
Missional Communities

st thomas' philadelphia



"The objective is not to get people into 'church' but to get 'church' which is us, mixing with people in whatever they enjoy doing"

Activate Community

"It's a great place to learn about other cultures and to really seek after what God wants us to be - 'all one in Christ Jesus'."

All 1 Community

Missional Communities

What are Missional Communities?

Faith has a corporate expression as well as being a personal journey. **St Thomas' Philadelphia is a big church and it could be easy to feel lost in the crowd on a Sunday. We believe real community is an essential building block of the church and is a vehicle for mission into our city. It's a place where we can be known, supported and challenged to go deeper in our relationship with each other and to grow as disciples of Jesus.**

To help us in this, we have more than 40 smaller communities of different shapes and sizes across the church: A place to find friends to grow in your faith with and to live it out!

Missional communities are generally made up of between 6-30 people (plus any number of accompanying children) and are communities of people who find they have a similar heart, focus or calling in life. Whether this similarity is for a particular people group, geographical area of the city or ministry, it forms the basis of their life together and of their outreach.

Most missional communities have smaller groups within them. These are like our immediate family - people we see week-in, week-out and share our lives with at a deeper level.

Missional Communities

How do Missional Communities fit into St Thomas' church as a whole?

St Thomas' Philadelphia is a large church with over 2000 people who connect in some way every week. We have many different groups, communities and ministries which take place all across the city. They are as varied as the people of Sheffield themselves—including communities for students, young adults, creative types, the marginalised, business communities, families, the elderly and more. These are based across the city on urban estates, in the suburbs and in the city centre.

So how do missional communities fit in?

They are the backbone of all the missional and discipleship activity which goes on. We have missional communities connecting with all of the people groups and places listed above, and many more. The Sunday services are places for resourcing and equipping and are not places of belonging in themselves. The most important thing is belonging to a community, not which Sunday service you attend.

Most communities would attend the Sunday services between one and three times a month and meet as a community in their context for the rest of the time.

Missional Communities

What are the core values of Missional Communities?

1) FAITH

- Learning

Growing in faith is an important part of community life and we encourage you to pursue this in your own lives and in your communities. We want to be people who look to God for everything we need and learn to put his word and ways into practice, operating by faith. We are committed to learn from life, **from God's Word, and from each other.**

- Adventure

We believe that community grows best when people are joined or bonded together in a common focus or task beyond themselves. We want our communities to be places where people are encouraged to step out in their faith, to take risks and to learn from their experiences together. This includes the freedom to fail sometimes!

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2) IDENTITY

- **Natural Rhythms and Seasons**

We need to be secure in our identity as children of God and rest in the fact that our significance comes from Him. Out of this place of security, where we freely receive his love and acceptance, we can move in power to freely give.

It's important to recognise the cycles and seasons of life in our individual lives and communities —the rhythms of pruning & fruitfulness, sowing & reaping, abiding & growth, breakthrough & consolidation, being & doing and death & life. Whatever the season of life, we live from a place of being firmly rooted in **God's love.**

- **Freedom in Style and Structure**

Each group is different! And the way they express their community life together will look different. We strongly value **diversity across the whole church so we don't have a set** programme or pattern that we ask communities to follow. Instead we want to release a mixture of vision, style and structure, allowing each community to shape the way they meet in a way that best fits their vision and call, based around the value of balanced community (Core Value 3)

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3) COMMUNITY

- **Vision-led Community**

Each community is formed around a God-given missional vision or common purpose—something which unites the group. This provides a focus for the life of each group and its rhythm and activities. These range from reaching out to the city using the creative arts, serving a local neighbourhood, welcoming international students, sharing a passion for the outdoors, supporting individual members in their workplace, working with the homeless to ... anything!

- **Balanced Community**

In each group we give time to growing our relationship with God and all that He would want to do and say to us; to creating open, honest community with each other and those within the body of Christ; to reaching out with love and service to our city and the places where God has put us. These are the three basic dimensions of the life of each group and are shown by the triangle.

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4) DISCIPLESHIP



- Making Disciples

Missional communities are places where we expect people to grow in their relationship with God. We want to grow a church which is full of disciples and learners, people who increasingly **learn to put God's Word and ways into practice. We want to see** new people becoming disciples and joining communities where they will be supported and inspired in their faith. Communities create an environment which gives opportunities and encouragement for members to realise their God-given potential. This includes growing in spiritual gifts and disciplines, skills, & abilities.

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5) TRANSFORMATION



- **Open Community**

We want our communities to be hospitable, open and welcoming to new people, and to known for their demonstration of sacrificial love & service. Love which has the power to transform lives!

Also, as members discover and operate from their 5-fold base ministry gift (see Ephesians 4), the community will be built up and reflect the fullness of Christ to the world.

