

## Chapter 3 How to Discern a Vision for a New Community

Discerning where to locate a community is key. Keep returning to important questions like:

- Why do you feel God is leading you to choose this community/context?
- Who are you orienting toward?
- What is God saying to you through your relationships with local people?
- In one sentence, can you describe your vision for what you are doing?
- What will it look like in a few years' time?
- How does the vision relate to the NPNP/CaM values?

It is important to consider the community's wider influence and potential shared learning. All NPNPs begin with listening – to the community, God and to each other – to discern the call of God.

### Listening to the community

This is hard and challenging, but also an opportunity to get to know people and form new and creative relationships. It is from this initial deep listening that a clear vision for a new Christian community will emerge.

### Listening to God

In the busyness and enthusiasm of starting something, it is easy to forget to pause and listen to where God might be leading. At every stage of the discerning process, it is important to set aside time for prayer.

### Listening to each other

Listening together as a team will bring different perspectives and understandings of the community. Placing collaboration at the heart of your community will build relationships within the team and enable each person to feel valued.

### Meet local people, listen and learn

Discover what people enjoy about their community. What are their hopes and dreams? Where do they go if they need help? What would they like to change? Consider factors which have shaped community identity by talking to local people about the impact of its history, geography, cultural, and religious influences.

### Experiment, test and learn

It is better to test ideas at an early stage, in several places, to see if your listening, hunches, and discernment resonate with a real community. It's okay to make mistakes, change ideas, or explore elsewhere.

## Chapter 4 Case Studies of New Places for New People

Across the Connexion, there are people beginning NPNPs. There are a few case studies below that illustrate the wide variety of leaders and contexts that can birth an NPNP. We have chosen these stories as they illustrate some of the contexts and people groups that the Methodist Church is currently prioritising:

- 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
- or another context where an NPNP vision has arisen.

**Derbyshire North East Circuit** launched in 2020, bringing together two smaller circuits. One of the key drivers behind its creation was creating capacity for new mission. Their vision to reach out to the post-industrial village of Barrow Hill and a group of interconnected estates in south Chesterfield emerged from extensive consultations with members across the former circuits. These are both “left behind” places, facing economic deprivation and isolation.

**Street Ecclesial Community, Birmingham.** The vision for this community is based on The Parable of the Great Banquet recorded in Luke 14:15-24. The vision of a table where people experiencing poverty, the disabled, the blind and the lame are all invited and welcomed is key, but also the way in which the parable challenges social norms, breaks down barriers and turns traditional roles upside-down. The Street Ecclesial Community is a place where hosts become guests and guests become hosts. View the video here: [youtu.be/vQ21ibPQHIA](https://youtu.be/vQ21ibPQHIA)

Building relationships in order to share the love of Jesus on a new housing estate at **Overstone** in Northampton. Melvina Brown, Pioneer Community Chaplain, works collaboratively with ecumenical partners and the developers of the community to build caring relationships and to share the love of Jesus. View the video here: [youtu.be/-ooE98\\_fMJc](https://youtu.be/-ooE98_fMJc)

## Chapter 5 Connecting with the Wider Community

### Characteristics of a pioneering/core NPNP team

The NPNP will form out of real relationships – the pioneering team itself needs to be the community that new people from the wider community want to be part of. As a team you will work incredibly hard together: planning meetings, designing publicity, running events and tidying up afterwards, so it is important that the team has a purpose and a life beyond the hard work. Make sure you have time together to get to know each other. Exploring faith and God together will be a vital part of growing together as a team.

### Connecting with the wider community

It can be tempting, in the early stages of pioneering, to invest all your time in building the team, assuming that wider community engagement can come later. However, the small steps of testing ideas and connecting with your community are essential in the early stages of your community as you develop your practices and rhythm of meeting, and cement a culture of being outward-looking, welcoming, evangelistic people.

### Serving your community

If you want to get to know new people unaffiliated to the church, you need to meet them – join in with wider community group activities in your local context. And if you want new people to join your community, then they need to feel they know you. Serving your wider community without expecting anything in return will build trusting relationships for the long-term future, and possible future partnerships.

### Listening to and praying in your community

Listening to your community will strengthen relationships and enable you to better serve others. Being physically present in the community that is the subject of your prayers will bring fresh perspective and insight, compared to praying in a church or meeting room.

### Sharing testimony

As you become known in your community, and people encounter your love and service, there will be times when people want to know why you are doing it. It is at this point that, in a gentle way, testimony can be sensitively shared. It is not about a polished presentation, but a natural account of how God is working in, moving in, and changing your life.

### Digital presence, communication and evangelism

Every NPNP must take digital presence and communication seriously. It is now a part of everyone's life and a big part of how we experience the world. You can serve, join, pray and share testimony in the digital world, as well as 'in real life'.