

Discussion Notes: Growing Community - Exploring the Missional Potential of Tea and Biscuits

Many churches run community cafes or coffee mornings, in one form or another. These can be places where relationships flourish and can be a beginning point for running a social action ministry. These notes were part of the discussion following training by Nigel Adams (founder of the Christian Hub Network and author of '[Communities of Hope](#)').



Watch Nigel's presentation on how churches' offer of hospitality can be the starting point for growing communities of hope here: <https://youtu.be/b33gwewTIKg>.

What is working well? How do we build friendships with guests?

- Creating informal, accessible spaces - this has been useful for attracting those who would not usually attend church services.
- Hosting activities in a different, more neutral building (rather than a traditional church space) can help reduce barriers. This will not be possible for everyone.
- Removing church jargon can also help reduce barriers.
- In café-style spaces, the focus can naturally be on greeting and paying attention to whoever walks in.

What are the practical and operational requirements for running a community cafe/coffee morning?

- It's recommended to start small, without feeling the need to try and tackle a host of social issues at once.
- You will need to undertake a risk assessment and if preparing food onsite you will also need a food hygiene certificate. More information about this can be found on the **Diocesan Social Action Webpage** (<https://southwark.anglican.org/mission-ministry/faith-in-action/social-action>), or you can **contact Nicole McKeever** (nicole.mckeever@southwark.anglican.org), who can walk you through the necessary steps.
- It is important that we continue to follow our church's safeguarding policy and report all concerns to the safeguarding lead.

What encourages people to attend?

- In some cases, events offering full meals seem to attract higher attendance.
- People often want a clear sense of what they are stepping into before they come along.



How do we develop community where everyone feels included?

- It can be very helpful to set out specific roles with team members. You will need to identify the key roles that are needed to make a space inclusive and welcoming. For example:
 - someone to make the tea/run the hospitality
 - Someone to welcome people at the door
 - someone to sit at the tables and engage guests in conversation.
- All team members should be trained and supported to listen well, befriend attendees, and focus on relationship-building rather than tasks.
- All team members should feel confident that their main purpose is simply to give time and build connections.
- It can also be helpful to have someone in a chaplaincy role - this can be indicated through a dog-collar or lanyard so that guests know who to go to for support.

How do we harness the potential for social action in our community hubs/cafes/coffee mornings?

- Consider partnering with your local GP surgery and offering your community cafe/coffee morning for **social prescribing**. You can find out more about social prescribing here: <https://www.churchworks.org.uk/our-work/welbeing/social-prescribing>.
- Hopefully, as we build relationships we will get to know the needs/wants of the local community. If someone wants to start something new or get involved, help them do this. Try to encourage them to take a lead with this themselves.
- Build partnerships with and get to know the other organisations in your local area. Can you signpost to them from your community cafe/coffee morning?
- Why not print some copies of the **diocesan Signposting Guide** (<https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Signposting-People-in-Your-Parish-FINAL.pdf>). It contains lots of helpful information and contacts for supporting people in your area
- Find out more about the Christian Community Hub movement (<https://christiancommunityhubs.uk>)



We want to hear from you!

Get in touch with Nicole McKeever
(Mission Department - Social Action)
with any good news stories or for
tailored support and advice.

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