- **Kingdom Expectation**

We believe that God wants to extend His Kingdom here in Sheffield! We want our communities to be filled with people who are expectant that God will move and do amazing things amongst his people and in our city. We want to see people and neighbourhoods transformed through the love and power of God, expressed through the people of God.

Missional Communities

Some Key Questions about Missional Communities:

How often do they meet?

Missional Communities meet whenever they want! Most communities have a regular meeting pattern during the month, often in evenings or at weekends. Some groups have daytime **meetings, and most communities meet 'out' in the community** at least once or twice a month on a Sunday, rather than gathering at the Philadelphia campus. This is because the heart of our church really is about being community where we live, rather than spending time in a building every Sunday.

What do they do when they meet?

Groups meet for worship and prayer, for accountability, for **learning together from the Bible, sharing each other's lives,** stories and needs from the week, having fun together, eating, getting involved in mission together, spending time with each **other's friends, discussing things.....the list goes on!** Usually there is a good element of fun involved! They live out the **message of 'fullness of life' Jesus won for us**—being good news to each other and to the people we come into contact with.

Missional Communities

Why should I join a Missional Community?

We believe that church isn't just about 'consuming' a service every Sunday, but about living out a genuine faith amongst ordinary people both inside and outside the church - **you can't live it alone! It's about giving to others as well as receiving back.**

We believe 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 real opportunity to live out or discover your God-given calling and to engage in mission to our city. 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 do amazing things in you and through you with others, then join a Missional Community!

What is Communities Sunday?

Communities Sunday happens on the 4th Sunday of each month **and is when all missional communities meet 'out', away from the Philadelphia Campus, in whatever venue they choose.** Some meet together to eat and do a social activity to which they invite their friends, some do outreach activities, some meet to pray and worship together; a whole host of things!

On these Sundays particular communities which have a specific vision to resource the whole church family, the Minster, (see separate booklet), meet at Philadelphia worship and learning together.

Missional Communities

How would I go about joining a Missional Community?

There are a few ways to find out about what Communities there are at Philadelphia.

1. Ask someone on the welcome team on a Sunday at Philadelphia to tell you more or pick up a flyer about individual communities from the back of the Philadelphia Conference Centre.
2. Check out information about all our communities on our website www.stthomaschurch.org.uk—go to the communities page.
3. Give us a ring in the office on 0114 241 9560—ask for Lindsay Lonchar.

See which communities interest you and then go and visit to get a better idea of which one might fit you best before deciding **who you'd like to join.**

I think I might have some inspiration for a new group - what should I do?

Get in touch! We want to release all kinds of new and diverse **communities across the body of the church. So, if you've got an idea of how you'd like to see community expressed then...**

- ⇒ catch one of the team on a Sunday
- ⇒ drop us an email at communities@stthomaschurch.org.uk
- ⇒ ring the office on 0114 241 9560

Missional Communities

“I prayed for one of our neighbours at a community event we held; she had a very sore mouth and was unable to eat. I called to see her one week later and she told me she is much better and is now eating as normal!”

Grassroots Community

“We want to be a community of people who walk closely with God, encourage and challenge each other and love and serve the wider community.”

Roots & Wings Community

Missional Communities



Rich Robinson
Team Leader



Lindsay Lonchar
Communities Developer

The Team



Andy Niblock
*Restore
Communities*



Ben Askew
*Minster
Communities*



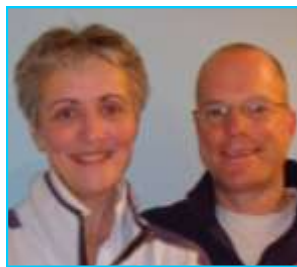
Helen Askew
*Young Adult
Communities*



Bob & Mary
Hopkins
Consultants



Karim & Azam
Novi
*Farsi speaking
Communities*



Nikki & Jem
Williams
*Communities
Leadership +
Admin Support*



Pip Martin
*Admin
Support*



James
Royle
*Form
Intern*

There are also communities in the student, youth and children's ministries—contact Lindsay Lonchar or see appropriate other booklets.

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“I love leading my student community...it’s filled with a real mix of characters. It is always great fun getting together and catching up, but also really exciting to see each member be supported in living for Jesus in their halls, shared houses and on their courses. It’s great to see God developing the student guys and giving them vision to live in community and love those around them.”

Community Leader

“One of our guys had no cash for a weekend away so I asked people if they wanted to give anything to support him; within 15 minutes we had 4 times too much money for him. I’m so excited by this because I love to see generosity at the heart of our culture!!”

Community Leader



St Thomas' Church
PHILADELPHIA CAMPUS, SHEFFIELD

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