospel communities amongst unaffiliated people – with creativity, imagination, innovation, and sustained commitment.

Develop a 'mixed ecology': We value a diverse range of missional approaches which will produce a variety of new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. These include church plants, pioneering communities of faith, fresh expressions, missional communities, and other new faith communities in rural, estate, urban, inner city, suburban, and village contexts.

Be committed to risk-taking mission: NPNP is the work of the whole Methodist Church, and we are committed to experimenting and taking risks in mission. In a healthy culture of learning and reflection, evaluation will be valued as part of the journey of a fruitful NPNP project.

Ensure contextual relevance: New Christian communities will arise out of careful listening and will always remain connected to the wider community and aware of its needs.

Nurture discipleship in gathered community: Though an individual chooses to become a disciple, faith is nurtured in community with others. NPNP will celebrate emerging patterns of worship and contextually relevant discipleship that resonate with new people.

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