

## **SESSION TWO: GROWING THE VISION OF NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES**

### **1. AIMS**

- to explore the dynamics of growing a vision;
- to expand the understanding of New Faith Communities;
- to have a vision of the possibilities of a particular New Faith Community.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

Vision is imaging the future. The clearer the vision the more focused the way ahead. A well thought out vision invites action and points to the future. Priorities and directions follow visioning. Deciding priorities is deciding direction. After we have owned the vision and developed four to six strong directions we then seek to find the support we need. Groups need time to connect with each other, to collaborate and to build a strong consensus about how God is leading them into the future.

### **3. SHARING FROM CONTACTS AND STORIES**

*After welcoming the people and sharing the material on vision, ask anyone who was able to make contact with a new Faith Community to share what the person said about their vision. Ask the people to share what they think are the visions of Lanyon Valley on the basis of what they read in that story. (Reading 2 at the end of this session).*

### **4. THEIR VISIONS AND OUR VISIONS**

*Make a list of the visions offered by members of the group on a sheet of newsprint or overhead transparency. Place the list prepared in Session 1, Point 5 against the list of visions.*

*Ask the people to discuss in the whole group where there are similarities and differences.*

### **5. VARIETIES OF NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES**

*Ask the members of the group to form pairs, to read the following stories and then to discuss in which category they would place the stories in the chart which is set out after the stories. Ask them to mark the stories on the chart.*

- (1) In Sydney in an area of public housing, a Tongan woman with a large family began a worship service in her home. She invited her neighbours to join her. A minister working in the area provided support.
- (2) A deacon was appointed to work with people who have been placed in community accommodation as a result of Government deinstitutionalisation policies. Beginning with conversation and local community networking the work developed and built on links between people who are marginalised by the wider community.
- (3) A parish outreach worker was appointed to work in the La Trobe Community in Victoria. This community had many established churches but was feeling the full impact of depopulation and the privatisation of the state's electricity supply. The parish worker was single and after twelve months of listening and making contact in the community found herself the centre of a network of other single people in the region.
- (4) A minister with links in both the parish and a Church School began a New Faith Community in the School. It met each Sunday and a young couple was asked to lead it. It was particularly for children who attended the school and whose parents were not attending the parish church.
- (5) A group of people from the Philippines began to meet for fellowship. They enjoyed worshipping together and became a Faith Community. Later as they grew in numbers they became a congregation.
- (6) A group of young people from a congregation liked to worship in a less formal manner and with a charismatic emphasis. They found a church in a neighbouring parish which was used infrequently. They received permission to meet there on Sunday mornings. Elderly people

from a nearby retirement home enjoyed coming to the worship led by these enthusiastic young people.

- (7) An isolated area outside a country town in Queensland was divided into five acre blocks. The land was no good for farming but many people were attracted by the relatively cheap price and the possibility of owning a block in the country. Because of the isolation, many of the people were lonely and were without their usual network of friends. The local minister visited everyone and started a Faith Community that church people and non church people attended.
- 8) A group of young adults supported by their minister began a special event on Sunday evenings called Cafe Church. (Full description is in Reading 3). Set in a trendy suburb of inner Sydney, the group is reaching out to young adults who enjoy going out for coffee. The participants sit around tables and the program offers a variety of religious and other resources to help people in their daily living.
- (9) Often in Retirement Complexes or Nursing Homes, worship is held mid-week when the minister is not involved in Sunday services. One minister had the idea of a Service at a special time on Sunday that could include relatives of the people in the home, many of whom were attending no church. It would be only 30 minutes so as not to cut into visiting time but would be a New Faith Community.
- (10) A group of Chinese University students from Malaysia would meet on a Sunday afternoon to worship in their own language. They would have rice and other dishes together afterwards and ask their friends who were not Christian to come and join them.
- (11) A congregation was concerned that no one from a big apartment block came to the congregation. They found a couple who were prepared to live in the units as a Christian witness. The Church helped to pay their rent. They befriended various people and invited them to a Bible Study in their unit. After a time a small group of people from the apartment block met regularly for worship, study and mutual support.
- (12) In a large Church with two fairly formal worship services a number of young adults began an informal worship service at the same time as the first service. Whereas the traditional service used the pipe organ and robed choirs the young adults used guitars, dressed less formally and had informal but very meaningful worship. Through this an extra fifty people were participating in the Church on Sunday morning.
- (13) A team of people came together from the neighbourhood and local Churches to run family festivals in an area of South West Sydney. They sought to build a better sense of community in that area. Started by one person, the team now cares for each other, and meets to plan and pray for each festival they organise.
- (14) One of the first parishes to begin using the Alpha program ran their groups in the local bowling club. While initially attracting church people, it has now grown to include many who did not have contact with the Church. One of the groups continues to meet regularly, using another series based on the Sermon on the Mount.

Ask the people to come back together and to share and discuss their ideas as expressed by the chart.

**6. WHICH VISION OF A NEW FAITH COMMUNITY IS FOR US?** Ask the people while they are in the whole group to discuss this question:

Which of those stories speaks particularly to us in our congregation?

**7. FOR NEXT MEETING**

Read the Carapook Story in the resources in Session 3.

**8. WORSHIP**

The designated person or group leads in worship, remembering to pray for those who are attempting to form new Faith Communities.

Focus of the Faith Community	Variety of Faith Community
Geographical	
Institutional	
Sociological	
Focused on Worship	
Focused on Witness	
Focused on Service	
Other	
Other	